

THE NUMISMATIC SOCIETY OF IRELAND

**Occasional Papers
52 – 58**

**Edited by
Ronan Fitzpatrick**



Dedicated to passed members who have enriched our knowledge through their
commitment to the study of numismatics and their engagement with
The Numismatic Society of Ireland.

Front cover: The pin of the Society. Actual size 15.5mm

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**CENTRAL BANK &
FINANCIAL SERVICES
AUTHORITY OF IRELAND**

EUROSYSTEM

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P R E F A C E

It has been another very pleasing experience to bring together the latest set of writings for these Occasional Papers which include research on Irish coins, banknotes, a political record, an art medal and some market tokens. Each paper is very important and adds new insight to our understanding of Irish numismatics. The papers are fully illustrated, either in support of a thesis or to illustrate new knowledge, all of which enhances the experience for the reader.

Members who are able to attend the Society meetings in Dublin will have already heard presentations based on some of these papers and through this publication they are now brought to our broader and worldwide membership. As always, it is only because members have committed to researching and writing up their findings that it is possible to publish these Occasional Papers. Through this process of recording and publishing research relative to Irish numismatics future members and scholars will also benefit.

As always, engaging with the authors has been very enjoyable and I thank them for sharing their research in the first instance and for making my role easier during the editing process. Thanks are also due to our patron and committee who continue to support us and encourage this publication.

By way of adding further to this knowledge and stimulating further discussion, readers' comments and observations are always welcome

Ronan Fitzpatrick,
Dublin,
Autumn 2014

THE DISCOVERY OF THE CARRICK-ON-SUIR GOLD COIN HOARD

Michael Kenny and Isabella Mulhall

On 14th January, 2013, one of the most significant hoards of seventeenth-century gold coins ever found in Ireland was unearthed on Main Street, Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary (Fig. 1). The hoard of eighty-one gold coins, which was discovered by a team of builders engaged in groundworks in a derelict public house, consists of seventy-seven guineas and four half-guineas, spanning the reigns of Charles II (1660-85), James II (1685-8), William and Mary (1688-94) and William III (1694-1702).

It appears that the coins were concealed in soil under the floor-boards of the premises, although further research is being carried out in this regard. They were spotted by one of the builders in the process of digging a pit to support a structural column, and were reported to have been “in a line together” (approximately 15-20cms in length) in the ground. It is possible that in the past they were wrapped and held together by some material, though if they were this has not survived. According to the finder, the coins were buried at a depth of approximately two feet (c. 60cms) and were located “about a foot and a half” (c. 45cms) from the base of the party wall to the east. Further coins from the hoard were also found in spoil heaps to the rear of the site, a result of being unwittingly transported in a wheelbarrow along with soil excavated from the pit. Following an extensive search of the site, the finders were satisfied that all coins from the hoard had been retrieved and that no further coins remained at the site. The hoard was subsequently deposited for safe-keeping with An Garda Síochána, before later being transferred to the National Museum of Ireland under the terms of the National Monuments Acts (1930 to 2004).

On 23rd January, 2013 a detailed archaeological assessment of the find spot was carried out by staff from the National Museum of Ireland (Isabella Mulhall) and the National Monuments Service, Dept. of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Jean Farrelly). No further coins came to light during this assessment, nor was any evidence uncovered for a wrapping or container for the coins.

This is a highly significant hoard, historically and numismatically. Finds of gold coins in Ireland have been few and far between. There is little or nothing to report for the Tudor period or for the first half century of Stuart rule. The one great gold hoard of the seventeenth century, the exception to the pattern, is the huge Derryville hoard of the early 1650s, which is almost certainly associated with the closing phase of the Great Rebellion (1). The find, from near Portarlinton, included a range of continental gold coins, together with a small number of Irish gold coins known as pistoles. There is documentary evidence to show that the latter were struck at Dublin in 1646 (2). The scale of the hoard and the presence of such a large body of European coins suggest that it was a ‘military’ hoard, intended to pay for the activities of one of the various contending armies traversing the country at this point.

The latest dated coin in the Derryville hoard is 1651. The latest coin in the Carrick-on-Suir hoard is 1701, exactly fifty years later. Quite apart from the time-gap the two finds are very dissimilar in terms of content and make-up. While the Derryville find includes a range of denominations from several countries, in both gold and silver, the Carrick-on-Suir hoard contains only gold coins, all English and the vast majority of them guineas. It spans four reigns, from Charles II to William III and has a date range, from earliest to latest coin – 1664 to 1701 - of almost four decades (Fig. 2). The suggestion must be, therefore, that the material was hoarded methodically as it certainly does not have the appearance of having been hurriedly put together. It may, of course, have

been hurriedly placed in its final resting place. Since it is not known what fate befell the owner or why such a large amount of wealth was not retrieved, the questions surrounding its deposition must remain unanswered. Since the hoard was being accumulated for over two decades before and a further decade after the end of the conflict between James II and William III, it can safely be classified as a 'banking' hoard rather than a 'war' hoard. Beyond that, we can only surmise. Given the geographical location, it is possible that the hoarder was a wealthy merchant engaged in international trade and that the coins represent part of his profits, put aside for an emergency or as an investment. It is interesting to note that, while there are several coins in the hoard for each of the years of James II's reign up to 1688, when hostilities broke out, there is only one solitary piece dated 1689 and no coins at all for the years 1690, 1691, 1692 or 1693. This suggests perhaps that the owner's livelihood or commercial activity may have been disrupted by the uncertainty and upheavals of the war. Carrick-on-Suir fell to the Williamites on the 21st July 1690 and the army remained there for about a week before taking the surrender of Clonmel and moving on to the siege of Limerick (3).

The religion of the hoarder might also be of significance, given that the penal laws against Roman Catholics were in full swing in the years following the Williamite victory. These laws were at their most severe between the early 1690s and c.1730 and covered areas such as land ownership, commerce, political representation and inheritance (4). Catholics were forbidden from engaging in professions such as law or from holding public office, and barred from holding commissions in the army or navy. They were not allowed to purchase land and their access to education was limited. The more vindictive proposals were initially kept in check by William III himself, as he was in a military alliance with the Catholic Hapsburg Emperor, Leopold, against Louis XIV of France. After war ended in 1697 there was less need for moderation and the death of William in 1702 removed a restraining influence. The reign of Queen Anne ushered in a swathe of particularly vicious legislation, culminating in the anti-Popery Act of 1704. The main aim was to wipe out the Catholic landowning class. The 'lower orders' were much less affected, as the victors needed an 'underclass' to work the soil. The Catholic merchant class, somewhere in between, was in an increasingly precarious position, barred from purchasing land, excluded from municipal politics and restricted in commerce. Any ostentatious show of wealth was certainly inadvisable and unwise. This state of affairs may be of some relevance, or indeed no relevance, in relation to the particular story of the Carrick-on-Suir hoard. The contemporary political/economic background is, however, worth noting.

The coins are all good quality gold and the vast majority of them – seventy-seven pieces – are guineas. The guinea was an ideal hoarding coin since gold was much sought after and retained its value. It was initially valued at a pound or twenty shillings when the new milled coinage of Charles II was produced in 1663 (5). Some years later it was increased in value to twenty one shillings. Later again it moved to twenty one shillings and sixpence. Due in part to the poor state of the silver coinage, the guinea could usually pass in trade for even more than its stated value, which added to its importance (6). Much of the silver in circulation was old, worn hand-hammered coin, deficient in weight. By the reign of William and Mary (1688 – 1694) the guinea circulated for as much as thirty shillings. After Mary's death, William III undertook a great re-coinage of the worn and clipped silver in circulation and the guinea was again officially valued at twenty one shillings and sixpence by 1698. In 1717 it was valued at twenty one shillings and this was to remain unchanged for a hundred years, until the denomination was replaced by the sovereign in 1817.

The term 'guinea' is itself of historical interest. The name came into use due to the fact that some of the gold from which the coins were made came from Guinea in West Africa, but the term soon came to be applied to all gold coins of this denomination, regardless of the origin of the precious metal. The gold was imported by the Royal African Company, which had been set up in 1672 to oust the Dutch from control of the profitable African slave trade (7). During the reign of Charles II it was under the patronage and control of his brother the Duke of York, the future James II. Coins minted from company gold carried its mark or emblem, an elephant and castle. There are only three such marked coins in the Carrick-on-Suir hoard; one guinea coins of Charles II and James II and a half guinea coin of William III (Fig. 3).

All of the coins listed below were produced using the new machinery introduced at the Royal Mint in 1663. Developed by the Frenchman Peter Blondeau and using dies made by the royal

engraver Jan Roettier, the new process put an end to the centuries old tradition of hand-hammered coinage. It also made possible greater uniformity of weight and design.

The coins carry, on the obverse, a bust of the reigning monarch and the legend CAROLUS. II. DEI. GRATIA (*Charles II by the grace of God*), changing to IACOBUS II (*James II*) or GULIELMUS (*William*), as the various monarchs succeeded each other. The reverse shows the royal coat of arms in four shields, separated by crossed sceptres and the legend MAG. BR. FRA. ET HIB. REX (*King of Great Britain, France and Ireland*), followed by the date. The reverse design was changed with the advent of William III, in order to reflect his Dutch title. This was achieved by adding a further shield at the centre of the royal arms, containing the rampant Lion of Orange-Nassau (8).

The coins are listed below by reign, denomination and date. Some years are represented by several coins, others by single specimens. The number of coins for each year is given in brackets.

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1. I.D. Brown and Michael Dolley, *A Bibliography of Coin Hoards of Great Britain and Ireland, 1500-1967* (London, 1971), p. 78.
2. William O'Sullivan, 'The only gold coins struck in Ireland, 1646' *British Numismatic Journal*, Vol. 33 (1964), pp 141-50.
3. Samuel Mullanaux, *A Journal of the Three Months Royal Campaign of His Majesty in Ireland, together with a True and Perfect Diary of the Siege of Lymerick* (London, 1690), pp 14,20
4. See, for example, Edmund Curtis, *A History of Ireland from Earliest Times to 1922* (2005 reprint), pp 241- 47; Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ireland in 250 Episodes* (Dublin, 2008), pp 236-38; Robert Kee, *Ireland A History* (London, 2006), pp 54-55. There has been considerable disagreement among historians over the degree to which some of the penal laws were actually implemented but there can be no doubt that they had a huge impact on the political, economic and social position of Roman Catholics in eighteenth century Ireland.
5. George C. Brooke, *English Coins from the Seventh Century to the Present Day* (London, 1932), p.222. See also Spink catalogue, *Coins of England and the United Kingdom* (London, 2010), p.320.
6. Brooke, *op.cit.*, p.223.
7. Christopher Hill, *The Pelican Economic History of Britain, Volume 2. 1530-1780. Reformation to Industrial Revolution* (London, 1969), p.228.
8. Charles Oman, *The Coinage of England* (Oxford, 1931), p.334.

The Discovery of the Carrick-on-Suir Gold Coin Hoard

Charles II (1660-85)	James II (1685-88)	William III and Mary (1688-94)	William III (1694-1702)
<u>Guineas</u>	<u>Guineas</u>	<u>Guineas</u>	<u>Guineas</u>
1664 (1)	1685 (10)	1689 (1)	1695 (4)
1668 (2)	1686 (6)	1694 (1)	1697 (1)
1670 (1)	1687 (3)		1698 (5)
1673 (2)	1688 (5) – One with elephant and castle mark on obverse, below bust		1700 (2)
1674 (2)			1701 (5)
1676 (1)			
1677 (2)			
1678 (3)			
1679 (7)			
1680 (2)			
1682 (1)			
1683 (7)			
1684 (3) -One with elephant and castle mark on obverse, below bust			
<u>Half-guineas</u>	<u>Half-guineas</u>	<u>Half-guineas</u>	<u>Half-guineas</u>
1684 (1)	1686 (1)		1695 (1)
			1696 (1) -One with elephant and castle mark on obverse, below bust



The Discovery of the Carrick-on-Suir Gold Coin Hoard





Obverse (top) and reverse examples of Charles II, 1685 and William III, 1694



Elephant and castle mark on obverse, below bust

PLOUGHMAN NOTES REVISITED

Jonathan Callaway

For a series which lasted only a dozen years or so Ploughman notes have taken on iconic status in the history of Ireland's paper currency, a history which started as long ago as 1732 (and quite possibly earlier) when the earliest recorded private banker's note was issued payable to bearer. Ploughman notes have been described as miniature works of art by some and at the very least one feels bound to praise the truly magnificent standard achieved by the designers and engravers. It is time for a fresh look!

Let us start by reviewing the basics, the genesis of the notes: the circumstances leading to their issue and how their designs were created. We will then move to assessing how many were issued by the banks involved and how many remain outstanding. We will finish by calculating the possible distribution of those survivors still probably available to collectors. These calculations, while based on a statistical analysis which will inevitably be at variance with actual survival rates, should nevertheless help demonstrate the probable pattern of survival rates for each signature type, and thus identify the true rarities of this series. Finally, a warning: some hypothesis is involved although the writer hopes this exercise will stimulate further study of this fascinating note issue, unique as it is to Ireland.

1. The Genesis of Ploughman Notes

Following the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922 it was decided not to make any immediate changes to the status quo but it was recognised that a distinctive currency and issuing authority needed to be established in the newly independent state. As a result a Commission of Inquiry was established in March 1926 whose main recommendations were incorporated in the Currency Act of September 1927:

- The establishment of an independent Currency Commission
- The creation of a new Irish currency, the Saorstát Pound, to be maintained at a fixed one-to-one parity with Sterling
- The replacement (in the Irish Free State) of the note issues of the six commercial banks with 'Consolidated Notes' to be issued under the auspices of the Currency Commission and redeemable in Irish legal tender (the banks having to pay the Commission an annual fee of 1½% for the privilege, a cost which effectively rose to 3% p.a. in 1932)
- The issue of Legal Tender Notes by the Currency Commission who would take formal responsibility for managing and controlling the note issue. Legal Tender Notes were to be backed by Sterling deposited with the Commission. The Bank of England was appointed as London Agent for redemptions, hence the statement on the notes "Sterling Payable to Bearer on Demand in London" which appeared until 1961.

Until the 1927 Currency Act was passed paper currency issuance in Ireland had been entirely in the hands of six commercial banks, although their notes had been supplemented by Bank of England issues, and, since 1914, UK Treasury notes for 10/- and £1. Some Scottish notes also circulated,

mostly in the north of Ireland. Nothing had really changed since 1841 when the Agricultural & Commercial Bank of Ireland failed; prior to that there had been many more private bank note issuers but most had also failed. The continuity and financial stability provided by the six banks stood Ireland in good stead during a tumultuous period but with Independence it was clear their time as issuers was up – almost.

Who were these six banks and why did one of them decline to participate in the Currency Commission's Consolidated Note proposal? First and foremost there was of course the Bank of Ireland, the country's pre-eminent bank established in Dublin in 1783 as the then government's banker. The Bank of Ireland dominated the banking landscape despite the presence of several competitors. In its earlier years it had been protected from competition by legislation but a level playing had been created by the 1845 Banking Act (Ireland). This Act confirmed the six banks' right to issue notes and excluded the granting of any new note issue licences.

Of the other five, two were London-based though with principal offices in Dublin, these being the National Bank (founded in 1835) and the Provincial Bank of Ireland (1825). Finally, there were the three Belfast-based banks, the Belfast Banking Company (1827), the Northern Bank (1824) and the Ulster Bank (1836).

Five of these six banks were formally nominated as Shareholding Banks in the Currency Commission and subscribed towards its capital. The exception was the Belfast Banking Company, which in August 1923, on the instruction of its parent bank the London-based Midland Bank, had sold its branches in the Irish Free State to the Dublin-based Royal Bank of Ireland (founded 1836). The latter bank, despite being a non-issuer, already had a branch network in the Free State and was joined by the Dublin-based Hibernian Bank (1825) and the Munster & Leinster Bank (1885), making eight banks in total. For these last three, the period 1929 to 1940 was the first and only time in their histories they became note issuers. A ninth bank had also been nominated, the National Land Bank (founded in 1919 by the Dáil Éireann) but did not take up the offer and its small allocation was absorbed by the Bank of Ireland.

The proposal to create a 'Consolidated' issue was in fact a compromise between the newly-created Currency Commission and the commercial banks whose private all-Ireland issues were no longer desired in the Free State. The agreement required them immediately to stop issuing in the Free State though they were separately permitted to issue new notes in Northern Ireland under the terms of the Bankers (Northern Ireland) Act 1928. These notes, all payable in Belfast, ended up circulating south of the border anyway.

The currency changeover date, or Appointed Day, was set for Monday 6th May 1929 and in a carefully co-ordinated action the banks started the immediate withdrawal of their old all-Ireland notes while starting to issue Ploughman notes in the Irish Free State and their new notes in the North. Legal Tender Notes, meanwhile, had already entered circulation on 10th September 1928.

Unlike the position they enjoyed in the North, issuing Ploughman notes was a much less profitable affair for the banks. The issuance fees mentioned above were incurred the moment the Consolidated Notes were delivered by the Commission to the bank concerned, not when they went into circulation. Inconveniently, the eight banks could only issue their own Ploughman notes, not those of other banks. If they took in notes of other issuers these had to be returned to the original issuer.

The compromise which led to the issue of Consolidated Notes did not last and despite an emergency issue just prior to the Second World War (to head off any run on the banks) no new Ploughman notes dated after 1940 were issued (or, probably, printed). Some banks were sitting on unissued stock and in the case of the National Bank were putting them into circulation as late as February 1945. Peak issuance of Ploughman notes was in 1942 when an average of £5,184,350-worth were outstanding. The last date on which issuance was permitted was 31st December 1953, on which date only £620,191 were still in circulation and the permitted aggregate had fallen to £1,299,000.

All Ploughman notes were required to be withdrawn by 1st January 1957 and outstandings fell steadily thereafter. The authorities had always intended the Consolidated Notes to be a transitional device and so it proved.

2. The Note Designs

An advisory committee was established by the Currency Commission to decide on the Consolidated Note designs. The chosen common design for the obverse of the notes was based on a drawing by Dermot O'Brien (1865-1945), President of the Royal Hibernian Academy, called "*Ploughman with a Team of Two Horses*", intended to symbolise Ireland's agricultural self-reliance (Figure 1). Each of the six reverses was designed by the artist E L (Edward Louis) Lawrenson (1868-1940) and displays a richness and diversity much appreciated by collectors even if the occasional critic has suggested the views are somewhat postcard-like and uninspiring. The familiar obverse design is common to each denomination while the notes are distinguished by size, colour and their reverses:

Denomination	Predominant Colour	Reverse Design
£1	Green	Customs House, Dublin
£5	Brown	St. Patrick's Bridge, Cork
£10	Blue	Currency Commission Building, Foster Place, Dublin
£20	Red	The Rock of Cashel, Co Tipperary
£50	Mauve	Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo
£100	Olive green	Killiney Bay, Co Dublin

Unlike the Lady Lavery series, no ten Shillings notes were prepared as this denomination had never formed part of the earlier issues of the commercial banks. The notes were engraved and printed by Thomas de la Rue (without their imprint) using watermarked paper supplied by Portals. Each note carries two signatures, that of Joseph Brennan on behalf of the Currency Commission and one representing the Shareholding Bank concerned. The basic plate does not include the issuing bank's name or signatory, or the prefix and serial number, all of which were added after the notes were printed. A different font was used for each bank's name though the differences in some cases were minor (Figures 2, 3, 4, 5).

3. Numbers Issued

The right to issue six denominations was offered by the Currency Commission although not all the banks took up this offer in full. The Hibernian, Northern and Provincial decided against issuing £50 and £100 notes and the National decided against issuing £20, £50 and £100 notes. The initial allocation to the shareholding banks was as follows:

CHART 1: AUTHORISED ISSUE TOTALS

Bank	Total	% of total
Bank of Ireland	£1,760,000	29.3%
Hibernian Bank	£ 439,000	7.3%
Munster & Leinster Bank	£ 852,000	14.2%
National Bank	£1,365,000	22.8%
Northern Bank	£ 243,000	4.0%
Provincial Bank of Ireland	£ 649,000	10.8%
Royal Bank of Ireland	£ 273,000	4.6%
Ulster Bank	£ 419,000	7.0%
TOTAL	£6,000,000	100.0%

The total was known as the 'Permitted Aggregate'. The allocations were based on the size of the bank and the number of its branches in the Free State. They changed with each triennial revision by the Commission and the permitted aggregate was gradually reduced. Additionally, the limits for

Ploughman Notes Revisited

each bank were reduced by the number of pre-1928 notes of each bank deemed still to be outstanding in the Free State, 'dead' notes included ('dead' notes are those regarded as irretrievably lost or destroyed).

While a maximum was set to outstandings at any one time the number of notes actually issued by each of the eight banks varied when compared to their individual limits. This was a factor of the frequency with which the individual note issue turned over and how quickly the notes wore out and had to be replaced.

The following chart sets out the estimated total number of £1, £5 and £10 notes issued by each bank. No analysis is attempted of £20, £50 and £100 notes as the numbers involved were tiny and they have all long since been redeemed. In total, 44 confirmed signature varieties of the three denominations exist for collectors to chase after, involving some 177 confirmed dates.

