

ALEXANDRIA COIN CLUB NEWS

Volume 21, Number 9

October, 2013



New to our club? Welcome!

We meet on the **3rd Wednesday each month**, at the Lee Center, 1108 Jefferson St. in Alexandria, VA. It's just off US 1 inside the Beltway, and there's plenty of free parking. Meetings are held in the Gold Room. Check the lobby bulletin board just to be sure! The bourse opens at 7:00 p.m. and members may display, trade, and sell coins during this time. Our auction starts about 8:10 p.m. Members and visitors can bid during the bourse and auction. Members are encouraged to submit coins to be included in future auctions – contact **Auction Chair Robin Borum** at rborum@verizon.net or 703-395-3269.

Next Meeting: October 16!

President:	Boots Barnes
Vice Pres/ANA Rep:	Frank Falgiano
Secretary:	Doug DeBarr
Treasurer:	Tom DeYoung
Auction Chair:	Robin Borum
Auctioneers:	Frank Falgiano Joel Cherry
Historian/CONECA Rep:	OPEN
ESNA Rep:	OPEN
MWNA Rep:	Jeff Saah
VNA Rep:	Joel Cherry
Microscope Coord:	Robert Mitchell
Refreshments Coordinators:	Doug DeBarr
Raffle/Door Prize Coordinators:	Ron Iliffe Bob Kimes
YN Director:	Pete Locke
Webmaster:	Mike Atkins
Newsletter Editor:	Noelle Locke

Tentative Meeting Agenda:

- 7:00pm Bourse opens – please help yourself to refreshments!
- 8:00pm Meeting begins: welcome, announcements, discussions, speakers.
- 8:10pm Auction begins. Door prize drawing and raffle held at intermission.
- 9:30pm Settlement of auction accounts, submission of coins for next auction, adjournment.

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Alexandria Coin Club

PO Box 1233 Alexandria, VA 22314

www.alexandriacoinclub.com

Member: ANA, ESNA, VNA

Atrocious Hideousness

By John Mercer

Once again, we are proud to feature an article written by ACC member **John Mercer**, which was published in the July 2013 issue of *Coin News*, the largest circulation coin magazine in the UK.

Last month, we reprinted "The Briot Shilling," the story of a 1643-4 Charles I shilling found hidden in the drawer of an antique chest of drawers, still in mint condition centuries later. John also authored that piece, which was published in the magazine's August edition.

A third article, entitled "Transitions," describes design transitions during the minting of the Victoria shield sovereign from 1838-1887. It was featured in the September issue of *Coin News*.



John Mercer

Many American numismatists may have heard this expression, used by U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt in a 1904 letter to Secretary of the Treasury Leslie Mortier Shaw to describe US coins:

*"I think our coinage is artistically of atrocious hideousness. Would it be possible, without asking permission of Congress, to employ a man like Saint-Gaudens to give us a coinage that would have some beauty?"*¹

Putting aside the favoritism this request entailed, a practice which the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens himself employed on occasion, the immediate result was the Saint-Gaudens \$20 Double Eagle, among the most beautiful U.S. coins produced. But Teddy Roosevelt's executive intervention into the aesthetics of coin design had a similar precedent in that taken by King Charles I of England, almost three centuries earlier. Let's take a look.

Setting the stage

Charles I was crowned King of England in 1625, at the age of 25. Henry Ferdinand, Charles's older brother, had been groomed since birth for the throne, but his death of a fever in 1612 thrust Charles out of a reclusive childhood spent overcoming a speech impediment and a frail disposition and into the limelight as the new heir to the throne. This sudden elevation, apparently the act of God, lent credence to the writings of Charles's father, King James I, about the theological basis for royal authority, and helps explain Charles's religious devotion and his views about the divine right of kings.

