



Ormskirk & West Lancashire Numismatic Society

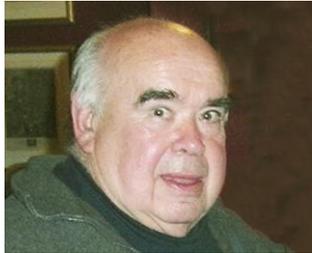
'LOCKDOWN' NEWSLETTER

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What have you all been up to? Any chat, photos, news, recent acquisitions etc. by members for future issues please!

YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD COLLECTOR DOWN!



TO FIND YOURSELF living in a care home during the Coronavirus pandemic is concerning, to state it lightly. Far from offering the protection their very name would seem to imply, these institutions have mostly been at the epicentre of the virus infection.

Our past chairman and honorary founder member, Dr. John Dawson (the Dr. title is a PhD) has been confined to a care home in Parbold for the past three years. John also has several health issues, such as heart trouble and diabetes. When his son Ian informed me that his Dad had been taken into Southport Hospital with suspected pneumonia and erratic blood oxygen levels, well, the future for John did not look bright.

Before this current crisis, John had regular visits from a number of our members and was always pleased to be brought up to date on the Society's agenda and gossip. Unfortunately, the present 'lockdown' ruling has meant that visits by friends and family have been indefinitely suspended. Some have still written to John and others have phoned. You can imagine our surprise when told that not only had John developed pneumonia but had also tested positive for Coronavirus – then came out of hospital after only a few days and has made a complete recovery!
- proving that coin collectors are made of sterner stuff.

PENDLE WITCHES – AN ANTIDOTE

Alan Dawson

Lancashire has long been associated with tales of witchcraft and black magic, both real and fictional. The infamous witch purges and trials of 1612 saw a number of innocent women, young and old, sent to the gallows at Lancaster Castle. Accusing someone of witchcraft was often a way of punishing an adversary in a neighbourhood dispute or simply venting suspicion of someone who was 'odd' or didn't fit in with the local community. The elderly, crippled or recluse were particularly vulnerable to accusation. It was believed that witches could take on many forms, from animals to insects, and their malevolence could inflict damage, not only to human health, but also farm animals and crops.

The early seventeenth century was an age of extreme religious intolerance and superstition. Belief in the supernatural powers of Satan was rife and so was the trust in supposed antidotes; talismans and amulets. Secret symbols and signs were thought to be a protection from the evil doings of witches. These were sometimes scribed on barn doors to protect the livestock within or, more relevantly, cast in small lead or pewter discs, which would either be buried in a field to protect the crop, or carried about the person. It was thought, seemingly without good reason, that witches were attracted to following lines or linear patterns. With this in mind, the linear outline of a flower in leaf was thought to confuse a witch, for by following the curved line she would automatically pass on to another curve, and so on, until she came back to the beginning. Another potent symbol used against the powers of witchcraft was the spider's web. Of course, a web is a complicated linear structure which inevitably would draw the victim to the centre, where, like a fly, she would be dispatched before returning to human form. Some twenty or so years ago I was given a small lead token which had been found by a metal detectorist near Lancaster. He was a member of the *Lune Valley Detectorists Club* whose members had found many medieval and later lead tokens over the years. At times when small change was scarce these crudely stamped pieces of lead were often given as *truck money* to local workers, to spent ultimately with the issuer.

Others are thought to be church *poor tokens*, which could be handed out in philanthropic communities to be exchanged for bread. Most lead tokens show a simple device, initials, a number or a lattice pattern. However, the token given to me was different.



Witchcraft related lead token or talisman?

The obverse, if there is such a thing, shows a four-leaved plant in linear form, with the initials WB and two trefoils of pellets. The reverse side has a spider's web and pellets. It is therefore tempting to think that this is indeed an anti-witchcraft talisman, from a period when superstition held sway over common sense. You might think that belief in witches died out well before the modern age. Think again. In England, under the 1733 'Witchcraft Act', the last known trial of a suspected witch was in 1944. A bogus medium was accused of 'summoning spirits' and faced trial under the said act, but was soon acquitted and simply charged with fraud. The act wasn't repealed until 1951. It is hoped this simple lead token now protects my own coin collection from developing ugly patination, other damage or manipulated downward market forces.

SIXPENCE – THE LAST HURRAH?