CHART 2: ESTIMATED TOTAL NOTES ISSUED

Bank	£1	£5	£10	Total	% of total
Bank of Ireland	10,750,000	210,000	26,000	10,986,000	36.2%
Hibernian Bank	2,460,000	225,000	35,000	2,720,000	8.9%
Munster & Leinster Bank	4,300,000	310,000	86,000	4,696,000	15.5%
National Bank	4,400,000	350,000	52,000	4,802,000	15.8%
Northern Bank	400,000	55,000	8,000	463,000	1.5%
Provincial Bank of Ireland	2,350,000	152,000	36,000	2,538,000	8.4%
Royal Bank of Ireland	2,750,000	55,000	12,000	2,817,000	9.3%
Ulster Bank	1,150,000	170,000	16,500	1,336,500	4.4%
Totals	28,560,000	1,527,000	271,500	30,358,500	100.0%

By way of comparison it is estimated that there were probably no more than 15,000,000 £1 notes issued in the whole of Ireland in 1928/29 while the Bank of England issued no less than 725,000,000 £1 notes during the same period. Moreover the Irish total is split between the eight Ploughman notes issuers, Lady Lavery notes and six banks' new issues in the North. These fifteen separate issues along with the Bank of England's notes which circulated in both parts of Ireland would have made life a bit of a challenge for the average shopkeeper, especially one near the border.

4. How Many Notes Outstanding?

The most relevant and useful statistics came from the Central Bank of Ireland as long ago as August 1984 when they were provided to Derek Young for publication in *Irish Numismatics*. They gave the total face value of notes outstanding at that time as £105,352 and importantly broke this down, as follows:

£1: 57,497 notes = 0.20% of all £1 notes issued
£5: 6,559 notes = 0.43% of all £5 notes issued
£10: 1,506 notes = 0.55% of all £10 notes issued

These outstanding 65,562 notes therefore equate to 0.22% of the total 30,358,500 notes issued.

The Central Bank's figures also confirmed that all issued £20, £50 and £100 notes had been fully redeemed, contrary to Derek Young's belief in 1972 that a single issued £20 remained outstanding. It is known that the total number of notes outstanding has fallen slightly since 1984 but a revised breakdown by denomination has not been forthcoming, so further analysis will work from these figures.

Based on all of the foregoing, a chart of statistically predicted survivors has been drawn up. This takes the known number of unredeemed notes and allocates these by denomination between each

Ploughman Notes Revisited

signature type of each bank according to estimated issuance totals. The results are now further adjusted to account for an estimate of the ‘dead’ notes in the totals, also taking into account estimates of notes in collectors’ hands today.

It has been assumed that only 20% of the unredeemed notes have actually survived to remain available to collectors and be in collectible condition. This estimate seems to be a reasonable reflection at least of £5 and £10 survival rates but has been applied to £1 notes for the sake of consistency. Known hoards, both small and not so small, have been ignored to avoid distorting the picture. The assumption is consistent with one made in 1930 by Joseph Brennan, no less, in the context of estimating the proportion of ‘dead’ notes in the total of pre-1929 all-Ireland issues outstanding just prior to the Appointed Day. He put the dead notes total at 80% of those notes then outstanding for over 20 years. We are dealing with a note issue where no note will have now been outstanding for less than 60 years and probably more like 80 years on average, so a 20% availability rate may even be optimistic.

It must of course be stressed that this statistical analysis is based on a range of assumptions and can only be taken as a guide. Reality will differ in all cases. For example, anecdotal evidence suggests that there are rather more Munster & Leinster and Ulster Bank £10 notes around than these numbers indicate. Also, Northern Bank £1 (Figure 7) and £5 notes with the Knox signature are much more difficult to find than those with the Stewart signature (Figure 8) despite apparently identical issuance and survival numbers. It is likely the earlier Knox notes were withdrawn more quickly.

CHART 3: ESTIMATED AVAILABLE SURVIVORS BY BANK AND SIGNATURE

Bank	Signatory	£1	£5	£10	Total
Bank of Ireland	Gargan	3,565	146	29	3,740
Bank of Ireland	Johnston	765	34	-	799
Sub-total		4,330	180	29	4,539
Hibernian Bank	Campbell	885	193	39	1,117
Hibernian Bank	Hodges	105	-	-	105
Sub-total		990	193	39	1,222
Munster & Leinster Bank	Gubbins	1,006	185	72	1,263
Munster & Leinster Bank	Hosford	724	81	23	828
Sub-total		1,730	266	95	2,091
National Bank	Russell	1,772	301	58	2,131
Sub-total		1,772	301	58	2,131
Northern Bank	Knox	80	24	9	113
Northern Bank	Stewart	80	24	-	104
Sub-total		160	48	9	217
Provincial Bank of Ireland	H Robertson	241	34	22	297
Provincial Bank of Ireland	Forde	262	85	17	364
Provincial Bank of Ireland	Kennedy	443	10	1	454
Sub-total		946	129	40	1,115
Royal Bank of Ireland	Stanley	322	30	13	365
Royal Bank of Ireland	Mack	705	17	-	722
Royal Bank of Ireland	Wilson	80	-	-	80
Sub-total		1,107	47	13	1,167
Ulster Bank	Patton	302	73	14	389
Ulster Bank	Lester	161	73	5	239
Sub-total		463	146	19	628
Total		11,498	1,310	302	13,110

Ploughman Notes Revisited

The recent sales of a Northern Bank £10 Ploughman with the Knox signature (€14,000 hammer price) and a Provincial Bank £10 with the Kennedy signature (€7,000) (Figures 11, 12) are a reminder that the market does not value notes purely on rarity: the chart above tells us the latter is somewhat rarer than the former.

Finally, we should look at the rare and beautiful specimens and colour trials which occasionally come on to the market (Figures 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17). These ought to form part of a comprehensive Ploughman collection and £20, £50 and £100 notes will only ever be available in this way. They are seen as either Bank of Ireland specimens or De La Rue colour trials with or without the Bank of Ireland name on them. The term 'colour trial', while widely used, might better be put as 'printer's sample'. These were often used for advertising purposes: they have been found in books of sample notes prepared by De La Rue for their travelling salesmen with the non-standard colours deliberately being chosen for security reasons. They were also prepared for ink testing and other internal purposes. Our fourth and final chart summarises these notes:

CHART 4: SPECIMENS AND COLOUR TRIALS

Type	£1	£5	£10	£20	£50	£100
Bank of Ireland Specimen (regular colours)	Green	Brown	Blue	Red	Mauve	Olive
Colour trial (Bank of Ireland)	Brown, Blue	Mauve	Red	Orange	Blue	Green
Colour trial (no bank name)	Brown	Red	Green	Mauve	Olive	Blue

A final observation on issued £20, £50 and £100 notes: while all were redeemed and assumed to have been destroyed a remarkable group of survivors has been found in the archives of the Central Bank of Ireland. These are notes from the final print run of the £20, £50 and £100 notes of the Munster & Leinster Bank carrying serial numbers suggesting the print runs were a mere 4,000, 100 and 50 notes respectively. Rare birds indeed (and hugely valuable if they ever came on to the market)! It seems probable these notes were never actually issued.

As observed at the start of this article, the Ploughman notes are iconic and many collectors specialise in them. The writer hopes this article has whetted the appetite of those yet to discover this wonderful series.

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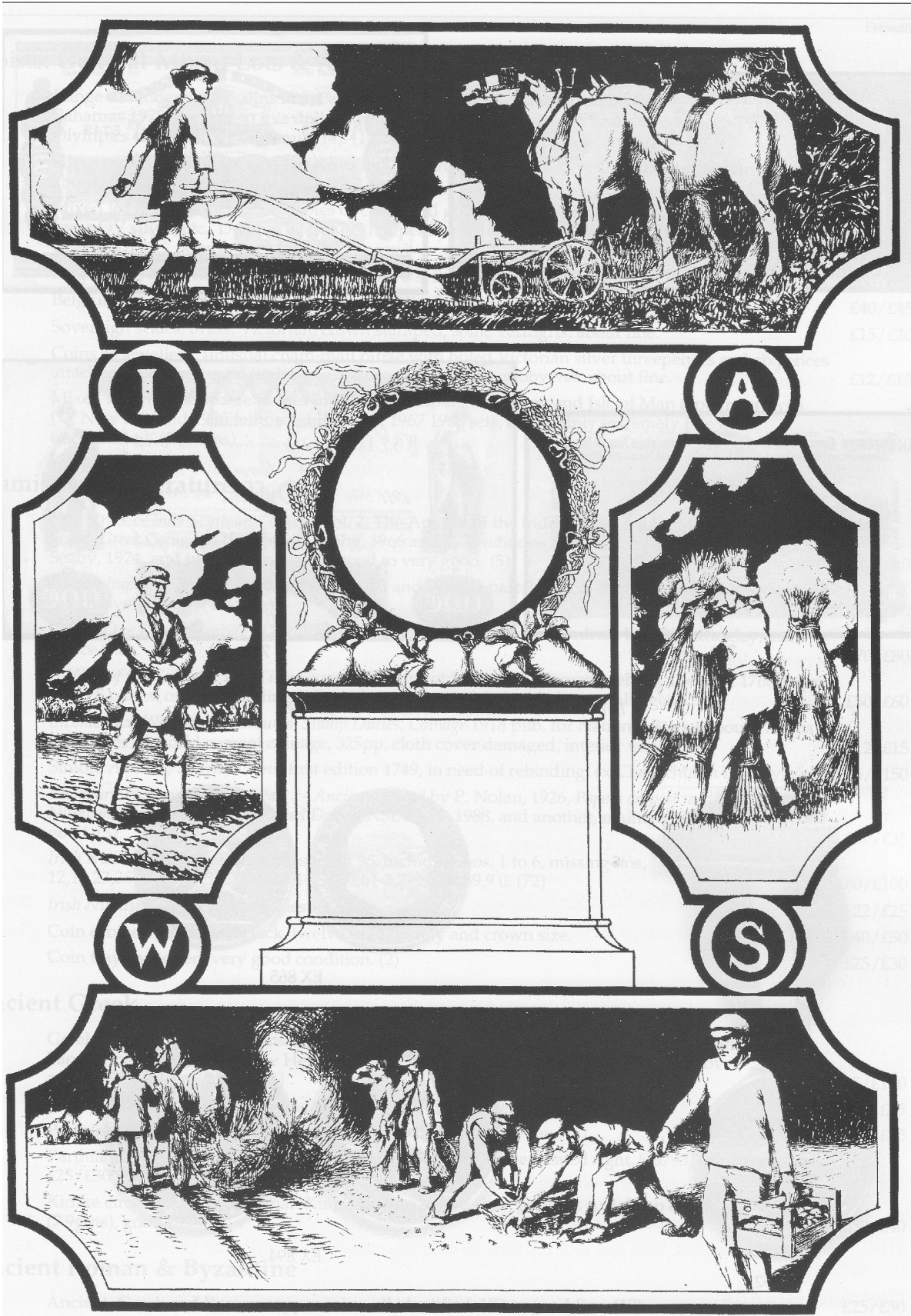


Figure 1 - Dermod O'Brien's original sketches



Figure 2 - Signatures on Ploughman £1 notes



Figure 3 - Signatures on Ploughman £1 notes



Figure 4 - Signatures on Ploughman £1 notes



Figure 5 - Signatures on Ploughman £1 notes



Figure 6 - The only Ploughman note with a 1940 date. It came from a group of the final Munster & Leinster issued notes now in the Central Bank's archives



Figure 7 - The Northern Bank £1 note with the Knox signature is hard to find in any grade



Figure 8 - The Northern Bank £5 note with the Stewart signature is quite scarce



Figure 9 - A colourful trial £1 note in the colours of the £10 issued note



Figure 10 - The mauve colour trial £5 note is considered by many the most attractive of the colour trials



Figure 11 - Statistically the rarest Ploughman of all but not the most valuable according to recent auction sales



Figure 12 - The reverse of the £10 note is a beautiful design enhanced by the vibrant blue ink used



Figure 13 - The £10 colour trial in red would have made a wonderful issued note



Figure 14 -The £20 colour trial in orange is the only one using a colour not otherwise found on issued Ploughman notes using instead the colours from the Lady Lavery 10/- note



Figure 15 - The view of the Rock of Cashel on the reverse of the £20 note is rightly praised for its harmonious design elements



Figure 16 - A classic view of Croagh Patrick is used on the reverse of the £50 note



Figure 17 - The eagle-eyed will spot the railway as the only man-made feature on the view of Killiney Bay used on the £100 note. Today it is rather more built up

A REVIEW OF IRISH BUNGAL(L)S

Gearóid Ó Broin

As the use of coinage became more widespread in Ireland in the later middle ages, a range of colloquial terminology derived from both English Irish came into use, in addition to the established penny, groat etc to describe various coins. Examples of these are *croise caoile/ crosse keele* (Henry VII/ Richard III triple crown groats), *salfás* (profile groats of Henry VII and VIII), *smulkins* (farthings) and *bungal(l)s*, which is the subject of this article.

The 16th century ‘*bungal(l)*’ most likely derives from Irish ‘*bonn geal*’ or ‘white or bright coin or groat’. Spinks [1] equate these coins with the brass or copper imitations of the base Edward VI shilling, which they say circulated in Connaught at a penny each. One problem with this is that they were never tarified at a groat, though this objection might be overcome if we take ‘*bonn*’ in its meaning of coin and the bright element referring to the original brass or copper colour or the silvering, which is still evident on some of them.

However, Dolley [2] equates the *bungal(l)s* with the base English 3 ounce fine shillings of Edward VI of 1549 -1551, which bear the inscription *Timor Domini Fons Vite*, or the fear of the Lord is the fountain of life. In coming to this conclusion, he followed the course of the appearance of the word *bungal(l)* back through Simon [3] (1749 and 1810), Nicholson [4] (1724) and Ware [5] (1705). These texts, which are evidently copied from each other, refer to *bungal(l)s* as base money decried and prohibited in England and sent to Ireland around 1564. They say that the *bungal(l)s* passed in Ireland first for sixpence, then two pence and finally for a penny in Connaught. Dolley says that *bungal(l)* was later given generally to all money of inferior standard in use in Ireland.

Descriptions of *bungal(l)* depend on whether Spink or Dolley is the source. The Spink’s interpretation has generally been followed, e.g, by Colgan [6], coin dealers and auctioneers while some, such as O’Donnell-May [7], have followed Dolley’s. Spink precede their interpretation of *bungal(l)* by saying that the base Edward VI shillings were shipped to Ireland to pass at sixpence and later at two pence. As both interpretations refer to a coin circulating in Connaught as a penny, it would appear that the Spink equation of the coin with the brass imitations of the Edward VI shillings is a misreading of the evidence.

I found references, apparently not previously quoted in numismatic literature, to *bungal(l)s* in a Latin text [8], (referring to the West Cork O’Driscolls), where the following appears [9] in relation to payments “*unius drachme ster’ anglice a Bungall ster.*”, which can be translated as “a silver piece, in English a silver *bungal(l)*”. This confirms that *bungal(l)s* were indeed silver coins and not the imitations.

Given that Dolley’s explanation of *bungal(l)* is most likely correct, the question arises as to whether the brass imitations of the Edward VI shillings can in fact be regarded as Irish. Grueber [10] points out that there is no documentary evidence linking the base issue Edward VI shillings with Ireland, but that those with initial mark harp, dated 1549 (MDXLIX) and 1552 (MDLII) can be regarded as Irish. This is probably the case as a fine silver coinage was issued in England from 1551 and the simultaneous issue of a base coinage is unlikely. There are no base silver Edward VI Irish shillings known dated 1549, all specimens are dated 1552. However, brass imitations with initial mark harp are dated either 1549 or 1552 [11]. These may well be the ones referred to by Grueber. It is unlikely that forgers in England would use initial mark harp in counterfeiting the

shillings as the harp initial mark was in use for Ireland only and in any event, the Irish coins are very rare and were probably not minted in any great quantity.

Dolley [12] mentions that there were brass imitations of the Edward VI shillings, but does not give a currency value to them or discuss them at length.

Moryson [13], writing in 1617, describing the coins current in Ireland at the start of the reign of King James I, c.1603, says: "They had little brasse pence, and pence of a second kinde, called Harpers, being as big as an English shilling", where the former are the Elizabeth I issues of 1601 – 02 and the latter presumably the brass imitations of the Edward VI shillings. In the same passage, he says that the Irish shillings with a harp were known as Harpers, so the term applied to shillings as well as the brass imitations.

It would appear that the brass imitations continued in circulation for quite some time as a proclamation [14] of the Irish Confederates of 15 November, 1642 increased the value of "the white groats of Coper to 2d" from a penny. This no doubt refers to the brass imitations and implies that circulation was not confined to Connaught, as implied by Ware et al.

Dolley [15] remarks that the letter 'B' in the RIA dictionary [16] had yet to appear. It was subsequently published in 1975, but his hope of further light being shed on the use and origin of bungal(l) has not been realised. While the dictionary quotes several examples of the use of 'bonn' in Irish literature and mentions Ware and bungull (sic), 'bonn geal' per se does not otherwise appear. However, given the evidence, Dolley's explanation can be regarded as secure.

The fact that some of the Irish imitations have a 1549 date has not been commented on generally, yet it may be of some significance. Some of the better examples extant show them to be of good workmanship and indeed, a die study might reveal that they were made from official dies. Reference N.1896 of J.J. North's [17] catalogue of English coins is a base issue shilling of Edward VI dated 1548 from the Durham House mint. While it is the same as English shillings dated 1549–1551 with the Timor Domini Fons Vite inscription, (and the Irish one of 1552), the only recorded specimens are of brass alloy and it is regarded as a pattern or a forgery. North further points out that no records exist surrounding this issue. The lack of records may perhaps have been intentional.

Could it be that the English and Irish base silver shillings of Edward VI were both preceded by a small official issue in (silvered) brass specifically to pass as a penny? This would have the advantage of 'testing the waters' on public reaction to an issue of base shillings. In the event of a hostile reception, it would be pointed out that they were merely pennies. In the event of muted public reaction, the issuing of base shillings with Edward's bust could proceed with some confidence. While base coins were already being issued during his reign, they bore the bust and inscriptions of his father. It may be that he and his advisers wished to proceed with caution in issuing base coins in his own name and hence the idea of issuing a limited number of imitations to pass as a penny. As the English brass 1548 'shilling' was followed the next year by an Irish equivalent, this opens the possibility that a base issue silver shilling was proposed for Ireland in 1549 or 1550. It would also mean that the first dated Irish coin is 1549, rather than the accepted 1552. Even if the above is not accepted, there still exist the brass imitations dated 1549 and these should be regarded as the first dated Irish coin, albeit a forgery.

It would appear therefore that the brass imitations can safely be regarded as Irish and that they should be called brass Harpers, not bungal(l)s, the later term to be restored as referring to the base English shillings of Edward VI sent to Ireland for circulation and later to base groats generally.

Given that the Irish is bonn geal and that there is distinction in Irish in pronouncing the sounds 'L' and 'LL', the better spelling would be bungal, which indeed it was in Ware, the first document known to record the term.

A Review of Irish Bungal(l)s



Left: Obverse Edward VI Irish Shilling, 1552 with clear initial mark 'harp'. Photograph courtesy of DNW, other photographs courtesy of Mr. John Rainey.



References & Footnotes

1. Spink & Sons, *Coins of Scotland, Ireland and the Islands*, (2003) p 148. Published by Seaby 1984 and 1970. All books contain the same explanation, so it is evidently of long standing. The full text is:

“It is known that in Elizabeth’s reign base Edward VI shillings were shipped to Ireland to pass first as sixpence and later at twopence, and brass imitations known as ‘bungals’ continued to circulate in Connaught at a penny each”.

2. Dolley, M., Elizabethan Bungal(l) - A Contribution to Anglo-Irish Lexicography, in *the British Numismatic Journal* 36, (1967) pp. 118-121.

A Review of Irish Bungal(l)s

3. Simon, J., *An Essay towards an Historical Account of Irish Coins*, (1749 and 1810), p 36. The full text is:
“No sooner was the base money decayed, and prohibited in England, but it was sent over in great quantities into this kingdom, where the bungals, as they were then called, went for six pence, but in a short time after, passed for two pence, and when they were refused elsewhere, passed in Connaught for one penny”.
4. Nicolson, W., *Irish Historical Library etc*, (1724), p 168.
5. Ware, J., *The Antiquities and History of Ireland etc*, (1705). Originally written in Latin, by his father, also James, the noted antiquarian (1594 – 1666), in an unpublished work, derived from earlier sources.
6. Colgan, M., *For Want of Good Money* (2003), pp 88 - 89.
7. O'Donnell-May, J., *The Splendid Shilling*, (1982), p 117.
8. O' Donovan, J., The Genealogy of Corca Laidhe, in *Miscellany of the Celtic Society*, (1849), p 384. http://www.archive.org/stream/miscellanyofcelt00celt/miscellanyofcelt00celt_djvu.txt
9. There are three references to “unius drachme, anglice two Bungal(l)s”, which may be scribal error. The three texts are very similar and seem to have been copied from each other.
10. Grueber, H., *Handbook of the Coins of Great Britain and Ireland etc. in the British Museum*, (1899), pp 229 - 230.
11. Of the eleven brass imitations examined for this article, seven were dated 1549 and four 1552. Lot 169, p 29, of the Millennial Collection, Whyte's 29 April, 2000 is a gVF example of the imitation, with 1549 date
12. Dolley, M., *Mediaeval Anglo Irish Coins*, (1972), pp 42 and 44, where for some reason he provides an explanation of ‘bungal(l)s twice. The wording of the former might, at first reading, imply that the Spink interpretation is correct. However, the wording on page 44 is fully in accord with his 1967 article. Also, on page 42 he purports to show a 1552 Irish Edward VI shilling, yet it is clearly a 1549 imitation.
13. Moryson, F., Of the Moneys of Ireland, in *Itineraries etc* (1617).
14. *Proceedings of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, I*, (1849-51), p. 452.
15. Dolley, M., Elizabethan Bungal(l)- A Contribution to Anglo-Irish Lexicography – see above.
16. Royal Irish Academy, *Contributions to a Dictionary of the Irish Language*, (1913 to 1976). Also available as a digital electronic edition (eDIL). The authors of the letter B evidently had access to Dolley's 1967 article.
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THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COINAGE OF THE IRISH FREE STATE

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SUMMARY

This article examines the political background and repercussions of the introduction of the new Irish coinage in 1928. It attempts to illustrate how the coins of the Irish Free State were the products of the political circumstances of their time. The article also analyses the political negotiations concerning the future of the large quantity of British coins that remained in circulation in the Irish Free State. The conclusion will argue that the Irish coins issued in 1928 were of considerable political importance as symbols of national identity visible to the general public on a daily basis. Symbols of this nature were of particular significance to the Irish Free State because its status as a sovereign state was open to dispute in the 1920s and 1930s. The Anglo Irish Treaty of 1921 made it clear that the Irish Free State was a Dominion of the British Empire. This article will argue that the political background to the introduction of the new Irish coins reflects wider controversies that dominated Irish politics and external relations in the years between the two world wars.

