SQUARE PEGGES AND ROUND ROBINS:
SOME MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NUMISMATIC DISPUTES

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BRITISH Numismatics as a science may fairly be said to have come of age in the mid-eighteenth century with early discussions among antiquarians groping toward solutions to some of the more vexatious questions:

Who struck the ancient British coins dug up throughout southern England and what was the meaning of the brief inscriptions on some of them?

Did the Anglo-Saxons coin any gold?

Where were the coins of Richard I and King John?

How could one differentiate the coins of William I and II; Henry II and III; Edwards I to III; and Henry IV to the early issue of Henry VII?

The debates over these and other problems ranged well into the next century but gradually the path toward historical solutions grew clearer - although not without false turns and dead ends. We shall take a brief look at two of these questions and another that sprang full-blown from a flan split on a single coin and the over-fertile imagination of several mid-century antiquaries.

Numismatic studies in the first quarter of the eighteenth century attempted to sort out some of the earliest English issues, as in the Numismata Anglo-Saxonica et Anglo-Danica illustrata of Sir Andrew Fountaine, printed in the Thesaurus of Dr George Hickes in 1705; and in Notae in Anglo-Saxonum nummos, published anonymously by Edward Thwaites in 1708. A chapter in Ducatus Leodiensis by Ralph Thoresby, first published in 1715, discussed coins in his private collection and was frequently referred to by other writers. With the Historical Account of English Money by Stephen Martin Leake, first published anonymously in 1726, a handbook solely on the coins from the Conquest became available. Although its original eight octavo plates illustrate fewer than seventy coins to the Restoration, Leake’s work lasted through the century - later editions of 1745 and 1793 bringing it up-to-date and including additional plates.

If we entered the eighteenth century with a virtual tabula rasa on specialized British numismatic studies, at least there was a great opportunity for enquiring minds to have at numismatic questions, and each other, in something resembling a scientific examination of the problems. Numismatists tend to be a contentious lot, and the early years were not

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1 Sir Andrew Fountaine (1676–1753) succeeded Isaac Newton as warden of the mint in 1727. He had built up a coin collection in Europe but sold it privately when renovating his property at Narford, Norfolk.

2 Edward Thwaites (1667–1711) described coins from Sir Andrew Fountaine’s collection in a privately-printed work.

3 Ralph Thoresby (1658–1725) inherited the nucleus of his collection from his father who had purchased them from Lord Fairfax’s executors. He lent specimens to Edmund Gibson and Sir Andrew Fountaine for illustrations in the Britannia and Numismata. Thoresby’s collection was sold by Bristow in March 1764.

4 Stephen Martin Leake the elder (1702–1773) was born Stephen Martin and assumed the surname Leake upon adoption as the heir of his uncle, Admiral Sir John Leake.
always filled with a tranquil progression toward the truth. It is fortunate that many of the letters between numismatists have been preserved by John Nichols in *Literary Anecdotes* and *Literary Illustrations of the Eighteenth Century* and these have been drawn on to supplement the pertinent printed numismatic monographs. Actors in the mid-eighteenth century numismatic scene were principally located in or close to London. Those who put their thoughts on paper tended to be clergymen or medical doctors or both, and (the numismatic literary field comprising only two to three score individuals during the entire century) if they did not know each other personally, they at least had friends and acquaintances in common. Here are discussed five principals and three disagreements they shared.

The Actors

Dr Patrick Kennedy (d. 1760)

The first person is the most enigmatic. His birth date is not recorded, at least not in numismatic sources, and even his first name is something of a mystery. A native of Scotland and generally referred to as ‘Dr’ Kennedy because of a medical degree, the *Dictionary of National Biography* reports that, ‘Bibliographers invariably assign him the Christian name of John, but he seems to have borne that of Patrick’. This is supported by a plate of coins labelled: ‘Ex musaeo Nostro D.P. Kenn(ediano)’.

Kennedy resided at Smyrna for some time, where he was an assiduous collector of Greek and Roman coins. He also purchased a selection of Greek regal coins from the celebrated collection of Dr Richard Mead before the latter’s death. At the sale of the Kennedy’s own collection in 1760, Philip Carteret Webb bought for £86.10s. the group of 256 coins of Carausius (nine in silver) and 89 of Allectus that had formed the basis of Kennedy’s studies of these rulers. Kennedy died in the Strand ‘at an advanced age’ in 1760. The majority of his coins were sold privately to Matthew Duane and they reportedly passed into the hands of Dr William Hunter, who augmented the group. Presumably most or all of them may be seen in Glasgow today.

Kennedy’s early interest in the coins of Carausius was apparently well known at least a dozen years before a controversy over one enigmatic piece erupted into print, for in a letter of February 1738/9 from George Ballard, the Oxford antiquary, to Joseph Ames, antiquary and bibliographer, a postscript asks, ‘Pray, when you see Dr Kennedy, present him with my humble service, and tell him that I have lately met with a very peculiar Carausius, such a one as I flatter myself he has not in his Collection, and that it is at his service’.

