

REVIEWS

Studies in early medieval coinage. Volume 1. Two decades of discovery, edited by T. Abramson (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2008), (8) + 204 pp.

THIS useful volume commences with the texts of six of the papers delivered at the International Sceatta Symposium held at Cambridge on 8 April 2006, together with the text of the closing remarks made on that occasion by Mark Blackburn. To these the editor has added five further papers on sceattas and related topics by other scholars; a reliable illustrated listing of the so-called “Beowulf” collection of sceattas put together between 1994 and 2006, mainly by purchases from British dealers, and offered for sale by CNG in May 2007 (pp. 125–53); and an analysis, fully illustrated, of the 527 sceattas offered in lists issued by the late Patrick Finn’s business between 1994 and 2001 (pp. 155–96).

Each of these separate elements is rewarding, and it is appropriate for a reviewer to commence by applauding the zeal and energy with which Tony Abramson has assembled the material and by welcoming the fact that the volume has found a publisher who will be marketing it not just to numismatists.

Over the thirty-two years since the publication of the late Stuart Rigold’s seminal classification of the sceatta coinage into primary, intermediate and secondary phases, subdivided into meaningful series denominated by letter, the number of surviving examples of the sceatta coinage available for study has been multiplied beyond recognition by discoveries made by detectorists. It might be supposed that this would have solved most of the problems confronted either by Rigold, or by the contributors to the 1983 Oxford symposium on *Sceattas in England and on the Continent*, or by Michael Metcalf in his three volumes on the sceatta and thrymsa coinages published by the Royal Numismatic Society in 1993–94; but in reality, as Metcalf ruefully records in his characteristically incisive essay on ‘Sceattas: twenty one years of progress’ with which the present volume commences (pp. 7–15), ‘even for the major series . . . the more we learn, or at any rate the more I learn, the less secure I feel’.

Blackburn, in making similar points later on in the volume (‘The 2006 Symposium and beyond’, pp. 69–72), expresses his surprise that ‘with twice or three times the number of coins [than were known in 1983] . . . we would be holding a symposium today still discussing basic attributions of types and mint locations for series such as C and G, or B and J’, and here he rightly contrasts the sceatta coinage, where the torrent of new discoveries has as yet failed to resolve many important issues in relation to the coinage’s structure and chronology, with the substantial penny coinage struck by Offa of Mercia’s immediate successors in the early ninth century, where a comparable increase in the number of recorded specimens has simply reinforced the picture of

that coinage set out forty-five years ago by Blunt, Lyon and Stewart.

What Metcalf and Blackburn both make clear is that there are no short cuts to an understanding of the sceatta coinage, and that future progress in its interpretation must continue to rest on such basic tools of numismatic methodology as die-study and the cumulative evidence of single finds.

In that context, quite the most stimulating paper in the volume is that by Claus Feveile, ‘Series X and coin circulation in Ribe’ (pp. 53–67). In this Feveile not merely presents substantial new find evidence in support of Metcalf’s earlier hypothesis that the trading settlement of Ribe in Denmark may have been a mint for sceattas of Series X, ‘Wodan/Monster’, but also demonstrates from stratigraphic evidence that there is a strong probability that sceattas of Series X continued to circulate as currency there down to the end of the eighth century, long after sceattas are supposed to have gone out of use on the continent of Europe. In a similar but more expected vein, Series D, ‘Frisian Runic’, is unpicked into its component elements by Wybrand op den Velde, ‘The Sceattas of Series D’ (pp. 77–90), who uses die-study, hoard evidence and the evidence of single finds to identify the products of two or more primary minting organizations, probably in present-day Friesland, as well as related issues, chiefly imitative, some of which seem to have been struck in Friesland and others in England.

Most of the rest of the papers deal with the various purely English sceatta series. Series Q, a rare grouping shown to be of East Anglian origin by a scatter of single finds, is the principal subject matter of John Newman’s paper, ‘Sceattas in East Anglia: an archaeological perspective’ (pp. 17–21), who repeats his own previous suggestion that its mint might have been Ely. Sceattas of several series found on a site in north-west Essex are put on record by Mike Bonser and Tony Carter, ‘Sceattas from a site in Essex’ (pp. 91–5), and a more extensive paper by Tony Abramson himself, ‘Some new types’ (pp. 31–44), publishes an interesting range of newly discovered specimens of many sceatta series, of which a good proportion are from known find spots, and nearly all offer typological novelties. Typology and iconography are central themes for Anna Gannon, ‘Series K: eclecticism and entente cordiale’ (pp. 45–52), in which she teases out the iconography of coins of Series K, type 33, and of coins of the related type 32a, although her tentative suggestion that ‘the coins [of types 33 and 32a], while basically adopting a common iconography across regional borders for commercial or other reasons, built on metaphors and carried ideas forward by means of added symbols to claim back some permissible particularism’ seems to this reviewer to import too overt an intellectualism into the process of coin design in eighth-century England.

Ian Wood's paper, 'Thrymsas, sceattas, and the cult of the cross' (pp. 23–30), wisely rows back from some scholars' more extravagant claims about the symbolism of crosses in Kent and Northumbria in the sixth and seventh centuries, but recognizes the interest of the presence of images of a cross in prominent positions on the well-known Liudhard medalet and on the gold shillings attributable to King Eadbald of Kent. He also interprets the figure holding a cross in either hand as a type on Northumbrian coins in the joint names of King Eadberht and Archbishop Ecgberht as an evocation of Archbishop Ecgberht's 'energetic promotion of his authority', and this is surely correct.

The topic of Philip Shaw's paper, 'Orthographic standardization and seventh- and eighth-century coin inscriptions' (pp. 97–112), may seem more abstruse, but in the course of it Shaw adduces convincing arguments in support of the case that the legend **AUDVARLDI** (or, as he suggests, **AVDVABLDI**) on the obverse of the coins which numismatists have attributed to King Eadbald of Kent is indeed intended as a transliteration of Eadbald's name. He also grapples manfully with the possible significance of the variant name forms, **EADBERHTVS** and **EOTBERHTVS**, found on coins of King Eadberht of Northumbria, although the issues here are on any view complex.

The remaining paper that calls for comment is that by Richard Hodges, 'Fifty years after Dunning: reflections on emporia, their origin and development' (pp. 113–8). Here Hodges takes as his starting point the late Gerald Dunning's essay on trade relations between England and the European continent in the eighth century, published in 1956 and based on the evidence provided by imported pottery, principally at the then newly excavated Hamwic site. Half a century later there is good archaeological evidence for large Anglo-Saxon trading settlements not just at Hamwic but also at Ipswich and London, already laid out by the end of the seventh century with 'gridded streets composed of compacted gravel'. Hodges sees the purpose of such places as an ultimately unsuccessful attempt by royal authority to exert monopolistic control over the import/export trade, and points to a common decline in their prosperity after c.820, evidenced by the diminishing quantity of later ninth century silver coins discovered at each of these settlements.