Chris Leather

Those of a certain age will remember that before 1971 our coinage consisted of pennies, and shillings, in various multiples, one of which was the sixpence, or half-shilling. This denomination had been first introduced to our pockets and purses in 1551, with the fine coinage of Edward VI, and remained one of the most used coins from then on. So much so that with the widespread withdrawal of pre-decimal money in the period 1969-1971 the sixpence somehow remained exempt. Although it did have a decimal equivalent, two and a half new pence was always going to be a difficult and clumsy denomination, especially with a new two pence piece circulating in parallel. The partisans of the tanner ensured its continued survival, however, until 1982 when logic finally prevailed and the coins were finally withdrawn. Or were they?



Elizabeth II silver sixpence, 2016

There remained a lingering affection for the old tanner, for its use in Christmas Puddings, and as a representation of The Good Old Days. So much so that in 2015 a Royal Proclamation was issued establishing a new six pence coin, to be struck in .925 silver, at a weight of 3.35 grammes and legal tender for any amount. There is obviously no expectation that the new sixpence will ever circulate, as circulation strikes are not being produced, and the silver versions are retailed by the Mint at a most un-tanner like figure of £15. If it wasn't for the high cost of trying, it might be fun to try spending one of these at the local supermarket. Perhaps alongside a Victorian double florin which, never having been withdrawn, remains legal tender for 20 pence....

A SECOND 1945 SILVER THREEPENCE



The second known silver threepence piece dated 1945 has been sold at auction by Baldwins. This extreme rarity achieved three times its pre-sale estimate to be knocked down for £62,000 (incl. BP). All silver threepences bearing this last date were thought to have been melted down at the Mint, as the denomination had been replaced by the more popular twelve-sided 'brass' threepenny bit.

It would appear that at least two coins escaped their fate in the melting pot. The first appeared in 1970 and, even being thought unique, sold at auction for the not so impressive sum of £260. Described as about very fine it was no

where near the grade of the current specimen, which grades as a good very fine to extremely fine.

During the height of WW2 (1942-1944) the silver threepences of those years were all shipped for use in the British West Indies. The mintage figure for 1945 shows that just 371,000 bearing that date were produced, then ordered to be melted down again and the dies destroyed. No specimens were supposed to be released into circulation in the UK. However, as is sometimes the case, there seems to have been some escapees. The first coin to be found showed signs of considerable wear and had obviously seen circulation with other coins. This latest specimen shows few signs of wear, except for surface scratches. Surprisingly the coin had been kept, with others of different dates, in an ordinary blue cardboard 'Whitman' folder, popular with date collectors since the 1930s. It now joins the ranks of other 20th century great currency rarities, such as the 1933 penny, 1954 penny and 1952 halfcrown. I just wonder what else will turn up in future.

COIN QUIZ No.3

QUESTION 1. What does the mint signature 'RIS' stand for on a coin of King Stephen?

QUESTION 2. In what year was the halfcrown finally demonetised?

QUESTION 3. On some Roman and Byzantine gold coins what does COMOB mean?

QUESTION 4. Why is the Roman denomination 'miliarensis' so called?

QUESTION 5. Why was the infamous 'Window Tax' introduced in 1695?

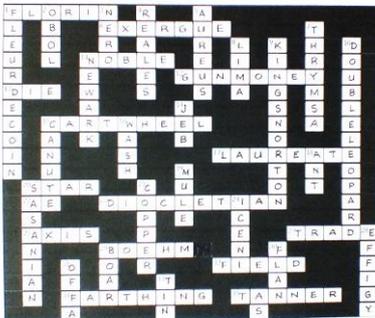


QUESTION 6.

Can you identify each of the following coins, when just a small part of the coin is showing?



CROSSWORD ANSWERS



BRIAN'S BOOK ON JEWISH COINS

One time member of the Society, Brian King, has started to write a concise booklet on the *History of Jewish Coinage*. Brian, who has a lifelong interest in Jewish coins, realised that many of his friends and relatives, although well versed in matters concerning their religion, actually knew very little about the role Jews played in the general history of coinage. The book will act as a brief introduction to the earliest Jewish coins of Judea, the Roman occupation and its mark on coinage of the region, through to the English and European medieval period. During Lockdown Brian has been kept busy collating all his notes and gathering together images of coins to illustrate the story. The booklet will have a limited circulation but is certain to be well received by anyone interested in the subject.

CELTIC COIN OR WEIGHT OR WHAT?

If there is one thing that most coin collectors have in common it is the satisfaction gained from correctly identifying a coin or token. Occasionally, we are presented with something that is so strange that it cannot be accurately pinned down to date, denomination, issuer or even culture. Just such a piece was acquired by our member Lee Brown. He acquired the piece on the internet, where it was described as a 'detector find from Surrey'.