Dr William Stukeley (1687–1765)

Dr William Stukeley was born near Spalding in Lincolnshire and received his early

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5 *DNB* XXX, 427.
6 (John Kennedy), *A Dissertation upon Oriuna* (London, 1751), fig. 3.
7 Dr Richard Mead (1673–1754) formed one of the earliest extensive coin collections in England. This was catalogued by George North and sold by Langford in February 1755.
8 *DNB* XXX, 427.
9 As recorded by Thomas Hennin, George Ballard (1706–1755) and his sister were collecting coins by their early twenties. Ballard had studied Anglo-Saxon and presumably was interested in the coins of that period, although no collection has been traced.
10 Joseph Ames (1689–1759) is best known as a bibliographer of the history of printing. He published an eight-page index to *Numismata Antiqua*, the 1746 catalogue of the collection of Lord Pembroke. His coin collection was sold by Langford in February 1760.
education at the Free School there. He was admitted a pensioner of Bene’t (Corpus Christi) College, Cambridge, on his sixteenth birthday and his early interests included ‘physick’, that is, natural science – more especially the art of healing. Upon taking an M.B. degree in 1709, Stukeley went to London to study at St Thomas’s under Dr Mead, returned to Lincolnshire to practice for some years, then came back to London in 1717 and settled in Great Ormond Street, Bloomsbury, where he became a fellow of the Royal Society and secretary of the newly-founded Society of Antiquaries. A year after taking the degree of M.D. at Cambridge in 1719, he was admitted a fellow of the (Royal) College of Physicians.\textsuperscript{12}

Stukeley’s most noteworthy archaeological work was accomplished from this time into the mid-1720s, through careful field observations – especially at Avebury and Stonehenge. His early publications were divided between reports and speculations on antiquarian remains and on medical treatises. In 1726 he retired to Grantham, where he married a lady of good family and fortune but soon became greatly afflicted with gout. While in ‘this country retirement he disposed his collection of Greek and Roman coins according to the order of the Scripture History’.\textsuperscript{13} From about 1730 much of his work was influenced by increasingly-eccentric antiquarian and theological theories and ‘his familiar friends used to call him “The Arch-Druid of this Age”’.\textsuperscript{14}

These combined interests in antiquities and religion sometimes showed an exceedingly imaginative bent, such as his peculiar theories that Greek and Roman deities were derived from true biblical personages (e.g. that Adam became Hercules and Cain became Ganymede) and that the actual days of striking Roman coins can be determined from the legends and iconography:

‘(T)he custom and business of the Mintmasters was to stamp the coins, in a certain rotation, every year. So that the same festivals in the year produced the same coin. And similar events in any emperor’s reign were generally commemorated by coins, on the same stated days of the year, when those deities were celebrated, which were supposed to regard the action’.\textsuperscript{15}

‘(T)he coins (of Carausius) with the bust turned to the right, whether radiate, helmeted, laureate, single, bijugate, trijugate, were struck on 1 jan. (in honour of Janus)’.\textsuperscript{15}

Even the year of striking can be exactly determined: the PAX coins of Carausius with plain ‘area’ (his word for the field) and exergue were struck in AD 290, those with letters in the field in 291, with letters in exergue only in 292, with transverse spear in 293, and with letters in both field and exergue in 294. Stukeley does not explain how he arrived at these dates except to note that the year 293 was the quinquennalia of the emperor.\textsuperscript{16}

From about the age of forty, ill-health and the demands of his profession began to turn his thoughts to the Church, with its possibility of greater financial stability and more time for writing. He took ordination in 1729 and was presented to the living of All Saints in Stamford. Here he cured his gout with the newly-invented oleum arthriticum, which ‘not only saved his joints, but, with the addition of a proper regimen, and leaving off the use of fermented liquors [this would not, of course, include sherry], he recovered his health and limbs to a surprising degree, and ever after enjoyed a firm and active state of body, beyond any example in the like circumstances, to a good old age’.\textsuperscript{17}

In 1737 his first wife died and the next year he married a sister of his very close


\textsuperscript{14} Nichols, \textit{Literary Anecdotes}, V, 508.

\textsuperscript{15} William Stukeley \textit{The Medallic History of Marcus Aurelius Valerius Carausius, Emperor in Britain} (London, 1757-9), II, 74.


\textsuperscript{17} Nichols, \textit{Literary Anecdotes}, V, 502-3.
antiquarian friends, Roger and Samuel Gale, and began to spend his winters in London. Over the years, Stukeley had acquired several other provincial preferments but in 1747 the Duke of Montagu persuaded him to vacate them by giving him the rectory of St George’s in Queen Square.

Stukeley spent the last years of his life completing a long and laborious work on ancient British coins, in particular of Cunobeline; and felicitated himself on having from them discovered many remarkable, curious, and new anecdotes, relating to the reign of that and other British kings. It was never published, but the twenty-three plates prepared for it were printed after his death by his executor son-in-law.

Rev. Samuel Pegge, the elder (1704–1796)

Samuel Pegge was not only the longest-lived of the five, but was the most prolific numismatic writer – many of his works being short pieces in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, often under the pseudonyms ‘Paul Gemsege’ (an anagram of his name) or ‘T. Row’ (i.e. the Rector of Whittington, one of his benefices), in addition to various combinations of initials.

Pegge was born at Chesterfield, Derbyshire, where he received his early education. In 1731 he was given the vicarage of Godmersham, Kent, where he spent about twenty years, writing on antiquities and collecting books and coins. In 1751 he was elected a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and in the same year was inducted into the rectory of Whittington, near Chesterfield, which he retained until his death. In 1791, aged 87, he was created DCL by Oxford University and lived for five more years. Pegge’s small collection of coins was sold by Leigh & Sotheby in March 1797.

Although greatly admired by John Nichols (being allowedly an excellent classical scholar) and the subject of an immoderate obituary in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, his fellow antiquarians have been more critical – and Stukeley did not escape either:

‘Mr Pegge is extremely clever, and the learned world are under infinite obligations to him; but he has one fault, which hurts him even as an antiquary, and that is, writing too much, and upon every thing’. (John Charles Brooke, Somerset Herald, in a 1777 letter to the well-known antiquary Richard Gough).

