

REVIEWS

Coinage and society in Britain and Gaul: some current problems
(C.B.A. Research Report no.38, 1981). Edited by B.Cunliffe. £9.75.

The ten papers here are based upon their author's contributions at a conference held in October 1978 on the theme of early coinage in Britain and Gaul. This was the last of three conferences on the Iron Age, each designed to examine the most recent British work against its continental background.

Three papers are concerned with the origins and development of coinage in the Celtic world - Daphne Nash on 'Coinage and state development in central Gaul', Simone Scheers on 'The origins and development of coinage in Belgic Gaul' and John Kent on 'The origins of coinage in Britain'. These both summarize and extend the arguments in recent studies published by their respective authors. Two papers are on the use of coinage in the classical world - Keith Rutter on 'Early Greek coinage and the influence of the Athenian state' and Richard Reece on 'Roman monetary impact on the Celtic world - thoughts and problems'. They are included here on the grounds that they complement Derek Allen's paper 'Wealth, money and coinage in a Celtic society' (J.V.S.Megaw ed., *To Illustrate the Monuments Essays on Archaeology presented to Stuart Piggott* (1976) 199ff), but interesting and informative as they are in their own right, they serve much more the fields of classical rather than Celtic numismatics.

The remaining contributions are on the subject of coin finds and their interpretation. Two discuss the theory of the recording of such finds. Warwick Rodwell's paper, 'Lost and found: the archaeology of find-spots of Celtic coins' is of considerable interest in its evaluation of the work of early collectors and antiquarians, and also in its critical discussion of the local recording of finds at the present day. I would personally disagree with his statement that 'It is an observable fact that a disproportionately high number of gold and silver coins are reported to museums ...' (p.49): because of the proportionately higher value of these coins there is a tendency for the finders to conceal their discovery through fear that the state or land-owner may lay claim to them. Two further references to museums (p.50) are particularly serious and merit further discussion within that profession. Rodwell claims, perhaps too sweepingly, that 'there is a massive distrust of museums in all levels of society' with the result that fewer finds are being reported to them. His assertion, however, that 'many finds are not being reported to their nearest museums but are shown at museums many miles from their find-spots' is, sadly, quite true. This is not entirely due to inadequacies of local museums, but to finders (nowadays often 'treasure hunters') realising that the distant museums will be ignorant and often less-caring as to whether the find-spot was either a scheduled ancient monument or known archaeological site, and will not have the personal relationship with the land-owner both to enable him to lay claim to the find or prevent further despoliation of the site. The second paper by Colin Haselgrove and John Collis discusses a new system for recording British Celtic coins. There is no reference to any role to be played by local museums, county archaeologists or county sites and monuments records in documenting local finds and feeding them to this record. But students now

must realise that local county records will in many respects be more accurate, more up-to-date and with better background data to the finds than a nationally based record system.

Three papers are concerned with the interpretation of the distribution of coin finds. Barry Cunliffe discusses 'Money and society in pre-Roman Britain'. The serious weakness here is the ignoring of Christopher Hawkes' *caveat* long ago that Celtic coins from Roman sites must not be used in reference to pre-Conquest conditions. One may criticise too his fig.15: his inclusion here of Winchester as a site with urban status before the Conquest is flatly contradicted by Collis (p.54), while Marlborough is included, I suspect, on the grounds of a single find (the Marlborough bucket). There are no Iron Age coins from Marlborough. A better candidate for a pre-Roman urban centre in this region is Mildenhall, either beneath or in the vicinity of Roman *Cunetio*. Reference to the reviewer's paper in *BNJ* xlvii (1977) would have enabled him to reduce the delimited area of the distribution of Dobunnic coins in his fig.20 by $\frac{1}{2}$. The two final papers by John Collis and Warwick Rodwell usefully continue the discussion of the latter's paper, 'Coinage, oppida and the rise of Belgic power in south-eastern Britain' (1976).