At first glance it looks like an elongated blob of molten bronze, possible waste metal from a casting operation or furnace, certainly not coin-shaped in any way. However, then the 'lump' is turned over it reveals the distinctive image of a Celtic horse stamped into the metal. So far so good. It certainly has a 'Celtic' motif, which was used in many variations across Britain and Europe during the first centuries BC/AD. Looking at the imagery it has to be of an Iron Age date. It is stamped, not cast, but the reverse side is blank, not that this is an unusual feature in Iron Age issues. However the flan is unformed, crude and definitely of an un-coinlike appearance. The weight of precious metal coins was carefully controlled by the coin issuing tribes of Britain and Gaul, especially at the beginning of the Roman era, but base metal coins seemed to have unregulated weights. At this point caution is needed, as the piece might not be a coin at all. It weighs 8.73 g. and the design of the disjointed horse, although typical of Iron Age imagery, does not quite conform in style to any known coins of either Britain or Europe. It's style is similar to the elongated Uffington White Horse, or, if what appears to be wings on the horse's back is right it could be a crude pastiche of the Greek coins of the Corinthian colonies. There also appears to be Macedonian gold stater generally weigh between 8g – 9g. so could it be a coin weight of some sort? Below the horse's hind legs there appears to be lettering. Legends of any sort are usually associated with later Celtic issues, whereas the open linear face of the horse is more typical of unscripted issues of the 2nd/1st century BC.



Image twice actual size

There again, disregarding all of these hypothetical points the lump might turn out to be a trade weight of some sort, possibly for weighing against coins or multiples thereof or maybe other unknown items. It is certainly an unusual and fascinating piece which certainly has a Celtic connection, but apart from that, its specific use remains a mystery. If anyone has a plausible theory about this enigmatic lump of bronze please email Lee on ijjkbrown@sky.com I am sure he would be pleased to hear from you.

USELESS COIN FACTS No.3

THE FINEST KNOWN EXAMPLE of the famous 1794 'flowing hair' silver dollar is not in an American collection but is in the British Museum. This iconic coin was almost certainly the work of Robert Scot, an English medalist and die-sinker, who trained as a clockmaker before emigrating. The auction record to date, for an MS64 graded specimen, is \$10,820,000. The British Museum was gifted the coin from the estate of Sara Sophia Banks, who had bought it from a Captain Hawkins Whitshed in 1796.

'Time is the Coin of Life – be careful how you spend it'

Carl Sandburg

'Thanks to Lockdown my car now does three months to the gallon!'

THOMAS WOLSEY'S UNAUTHORISED GROAT

Chris Leather

By the time of King Henry VIII, the extensive network of country mints which had existed since Saxon times to ensure that coinage was supplied where it was needed with the least possible risk, had been reduced to four. The King had his own mint, the Royal Mint, in the Tower of London, and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the 'Prince' Bishop of Durham, operated their own ecclesiastical privilege mints. Each of these paid a fee to the King, bought their dies from the Royal Mint, and struck according to Indentures issued by the King to each mint master. The Indentures specified the fineness of silver to be used, the standard of weight to be used, the amount of deviation from these standards which would be permitted, and the denominations to be struck. In general terms, the ecclesiastical mints struck the smaller coins: halfpennies, pennies, and half groats. As a special mark of favour, the prelates concerned were allowed to put their initials or symbols on their coins, so, for example, Archbishop Edward Lee of York, 1531-1544, signed his coins with the initials EL for Edward Lee or LE for Lee Ebor, the abbreviation for Eboracum used in his Latin signature.

Thomas Wolsey issued his first coins as Archbishop of York from 1514 onward. His initials TW appeared either side of the shield on the reverse of the coins, together with his symbol, a Cardinal's hat, which appeared below the shield. Similar iconography was also applied on coins issued from the Durham mint, as Wolsey was also Prince Bishop of the palatinate from 1523 onward. From both mints, coins from the standard range of denominations were issued. With the exception that, some time after 1526, a groat was added to the denominations issued by the York mint. So far, so good.



Reverse of Wolsey's controversial groat, with T-W beside the shield and a cardinal's hat below

Wolsey was King Henry's trusted adviser and fixer. In addition to his ecclesiastical appointments, he was also Lord Chancellor and, after the King, the most powerful person in the Kingdom. But as other advisers and fixers have found, favour depends on the ability to fix, and Wolsey was unable to fix King Henry's divorce from Katherine of Aragon. His fall from favour was rapid and total.