Although Hodges is certainly right in his contention that the quantity of coins from these sites tails off during the ninth century, some allowance must be made for the fact that the monetary economy of southern England appears to have been much more efficiently managed between the beginning of the ninth century and the late 860s than it had been in the eighth century. In such a scenario there would, in the present reviewer's opinion, have been a greater incentive for traders to guard their purses carefully and exchange coins that had been demonetized, or which were unpopular in commerce, with bright new pennies of the current issue, with a consequent fall in the number of coins lost or casually discarded; so the pace of the decline of Hodges's emporia is not simply to be measured by mere arithmetical calculation of the number of ninth century coins from these sites, however correct his general thesis may be.

HUGH PAGAN

Trade, Money and Power in Medieval England, by P. Nightingale (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007), 352 pp.

IN their distinctive (if dull) blue covers, the volumes of the Variorum Collected Studies series have long offered an invaluable resource to historians, particularly of the core areas of the series – Byzantine, medieval and early modern history. Their purpose remains what it has always been: the themed re-publication of papers by leading scholars, pulling together apposite material from a wide range of journals, festschriften, conference proceedings and the like into a compact and accessible form. Inside their covers, they retain the font style and, much more usefully in bibliographical terms, the pagination of the original publication, making citation of original and reprinted versions complementary and straightforward for those using them.

It could be argued that this is a particularly valuable resource for numismatics, since private and specialist numismatic libraries would be unlikely to be able to subscribe to the range of journals that is standard for a mainstream academic library. The collections of papers relating to numismatics and monetary history in the Variorum series do therefore form a very useful, if relatively modest, subgroup within it, featuring the collected articles of Grierson, Lowick, Morrison, Lopez, Bisson and Miskimin, among others. However, it would appear – and this is a shame – that Pamela Nightingale's new collection is the first to be devoted predominantly to the monetary history of medieval or early modern England, with John Munro's *Bullion Flows and Monetary Policies in England and the Low Countries 1350–1500* (Aldershot, 1992) the only partial rival. Collections of the work of senior figures such as Nicholas Mayhew and Christopher Challis, for example, would be extremely welcome additions.

Nightingale's volume publishes seventeen papers, ranging in date from 1982 in the *Numismatic Chronicle* to 2004 in the *Economic History Review*. Meanwhile, in 1995 she had also published her major monograph *A Medieval Mercantile Community: the Grocers' Company and the Politics and Trade of London* (Newhaven and London, 1995), a book described by Peter Spufford as really being 'about trade and about the place of London in the internal and overseas trade of medieval England. As such it is a major contribution to economic history'. Many of her articles reflect this same concern and anticipate, introduce and support the book.

The articles are presented in the volume in rough chronological order, as determined by their subject matter. However, they can also be broken down into four main threads, although all are closely linked and mutually illuminating. Readers of this *Journal* will be most immediately drawn to her specific work on the role on coinage provision (broadly defined), mostly produced relatively early in her career in the 1980s: her study of English weight standards and the coinage in the eleventh century, published in two parts (II and III in the collection); a paper placing this work in a wider European context in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (IV); a paper on London moneyers and mint organisation (V) and one on more general English mint and monetary policy (VII) in the same two centuries. Three of these appeared in the *Numismatic Chronicle* and the last in the Oxford Symposium on *Later Medieval*

Mints: Organization, Administration and Techniques (Oxford, 1988) and might therefore be relatively familiar. She has taken advantage of the re-publication to add addenda sections to some of these early pieces, and also her most recent and very welcome thoughts on the issue of weight standards will have been made available to readers of this *Journal* by the time this review appears – perhaps a fortunate by-product of the production of the collection?¹

The other aspects of her work might be less familiar to numismatists, but probably should not be. The second *tranche* of her endeavours, so to speak, focuses on the position of London as capital city and commercial centre. London's international connections are brought out, through examinations of the fundamental impact of the eleventh-century Danish conquest on London's position (VI) and the wide-ranging role of London's merchant community (VIII), especially the pepperers' guild, penetrating into the Mediterranean region during the twelfth century. This links into her work on the Grocers' Company (into which the pepperers' guild would evolve). For the later period, two papers focus on London in the fourteenth century: the first is a study of the relations between London and Norwich that examines regional integration into the national economy in the early fourteenth century (X) and the second is an examination of the constitutional and social struggles within London for control of the city (XIV). Another piece, probably the most important of the London-centred papers, is her highly-regarded and essential survey on the place of the city's growth in the overall medieval English economy (XIII). The author's own introduction concludes with the emphatic statement that by 1500 '[London] now held the keys to the trade, wealth, and power of the kingdom'.

Two papers concentrate on specific social groups in England as a whole, emphasising the need for an integrated view of the medieval English commercial economy which does not focus too exclusively on the purely mercantile classes: the economic importance of the parochial clergy as investors and creditors in the fourteenth century (XI) and the commercial interests of the knightly class (XII).

Throughout Nightingale's work, she has always been acutely alive to the importance of the two phenomena that fundamentally affected the medieval money supply: the availability of bullion to fuel the coinage and the accessibility of credit to supplement it. She has also been aware of the role of the political and demographic as other crucial elements. A group of papers address these issues broadly, with one standing as an introduction to the volume as a whole (I) by considering money's role in the rise of the European market economy. Another paper reviews the distribution of wealth through an analysis of the lay subsidies to the crown in the decades around 1300 (IX). The final three papers in the collection all address the themes of money supply and credit and their impact on the economic well-being of England (XV, XVI, XVII). Anyone interested in the functioning of money in medieval England needs to absorb and digest her work in this area.

BARRIE COOK

REFERENCE

Nightingale, P., 2008. 'English medieval weight standards revisited', *BNJ* 78, 177–93.

Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles, 59: The Norweb Collection, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A., Tokens of the British Isles 1575–1750, Part VII – City of London, by R.H. Thompson and M.J. Dickinson (Spink and Son Ltd., London, 2007), xcvi + 381 pp., 61 pls.

THE late George Boon, reviewing Robert Thompson's first two *Sylloge* volumes devoted to the late Mrs Norweb's incomparable cabinet of seventeenth-century tokens, commented that they 'and the subsequent fascicules to come will be prized by all concerned with seventeenth-century tokens, and they stand comparison for the scholarship of their editor with any other contribution to the *Sylloge*'.¹ That was in 1988. For Part III (published in 1992) Thompson was joined in his editorship of the collection by Michael Dickinson and since then, through their collaborative efforts, four further volumes have been published. Each fascicule has borne out Boon's augury to the full; and not least the latest, Part VII, where the editors have overcome the most challenging task they have so far had to face with their scrupulous survey of the tokens of the City of London.