‘(O)It is lamentable to find a writer at the present day perpetuating the gross absurdities of the Pegge and Stukeley school of antiquaries. “There is,” says an author of antiquity, “a secret propensity in the blockheads of one age to admire those of another.” And, expressing disgust with a recent work, *Britannia after the Romans*, by Edward Davies: “This surpasses the wild reveries of the author of the *Medallic History of Carausius*, and the crazy speculations of Pegge!”, (J.Y. Akerman, one of the founders of the London Numismatic Society and the first editor of *The Numismatic Chronicle*).

‘Pegge . . . makes out that TASCIO was the name of the mint master of Cunobeline, and many of his descriptions of the types of the coins and of their probable meaning are supremely ridiculous’. (Sir John Evans).

Rev. George North (1710–1772)

Like Dr Stukeley, George North attended Bene’t College, Cambridge, taking a BA in
Charles Clarke (1718–1780)

In the first edition of the *Dictionary of National Biography* Charles Clarke, ‘antiquary; of Balliol College, Oxford’, received rather short shrift and was reported to have died in 1767. In later editions his entry was expanded somewhat and his death date brought forward by thirteen years. He did not earn a degree at Oxford but did take holy orders. Clarke was elected a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1752, although in light of his poor record as an antiquary, the *Dictionary of National Biography* found this ‘rather surprising (as he was) deficient in archaeological knowledge . . .’.²⁹

When Clarke ‘invited ridicule (by his) idle imaginings’, he threatened to publish a refutation of his critics, especially George North, but fortunately (for him) thought better of it. He did, however, announce the publication of what was to have been his chief work to be entitled, *The Hebrew, Samaritan, Greek, and Roman Medalist*. ‘The work never appeared, possibly from the fact that the author had become convinced of the danger of trifling with numismatics’.³⁰

²⁵ Andrew Coltee Ducarel (1713–85) was Keeper of the Lambeth Library and author of the first major work in English on the Anglo-Gallic series. For letters from and about North see Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, V. 426–69, etc.
²⁷ Edward Hodsol or Hodsoll was a goldsmith in the Strand who sold his collection of English and Anglo-Gallic coins to Samuel Tyssen en bloc.
²⁸ Mead’s collection was sold by Cock in March 1741/2 and West’s by Langford in January 1773.
²⁹ DNB X. 417.
³⁰ DNB X. 417.
Oriuna, England’s Most Mythical Queen

The first of our disagreements has been referred to occasionally by numismatic writers during the past two centuries but the arguments employed during the eighteenth century serve to illustrate some of the difficulties of numismatic investigation at that time.

We could say that it was all Dr Mead’s fault. Finding an unusual coin of Carausius, he sent it off to France as a gift to the Royal Cabinet in Paris – leaving only an engraving for English numismatists to chew over. Although the coin flan was split at one key point, the first engraver ‘tidied up’ this defect in his woodcut and also omitted the faint top stroke to one letter. The result was an apparent reading of ORIVNA instead of FORTVNA on the reverse.

The Oriuna fantasy began quietly enough with the publication in April 1751 of a pamphlet entitled ‘A Dissertation upon Oriuna, said to be Empress, or Queen of England, the supposed Wife of Carausius.’ This Coin of her’s being lately sent to France . . . The work itself is not without controversy – being attributed to Dr Stukeley and to Dr Kennedy in the Dictionary of National Biography. Through internal evidence and placement to ‘Dr K — dy’ in The Gentleman’s Magazine there can be little doubt that the latter was the sole author. Kennedy accepted the Oriuna reading but asserted that it must refer to Carausius’s ‘guardian goddess’, rather than his wife.

The first overt attack, in The Gentleman’s Magazine for July 1751, ridicules Kennedy’s conjectures: ‘(H)is reasons carry no air of probability, and his criticisms fall beside the mark. On the contrary, the triliteral AVG, so common in these coins, and known to stand for AVGSTVS or AVGSTA, which escaped his notice, appears decisive against him, and plainly indicates that ORIVNA AVG . . means the same as ORIVNA AVGSTA, that is, Oriuna the empress, or imperial consort.’

The next year, in his Palaeographia Britannia, No III, Dr Stukeley admitted that he had not seen the actual coin in question but, relying on the available drawing and because none of the usual symbols of Fortune were exhibited, he rejected the possibility that the reverse legend actually was FORTVNA and affirmed that ‘Oriuna’ must have been the wife.

At almost the same time, in an appendix to his Conjectures on a Coin of Richard I, Charles Clarke defiantly jumped into the fray:

32 (John Kennedy), A Dissertation upon Oriuna, said to be Empress, or Queen of England, the supposed wife of Carausius, Monarch and Emperor of Britain, who reigned in the Time of Diocletian the great Persecutor of Christians, whom he was at War with for many Years, until received as Colleague with him in the Roman Empire. Illustrated with the Coin of Oriuna, and several others most remarkable of Carausius, hitherto not made public, this Coin of her’s being lately sent to France to his most Christian Majesty (London, 1751).
33 Gentleman’s Magazine, XXI (1751), 314.
34 Gentleman’s Magazine, XXI (1751), 369.
35 William Stukeley ‘Oriuna, Wife of Carausius’ in Palaeographia Britannia, or Discourses on Antiquities that relate to the History of Britain, No III (1752).
To confute is the immediate duty of every friend to truth, though not always received with that agreeable respect as the grand foundation of all learning should.

The several errors in a pamphlet lately published, with the pompous title of ‘A Dissertation on Oriuna the supposed Wife of Carausius’, has, I humbly presume, given sufficient opportunity for my thus offering these remarks without committing offence to the unknown author, or extending the accustomed bound of civility.

