



Melbourne Numismatic Society Inc.

July-August 2020 Newsletter

Welcome to the 1st Hibernation Newsletter. Most of us are really suffering from not being able to fully enjoy our various hobbies or interests, visit our clubs, have a snack or meal at our favourite café and it's a long time since any of us enjoyed the familiarity of a counter tea or lunch at our favourite pub. I'm especially mourning the loss of the Irish Pub in Knox O Zone that could not survive. It was having a rough time a few months before because of the high rents, but it had managed to get back on its feet and then Corona came and put the last nail in its coffin. It is hard to see businesses go to the 'wall' because of this epidemic and it has been made worse by bungling on the political scale, followed by very selfish people who do not care what damage they do to lives and businesses. Mostly it has affected our convivial meetings and lively discussions. Some of you have been able to have "Zoom" meetings, but I don't think it's quite the same as being able to have a coin or medal or ancient artefact in your hands. Coin shops of course are closed and, although they can trade on-line; you can't see or hold the product before you get it and make sure it is 'bona-fide', or what you actually really wanted.

Gary came up with the idea of this monthly newsletter and it was taken up very quickly by Michael, so Jan and I were eager to take up the task of collating articles or items of interest that we usually share face to face. We thought it may not be a long one, but to keep us up to date with new acquisitions or the usual interesting discussion points that we enjoy every month. I was truly amazed when I saw the articles and items that came through and it was quite enjoyable incorporating images either given or enhancing the articles. It became far more extensive than I'd thought at first.

I'm also very happy to report that Joan and Stan are going well. Stan has now been at home from hospital for a while now and is happily sorting through coins with aim of selling some online with some family support. They are always happy to hear from us and talk about numismatics and the world in general. Tim sees them once a week.

So here we are, the first of our Hibernation newsletters. I really hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed putting it together, all the pages of it. If you didn't manage to get your item in, there's always next month.

Monica

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hi all MNS members and NAV recipients of this newsletter. As I write (Thursday 9th) we have just gone back to lockdown. We have forced this epidemic down before and we will do it again. I hope we all learned a little from last time to make this a bit easier. I woke up with a minor sore throat on Tuesday and thought it best to get tested. About an hour in drive-through at Knox. Earlier today I got the all-clear and can at least leave home for any of the legitimate reasons.

On the numismatic front I am trying to put together a couple of CAB magazine articles on decimal coins, circulation and NCLT issues, mainly looking at what is popular (and with high risk of being overpriced) and the few items that are truly rare. Lots of issues have little residual interest and there are too many to maintain saleability beyond bullion or even face value (much less than issue price) after a few years. Some of the designs and execution of NCLT have been brilliant and collectors have snapped them up. Here is an example I found:

In 2014 RAM issued a couple of VC coins, one in silver (1 ounce), the other in copper, the latter by ballot. Mintages of 30000 and 5000 and issue prices \$80 and \$100 respectively. The designs had the VC but in the latter field



were the names of all Australian recipients in microtext. The current resales are something like \$50 and \$400 respectively. Some on-line opportunists are asking much more. The mintage is quite high so it remains to be seen if current market price is maintained.

The RAM has been imaginative in marketing their products. A 2015 project involved commemoration of AFL and NRL grand finals. The RAM marketers issued a challenge to collectors who had a taste for the punt which combined a moderate

mintage set which was also a lottery for some low or very low mintage coins. 5000 Custodians of the Game (AFL) and 5000 Moments that Matter (NRL) sealed sets were issued at \$120 each. Most contained a frosted silver One Dollar coin and some trading cards. 10% (ie 500 sets) contained a coloured silver coin and only 1 in 75 contained a gold-plated silver coin (ie 67 coins issued for each code). This makes the gold-plated coin one of the great rarities of the NCLT issues. They must be tightly held. I have not been able to find one that has sold on the open market. The coloured silver coin retails around \$300. The sets were sealed so it was known that they have

been opened. Of course when the set is opened and you only have the normal dollar the value depreciates. If anyone still wants to try their luck there are 1 or 2 sealed sets still unsold by dealers!