The arrangement of the catalogue follows the abbreviated format established for previous volumes in the series. Weight (in both grams and grains), metal and die-axis are given for each of over 1,400 different issues recorded; references to Williamson and Dickinson are provided where appropriate and a useful concordance with *Sylloge* numbers brings these all together in a separate section; obverse and reverse types are defined by means of a system of numerical references to a classified index; details of provenance are given where these are known; and invaluable personal notes on the token issuers are included where such information can be determined. The epitomized nature of these last annotations belies the extent of the research the editors have undertaken in establishing the identity of the issuers often unknown except by their initials. They pay due tribute to the manuscript material in the Society of Genealogists assembled by the indefatigable Percival Boyd, especially his monumental multi-volume 'Inhabitants of London', but their investigations range remarkably widely over other archival and printed material. The size of the City and its complex maze of 'streets, lanes, alleys, courts, yards, churches, halls, houses &c' presented a particular difficulty but each locality within which tokens were issued is pinpointed by reference to the London Topographical Society's 1992 reprint of Ogilby and Morgan's map of Restoration London (1676) through Peter Jackson's key which is reproduced at the conclusion of the catalogue together with a supporting index of streets and other loci.

A fundamental element of any *Sylloge* volume is, of course, its plates and the sixty-one in the present fascicule are of a high standard although there is a

¹ Nightingale 2008.

¹ Boon 1988, 171.

considerable degree of variability in the brightness and contrast of the illustrations. That said, where there is any real difficulty in interpreting an image it is due to the state of preservation of the specimen rather than to any lack of skill on the part of the photographers.

A feature of some of the Norweb fascicules has been a notable introductory essay by Thompson on a topic relevant to that particular volume. In the past these have covered such subjects as Bristol Farthings (Part II) and Sir William Petty (Part VI). In this instance he examines the rare occurrences of contemporary references to tokens, drawing, *inter alia*, on [Browne] Willis MS 63 in the Ashmolean Museum. Here, in a list of his collection, the antiquary interpolated his belief that Norweb 7770–1 and 7572 were respectively the earliest (1648) and the latest (1672) issues of the series, the latter being referred to as a 'Trader' which may be a very early example of the use of this descriptive word for a tradesman's token. It is not absolutely clear, though, how contemporary the basis for these particular observations was. Although Browne Willis was born in 1682 only a decade after the first proclamation against tokens and so may have had the benefit of relatively close knowledge of the series the manuscript list where his annotations appear was, according to J. G. Milne, not initially drawn up until about 1740.² The insertions may therefore reflect later received opinion. Interestingly, a reference to 'Traders' and their collection, not mentioned by Thompson, occurs in John Hill's *The Adventures of Mr George Edwards, a Creole* published in 1751.³ Thompson concludes his essay with reference to an eighteenth-century catalogue entry for a long lost 1672 pamphlet *The Downfall of Coffee Pence* as an introduction to an intriguing discussion of London coffee house issues and his confirmation that *The Sultaness* token (Norweb 7711) was issued by Thomas Garraway, the famous coffeeman.

This volume is a handsome addition to the *Sylloge* series and will be a critical research tool for all students of seventeenth-century tokens wherever their particular interests may lie. London moneyers, albeit privately, were after all the source of the vast bulk of token production and many clues to the types, design features, dies and punches used for provincial issues are to be found on the tokens put out by tradesmen in the web of streets in the square mile lying west of the Tower.

The issues of Middlesex, metropolitan and 'rural', now await Thompson and Dickinson's critical eye and one has every confidence that in Volume VIII they will make as great a success of this task as they have of the tokens of the City of London.

D.W. DYKES

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[Hill, John], 1751. *The Adventures of Mr George Edwards, a Creole* (London).

² Milne 1949–51, 333–4.

³ [Hill] 1751, 189.

Milne, J.G., 1949–51. 'Seventeenth-Century Tokens: The Browne Willis Cabinet', *BNJ* 26, 333–8.

Ogilby, John, and Morgan, William, 1992. *A new and accurate Map of the City of London [The A to Z of Restoration London, 1676]* (London).

The Social Life of Money in the English Past, by Deborah Valenze (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006), xv + 308 pp, 9 figs.

PROFESSOR Valenze makes it clear at the outset of her book that it is not her intention to provide a systematic account of the history of money during the years of England's 'financial revolution'. She is concerned with money's changing cultural and social impact on people during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries rather than with its material aspect, her perspective being very much at one with other recent revisionist work on money and credit looked at from an anthropological and sociological standpoint.¹ The purpose of her highly original contribution to this new 'history of economic culture' is, she explains, 'to extend our grasp of the subject by presenting a series of interwoven investigations into what might be called the social life of money, its propensity to become involved in relations between people in ways that move beyond what we understand as its purely economic functions' (p. 2). To this end Valenze probes with some degree of subtlety what money meant to contemporaries by means of a cluster of case studies straddling the century or so between the 1640s and the 1770s. Proverbs, allegorical tales and images, poems and plays relating to money come within her purview as do the moral agonising of two seventeenth-century diarists (the puritan London shopkeeper, Nehemiah Wallington, and the Essex clergyman, Ralph Josselin); the writings of the Quaker reformer, John Bellers, and his advocacy of co-operative communities in which no money – the 'Mammon of unrighteousness' – would be needed; and the monetary measurement of people, their 'commodification', in respect of vagrancy, settlement, the apprehension of criminals and wife sale. Each of these essays, based on a wide-ranging familiarity with mainly printed sources, is a fascinating contribution to the exploration of money's social dimension in early modern England. Yet, while Valenze's individual studies are so richly illuminating in their detail and the particular inferences she draws from them are telling, the general theoretical structure she seems to be striving to support is elusive, the inter-relationship between her specific forays, their 'interweaving', is hard to discern, and one searches in vain for an encompassing conclusion.

The author's Introduction, in which she defines the historiographical assumptions underlying her study, is both comprehensive and valuable especially in its critique of the scholarship of the past decade that has inspired her work. But its complex sentence structure and its indulgence in 'sociology speak' – here and in other places in the book – result in a frustrating opacity of expression that is challenging and at times difficult to

¹ *Inter alia*, Muldrew 1998 and 2001, Gaskill 2000, and Finn 2003.

follow. More accessible is the succeeding chapter where she sets out the monetary theory and historical base underlying her narrative but her survey of the currency shortages of the seventeenth century, the token phenomenon – what she later describes as ‘a prime example of autonomous fashioning of money media’ (p. 266) – and the Great Recoinage and its aftermath is so telescoped as to be confusing when it is not commonplace. Monetary historians will have concerns, too, about the accuracy of some of Valenze’s statements and the questionable nature of some of the approaches she takes here and elsewhere in her account. The author of *The Remedy against the Losse of the Subject by Farthing-Tokens* (London, 1644) in his reference to ‘the very Caterpillars of this Kingdome’ was not inveighing against the private token issuers of the Interregnum and Restoration but against the projectors of the early Stuarts’ Royal farthing tokens (p. 37). The stress on the later seventeenth-century tokens as a ‘people’s money’, ascribed to what she vaguely describes as ‘popular initiative’ (pp. 37–8), does not sufficiently recognise their debt to a centralised metropolitan manufacture with sophisticated sales tentacles capitalising on the burgeoning growth of ‘standing’ shops throughout the country. The first guineas were struck in 1663 (not 1662) and they did not bear the ‘jaunty image of a colonial elephant’ as their ‘head’; only on those pieces made from gold supplied by the successive Royal African Companies did a distinguishing device appear and this was a small elephant (after 1674 an elephant and castle) below the king’s bust (p. 127). It is also over larding the cake to suggest that the tokens of the eighteenth century ‘laid the groundwork for a modern system of state coinage’; it was by no means through ‘the persistent production of “convertible token coins” by private firms’ – in practice often as inconvertible as Tower half-pennies – that the government finally recognised, ‘through such practical success, the benefit of relinquishing an attachment to intrinsic value for all exchange media’ (pp. 266–7).