If Conjectures may be allowed in this inquiry, I will venture to offer mine, though not having seen the Coin, I will not be positive; which is, allowing the first letter F to be wanting, either exceeded or otherwise destroyed by envious and subtending times, a misfortune too frequent on these learned Records, (the last letter in the triliteral AVG. is wanting on the Head on the Legenda of this Coin, which must of consequence cause the absence of the first letter on the Reverse [viz.] the F.) why may we not proceed and read the Legenda FORTVNA. AVG. the I in ORIVNA may easily be taken for the T in FORTVNA, only wanting the cross stroke: Thus the whole Legenda is regularly placed, no changing of letter admitted, nor does there appear any of the Dissertator’s hobgobling work.

I must coincide with the Dissertator, that this Medal gives very slight reason, if any, to conclude that the female Person on this Medal is Oriuna the Wife of Carausius.

Four years later, in 1756, Kennedy (again anonymously) followed with Further Observations on Carausius, Emperor of Britain, and Oriuna, Supposed by some to be a real person. With Answers to those trifling Objections made to the former Discourse. Illustrated With Twelve extraordinary Coins of Carausius, Not hitherto published. The plate, headed ‘Numismata selectiora Allecti et Carausi Britanniae Imperatorum, è Musaeo Kenne-diano’, also has a single leaf of ‘Explanatory Notes on the Plate of Allectus, Emperor of Britain, with those of Carausius’. In the Further Observations text, Kennedy attacked all who disagreed with him, especially Stukeley:

The different, idle, simple Criticisms, or ill-founded objections, which have been advanced by some, are in reality scarce worthy of public Notice. As to the Rev. Dr. St... y’s Letter or Dissertation to prove Oriuna to be the Wife of Carausius, I do verily believe he scarce believes it himself, but did in reality only mean it, as a high Puff, to this his Patron’s Present to the Most Chr. King, and that our writer well knew he would readily and ardently swallow such-like or the highest Adulation...

Yet I will venture to assert, that, if our very obliging Author should seriously apprehend he therein in the least affirms Truth. I will freely venture to say, that such who know any thing of these Matters (and who knew him,) none such will believe him. But waving, at present, Integrity, Sincerity, and Knowledge, in these Assertions or Writings, we shall now enter upon his affirming, and learnedly proving, the Head of Oriuna to be that of the Wife of Carausius.

This Coin, he assures you, is an undoubted true one, and yet freely owns he never saw it; which if indeed he ever had, it would probably have been much the same. He farther affirms, that the Drawing thereof made at Paris is a very exact one; yet I who have seen and frequently had and examined this Coin, do affirm it not to be a strict or exact Drawing, it being greatly heightened, and fashioned out to their own Fancies; so making it as much more plain and distinct that it in reality is... Be these Things right or wrong, our learned Doctor takes all for granted and undoubted: most learnedly haranguing us thereon:...

Kennedy illustrated the increasingly infamous ‘Oriuna’ coin as the first figure on the plate. This at last showed the flan crack but, in spite of his claim to have frequently ‘had and examined’ the piece, he did not accept Clarke’s obvious deduction that there should have been an initial letter in the missing area to make the legend balance – and there is no admission that part of the crossbar to the T appears on the actual coin.

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36 Charles Clarke, Some Conjectures Relative to a Very Ancient Piece of Money Lately found at Eltham in Kent, endeavouring to restore it to the Place it seems in the Coin-Collection of English Coins, and to prove it a Coin of Richard the First, King of England of that Name. To which are added Some Remarks on a Dissertation (lately published) on Oriuna the supposed Wife of Carausius, and on the Roman Coins there mentioned (London, 1751), pp. 28, 32–31 (i.e. 33), 34.

37 (John Kennedy), Further Observations on Carausius, Emperor of Britain and Oriuna, Supposed by some to be a real Person. With Answers to those trifling objections made to the former Discourse. Together with some new Thoughts concerning his Successor, Allectus, Emperor also of Britain: And particularly on that Gold Coin of Allectus, sent to France from the same Hand. Illustrated with Twelve extraordinary Coins of Carausius, not hitherto Published (London, 1756), pp. 1–3.
Meanwhile, Dr Stukeley appears not unnaturally to have taken the matter as a personal challenge and began soliciting information on additional coins of Carausius with a view to completing a numismatic and historical study of Carausius that he had drafted some years previously. In this he had relied to a considerable extent upon material and coins sent to him by Maurice Johnson. The two volumes of his History of Carausius were finally published in 1757 and 1759, more than ten years after they had been begun. In the preface, he said he had ‘no . . . need to retract’ anything that he had written previously on the ‘Oriuna’ coin.

From the coins he has seen and a spurious manuscript attributed to Richard of Cirencester, Stukeley derived an imaginative history of Carausius’s life: that he was born at St David’s (Menapia) in Wales, ‘of the old Britsh blood-royal’, had a son named Sylvius, and of course that the ORIVNA AVG ‘medal’ was struck in honour of his wife. Sylvius, who existed only in Stukeley’s vivid imagination, is given life by such entries as:

A.D. 290, march 17. On this day youths solemnly enter’d on man’s estate, and now the emperor’s son Sylvius took the toga virilis; and his father declared him Caesar, he being sixteen years of age. On this great occasion, many coins were struck.

He then lists some of the coins he believes were actually struck on that day.

Stukeley showed great ingenuity in assigning exergue letters to a wide variety of mint towns: Alborough or Isurium (IM) and the Thornborough Mint at Cateric or Cataractonium (C, CXXI) in Yorkshire, St David’s or Menapia in Wales (M, MC, MSP, MSR, MXXI), Richborough or Rutupium (RS, RSR), Salisbury or old Sarum (S, SPC), and Southampton or Clausentium (CLA), in addition to London (ML, MLXXI).