INTRODUCTION

In 1926 Ernest Blythe told the Dáil “It is the natural and logical consequence of the setting up of the Saorstát that we should have here a coinage distinctively our own, bearing the devices of this country”.¹ These words announced the beginning of a process that would end with the issuing of a whole new series of Irish coins in 1928. No distinct Irish coinage had been minted in over a hundred years. The last official Irish coins had been produced in 1822 and depicted portraits of King George IV on one side and a crowned harp on the other. A proclamation issued in 1826 assimilated the silver and copper coinages of Great Britain and Ireland and the Irish coins were withdrawn from circulation. This followed the coming into force of the Act of Union in 1801 and the merging of the British and Irish Exchequers in 1817, developments which sounded the death knell for a separate Irish coinage.

¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 159, 27 January 1926.

The political significance of the coinage of the Irish Free State



The resurrection of Irish coinage in the 1920s was deeply symbolic and announced the birth of the Irish Free State to the world. However, the harp on the twentieth century coins was not accompanied by a crown and the current monarch, King George V, was nowhere to be seen. Indeed, at first glance the coinage of the Irish Free State seemed to be a complete break from the coinage of the British Empire. Symbols of the monarchy that symbolised Imperial unity were nowhere to be found. The inscriptions on the coins were entirely in the Irish language with no concession to English or even Latin. The entire series was made up of depictions of animals in place of the heraldry that dominated the coinage of the United Kingdom and much of the British Empire.

These features were not accidental. The “committee on coinage designs” appointed by the Irish government in 1926 and headed by W.B. Yeats was not given full discretion in choosing designs for first new Irish coins in over a century. Although Yeats had wanted to create a coinage that was “elegant, racy of the soil, and utterly unpolitical”, the last of these objectives was impossible to achieve in 1920s Ireland.² Ernest Blythe instructed the committee that the effigies of living persons should not appear on the coins.³ This was and remains an emblematic feature of the coinage of a republic, such as the United States of America. It is important to emphasise that King George V was officially the Irish head of state and enjoyed a prominent place in the Constitution of the Irish Free State. Nevertheless, these realities would not be reflected on the new Irish coinage. Instead, Blythe ordered that most, if not all, of the coins should have the harp on the obverse side that would normally have contained the King’s portrait. Blythe was also responsible for specifying that all inscriptions should only appear in the Irish language.⁴ The coins that were finally issued in 1928 were intended to be unambiguous in declaring a distinct Irish identity and in announcing the arrival of a new sovereign state to the community of nations.

The need to stress the sovereign status of the Irish Free State on its new coins was intensified by the fact that this status was far from clear in the 1920s. Although the territory of the Irish Free State had seceded from the United Kingdom it remained an integral part of the British Empire. This was apparent in the opening provisions of the Treaty signed in London by the Irish

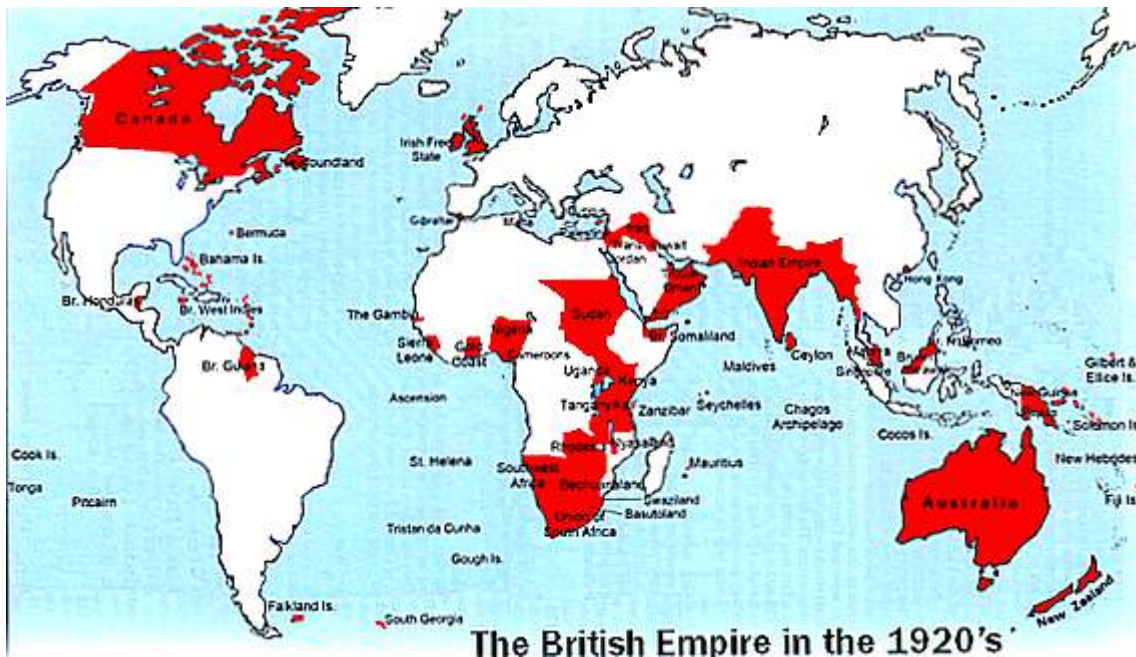
² R.F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats - A Life, II: The Arch-Poet 1915-1939* (Oxford: OUP 2003) p. 333.

³ Jokes about Executive council DD and lecture. Leo T. McCauley “The Summary of the Proceedings of the Committee” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 26-7.

⁴ NAI DT S6244A, “The Irish Coinage Designs”, lecture delivered by Thomas Bodkin at the Metropolitan School of Art, Dublin, 30 November 1928 and Leo T. McCauley “The Summary of the Proceedings of the Committee” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 26-7.

The political significance of the coinage of the Irish Free State

delegation led by Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins. Article 1 of the 1921 Treaty made it clear that the Irish Free State would remain within the British Empire and enjoy the same constitutional status as the self-governing Dominions.⁵ The Dominions were parts of the Empire with large white populations that enjoyed substantial powers of self-government.



In 1921 the Dominions included Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland. Although the Dominions had made great strides during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the direction of becoming fully sovereign states it remained unclear as to whether they had actually achieved this status in the 1920s. Considerable limitations on their autonomy remained and a detailed study that directly considered the question as to whether the Dominions constituted sovereign states was answered in the negative in 1929.⁶

Dominion status lay at the foundations of the settlement inherent in the 1921 Treaty. Yet even staunch supporters of the Treaty in Ireland had real difficulty with accepting the idea that their new State was actually a Dominion. An innate rejection of the concept of an “Irish Dominion” led Colonel Maurice Moore to declare to the Seanad in 1931 that “Ireland is not a Dominion. The Treaty stated that Ireland had the status of a Dominion, but it does not state that we are a Dominion”.⁷ Irish commentators insisted that their State was autochthonous and represented the revival of an ancient European nation that could not in any way be compared to the daughters of “mother Britannia” in the new world.⁸ These sentiments were reflected in the words of Leo Kohn, author of a leading work on the Constitution of the Irish Free State, who concluded “In the garb of ‘Dominion Status’ a nationally self-conscious European State was introduced into the symmetry of Empire, a Dominion neither in form nor in substance”.⁹

⁵ “Ireland shall have the same constitutional status in the Community of Nations known as the British Empire as the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand and the Union of South Africa ...”. Article 2 of the Treaty linked key aspects of the status of the Irish Free State to that enjoyed by Canada.

⁶ P.J. Noel Baker, *The Present Juridical Status of the British Dominions in International Law* (London, 1929) p. 356.

⁷ For example see *Seanad Debates*, vol. 14, col. 1625, 23 July 1931.

⁸ For example see J.G. Swift MacNeill, *Studies in the Constitution of the Irish Free State* (Dublin, 1925) p. vii-ix and 9-10, E.M. Stephens, “The Constitution” in *Saorstát Éireann Official Handbook* (Dublin, Talbot Press, 1932), p. 72 and William Magennis at *Dáil Debates* vol. 17, col. 756-761, 15 December 1926.

⁹ Leo Kohn, *The Constitution of the Irish Free State* (Dublin, 1932), p. 71.

The political significance of the coinage of the Irish Free State

The Irish relationship with Dominion status was always a difficult one. In the early years the Irish government seemed to accept that many of the legal limitations on the autonomy of the Dominions also applied to the Irish Free State. The Irish government sent delegations to participate in the deliberations of successive Imperial conferences up to 1933. Yet it could never be forgotten that a substantial minority had rejected the 1921 Treaty and even those who had accepted it chafed at the limitations on sovereignty inherent within that settlement. By the middle of the 1920s the Pro-Treaty Irish government began to reject many of the key legal attributes associated with Dominion status. This was no easy task because the Constitution of the Irish Free State was suffused with symbols of Dominion status in the form of the King, the role of the Governor General, the wording of the controversial parliamentary oath and in the appeal from the Irish Supreme Court to a court in London known as the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. These constitutional provisions were bitter pills for many Irish people to swallow. The struggle for the identity of the new Irish state continued until the adoption of a new Irish Constitution under the guidance of Eamon de Valera in 1937 which took great pains to separate the status of Ireland from the Dominions. The final link was cut in 1949 with the declaration of a republic and a formal withdrawal from the Commonwealth.

The impact of the Treaty settlement on the provisions of the 1922 Constitution could not be denied in the early years of the State. Historical accounts concerning the struggle over the identity of the Irish Free State in the inter-war years tend to focus on the controversial parliamentary oath and other divisive provisions of the 1921 Treaty and 1922 Constitution. Yet it is important not to underestimate the importance of non-legal symbols in asserting the identity of the Irish Free State. Although the act of painting the postboxes green is often presented as a symbol of frivolous and superficial change it must be admitted that this development was far more visible to members of the public in their everyday lives than complex issues of constitutional law.



Other prominent symbols of the secession from the United Kingdom were reflected in the form of flags, stamps and currency.¹⁰ The founders of the Irish Free State were aware of these realities and were determined that these popular symbols would be seen to diverge from the practice followed in other Dominions.

PROMINENT SYMBOLS OF STATEHOOD IN THE IRISH FREE STATE

The most important symbol of political change in the infant Irish Free State was the appearance of a new tricolour flag of green, white and orange that appeared over government buildings in 1922. The appearance of the tricolour was at variance with the position under which the Union flag was used in all parts of the British Empire. A South African challenge this position in the 1920s resulted in a limited concession which allowed the use of a Red Ensign with South African arms to be flown in conjunction with the Union Flag on official occasions.¹¹ It is unlikely that a compromise of this nature would have been acceptable in the Irish Free State. The solution adopted by the Irish government was to simply fly the tricolour while refraining from enshrining it

¹⁰ W.B. Yeats referred to stamps and coins as “silent ambassadors of national taste”. *Seanad Debates*, vol. 6, col. 501, 3 March 1926.

¹¹ Harry Saker, *The South African Flag Controversy, 1925-1928* (Capetown, 1980)

in law as the national flag. The argument that the Union flag remained the official flag of the Irish Free State as a British Dominion was widely ignored. The tricolour continued to be used in an unofficial capacity until the Constitution of 1937 finally provided legal recognition of its status as the national flag.¹²

The Irish Free State formally came into existence, under British law, on 6 December 1922.¹³ The pangs of Civil War robbed nationalists of any sense of euphoria as the “long-awaited day” approached and much of the transition was marked by a sense of quiet understated dignity. Bonfires did burn in some parts of the country but for most areas the only sign public demonstration of the change wrought on 6 December 1922 was the long queues outside the post offices anxious to buy the first Irish definitive postage stamps.¹⁴ A portrait of the reigning monarch had been a common feature of British definitive issues since the creation of the “Penny Black” as the world’s first postage stamp. By contrast, the first definitive Irish stamps depicted a map of the entire island of Ireland which was, in itself, a powerful political statement. The absence of King’s head remained a constant feature of the postage stamps of the Irish Free State, a position that did not escape notice in the United Kingdom.

The decision to print a new series of Irish banknotes was reflected in the enactment of the Currency Act, 1927. A special Currency Commission oversaw the design of the first series of legal tender notes.¹⁵ These notes depicted the portrait of a woman intended to be an allegorical representation of Ireland.¹⁶ However, it is important to emphasise that banknotes, at least in the early twentieth century, represented a much less politically charged form of currency than coins.

¹² Article 7 of the Irish Constitution of 1937 provides that “The national flag is the tricolour of green, white and orange” finally put this issue beyond doubt. No statutory basis for flying the national flag over Irish vessels existed until the enactment of the Mercantile Marine Act, 1955.

¹³ See Order in Council of 17 March 1932 on the provision for the reciprocal enforcement of judgments in the United Kingdom and in other parts of His Majesty’s Dominions under part 11 of the Administration Act 1920. This provides that “on the 6th day of December, 1922, the Irish Free State was established under the provisions of an Act of Parliament shortly entitled the Irish Free State Constitution Act 1922 (Session 2)”. The date on which the Irish Free State came into existence under Irish law cannot be fixed with the same degree of certainty. See Thomas Mohr, “British Imperial Statutes and Irish Sovereignty: Statutes Passed After the Creation of the Irish Free State”, (2011) 32:1 *The Journal of Legal History* 61 at 71-74.

¹⁴ In the year separating the signing of the Treaty on 6 December 1921 and the coming into force of the Constitution of the Irish Free State on 6 December 1922 the embryonic state had placed overprints on British stamps reading “Rialtas Sealadach na hÉireann” meaning Provisional Government of Ireland and “Saorstát Éireann 1922” as interim measures. *Postage Stamps of Ireland 1922-1982* (Dublin, Department of Posts and Telegraphs, 1983) pp. 7-9.

¹⁵ The banknotes issued by the Currency Commission were complemented by the issue of a series of “Consolidated Banknotes” in 1929. These notes were the joint issues of commercial banks operating in the Irish Free State. They were intended to replace the the variety of notes that had previously been issued by many of these banks. The existing notes issued by the “Shareholding Banks” had to be withdrawn and destroyed in advance of the issue of the consolidated series.¹⁵ This included existing banknotes circulating outside the State i.e. in Northern Ireland. The new consolidated banknotes depicted a man ploughing with two horses, created by Dermot O’Brien of the Royal Hibernian Academy, and a series of notable Irish buildings and landscapes on the other side created by the artist E.L. Lawrenson. Eight banks were finally admitted as “Shareholding Banks”. These were Bank of Ireland, Ulster Bank, Northern Bank, Hibernian Bank, National Bank, Munster and Leinster Bank, Provincial Bank of Ireland and Royal Bank of Ireland. The last three of these banks formed Allied Irish Banks in 1966. The two series of banknotes circulated side by side until the completion of the withdrawal of the Consolidated Banknotes at the end of 1953. This followed the creation of the Central Bank of Ireland in 1943 which became the sole authority to issue banknotes for circulation in the 26 counties. See Central Bank Act, 1942.

¹⁶ The commission to provide this portrait was given to Sir John Lavery R.A. who had lent his house to the Irish delegation during the negotiations that preceded the signing of the 1921 Treaty. The resulting portrait is believed to have been based on the likeness of Lavery’s American wife Hazel. The designs on the opposite side were based on a series of sculptured heads representing Irish rivers which had originally been carved for Dublin Custom House by the eighteenth century sculptor Edward Smyth. Nevertheless the association of this series of banknotes with the Laverys has remained dominant with the result that they is popularly, though unofficially, known as “Lavery notes”. The official name of this series of banknotes is the “A” Series.

Banknotes issued in Great Britain or Ireland before 1922 seldom contained a portrait of the ruling monarch. This remained the case until the accession of Queen Elizabeth II. Consequently, the absence of royal insignia on the new Irish banknotes largely passed without comment. The first official banknotes of the Irish Free State, unlike the coinage, included bilingual inscriptions. The reference to the continued link with sterling together with the declaration that the value was “payable in London” on the notes issued by the currency commission reflected the economic limits of the sovereignty of the new state.

Coins were far older symbols of statehood than stamps, banknotes or even flags. The ancient status of coinage ensured that, unlike banknotes and stamps, it was considered to form part of the Royal Prerogative.¹⁷ This meant that coinage was considered to fall within the customary authority of the Crown, although by the nineteenth century this authority was largely superseded by statutes passed by the parliament at Westminster.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the King or Queen was deemed to have the right to be consulted as to the designs and inscriptions that were placed on all coins intended for constituent parts of the British Empire.¹⁹ In addition, the name or portrait of the ruling monarch was included on the obverse of coins as an essential symbol of Imperial unity. This set coinage apart from stamps and banknotes which displayed far less consistency in including such symbols.²⁰

COINS AS SYMBOLS OF EMPIRE

Although the pound sterling circulated in many parts of the world, the British Empire never had a single currency. Nevertheless, the British government did take a direct interest in the issuing of currency throughout the Empire. In the nineteenth century the use of the power of disallowance, the effective vetoing of a statute in force, was not uncommon in matters of currency. In 1843 a New Brunswick coinage statute was disallowed on the grounds that it had incorrectly specified the rates of value of the relevant coins.²¹ A similar fate befell a Canadian statute of 1850.²² The royal instructions given to Governors General, sent out as representatives of the King or Queen, often forbade them to assent to legislation that related to matters in which London was considered to have a direct interest, which included currency.²³ In the early 20th century the British government retained substantial control over mints established at Sydney (1855), Melbourne (1872), Perth (1898) Ottawa (1907) and Pretoria (1911) which were considered branches of the Royal Mint.²⁴ A number of Imperial statutes, which were ultimately consolidated into the Coinage Act, 1870, confirmed that London enjoyed sweeping powers over coinage and legal tender throughout the Empire including the design of coins.²⁵ However, by the dawn of the twentieth century these extensive legal powers held by the United Kingdom began to be seen as incompatible with the growing autonomy of the self-governing Dominions.

The enhanced status of the Dominions of the Empire was manifested when Canadian, Australian and New Zealand troops contributed to the prosecution of the Second Boer War (1899-

¹⁷ TNA-PRO CAB 24/204, memorandum on the “Operation of Dominion Legislation” December 1928.

¹⁸ TNA-PRO CAB 24/204, memorandum on the “Operation of Dominion Legislation” December 1928. The memorandum notes “It is an interesting but unprofitable speculation whether the original prerogative powers in relation to the coinage still exist, or are to be regarded as superseded by existing legislation”.

¹⁹ A.B. Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions Vol. III* (Oxford, 1912), p. 1187.

²⁰ Arthur Berriedale Keith, a prolific author on the subject of British Imperial law, noted “A minister of New Brunswick who placed his own head on a stamp issue was compelled to resign and the issue recalled (1861). This is of course a less solecism than placing a wrong effigy on coins, for the *ars cudendi* has been since classical times a sovereign right, while stamps have a humbler origin”. A.B. Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions Vol. III* (Oxford, 1912), p. 1187.

²¹ A.B. Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions Vol. III* (Oxford, 1912), p. 1183.

²² A.B. Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions Vol. III* (Oxford, 1912), p. 1183.

²³ For example, A.B. Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions Vol. III* (Oxford, 1912), p. 1184.

²⁴ TNA-PRO CAB 24/204, memorandum on the “Operation of Dominion Legislation” December 1928. and A.B. Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions Vol. III* (Oxford, 1912), p. 1185. The Sydney mint was discontinued in 1926 under the Sydney Mint (Discontinuance) Proclamation, 1926.

²⁵ The Coinage Act, 1870 was amended by the Coinage Act, 1891 and the Coinage Act, 1920.

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1902). The coins of the Empire recognised this development by making express reference to the Dominions on coins produced throughout the Empire. Coins produced from 1901 onwards described the monarch as “*Britt. Omn. Rex*” or “*Britanniarum Omnium Rex*” meaning “King of all the Britains”. The description of the Dominions as “Britain beyond the seas” or “daughters of mother Britannia” was not uncommon in this period. Nevertheless, by the dawn of the twentieth century Britannia’s daughters were beginning to articulate their emergence into adulthood in their own terms.