These may be thought points of detail in the context of Valenze’s broader inquiry but they do imply a somewhat superficial understanding of at least some of her monetary sources. More questionable, though, is the overall theoretical superstructure of her account which this reader at any rate finds strained and puzzlingly detached from her specific case studies. It is primarily for these vignettes, their instructive detail, and the interdisciplinary focus that Valenze brings to bear on them that *The Social Life of Money in the English Past* should not be neglected by monetary historians.

D.W. DYKES

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- Muldrew, C., 1998. *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke).
- Muldrew, C., 2001. “Hard Food for Midas”: Cash and its Social Value in Early Modern England’, *Past & Present*, no. 170 (February 2001), 78–120.
- The Hibernia Coinage of William Wood (1722–1724)*, by Sydney F. Martin. (The Colonial Coin Collectors Club, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2007), 480 pp.
- THIS book consists of four parts: Chapter 1. A Brief History of the Hibernia Coinage of William Wood, pp. 1–4; Chapters 2–4. Production of Hibernia Farthings and Halfpence, including detailed analysis of hundreds of die varieties, charted and illustrated, pp. 15–396; Chapter 5. American Colonial Associations, pp. 397–406; and Appendixes A–E, pp. 407–80.
- The ‘brief history’ in the first chapter is of general interest and makes the point that Wood’s coins were needed to fill an almost complete shortage of small coins in Ireland and at first were welcomed because there were no other coins available. The subsequent attacks on the coins were both political and generally specious. ‘The coppers came to be viewed as an egregious example of how the Irish people were being unjustly exploited by the English’ (p. 4) and claims such as that the coins were of poor quality and severely underweight were manifestly untrue to anyone actually handling them. Similarly, the claim that Wood was making an enormous profit at the expense of the Irish was not only false but, in fact, for a variety of reasons he actually was losing money.
- This leads the author to an astonishing hypothesis – that if Wood could somehow persuade the Crown to redeem the patent (and thereby reimburse him) he could extricate himself from his increasing losses and still come out ahead: ‘I think that once Wood realized the project would be a financial disaster, he surreptitiously encouraged the protestors’ (p. 14). In the event, in August 1725, ‘Wood relinquished the patent to the Crown in return for £24,000 to be paid in eight annual instalments of £3000’ (p. 8).
- Obviously the ‘heart’ of the study is the analysis of hundreds of dies and die pairings in their various states from initial to middle to late strikings. This will be of interest to collectors of die varieties and to dealers seeking to identify their stock. However, I have been advised by one dealer that it took him the better part of an hour to identify one variety on a halfpenny reverse from such details as:

First stop is somewhat low; it is just left of the third denticle left of “H”.

Second stop is low and midway between “A” and “1” (A-1 average).

Third stop is slightly low and a bit closer to “2” (2-effigy average).

Front of head is between “E” and “R”, a little more toward the “E”.

Hand just touches the eighth string (bottom part of string not evident).

Strings are very even and parallel.

On early strikes there is a line (almost like a string) from the angel’s body to the middle of the first string; on later strikes this feature becomes less evident.

“BER” is close; first “2” is high” (*sic*); “17” leans right, the second “1” leans left.

Exergue line: Single heavy line that touches the denticles of the left side but, though coming close, stops short of them on the right side.

The appendices illustrate current copies, counterfeits, counterstamped pieces, copies of contemporary documents and newspaper notices, and even the *c.*1725 musical notation (without words) for ‘Squire Wood’s Lamentation on the Refusal of His Halfpence’ by ‘Ireland’s national bard’ (p. 480).

Of particular interest to this reviewer is Martin’s careful discussion of the silver striking of Wood’s halfpence and farthings. Since the nineteenth century and more especially in recent years, there have been claims that silver striking of several seventeenth-century Irish coppers were meant to circulate as shillings. I have shown elsewhere that they were not. Martin also describes ‘a hoard of 20 to 25 silver farthings’ within a sterling silver tube, ‘with silver halfpennies as caps’, ‘descended through Wood’s family [in] the possession of Albert Baldwin’ in the late 1950s.

Martin is careful not to subscribe to the ‘shillings’ claim (p. 123 and endnote 5, p. 147):

An English shilling was nominally 92.6 grains, while an Irish shilling of account would have been 85.5 grains, since the exchange rate Irish-to-English was 108.33, as previously discussed. Hibernia silver ‘shillings’ weigh about 117.4 grains . . . Thus, the silver ‘shillings’ would actually have $(117.4/85.5 \text{ gr}) = 1.37s.$ worth of silver. However, likely because of their size, the silver halfpence have traditionally been called a ‘shilling’ . . .

In summary: This is a well-researched (apparently the only known major group of coins the author was unable to examine is in the National Museum of Ireland collection in Dublin) and superbly illustrated study of one issue of Irish coins, albeit a controversial one. The brief but cogent summary of the series in Chapter 1, coupled with the bibliography (pp. 481–8), will be of interest to all students of Irish coins; the die details to serious collectors of the series and to dealers interested in identifying coins in stock or on offer. In his introduction, Michael Hodder expresses the hope that Martin’s next project will be a companion volume on Wood’s related *Rosa Americana* series.

H.E. MANVILLE

Good money: Birmingham button makers, the Royal Mint, and the beginnings of modern coinage, 1775 – 1821, by G. Selgin (Oakland, Ca./Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, *c.*2008), xvii + 345 pp.

EVERY now and then a book comes along that forces us to take a long, hard look at a subject that we thought we understood, and makes us see it through fresh eyes. *Good Money* is such a book. Selgin provides a useful summary of his thesis in his ‘Prologue’ (p. 2):

Had it not been for commercial coins [i.e. trade tokens], Great Britain’s Industrial Revolution, instead of accelerating to a gallop as the nineteenth century approached, might

have slowed to a saunter, if not a snail’s pace, for until these coins made their appearance, manufacturers had to struggle to pay their workers, while retailers had to struggle to make change. Technical and administrative changes pioneered by private coiners also proved crucial to the reform and modernization of official coinage arrangements.