By 1529 an Indictment was prepared charging Wolsey with treason. Article 40 of the Indictment was that 'he had stamped the image of the Cardinal's hat' on the groats issued from York. As this device had already appeared on other denominations from York, and on the coins from Durham, none of which were mentioned in the Indictment, it seems that the real problem was the issue of groats, which had not been authorised by Indenture, and therefore could be seen as setting aside the King's prerogatives over the coinage. Wolsey claimed that he had only acted in accordance with precedent, but this was, at best, a very dubious claim. In the event, the defence was never tested. In 1530, Wolsey died on his way from York to London to answer the Indictment.

As coin collectors, we are left with the evidence, sitting in our trays, that Wolsey did indeed issue an unauthorised groat; it isn't often that we can own something so central to a major event in history.

ANOTHER POUND COIN MINTING 'ERROR'

With the discovery of two £1 coins struck on a wrong metal blank in so many months it certainly raises a few questions. The first coin appeared on eBay and sold for £205. The second specimen, offered by TimeLine Auctions fetched £2,375. Both coins, struck on a gold-coloured blank instead of the correct bi-metallic flan, have yet to be verified as genuine by the Royal Mint.

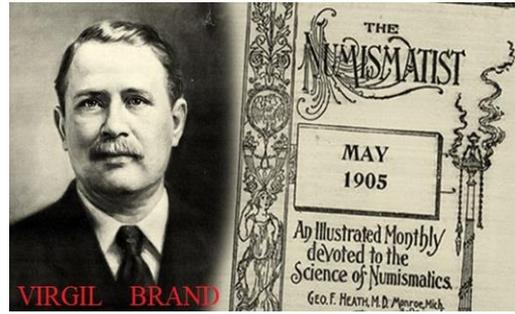
With such advanced and stringent security measures in place throughout the Royal Mint, it seems paradoxical that such an error could occur, and yet it does with alarming frequency – or does it?



WHY COLLECT COINS?

Eric Hodge

In the May 1905 issue of *The Numismatist*, the Journal of the American Numismatic Association, this question was answered by Virgil Brand, possibly the owner of one of the world's greatest coin collections.



Ask almost any coin collector their reasons for collecting and invariably the answer will be that it is for recreation and enjoyment.

With the greater number this is the paramount motive, and as recreation is a necessity as well as a diversion, a collection in providing it, provides a service of no little value. But recreation is of several kinds, and compensating mental recreation is more difficult to find than that of a physical character.

Perhaps the chief value of collecting is that it arouses so keen an interest in the objects collected, that research and study concerning them, which otherwise would have been uninteresting and irksome and might have received little or no attention, becomes an attractive recreation and in consequence made much more thorough and comprehensive. A prompt reward for the expended effort is a greatly increased appreciation of the collected objects. Knowledge gained through an absorbing interest in the things to which it relates, is fixed far more firmly in the mind than if acquired with no such incentive. Nor will the impulse toward the acquisition of knowledge, thus given, easily exhaust itself as it will be constantly regenerated by the discovery of new material.

The majority of coin collectors commence their cabinets with the single thought of finding amusement, and view collecting merely as a pastime, interesting and fascinating, but with no more substantial value than to employ agreeably a few idle hours. The acquisition accidentally or otherwise, of one or more coins or medals, which are at the time unknown and strange to them and therefore arouse their curiosity, engenders a desire to possess other specimens with similar attributes, and thus they become collectors. Some will find the speculative possibilities the greatest attraction and will collect only for the purpose of financial gain; however these should not be considered as true collectors. Many restrict their efforts to coins of a selected period or locality, or of a certain metal or denomination, or gather only specimens relating to one or more separate related subjects. To the collector's zeal is now added a craving for knowledge, and his cabinet becomes a powerful and valuable influence in favour of education.

The branches of learning to which the science of numismatics is related are numerous, and many collectors specialize, selecting one or more of them, according to their inclination or interest. It is a part of archaeology and is a valuable aid in the study of mythology, heraldry, iconography, and other subjects. But its relation is closest to history; in fact coins have been freely employed in revising the latter, and much valuable historical data rests entirely upon their testimony. In the domain of art, coins and medals occupy an important place. They furnish instantaneous ocular proof of the attained stage in its development at all times. The features of numerous historical personages, as well as the costumes worn in past ages, are known to us only from coins and medals, on which they are faithfully reproduced by contemporary artists. The economist may be chiefly interested in coins as money and will find his cabinet indispensable in the study of the monetary systems of nations, the relative value of the precious metals at various periods, the fineness and weights of the world's coins, and the purchasing power at different times and in different localities.

The true numismatist, while he may specialize in a kind or class of coins, does not do so in his researches concerning those he collects, but strives to acquire a full knowledge of everything pertaining to them. To the uninitiated, all of this may seem a formidable task, but in reality it is far from being so. Careful study of the history of the nation or other authority issuing the coins will yield the greater part of the desired information.