The move towards greater autonomy in the Dominions was reflected in challenges to Imperial control over coinage. Canada and Australia used their constitutions to claim that their parliaments had exclusive power to legislate on coinage and legal tender. By the early twentieth century the right to legislate in the sphere of coinage was considered to be an essential attribute of Dominion status. The idea of using the power of disallowance with respect to Dominion legislation on coinage became untenable in political terms. In 1929 the Dominions Office in London concluded that the power had been rendered obsolete.²⁶ The Irish public tended to take it for granted that their new State would have total freedom to issue and design its own coins without any realisation of how recently this position had been established.

The new coins of the Dominions minted under the authority of their own parliaments constituted material evidence of their move towards greater autonomy. Yet, the designs that appeared on the new Dominion coins continued to reflect symbols of Imperial unity and the portrait of the King dominated their obverse sides. The enhanced status of the Dominions found expression in requests that the King appear bareheaded on their coins, as he appeared on the coins of the United Kingdom, rather than crowned as he appeared on the coins of dependent colonies. This desire was not fulfilled until 1936.



Britanniarum Omnium Rex

Dominion coins continued to refer to the King/Emperor as “*Britanniarum Omnium Rex*” or “King of all the Britains”. In 1922 the Irish Free State was recognised as the latest addition to the self-governing Dominions of the British Empire. It remained to be seen whether the Irish see their new state as another of the “Britains” beyond the seas?

LEGISLATIVE STEPS TOWARDS A NEW IRISH COINAGE

²⁶ TNA-PRO, DO 117/184, confidential note on the proceedings. The report of the 1929 “operation of Dominion legislation” conference declared that those Dominions that had the power to alter their own Constitutions could now remove the provisions relating to disallowance if they so desired. Cmd. 3479 at 35.

The political significance of the coinage of the Irish Free State

In 1922 Michael Collins made enquiries as to the feasibility of creating a new Irish currency based on the gold standard. He was quickly dissuaded from further pursuing this idea.²⁷ There was little enthusiasm for breaking with the perceived stability of the pound sterling and creating new barriers to trade with the United Kingdom.²⁸ Although the proposal to create a new coinage for the Irish Free State in the mid-1920s was a much less radical proposal, it did meet with some opposition in the Oireachtas on the basis of fears that this initiative would be a stepping stone to a change in currency.²⁹

The failure to sever links with the pound sterling did not necessarily preclude the Irish Free State from producing its own coins and banknotes. The possibility of issuing Irish coins and ten shilling banknotes was given serious consideration in 1923. However, the decision was postponed on the advice of a leading member of the committee appointed to examine this proposal.³⁰ H.S. Guinness, governor of the Bank of Ireland, stressed the inconvenience that new coins would cause to travellers between the Irish Free State and the United Kingdom and argued that any such initiative should be left until settled conditions prevailed.³¹ Guinness was even more pessimistic with respect to the proposal of introducing ten shilling banknotes. He argued that this might result in the rapid withdrawal of all British banknotes from the Irish Free State on the basis of “Gresham’s Law” of bad money driving good money out of circulation.³² The Department of Finance remained unconvinced by these contentions. The possibility of inconvenience to travellers was clearly an argument that militated against ever introducing an Irish coinage. Nevertheless, further consideration of the proposal was delayed for over a year.³³

In 1925 the Irish government finally made the decision to mint a new coinage for the Irish Free State. This decision was influenced by a number of important factors. First, the creation of new Irish coins would provide some level of control in avoiding a shortage or surplus of coins in circulation. This would be particularly useful given that there was considerable uncertainty as to the number of British coins in circulation in the Irish Free State in the late 1920s.³⁴ Secondly, the creation of a new series of Irish coins would ensure that the profits that accrued from the issue of new currency would remain in Irish hands. These profits were very considerable. In 1928 the face value of the first issue of new Irish coins was approximately £750,000. However, the cost of striking this issue was approximately £249,000, exclusive of freight and insurance. This represented

²⁷ NAI DT S3875, T.A. Smiddy to W.T. Cosgrave, undated 1922 and Secretary of President’s Office to all ministers, 11 December 1922.

²⁸ For example, see *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 161-3, 27 January 1926.

²⁹ Ernest Blythe declined to give an assurance that the introduction of the new coinage was not a stepping stone to a new currency. *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 196, 27 January 1926.

³⁰ This committee consisted of H.S. Guinness, governor of Bank of Ireland, T.B. Lillis, general manager of the Munster and Leinster Bank, Timothy Smiddy, professor of economics and commerce at University College Cork, Charles Francis Bastable, professor of political economy at Trinity College Dublin, Joseph Brennan, Department of Finance and James J. McElligott, Department of Finance. NAI DT S3875, Memorandum for Executive Council, 14 June 1924.

³¹ NAI DT S3875, memorandum on “Silver Coinage and Ten Shilling Currency Notes”, H.S. Guinness, 2 February 1924.

³² NAI DT S3875, memorandum on “Silver Coinage and Ten Shilling Currency Notes”, H.S. Guinness, 2 February 1924.

³³ NAI DT S3875, “Memorandum on Token Coinage”, Department of Finance, undated 1924.

³⁴ H.S. Guinness estimated that £1,473,136 of silver coinage was in circulation in the Irish Free State. NAI DT S3875, memorandum on “Silver Coinage and Ten Shilling Currency Notes”, H.S. Guinness, 2 February 1924. The Department of Finance suspected a higher figure than Guinness’ estimate. NAI DT S3875, “Memorandum on Token Coinage”, Department of Finance, undated 1924. See also *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 159-60, 27 January 1926.

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a profit margin of almost 200%.³⁵ The Irish government could not ignore economic benefits on this scale.³⁶

The third incentive to create a new coinage was based on the perception that coins represented an indispensable symbol of the autonomy of the Irish Free State. W.T. Cosgrave believed that just as Jesus had used the tribute penny as evidence of Caesar's dominion, so the new Irish coins would reflect "our dominion".³⁷ A Department of Finance memorandum issued in 1924 noted "It is a normal function of any modern State to provide its own currency".³⁸ However, the same memorandum recognised additional considerations concerning matters of sovereignty that were unique to the Irish Free State. First, the memorandum stressed "the Dominion Governments of Canada, Australia and South Africa have their own currencies".³⁹ This implied that if the Irish Free State did not issue its own coins and banknotes it would be seen as enjoying less status and autonomy than these Dominions. The memorandum also raised powerful reasons grounded in internal politics for issuing Irish coins:

"It may well be argued that the introduction of our own coinage would be generally welcomed by well-wishers of the Irish Free State as bringing home vividly to the ordinary citizen the wide extent in one important respect of the independence assured by the Treaty. The public effect might thus be valuable by tending to discomfit further the opponents of the Treaty settlement. Moreover, the appeal to the popular imagination might tend to enhance, if only in a small way, the prestige of the State and thereby help to strengthen public credit."⁴⁰

The decision to create a new coinage caused some apprehension in the Irish Free State, which sometimes found voice in the Oireachtas. The issue of convenience to travellers was resurrected. This resulted in calls for an arrangement between the Irish Free State and the United Kingdom for reciprocal acceptance of coinage similar to the Latin Monetary Union that still operated on the continent.⁴¹ Captain William Redmond, the brother of the late John Redmond, stressed the convenience of being able to give an Irish sixpence to the porters at the ferry in Holyhead.⁴² Persons of nationalist and unionist backgrounds cautioned against the introduction of the new coinage in the Oireachtas by raising perceptions of economic risk and on the basis that there was no demand for this step among the Irish people.⁴³ The government often had difficulty separating the issuing of a new coinage from arguments against creating a currency that was not linked to sterling. Those who opposed the scheme suggested that the government was seeking

³⁵ The bullion value of silver used was estimated at £210,000 and the total charge for minting, which included the cost of metals other than silver, was approximately £39,000. It should be noted that early estimates of profits in excess of £600,000 were based on issuing £1 million in new coins. *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 160-1, 27 January 1926.

³⁶ H.S. Guinness suggested asking the United Kingdom if it could share in the profits accrued from the coinage and banknotes that circulated in both jurisdictions pending the creation of Irish coins and notes. NAI DT S3875, memorandum on "Silver Coinage and Ten Shilling Currency Notes", H.S. Guinness, 2 February 1924. Although there was a precedent for a proposal of this nature, the Australian delegation to the Colonial Conference of 1907 had made a request along these lines, it does not seem to have been explored by the Irish government in the early 1920s.

³⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 175, 27 January 1926. Richard Wilson TD argued that coinage was "one of those things that stamps us as an entity of our own, that makes it clear that this country belongs to us and that there is a heart beating in this country which is not dependent on an outside nation". *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 174, 27 January 1926.

³⁸ NAI DT S3875, "Memorandum on Token Coinage", Department of Finance, undated 1924. A historical account of the issuing of the Irish coinage written by an Irish civil servant in 1945 began by stressing that a separate coinage was "one of the characteristics of a sovereign State. NAI DFA 370/58/4/1 "Draft – The Current Coinage of Ireland". This argument was raised repeatedly during the enactment of the Coinage Act, 1926.

³⁹ NAI DT S3875, "Memorandum on Token Coinage", Department of Finance, undated 1924.

⁴⁰ NAI DT S3875, "Memorandum on Token Coinage", Department of Finance, undated 1924.

⁴¹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 169, 27 January 1926.

⁴² *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 164, 27 January 1926.

⁴³ For example see *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 178, 27 January 1926 and col 437, 439-42 and 444, 4 February 1926.

deceptively easy profits, described as “leprechaun gold” while risking serious economic consequences.⁴⁴ It was also argued that ordinary Irish people might be disturbed by an unwanted change of coinage and that its introduction should, at the very least, be postponed.⁴⁵ The Irish government rejected all of these arguments and insisted that there was a discreet yet powerful desire among the Irish public for an independent coinage. This demand was often identified with the wider struggle to achieve self-determination and assert a distinct national identity. In 1926 Ernest Blythe told the Dáil:

“If there has not been a newspaper demand there has been a popular demand. I have met great numbers of people who were anxious to have our own token coinage. I met them in all sorts of places and amongst all classes. When we say that there is no popular demand we should not forget the historical background of the Free State. There has always been a vehement demand which embraced all this and a great deal more.”⁴⁶

One of first steps taken by the Irish governments in creating a new Irish coinage was to examine Dominion statutes on coinage as guidance for future legislation by the Oireachtas. The Coinage Act, 1926 maintained the link with sterling and also ensured retention of British denominations. This meant abandoning any prospect of decimalisation of the coinage which had been proposed by Sinn Féin soon after its foundation by Arthur Griffith.⁴⁷ Determined individuals in the Department of Finance and in the Oireachtas continued to press for decimalisation throughout the 1920s.⁴⁸ Nevertheless the Irish government shied away from this radical step on the grounds that this would exacerbate existing fears concerning the introduction of the new coinage.⁴⁹ Decimalisation would also have displaced many of the British coins currently circulating in the Irish Free State. It is important to emphasise that the Irish government was not proposing the immediate replacement of all existing British coins with Irish coins.⁵⁰ The two coinages were intended to circulate interchangeably in the Irish Free State on the assumption that the British coins would be phased out on a gradual basis.

The enactment of the Coinage Act, 1926 ensured that the new Irish coinage would continue to follow the old system of pounds, shillings and pence that had first been standardised by the Carolingian Empire more than a millenium earlier. Yet the Irish government was not content to mimic the coinage of United Kingdom in all respects. The 1926 Act provided that the new Irish coins above the value of one penny would differ from their British counterparts in terms of bullion content. British silver coins had traditionally contained 92.5% silver. After 1920 the Royal Mint reduced the silver content to 50%.⁵¹ The Irish decided to go one step further and eliminate all silver from the smaller coins. Irish three pence and six pence coins would be made entirely of nickel and would be substantially larger and thicker than their British equivalents that were still 50% silver. Ernest Blythe’s justified this step to the Dáil by arguing that the small British three pence piece was “easily lost and rather difficult to pick up again”.⁵² He added that a larger three pence coin would necessarily demand a similar expansion in the size and thickness of the six pence coin, which would also be made of nickel.⁵³

⁴⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 169, 27 January 1926.

⁴⁵ Major Bryan Cooper TD moved an unsuccessful amendment to postpone the coming into force of the Coinage Act, 1926 for almost two years. *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 436-9, 4 February 1926.

⁴⁶ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 449, 4 February 1926.

⁴⁷ NAI DT S3875, Acting Secretary, Department of Finance to President, 14 December 1922.

⁴⁸ NAI DT S3875, Acting Secretary, Department of Finance to President, 14 December 1922. See also *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 184-6 and 190-1, 27 January 1926.

⁴⁹ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 192-3, 27 January 1926.

⁵⁰ The Coinage Act, 1926 provided that the Government could permit the continuance in circulation of British coins as legal tender for limited amounts.

⁵¹ Coinage Act, 1920.

⁵² *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 460, 4 February 1926.

⁵³ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 160-1, 27 January 1926. There were repeated requests in the Oireachtas that the nickel coins be pierced in the middle to better distinguish them from the silver calls. For example, *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 438 and 461, 4 February 1926, col. 593-4, 10 February 1926 and col. 881, 23 February 1926. These requests did not meet with success.

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The Irish government decided to move in the opposite direction with respect to the higher value coins of shilling, florin and half crown. The 1926 Act provided that new Irish coins of these values would contain 75% silver, a higher content than their British equivalents.⁵⁴ There were practical advantages that buttressed this decision. It was generally believed that a higher silver content would make the new Irish coins more durable than their British counterparts.⁵⁵ However, this decision also ensured that the new coinage would be more expensive to mint and precluded the eminently practical solution of melting down the British coins currently in circulation in order to make their Irish replacements.⁵⁶ It is clear that part of the decision to raise the silver content of the higher value coins was based on uncertainty as to the reaction of the people towards the new Irish coins. The Department of Finance repeatedly stressed the need to overcome prejudice against the new system of coinage. It recognised that although a higher silver content would reduce the profits available to the State from issuing the new coins, it would also be “of some advantage in obtaining a good reputation for the coins in popular estimation at the outset”.⁵⁷ Ernest Blythe told the Dáil that part of the decision to include a higher silver content was “to assure people, and to be able to point out definitely to them that here is a coin intrinsically better than the coin it is replacing”.⁵⁸ This consideration led to the rejection of the bold suggestion of Senator H.S. Guinness to mint all the coins of the new Irish series in base metal.⁵⁹ The association of metal content with prestige was as old as coinage itself. Aristophanes’ play “The Frogs” contrasts the unalloyed gold and silver coins associated with “men we know for upright, blameless lives and noble names” with the wretched issues of “men of brass”. The provision of a higher silver content in Irish coins than in their British equivalents was also used to stress the economic soundness and respectability of the new Irish Free State.⁶⁰

THE DESIGNS OF THE NEW IRISH COINS

The committee on coinage designs established in 1926 consisted of W.B. Yeats, senator and poet, Dermot O’Brien, president of the Royal Hibernian Academy, Lucius O’Callaghan, Director of the National Gallery of Ireland, Thomas Bodkin⁶¹, then a governor of the National Gallery of Ireland and Barry Egan, who ran a firm of goldsmiths and jewellery in Cork.⁶² Leo T. MacCauley of the

⁵⁴ This followed a recommendation made by the Department of Finance in 1924. “Memorandum on Token Coinage”, Department of Finance, undated 1924.

⁵⁵ “Memorandum on Token Coinage”, Department of Finance, undated 1924. See also *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 160, 27 January 1926.

⁵⁶ This consideration had ensured that the 1926 Act specified that the new Irish farthing, half penny and penny would contain an identical alloy of copper, tin and zinc to their British equivalents.

⁵⁷ “Memorandum on Token Coinage”, Department of Finance, undated 1924.

⁵⁸ *Seanad Debates*, vol. 6, col. 509-10, 3 March 1926.

⁵⁹ *Seanad Debates*, vol. 6, col. 506-7, 3 March 1926.

⁶⁰ The higher silver content of higher value Irish coins than their British counterparts was stressed in J.P. Colbert “The Banking and Currency System” in *Saorstát Éireann Official Handbook* (Dublin, Talbot Press, 1932) p. 108. The Irish Free State did consider minting gold coins. In 1924 the Department of Finance raised the possibility of minting 10 shilling coins in gold instead of printing banknotes of the same value. “Memorandum on Token Coinage”, Department of Finance, undated 1924. Part II of the Currency Act, 1927 provided for the issue of gold pound and ten shilling coins. These provisions were brought into operation and were finally removed by the Central Bank Act, 1971.

⁶¹ Thomas Bodkin (1887-1961) was a nephew of Hugh Lane. He served as director of the National Gallery of Ireland from 1927 to 1935. In 1935 he was appointed as Barber Professor of Fine Art at the University of Birmingham and was founding director of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts from 1935 to 1952.

⁶² NAI DT S6244A, committee on coinage designs appointed by the Minister for Finance, 19 May 1926. Egan became a TD in 1927 while serving on the committee.

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Department of Finance acted as secretary.⁶³ Members of the public were invited to assist with their work by submitting ideas for designs. The response to this invitation proved disappointing.⁶⁴

The committee's final recommendations were delivered in August 1926. These proposed that the designs be "representative of the natural products of the country" although this criterion was broadly interpreted. The designs would be representations of animals with the "more noble and dignified types" on higher denominations and "more humble types" on the lower. Ernest Blythe's suggestion that the series also include depictions of plants did not find favour with the committee and was eventually rejected.⁶⁵



The designs of the horse (halfcrown), salmon (florin), bull (shilling), wolfhound (sixpence), hare (threepence), hen (penny), pig (halfpenny) and woodcock (farthing) were finally selected.⁶⁶ W.B. Yeats concluded "what better symbols could we find for this horse-riding, salmon-fishing, cattle-raising country?"⁶⁷ The committee decided that the harp should be used on all the obverse

⁶³ NAI DT S6244A, committee on coinage designs appointed by the Minister for Finance, 19 May 1926. The committee also received advice from Osborn Bergin and R.I. Best of the Royal Irish Academy and the Royal Society of Antiquaries in Ireland. Leo T. McCauley "The Summary of the Proceedings of the Committee" in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland's Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 27 and 34 and NAI DT S6244A, "The Irish Coinage Designs".

⁶⁴ NAI DT S6244A, "The Irish Coinage Designs". The inclusion of the wolfhound on the 6d seems to have been the only suggestion from the public that was finally included on the new coins. NAI DT S6244A, committee on coinage designs – interim report, August 1926.

⁶⁵ NAI DT S6244A, Leo T. MacCauley to Secretary, Executive Council, 9 August 1926. Thomas Bodkin believed that the use of plant images would have broken up the unity of the series. He was also convinced that the only successful use of plant images on contemporary coinage were the wheat ear and wheat sheaf which were already in use in on the coinage of many European coinages. NAI DT S6244A, "The Irish Coinage Designs".

⁶⁶ NAI DT S6244A, "The Irish Coinage Designs". The Irish artist Jerome Connor submitted designs based on his own ideas in addition to the designs specified by the committee on coinage designs. The committee seemed unimpressed with his offerings and declined to recommend their acceptance. NAI DT S6244A, committee on coinage designs – report on designs submitted in connection with the limited competition, 22 March 1927.

⁶⁷ W.B. Yeats "What we did or tried to do" in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland's Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 8.

sides and provided the option of basing the final design on the Trinity College or “Brian Boru” harp or the Dalway harp.⁶⁸

The committee chose to place a horse, of a breed known as an “Irish hunter”, on the halfcrown (two shillings and sixpence) coin.⁶⁹ This design was chosen in recognition of the international fame of Irish horses. The Committee was also guided by aesthetic reasons in that horse designs had been used successfully in ancient Carthagian and Greek Sicilian coins that had particularly impressed W.B. Yeats. The salmon was chosen for the florin (two shillings) as a natural Irish product and in recognition of the “salmon of knowledge” of Irish legend.⁷⁰ The choice of the bull for the shilling was also inspired by an ancient Greek Sicilian coin admired by Yeats, although no series of Irish natural products would have been complete without some reference to cattle. The wolfhound chosen for the six pence coin was one of the animals of the series that did not quite fit into the theme of natural products. However, the wolfhound was one of the few suggestions sent in by members of the public to find favour with the committee. It was finally chosen as an animal that was often associated with Ireland in preference to the depiction of a greyhound favoured by one member of the committee. The hare was chosen for the three pence coin which, like the six pence, would be made of pure nickel. The choice of dog and hare for the two nickel coins were intended to provide a certain unity, although the association with hare coursing would not please all members of the Irish public today. The committee was aware that the selection of a hen, with the possible addition of a group of chicks, which was chosen for the one penny coin might provide a source of criticism. A cockerel might have been less controversial but this animal was already associated with the French Republic. In any case, the committee was convinced that the “homeliness” of the hen would appeal to farming women who traditionally took care of poultry.

If the hen was considered a slightly risky choice the decision to include the pig on the half penny coin was deeply divisive. The committee admitted that this recommendation had caused some hesitation. One member of the committee admitted that this hesitation was based on “the unfair ridicule with which this noble and useful animal is often associated”.⁷¹ Nevertheless, the committee finally decided that the humble pig merited a place in the series as an undeniably valuable natural product of Irish agriculture. There were strong voices who spoke in favour of depicting a ram or, if a pig must be chosen, to depict a boar.⁷² The pig finally prevailed and appeared in the form of sow and piglets. The anticipated ridicule did emerge but much of it came from sources that were not impressed with the series as a whole or, in some extreme cases, were hostile to the very existence of the Irish Free State.