This is complicated story to tell, but Selgin does not disappoint, carrying us along at a cracking pace and introducing us to a remarkable cast of characters along the way.¹

In Chapter 1 (‘Britain’s Big Problem’) Selgin sets the scene and describes the dire state of Britain’s copper coinage by the mid-1780s. An inadequate supply of coin and a non-existent distribution system had resulted in a serious shortage of small change which the government refused to address. However private enterprise had stepped in to fill the gap. Particularly prominent in this were the Birmingham button-makers, who had both the skills and the equipment to turn out counterfeit halfpennies in large quantities. Their ‘Brummagem halfpennies’ eventually came to dominate the circulating currency, being widely accepted because they filled a desperate need.

Chapter 2 (‘Druids, Willeys, and Beehives’) tells the story of the first of the trade tokens which eventually came to form such an important part of the circulating copper in the late 1780s and 1790s. The chapter begins with an account of the Anglesey copper mines, and of the rise of Thomas Williams, the Copper King, who issued the first tokens in 1787. Others soon followed suit, but these unofficial coins incurred the disapproval of the greatest of the Birmingham manufacturers, Matthew Boulton, who was firmly in favour of a new large-scale issue of regal copper coins. There is no reason to doubt that he honestly believed, as he frequently stated, that a new coinage would be for the common weal, but one of the important insights Selgin offers is to show how important it was for Boulton’s own business interests that a new major demand for copper be found at this time. Typically, Boulton’s conviction that a copper coinage contract was about to come his way got the better of caution and he invested heavily in the construction of a new mint only to find out that there was to be no new coinage. To keep his mint going, and to try and recoup some of his investment, he took on whatever business he could find and, paradoxically, became one of the major manufacturers of tokens.

Chapter 3 (‘Soho!’) initially backtracks slightly to tell the story of Boulton and the creation of the Soho Manufactory –

Where GENIUS and the Arts Reside
EUROPA’S wonder and BRITANNIA’S pride²

But most of the chapter is devoted to the Soho Mint, whose successive incarnations are described in detail,

¹ Readers may find it useful to know about a chapter that featured in earlier drafts of this book, but had to be omitted from the final publication. ‘A Ramble ‘Round Old Birmingham’ takes readers on a fascinating numismatic tour of Birmingham in 1829 and can be found on Selgin’s website at <http://www.terry.uga.edu/~selgin/documents/Ramble.pdf>.

² James Bisset, *A Poetic Survey round Birmingham* (1800).

and to a fuller account of Boulton's attempts to land the contract to produce a new regal copper coinage. Chapter 4 ('The People's Money') describes the explosion in the issues of trade tokens in the years following 1787. By the mid-1790s these had come to form a substantial proportion of the circulating currency. In another important section, Selgin questions the long-held assumption that the tokens then fell into the same disrepute as the regal coins through a combination of forgery, declining quality and an overabundance of issuers, and provides convincing arguments to show that none of these assumptions actually holds true. As he says, while 'commercial coins' were not perfect, they were much preferable to what had gone before.

Chapter 5 ('The Boulton Copper') begins with the financial crisis of February 1797 and the flurry of government activity it caused. Among other things, this resulted, finally, in a new issue of copper coins – the famous cartwheel pennies and twopences – for which the contract went to Matthew Boulton, who owned 'the only mint capable of coining on the scale the government was contemplating'. A large part of the chapter is then devoted to the story of the cartwheels and includes much of interest on their reception by the public, which suggests that they may have been less universally popular than much numismatic literature has suggested. Selgin also makes clear how misplaced were Boulton's assertions that coins produced on his steam-powered presses were forgery-proof – Birmingham coiners were producing cast copies within weeks, and good quality screw-press copies followed soon after. The chapter continues with a discursus on the business relationship between Boulton and Thomas Williams that shows Boulton is a less than glorious light, and discusses the building of the new, technically improved, second Soho Mint and the 1799 issue of regal half-pennies and farthings. It ends with a consideration of the state of the Royal Mint at the end of the 1790s and its centuries-old resistance to change, and how this finally crumbled in the face of the competition provided by the Soho Mint.

Chapters 6 ('Their Last Bow') and 7 ('Prerogative Regained') describe the final wave of unofficial tokens that began in 1811 in response to the continuing problems with the silver and the copper coinages. Many of these tokens were made in Birmingham by Edward Thomason, himself a former Soho apprentice. With Boulton dead, and his son Matthew Robinson Boulton in charge, Soho itself took no part in the trade this time. Selgin provides a thorough account of how these tokens were eventually suppressed by the government, causing further coin shortages that were not relieved until major new issues of coin were made (silver in 1817 and copper in 1821).

In Chapter 8 ('Steam, Hot Air, and Small Change') Selgin examines how much the Royal Mint learned from 'commercial coiners' such as Matthew Boulton. As he demonstrates, many of the assumptions that have traditionally been made about the superiority of steam-powered coin presses over manually-operated ones are not justified. Firstly, most of the non-Soho trade tokens were struck on manually-operated presses, and this was true not just in the late eighteenth century. There is no firm evidence that any other token-maker was using

steam-powered presses as late as 1812, and it seems likely that Thomason was still relying on manually-operated presses as late as 1836. Secondly, steam-powered presses were much more expensive to operate for short or medium sized production runs than manually-operated ones, and even Soho itself only operated at full capacity for comparatively brief periods of time. In fact the main advantage of steam-powered presses was that they could strike coins faster, even if not, in practice, as fast as Boulton was apt to claim they could. (It is also true, although Selgin seems less convinced of this, that steam-powered presses struck each coin with the same force, meaning the clarity of the design did not vary from coin to coin as could happen with manually-operated presses.)

Much more important to producing and maintaining a high-quality copper coinage that would defeat the counterfeiters were things like well-engraved dies; making dies from better-quality crucible steel which allowed efficient hubbing of working dies from a single master; using a collar when striking to create perfectly round, regular coins; keeping a plentiful supply of coin in circulation; removing old, worn coins from circulation, so they did not present counterfeiters with easy targets to copy; and devising an effective system for distributing coins from the Mint to wherever they were needed. Unfortunately the entrenched interests of the Mint officials and the monopoly rights they held over the production of coins long prevented any such changes being introduced. It was not until the institution itself was forced to change that the problems could be addressed, and it is here, Selgin argues (pp. 300–1), that Matthew Boulton's importance lay:

Although Boulton was far from being uniquely capable either of making counterfeit-resistant coins or of making them cheaply, he, more than any other commercial coin maker, played a crucial role in the modernization of Great Britain's official coinage. He did this not by coming up with a new way of making counterfeit-resistant coins but by successfully defying the "old shop's" monopoly. To be sure, steam presses helped Boulton to achieve this result. Yet they did so not by actually making better or cheaper coins but by appearing to be capable of doing so.

