MISCELLANEA

"A NEW COIN OF HENRY OF ANJOU"

In the last number of the Journal, I published an article entitled “A New Coin of Henry of Anjou”. Mr. Leopold A. Vidler, of Rye, Sussex, a member of this Society since 1931, has written to me to point out that the coin is not “new” so far as he and his brother Mr. O. C. Vidler of Dorchester, Dorset, are concerned. Indeed it was the latter who was primarily responsible for the coin being discovered and the former for it being “vetted” at the British Museum.

The coin was discovered in the course of building the Dorchester Women’s Institute County Hall, which lies within a few yards of the only surviving piece of the Roman Wall. Mr. O. C. Vidler asked Miss Marsden, who was President of the Women’s Institute in Dorchester (and subsequently Mayor), to have all the coins, &c., found in the excavation preserved; the penny of Henry of Anjou was amongst them. It was sold to the British Museum for the benefit of the Women’s Institute. In addition to being known at the British Museum, the coin, or an impression of it, was seen by Mr. W. J. Andrew, Mr. J. B. Caldecott, and Mr. A. H. Baldwin, the last of whom at least realized its significance.

A cast of the coin is, Mr. Vidler tells me, now in Dorchester Museum.

I hasten to correct any false impressions which my note may have created as regards its “newness” or its “discoverer”, and to pay Mr. Vidler and his brother full credit for the discovery and recognition of the coin. In publishing the coin, which I simply found in the British Museum trays, I had of course no clue to this background.

D. F. A.

A MEDAL OF ANNE BOLEYN

The following note has been sent by Colonel M. H. Grant with reference to the medal of Anne Boleyn reproduced on page 209 of this volume of the Journal:

“Whilst the homely features here depicted can scarcely be those of Henry’s beautiful wife, they may well be those of Anna, daughter to Sir Geoffrey Boleyn, who married Sir Henry Heydon, of Wickham Court (near Hayes and Keston). She was Aunt to the queenly Anna, or Cousin, it is not certain which, but a different lady, and one of note, contemporary with her junior Anna.

“This may be a solution of the interesting medal.”

ANCIENT BRITISH SILVER COIN FOUND IN BERKSHIRE

In June 1948 Mr. W. S. How, of Edinburgh, accidentally found in the chalk on White Horse Hill an uninscribed silver coin of the type Evans, F. 6. The exact spot of the find was the junction of Icknield Way with a cart-track at the south-western corner of Uffington Castle, on the left side of the road facing east. Further details and an
I acquired the following piece a short time ago:

Obv. CLAREWIL • TAVERNER round crossed keys in a beaded circle.

Rev. AC • YKYES OF • DVNKIRK • in a beaded circle, round LOS [sic] TO THE SPANYARD in four lines.

Farthing size. Die axis. ↑ ← [See illustration above.]

No town is named, or date given on this token, and neither the name of the inn nor that of its proprietor is recorded in any work on tokens. Fortunately, the name “Keys of Dunkirk” gives an approximate date for the issue of the piece. Dunkirk, then in the hands of the Spaniards, was taken in 1658 by an Anglo-French army under Turenne, supported by an English naval squadron. The combined armies had, a few days before, defeated the enemy outside the town.

The following story (for the accuracy of which I cannot vouch) is given in M.I.B.H. (i), p. 429. Louis XIV, in allying himself with Cromwell, had agreed to hand over Dunkirk to England, but had given Turenne secret instructions not to do so; Cromwell, getting to know of this, threatened that if the town was not given up to his representative an hour after its surrender, “he would himself demand the keys at the gates of Paris”. His firmness was rewarded and Dunkirk remained English until Charles II, wishing to “appease” France, sold it back to Louis for a large sum of money.

The naming of an inn after the Dunkirk incident is an indication of the popularity of Cromwell’s action; it is interesting to recall his principal reason for acquiring Dunkirk, as it was a matter of great concern to England.

Cromwell, with an acute appreciation of sea-power, knew well that Dunkirk in the hands of Louis XIV would be developed into a great port, threatening English command of the Channel, and acting as a base for a future invasion of England. Moreover, Dunkirk privateers had already become a serious menace to shipping of all nations.

What Cromwell feared came to pass in Charles II’s reign. The return of Dunkirk to France encouraged Louis XIV and Colbert to begin their naval expansion, and during the wars of William III and
Anne, the Dunkirk privateers, led by Jean Bart, Du Casse, and others, inflicted severe losses upon British shipping, causing a diversion of forces, which gave the French fleet under Tourville the advantage of numbers.

He failed to follow up his victory off Beachy Head in 1690, and soon afterwards the French fleets were either destroyed or blockaded in their ports. The privateers, without an adequate backing, could do no more than prolong the war.

I have diverged rather widely from the point, because I wished to show how this little token could be used to illustrate a point of great historical importance to England, namely, the command of the narrow seas. J. D. A. THOMPSON

THE NAMING OF SHIPS AFTER ENGLISH GOLD COINS

Nothing illustrates the popularity of the ship-type in England better than the practice of naming ships after certain gold coins.

It is difficult to say how generally it was adopted, but if we except Henry VII's great ship Sovereign of 1494 (whose name may be taken more as a compliment to the king than as a reference to the coin), four examples can be quoted, all of the Elizabethan period. Some notes on these ships may interest readers.

1. The George Noble. A ship of 120 tons and 10 guns, belonging to the "secondary" or Reserve squadron of London, raised for service against the Armada in 1588. This squadron was commanded by Nicholas Gorges, and remained in the Thames ready for sea, but saw no service. I can find nothing more about this ship.

2. The Golden Noble, of 200 tons, a London vessel, and one of twenty-two merchant-ships taken up for the Queen's service on the outbreak of war with Spain in 1585.

3. The Golden Ryall, of Weymouth, 120 tons, and belonging to Thomas Middleton. This ship fought against the Armada, for her owner claimed money for damage to one of her guns in action.

4. The Angel or Angel of Hampton, of Southampton. The tonnage of this vessel is not stated, but her owner was Richard Goddard, a former mayor of Southampton, and she was commanded by Lawrence Prowse, who became mayor in 1618. The Angel was expended as a fireship against the Armada, off Calais.

The three ships first mentioned were armed merchantmen, equipped partly at the Queen's expense; units of this class formed the bulk of the English fleet. They were of medium tonnage by Elizabethan standards, and were probably all "galleons"—sailing-ships built with a beak head, somewhat on the lines of a galley, in contrast to the older "carrack" or nao (a sixteenth-century Portuguese term meaning "ship") with its overhanging forecastle. The two types can be readily compared by looking at three English coins—the rare pattern Angel of Edward VI in the British Museum (Ruding, pl. VIII, 3), the Mary Ryal, and that of Elizabeth. J. D. A. THOMPSON