Thomas Bodkin, a member of the Royal Irish Academy who sat on the committee on coinage designs, took credit for the choice of the woodcock for the farthing as “a bird beloved by all true sportsmen – shy, scarce and elusive, like the farthing itself, and yet to be found in Ireland in

⁶⁸ The Committee initially considered offering a third option of the Ullard harp. This option was not provided in the invitation sent to the artists to submit designs. NAI DT S6244A, letter of invitation sent by Leo T. MacCauley, Department of Finance, September 1926.

⁶⁹ Although the half crown was removed from circulation in 1971 the Irish hunter design was used on the twenty pence coin introduced in 1986.

⁷⁰ The Committee provided the option on including a spray of hazels in accordance with the stories of Fionn Mac Cumhaill. Although some artists, such as Publio Morbiducci, chose to include hazelnuts the successful design submitted by Percy Metcalfe declined to do so.

⁷¹ NAI DT S6244A, “The Irish Coinage Designs”.

⁷² The committee on coinage design admitted that they had considered the use of a ram instead of a pig for the half penny coin. NAI DT S6244A, committee on coinage designs – interim report, August 1926. Ernest Blythe made clear his preference for a ram design. NAI DT S6244A, Leo T. MacCauley to Secretary, Executive Council, 9 August 1926. The final invitation to the artists provided a choice between a boar, sow and a ram for the half penny. NAI DT S6244A, letter of invitation sent by Leo T. MacCauley, Department of Finance, September 1926. Several artists, including Percy Metcalfe provided designs depicting a ram but this animal was not chosen for inclusion in the final series. NAI DT S6244A, committee on coinage designs – report on designs submitted in connection with the limited competition, 22 March 1927. A ram design was again considered but rejected for conclusion among the designs for the Irish decimal coinage. Maurice Moynihan, *Currency and Central Banking in Ireland 1922-1960* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1975) p.33.

larger numbers than elsewhere”.⁷³ The status of the woodcock is now considered to be vulnerable across Europe and the rationale of choosing this species as an emblem of bird shooting would not pass without comment today.⁷⁴

Although appearance of animal designs for an entire series of coinage is not usual in the twenty first century, it was a novelty in the 1920s. The popularity of animal designs have since grown in popularity as a result of their inherent attractiveness, their accessibility and by their non-political nature. The use of portraits of Irish patriots would have aroused political controversy in some quarters and their relative obscurity outside Ireland would not have ensured popularity for the Irish coinage on a wider stage. The committee on coinage designs set out to create a series of designs that would “tell one story” and would be “at once beautiful, intelligible and appropriate, with a meaning both for the people of the country and for foreigners”.⁷⁵ The popularity of these designs among numismatists outside Ireland is testament to their success.⁷⁶

One aspect of the new coins that did raise questions of accessibility concerned the decision of the Department of Finance that all inscriptions, including the values of the coin, should only appear in the Irish language.⁷⁷ This feature would obviously separate Irish coins from those of the rest of the British Empire. However it also raised problems within Ireland as a significant section of the population was unfamiliar with that language. Many of the inscriptions of value were obvious enough, such as “pingin” for penny and “scilling” for shilling. However, the use of “reul” for sixpence and “leath reul” for threepence created greater challenges.⁷⁸ These considerations inspired the committee to include numbers of value on all denominations. One member of the committee on coinage designs joked that this feature was necessary “for the sake of those who are too idle or too stupid or—like myself—too old and too occupied to learn Irish”.⁷⁹ The new coinage reflected political aspiration and reality in the Irish Free State in the form of insisting that a position of exclusivity be given to the Irish language while admitting that much of the population struggled to understand basic words in that tongue.

THE ARTIST

Political considerations also entered into the process of choosing an artist to execute the designs. It was decided not to have an open competition but to send invitations to seven artists to submit designs. Each artist would be paid £50 for time and expenses in creating their designs irrespective of whether or not their designs were chosen.⁸⁰ Political considerations ensured that the committee specified that at least three of the seven artists should be Irish. The committee finally selected three Irish sculptors, Jerome Connor, Albert Power and Oliver Shepherd. It would have been politically desirable to have chosen at least one design by an Irish artist. However, President W.T. Cosgrave was alone in favouring the Irish artists when the final designs were submitted.⁸¹ The

⁷³ NAI DT S6244A, “The Irish Coinage Designs”.

⁷⁴ This design was revived after decimalisation for use on the fifty pence piece.

⁷⁵ NAI DT S6244A, committee on coinage designs – interim report, August 1926.

⁷⁶ For example, see Richard G. Doty, *Coins of the World* (New York, Bantam, 1976), p. 45, C.C. Chamberlain, *Guide to Numismatics* (London, English Universities Press, 1960), p. 81 and John Porteous, *Coins* (London, Octopus Ltd, 1973) p. 96.

⁷⁷ Leo T. McCauley “The Summary of the Proceedings of the Committee” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 26-7.

⁷⁸ The committee on coinage design considered omitting the inclusion of numerals on the “scilling” given the similarity of the Irish word to its English equivalent. Nevertheless the numeral was finally included on the final design. The inscription on the 3d piece was written as “leat reul” with a dot over the “t” to indicate an accompanying “h”.

⁷⁹ NAI DT S6244A, “The Irish Coinage Designs”.

⁸⁰ NAI DT S6244A, letter of invitation sent by Leo T. MacCauley, Department of Finance, September 1926. This method of choosing an artist by means of a limited competition was admired by the Royal Mint which recommended this method for use in designing new coins for Australia. NAI DT S6244A, “The Irish Coinage Designs”.

⁸¹ NAI DT S6244A, coinage designs, summary of views of the ministers.

designs of the Swedish artist Carl Milles⁸² and the American artist Paul Manship⁸³ did not win support in the committee or among members of the Irish government.⁸⁴ Although the committee admired the “violent rhythmical energy” of the medals of the Yugoslavian artist Ivan Mestrovic, the letter of invitation was sent to the wrong address and he missed the deadline. Nevertheless Mestrovic did design an obverse design of a woman with a harp which he generously donated to the Irish Free State and would be used on the seal of the Irish central bank after 1965.⁸⁵ The two serious competitors for the commission were the Italian artist Publio Morbiducci and a young and little known artist from Yorkshire called Percy Metcalfe.

Morbiducci had designed the depiction of the fasces on some of the coins of Mussolini’s Italy. The artistic competence of these designs, irrespective of their political symbolism, was greatly admired by members of the committee on coinage design. Some of Morbiducci’s designs, showing the Dalway harp on the obverse with and reverse designs of animals who seem to struggle against the confined space of the coins, have survived in the form of patterns. Although these designs won substantial support within the Irish government, the final commission did not go to Morbiducci. Nevertheless, the patterns submitted by the Italian artist evoked a great deal of interest in the years that followed with extremely high prices paid for surviving patterns and at least one proposal that they be re-used for a new series of Irish coins.⁸⁶

The committee finally selected the designs submitted by Percy Metcalfe. He had been selected as one of the seven competing artists on the recommendation of the secretary of the British school of art at Rome. One commentator has noted that Metcalfe was “the youngest and in some ways the least distinguished of the competitors”.⁸⁷ In fact, Metcalfe proved a fortunate choice in the sense that the young artist proved very willing to make repeated changes to his work demanded by the Irish authorities which might have met resistance from a more established artist.⁸⁸ Although opinion was



⁸² Milles had been selected on the basis of his impressive bronze medal of Gustavus Vasa which was admired by members of the committee on coinage design. Yeats p. 11-2. NAI DFA 370/58/4/1 “Draft – The Current Coinage of Ireland”.

⁸³ Manship was selected by the committee on the basis of a widely admired bronze medal of the goddess Diana hunting with her dogs. NAI DFA 370/58/4/1 “Draft – The Current Coinage of Ireland”.

⁸⁴ The committee was also impressed with the American nickel coins first struck in 1913 depicting an American bison on one side and the profile of an Indian on the other. Unfortunately the American artist James E. Fraser declined to take part in the competition. Yeats p. 12 NAI DFA 370/58/4/1 “Draft – The Current Coinage of Ireland”. The choice of the British artist Charles Shannon was probably inspired by the presence of several of his works in the national gallery of Ireland and by his reputed designs of robes and caps for use in Irish courts that had been rejected by the Honorable Society of Kings Inns in favour of the traditional wigs and gowns. Yeats p. 11. Shannon declined the offer put forward by the committee for coinage designs.

⁸⁵ This decision followed a series of letters to the press in 1964 urging that the state make use of Mestrovic’s design. For example, see *Irish Times*, 18, 20 and 21 August 1964. This design was also used to create a commemorative medal that was included with the first sets of Irish decimal coins issued in 1971. Edward Colgan, *For Want of Good Money* (Bray Co. Wicklow, Wordwell, 2003) p. 179. The design was also used in 2007 in the creation of a joint issue of a Irish 15 Euro coin and Croatian 150 Kuna coin in celebration of the work of this artist. See <http://www.croatianhistory.net/etf/art.html> (accessed 17 February 2012)

⁸⁶ One such proposal was made by Fianna Fáil TD and future Minister for Education, Gerard Brady in 1980. *Evening Herald*, 21 May 1980. See also Edward Colgan, *For Want of Good Money* (Bray Co. Wicklow, Wordwell, 2003) p. 179. Morbiducci tried unsuccessfully to reuse his bull design for use on Italian coins or medals. See http://www.lamoneta.it/topic/50323-peccatosarebbe-stato-un-bellargento/page_st_15 (accessed 17 February 2012).

⁸⁷ Brian Cleeve “Afterword” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 72.

⁸⁸ Thomas Bodkin noted “We gave Mr Metcalfe an immense amount of trouble; and we were one and all greatly impressed and gratified by the readiness – I might almost say the eagerness – with which he endeavoured to meet every point we raised, no matter how trivial. In these days, it is regrettably rare to find an

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divided within the Irish government on the merits of the animal designs submitted by the various artists, there was no real dissent on the superiority of the harp design submitted by Metcalfe.



The Yorkshireman had chosen the Trinity College or “Brian Boru” harp as his model. His design for the harp was remarkably similar to one created by Archibald McGoogan, based on the same model, that appeared on the Great Seal of the Irish Free State.⁸⁹ Finally, the young artist requested a fee of 45 guineas for each design in contrast to some of the other artists who demanded as much as £250 and £280.⁹⁰

The choice of a British artist to create the first new Irish coins in over a century was the cause of predictable grumbling, especially among disappointed Irish artists. J.J. O’Reilly, creator of a *claiomh solais* or flaming sword design that appeared on many of the earliest Irish stamps, later wrote of the “indignation that was felt and expressed at the time by Irish designers at the Government’s action in handing over the work of designing the coins to England, completely ignoring its Irish artists of whom I was one”.⁹¹ It was also alleged that Irish artists who had been invited to take part in the competition had been unfairly treated.⁹² Although reactions of this nature were only to be expected, it must be recognised that Metcalfe’s reputation rested on artistic accomplishments that had the potential to arouse much greater political controversy in Ireland had they been widely known.

Percy Metcalfe had first made his reputation at the British Empire Exhibition of 1924. His powerful depiction of steely faced lions were chosen for inclusion on two commemorative medals as symbols of the British Empire.⁹³ The success of these designs resulted in a commission to produce a large sculpture of a similarly featured lion as a fitting symbol of the “modern British Empire” for

artist so willing to weigh the least opinions of his clients, so anxious to accommodate his work to their wishes. Though his art is modern in the best sense of the word, Mr Metcalfe showed himself, in this respect, to be animated by the highest ideals of the medieval artist.” NAI DT S6244A, “The Irish Coinage Designs”. See also Leo T. McCauley “The Summary of the Proceedings of the Committee” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 26-7.

⁸⁹ TNA-PRO MINT 20/824A, Hugh Kennedy to C. Roberts, 28 December 1923. This similarity has resulted in unfounded accusations that Metcalfe had copied McGoogan’s design. *Irish Times*, 18 August 1964.

⁹⁰ NAI DT S6244A, committee on coinage designs – report on designs submitted in connection with the limited competition, 22 March 1927.

⁹¹ *Irish Press*, 8 July 1964.

⁹² *Irish Times*, 18 August 1964.

⁹³ Brian Cleeve “Afterword” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 73.

display at the palace of industry at Wembley. This Imperial lion was so successful that many additional copies of this work were produced at to meet public demand.⁹⁴ Although the Irish government had chosen designs that eschewed all links with the British Empire they could scarcely have chosen an artist more closely associated with symbols of Empire. The commission to design the coinage of the Irish Free State advanced a career that would later see Metcalfe work on the coins of many parts of the British Empire including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Southern Rhodesia, Mauritius and Fiji, Egypt and Iraq.⁹⁵ Metcalfe was also involved in designing the George Cross and the Great Seal of the Realm.

MINTING THE COINS

Advisors to the Irish government firmly rejected the feasibility of opening an Irish mint in the 1920s. There was general agreement that the expense and modest needs of the Irish Free State precluded such a major undertaking.⁹⁶ Having made this decision, the use of the Royal Mint offered the most practical means of producing the new Irish coins. The Irish had already had satisfactory dealings with the Royal Mint in producing the Great Seal of the Irish Free State. In addition, the new Irish coins would be of identical dimensions to coins already produced by the Royal Mint, with the exceptions of the nickel three pence and six pence coins. In any case, it was recognised that the Royal Mint would be able to produce the coins faster and cheaper than a new Irish mint.⁹⁷

Notwithstanding the practical foundations of the decision to commission the Royal Mint, W.T. Cosgrave did try to make some political capital out of the choice during Anglo Irish negotiations in the years that followed. On other occasions the choice worked to the disadvantage of the Irish government as a result of predictable accusations that the nationality of the artist and the location of the mint meant that the new Irish coinage was actually a British imposition.⁹⁸ Although these arguments do not correspond with the history of the coinage of the Irish Free State, the use of the Royal Mint did cause some embarrassment in the years that followed. For example, the Irish Government was forced to object when the Royal Mint placed its name and the coat of arms of the United Kingdom on boxes containing sets of Irish coins in the 1930s.

ABSENCE OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

The committee on coinage designs made a conscious decision not to place religious symbols or images of saints on the coins. Thomas Bodkin justified this step by describing the irreverence that would have resulted from the use of such images: "I saw in my mind's eye, a peasant at the fair being paid for a bonham with the image of St Patrick and, impelled by the habit of centuries, to spit upon that image for luck before he rammed it in his trouser pocket. I saw two loafers at the bar of a public house tossing as to which of them should pay for drinks, according as to whether the image of St Bridget or St Columcille came uppermost".⁹⁹ The invitation to the public to suggest designs did not result in proposals of religious symbols apart from one lady who suggested a depiction of a

⁹⁴ <http://ashteadpottery.com/metcalfe.html> (accessed 18 February 2012).

⁹⁵ Brian Cleeve "Afterword" in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland's Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 73. Metcalfe assisted with the change of the inscription from "Saorstát Éireann" on the obverse of the coins to "Éire" that first appeared on Irish coins in 1939. He took this opportunity to make minor alterations to the harp design on the obverse. Brian Cleeves suggests that in 1970 Metcalf may have approved the new bronze decimal coins at the request their designer. Brian Cleeve "Afterword" in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland's Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 73-4.

⁹⁶ NAI DT S3875, memorandum on "Silver Coinage and Ten Shilling Currency Notes", H.S. Guinness, 2 February 1924 and "Memorandum on Token Coinage", Department of Finance, undated 1924.

⁹⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 161, 27 January 1926.

⁹⁸ For example, one letter to the Irish Times in the 1960s declared "our currency is that of Britain, mixed with a percentage of a kind of token coinage also produced by the British Mint with Irish details." *Irish Times*, 18 August 1964

⁹⁹ NAI DT S6244A, "The Irish Coinage Designs".

“kneeling angel pouring money from a sack”.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, an initial murmur of criticism began to grow in intensity as the date for issuing the new coins approached in late 1928.

The exclusive use of animal designs was criticised in some quarters as being pagan in nature. The committee that chose these designs was accused of “a turning down of God”.¹⁰¹ The cathedral chapter of Tuam went to the trouble of passing a resolution:

“That we consider the designs of the proposed new coins utterly unsuited for the coinage of this ancient Christian nation. We are strongly of opinion that they should give expression to the ideals which kept the national and Christian spirit alive in this land through the centuries”.¹⁰²

One of the most extreme reactions appeared in a letter to the *Irish Independent*:

“If these pagan symbols once get a hold, then is the thin end of the wedge of Freemasonry sunk into the very life of our Catholicity, for the sole object of having these pagan symbols instead of religious emblems on our coins is to wipe out all traces of religion from our minds, to forget the “Land of Saints”, and beget a land of devil-worshippers, where evil may reign supreme.”¹⁰³

Thomas Bodkin was stung by the contrast between the generous praise from abroad for the designs on the new Irish coins and the hostility or indifference that he perceived in Ireland. His chagrin was evident when he noted “The Committee appreciate such generous praise, though it would have been still more welcome had it come from their own countrymen”.¹⁰⁴ Bodkin argued that the animals that appeared on Irish coins were also created of God and therefore could be considered as Christian symbols. “Surely it is only a pagan” he added “who would associate our shilling with Mithras or with Apis rather than St. Matthew”.¹⁰⁵ Bodkin emphasised that the critics of the new coinage were not able to point to any Christian state that had adorned their coins with religious emblems.¹⁰⁶ Yet it should be noted that Bodkin’s defence of the new coinage was itself highly deferential to religion in emphasising examples of clerical approval for the designs.

ABSENCE OF MONARCHICAL SYMBOLS

Difficulties with the new coinage were not confined to Roman Catholics. Indeed, the opposition within the Oireachtas to the new coinage included a disproportionate number of Protestants. This consideration may have influenced Thomas Johnson, leader of the Labour Party, when he speculated that the absence of the King’s portrait on these coins was a contributory cause of this opposition.¹⁰⁷ Much of the political reaction in the United Kingdom to the new Irish coinage focused on this issue.

The British had ample reason to anticipate these features long before the first Irish coins were issued. This is evident in events that took place in the aftermath of the Imperial Conference of 1926. Kevin O’Higgins, the Minister for External Affairs and leader of the Irish delegation to the conference, decided to undertake exploratory discussions as to the possible unification of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland within a new “Kingdom of Ireland”. The Dominions Secretary, L.S. Amery, made it clear that any such settlement would require a change from the tricolour flag used in

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Bodkin, “Postscript to ‘Coinage of Saorstát Éireann, 1928’” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 55.

¹⁰¹ Thomas Bodkin, “Postscript to ‘Coinage of Saorstát Éireann, 1928’” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 56.

¹⁰² Thomas Bodkin, “Postscript to ‘Coinage of Saorstát Éireann, 1928’” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 56.

¹⁰³ Thomas Bodkin, “Postscript to ‘Coinage of Saorstát Éireann, 1928’” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 56.

¹⁰⁴ NAI DT S6244A, “The Irish Coinage Designs”.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Bodkin, “Postscript to ‘Coinage of Saorstát Éireann, 1928’” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 57.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid* at p. 59.

¹⁰⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 446, 4 February 1926.

practice in the Irish Free State and the inclusion of the King's portrait on Irish coins and stamps.¹⁰⁸ O'Higgins had some reservations concerning the flag but was prepared to accede to the inclusion of a depiction of the King on Irish coins and stamps.¹⁰⁹ The assassination of Kevin O'Higgins in 1927 prevented his scheme from advancing any further than these exploratory discussions. The Irish Free State continued with its plans to create a new coinage without any representation of the King.

Questions concerning the Irish coins were raised at Westminster a few weeks after the new coinage was finally issued. Lord Danesfort, a Unionist peer with Irish roots¹¹⁰, complained to the House of Lords that the reasons behind the introduction of the new Irish coinage had never been explained. He made predictable objections as to the inconvenience that this would cause to Northern Ireland and visitors to the Irish Free State. However, when Danesfort declared that the designs on the Irish coins were "remarkable" it soon became clear that he did not intend to pay a compliment. Danesfort was unimpressed with the "designs of somewhat ignoble animals such as pigs and barn door fowls". Nevertheless, Danesfort's real complaint concerned another aspect of the designs on the new Irish coins:

"On that coinage there is one design which is conspicuously absent from every silver and copper coin issued by the Free State, and that is the design which of all others you would expect to be there—namely, the head of His Majesty the King. That design has been completely eliminated from the new coinage as it had previously been eliminated from the design of the postage stamps already issued by the Free State. ... Is there any precedent of any of His Majesty's Dominions issuing coinage with the head of the King eliminated from the design?"

Danesfort raised the possibility of using powers claimed by the Coinage Act, 1870 in controlling the designs used on the coinage of the Empire. In truth, the use of Imperial legislation to impose control over Dominion coinage was a dead letter by the late 1920s. The new Irish coinage was a tangible symbol of new realities in British Imperial Law and also reflected a symbolic separation between the Irish Free State and the British Empire. Arthur Berriedale Keith, a leading authority on British Imperial law, noted "It is significant of the unique position of the Irish Free State that all trace of the Crown is eliminated from stamp and local coinages alike".¹¹¹

Despite some offence at the exclusion of the King's portrait, it is important to note that many commentators from the United Kingdom and the Dominions expressed highly favourable opinions of the designs chosen for the new Irish coins.