The book concludes with 31 distribution maps attempting 'to represent all major classes and issues as at October 1978'. The incorrect representation of the Upper Thames and the omission of tributaries such as the Kennet (which Cunliffe does include in his fig.15) make the maps less useful to anyone concerned with west and south-west. In conclusion, while it is useful to have a good record of a major conference, the nature of the contributions make it doubtful whether or not the book will have a lasting value to either pre-historians or numismatists.

P.H. Robinson

A Catalogue of British Historical Medals, 1760-1960

Volume I: The Accession of George III to the Death of William IV

By Laurence Brown. Seaby Publications Limited, London, 1980. xxvi + 469 pp. - Illustrations in text. £45.

The medals of this period are now, with Mr. Brown's impressive publication, readily available to the public at large for the first time. Interest in these medals, and in their various aspects - historical, numismatic, artistic - has hitherto been confined to a rather limited circle of collectors and students. The value and charm of the medals as historical documents recalling the enthusiasms and agitations of their time certainly deserve to be more widely known, and it is this historical aspect that will no doubt have the greatest appeal. It has been the author's chief concern, in presenting and annotating his catalogue, to show the medals in this light, and to relate them to their historical background. In planning the book he has of course been fully conscious of the great forerunner, 'Medallic Illustrations', which did a similar task for the medals down to 1760; and indeed he invites the reader to regard the present work as a continuation. This is fair enough, though circumstances have called for a different treatment in some respects. The aims and standards of the earlier work have on the whole been maintained:

in presentation, in ample indexing, and above all in providing abundant information, both in the introductory pages and in the historical notes to the catalogue, which are clearly the product of an impressive degree of research.

The book is naturally a welcome acquisition in numismatic circles. A comprehensive catalogue of these medals has long been a dream of collectors, curators, and students, both for use as a working tool, and as a means of establishing the full extent of the series. For this latter purpose Mr. Brown has carried out the fundamental task, for which there was no substitute, of examining every major collection, public or private, in these islands. It might seem a pity, then, that he has not simply included every medal that he saw, for the result would have been highly interesting. But we must remember that his purpose has been to illustrate our national history through the medals, and only those that had in his opinion a contribution to make have been included. The author's policy in this respect is clearly set out on page xxiii. As a result the catalogue has not the degree of completeness that we may have looked for, but none the less includes the great majority of the better known medals, and represents the mainstream of production.

On the history of the medals themselves, on their production, and on the people who sponsored or made them, our knowledge is pretty incomplete. The author has given this aspect due attention, and has drawn on such recognised sources as exist. A great deal is known, for example, about Boulton's medal making, and something about Thomason's. We know a lot about some of the artists, and nothing about others - in some cases one might think deservedly. The one feature of the book that must be sincerely regretted is the treatment of the medal signatures, for these are really the prime evidence on the artists. Instead of a faithful transcription of the signature, which we should surely expect, we are given a bald statement at each catalogue entry, purporting to be the name of the engraver. The truth is, however, that it is not that simple: we find that cryptic signatures or initials have sometimes been misinterpreted, and some signatures overlooked; while many of the statements for the lesser known medals are misleading, or ill-founded, or wrong. The explanation lies largely in the immature state of the science. In spite of Forrer's admirable pioneering work there still remains a good deal of confusion about the minor artists, their signatures, and the reading of initials; and much of the ground has hardly been touched. Earlier writers have laid traps by false attributions and guesswork, and our author has unfortunately fallen into them. There are subtleties which take some penetration to unravel: for example, it can be shown that the J.Gibson whose name appears on the Roscoe medal (no. 1532) is indeed his protégé, the celebrated sculptor; but the J.Gibson who signs the Samuel Parr medal (no.1161) is a minor Birmingham die-sinker, otherwise almost unknown. The distinction is not at once apparent, but none the less needs to be made. A typical result of earlier confusion is the attribution here of a range of about 28 medals, all dating from 1814 or later, to the artist Hancock. Yet it is now known that Hancock died in 1805, and can have had nothing to do with them. None of them in fact bears the Hancock name, though a few are signed with the letter H and can be given with fair confidence to Halliday. On the other hand, where signatures have simply been overlooked, the author must bear the responsibility himself. For example, the royal goldsmiths, Messrs.Rundell, issued a number of medals in this period: on eight of these the signature of the firm has been duly noticed and recorded; but on five others (nos.805,829, 923,1337, and 1476) it has been overlooked, and no mention made of the Rundell connection. A false impression is thus created of the medallic

