



ORMSKIRK & WEST LANCASHIRE NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

'LOCKDOWN' NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NUMBER 6. OCTOBER 2020

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

'RULE OF SIX' - MEANS NO MEETINGS BEFORE YEAR END



THE GOVERNMENT'S latest ruling on social gatherings, due to the rise in Coronavirus cases, certainly cancels any hope of regular meetings of O&WLNS for at least the rest of this year. Our meetings had already been cancelled, as guest speakers were understandably reluctant to attend and most members were also extremely cautious about social distancing and ventilation in our venue. The *Eagle & Child* is open for business, albeit with strict measures in place, but reorganizing a programme for the rest of this year would have been a daunting task at such short notice. In a way, the Government's latest edict has settled any uncertainty about future meetings. We now know that meetings of more than six people, indoors or out, are not allowed. So we must instead look forward to a possible resumption of our regular monthly gathering next year. In the meantime it looks as if this monthly newsletter will be set to continue for some time yet, hopefully providing the much needed bond to keep the Society together.

OCTOBER'S AGM WITH A DIFFERENCE

Any 'virtual' Annual General Meeting would be beset with problems. It is therefore proposed that Officials of the Society and Committee members remain the same as last year. Norman Mercer has already prepared his usual detailed accounts for the year 2019/20 and these will be available to any member who wishes to see them. To précis the report; the society is in a really healthy financial state, thanks to switching accounts and outgoings this year being minimal. As this newsletter is now sent also to people outside the membership, such as coin magazines, other societies and interested parties, it was decided not to publish details of our accounts in this newsletter. If any member of O&WLNS wishes to raise a point arising from last year's AGM or has a proposal to make concerning future meetings, these can be made by email to the Secretary at the address on the title banner of the newsletter.

After a proposal by our Treasurer, seconded by the Secretary and agreed by both Chairman and President, no annual subscription at all with be asked for 2020/21, as this year's meetings have been so disrupted. Other matters usually discussed at the AGM will be held over until next year. One positive point worth mentioning is that after receiving copies of 'Lockdown Newsletter' two past members of the Society have decided to re-join once meetings resume. With the good publicity the venture is receiving, more might follow.

Copies of all five issues of 'Lockdown Newsletter' have been emailed to both *Coin News* and *Money & Medals* together with a covering letter outlining how our Society is coping with the present situation. Coin News editorial team have responded very favourably and asked if they can make a feature of it on their Clubs and Societies page in a future issue. All publicity helps!

COINS FROM THE 'PIEDMONT'

Peter Thompson

The loss of the "Piedmont" in 1795 was part of a major maritime disaster. The war against revolutionary France was not going well for Britain and it was decided that the key to turning things round would be a major offensive against the French islands of the Caribbean. Taking these while at the same time securing the British islands would severely damage France's economy and weaken her in this long drawn out struggle. To accomplish this a major fleet of troop transports, store-ships and naval vessels was gathered together on the south coast in the autumn of 1795 and troops from all over the country were assembled and embarked. The expedition was as well-equipped as the straightened circumstances of the day would allow. The ships were gradually assembled in St Helens Roads, a sheltered anchorage close to the east of the Isle of Wight.

Although good weather could not be expected in the Atlantic in late autumn a winter arrival in the West Indies was planned so that the troops could be gradually acclimatised to the tropical conditions in that part of the world. After numerous delays the fleet was finally as ready as it would ever be and on 15th November some 180 ships departed St Helens Roads in what looked like a decent break in the weather. Stragglers would follow and more ships were to rendezvous off Cork. On board were some 18,740 soldiers with all the armaments, stores, fresh water, horses, livestock and everything else required for this major undertaking, including of course some ready money. The next few months would be an almost continual battle against some of the worst Atlantic storms ever recorded with the fleet returning twice to sheltered anchorages. After long delays it would finally reach Barbados on 21st April 1796 but sadly the "Piedmont" and several other ships would not be with them.

Sailing initially on 15th November the fleet had not passed Plymouth before the wind freshened considerably from the south west. The "Piedmont" with many others headed back for St Helens Roads but in atrocious conditions and poor visibility was carried too far north to clear Portland Bill. At about midday on 18th November, unable to clear a lee shore, she was thrown hard onto the pebbles of Chesil Beach at the eastern end of Lyme Bay in mountainous following seas and was broken up almost immediately. It is quite remarkable that 18 of the 156 persons on board managed to survive. Three other transports and two merchant ships were lost on Chesil Beach that day with a total estimated death toll of 296.