EDWARD VIII – The Indian Connection

Peter Thompson

The short reign of Edward VIII, and perhaps particularly the reason for its brevity, has fascinated students, commentators and pundits for years. For the numismatist the fascination lies not only in the coins themselves but in the assumed rarity of anything numismatic belonging to the reign. This is because the abdication came before coins bearing his name and portrait (other than a few of the new brass threepenny pieces) were issued for general circulation in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, while this was the case in the home country several of Britain's colonies had made extensive issues of coins in his name before the abdication took place and these remained in circulation for many years. Withdrawal would have been an unnecessary expense and none of these coins are rare today.

Coins of British West Africa, East Africa, Fiji and New Guinea in the name of Edward VIII are well known. These though are all in denominations which had a central hole for the convenience of users without pockets so while all of these bear his name none of them carry his portrait.

Fig.1



Less well known though are coins of some of the Indian States which also bear the name of Edward VIII. These are the States that retained some level of independence under the paramount power, which from 1858 was the British Crown. Their independence included responsibility for coinage and just as some of them had honoured the Moghul Emperors on their coins some began to do the same for Victoria and later British monarchs who from 1877 bore the official title of Empress/Emperors of India.

Over the years many of these Indian States adopted British Indian currency but right up to 1947 (when India and Pakistan were formed and those States lost their independence to one or the other) some of them continued to issue coins on a regular basis. In 1936 three of them issued coins in the name of Edward VIII. Kutch issued a full series of silver coins (five kori, two-and-a-half kori and one kori) in his name together with an impressive three dokda in copper. Jaipur issued a broad flan copper paisa and Jodhpur issued several varieties of quarter annas.

Fig 2



On these Indian State coins his name appears thus:-

ا. ب. ر. و. و. و. ا.

or something similar with the regnal numeral (^) to the left. On the Kutch coin illustrated (figure 2a) this can be seen as the top line of the reverse legend. On the Jaipur coin (figure 2b) it is not so distinct and omits the regnal numeral but the legend does include the full Christian date, 1936, in Arabic numerals (١٩٣٦) at 3 o'clock.

The Jodhpur coin (figure 2c) gives Edward's name and regnal numeral (^) across the centre of the reverse. A "daroga" (control) mark somewhat in the shape of a standing man separates the regnal numeral from the name.

All of these coins of course also named the ruler of the State as well as the King/Emperor. In Kutch at this time this was Khengarji III, in Jaipur it was Man Singh II and in Jodhpur it was Umaid Singh. Many catalogues designate the side of the coin bearing the King/Emperor's name as the obverse but in the view of this writer it is the side bearing the name of the local ruler that is correctly the obverse.

'In an unsettling reversal of our teenage years – we are now yelling at our parents for going out!'

'Now everyone knows what introverts do for fun'

CAVEAT EMPTOR

Graham Jones

Love it or hate it, during 'lockdown' eBay has been a godsend to many coin dealers and collectors. However, it has also attracted the fakers and forgers who have seized on the opportunity. There has been the usual awful fakes on offer, which are fortunately easily spotted and avoided. But some recent fake Anglo-Saxon coins, coming from Poland, are much more convincing. Then there are those who are just trying it on. For example, a recent listing of an Elizabeth I crown of 1601 is being offered at £3,000 and described by the seller as 'rare', but photographed slightly out of focus (always suspicious!) and with a minimal description ending with the innocuous letters 'WRL', which stands for Westair Reproductions Limited. The WRL mark had been cleverly removed from the coin, but with no mention that it was a reproduction.

Occasionally, genuine bargains do appear on eBay and can be real 'finds', but then again there can also be the downright bizarre. Another recent listing was for a British 2p coin that was being offered at 16,425 yen (Japanese seller) or £124. The high priced demanded, one would assume was for some highly unusual die flaw etc – but no. Apparently its rarity was that it had been 'licked' by the pop star Justin Beiber!



Matthew Boulton, caught mid sneeze! (artist unknown)



Any offers?

This raised so many questions in my mind that I thought maybe I should just go with the flow and list a Cartwheel penny for £500 – claiming that it had allegedly been sneezed on by Matthew Boulton and see what happened. As always with eBay, caution is well advised.

Hopefully, this issue of 'Lockdown Newsletter' has hit the right note, that is, somewhere between news, serious numismatic research articles and frivolous nonsense, but all contributing in their own way to easing the frustrations and boredom brought about by this unprecedented global situation.

Until the next issue keep well and keep safe.