output of these important people, and a pitfall provided for future students. The unreliability of the information in these various respects is of course reflected in the Index of makers and artists, where several corrections need to be made. One feels that the author would have served us far better if he had paid more attention to careful transcription, and taken a wariier path through the difficult field of interpretation. These remarks are a necessary warning, for the book is clearly destined for many years to come to be our first source of information on these medals, and readers will naturally rely on it. However, defects in these particular areas do not detract from the author's undoubted success in presenting the medals against their historical background, and we are indebted to him for his achievement.

T.Stainton

Silver Medals, Badges and Trophies from Schools in the British Isles 1550-1850

By M.E.Grimshaw. (Cambridge,1981) Pp.64 incl. pl.iii. Illustrations in text. £3.50.

This is a history of methods of educational awards in English public, grammar, private, and a few charitable and state schools, Scottish types of schools and a few in Ireland. The narrative is interspersed with lengthy documentary passages from mostly unpublished archives of a cross-section of English schools and old histories of some Scottish schools. Specific medals mentioned, whether illustrated or not, are serially numbered throughout the work; besides silver, a few in gold or copper are included. The illustrations are mainly from the author's collection, and the legends are set out with comments. Some medals were circular, some elliptical.

For the diestruck medals, the medallists are named, with their working periods; most were successive chief engravers at the Royal Mint (for long a monopoly producer in precious metals). A medallist notably absent from the range of examples is Thomas Halliday. A medal on p.47 with John Milton's initials and die-dated 1806 is a slight problem as he died in February 1805 (*DNB*).

The other silver awards dealt with were the work of silversmiths: engraved medals, badges, replicas of quill pens, of palettes, and of archery arrows. Besides decoding all the hallmarks, the author has diligently traced, or, where not possible, has suggested, the responsible silversmiths and other craftsmen involved, even inscribers of names of awardees.

Moreover in numerous cases she has traced careers of awardees, teachers, and other persons named on the medals.

Most of the artefacts were gifts to pupils; the badges (for wear on arms or shoulders) and some medals denoted transient status as monitors or as top pupils. An amusing story of a London school which pioneered medal awards (18th c.), for which it drew up elaborate plans of graded intrinsic values, tells how its first two struck medals, in gold, were duly donated to top pupils, but the ensuing specimens (silver) were given to the high master and to officials of the sponsoring livery company. A century passed before pupil-award medals were resumed there, under a fresh endowment.

R.N.P.Hawkins

Viking-age Coinage in the Northern Lands. The Sixth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History

Edited by M.A.S.Blackburn and D.M.Metcalf. (Oxford), BAR International Series 122 (i) and (ii), 1981. 2 vols. (10) + 327 + (1) pp; (4) + pp. 329-568. £22.

These volumes contain the final versions of papers read to a symposium held in Oxford in January 1981, and the editors deserve much credit for assembling the material with such promptness and skill. It is the contributions from the editors, too, which form the meat of the volume for British readers; Mr.Blackburn, as well as contributing a short note of his own on a well-known Aethelred II *Crux/Intermediate Small Cross* die-chain involving both English and imitative Scandinavian dies, joins with Dr.Metcalf in a note on the List hoard (from the island of Sylt in North Frisia) which is so far unique among finds from across the North Sea in containing a substantial parcel of unpecked Aethelred II *Long Cross* pence. He also collaborates with Kenneth Jonsson in a paper on Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman coins in hoards found in the Scandinavian countries proper, Finland, East Germany and Poland, and their list of such hoards, taken together with a similar list by Dr.Bernd Kluge of hoards from Estonia, Latvia and Russia, will now provide British numismatists for the very first time with a key to the 600-odd Northern European hoards relevant to their own studies.