The 138 soldiers on board the "Piedmont" were all of the 63rd Regiment of Foot and here lies a tragic connection with the North West of England. All of those on the "Piedmont" had been recruited in the Lancashire town of Colne and hardly a family there was untouched by the loss.



Cob eight reales from the "Piedmont". Potosi mint 1679

In the early 1980s salvage was carried out on the Lyme Bay wrecks and many silver cob coins of the 17th century were found on the "Piedmont" wreck site. These are assumed to have been in the vaults of the Bank of England for many years before being pressed into service for this expedition. The Spanish American mints of course were all striking milled coins by this time but in an age where coins had an intrinsic value this may not have seemed important. A group of "Piedmont" coins was sold by Format of Birmingham in 1985.

NO NEW 2p OR £2 COINS FOR TEN YEARS



The Royal Mint has announced that it will not be striking any new 2p or £2 coins for at least the next ten years. It would appear that there is a surplus of both denominations already in circulation and coin use generally is slowing down. Nearly half of all purchases, either on the High Street or the Internet, are now made by card and the present pandemic has understandably accelerated the use of contactless payments. Thankfully, the Mint has confirmed that there is no plan to phase out these denominations, or any other for that matter, but production numbers are likely to be less in future.

COIN QUIZ No.6

- QUESTION 1.** What type of coin is a 'Ring-Dollar' or Holey-Dollar?
- QUESTION 2.** Where did the 15th century 'Galley Halfpence' originate?
- QUESTION 3.** What is a 'Pollard'?
- QUESTION 4.** Some medalets were made in 'Pinchbeck' what is it?
- QUESTION 5.** The mintmark 'PLN' on Roman bronze coins refers to what mint town?
- QUESTION 6.** Where did 'Lord Baltimore coins' circulate?
- QUESTION 7.** In what year was hammered silver demonetised?
- QUESTION 8.** What are 'Hard Times tokens'?

LANARK MILLS DISCOVERY

Eric Hodge

I have recently seen a new UK merchant countermarked dollar from Lanark Mills.

Genuine Lanark Mills countermarked values of 5/, 4/9 and 4/6 are only known on Spanish-American 8 reales whereas the 2/6 values are on French half écus. The Lanark Mills countermark was made with two punches, one for the name (Payable at Lanark Mills), being the outer ring and a separate punch for the value punched inside the name ring punch. There were two different name punches, one with a lozenge (◆) stop between Mills and Payable (fig. 1) and the other with a star (*) stop between Mills and Payable (fig. 2). The lozenge stop ring punch was always used for values 5/ and 4/9. The 4/6 value used either the lozenge or the star stop, both including an extra countermark in the shape of a letter D, (fig. 3) (possibly to remember David Dale the original founder of Lanark Mills). The 2/6 value only used the star stop, some with the extra countermark in the shape of a letter D some without. It is believed that these separate issues of 4/6 and 2/6 were issued at different time periods.

The coin I saw was a Lanark Mills 4/6 with star stop and D (fig. 4). There are now seven examples of this countermark known but interestingly six of them are in museums, Birmingham City Museum, American Numismatic Society NY, Hunterian Museum Glasgow, Paisley Museum and two in the British Museum, so this coin is the only one known in private hands.

The host coin dates for the 4/6 star stop are 1788(2), 1791(4) and 1792. For the 4/6 lozenge stop they are 1776(2) (both over Bank of England oval countermarks marked in 1797), 1793 and 1795? (again with a Bank of England oval). So it would seem that the most likely first issue was the 4/6 star stop.



Fig 1.



Fig 2.



Fig 3.



Fig 4.

ANSWERS (Quiz No.5)

- Q1. Hammered Gold was officially demonetized in 1733
- Q2. 'Black Money' was a term used for very base metal coinage
- Q3. A 'Messianic' coin is one purporting to show a true image of Christ.
- Q4. The quarter farthing was issued for use in Ceylon (Shri Lanka)
- Q5. 'Carat' derives from the Arabic word 'qirat' meaning a pod or seed of the locust tree, originally used as a small weight.
- Q6. 'Scissel' is the scraps of metal left after a blank is cut.
- Q7. 'Type Muet' refers to a type of coin which is 'anepigraphic' i.e. without portrait.
- Q8. A 'hardhead' is a billon coin of Scotland, also known as a 'Lion'. They were first issued in 1555 under Mary Queen of Scots.
- Q9A. Edward VII 1902 penny, 'Low Tide' variety.
- Q9B. Coenwulf, King of Mercia, (796-821) gold penny or 'Mancus' of thirty pence.
- Q9A. Charles I, Scarborough siege piece of five shillings.
- Q9A. George III, Bank of England dollar of five shillings reverse side.

