REVIEWS


This 25th volume in the SCBI series publishes over 1,100 Anglo-Saxon, Norman, Hiberno-Norse, and related imitative coins, of which all but about thirty are currently in the collection of the National Museum, Helsinki. The Helsinki collection is not quite unknown to British numismatists, for Dr. C. A. Nordman’s Anglo-Saxon coins found in Finland, published in 1921, is based on the Anglo-Saxon material in the National Museum, and the coins of the Lincoln mint in the collection have been published more recently by Mr. Mossop; but the present volume entirely supersedes previous publications and gives a very clear account both of the coins themselves and of the history of the collection. Students of the series will find Mr. Talvio a reliable guide on points of arrangement and attribution and in this respect the present volume is a vast improvement on the successive volumes of the Copenhagen Sylloge, the Sylloge committee’s previous Scandinavian venture.

The Anglo-Saxon coins in the collection begin with a single fragment of a coin of Æthelstan and a single coin of Eadweard the Martyr. There then follow 596 coins of Æthelred II, 298 coins of Cnut, and 13 of Harold I. Harthacnut is a gap and after Harthacnut there are only 17 coins of Eadward the Confessor, 6 of William I, 1 of William II, 2 of Stephen, and 1 coin of the Cross-and-Crosslets type of Henry II. Hiberno-Norse coins number just over 30 and coins under the general heading ‘imitative series’ number some 160. The collection is thus dominated by coins of Æthelred II and Cnut, and as the earliest types of Æthelred II are only scantily represented the importance of the collection for Anglo-Saxon numismatics is for the period from the start of Æthelred II’s Crux type to Cnut’s Short Cross type. The parallel imitative pieces may have a slightly different date-bracket, and their occurrence in a number of Finnish hoards is of potential importance in assigning them dates and place of manufacture (although a disappointingly large proportion of these coins are single finds or belong to the older, unprovenanced holdings of the National Museum).

Specialists in the coinages of Æthelred II and Cnut will note a number of individual coins of interest, and Mr. Talvio draws attention to several by moneyers ‘not in BEH for type’ or ‘not in BEH for mint for reign’ (which by no means implies that the coins are by moneyers otherwise unpublished for the types and mints in question). One curiosity, a coin of Æthelred II’s Crux type clipped down to the inner circles on either side, no. 149 in this volume, is comparable with a clipped-down coin of the same type in the Ashmolean Museum, and as the Finnish coin has a hoard provenance demonstrating that it was clipped down in the eleventh century its existence assuages, without entirely removing, doubts which this reviewer had some years ago about whether the clipping of the Ashmolean coin was done in the Anglo-Saxon period.

Lastly, some accident in printing has deprived Mr. Talvio’s readers of a description of coin no. 13, a coin of Æthelred II’s Second Hand type, and the difficulty of making out from the photograph of the coin on the accompanying plate the identity of its mint and moneyer highlights the one respect in which Sylloge volumes in general fall short of perfection. Volumes like this one for which the plates have been produced from direct photographs of the coins are still definitely inferior as tools of numismatic research to volumes for which the plates have been produced from casts. Let it be hoped that the Sylloge committee is trying as hard as it can to ensure that future Sylloge volumes have plates that can be easily interpreted by their readers.

H. E. P.


Dr. Challis has set himself precisely defined objectives for this study. His aim has been to provide an administrative and institutional history of the English mints in the sixteenth century, showing how coins were produced and in what
quantity, how bullion was obtained for their manufacture, and in what ways they were adulterated and counterfeited. He has admirably succeeded in achieving all these goals. He has deliberately and explicitly refrained from an analysis of the use of money in the Tudor period, recognizing that this would require another book; nevertheless, he does have interesting remarks to make on the subject in passing.

Dr. Challis's first chapter describes the various mints, their officials, and the processes of manufacture. He then proceeds to a chronological account of production, with the emphasis very naturally upon the debasements of the middle of the sixteenth century. The third chapter is perhaps the most important of all. Here Dr. Challis explores the various sources from which the mints obtained bullion; and his close analysis of the problems involved in this is wholly admirable. He is surely right to stress that the central problem for the government lay in securing enough bullion to enable the mints to produce. During the period of the great debasement the Crown had continually both to raise the mint price of silver and to convince suppliers of silver that they would be able to dispose of the debased coin, with which they were paid, at its face value. This uneasy balancing-act could not be maintained indefinitely and the policy of debasement was bound to end when the mints could not obtain more bullion. Dr. Challis describes this whole process and its attendant problems far more clearly and convincingly than anyone before him. He also has a significant and original discussion of bullion-supply under Elizabeth, arguing cogently that the bulk of it was silver from the New World.

The fourth chapter describes the various forms and denominations of the circulating medium. A particularly interesting section discusses some of the local tokens issued to supply the deficiency of coins. Dr. Challis then estimates the volume of coin produced during the century and the size of the circulating medium, which, he calculates, increased by roughly 100 per cent between 1526 and 1603. In his last chapter Dr. Challis discusses the role of government in exploiting the currency for its own use and in trying to prevent others from doing so for private ends. His conclusion, that 'government had failed' to discharge its obligations over the coinage may be unduly harsh. The debasements of mid century were certainly an intolerable fraud. But Edward VI's successors refrained from repeating such expedients—except in Ireland—and for that they deserve more credit than Dr. Challis gives them.