Dr.Metcalf, in his turn, contributes what is in many respects the key paper delivered to the symposium. Ostensibly concerned with statistical analysis of the currency of the Northern countries as shown by the hoard evidence, in reality it grapples with nearly all the issues, statistical and non-statistical alike, raised in other contributions to the symposium, and it is to Dr.Metcalf's paper that the student must look for the hint (pp. 358-62) that some German issues of the late 10th/early 11th century may still be wrongly dated, and for the reminder (pp. 369-71) that statistical anomalies in the pattern of circulation of a particular type of coin - in this instance Frisian coins of the 11th century - may in part be explicable by rather more careful numismatic analysis of the individual hoards on which the statistics are based.

Dr.Stewart's contribution is a characteristically acute observation on the degree of duplication among Aethelred II *Long Cross* coins found in Finland (one large parcel of them brought direct from England was a significant element in Finnish currency for some thirty years thereafter); while Mr. Lyon writes on the metrology of Lincoln coins of that same type, and Professor Dolley sums up the symposium as a whole.

Contributions from scholars resident outside Britain include papers primarily concerned with aspects of their national coinages by Peter Ilisch (Germany), Kirsten Bendixen and Professor Becker (Denmark) and Kolbjørn Skaare (Norway). Bengt Hoven and Professor Noonan write on the circulation of Oriental coins respectively in Scandinavia and in the western USSR; Tuuka Talvio writes on the study of Viking-age numismatics in the countries bordering the Eastern Baltic, and in a separate note corrects an erroneous assumption that coins of Burgred of Mercia have been found in Russia; Dr. Alfred Liebert discusses trade in the Northern countries in the Viking age; and Professor Malmer, who writes both on the problems of editing the *corpus* of Swedish coin hoards and on a group of imitative coins from the Igelösa hoard, shows an interest in both places in counting the varying numbers of peck marks on Anglo-Saxon and related coins found in Scandinavia.

This reviewer's reaction to the last-named topic was sceptical, for there are surely more urgent tasks for numismatists than the counting of peck

marks, but there may yet prove to be merit in Professor Malmer's line of approach; it was she, after all, who constructed almost from thin air a chronology for the proto-pennies of Hedeby which has since been vindicated beyond expectation.

H. E. Pagan

Collectanea Historica. Essays in memory of Stuart Rigold

Edited by Alec Detsicas. Maidstone, Kent Archaeological Society 1981. xxx + (2) + 315 + (1) pp., portrait frontispiece, 64 plates, text ill. £20.

Only one of the thirty-two essays in this volume is on a numismatic topic - a justifiably triumphant note by Dr. Kent on the recent discovery of the very type of George Noble of Henry VIII of which he predicted the existence in our *Journal* almost a generation ago - but the other contributions are on archæological and antiquarian themes as dear to our late President's heart, and the whole makes a handsome tribute to him. There is a full bibliography of his published writings, many of them on numismatic themes, and also an excellent photograph of Stuart, who would have been much pleased by the Kent Archaeological Society's zeal on his behalf - and perhaps just a little put out (had he still been with us) that he would not, as the cause of the volume, be able to do it justice in an all-embracing review touching with equal glee on Pelagianism, graveyard beetles, Bluecoat Boy hospitals, indents of 14th century brasses and all the other *mumpsimus's* (see p.290 for the plural form) that the volume offers.

H. E. Pagan

A Numismatic History of the Birmingham Mint

By James O. Sweeny. The Birmingham Mint Ltd., Birmingham, 1981. xii + 245 pp. £9.75.