QUESTION 9.

Name the famous film



QUESTION 10.

Name the famous Western

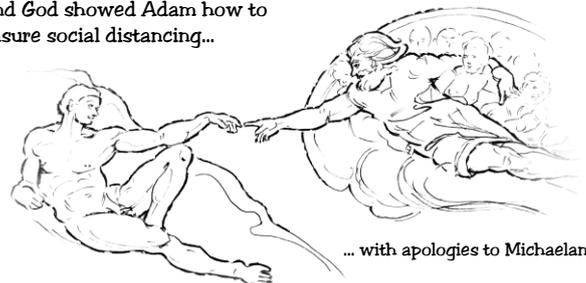


RARE STEPHEN PENNY SELLS FOR £8,500

An extremely rare penny from the reign of King Stephen (1135-1154) which was found by a detectorist, has recently been sold through Dix Noonan Webb auctioneers for £8,500 plus buyer's premium. The coin was found in a field on the Lincolnshire/Yorkshire border in 2018. The coin, which was minted in York, features two standing figures, supposedly representing Stephen and his queen Matilda, is one of only 25 known examples.



... and God showed Adam how to measure social distancing...



... with apologies to Michaelangelo

USELESS COIN FACTS No.6

Tobacco in many parts of the world has proved to be a useful form of unofficial money. In Maryland, Virginia and other American states it was actually an official and authorized currency in the 17th and 18th centuries. Daniel Defoe, in his 1792 *Colonel Jacque* tells us that in Virginia "As tobacco is their coin as well as their product, so all things are purchased at a certain quantity of tobacco, the price being so rated at three shillings to the pound". Better to spend it than smoke it!

A STONE WITH A STORY

Colin de Rouffignac

It was interesting to hear about members' other hobbies and interests in the last two issues of the newsletter. Myself, I 'love to go a wandering along the mountain track' as the song says. After all, it is the cardio-vascular exercise of choice.

When walking on a quiet country road, north of Slaidburn and in the middle of nowhere, I came across the remains of a medieval stone wayside cross. Apparently, it is quite well known as the 'Cross of Greet' and it does have quite an interesting story. The stone base was used as a marker for the old Lancashire to Yorkshire border. Of course no trace of the original cross now remains, if indeed there ever was one. The plinth consists of a roughly hewn stone block, the top surface of which bears a square depression which, in wet weather, forms a basin. It seems too shallow to have acted as a socket to support a cross, being at most a couple of inches deep. However this shallow depression seems to have had another use entirely.



The 'Cross of Greet' stone, near Slaidburn, Lancashire



Plague Stone at Ackworth, West Yorkshire

It is claimed that the Cross of Greet was used as a *Plague Stone* during that other pandemic of 1665/6 or possibly earlier during the notorious Black Death of the late 1340s. The stone depression in the basin would be filled with vinegar and used by travellers to wash their hands and their groats before entering 'God's own county' (depending on the direction of travel) in an attempt to reduce the spread of the plague. The medieval plague reached Yorkshire in 1348 and it is estimated 50% of the population of that county perished.

During Henry VIII's ruthless dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century followed by Cromwell's puritanical destruction of religious icons after the Civil War, many wayside crosses were smashed to pieces or buried. Therefore, if the Cross of Greet is the base of a medieval wayside cross it probably suffered the same fate. If this is the case then its proposed use as a 'Plague Stone' probably dates to the second great pestilence of 1665/6, which ravaged West Yorkshire for a year, wiping out whole villages and decimating urban populations in the region.



The Plague Stone at Penrith, Cumbria



The unusual Plague Stone at Eyam in Derbyshire, specifically for coins

Plague Stones are certainly known in other locations, such as Ackworth in West Yorkshire, Penrith in Cumbria, Great Budworth in Cheshire and, most famously on the edge of the plague village of Eyam in Derbyshire. The Eyam stone is unusual inasmuch as instead of a single 'basin' it has six small depressions to suite the sizes of various coins. In this case the coins were deposited by the quarantined villagers in payment for vital supplies during their self imposed martyrdom. In this present pandemic I suspect that cash, and plastic banknotes in particular, still represents a major source of infection transmission. The prevention practices of generations past might not be quite so pathetic as first thought, although we should perhaps substitute vinegar for diluted bleach or an alcohol-based solution. Stay safe and keep well.