All this mixed-up nonsense only stirred Kennedy to a further splenetic outburst and, as noted in Literary Anecdotes, he abused Stukeley in a six-penny quarto pamphlet entitled: ‘A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Stukeley, on the first Part of his Medallic History of Carausius, Emperor of Britain, his ill-grounded Opinions and most extraordinary Assertions therein contained’. This later was reprinted, with a slightly different title, with his first two papers on the subject, still anonymously, under the general heading: Two Dissertations on the Subject of Carausius . . . (and) A Letter to the Reverend Dr. S-k-y.

Stukeley and Kennedy had not always been at daggers drawn for in a letter addressed ‘To Dr. Patrick Kennedy, at Mr. Watson’s, a China-shop, by Buckingham-street, Strand, London’ and dated Stamford, 15 June 1747, Dr Stukeley writes:

‘Your letter gave me great pleasure, in the hope of a complete account of the Coins of Carausius, from your accurate hand. I have wrote many loose sheets of paper about his History, and flatter myself I could have made an elegant and entertaining account of his seven years reign in Britain. But, having not skill enough to manage the Booksellers, so as to get any reward for one’s labours, I have long left off thoughts of it.’

After publication, Kennedy was not alone in finding Stukeley’s Carausian theories untenable, of course, and in a 1763 letter to John Hutchins, ‘the Historian of Dorset’, the Rev. Charles Godwyn warned:

Maurice Johnson (1688–1755), founder of the ‘Gentlemen’s Society’ at Spalding, had helped to plan a ‘Metellographia Britannica’, dividing ‘all the Legends and accounts of Coins that relate to Britain’ into five areas. This project was never completed. See Nichols, Literary Anecdotes VI, 14, 23, 157 fn.

See Nichols, Literary Anecdotes IX, 409–10 fn.

Stukeley, Medallic History I, 62, 122.

(John Kennedy), A Letter to the Reverend Dr. S-k-y, on the first Part of his Medallic History of Carausius, Emperor of Britain, two ill-grounded Opinions and most extraordinary Assertions therein contained (London, [1752])

Nichols, Literary Anecdotes, IX, 409 fn.
I find you correspond with Dr Stukeley. You must be very cautious there. He is extremely injudicious, and whimsical to the last degree. His 'Carausius' is one of the wildest books that ever were written; and he is going to publish another as wild upon the British Coins. He sometimes tires the patience of the Antiquarian Society with a dissertation, which never fails of exciting laughter.  

If this last statement really reflects what had been happening, one begins to feel sorry for the poor old man.

A 'Coin' of Richard I

In the eighteenth century, as now, many numismatists attempted to form a complete run of coins of the English kings. While the Irish coins of King John could fill in one gap, those of his elder brother remained elusive. Charles Clarke hoped, at least partially, to supply the deficit by offering a rather ordinary base-metal token as one of the 'missing' coins in Some Conjectures Relative to a Very Antient Piece of Money . . . Endeavouring . . . to prove it a Coin of Richard the First . . .  

Although the supposed coin is acephalic and anepigraphic, it does show stars (mullets) and crescents on one side and this was enough for Clarke to identify it because:

'The Horse so frequently stampt on the British Money denotes this nation in great esteem for that generous beast . . . as our country was famous for breeding of Horses . . . The wheel often to be seen under the Horse, declares the making or repairing a Highway. The Pearl [stop?] which frequently is used to adorn their Coin, alludes to the great plenty found in this island.'

According to Clarke, the Saxons, Danes, and Normans coined more silver than brass and 'wisely guarded against the falsifiers of Money, by coining it exceeding thin, and coined no larger Pieces than Pennies, which in their dimension are for the most part near equal to the Groats of our hammered Money.'

Clarke also suggested that some of the pieces he calls 'Pollards, Crocars, and Rosaries' may belong to English Kings, as could 'black Money . . . Coins of base metal, brought hither by the Genoa Gallies'. He assigns some blame for the lack of acceptance of these

43 Nichols, Literary Anecdotes, VI, 240 fn.
44 See n. 36.
45 Clarke, Some Conjectures, pp. 13-14.
46 Clarke, Some Conjectures, pp. 3-4.
47 G. North, Remarks on Some Conjectures, relative to an antient Piece of Money endeavouring to prove it a Coin of Richard, the First King of England of the Name. Shewing the Improbability of the Notion therein advanced: that the Arguments produced in Support of it are inconclusive, or irrelevant to the Point in Question (London, 1752), p. 3.
pieces and for other gaps in the catalogue of English coins to ‘the ungenerous temper of some few . . . stupid possessors’ who ignorantly conceal their coins, ‘either from the vanity of possessing such treasure alone, lucre of gain, or envious mistrust of the labours of others . . .’ One suspects that several collectors had declined to send him their coins.

In 1752, George North, whom John Nichols lauded with: ‘No man could be better qualified for this task (- who was) perfectly acquainted with the records and whole state and history of the English Coinage’, published Remarks on Some Conjectures . . . shewing The Improbability of the Notion therein advanced; that the Arguments produced in Support of it are inconclusive, or irrelative to the Point in question.48

North shreds almost every paragraph of Clarke’s conjectures – turning his statement, ‘that to confute is the immediate Duty of every Friend to Truth’, against him:

‘My Regard to Truth gave me an increasing Concern, as I proceeded in the Perusal of those Conjectures; and the Variety and Number of Errors in them . . . One would imagine the Conjecturer could not be so sensible of the superlative Merit of some studies in the Medallic Science, without submitting his Conjectures and Arguments to their Review and Censure; which had he done, it may be doubted at least, whether he would have had Encouragement to lay them before the Public; and, without consulting some learned Friend, the Temerity in such an Attempt must be acknowledged’.