Charles came to the throne a self-righteous, determined and stubborn young man with a refined and expensive taste in art. While his inability to compromise and extravagant spending would prove his eventual undoing, these qualities also produced a stubborn insistence on aesthetically superior coinage that would have an impact for years to come.²

Atrocious hideousness

To mark Charles's ascent to the throne, the chief engraver and designer at the Royal Mint, Edward Green, set about designing new coinage. Given Charles's refined tastes, you can imagine his reaction when confronted with the new coinage, as represented by this example of an early shilling, which supposedly depicts him in his coronation robes:



Charles I (1625-49) Silver Shilling. Not dated, struck circa 1625. Obverse Group A, second bust left, with ruff collar and coronation robes, larger crown with jeweled outer arch, value behind. Mintmark lis (London, Tower Mint). Reverse long cross fourchée over square-topped shield of quartered arms (N 2216; S 2782). About Very Fine.

The reaction

The horror! Ruff collars were admittedly in fashion during the early years of Charles's reign, but the overall impression is clumsy and clownish, with features that bore little resemblance to the king. Compare that monstrosity to this detail from one of the wonderful portraits Charles was soon to commission, at great expense, from the talented Dutch artist Anthony Van Dyck.³

As an aside, the single pearl earring seemed to have been all the rage back then, since Johannes Vermeer's model in "Girl with Pearl Earring" wore a similar one, also in the left ear, at about the same time.⁴ In addition, by the year this portrait was painted, ruff collars had given way to collars that were the forerunners of the shirt collars we see today.



Charles apparently knew he was going to be dissatisfied with Green's work before it even appeared but let it proceed anyway, either due to time constraints, or perhaps because Green was his father's appointee and Charles had enough decorum not to dismiss him out of hand. That didn't mean he was going to let such 'atrocious hideousness' stand uncorrected, though.

An initial fix

Charles had already engaged Abraham Van der Doort, a Dutchman who was serving as his Groom of the Chamber and Surveyor of the King's Pictures, and assigned him the task of improving the effigy of the king on the design.⁵ Van der Doort was skilled in the design of high-relief images for medals, and his influence helped improve subsequent issues.

Unfortunately, the patterns Van der Doort produced that the King most favored were "at odds with prevailing Mint practice, which was to produce coins which were 'broad and thin' at some speed. As the Mint officials explained, Van der Doort's 'embossments' were too high to 'rise in the moneys' and the execution of them was 'so curiously done' [detailed] that Mint output would be slowed down."⁶ As a result, Green's position as chief engraver remained secure.

A second try

Charles was not to be dissuaded, however, and retained the Frenchman Nicolas Briot, both to engrave a new Great Seal of England and to pick up where Van der Doort left off. After an initial period confined solely to engraving the king's effigy, Briot was finally installed in the Tower and began using his own machinery to produce small quantities of coins, first in 1631/2 and again in 1638/9.

The exact details of Briot's machinery are unclear, but it is thought he used two methods: oval blanks fed into rocker dies for larger denominations, and circular blanks struck in a screw press for smaller ones.⁷

The first trial in 1631/2 proved inefficient compared to the normal production run, but the second trial, limited to silver issues, was satisfactory. Both runs were superior from an aesthetic viewpoint, being produced from superior dies. Since they were machine made, they were also more consistently round, without the 'curve and tang' appearance⁸ of many hastily produced hammered coins of the period. Below is an example of a shilling from the second run:



Charles I (1625-49) Silver Shilling. Nicholas Briot's coinage, second milled issue, 1638-1639. Mintmark anchor and B (London, Tower Mint). Briot's late bust left, value behind, reverse long cross fourchée over square-topped shield (N 2305; S 2859). Light adjustment marks on the reverse, toned, Good Very Fine.

The result

To compare the shilling of 1625 and the one of 1638/9, both to each other and to the portrait of the king, is to realize that there was no comparison. Seventeen years of Civil War, Interregnum and a bewildering variety of hammered coins and siege pieces later, the establishment of Peter Blondeau's machinery at the Mint in 1656 to produce Oliver Cromwell's portrait coins⁹ signaled the end of hammered coinage in England.