The book ends with three brief sections. In Chapter 9 ('Conclusion') Selgin sets forth his message that the experience of Britain at the end of the eighteenth century shows that privately issued small change might not only actually be beneficial to an economy, as long as it is convertible, but that there might even be some positive advantages from privatising the issuing of coins. This is followed by an 'Epilogue', which covers the sale of the Soho Mint in 1850, the establishment of Heaton's/the Birmingham Mint using the machinery bought at the sale, and the sad story of its collapse in 2003. Finally an Appendix reproduces various useful material on the nineteenth-century silver tokens from Lord Lauderdale's *Further Considerations on the State of the Currency* (1813).

Selgin writes well, with an easily readable style which is enlivened by well-placed touches of humour, although just occasionally some of his colloquial turns of phrase may leave a British reader slightly at a loss. For example, it took a few seconds to work out that

when Boulton's brother-in-law, Luke Robinson, is described as having 'stuck his spoon in the wall' it meant he had died.

Inevitably there are some points where the reader might not wholly agree with what Selgin has to say. For example, one might take issue with the statement that Britain's eighteenth-century trade tokens were 'the world's first successful money for the masses': Roman bronze coins of the fourth century AD or Chinese cash could surely challenge for this title, to name but two possibilities. It was also unfortunate to see the old chestnut repeated that fifteenth-century Birmingham was a 'small village'. It was not. Mediaeval Birmingham was from its beginnings in the twelfth century a market town, and by the fourteenth century it was already vying for second place in Warwickshire behind the then metropolis of Coventry.

Just occasionally, too, Selgin nods. For example, in his 'Prologue' he imagines the reaction of an Anglesey copper miner being paid partly in the new Parys Mines Druid tokens. This miner would certainly be less pleased than Selgin imagines to receive two worn shillings and four half-crown rolls of penny tokens as payment of his 12s. 6d. wages since he is being short-changed by sixpence! Further, on p. 94, Boulton's nemesis, the engraver Droz, appears as John-Pierre Droz: his name is given correctly in the index as Jean-Pierre.

These are mere quibbles, however. This is an excellent book, and anyone interested in the economy or coinage of Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries needs to read it.

DAVID SYMONS

Tokens and Commemorative Medals of Cheshire since 1820, by B. Edge (Crewe & District Coin and Medal Society, 2008), 127 pp.

THIS book is important on two levels. First and self-evidently, for those interested in the numismatics of the pre-1974 county of Cheshire, so that it includes parts of present-day Derbyshire, Greater Manchester, and Merseyside. They have a well-illustrated and documented catalogue for the ten categories listed below, subdivided by place. It originated as *Tokens and Commemorative Medals of Cheshire* by Ken Banham (1920–1998), who took up Brian Edge's challenge at the first Token Congress in Crewe in 1982 that those attending should seek to record paranumismatica county by county. Now Brian Edge himself has incorporated the new material in a revised edition which appropriately recognises his authorship.

Secondly, the whole work is so well-organised that George Martin and other fellow members of CAD-CAMS secured sponsorship from the Heritage Lottery Fund 'Awards for All' for its publication as a glossy hardback volume, copies of which have been presented to all the Cheshire libraries, museums, and to certain educational establishments which include the British Numismatic Society. It therefore constitutes a challenge to numismatists in other localities to do likewise, as well as a model for how they might arrange their material:

1. Public house checks and coffee & cocoa house tokens (P1–121)

2. Transport (T1–118)
3. Religion (R1–35)
4. Education (E1–29)
5. Societies (S1–57)
6. Co-operative Society checks and tokens (C1–109)
7. Advertising tickets and checks (A1–37)
8. Works and factory checks (W1–31)
9. Miscellaneous (M1–39)
10. Commemorative Medals (CM1–165).

This last section provides a very fine display. It would have been nice to refer to a list of blazons of the arms, but their descriptions should be findable elsewhere. The catalogue seems generally accurate, although it is surprising to see Mottram spelled MOTTERHAM on p. 46, and a few other slips which are readily corrected from the illustrations, though one can only wonder about INCUMBANT on medal CM8. One misses a bibliography to elucidate that 'RNP Hawkins in 1975' is his *Four Studies of British Metallic Tickets*, and that *Boer War Tribute Medals* is by M.G. Hibbard, published in South Africa in 1982. The index is admirably thorough.

R.H. THOMPSON

Jetons, Medalets and Tokens. Volume Four. British Isles from circa 1830, by Michael Mitchiner (London, Hawkins Publications) 2007, 847pp.

THIS latest volume follows on from the previous three and is paginated sequentially (2161–3008). The idiosyncratic style of presentation of the various series continues from the previous volumes, on the one hand including material in minute detail and often unnecessarily duplicated, and on the other briefly passing over or completely omitting other material and references, which will disappoint many specialists. The most up-to-date published material for tokens of this period already occupies several feet of shelf space, but even so many series remain completely unpublished; so what has been achieved in the one and a half inches being reviewed here?

The preface begins with a description of some of the token issuing trades (tea, clothing, public houses, market traders, industrial usage, etc.), then follows a description of the trade in metals, including the evolution of alloys used for tokens. This is followed by a crucial page outlining the aims of the study: 'to look at the manufacturers of die-stamped discs', 'the range of functions serviced by the artefacts', to 'present a cross-section. . . during the general period 1830–1914', and to 'draw together a picture of what was happening in the field of die stamped metal discs embracing a wide range of different functions', with a final aim of helping 'to develop a picture of society, and of how society was evolving, particularly during the Victorian period'. High aims indeed.

The main catalogue with brief notes on the many series is then presented with many thousands of illustrations. Some series, such as To Hannovers and unofficial farthings, are described in detail, with others less well covered, such as advertising tickets, pub checks, mining and factory checks, imitation spade guineas, or market and farm checks. The coverage of

the various series is curiously uneven. On turning the pages, there are many surprises: theatre tickets from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (p. 2475), New South Wales Hole Dollars (p. 2645), and the original dies used to strike replica shillings for the 1985 Paramount film *Lady Jane* (p. 2920). This is a book that needs careful perusal, without which much of interest might be overlooked.

The catalogue ends with a select bibliography, which could have been more select, leaving space for more relevant works on the series described; notable omissions include Edge's *Dictionary of Paranomismatica*,¹ Todd's catalogues for most of the London markets, Rogers² on *Toy coins* and Neilson's work on imitation spade guineas.³ Finally there is a list of suggested valuations for the pieces, along with a Kent Education Committee medal (thrown in on p. 2991) and a very useful index bringing the book to a close. The values quoted are unfamiliar to this reviewer, with many being quite wide of the current mark.