'Now I understand why pets run out of the house when the front door is left open'

'I never thought I would ever enter a bank, wearing a mask, and ask for money'

UNA & THE LION REVISITED

Every year selected samples of coins struck by the Royal Mint over the previous year are tested for weight and composition of the metal at the *Trial of the Pyx*, which takes place in Goldsmiths Hall, London. The tests are carried out by the Goldsmiths Company. This year the Mint's largest gold 'coins' ever made in the UK were put to the test.

Weighing in at five kilos, two kilos and one kilo, with a face value of £5,000 and £2,000 and £1,000 respectively these three huge lumps of gold feature, on the reverse, the iconic design of 'Una and the Lion' by William Wyon. But are these really true coins, medallions or simply a gimmicky form of bullion?

The Una and the Lion issue, which ranges from a silver two ounce proof up to the massive five kilo lump, are the first in a proposed Royal Mint series commemorating famous coin designers of the past. The initial idea is commendable, as it harks back to the days when coins were truly miniature works of art with dignity in the design. It is certainly a breath of fresh air when compared to some recent issues.

These large proof coins are obviously not intended for circulation, even though they have been given a nominal face value. With retail prices of up to £400,000 for the five kilo coin, of which only twelve have been made, these pieces are not for the feint-hearted or the average date-collector. They are obviously aimed at the market speculator with a bulging wallet. Nevertheless, the concept is just as praiseworthy as it was back in 1839.



Five kilo gold proof 'Una & the Lion' at the Trial of the Pyx, inset: reverse of the coin

THE PROTO-CURRENCY OF THE BLACK SEA

Alan Dawson

In the 7th century BC the Milesian colonies of the western Black Sea coast were thriving trading points between the Greeks and their Scythian and Thracian neighbours. Of course this was in a time before coins as we know them did not exist. As centres of trade and exchange the colonies of Olbia, Istros, Odessos and Apollonia began casting copper and bronze objects styled on things familiar to all parties. These pre-monetary items included the ubiquitous 'dolphins' and the scarcer 'arrowheads' as well as 'wheels'. Surprisingly they stayed in circulation in the west Pontic area for about two centuries despite the introduction of struck coinage.



Dolphin money and wheel money (centre)

Arrowhead money

PERCY METCALFE – Style and substance

Chris Leather

Mention Art Deco, and most people imagine the stylish geometry and symmetry of the 1930s, but the Deco style originated before the first World War, having its origin in the Vienna Secessionists, the Fauvists and Cubists. But as if by definition, a movement evolves, and Deco as a style in its own right began to concentrate more on the use of rare, exotic and new materials, such as ebony, ivory, and chromium, and clean uncluttered lines. Streamline ‘Moderne’ was the final flowering of Deco before the hardships of the second World War, and the Utility period which followed.

Coin design is usually seen as being rather conservative, as the selection panels are often chosen from the art establishment, and there are physical constraints imposed by the minting process which limit the detail and depth of relief which can be obtained in a product which must be manufactured in the millions and at the lowest cost. There were, however, a number of artists who managed to combine the stylishness of Deco with the limitations of the press.

Principal among these was Percy Metcalfe. Born in Wakefield in 1895, Metcalfe attended the Leeds School of Art from 1910, registering as a general artist. His talent took him to the Royal College of Art in London, where he developed his techniques of designing objects as forms of art, expressing these as sculptures, and designs for the Ashtead Pottery which was set up in 1919 to provide employment for disabled ex-servicemen, and including, notably, a ceramic tankard for the Ancient Order of Froth Blowers. During the 1930s he produced car mascots, advertising items, shop fronts, and theatrical sets.

His first commission in the field we would recognise came with a range of small medals struck in Wembley at the British Empire Exhibition of 1924, for sale to those attending. The style of these is pure Deco, and owes nothing to earlier times. Coin design came with the formation of the Irish Free State, when his suite of designs featuring animals important to the Irish economy was selected for the State’s first distinctive coinage in 1928. Some of these designs remained in use until displaced by the Euro in 2002. These ‘barnyard’ designs have been described as being among the most beautiful coins ever issued; they certainly have an elegant simplicity which evokes the style of the age exquisitely well.