As for the supposed coin of Richard I:

‘Its Weight is Fifteen Grains and a half. – Another undeniable Proof it is not an antient English Coin; for all our Pennies, from the Norman Conquest, till the 18th Year of King Edward III. weighed 22 Grains and a half Troy Weight . . . It is no Pleasure to be oblig’d to say, that every Paragraph concerning our English Coins has almost as many Mistakes as Sentences . . .’

And on Clarke’s blaming the baseness of the piece on the ‘Treachery of the Mint’: ‘This is a most unjustifiable Reflection, grounded on no Fact; unsupported by any Testimony, from Records, or Historians’.

‘The Conjecturer could not but foresee that some Account would be expected why no Head or Legenda appear on this Piece, as on all other English Coins; the Reason he gives, is, because K. Richard I. did not assume the name of King, directly on the death of his Father Henry II . . . which occasioned a sort of Interregum, till the Coronation of Richard; though all the Time he was abroad, he did use the Seal with the Star and Crescent.

The whole Sentence is a Jumble of Ambiguity, in order to convey a false Notion to the Reader: The last words, particularly, would lead any one to imagine, that Richard was not crown’d, till his Return from the Holy Land, and his Captivity. The facts are quite different from what the Reader was design’d to believe. K. Henry II. died the 6th Day of July 1189. and K. Richard was crowned at Westminster the 3rd of September next following . . . so that the Interval (no Interregnum) was not full Two Months . . .

And it’s worth observing, that in his first Great Seal, and to which our Conjecturer refers for the Crescent and Star on it, he is stiled Ricardus Dei Gratia Rex Anglorum; but this was suppress’d, purely to make way for a false and insufficient Support to his Conjectures.’

The reason for Clarke’s ‘shameful Blunder’ that Saxon pennies were for the most part as broad as hammered groats ‘is pretty easily discovered: Old Speed, in his History of England, gives the Representations of a fine Collection of the Saxon Coins (as they were in the Cotton Library) in Circles exactly equal to our old Groats . . . a cursory View of any of the real Coins could not but have inform’d him quite otherwise’.

The Pollards and Crocards (Crocardi in the Records) of Brass, did indeed pass here for Pence, and afterwards (a little while, till cried down) for Half-pence: Yet these were not English Coins, but brought from abroad per Mercatores Alienigenas (who exported our Sterlings), as the Proclamation for the prohibiting the Currency of them expresses; and therefore are noways concerned in the present Argument’.  

48 See n. 47.
In this matter, for once Dr Stukeley merited some praise from one of our other principals:

'Dr Stukeley's opinion relating to Mr. Clarke's coin, that it is no other than a Counter, is near the matter; but a more particular account of what it is, and which I apprehend is the best that can now be given, will be seen in my Answer; though I was under no obligation to proceed any farther than to shew it was not what that gentleman pretended it was. . .' 49

To sum up:

'(T)he Piece which our Author has produced . . . is, we apprehend, no other than one of those which were denominated Penyard Pence, from their being made or stamp'd at Penyard, a Place near Ross in Herefordshire, where of old were Iron Works . . . About (the time of Henry III) this sort of base Money (if we may be allow'd to call any Piece Money which does not come from the Royal Mint) is supposed to begin to be made there, to be current among the Workmen at the Forges . . .

As to the Gentleman, whose Conjectures are herein opposed, it is imagin'd he will meet with some Obligations of performing his Promise, p. 23, that he shall with Pleasure retract these Conjectures, if any Mark, Device, or Reason, can be produced to the contrary. . . May this be no Discouragement to the Publication of his Majus Opus; in which he has my hearty good Wishes of better Success.'

In spite of, or perhaps because of, these faint 'good wishes' and Clarke's original published invitation to refutations, he was enraged or, as North put it in a letter to Dr Ducarel, dated 22 March 1752 (presumably 1751/2):

'The particulars which you mention . . . concerning Mr Clarke give me some small surprize, but not the least uneasiness, as not being conscious of giving him any just reason of being so prodigiously angry. As I have no personal knowledge of the Gentleman, there can be no room of doubting the truth of my assurance of having no personal resentment against him. My Remarks were designed only against his Conjectures . . . (If my conclusions) are erroneous or improper, I stand willing and ready to receive conviction; but to whatever shall be offered by way of answer, if no better supported than his first action, I will not fail to give a proper and sober reply.

If any abuse has been or shall be offered, I shall take such notice of it as prudence and good manners shall direct. The whole is only a question of curiosity; and every man has an equal liberty to offer his own opinion, or point out the invalidity of the opinion of others. I shall be always willing to retract my own errors, and as equally resolute in defending what cannot be confuted.

Give me leave to expect from your friendship an account of whatever Advertisements or Publications concern me or my Remarks, that silence (through want of information at this distance) may not be interpreted into inability or conviction.' 50

Were There Anglo-Saxon Gold Coins?