The work appears fragmentary, without a unifying thread, and it is left to the reader to distill his or her own story from the mass of information. Whilst many of the stated higher aims have not been met, this accumulation of information and illustrations is laudable, and publication invaluable. In addition to being of great value to the general student of the series, specialists too should take a close look, as there is material here that is unlikely to be found illustrated anywhere else for some years to come.

GARY ODDIE

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Royal Commemorative Medals 1837–1977. Volume 1, Queen Victoria 1837–1901 excluding the jubilees of 1887 & 1897, by A. Whittlestone, and M. Ewing (Llanfyllin, Galata, 2008), 184 pp.

ANDREW Whittlestone and Michael Ewing have accomplished a truly heroic task in this catalogue of the many patriotic souvenir medals produced in honour of the British Royal Family. In *British Historical Medals (BHM)* Laurence Brown referenced the major pieces and did not try to be exhaustively comprehensive.¹ Christopher Eimer and Daniel Fearon also make scant reference to these ephemera.² Now at last we have

¹ Edge 1991.

² Rogers 1990.

³ Neilson 2003.

¹ *BHM II* 1987 p.xxii. Brown excluded foreign-produced and strictly local issues, advertising pieces and calendars, many pierced medals and those that were intended to be worn.

² Eimer 1987; Fearon 1984.

the long-awaited first volume in the Whittlestone Ewing series *Royal Commemorative Medals*, involving the British Royal Family at home and abroad from the majority and accession of Queen Victoria to Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee in 1977. Although the volumes are numbered chronologically, this first volume is the fifth title in the series to be published. Victoria's Golden Jubilee of 1887 (*RCM* vol. 2) and her Diamond Jubilee of 1897 (*RCM* vol.3) already provided the collector and historian with much information. The lack of this initial volume covering the other events of Victoria's reign was keenly felt by those trying to make sense of the variety of medals produced.

As mass production made striking medals in non-precious metals inexpensive, the medallic souvenir became popular amongst the middle classes, especially in the last years of Victoria's reign. Manufacturers and their local agents, often jewellers, could provide customised reverses to stock Royal designs. The catalogue is still not truly comprehensive as school attendance and prize medals are excluded but it does describe many of the medals produced by municipalities, businesses and commercial advertisers.

The same practical layout as in previous volumes is maintained; the medals are described in chronological order by event and date, sorted by maker, obverse and variant reverses, and again subdivided by size and metal, each with a rarity and price guide. The latter is rapidly becoming out of date but the rarity given is of considerable value. The entries are cross referenced to *BHM*, or to a more specialist reference; for example, WE 424, Birth of Prince Alfred Box (p. 51), refers to an article by David Magnay for varieties,³ and also cross-references another item in the catalogue, WE 589, the box medal for the Children of Queen Victoria. This type of information shows the depth of erudition and passionate interest in the subject, which will be much appreciated by others who share that enthusiasm.

Production has improved with each successive publication in the *RCM* series, both in quality of paper and print. It is most noticeable in the quality of the photographs reproduced. This volume continues the tradition of having the year and event as page header, the names of medallists as page footer. It would be easier to locate events if the page headers were in bold print: the heading for the event is the same font and size as the name of the maker or medallist, which is visually disconcerting. The contents page provides a useful easy index and a timeline. The three indices list makers, designers and die-cutters. Many of these mass-produced medals bear the maker's name so the index is a time-saver when navigating the catalogue. There is also a general index and an index of obverse legends.

The catalogue includes medals celebrating members of the Royal Family other than the queen; for example, in 1843 medals were produced to commemorate the death of the Duke of Sussex (WE 384–5), the birth of Princess Alice (WE 390) and the opening of the Wanstead Orphan Asylum by the King of the Belgians (WE 394). The latter, we are informed, stood in for Prince Albert, who had a cold. Given the involvement of Prince Albert, it seems odd that the medals for the

³ Magnay 2000.

Crystal Palace Great Exhibition of 1851 held in Hyde Park are left out. However, the medals are covered in Les Allen's comprehensive catalogue.⁴ Whittlestone and Ewing include many other Crystal Palace mementoes, but only those with royal connections, e.g. a sample of three designs for the Crystal Palace Sydenham, opened 10 June 1854 (WE 679, 682, 689), or the rare medal for the foiled assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh (WE 1112).

This volume is essential for anyone studying medals of the Victorian era and provides a wealth of information for potential research and further study. Volumes five (George V) and seven (George VI) are in preparation and are keenly awaited to complete this admirable series.

FRANCES SIMMONS

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Designing Change, the Art of Coin Design, edited by K. Clancy, with foreword by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, and contributions from C. Cheesman, K. Clancy, C. Eagleton, C. Frayling, M. Dent, S. Raw and A. Rawsthorn (The Royal Mint, 2008), 112 pp, with colour and monochrome plates throughout.

COIN design is a specialist art form regarded by numismatic outsiders, if they think of it at all, as arcane and somewhat antiquated. The same arguments about the emblematic demonstration of national pride on our money have been reshaped over the years – too modern, too conventional, bound with heritage but needing

contemporary relevance. The introduction of new standard reverses for the small denomination coinage of the United Kingdom after some forty years deserves not only celebration but explanation and documentation of the process of commissioning new designs. This appears to be the rationale behind the publication by the Royal Mint for this book which ties in with the exhibition at the British Museum, *Designing Change: Coins of Elizabeth II* (British Museum, September 2008–February 2009). Coinage is practical but beautiful, mass-produced yet artisanal; these ideas are axiomatic. But these new 2008 coin designs are also deemed exciting and extremely modern in concept, execution and marketing. This last point is the novel message that the Royal Mint, responsible for the whole process of commissioning the new designs, wishes to communicate strongly to the reader both through the essays of the various contributors and the conceptual design of the book. There have been several articles on commissioning medals and medal design but there has not been a book on coin design like this before.¹

Dr Kevin Clancy, head of Historical Services at the Royal Mint but known to BNS members as our current Director, as editor of *Designing Change* has gathered a galaxy of contributors with varying styles – beginning with HRH The Duke of Edinburgh who chaired the Royal Mint Advisory Committee (RMAC) from 1952 to 1999. For non-numismatists, the foreword is a plain man's guide to the obscure business of coin design and the management of the RMAC.

The first essay by Clive Cheesman documents one thousand years of heraldry on British coinage, 'a frank and open relationship'. The text is illustrated with a progression of shield reverses showing how the present use of the personal Royal Coat of Arms fits within the heraldic tradition rather than breaks with it. Coincidentally the text illustrates how coin design follows the fashion of the day, whether it is the introduction of heraldry in response to European custom in the twelfth century, or the echo of medieval heritage in Victoria's Gothic crown. Early twentieth century coinage and the introduction of the decimal currency produced naturalistic emblems, e.g. the wren, thrift, the ten pence lion, in the interval before Matthew Dent's designs returned the coinage to heraldry.