Metcalfe’s only commission for a British coin came with the design of the Crown piece for the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935. Extensively derided by the public as being ‘the rocking horse crown’ and by the King as depicting St George in an impossible position on the horse, the coin was not a success at the time, but perhaps time has been slightly kinder, and it is now seen as a classic of the period. It obviously was no bar to his career, though, as he also designed the official Coronation medal for King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. Metcalfe also designed for a number of other countries, including Bulgaria and Romania, Turkey, Greece, Egypt, and various parts of the British Empire. His success was not confined to the reverses, where traditionally a freer hand might be used, as his effigies of King George VI went right around the Empire – one of the most successful being the simple portrait used on the nickel rupee denominations for India in 1946 and 1947.



Top left: 1935 ‘Rocking Horse’ crown, right: Indian 1947 nickel rupee
Bottom left: Bulgaria 1937 100 leva, right: Ireland halfcrown

The change of style, almost the abandonment of style, after the War, saw the end of Metcalfe’s coin designing career and, indeed, there are few traces to be found these days of any significant post-war work. His exceptional talent was not rewarded by financial success. When he died in October 1970, Metcalfe’s estate was valued at £1,973.0s.0d. a poor ending for a man who made so much money.

CANTERBURY PILGRIMS’ INN OF CHOICE

Alan Dawson

During the present imposed restrictions finding suitable hammered coins to add to my collection has proved rather difficult, inasmuch as either the type or variety isn’t being offered or else the price being asked is way beyond my budget. Collecting any type of coins is like keeping a fire on the go; if it isn’t regularly fuelled the flame will disappear. So, to keep my interest alive I decided to explore themes that were somewhat akin to hammered coins but offered a different scope.

Seventeenth century traders’ tokens present a vast and sometimes bewildering choice and are still relatively under priced. They are small windows into the social history of both the Cromwellian period and the changes brought in by the Restoration of the Monarchy. As such they fit in nicely at the end of a hammered coin collection. I decided to make a very small sub-collection of seventeenth century tokens, limiting it to halfpence and farthings and the five distinctive flan shapes, i.e. round, square, octagonal, diamond-shaped and heart-shaped. I had already acquired a heart-shaped halfpenny some years ago but had never expanded the theme, but this was certainly a start. Then, only a few weeks ago, I was offered an octagonal example in pretty good condition for the series.



The Chequer of Hope token, obverse and reverse

This particular token had been issued by a certain James Masterson at the famous ‘Chequer of Hope’ Inn in Canterbury, sometime between 1660 and 1672, as the token is undated. These dates are confirmed by the Canterbury archives where it states that Masterson was a business man (presumably landlord?) of the inn between those dates, and that he issued halfpenny tokens. By the seventeenth century there had been an inn on the site for over 600 years, as the foundations date from 1120. The ground floor originally housed various workshops and on the first floor was the ‘Chamber of 100 beds’ as this particular hostelry was popular with the thousands of pilgrims who flocked to Canterbury to visit the shrine of St. Thomas Becket. The inn’s unusual name has two possible meanings; it could refer to the popular gambling game using a chequer board on upturned ale barrels or possibly it was a ‘Checker’ building, a counting house in the Priory, where the counting of ‘hopes’ that pilgrims left after their visit to the shrine, would take place.



The Chequer of Hope as it was in the nineteenth century – and as it is today

The inn is actually referred to in The Tale of Beryn, as ‘The Chequer of the Hoop’ later changed to The Chequer of Hope. Geoffrey Chaucer describes it as the resting place of the pilgrims in his celebrated raunchy work; the Canterbury Tales. The Dissolution of the Monasteries saw an end to pilgrimages but the Chequer of Hope inn continued to function as a hostelry. By 1593 the Chamber of 100 Beds had been subdivided into smaller rooms and by 1825 the building ceased to function as an inn altogether and much of the west end of the building was destroyed by fire in 1865.

However, the arches and facades on the High Street and Mercy Lane escaped largely undamaged. Today, the inn would be hardly recognizable by the fourteenth century pilgrims, yet the building still stands with its distinctive ground floor arches. Even modern secular pilgrims are still catered for in the plethora of souvenir shops in Mercy Lane and the Cathedral precinct. All trade tokens have a tale to tell of one sort or another, but this particular little piece of octagonal bronze really caught my imagination.

The next ‘Lockdown Newsletter will be the November issue