The possible existence of genuine Anglo-Saxon gold coins struck in England generated much heat in the mid-eighteenth century and the matter still provoked arguments well into the nineteenth. 51 The dispute had apparently been simmering for some time and was brought to a head by two letters sent to the Antiquarian Society by Samuel Pegge in the summer of 1751. The first discussed the famous 'Wigmund' gold piece in the Pembrochian cabinet, 'proving' it genuine and assigning it to Wulstan, Archbishop of York in the tenth century, with 'Vigmund' as his moneyer, and possibly struck as a medal to commemorate the peace 'between King Edmund and King Anlaf, AD 942. by the Mediation of our Prelate and of Odo Archbishop of Canterbury'. 52

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49 Letter from North to Dr Ducarel, 13 February 1751/2, in Nichols, Literary Anecdotes, V, pp. 701.
50 Nichols, Literary Anecdotes, IX, 615-16.
51 See for example the discussion of a claimed but doubted gold coin of Edward the Confessor in the Numismatic Journal, II (1836-7), 54, 106-7. This famous coin is now accepted as genuine: D.F. Allen, 'Edward the Confessor's gold penny', BJ 25 (1945-8), 259-76.
52 Samuel Pegge, A Series of Dissertations on some Elegant and very Valuable Anglo-Saxon Remains (London, 1755), no. I: 'A brief Dissertation on a most rare Gold Piece in the Pembrochian Cabinet, Part IV Tab. 23, wherein it is proved to be a real Anglo-Saxon, and probably a Medal of Wulstan, Archbishop of York', p. 17.
The second letter also assigned a smaller gold piece to the Northumbrian kingdom in the early tenth century, and mentioning somewhat similar coins in Dr Ducarel's and his own cabinets.\textsuperscript{53}

During the next few months, the question was debated privately in discussions and letters between antiquaries – from George North to Dr Ducarel in October 1751, for example:

'As to your gold coin, I am afraid I shall rob you of some degree of pleasure, in telling you that I cannot by any means imagine it to be Saxon... I very unwillingly differ in opinion from persons for whom I have so great esteem [could this have included Pegge?]; but I cannot do otherwise, when not one argument appears to me to lead me to their notion.

The same objections that lie against yours are equally strong (according to the description you sent me) against the coin of Mr. Symson's. Mr. Pegge's solution of the Monogram is not unexceptionable... All the Saxon coins I ever saw have the king's name round the head; these have not, or we must coin new kings to make out old coins; which looks like serving an hypothesis. I have seen the coin of Wigmund in Lord Pembroke's cabinet. The work, and every circumstance, proclaim it to be a fraud...\textsuperscript{54}

Another of the next month from Francis Wise, the Oxford archaeologist, to Dr Ducarel agreed:

'I advise you not to flatter yourself with being possessed of a gold Saxon coin, for I never yet saw one that I could call such. I have seen several of these small gold pieces you mention; but take them to be all foreign, either Gallic or Gothic, &c. and of an age superior to most of our Saxon kings.

I have studied this point, I believe, as much as any man; and must own that I yet find no reason to think that any of our Saxon Kings struck gold; and think I shall never be convinced of my error, if it is one, till some coin of Offa's in that metal shall be brought to light...

Perhaps you may object to me the gold coin of Wymund, or Wigmund, a Mercian Prince... But you may observe how cautiously and gingerly I handle that point in my book, for I did not care to contradict Lord Pembroke's authority; but will tell you, as a friend, that I do not believe the coin belongs to our Wigmund, nor that it was struck in Britain.\textsuperscript{55}

The next month, on 19 December, James West, then vice president, read before the Society of Antiquaries a letter from George North, entitled 'An Epistolary Dissertation on some supposed Saxon Gold Coins'. This was printed the next year as an appendix to North's \textit{Remarks} against Clarke's 'coin' of Richard I. North's principal arguments against the Saxons having coined gold in England are these:

(1) (T)he Coins of all other Nations in Gold and Silver bear Resemblance to each other (and) the Silver and Copper Saxon Coins all carry the name of the Kings upon them (but this is not) follow'd in the more precious Metal.

(2) The only Piece of Gold we meet with in the Saxon Historians is the \textit{Mancus} (of) Thirty Pence. (Although he cannot find a reference to the ratio of gold to silver in Saxon times, in the reign of Henry I, which began) but 34 Years from the Period of the Saxon Government, (the relationship was 9 to 1 and therefore) the Weight of the \textit{Mancus} must be the 9th Part of the Weight of Thirty Pence Silver; or... 75 Grains...

Dr. Ducarel's (coin) weighs but 19½ Grains; so that it wants Three Grains, at present, of being worth (only) 9 Pence in Silver Coins of that Time.\textsuperscript{56}

Even before North's \textit{Remarks} appeared in print, Clarke struck back by circulating an advertisement:

'Soon to be published. Remarks on an Epistolary Dissertation on some supposed Golden coins, read before the...'

\textsuperscript{53} Pegge, \textit{A Series of Dissertations, III. 'A Gold Coin of Mr Simpson's of Lincoln'}.

\textsuperscript{54} Nichols, \textit{Literary Anecdotes}, V, 442-4.

\textsuperscript{55} Francis Wise, \textit{Nummorum antiquorum Scriinis Bod-}

\textsuperscript{56} North, \textit{Remarks on Some Conjectures}, pp. 39-42.
SQUARE PEGGES AND ROUND ROBINS

Although he should have expected a counterattack and denied that he was upset, North appeared to have been somewhat taken aback by the tone of Clarke’s notice, as he wrote to Dr Ducarel:

‘Mr. Clarke’s advertisement has been sent me, by which I find he wants to spit some venom at me, and is industriously particular in denoting to the world who it is directed against. I heartily laugh at such petulant anger, merely because his errors have been pointed out. If he proves any error upon me I will set him a good example by publicly retracting; but he shall be convinced I do not want spirit to defend what is right. I doubt but you have heard, what he informed Mr. Sandby my publishers, that he has complained of me to Mr. Folkes and several of the Members; which I look on as a childish endeavour to bring the affair coram non Judice, as the Conjectures and my Remarks on them, were wrote, and the latter in the press, before he was admitted or chose a Member of the Society.