The tortuously slow process of creating the designs for the previous standard reverses is narrated in the section 'Christopher Ironside and the designs for the decimal coinage' by Catherine Eagleton. This chapter provides a partial record of the British Museum exhibition, showing the result of six years' work by Ironside, helped by the odd gin and tonic when half-way through the project he was advised to start again.² Dr Eagleton's contribution has simplicity of presentation which lets the designs speak for themselves while giving the information in pithy captions. It ends with a quote from Ironside who, criticised for being too traditional,

¹ See Leavitt Bourne 1999 and Moss and Anon. 2000.

² *Designing Change: Coins of Elizabeth II* also exhibited the four original plasters for the queen's portrait effigy as well as Ironside's drawings, preparatory and finished, for the decimal currency. The exhibition included the new 2008 coins and their pattern dies. The photographic panels decorating the room were reprised from the book under review.

⁴ Allen 2000.

responded 'I was not designing for myself, but for everyone else.' I am not sure that the eventual winner of the competition for the new coin designs, Matthew (Matt) Dent, was entirely of the same opinion. Matt Dent is a graphic designer who was interested in shapes and puzzles from undergraduate days, playing with forms to see what order might arise, if any. His contemporary conceptual approach to the competition commission was to take the traditional shield and incorporate all the denominations within it. The result created coins that to a numismatist look incomplete, like miss-strikes: off-centre or the wrong flan for the die. Like squaring a circle, it does not work literally but the intellectual concept is that all coinage, no matter how small the denomination, is protected by the shield of state, or in this case the Royal Coat of Arms. We still do not see David Gentleman's oak designs, although they are mentioned on p. 75, where he explains his choice of design. Eschewing heraldry, as 'archaic and no longer relevant', he chose 'something actual, real, living, growing and beautiful: the oak, effectively our national tree.' While it might be argued that the oak is a very English as opposed to British symbol, it was an unfortunate coincidence that the Conservative party chose the oak as their logo at the time of the commission, albeit a squiggled flourish of a tree. Gentleman's designs join an illustrious group of works that ultimately were not used, including those of Eric Gill and Kruger Gray in the twentieth century.³

'Continuity through change' the title of the chapter written by Professor Sir Christopher Frayling, could have been an alternative title for this book.⁴ This chapter documents the contribution of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee to the design process. In response to a public competition, the largest of its kind to date, 526 people submitted 4000 designs.⁵ Frayling's jottings during the meeting of the RMAC on 8 December 2005 show the variety of themes which suggested Britishness in the twenty-first century, from the Queen's Beasts to royal corgis, fish and chips, the London Eye and the Shipping Forecast. Comments about Designer Z's entry (Matthew Dent) show the reaction of the committee to a radical response to the brief which proposed a simple, unified family of designs using a fresh take on heraldry. And yet 'deconstruction had at last reached the coinage, having been a strong theme within fine art for some time'⁶. The clever use of continuous script as illustration by the book designer enables the inclusion of statistics and thoughts which otherwise would have been confined to a footnote or omitted.

³ See pp. 86–7 for Gill's 1924 designs, and p. 43 for Kruger Gray's design for the 1935 crown.

⁴ The phrase was suggested by the Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion. This essay reprises the lecture Professor Frayling gave to the BNS at the Warburg Institute in May 2008 about his time as Chair of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee, 1999–2007.

⁵ See p. 54: 'The Royal Mint invites members of the public to make their mark on history', August 2005. The invitation was simultaneously made to the general public, and to eighteen professional designers, seven members of the Royal Mint engraving team, three heraldic artists and the designers of the coinages of Hungary, Iceland and the Czech Republic.

⁶ See pp. 60–1.

At first, lettering may not seem crucial to coinage design but it is an integral part of the process, just as in book production, and causes headaches to the designer. Stephen Raw is an artist for whom text is both inspiration and integral to art. His demonstration of technical problems associated with the 'visual language of coins' rewards reading and may explain the occasional malaise experienced when handling less than competent examples of numismatic art.

Possibly the most innovative section of the book is 'Receiving change; reaction to the new designs'. Dr Clancy chronicles the extensive Royal Mint public relations campaign and resulting coverage. News was leaked about the removal of Britannia – petitions made, an Early Day motion penned so that the icon might be retained.⁷ The coinage was launched at the Tower of London on 2 April 2008 and made headlines in the national newspapers, on television and radio and in specialist magazines. Opinion at the start was in general favourable with praise for the bold, imaginative concept. The designs provoked questions about Britannia, post-modern art, the lack of numerals and the Union itself. Critical letters were written to the newspapers, to MPs and to the Royal Mint but more numerous still were the hundreds of opinions voiced on various websites and blogs. A few months later, the unintentional irony is that a design intended to be both a playful puzzle and new interpretation of the link between state and coinage now illustrates a fractured economy and a currency battered on foreign exchanges.

The afterword is given by Alice Rawsthorn of the Design Museum. Her conclusion is that the new coinage 'is an inspired design solution. The ancient heraldic symbol is a respectful nod to tradition. Fragmenting it is a gracious acknowledgement of national differences with a fashionable whiff of deconstructivism. And it is all beautifully done.'

Ms Rawsthorn might have been describing this book. The designer had to unify different styles of writing and approaches to the subject of change. The inspiration for the solution is evidently the new coinage designs. The conceit of the puzzle piece reverse is taken up by the book designer so entire pages are given over to a spread of coins. I am reminded of a hoard or a junk box, something to rummage in. For a non-numismatist it may mean something entirely different – the way the design of a coin is partially obscured anyway when it joins the jumble in your purse or pocket, fragmented like the designs on the coins themselves, yet still of the value stated. Words are similarly used by the designer in a breathless way, without punctuation, instead of as footnotes or further comment. They illustrate and expand the narrative, changing colour and style to effect as demonstrated on p. 107 by the

'notesfromthe**blogosphere**//sleeknew**designs**innovative contemporarywith**gravitas**and**history**...'. The words and phrases run thus continuously to the end of the page, fading to grey, unattributed. There are interesting snippets about the workings of the Royal Advisory

⁷ Clancy does not tell us how the news was leaked, but this is a classic marketing ploy to spark interest. Combined with the viral marketing via the internet, this campaign by the Royal Mint was very different to anything that had preceded it.

Committee and gossip comments throughout in the manner of current journalistic reporting, but these are confined to the margins of the main narrative, off-centre. The photography is sumptuous, the layout allowing the super-sized images to sing. The soft-tone colours used on the dust jacket remind me of cup-cake adverts and sugared almonds, or a contemporary decorator's palette, all tasteful pastels and ivory tones. This is not just a coin book. This is a Royal Mint conceptual narrative. It may be seen an *apologia*, a defence and illustration of the current coin designs but it is also an historical and sociological document. *Designing Change* as a chronicle merits a place on the bookshelf of those interested in the process of making coinage and mount-

ing an effective public relations campaign to render the unfashionable art of coin design contemporary.

FRANCES SIMMONS

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