Conclusion

It is interesting to note the similarities in these two episodes

- Both featured long-standing, formulaic designs produced by established mints that were focused primarily on producibility and consistent weight and fineness
- Both Charles I and Roosevelt sought to improve the artistic appeal by introducing outsiders whose main expertise was sculpture and design
- Both Charles I and Roosevelt showed a readiness to bypass Parliament/Congress to achieve their goals – in Charles's case, with disastrous consequences

In both cases the almost mutually exclusive goals of aesthetic design and producibility required compromises or long-term change to achieve

- In Charles's day, while Van Der Doort's intricate, high-relief patterns proved unsuitable for production, Charles's influence invigorated design, and Briot's artistry, expertise and innovative machinery led to the transition from hammered to milled coinage
- In Roosevelt's day, Saint-Gaudens's early high-relief designs also proved unsuitable for mass production, but design compromises resulted in the beautiful American Eagle and Double Eagle coins produced for a generation until withdrawn from circulation in 1933

Notes

1. Roger Burdette, "Roosevelt redesign 'genesis letter' surfaces," *Coin World*, 12-26-11, <http://tinyurl.com/cftigws>, accessed 26 March 2013.
2. Charles I (r. 1625–49), *The British Monarchy*, <http://tinyurl.com/blqnoom>, accessed 26 March 2013.
3. Detail from "Charles I, King of England, from Three Angles," by Anthony Van Dyck. Painted about 1636. Image is not copyrighted and is in the public domain.
4. Jonathan Janson, "Girl with a Pearl Earring" resource page, <http://tinyurl.com/bo7ocbu>, accessed 26 March 2013.
5. Steve Hill, "The story behind the Engraver" in "Lot 5023: Rare English Coins, Charles I (1625-49), Unique Gold Pattern Triple Unite," *Auction Number 48, One Hundred Numismatic Rarities*. London: Baldwin's Auctions, 26 September 2006. Interestingly, Van der Doort committed suicide in 1640, in despair over misplacing a miniature portrait of the King's head. Had he simply continued to look a bit longer, in another 9 years the actual head was 'misplaced,' rendering his loss quite insignificant.
6. C.E. Challis, ed., *A New History of the Royal Mint*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992, page 300.
7. *Ibid*, page 301.
8. *Ibid*, figure 24, page 295.
9. Philip Skingley, ed., *Coins of England & the United Kingdom, 48th Edition, Standard Catalogue of British Coins*. London: Spink, 2013, page 325.
10. Coin images are copyright and from the author's collection.

Thanks to **John Crawford** for alerting members to an estate sale opportunity recently, which featured many coins from Israel. This auction was listed on EstateSales.NET, a service which can send you e-mail notifications of estate sales and auctions occurring around the area (and beyond). The site enables you to specify what kind of items you are seeking to narrow your search. It's free, so check it out!

Mark Your Calendar:

Upcoming Shows and Events in our Area



Richmond Coin Club Show 10/18 - 19 10 – 6 Clarion Hotel William Scott 804-350-1140
10/20 10 – 3 3207 North Blvd woscott1@verizon.net
Richmond, VA

Vienna Quarterly Coin Show 11/2 10 – 6 Vienna Community Ctr Darren Coker 703-532-6640
11/3 10 – 4 120 Cherry Street darrencoker@aol.com
Vienna, VA

Winchester Coin Club Show 11/23 9:30 – 5 Hampton Inn Doug Bowers
1204 Berryville Ave bottles@shentel.net
Winchester, VA



Have a Question? Need Some Help? Contact an ACC Dealer!

Robin Borum
rborum@verizon.net

Robin Borum Rare Coins 703-395-3269

Joel P. Cherry
joel.cherry@cox.net

MERCURY Numismatics 703-876-9450

Frank Falgiano

CEFCO Enterprises 703-491-1017

Mike W. Hess

Classic Coins & Collectibles 703-330-3747

J.W. Kennedy

Kennedy's Stamps and Coins 703-569-7300

John Koebert

Butternut 703-802-0252

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Bob Patterson

Bob's Coins 703-490-1222

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www.angeldees.com

Angel Dee's Coins and Collectibles 703- 580-6969

T.J. Shea

Penny Pincher Coins 703-383-1414

John Sullivan
camcoins@aol.com

Cameo Coins and Collectibles 703-281-7053

George Watson

George A. Watson 703-843-7072

Wayne Wilcox

Wayne's Coin & Currency 703-920-2385

Jason Zeibel

Z&Z Coins 703-598-1340



Drum Roll Please...