¹⁰⁸ TNA-PRO CAB 24/182, "Proposed Creation of a Kingdom of Ireland", memorandum by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 13 December 1926. Amery also identified "the extravagances of the Irish language cult" as one of the obstacles to unification.

¹⁰⁹ O'Higgins insisted that a flag containing the Union Jack would cause difficulty in Ireland. Nevertheless he insisted that there was sentiment about dropping the tricolour and suggested a harp and crown on a blue background in its place. John Barnes and David Nicholson (eds), *The Leo Amery Diaries: Vol. I* (London, 1980) p. 483. Although O'Higgins' proposal never came to fruition it was not the only example of Irish flexibility over the issue of the national flag.

¹¹⁰ John Butcher, First Baron Danesfort (1853-1935) was the son of Samuel Butcher (1811-1876), Bishop of Meath and Professor of Divinity at Trinity College Dublin.

¹¹¹ A.B. Keith, *The King and the Imperial Crown* (London, 1936), p. 358.



Winston Churchill made sure to praise their beauty when opening important negotiations with the Irish government in early 1929. While this might be dismissed as a clever negotiating tactic, these opinions were shared by more disinterested authorities in the 1920s and afterwards. Commentators on international numismatics have described the coins of the Irish Free State as “strikingly artistic” and “a complete break-away from the English tradition” with “highly original designs”.¹¹² R.B. Bennett, Minister for Finance and future Prime Minister of Canada, praised the “originality of design and excellence of execution” that marked the Irish coins. The most striking praise of all came from a correspondent with the *Manchester Guardian*:

“I think that the Irish coinage will be acknowledged as the most beautiful in the modern world. I doubt if any country ... would have had the imagination and freedom to lay down the conditions that would have made such designs possible.”¹¹³

THE REPLACEMENT OF BRITISH COINS IN THE IRISH FREE STATE

Although the symbolism of the designs on the new Irish coins attracted considerable attention in the 1920s, the uncertain future of the British coins circulating in the Irish Free State ignited a political controversy based on firm financial grounds. It should be remembered that the Irish government planned from the outset to gradually replace the British coins circulating in the Irish Free State. However, the question of what would be done with the displaced British coins remained unsettled. The solution for the British copper coins (pennies, half pennies and farthings) was simple. These could be melted down and used to mint their Irish replacements. This solution was not available for the higher value silver coins given that the Irish had already decided to replace the British three pence and six pence coins of 50% silver with coins of pure nickel and the British shilling, florin and halfcrown coins of 50% silver with Irish equivalents of 75% silver. The Irish government seemed confident from the outset that their British counterparts would be content to buy back the displaced silver coins at face value. Warnings by members of the Oireachtas that the British might not prove so obliging were brushed aside by the Irish ministers.¹¹⁴ However, the

¹¹² Richard G. Doty, *Coins of the World* (New York, Bantam, 1976), p. 45 and C.C. Chamberlain, *Guide to Numismatics* (London, English Universities Press, 1960), p. 81.

¹¹³ The *Evening Standard* stated “We may well be jealous of the beautiful new Irish coins” while the *Nation* concluded “The Free State has the most beautiful set of coins in the world”. Thomas Bodkin, “Postscript to ‘Coinage of Saorstát Éireann, 1928’” in Brian Cleeve (ed) *W.B. Yeats and the Designs of Ireland’s Coinage* (Dublin & New York 1972), p. 60.

¹¹⁴ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 438, 440-1 and 448, 4 February 1926 and *Seanad Debates*, vol. 6, col. 504, 3 March 1926.

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British government made it clear that this solution was unacceptable soon after the Irish began informal negotiations with the Royal Mint.

Winston Churchill, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, insisted that the United Kingdom already had an ample supply of coinage given that the Bank of England already had £5.5 million of silver coins in storage. In any case, it should be remembered that there were very substantial profits to be made from minting coins. It was far more lucrative for the United Kingdom to buy bullion and mint new silver coins rather than accept the British coins circulating in the Irish Free State at face value, a course of action that offered no profit whatsoever. In these circumstances the Irish government should not have been taken by surprise when Winston Churchill made it clear that the United Kingdom was only prepared to accept British coins circulating in the Irish Free State at their bullion value rather than their face value. This predictable development did not prevent the Irish from making vigorous objections to Churchill's obstinate stance which threatened to deprive them of their own profits in minting the new Irish coins. The Irish government argued that the Irish people would not understand why British coins that bore the King's portrait were only worth their bullion value. Ernest Blythe made it clear that British honour and credibility were at stake. He told the Dáil that if the United Kingdom refused to take these coins at face value "it would be very like dishonouring a cheque".¹¹⁵

Churchill was determined to take a hard line on this issue. He estimated that the loss to the British taxpayer in taking back the silver coins circulating in would be approximately £1,800,000. He insisted that British taxpayers would not understand why they should be deprived of this considerable sum "just because the Irish want to get rid of the King's head".¹¹⁶ If the Irish wanted to indulge "this sentiment" they should do so at their own expense.¹¹⁷ Churchill ordered that draft legislation be prepared that would grant powers to prohibit the importation of certain classes of coin into the United Kingdom. He warned the Irish government that British opponents of 1921 Treaty would derive considerable satisfaction from legislation of this nature which, he predicted, would go through parliament with ease.¹¹⁸ Churchill pressed on with his plans to draft the necessary legislation notwithstanding the anxiety expressed by some British ministers at the negative impact it would have on Anglo Irish relations.¹¹⁹



The need to respond to Churchill's threats received the personal attention of W.T. Cosgrave, President of the Executive Council, as a result of the absence of his Minister for Finance at an international conference. The Irish leader seemed deeply offended by the suggestion that the introduction of new Irish coins was nothing more than a reflection of Irish "sentiment". Cosgrave insisted that a new Irish coinage was a logical outcome of the change that had occurred in Ireland and an important aspect of the achievement of fiscal independence.¹²⁰

The cornerstone of the argument put forward by the Irish government was that the British had accepted the return of silver coinage at face value from Australia in 1910 and South Africa in 1922 following the introduction of their national coinages. The Irish insisted that the treatment of these Dominions must be treated as precedents and that the same facility must be made available to the Irish Free State.¹²¹ Churchill denied that any Dominion precedent had been created in the

¹¹⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 448, 4 February 1926 and *Seanad Debates*, vol. 6, col. 508, 3 March 1926.

¹¹⁶ NAI DT S4517, Churchill to Cosgrave, 13 June 1928.

¹¹⁷ NAI DT S4517, Churchill to Cosgrave, 13 June 1928.

¹¹⁸ NAI DT S4517, Churchill to Cosgrave, 13 June 1928.

¹¹⁹ TNA-PRO CAB 23/57 "Irish Free State – Silver and Currency in", 23 May 1928.

¹²⁰ NAI DT S4517, Cosgrave to Churchill, 9 July 1928.

¹²¹ NAI DT S4517, Cosgrave to Churchill, 9 July 1928 and draft response to Churchill, December 1928. See also *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 448 and 451, 4 February 1926.

treatment of Australia and South Africa. His position was partially based on fluctuations in the value of silver but its key argument focused on the nature of the new self-governing state in Ireland. The Irish Free State might have been recognised as a Dominion under the 1921 Treaty but, unlike Australia or South Africa, it had once been a part of the United Kingdom. Churchill argued that British and Irish taxpayers had been joint beneficiaries of the profits accrued from the issuing of the silver coins that now circulated in the Irish Free State unlike their counterparts in Australia or South Africa.¹²²

The dual identity of the Irish Free State as a Dominion and successor to the United Kingdom in the territory of the 26 counties was the cause of numerous legal complications in the 1920s and 1930s. In strict legal terms the two positions were not always compatible. For example, this question was of crucial importance when deciding which Westminster statutes had been inherited by the Irish Free State in 1922.¹²³ In addition, the psychological difficulties that even Irish supporters of the 1921 Treaty had with the idea of an “Irish Dominion” provided the Irish government with a powerful incentive to favour the alternative position of treating their state as a successor to the position of the United Kingdom. The negotiations related to the replacement of silver coinage is interesting because it saw a reversal of this preference. The Irish government insisted that a Dominion precedent had been set in this area and demanded that their state be treated as a Dominion rather than as a successor to the position of the United Kingdom. W.T. Cosgrave was convinced that it would constitute “unfair and unexpected discrimination against us” if the Irish Free State were treated differently from Australia and South Africa in matters of coinage.¹²⁴

The dispute over the withdrawal of British coins was further complicated by uncertainty as to the total value of silver coinage in circulation in the Irish Free State. The British put forward a figure of £3 million while the Irish estimates were closer to £1.5 million.¹²⁵ Another complication was created by the Irish demand for compensation for the considerable profits accrued to the British Treasury as a consequence of the circulation of British banknotes in the Irish Free State between 1922 and 1928, when Irish banknotes were finally introduced. The British responded that the Irish had made use of these banknotes for their own convenience during this period.

Although Churchill had threatened to introduce legislation banning the importation of silver coins from the Irish Free State he was aware that this measure would not prevent the Irish government from finding other ways to dump silver coins in the United Kingdom, most likely across the border with Northern Ireland.¹²⁶ Ernest Blythe had told the Dáil in 1926 that British refusal to accept silver coins “would not prevent us getting rid of the coin at its face value, but the process might be slower”.¹²⁷ W.T. Cosgrave raised the possibility of the Irish Free State making certain agreed payments to the British Treasury in the form of silver coins.¹²⁸ Winston Churchill was adamant that the British government would be under no obligation to accept payments in this form.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, Irish threats to find means of dumping silver coins in the United Kingdom could not be ignored.

The replacement of coins in the Irish Free State soon became entangled with other areas of Anglo Irish dispute when the issue was finally raised at Westminster. In particular, this issue was raised in conjunction with disputes over compensation for persons who had suffered loss in the turbulent years surrounding the creation of the Irish Free State. Unionist voices at Westminster contrasted the substantial profits that would be made in the minting of the new Irish coins against

¹²² NAI DT S4517, Churchill to Cosgrave, 28 August 1928 and TNA-PRO CAB 24/197 “Silver and Currency in the Irish Free State” memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 31 July 1928.

¹²³ See Thomas Mohr, “British Imperial Statutes and Irish Law: Statutes Passed Before the Creation of the Irish Free State”. 31(3) (2010) *Journal of Legal History*, 299.

¹²⁴ NAI DT S4517, draft response to Churchill, December 1928.

¹²⁵ See NAI DT S4517, Churchill to Cosgrave, 13 June 1928 and Cosgrave to Churchill, 9 July 1928.

¹²⁶ TNA-PRO CAB23/58, “The Irish Free State – silver currency in”.

¹²⁷ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 448, 4 February 1926 and *Seanad Debates*, vol. 6, col. 508, 3 March 1926.

¹²⁸ These payments had been agreed under the “Ultimate Financial Settlement” of 1926. See NAI DT S4517, Cosgrave to Churchill, 9 July 1928.

¹²⁹ TNA-PRO CAB 24/197 “Silver and Currency in the Irish Free State” memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 31 July 1928.

failure to pay claims made by Irish loyalists for personal injury and loss of property during the conflict of 1919 to 1921. The dispute over silver coins also became entangled with an Anglo Irish disagreement over the level of compensation payable to transferred civil servants. These financial disputes were used to portray the Irish as habitual spongers who continually asked for financial concessions while not living up to their own moral debts. In particular, Lord Danefort argued the Irish were issuing an unnecessary coinage in order to make substantial profits while expecting the British taxpayer to bear the cost that resulted. He was convinced that the Irish had issued the new coins following the example of the Biblical parable of the persistent widow, who extracted a favourable result from a judge as a result of indefatigable pestering. Danefort asked his fellow peers in the House of Lords:

“Is there anyone in the Irish Free State who ever thinks he has got enough out of the British Government? ... What do they think? Do they think they should have another million or another two millions?”

The emotions raised by the dispute over the replacement of silver coins in the Irish Free State illustrate the truth of Oscar Wilde’s words “Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side”.¹³⁰ On 19 January 1929 Ernest Blythe and John A. Costello met with Winston Churchill and Leopold Amery, the Dominions Secretary, to see if a solution could be found. These negotiations were complicated by the entanglement of other political and financial disagreements with the dispute over coinage.¹³¹ Nevertheless, the meeting concluded with an amicable settlement. Churchill agreed to accept British silver coins circulating in the Irish Free State at face value on a phased basis over the next ten years.¹³² This agreement endured despite efforts made by de Valera to reopen the dispute in 1932 as part of the “Economic War”.¹³³ The arrangement was actually extended in 1938 when it was agreed that £60,000 of silver coins a year would be accepted at face value by the United Kingdom between 1940 and 1950. Indeed, the dispute over the gradual replacement of British silver coins in the 26 counties had an ironic conclusion. The disruption caused by the outbreak of the Second World War led to a shortage of silver coins in the United Kingdom. This led the Royal Mint to indicate that it was prepared to accept more than the agreed annual figure of £60,000 of silver coins at face value. Unfortunately, the Irish were suffering from similar shortages and responded that they were “unable to see any possibility of repatriating any British silver coin in the near future”.¹³⁴ The coins that neither side had wanted in the 1920s proved to be rather useful after all.

CONCLUSION

The creation of the new Irish coinage in the 1920s was not an enterprise that was devoid of risk. The decision to boost the silver content of the higher value coins was based on sense of

¹³⁰ Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) Act 2.

¹³¹ A.B. Keith argues that the need to settle dispute concerning the return of British silver coins influenced the conclusion of negotiations on compensating civil servants who had retired following the conclusion of the 1921 Treaty. This dispute also concerned the integrity of the appeal from the Irish Supreme Court to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Irish government denied any connection between these issues. “Notes on Imperial Constitutional Law” (1929) 11 *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law* 257.

¹³² Under this agreement £50,000 of British silver coins were to be repatriated by 31 March 1929. This would be followed by £100,000 in April 1929; £60,000 in April 1930 and £60,000 every April after 1930 up to 1939. The total cost to the United Kingdom, based on the value of silver in 1929, was estimated at £500,000.

¹³³ De Valera also resurrected Irish demands for a share in the profits derived by the United Kingdom from the circulation of British banknotes in the Irish Free State between 1922 and 1928. He also demanded compensation for the United Kingdom’s abandonment of the gold standard in 1931. *British Parliamentary Papers*, Cmd. 4184, papers relating to a conference between representatives of the United Kingdom and of the Irish Free State, 14-15 October 1932.

¹³⁴ Only £60,000 of British silver coin was sent to the United Kingdom between April 1940 and March 1944. The return of coinage in the quantities agreed in 1938 was only resumed in 1944 when the war was almost concluded. Maurice Moynihan, *Currency and Central Banking in Ireland 1922-1960* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1975) p.132.

The political significance of the coinage of the Irish Free State

insecurity as to their reception by the Irish public. In addition, the Irish government had taken a substantial financial risk in minting the coins before securing agreement as to the future of the British coins currently in circulation in the Irish Free State. The exclusion of the King's portrait and any reference to the monarchy on the Irish coins was bound to attract some controversy. Nevertheless, the value of a separate Irish coinage as a declaration of sovereignty was too important to be ignored by the Irish government. It was, as Irish memoranda suggested, essential in emphasising that the status of the Irish Free State was no less than the Dominions of Canada, Australia and South Africa which had issued their own token coinage soon after coming into existence. The Irish government was not deterred by sceptics who argued that the other Dominions did not suffer inconvenience in having a separate coinage from the United Kingdom since, unlike the Irish Free State, they were separated from that country by great distances.¹³⁵ It should be remembered that the right to issue a separate coinage was one of the distinguishing features between the autonomy offered by successive proposals for Irish Home Rule and the status finally achieved under the 1921 Treaty.¹³⁶ It should also be noted that many Irish commentators who supported the Treaty insisted that the true status of the Irish Free State was not just equal but in excess of that enjoyed by the "daughters of Britannia" in the new world. The creation of an independent Irish coinage was an essential aspect in maintaining claims of this nature.

The story of the creation of the new coins encapsulates much of the political history surrounding the origins of the Irish Free State. The conservatism behind the refusal to depart from the coin denominations inherited from the British was typified the outlook of the Cosgrave administration.¹³⁷ In addition, the need to establish an image of respectability for the new State was an important component in the decision to mint coins with a higher silver value than their British counterparts. Finally, the designs of the coins that were finally minted in 1928 reflected the denial of an "Irish Dominion" that was common even among Irish supporters of the settlement inherent in the 1921 Treaty. The instructions given to the committee on coinage designs demanded a break with the conventions followed on coinage throughout the British Empire. The symbolism of new Irish coins was closer to those of the republic that had been denied by the 1921 Treaty.



This reality ensured that no substantial change in the national coinage was necessary when Eamon de Valera introduced a new Constitution in 1937, apart from changing the name of "Saorstát

¹³⁵ *Dáil Debates*, vol. 14, col. 165, 27 January 1926 and col. 441, 4 February 1926.

¹³⁶ Section 4, Government of Ireland Act, 1920.

¹³⁷ The Irish also maintained British limits on legal tender of 40 shillings for silver coins and one shilling for bronze coins. A limit of 5 shillings was set for the new nickel coins.

Éireann” to “Éire”.¹³⁸ No additional change was necessary because the dominant message of the coinage of the Irish Free State had always been a denial of the very existence of an “Irish Dominion”.

Yet, the relationship between the Irish Free State and Dominion status was more complex than might be suggested by the symbols that appeared on the coins. Behind these images lay origins that were deeply intertwined with Dominion status. The existence of separate coinages in the Dominions was used to justify the need to create a distinct coinage for the Irish Free State. The first step taken by the Irish government in drafting the legislation to create this coinage was to examine Dominion precedents in Canada and South Africa. The Irish demanded strict adherence to Dominion precedents when the British initially refused to accept British silver coins at face value. It was argued that a failure to treat the Irish Free State in the same manner as other Dominions would constitute unwarranted discrimination. The Irish argument on this matter might be put down to tactical considerations aimed at saving considerable sums of money. However, Irish sensitivity at being treated differently from the older Dominions was a recurring theme in the 1920s and early 1930s.¹³⁹ W.T. Cosgrave repeatedly expressed his dissatisfaction at the progress of Anglo Irish negotiations concerning the ownership of the Hugh Lane pictures by insisting that the United Kingdom would never treat one of the other Dominions in such a manner.¹⁴⁰ In addition, the stance taken by the Irish government with respect to the replacement of British silver coins was not the only occasion in which the Irish authorities chose to treat their new state as a Dominion and not as a successor to the position of the United Kingdom. In 1928 the Irish Supreme Court was faced with similar choice in *Performing Right Society v. Bray Urban District Council* and produced a decision that treated the Irish Free State as a Dominion.¹⁴¹ The contention that the new Irish state was a British Dominion had a profound impact on Irish internal politics and external policies in the 1920s and 1930s. Although this reality was effectively denied by the designs that appeared on the new Irish coinage it constituted an integral part of the history of its creation.

The final “Dominion aspect” of the new Irish coinage occurred immediately after the first coins were minted in 1928. The first Irish coins produced since 1822 were placed in sets and sent to the United Kingdom and to each of the Dominions. The only other state to enjoy this privilege was the Vatican. Once again, the special relationship with the other self-governing entities of the British Empire was fully recognised. This provides another example of the manner in which the history of the new Irish coinage reflects the full complexity of the identity of the Irish Free State as an entity founded on the acceptance and rejection of Dominion status, both inextricably intertwined.

The maintenance of the link between Irish currency and the pound sterling was by far the most important Imperial link to be retained after the creation of the Irish Free State. The maintenance of this link with the United Kingdom had no equivalent in any other Dominion. Before the First World War the currencies used in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand remained on par with the pound sterling. The severing of the link with gold after the conclusion of the conflict ensured that these currencies began to deviate in value.¹⁴² This development resulted in a detailed proposal aimed at creating a single currency for the self-governing entities of the Empire at the Imperial Conference of 1923. This proposal met with support from New Zealand and Australia, opposition from South Africa and the United Kingdom Treasury¹⁴³ and indifference from Canada,

¹³⁸ This change appeared on Irish coins issued from 1939 onwards.

¹³⁹ The initial wariness of the Irish government to engage with the negotiations at the Imperial Conferences before 1923 was also based on fears of discrimination. When the Irish did engage with these negotiations the assertion that the Irish Free State must be treated in like manner as the other Dominions was the keystone of the stance taken by Irish delegates.

¹⁴⁰ TNA-PRO, CAB 24/180 C.P 230 (26) “Lane Picture Bequest – Note by Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs”, 8 June 1926.

¹⁴¹ [1928] I.R. 512. See Thomas Mohr, “British Imperial Statutes and Irish Law: Statutes Passed Before the Creation of the Irish Free State”. 31(3) (2010) *Journal of Legal History* 310-1.

¹⁴² NAI 2009/27/52 “Imperial Co-operation in the British Empire – Currency Co-operation in the British Empire” memorandum prepared in the Treasury, October 1923.

¹⁴³ NAI 2009/27/52 “Imperial Co-operation in the British Empire – Currency Co-operation in the British Empire” memorandum prepared in the Treasury, October 1923.