He says my Remarks have been attended with very bad consequences to his reputation and character; if this be really fact, it is through is own inaccuracy, and not any malevolence in me, who desire to injure no man living . . .

Pray read over attentively, and with the severity of a friend, my letter on the supposed gold Saxon Coins, and make me sensible of what errors you find in it, which I shall acknowledge as a favour’. 58

Knowing that Francis Wise agreed with his doubts about the existence of genuine Anglo-Saxon gold coins, North evidently also complained to him about Clarke’s proposed rebuttal and received back a letter saying in part:

‘I am only concerned that such a trifling performance should move your indignation. So much self-sufficiency I scarce ever saw in any author, nor so much of that which generally accompanies self-sufficiency. I had scarce patience to read the Pamphlet; which yet I find you have considered with attention’. 59

Clarke must have had second thoughts about vindicating his honour in the thorny thickets of numismatics and he was not heard from again on the matter.

Although history has proved him wrong, North cautiously, or stubbornly, refused to accept that the Anglo-Saxons coined gold. We may assume that he continued to feel badly about condemning his friend’s piece because two years later, in 1753, he wrote to Dr Ducarel:

‘As to Mr. Pegge’s notion of your coin, I cannot see any shadow of argument to be of his opinion. I may possibly give my sentiments more fully to the Society, if there be any room allowed from the reading of any thing relating to Antiquity during these squabbles for power and rule.’ 60

A few months later Pegge also wrote to Dr Ducarel on the subject:

‘Having lately resumed the study of the Anglo-Saxon money affairs . . . I have inspected your Gold penny amongst the rest (and) take the head to be that of Sihtric, the Danish King of Northumberland, about whose time I am of opinion the Saxons coined some little gold’. 61

Pegge’s ‘resumed study’ did cause him to change his mind slightly about one of the gold pieces and in 1755 he put his ‘Second Thoughts of Lord Pembroke’s Coin’ on paper, published with the first two in 1756. The only significant change, however, was to re-assign

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57 Nichols, Literary Anecdotes, V, 452-3.
58 Nichols, Literary Anecdotes, V, 702n.
59 Nichols, Literary Anecdotes, V, 463n.
60 Nichols, Literary Anecdotes, V, 452n.
61 Nichols, Illustrations, III, 685-6.
it to Wigmund, Archbishop of York in the mid-ninth century, where it remains to this day.

Pegge’s *Series of Dissertations* begins with a preface, ‘Wherein the Question, Whether the Saxons coined any Gold or not, is candidly debated with Mr. North’:

‘What reception (North’s) Dissertation met with from the Gentlemen of the Society I cannot tell, but I am persuaded that upon a mature Discussion of the Reasons there offered, others will incline to believe that the Gold pennies in Question may possibly be Saxon still’.62

Pegge points out that the gold and silver coins need not resemble each other, witness ‘Our first English Gold Coins (which) differed vastly in their Type from the Silver ones of the Time . . .’, and that the absence of the ruler’s name also was not insurmountable ‘if the Person to whom a Piece belonged was denoted by any other Method equally certain’, i.e. a mintmaster’s name would be as well known locally as that of his master.

Pegge’s conclusion might almost have been written today:

‘I will not pretend to say, nor even to hope, that the Matters contained in these Dissertations, are in every Part so firmly established, as to satisfy all Readers . . . Gentlemen, I am sensible, will judge differently . . . But so far, however, I think, I may venture to assert, to wit, That enough is here said in the two Dissertations on the Gold Coins, as likewise in this Preface, to cause Gentlemen to be alert, and to prevent them, when they are making their Collections, from rejecting a Piece merely from the Singularity of the Type, or because it does not exactly quadrature with the present received Notion of Things . . .’

A ripost to this by North has not been traced but apparently Clarke, whose own numismatic theories had been so savaged, decided he might do better by ‘borrowing’ from others – and who better to steal from than his old antagonist? From a letter to Dr Ducarel in 1757, North complains of Clarke:

‘surreptitiously getting from Miss Folkes’s a copy of my account of English Coins from our old english Historians, and the Records, and then quoting whole sentences of it *totidem verbis* at the Antiquarian Society as his own . . . It is not to satisfy you, who need it not; but that you may do me justice with others, that I most solemnly aver, that he never was directly or indirectly, either more or less concerned in it; that I never asked his opinion in one single point, as knowing him quite incapable and ignorant of any historical knowledge of ancient coins; and that what little he know of English ones was by rote . . .’

Results

Was anything really solved? Certainly the question of whether or not the Anglo-Saxons coined gold in England remained open – nor was the, then, difficult concept of a *nom immobilisé* during the reigns of Richard I and John well understood. Oriuna, of course, really was a non-starter based solely on a faulty engraving and lively imaginations.

Nevertheless, there were some positive results from all of this. In the mid-eighteenth century antiquaries began publishing studies, both long and short, on individual numismatic questions. Some appeared in *Archaeologia* and the pages of *The Gentleman’s Magazine*. Others, as we have seen, were offered for public sale, generally in editions of up to about 200 copies – and these often generated riposts.

This suggests that numismatics was beginning to separate itself from being subsumed under archaeology – as only one of many branches that an antiquarian should pursue. Although it took another seventy-five or eighty years from the time of our disputes before the Numismatic Society of London and its concurrent publications provided a specific forum solely for numismatic studies in England, such personalities as John (or Patrick) Kennedy, William Stukeley, Samuel Pegge, George North, and even Charles Clarke can be thanked for their early contributions to the process.

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62 Pegge, *A Series of Dissertations*, II.
63 Pegge, *A Series of Dissertations*, X-XI.