Announcing:

The 2014 Alexandria Coin Show!

- When?** Saturday, February 8, 2014
9:00 am – 5:00 pm
- Where?** Springfield American Legion
Post 176
6520 Amherst Avenue
Springfield, VA 22150
- Who?** Your contact is Boots Barnes
703-975-7029 (cell)
steven.barnes8@verizon.net

Anything else?

It's free and open to the public! Door prizes will be awarded and there will be a special instruction period at 1:00 pm that's not to be missed!

Bring family! Bring Friends! Get your sweetie a love token!

ACC October Auction Lots					
#	Item	Description	Min Bid	Estim Value	Win Bid
1	50c	3pc, 1917 VG, 1939-D F, 1940-S VG		37	
2	50c	3pc, 1934-S VG, 1936 F, 1937 F		39	
3	50c	1809 VF (obv graffiti)		125	
4	5c	18pc, 1936-D F, 2-1943-P 1945-P AU, 14 dateless Buffalos		22	
5	mixed	9pc,1834 1c AG,1864 2c AG, 2-2c 5-Lg cent F2 to P1	10	25	
6	50c	13pc,1964 AU,1942 VG, 11-1966 to 1969 avg circ		60	
7	\$1	1885 MS63DMPL	80	180	
8	\$1	1878-S MS64PL	120	280	
9	\$1	1881-S MS63DMPL	120	180	
10	\$1	1902-O MS64	65	115	
11	\$!	1886 MS63	45	65	
12	\$1	1885-O MS64	45	85	
13	\$1	1881-S MS63	45	65	
14	\$1	1878-S MS63PL	75	95	
15	World	2008 Beijing Olympic 5pc Set (5-1oz Silver coins in box)	100	125	
16	\$1	5pc, 2000-S to 2004-S Proof 69 Ultra Cameo in NGC holder		115	
17	Set	1959 Proof Set in Capital Plastic holder		32	
18	Set	1962 Proof Set in snap lock holder		26	
19	Set	1963 Proof Set in snap lock holder		26	
20	25c	1942-S in ANACS MS65 holder	100	200	
21	1c	1902 in NGC MS64BN holder	100	125	
22	1c	1908 in PCGS MS64BN holder	80	105	
23	1c	1911 in NGC MS64RB holder	100	125	
24	1c	1913-D in ICG MS63BN holder	150	200	
25	1c	1921 in PCGS MS64RB holder	125	125	
26	1c	1926-D in PCGS MS64RB holder	300	450	
27	\$1	1879-S MS63	55	65	
28	\$1	1886 EF45	30	37	
29	\$1	1991-S Proof Silver Eagle in Mint box	60	85	
30	\$1	1989-S Proof Silver Eagle in Mint box	60	85	
31	\$1	1990-S Proof Silver Eagle in Mint box	60	85	
32	1c	1855 upright 5's EF	35	60	
33	1c	5pc, 1859,60,62,63,64CN avg G some w/problems		35	
34	1c	1903 UNC		30	
35	3c	2pc, 1852 Silver AG, 1865 Nickel VG	26	33	
36	10c	1814 Lg Date, G	26	45	
37	10c	1828 Lg Date, G	52	75	
38	mixed	1935-S 5c VF, 1903-O 10c Vf	19	27	
39	25c	1834 F	70	150	
40	50c	1805 G	120	225	
41	50c	1829 VF	72	100	
42	50c	1864-S VF	95	200	
43	\$1	2pc, 1972-S, 1974-S, both Proof 'Brown Pac'		20	