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Newfoundland and the Irish Free State.¹⁴⁴ It was clear from the outset that Canada and Newfoundland would not be included in an Empire currency as a result of their close economic ties with the United States and the absence of existing links with sterling. The admission of the Irish delegate of not being able to “contribute anything of value to the discussion” might cause surprise until it is considered that the Irish Free State was already determined to retain a close link with sterling irrespective of the position of the other Dominions.¹⁴⁵ The final abandonment of the “Empire currency” proposal had no effect on the Irish Free State.

The Irish pound retained the link to sterling throughout the economic crises of the 1920s and 1930s. The final break with sterling in 1979 was precipitated by Irish participation in a “European Exchange Rate Mechanism” that did not include the United Kingdom.¹⁴⁶ The most visible impact of this development was reflected in the change in circulating coins. Although the Irish Free State created its own coins in 1928 the link with sterling ensured that the British coins continued to circulate in the 26 counties. In addition, the new Irish coins were a common sight in circulation in Northern Ireland.¹⁴⁷ There was no reason why British and Irish coins could not be used interchangeably when both currencies were at parity, both countries removed the silver content for their coinage and both countries went through decimalisation at almost the same time. The break between the two currencies in 1979 substantially reduced the mixture of coinage that had previously been visible on both sides of the border. In addition, this development precipitated the decision to finally create an Irish mint.

By the end of the twentieth century the Irish had reversed a policy of maintaining a currency union with the United Kingdom in favour of establishing one with countries in continental Europe. This shift became even more noticeable when Euro coins were introduced in Ireland in 2002. Unlike the coinage of the Irish Free State, the Irish coins produced after 2002 were prepared to depict common designs as a symbol of unity with other countries. Once again, the designs on Irish coins can be seen as reflecting the political circumstances of their time. It is worth noting that a popular author on the history of numismatics has lamented that the coinage of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries “have ceased to express any particular political idea”.¹⁴⁸ The history of Irish coinage in this period and beyond provides ample evidence that this conclusion is far from accurate.

¹⁴⁴ NAI 2009/27/22 “Imperial Economic Conference – Empire Currency” meeting of 26 October 1923. These discussions revolved around a proposal contained in “Empire Currency Bills”, memorandum prepared by Mr. J.F. Darling for submission by the Manchester Association of Importers and Exporters to the Imperial Economic Conference, October, 1923. See NAI FIN/1/1795. Darling was a former director of the London Joint City and Midland Bank. His proposal was raised at the Imperial Conference by the New Zealand delegation. Darling’s scheme would not have changed the circulating media in different parts of the Empire. Instead, each part of the Empire would agree to issue currency only against gold or new Empire currency bills. The Indian rupee was expressly excluded from this proposal.

¹⁴⁵ NAI 2009/27/22 “Imperial Economic Conference – Empire Currency” meeting of 26 October 1923.

¹⁴⁶ In 1978 Ireland joined the European Monetary System while United Kingdom declined to do so. The European Monetary System included the creation of a European Exchange Rate Mechanism which created agreed bands within which currencies would be allowed to fluctuate. By 1979 the pound sterling appreciated against all the currencies in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism including the Irish pound. This threatened to take the Irish pound, which was still linked at parity with sterling, outside its permissible band. The final break with the currency of the United Kingdom that had been maintained since the foundation of the Irish Free State was now unavoidable.

¹⁴⁷ This mixing of the coinage was kept in check by an understanding that Irish banks importing Irish coins, in many cases from their branches in Northern Ireland, would export the equivalent amount of British coins. After the conclusion of the Second World War informal agreements between the Irish Central Bank, the Bank of England, the Royal Mint and commercial banks in the United Kingdom and in Ireland also regulated the repatriation of coins. Maurice Moynihan, *Currency and Central Banking in Ireland 1922-1960* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1975) p.132.

¹⁴⁸ John Porteous, *Coins* (London, Octopus Ltd, 1973) p. 95.

LIMERICK MONEY

John Rainey

INTRODUCTION

This preliminary study on Limerick Money was written in 2009 and presented to the Numismatic Society of Ireland Northern Branch as an illustrated talk in Belfast on 8th May that year. Since then I have acquired more specimens of this coinage to expand the range of different die types and upgrade condition. I have also agonised over how to interpret the evidence. In other words try to establish what the coins can tell us.

I do feel that this study has the potential to become a paper and indeed I have had some very useful feedback from Robert Heslip, Ronan Fitzpatrick and Colm Gallagher on a small number of printed copies I circulated. I will comment further on this advice and criticism at the end of the talk since their comments refer to the content you are about to hear and should help stimulate what I hope will be a lively debate at the end. Indeed I have left a few copies of the talk around the room to allow you to refer back to what I have said.

In discussions with various people, most notably Colm, it seems that some of my speculation on the issue of the Limerick Money and indeed the Gunmoney struck in Limerick after the battle of the Boyne is suspect. For example I had thought it possible that the Gunmoney was continued for propaganda purposes or to perpetuate the idea that it would be redeemed. Perhaps the issue of Limerick Money was intended to promote and maintain faith in James II as king.

Such theories did not seem popular, leading to a realisation that I would need to engage with someone with an understanding of late 17th century Ireland and, in particular, what was happening within and around Limerick at the time. Someone who could relate to the coinage, reflect on the need for it and put things into context to arrive at a more authoritative joint paper on the subject.

Several recent joint lectures and papers where collectors interact with historians or academics are a testament to the success of this arrangement.

For this reason the text tonight is as it was on 8th May 2009 and it is perhaps appropriate as this is the form in which it received the Numismatic Society of Ireland's silver Written Award last year which was much appreciated.

Thus the talk will be short. I will try to prolong it by dwelling on some of Ian McBurney's excellent photographs to allow you to enjoy them. I will interrupt myself, digress and perhaps try to expand on some of the points.

My hope is that the evening will develop into a useful debate on this neglected issue.

LIMERICK MONEY

In 1691, after James II had fled from Ireland, a coinage, now commonly known as Limerick Money or, contemporarily as Hibernias, was struck by his supporters in Limerick. This coinage is currently firmly established in catalogues as consisting of halfpennies and farthings.



Figure 1 – Limerick Money Obverse and Reverse, Halfpenny & Farthing

In Numismatics, as in life, what we know, or think we know, is seldom as interesting as pondering on what we may never know. This notion forms the basis of this short talk, the main purpose of which is to speculate on the existence of the Limerick farthing. In the course of this, I hope to widen our appreciation of a relatively neglected issue and challenge the view that the coinage was crudely engraved and struck. In addition I wish to dispel the myth that the pieces now generally regarded as farthings were struck on small Gunmoney shillings. They were not.

THE NUMISMATIC LITERATURE

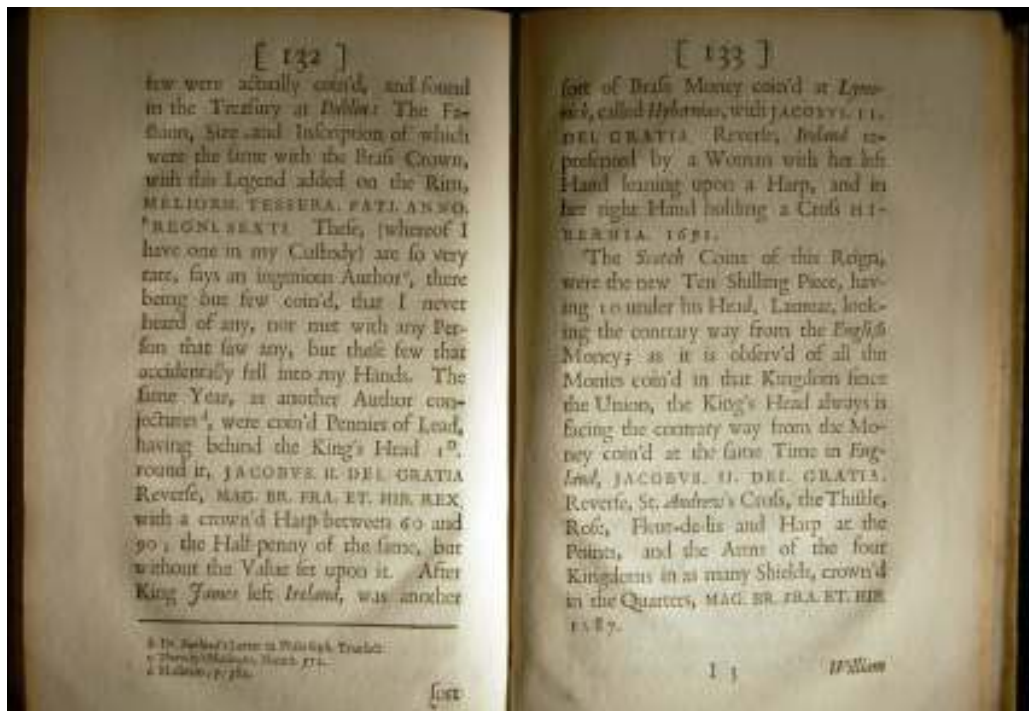


Figure 2 - An Historical Account of English Money (1726) Stephen Martin Leake, p132-133

In order to understand how thinking has evolved over the years it was necessary to revisit the authoritative literature that has been published during the past 300 years. The first reference I can find to Limerick Money in specifically numismatic literature is by Stephen Martin Leake in "An Historical Account of English Money" first published anonymously in 1726, though mis-dated M.DC.XXXVI. It reads:-

"After King James left Ireland, was another sort of Brass Money coin'd at Limerick, called Hybernias with JACOBUS.II. DIE GRATIA. Reverse, Ireland represented by a Woman with her left Hand leaning upon a Harp, and in her right Hand holding a Cross HIBERNIA. 1691." (Final sentence, p132)

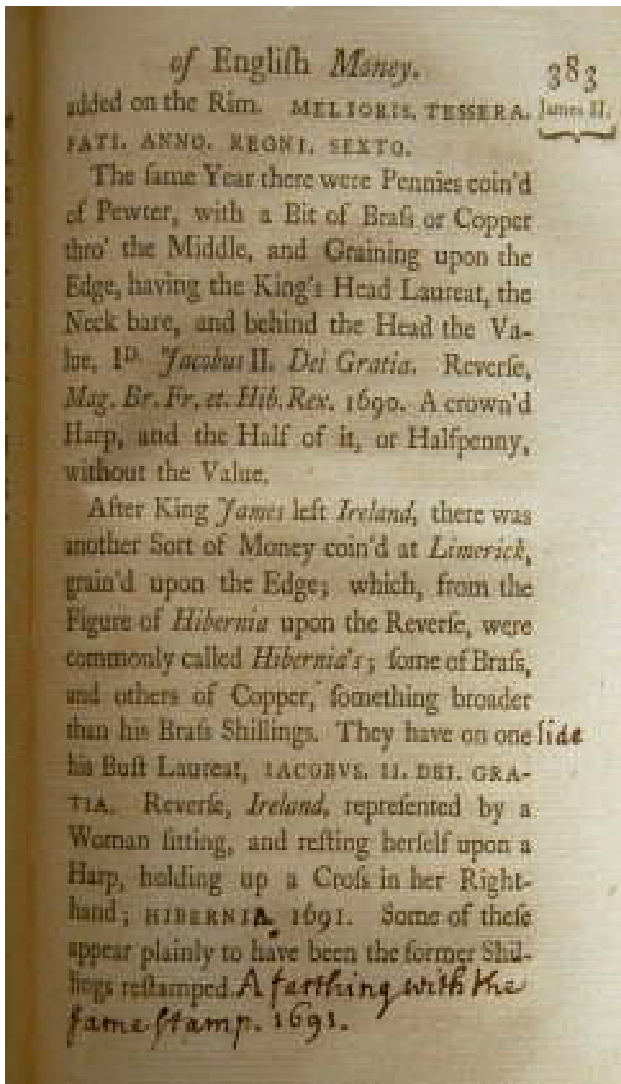


Figure 3 - An Historical Account of English Money (1745) Stephen Martin Leake, p383, with The Reverend Lewis' handwritten note about a farthing.

We are told in Harrington Manville's Encyclopaedia of British Numismatics Manville Volume III, p46, 49 & 50, that Archbishop Sharp's Observations on the Coinage of England was finally published in part in 1773 and in its entirety in 1785. Sadly, I don't have either book to which to refer.

Manville in his Volume III reveals:-

"Sharp prepared these substantial notes on the coins of England, Scotland and Ireland before 1695, and although not published as such during his lifetime,

My copy of the second edition of this work, much enlarged and printed in 1745 is interesting in that a previous owner, the Reverend Lewis, Vicar of Margate and author of the History of Thanet (Tenet) 1st ed 1725, 2nd ed 1736, has corrected the P 383 text, including a mis-spelling of the reverse legend to HIBERNIA and added

A farthing with the same stamp. 1691."

A third, and final, edition was published in 1798 with "side" included but the error in the legend HIBERNIE perpetuated.

In Leake's works we see:-

- * the use of the term Hibernia's derived from the figure of Hibernia upon the reverse

- * his noting that *"Some of these appear plainly to have been the former shillings restamped."*

- * no mention of halfpennies and farthings – in print

- * no mention of the reversed N in the legend

- * not for the last time the mis-spelling of Hibernia in the legend.

Other 18th century authors record the term Hybernias.

they were used as source material by William Nicolson in the final chapters of his three *Historical Libraries*, English 1699, Scottish 1702, Irish 1724. They also were utilised by Sharp's friend, Ralph Thoresby in *Ducatus Leodiensis*, 1715; and Stephen Martin Leake in *Historical Account of English Money* 1726. Sharp bequeathed the manuscript to Thoresby and it was purchased by Richard Gough at the sale of Thoresby's Museum (Ency I, 1764.1)".

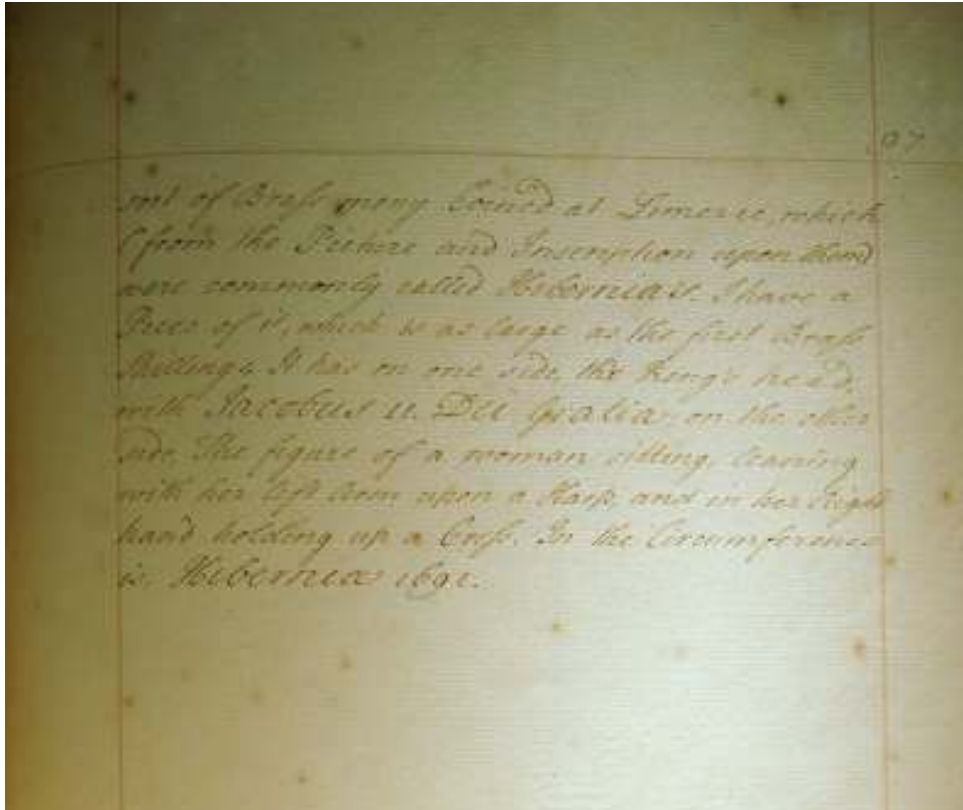


Figure 4 – Manuscript Notes on the coins of England, Scotland and Ireland before 1695, Archbishop Sharpe, p97.

I now have Sharp's manuscript. Important in its own right as apparently forming the foundation for 18th century British Numismatic literature, it, significantly for this study, records in its final paragraph the Hibernias.

“After King James left Ireland, there was in the year following viz. 1691. another sort of brass mony Coined at Limeric, which (from the Picture and Inscription upon them) were commonly called Hibernias. I have a Piece of it, which is as large as the first Brass Shillings. It has on one side the King's head with Jacobus II. DEI Gratia; on the other side The figure of a women sitting, leaning with her left arm upon a Harp, and in her Right hand holding up a Cross. In the circumference is, Hibernia 1691.”

This, assuming it was written prior to 1695, is as near to a contemporary reference as I have.

Turning now to Irish numismatic literature we begin with James Simon's "An Essay towards an Historical account of Irish Coins, etc." first published in Dublin in 1749 with a second edition, including Mr Snelling's Supplement in 1810. The text in both editions is the same and Snelling's Supplement adds nothing. It reads,

“After this prince had left Ireland, another kind of copper and brass money was struck by his adherents in Limerick, during the siege of that place, which, from

the word stamped on their reverse, were called, Hibernias. As some of these are thinner, some thicker, some larger and some less, and the former legend being still visible on many of them, it is plain, that some of the former shillings were only restamped there, and the larger pieces molten down and coined anew. They have on one side the king's head laureat, with the epigraph, IACOBUS.II.DEI. GRATIA. and on the reverse Ireland represented by a woman sitting and resting upon a harp, holding up a cross in her right hand, and around it HIBERNIA. 1691. See Plate VII Numb. 152. All these different kinds of money have a graining round the edge, or, as the proclamations have it are fringed round."



Figure 5 – Simon's illustration showing a farthing style reverse

Again we have the “generic” term Hibernias and recognition that “some of these are thinner, others thicker, some larger and some less, and the former legend being still visible on many of them”. Further, the illustration is of a reverse style similar to that normally associated with the “farthing” where the date is close to Hibernia’s arm, as indeed does Ruding’s illustration in all 3 of his editions. The reference to the “graining round the edge” is interesting. On the restamped former shillings this must surely be a feature of the undertype whilst on those pieces struck from virgin flans we will talk more about edge types later.

These descriptions are becoming rather repetitive but serve to reinforce the term “Hibernias” with its implication of a single denomination.

I would not like to overlook the subtle distinctions where Simon claims the term Hibernias derives “from the word stamped on their reverse”, Leake that it is “from the figure of Hibernia upon the reverse”, thus using an apostrophe S and Archbishop Sharp takes no chances and states “which (from the Picture and inscription upon them) were commonly called Hibernias.”

Lindsay in “A View of the Coinage of Ireland” published in Cork in 1839 adds nothing to our story with his concise and perhaps dismissive statement:-

“After James fled from Ireland, another kind of brass money was struck by his adherents in Limerick; these are commonly called Hibernias, and are given in Simon Pl.VII., No152.....”

From the point of view of this paper, perhaps the most interesting account comes from The Rev. Henry Christmas in “Irish Coins of Copper and Billon” communicated to the Numismatic Society of London in 1862 and 1863, p23 & 24. He writes,

“One piece only of James II. remains to be described; it is a brass halfpenny, struck in Limerick, after the departure of the king, and is commonly called the Hibernia. This issue was struck out of the gunmoney, sometimes melted down for the purpose, and sometimes by submitting the larger shillings to the action of a new die. Many of

Limerick Money

the "Hibernias" are found with traces of the older and better work. The only thing remarkable about this piece is that it presents us with the first example of a type similar to that on the English coin, but which never appears on any struck in the English mint but intended for use in Ireland".

HALFPENNY

Obv. – JACOBUS II. DEI GRATIA.

Bust to the left, draped and laureated

Rev. – HIBERNIA 1691

Figure of Hibernia, sitting, leaning on a harp, and holding in her right hand a cross.

"The figure of Hibernia is badly drawn, and the weight of the coin is extremely irregular varying from 75 to 115grs."

Here we have a precise statement, "a brass halfpenny" "commonly called the Hibernia", and again recognition of different sizes and weights.

We have to wait for Coffey before we see the first tentative mention of farthings in "*Catalogue of Irish Coins in the Collection of the Royal Irish Academy, part II Anglo-Irish,*" by G. Coffey B.A., M.R.I.A. This was first printed in 1895 and reprinted under a slightly different title in 1911.

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OBVERSE.	REVERSE.
<p>Coins struck after James II. retired to France, July, 1690; minted at Limerick during the seige. These pieces are known as <i>Hibernias</i>. They are of two sizes and were probably current as halfpennies and farthings. The larger pieces are re-struck on the larger Brass Money Shillings and usually exhibit traces of the original impression.</p>	
HALFPENNY.	
<p>1. IACOBVS. II. DEI. GRATIA. Bust laureated to left.</p>	<p>HIBEENIA. 1691. Hibernia seated to left: right arm holding a cross patée: left rests on a harp. N. reversed, re-struck on large shilling.</p>
<p>2. " "</p>	<p>" "</p>
<p>3. " "</p>	<p>" "</p>
<p>4. " "</p>	<p>" "</p>
FARTHING.	
<p>1. Same legend and type.</p>	<p>Same legend and type. Size of small shilling.</p>
<p>2. " "</p>	<p>" "</p>
<p>3. " "</p>	<p>" "</p>

Figure 6 - Coffey P116

Limerick Money

In both editions he records 4 halfpennies and 3 farthings in the collection at the time. Part I of the Catalogue, intended to refer to the Hiberno – Danish coins was never published. Since Dolley categorised the 2nd edition as “*an inferior not to say shoddy reprint disfigured by often grotesque but sometimes confusing misprints*” we will rely on the text in the 1895 edition, despite the absence of some of the lettering at the right hand margin.