Since 1851 the letter H or the name Heaton has been a familiar indication that a coin was struck in Birmingham, but surprisingly little has been written about the firm responsible. This book comprises a catalogue of the coin issues for one-hundred-and-three countries loosely supported by chapters on the history of the firm, mint marks, advertising pieces, minting machinery and blanks and a number of appendices on various topics. The author has restricted himself to currency issues although he has included many tokens on a random basis.

The catalogue, which is undoubtedly the most important part of this work, is based on the collection of coins, dies and printed and manuscript records surviving at Birmingham, the publication of minting figures in the *Annual Report of the Deputy Master of the Royal Mint* (always quoted as 'British Mint Records') and coins appearing in North American, but not apparently British, auction catalogues and dealers' lists. The author makes it difficult for the reader to evaluate his work. He gives no indication of which pieces are preserved in the Birmingham Mint collection, no assessment of the quality of the manuscript sources, and virtually no direct

references to specific documents. His lack of care with references may be seen in respect of Ralph Heaton's paper on 'Birmingham Coinage' which was published in Samuel Timmins *The Birmingham and Midland Hardware District* (Birmingham 1866) and is here never once quoted correctly. The absence of an index reduces its usefulness as a reference work.

The work is heavily dependant on secondary American sources with a corresponding absence of primary British publications. A work of this potential importance ought to have included a bibliography especially of the obscure and scattered local sources and should at least have listed the manuscript material at the Birmingham Mint and elsewhere. The catalogue lists in alphabetical order by the name of the country at the time of issue, though curiously the Lundy Island tokens are not under Great Britain, the restruct thalers appear under Maria Theresa rather than Austria and the numerous Australian and New Zealand tokens appear only in an appendix. Details are given of the date of issue, denomination, mintmark, alloy and mintage together with occasional commentary. The complexity of the numbering system will make it difficult to use as a reference work. Surprisingly the author makes reference only to general works like Yeoman rather than to such specialist works as Peck and Pridmore.

The history of the firm is sketchily treated and there is no hint of the dynamic activity which led to the firm's dominant position in the late nineteenth century. By dealing only with the coinage products the author has not given a true picture of the firm. It would be interesting to know what proportion of the firm's activity was numismatic and what related to other metal and metalwork products. The impression is given that Heaton only became involved with coinage as a result of the machinery which became available at the Soho Mint sale in 1850, but there is evidence of earlier work. The author shows little awareness of the background of coin and medal manufacture in Birmingham, or of the research which is being undertaken in England at the present. There is no mention of R.N.P. Hawkins' fundamental work on the Birmingham diesinkers and he has apparently not seen the series of papers published by the reviewer in the *Spink's Circular* in 1978-79. Many statements are unsupported by references and the opportunity to check information is not given, for example (p.100) did J.R.Gaunt & Sons really use drop stamps to strike British West Africa shillings in 1920?

The chapters on the supply of blanks and the design and manufacture of coining presses and other minting machinery introduce much novel material but are little more than verbatim quotations from mint records. This might have been more usefully added to the entries under individual countries so that the reader could form an overall impression of the firm's involvement with them. The chapter discussing advertisement pieces contains some useful illustrations but fails to understand either the material or cover the subject accurately. The 1851 counter is not illustrated, adv.15 is more likely to be 1850s than pre-1889, adv.35 is late 1960s not shortly after the turn of the century. The 1874 medal with its splendid view of the Icknield Street works, made for the Prince of Wales' visit is neither mentioned nor illustrated. The author fails to realise that advertisement is often a secondary function of the pieces. The dies were used for setting up presses or for experiments, for example those with clad-steel blanks in the late 1960s.

Despite its shortcomings, this work draws attention to the important position which Birmingham holds in the history of coin making and will undoubtedly stimulate further research. The Birmingham Mint Ltd. are to be congratulated on the publication of this account of their products. The photographs are of high quality and they have been well served by their printers.

Antony Gunstone