This book inevitably prompts comparison with Professor J. D. Gould's The Great Debasement. No two books by reputable and established scholars, writing on a broadly similar topic, could be more unlike. It is not merely that their calculations and conclusions differ—though they do. The approaches adopted are completely opposite and provide very useful illustrations of different historical methods. Professor Gould was concerned with the effects of debasement upon foreign exchange, domestic prices, overseas trade, and indeed the whole English economy. To investigate these effects he was prepared to indulge in a good deal of statistical extrapolation, all of it fascinating but much of it open to the charge that without a firmer base-line the conclusions were suspect. His book was an adventurous exercise in speculation, as interesting for its experimental methods as for its conclusions. Dr. Challis, by contrast, treads undeviatingly along the sharply defined path which he chose at the start: he uncovers the facts by patient investigation and largely eschews speculation. He shows himself to be well aware of the wider, more controversial, issues, but believes that they cannot be tackled until the questions that he asks here have been settled. Thanks to this book the necessary foundations have now been laid: we must hope that Dr. Challis and others will now move forward to investigate the role of money—and the shortage of money—in Tudor society.

P. H. W.


Whether stimulated by the current political scene, or written out of personal vanity, Samuel Pepys's Diary has become known as a unique record of London life in the middle of the seventeenth century. Following the appearance of the Latham and Matthews transcript of the Diary is the publication of this new book by George Berry on the token-issuing taverns mentioned in it.

In a pleasing format, and with a foreword by Peter Clayton, we are first treated to an explanatory prefacing concerning the need for tokens—ironically, they are not mentioned anywhere in the Diary—and then a potted biography of Pepys, coupled with relevant photographs, including those of the church where he was baptized and the houses in Buckingham Street where he lived. Berry also appends notes on the differences between a
tavern, an alehouse, and an ‘ordinary’ of the day, and the sort of meals that the Diarist liked to eat in them.

The principal part of the book is devoted to describing eighty taverns mentioned in the Diary and their associated token issues. Each entry includes the legend on the token, dates and relevant extracts from the Diary, and additional notes on the tokener and his house. In most instances, an enlarged photograph of the token is also shown, and care has obviously been taken to select tokens fine enough to merit illustration. The inclusion of four street plans, showing the location of some of the inns, is most useful.

It is unfortunate that in this main schedule there are rather more errors than one has a right to expect in such a specialist work. In a dozen instances Berry copies token legends incorrectly rendered by Hodgkin—inaexcusable, particularly as he illustrates eight of them. Four further tokens correctly described in Williamson’s Boyne have had their legends corrupted in this new book, even though three of them also are pictured. Elsewhere, occasional technical mistakes, such as using U’s for V’s, and J’s for I’s when giving token legends should have been corrected at proof stage. Fortunately the illustrations are excellent, although two (the obverse of no. 543, and the reverse of no. 2052) are upside down.

Further comment needs to be made on several points. It is not correct to state that the Ringstead token (p. 51) is ‘unpublished’, when an example was offered on a dealer’s printed list as long ago as 1895, and a complete reading published in the Numismatic Circular in 1947. The section dealing with the Three Tuns in Crutched Friars is woefully inadequate. There is no mention of the halfpenny issued by John Kent (admittedly not known to Hodgkin), or the farthing of Theophilus Pace (BW 813) except in the final stylistic analysis. Pace’s undated halfpenny (p. 58) has not ‘recently come to light’—it too was published in 1947. Roger Nichols (p. 93) also issued a halfpenny; Blagrave (p. 110) issued one token in New Fish Street, not two; Samuel Morehouse’s halfpenny, issued at the Angel on Little Tower Hill and published by Gilbert, is not included; neither is the farthing of Richard Levis (BW 3358) at the Angel near the Wardrobe.

The inclusion of two further tokens is questionable. Nourse’s farthing (p. 33) was not issued at an inn, and Attwood (p. 47) was a painter trading under the sign of the Half Moon, as Rogers indicated. The author ought perhaps to have given his reasons for assuming the tavern in Mark Lane (p. 92) visited by Pepys was the Fox and Goose, when it could have been the Star, at which two tokens were issued; equally, the brewhouse in Old Street (p. 99) could have been the Blazing Star, a token from which house was included in a prominent dealer’s list in 1972. Mention of die varieties is erratic. Those for nos. 228, 2141, and 3527 are included; admittedly the latter only in the analysis, while those for nos. 740 and 811, for instance, are omitted.

On the credit side, however, Berry exposes Hodgkin’s error in perpetuating the Three Golden Lions in Cornhill as an inn (p. 54), while without realizing it he offers the probable wife’s initial, B, for Cradocke’s farthing (p. 94), by quoting from the Fire Decree. Study of the illustration of the token will reveal that there is space for this initial, as Hodgkin intimated, so the sentence ‘His token must have been issued when he was a bachelor’ (p. 95) is to be ignored.

The author concludes by describing the tokens of four coffee-houses, two ‘places of entertainment’, and one hirer of horses, also mentioned in the Diary. Appendices include a list of token issuers mentioned by name by Pepys, and names of the innkeepers at the houses mentioned, together with their length of tenancy. Finally, there is the aforementioned analysis of the tokens, with details of style and die-axis of the relevant specimens in the National and Guildhall Collections.

Despite the inordinate number of errors concerning the tokens, this remains an eminently readable and well-illustrated account of Pepys and his taverns, and the author’s enthusiasm for his subject is obvious. It is worthy of inclusion in the libraries of all with an interest in trade tokens.

P. J. M.