REVIEWS

*Newton at the Mint.* By Sir John Craig, Deputy Master of the Mint. Cambridge University Press, 1946. Price 7s. 6d. 128 pp., with index.

Numismatists will welcome this attractive book. Newton came to the Mint, as Warden, in 1696, and Master in 1699; he remained there until his death, at the age of 85, in 1727, and we have here a picture of the working and administration of the Mint from the Great Recoinage to the end of George I's reign. Among many other things we are told that the recoinage, which was already in progress and not primarily Newton's work, was a partial cause of the shortage of silver during the next hundred years, since one of its effects was "to fit the silver circulation for export and set a relation between bullion and coin which cut off all normal flow to the Mint"; and we read in 1730 that since 1701 "no silver had been imported to the Mint but what was forced thither". Newton in fact presided over the revolution in our currency whereby the silver standard, "in all men's minds the only true money", was replaced by gold. Newton apparently did, and probably could do, nothing to stem the revolution; indeed there seemed no reason why he should do anything. He was, however, a "good bureaucrat", industrious and able himself, a stickler for clear and exact records, and an efficient guardian of his charge against knavish or hare-brained schemes to achieve miracles. Not the least of his cares was the dearth of copper coinage. Nothing much, however, was achieved; experiments were made in 1714, but apparently, and contrary to our present belief, "Queen Anne's farthings were strays from these experiments". The author adds categorically, "No copper coin was issued in England under Anne." So the famous farthings, it would seem, should all be called patterns.

Newton as a mathematician and a scientist we know; he is less familiar as a theologian. His Protestantism is echoed in the revival of the title "Defender of the Faith" on the coinage of George I, a sigh of popular relief, as it were, that Queen Anne had not been succeeded by her brother, a Roman Catholic. Students of the mill coinage and of medals in particular will find much to interest them, details of the Edinburgh recoinage in 1707, or of Newton's own drawings for the Vigo medal; few will fail to derive both profit and pleasure from this lively and intimate picture of the Mint in King William's day, and of a great man at his daily task.

C. A. W.


Seldom in British archaeology have the coins become such a focal point of interest as at Colchester. As the authors remark, this was
largely due to the location in the area of Cunobelin’s mint. The finding of multiple clay moulds for casting the flans and other traces of a mint workshop destroyed in the first period of Roman occupation greatly heightens this interest. But the archaeologist and the historian may share it with the numismatist, for coins have the properties both of written history and archaeological finds, particularly valuable at this period of transition from Belgic to Roman Britain. The report on the coins therefore falls naturally into three main sections, in all of which the archaeological interpretation has been kept well to the fore.

In the first section the evidence is discussed for placing Cunobelin’s mint in the south-west part of region 6 of the excavation map, where not only clay moulds (pl. xvi) were discovered, but a few of the bronze flans cast in them as well as broken crucibles, burnt earth, sand, and slag, all pointing to a coining industry which had been deliberately wrecked within a short time after the Roman Conquest.

The second section is devoted to the pre-Roman coins (pls. xvii–xviii), on which very full notes were provided by Mr. D. F. Allen. The great majority of these coins belong to the reign of Cunobelin himself, no less than six new types being recorded. Brigantian, Icenian, and earlier Belgic coins were also represented, providing at least another five new types. Only three Gaulish coins, all of the same Æ type (de la Tour no. 9248), were found, and these were post-Roman conquest.

The third section, on coins of the Roman period, is written by Dr. C. H. V. Sutherland (pl. xix). Here the principal interest lies in the local copies of official Roman issues, which the Britons evidently lost no time in making. This is a new study, which owes a great deal to Dr. Sutherland’s past work. Even General Pitt-Rivers, when recording in the fourth volume of his Excavations (p. 240) the contents of a Romano-British pit at Rushmore, did not mention that the two Claudian coins which he found were, in fact, British copies of an as of Antonia. Both were of the type illustrated in this report (pl. xix, 2 and 3). Dr. Sutherland argues convincingly that these imitations formed an official or semi-official currency necessitated by increasing pay-rolls and population and a lack of cash—the nearest imperial mint was at Lugdunum in southern Gaul.

It is to be hoped that a promised second report will not be long in appearing, for the coins already in the collection of the Castle Museum, Colchester, deserve careful study and publication, and the excellent plates in this report should be greatly increased. Within a predictable period it should be possible to place typologically any coin in the pre-Roman series, a goal approached by Mr. Allen in his paper “The Belgic Dynasties of Britain and their Coins” (Archaeologia, vol. xc). The coin illustrated on pl. xvii, no. 3, shows on the obverse a boar which developed from the head on the coin of Evans, pl. xvi, 7, while the horse on the reverse is surely the prototype of the zigzag line which appears on base silver coins of the Durotriges (Evans, pl. M, 13,
some semblance of the boar on the obverse being retained. Further evidence on the prototypes of the 'Chute' coins (*Num. Chron.* Ser. 5, vol. vii) may be found in part of a hoard of staters found at Great Clacton in 1898, and now in the Colchester Museum. There is good evidence to show that the balance of this hoard was in Sir Arthur Evans's collection. It was published by Sir George Hill (*Num. Chron.* Ser. 4, vol. xix) as being of unknown provenance.

Professor Hawkes and his collaborators have made an important contribution not only to British numismatics but also to the first chapter in our history. Happily we are told that this is only a first report. The next instalment will be more than welcome.

H. DE S. S.