One of the sources I have used are RAM annual reports which in an appendix lists mintages of circulation and NCLT coins minted in a financial year. This covers parts of 2 calendar years and so 2 dates at least are reported. Some NCLT issues have quite a high target mintage but due to lack of demand the actual mintage is much lower. Some of these quite rare issues have not been popular with collectors and can be found at prices around or even less than issue price. I managed to buy a nice NCLT Xmas present for my brother who is known to collect stuff weirder than coins. It comes with a ticket stating a mintage of 5000 but the actual number made is less than 400. As one of our members would say about these – RAM issues are “granny bait”. There are the common ones and rarer ones but they are all still “granny bait”. That is true but as a club we need to try and attract collectors of the decimal series because that is where most new collectors seem to start.

Michael

EARLY BEGINNINGS IN COIN COLLECTING

BY GARY

I'm sure we all have fond memories of what piqued our interest in coin collecting.



Singing Dollar bill with his prize 50c. (Courtesy of the internet infomercial)

I collect mostly Australian pre decimal coins although I also have a bits and pieces collection of decimal currency coins and a few notes.

There are 3 main memories I have from my childhood that have stuck with me over the years.

The introduction of decimal currency on the 14 Feb 1966

Who can forget Dollar Bill singing “On the 14th of February, 1966” to the tune of “Click Go The Shears” on the black and white telly all those years ago. That tune has stuck with me all my life.

As an 8 year old I can still remember Mum scurrying for her purse to find a shilling to put in the gas meter when the gas suddenly died under the nights dinner of chops and potatoes cooking on the old gas stove.

When Dad came home with his first pay packet in brand new decimal currency, we weren't interested in how much was in the packet but the smell and look of the new notes and coins. With my 3 sisters and Mum we all gathered around excitedly admiring the new currency.

When the gas meter was replaced I managed to swap some of the pocket money I had saved from doing my daily jobs of cutting kindling and filling the wood box and briquette bucket, for a couple of now redundant shillings.

And so my collection had begun.

Finding treasure on the beach around 1969

My Dad was a very keen fisherman and loved the outdoors. There weren't too many weekends that went by without us going to the bush or the beach. We did all the 'N' things...fishN, woodN, 4abbit4h4y, 4abbit4h, 4abbit4h, 4abbit & shootN.

Mum would make a basket of sandwiches and cup cakes and we would all jump in the car. Mum, Dad & the 4 kids with the 2 dogs, our fishing gear and a couple of big buckets to bring home whatever was available and in season.

We spent a lot of time camping behind the sand dunes along the 90 mile beach at places like, Seaspray, Golden Beach and Paradise Beach. Many a long day was spent paddling in the shallows and rolling down the dunes. When it was cold we would dig a body length hole in the sand fill it with any burnable material we could find, light it and when it had burnt down to a bed of ashes we would cover it with sand and lie on it for the warmth.

One day Dad pulled in nice salmon and while taking the hook out he noticed something glistening in the smooth sand after a wave had washed over. It turned out to be an 1872 Queen Victoria shilling.

We all wondered how it managed to get washed up on the beach. Was it from a boat that had foundered just off shore at the turn of the century? Was it lost from falling through a hole in the pocket of some dad who was at the beach perhaps walking and playing with his own kids many decades earlier ?



*Coin similar to Gary's
(image from rarecoinsandtokens.co.uk.*

I guess we'll never know, but it sure provided a romantic link for me as a pre teen wondering about sunken treasure as I twisted my feet in the sand to bring up some pippies for bait.

Road trip to Canberra in 1976

As an 18 year old having not long had my drivers' licence, I went on a road trip with my mate Wayne. We decided to go to Canberra and drove up through Gippsland and up the coast before heading inland to Canberra. As a couple of young blokes out for a good time we probably did plenty that we shouldn't have, but we had fun doing it. Cutting our feet to pieces as we tried to prise some oysters of the rocks in the shallows around Merimbula stands out.

We also made it to the Royal Australian Mint in Canberra and I was fascinated by the coins we saw and the displays and explanations about how coins were made.

As we were leaving I just had to buy a memento of our visit and so purchased a 1976 decimal proof set for \$13.00. I was rapt as it was encased in clear plastic and had foam protectors for the case. My mate Wayne was not as easy with his money or he was out of money, I'm not sure which. Anyway he decided to buy the uncirculated set. For a couple of dollars he got .88c worth of uncirculated coins in a cardboard wallet. Happy with our purchases we set off for home in Traralgon.