We can note that Coffey repeats “These pieces are known as Hibernias.” We need to give some credit for his statement that “*They are of two sizes and were probably current as halfpennies and farthings.*” He correctly says “*The large pieces are re-struck on the larger Brass Money Shillings and usually exhibit traces of the original impression.*” In the description of the farthing he comments:-

“Same legend and type.” [as halfpenny]

“Size of small shilling.” [ie Gunmoney]

The mis-spelling of HIBEENIA is corrected in the 1911 edition.

In summary Coffey

- * recognises the term Hibernias
- * is not catagoric regarding halfpennies and farthings
- * is not stating that the farthings are overstruck on small Gunmoney shillings simply that they are the “Size of small shilling”.

We must wait for Philip Nelson for halfpennies and farthings overstruck on the large and small shillings respectively to appear as “fact” in his work first serialised in the Spink Numismatic Circular of 1898/1899, subsequently published by Spink as “*Irish Coinage in Copper, Tin and Billon*” in printed paper wrappers in 1899 and then in its more familiar form as “The Coinage of Ireland in Copper, Tin and Pewter” 1905, reprinted from The British Numismatic Journal, Volume 1 (1903-04).

The ascertainment that the farthing is overstruck on small shillings is repeated by Stevenson in the BNJ for 1967 in his paper entitled “*The Irish Emergency Coinage of James II 1689-1691*” and is sadly perpetuated to this day, for example in:- For Want of Good Money – Edward Colgen 2003, Coins of Scotland, Ireland and the Islands, Second edition – Spink 2003, and Coincraft’s Standard Catalogue of the Coins of Scotland, Ireland, Channel Islands and Isle of Man 1999, where it should be recorded that they state “*The pieces are struck over small gunmoney shillings or from metal obtained by melting down various gunmoney denominations.*”

That concludes a rather laborious look at what the experts say.

THE COINS



Figure 7 – Obverse and Reverse, Halfpenny & Farthing

Now we turn to the coins themselves to see what they can tell us. First, I would like to try to win some respect for this issue, especially in view of disparaging remarks from various authors.

This example of the halfpenny, while weakly struck, showing signs of the undertype and being heavily die flawed, retains a certain dignity and attractive design intent even if the execution is found wanting. Curiously it seems to exhibit a high degree of ‘mint lustre’ despite being overstruck on a large Gunmoney shilling and the shortcomings of the minting techniques. To illustrate the true qualities of the issue we resort to a specimen of the farthing, firmly struck from early die state on a virgin flan.

THE STUDY SAMPLE

This study relies on a sample of 64 specimens which have been loosely subdivided as:- 36 halfpennies, 21 farthings, 5 ‘transition pieces’?, 2 unusual pieces (the farthings are over represented in this sample).

All 36 halfpennies are overstruck on large Gunmoney shillings.

All 21 farthings are on virgin flans

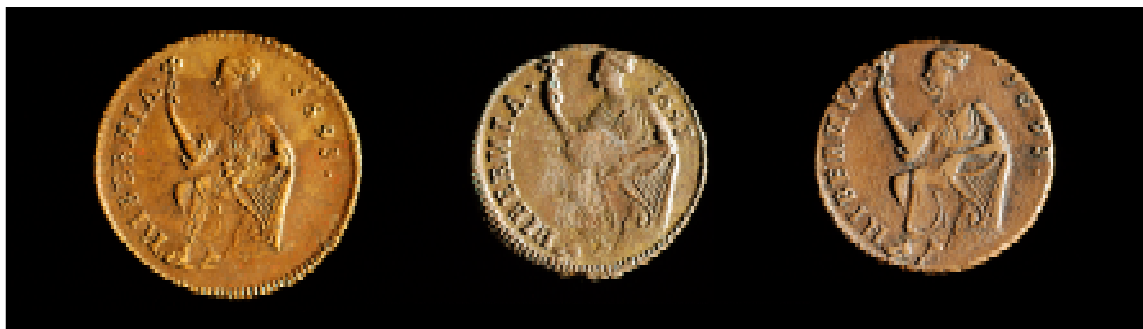


Figure 8 - Distance between the date and Hibernia's arm

While the distance between the date and Hibernia's arm varies greatly and is naturally much closer on the smaller size farthing, this is not an entirely reliable distinguishing feature. The weight range on the 36 halfpennies is 7.74g – 4.90g reflecting of course the variable weights of the shilling undertype. The weights of the farthings, on prepared blanks, vary even more significantly from 8.09g – 4.38g, with many actually heavier than the halfpennies, indicating that weight would not be a supporting factor in a two denomination theory. This issue would benefit greatly from a detailed die and die state study – a complicated enough task made more difficult by the undertype showing through.

For the purposes of this talk we can make a few observations.

THE 36 HALFPENNIES

Looking first at the halfpennies we are struck by what appears to be an inordinate number of dies for such an issue. Perhaps I should have learned my lesson with the Gunmoney!

Many exhibit manufacturing failings as illustrated in Figures 9, 10 & 11. All these pieces have a reversed N in Hibernia.



Figure 9 - Weak striking with undertype showing through



Figure 10 - Die cracks



Figure 11 - More serious defects

THE 21 FARTHINGS

When I was growing up the farthings were considered to be extremely rare. “*You can’t get them*”, I was told, a statement which may well be more true than we thought at the time!



Figure 12 – A worn farthing

I got my first, a rather worn specimen in July 1984. Is this a casting tag beside Gratia? The study is now fortunate to have access to a group of 21 specimens (perhaps even 26), thanks largely to A.H. Baldwin and Sons Ltd. While there are fewer die types, there are at least as many features of interest. These include:-



Figure 13 – Examples of farthing die types, reversed and normal N in Hibernia



Figure 14 – Examples of farthing die types, different punctuation around date (stop either side, stop after, no stop)



Figure 15 – Example of farthing die type, Hibernia's hatched collar

Limerick Money



Figure 16 - Die cracks – obverse and reverse



Figure 17 - Die break up – “crushing” on obverse die - difficult to see



Figure 18 - Unbarred A in IACOBVS

At least 3 pieces have a chevron edge.



Figure 19 – 1691 Limerick halfpenny from lot 291 of Hoblyn sale

The most beautiful of these pieces has an old ticket with the telling description: -JAMES II, HIBERNIA, SMALL SIZE, 1691. The coin was “part of lot 291 Sale R.A. Hoblyn Dec 8th 1906” – shortly after Nelson’s publication. While Edward Baldwin, expert in collector’s tickets, cannot yet identify the writer, we are agreed it is in an authoritative hand.



Figure 20 – A group of 4 halfpennies (top) and 4 farthings (bottom)

Figure - 20 shows two groups of coins that are readily identifiable and distinctly different on several counts especially with regard to the halfpennies being overstruck and the farthings not. If we take a group of say 4 each of these pieces and bring them together it is 'self-evident' that they are halfpennies and farthings. For some reason I would find this more believable if they were in fact struck on large and small shillings rather than by different methods and of course the weights and terminology add to the uncertainty.

THE 5 “TRANSITION PIECES”



Figure 21 – Transition pieces at 4.71g and 4.97g



Figure 22 – Transition pieces at 7.33g, 6.77g and 7.26g

Let me add further to the confusion. I have 5 other coins. All would be considered to be farthings in the catalogues. There are 2 die types.

The first 2 pieces (Figure 21) are of a size somewhere between the halfpennies and farthings with a design more similar to the halfpenny, especially with regard to the position of the date. The farthing in Lucian Lariviere's sale was of this type. I had thought that these were struck on blank flans but Ian McBurney's photographs clearly show a very faint undertype, especially on the reverse of the second coin, in front of Hibernia's face. Weights are 4.71g and 4.97g respectively. Note the distinct colour of these pieces. The other 3 coins are a similar intermediary size but much thicker and weigh in at 7.33g, 6.77g and 7.26g respectively. There are very clear signs of an undertype on all 3 pieces though all are very heavily struck. None of these 5 coins is struck on small shillings.

They are stuck on large shillings, although possibly, small large shillings. The design showing through on the first 2 coins is so faint as to suggest the blanks were specially prepared. On the first of the other 3 coins the II after IACOBVS is clearly visible in the field in front of Hibernia's face. This would suggest an attempt to orientate the undertype in a quite specific position, i.e., the exact opposite position to the struck coin. The second coin appeared to be similar but closer inspection revealed it was the end of DEI in front of the face. Worse still the third coin is struck reverse on reverse. Nevertheless the edges are very sharp, most evident on the photograph of the first coin, again suggesting some special attention in production. Were these Transition Pieces the result of experimenting with dies suitable for overstriking the large Gunmoney shillings?



Figure 23 – Halfpenny, transition pieces, and farthings compared

Place these coins between the halfpennies and farthings and the case for 2 denominations becomes less certain. So what was happening at the mint in Limerick in 1691? Were they really striking up large Gunmoney shillings as halfpennies and at the same time specially prepared and generally heavier blanks as farthings? This seems unlikely. Why would they not use the small size shillings? Did they use up all the large size shillings they had and have to resort to melting down other values to convert for more small change? Where would the transition pieces fit in? Did they start producing a minor coinage on specially produced blanks and then realise that the Gunmoney, recently reduced in value by proclamation, (see Nelson, *The Coinage of Ireland in Copper, Tin and Pewter*, pages 82-83) could be used. The Transition Pieces could be a step towards this. In other words did they try to make use of the large shillings by preparing them as blanks and then simply decide to overstrike them as they were? Or had they a minor coinage in circulation and sequentially or in a separate act overstruck the large shillings when news reached Limerick that these pieces had been reduced in value to a halfpenny? Some form of making this official!

WE MAY NEVER KNOW.

I suppose the possibilities are only limited by our imagination. The opinions of other, more experienced numismatists would be appreciated. What do I want to achieve? In the first place I want to eradicate the myth that the farthings are struck on small size shillings. They are not. Even the Transition Pieces, “farthings” which are overstruck, are on large shillings. No doubt a striking on a small shilling will now emerge.

Limerick Money



Figure 24 - Halfpenny design overstruck on a small Gunmoney halfcrown

Indeed, in anticipation, I can reveal that one of the unusual pieces in our sample is a halfpenny design overstruck on a small Gunmoney halfcrown. While such a discovery may challenge the dogma of this point it will not affect the essence. Do I wish to see the Limerick farthing removed from Irish Numismatics? Well, because it is already established as such, it will continue to be described as a farthing until further study proves otherwise.



Figure 25 – Two different coin types (left and right) and transition pieces (in centre)

Clearly there are two different coin types which must be distinguished, and, perhaps, a group in-between. Let's leave aside the Transition Pieces. Would I be happy with a description such as

Hibernia	large size	
Hibernia	small size	?

I'm not sure. I don't really like the term Hibernias. Would I settle for

halfpenny	large size	
halfpenny	small size	?

Am I that confident? Again I would welcome the opinions of others.

When my daughter asked me what I was doing over the Easter holidays I told her I was bogged down on a paper about the Limerick Money of 1691. "Oh!" she said "That's an interesting date." "Why?" I foolishly asked. "Because you can turn it upside down." Zoë explained. Well, I

am not saying that we have turned Limerick Money upside down but I think we can claim to have asked a few difficult questions.



Figure 26 – Another unusual piece

One more question then. The 64th coin in the sample. The second unusual piece. You don't have to be beautiful to be interesting! What is this then? Reverse, apparently an impression of a Hibernia with the legend HIBERNIA, 1691. Obverse, the legend IACOBVS. DEI GRATIA, but a completely different bust which gives the impression of being double struck.

CONCLUSION

At the start of this talk I said that I wanted to challenge the view that the coinage was crudely engraved and struck, and that I wished to dispel the myth that the pieces now generally regarded as farthings were struck on small Gunmoney shillings. Hopefully my arguments have been persuasive in this regard. Clearly much needs to be done to move towards a learned paper on the subject. Perhaps by publishing at this stage I can stimulate interest, thereby completing the picture, and ideally placing this important coinage and the Limerick gunmoney in their historic and economic context.



Figure 27 – The author's choice

I will leave you with my three favourite pieces, and in so doing again demonstrate the superb quality of Ian McBurney's photography for which I thank him.

JOHN RAINEY
EASTER 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I had mentioned at the start that several people have helped with advice, critique and commentary. I refer to only some of this. Robert Heslip reminded me that there were two sieges of Limerick which might imply that the larger and smaller pieces relate to these events. He agrees that the halfpenny was the circulating medium. He would prefer the literature in strict chronological order with which I agree. But for the purposes of a talk I feel it has more impact as it is. He also questioned why, with everything that was going on in Limerick at the time, they would waste valuable time and resources striking a coinage. But then perhaps what would coin makers do?

Ronan Fitzpatrick drew my attention to Greuber's Handbook of the Coins of Great Britain and Ireland. Published in 1899 there is no mention of farthings. Greuber does however suggest the coins are struck on large and small gunmoney shillings.

Colm Gallagher and I have discussed this subject several times but since he is here tonight I hope he feels inclined to speak for himself.

Finally, I am again indebted to Ian McBurney for his superb photography.

Footnote

As prophesised in my provisional presentation a Limerick "farthing" overstruck on a small Gunmoney shilling has been discovered. The distinctive J R from the reverse of the undertype is clearly visible. The piece weighs 5.32g. It is in poor condition and has been weakly struck. Happily, this piece is from the same dies as three pieces already recorded in this paper and referred to as one of the two groups of 'Transition Pieces'. In contrast to the original three pieces which are strongly struck to the extent it is difficult to identify the undertype with certainty, this piece is very weakly struck and approximately 2g lighter in weight. These pieces have the date far from Hibernia's shoulder, a feature associated with the "halfpennies". In some ways I feel this new find helps to reinforce the theory that some experimentation may have been taking place to find a way to utilise Gunmoney shillings as flans for Limerick Halfpennies.

John Rainey
February 2014

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THE BIRTH OF A MEDAL

John Rainey

The year 2013 was the 75th Anniversary of Denman International Ltd. and celebrations continued from March through to November. They began in Bologna at the Novotel, continued with a party for employees in Bangor at the Clandeboye Lodge Hotel in June, then at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas for friends and customers in America in July, the highlight of the year at the Royal Albert Hall in London in October, and the finale at the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club in November. For those who would like to view highlights there is a fifteen minute DVD posted on You Tube.

During the year it was felt that a more tangible and enduring legacy would be appropriate and the idea of a commemorative medal was proposed.

Medal expert Frances Simmons was appointed to manage the commission. There are many different options for commemorative medals with the Art Medal now fashionable and allowing great freedom of expression. With a view to help sponsor and encourage the arts it was decided to conduct a design competition. Three famous international medallists were invited to submit designs. All produced work of a very high standard. The three judges unanimously choose Natasha Ratcliffe who recently designed two of the Olympic Games 50 pence pieces for the Royal Mint.

This was the first stage of the process as drawings had to be converted to a plaster model for approval, then wax images, on through the stage of casting in bronze, surface treatment and finally hand finished to create our finely-crafted end product, a clever design capable of standing upright on the extending hair.



Design: Natasha Radcliffe.

Date: 2013.

Metal: Bronze

Size: 87 mm x 98 mm high.

Cast: 25 pieces.

Obverse: The Face of Denman, facing bust, with styled flowing hair, DENMAN crowned in left field.

The Birth of a Medal

Reverse: Seven row Denman brush with initials D & D, crowned, between 1938 2013. Legend 75TH ANNIVERSARY above, beaded rim of Denman brushes, styled hair below.

The medal was displayed at the British Art Medal Society Conference held in Brighton in April 2014 where it was very well received.

Medallist Natasha Ratcliffe explains, “I come from a background of making what are classed as 'Art Medals'. This is a used term, but is often misunderstood because of the word 'medal', so I also call them small sculptures. Many of the Denman pieces were also engraved and awarded, so they were used very much like a medal has been historically. 'Art Medals' tend to push the boundaries a bit, not just being circular, and tend to have more of a dialogue between the two sides, which is what I intended with the hair licking around the edges of the medal. The design idea came about by thinking of the key elements of the celebration. The D3 brush is unusual and distinctive in its end profile, so I knew I wanted to utilise this. I also knew hair had to be a strong key element, which, in turn, would give the design some organic quality, and a sense of energy. It all came about from research and sketches, and scribbling possible translations of all the important elements. I wanted to make use of the '75 years' as I saw this also to be key. So here sprouted the 75 brush idea, twisting a traditional rim into something a little more symbolic”.

The following are some of my original design notes.



The design for the commemorative medal, is an interpretation of the Face of Denman, Zoe Rainey, a strong clean elegant obverse, with most of the intended detail regarding the celebration and recipient on the reverse. The Portrait will be simple and clean lined, similar to art nouveau period style. The hair will be smooth flowing but linear and illustrative in style, lines and movement created by angles in the relief. The relief of the hair will vary greatly to give a strong point of focus and engraved complexity, resulting in a highly tactile fluid design. The plain background will contrast and highlight this. The logo will stand in relief and complete the design.

The reverse is designed to look like the flicks of hair are curled round onto the back. This shape where the hair breaks away from the traditional circle on obverse and reverse, will act as a weighted point where the medal will stand upright unsupported. This will result in a medal that has an instant way to be displayed, and act like a small sculpture. The bordered edge of the reverse is made up of 75 individual outlines of the Denman D3 brush, one for each year. The border will be in relief, the brushes engraved in negative. The D3 brush will be in relief in the centre, clearly showing the 7 rows of pins, and the crowned logo. The space below the brush will allow for engraving.

Natasha continues, “The process itself went from a 2D paper design, to producing a plaster model to scale. The plaster allows me to work in good detail, and keep edges and lettering crisp. I then took a silicon rubber mould of the original, in which to make multiple wax copies. These were next taken forward to the 'lost wax casting' process, which involves making a ceramic mould around the wax pieces, and firing the mould to harden it (which also removes the wax at the same time). This gave me an empty cavity in a very high temperature resistant material, which the bronze is poured into directly. The moulds are then smashed, the bronzes removed, sanded down and coloured with chemicals to get the finished look”.

All this work had to be conducted to very tight deadlines closely managed by Frances and the result was well worth the effort. A fitting tribute and legacy for posterity.

The Birth of a Medal



Sourcing a suitable presentation case befitting such a beautiful but unconventional shaped object was a challenge and in the final stages it was necessary to resort to a handmade option. Ten of the medals were presented to the winners of Denman Awards for Distributors in various categories of sales and marketing excellence.

Denman believe that theirs is the first commemorative Art Medal in the hairdressing world.

The project team for this medal were Brenda Robinson, Jonathan King, Frances Simmons and of course Natasha Radcliffe.

DUBLIN MARKET TOKENS

Martin Ruigrok

On display at the Little Museum of Dublin there are examples of four Dublin Fruit Market Tokens that were not published in paper 51. Contained within a small frame, the display consists of seven tokens in total such that the obverse and reverse of three of them are shown. There is only one specimen of the fourth and its obverse is shown.

Dublin Fruit Market

DFM
COLE 1



W. L. COLE, FRUIT MARKET DUBLIN, *rev*, blank, 1/-, round. Holed centrally for stacking on a vertical wire.

DFM
JENKINSON 1-
1/-



P. J. JENKINSON L^{TD} FRUIT MARKET DUBLIN, *rev*, 1/-, round. Holed centrally for stacking on a vertical wire.

DFM
KING 2-6/-



N. J. KING L^{TD} FRUIT MARKET DUBLIN, *rev*, 6/-, triangular. Holed centrally for stacking on a vertical wire.

Dublin Market Tokens

DFM
KING 3



N.J. KING FRUIT MARKET 2/6, *rev*, blank, round.

Occasional Papers Guidance for Submissions

The Society actively engages in the publication of scholarly papers and reports which are published as Occasional Papers and welcomes submissions for publication. Simple guidelines apply:

1. Papers may address coins, tokens, medals, banknotes or currency.
2. Submissions should be original and should not have been published previously.
3. Papers should be approximately 20 A4 single-spaced typed pages (including illustrations and references).
4. Referencing style should be: Author surname, Initial(s). (Year of publication in brackets), Article or paper title if appropriate, Publication (Journal title, Conference title, book), Publisher, City, Country, Volume, Issue and, Page numbers if appropriate. We can assist with that if necessary.
5. Authors are responsible for copyright permissions where these are necessary.
6. Submissions are welcome from all members including branch members. Authors who are not members of the Society but whose bone fides and expertise are known to the committee are also welcome to submit papers.
7. The committee will retain discretion to determine if the standard of a submission is acceptable and suitable for publication.
8. Submission deadline is **31 July**.

While the guidelines suggest a limit on the maximum number of pages in a paper, there is no limit on how short a submission may be. In previous editions, short reports on medal topics have been combined and a substantial 'paper' on these has been included as a 'Miscellanea'. So, no matter what your interest – coins, tokens, medals, banknotes or currency, all members are encouraged to make submissions.

Papers may be emailed to: rfitzp@gmail.com

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