I realise now Wayne must have been short of cash because by the time we got home he had spent his .88c and I still have my 1976 proof set 44 years later. All great memories that I keep along with my coins.

THE FOUNDER OF THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN MONEY ANOMALY

By Monica



JAN VAN RIEBEECK - FOUNDING FATHER OF
THE DUTCH AFRIKANER NATION

This is a rather cute story of for apparent reasons of vanity, the wrong face was put on South American money. Some of you may recognise it from an article I wrote a few years

ago, but I thought that this one was well worth a repeat. Jan van Riebeeck was one of the VOC's most valuable and versatile traders, serving in a number of posts, including that of an assistant surgeon in Batavia in the East Indies and head of the VOC trading post in Tonkin, Indochina. However, it is in South Africa that he became most famous. Many of the Afrikaner population view him as the founding father of their nation.



BARTHOLOMEUS VERMUYDEN
DUTCH SOLDIER IN CROMWELL'S ARMY

In 1651, he volunteered to undertake the command of the initial Dutch settlement, in the future South Africa. He landed three ships (*Dromedaris*, *Reijger* and *Goede Hoop*) at the future Cape Town on 6th April, 1652 and fortified the site as a way-station for the VOC trade route, between the Netherlands and the East Indies. The primary purpose of this way station was to provide fresh provisions for the VOC fleets, sailing between the Dutch republic and Batavia, as deaths en route were very high. The *Walvisch* and the *Oliphant* arrived later in 1652, having had 130 burials at sea.



JAN VAN RIEBEECK ARRIVING AT THE CAPE

In the twentieth century, the South African Reserve Bank believed that he was of such cultural and historical significance to South Africa that they wanted to put him on currency and stamps and this occurred from the 1940s up until 1993, when the Bank changed the currency to an apolitical design, as the Afrikaner Dutch were the ones who created the apartheid system in 1948; so Jan van Riebeeck was considered too provocative for the new image of the South African nation now freed from segregation.



WRONG FACE AGAIN

Nevertheless, it was found that the image used on bank notes, coins and stamps was actually not van Riebeeck, but another seventeenth century unknown by the name of Bartholomeus Vermuyden. This gentleman had never even set foot in South Africa. He was actually a soldier in Oliver Cromwell's Roundhead army in England.



JAN VAN RIEBEECK NOTE WITH VERMUYDEN'S FACE



2 GOLD RANDS OF SOUTH AFRICA

It's actually not a new discovery. It's just not well-known. In fact, decades ago, school students were taught that the image on currency was of South Africa's first settler. Currency dealers in the shops in Cape Town had no idea who it was. Jonkheer van Kretschmar, a genealogist, concluded in 1984 that the painting from which the image was borrowed, was not Jan van Riebeeck, the man who arrived in Table Bay in 1652. The portrait, painted by Dirck Craey, in the

possession of Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, was probably just another Dutchman named Bartholomeus Vermuyden.

On www.geheugenvannederland.nl, a web page which lists a detailed catalogue of the works displayed at the museum, the painting is labelled as "A Portrait of a Man, presumably Bartholomeus Vermuyden".

There have been quite a few scenarios, posited in abstracts and articles online, but the most likely answer seems to be that it was just the case of rushing the job, during the acquisition process.

The puzzling thing is that there is an actual portrait of the Dutch settler, also on display at the Rijksmuseum and there we see the marked difference from the face appearing on South Africa's old currency. Vermuyden's face is handsome, with a mass of lush hair and a beautiful moustache.

We are not even perfectly sure what van Riebeeck really looked like, only having the portrait in the Rijksmuseum to go by. So in 1952 who was the model for his statue on the Foreshore, donated to the city by the Dutch Jan van Riebeeck Society in 1952, 300 years after he first set foot at the Cape to start a refreshment station for the Dutch East India Company? This was when everyone thought that the image on coins, bank notes and stamps was Jan van Riebeeck.



STATUE OF JAN VAN RIEBEECK
AT CAPE TOWN STH. AFRICA

Maybe, as they weren't really fussed at the Mint and thought that this handsome imposing face was perfect as the Founding Father of the Cape; they really didn't care if it was correct or not. After all, when we look at the real portrait of Jan van Riebeeck, he isn't half as interesting. In fact, to my mind, he looks a bit like a Dutch Reformed Minister. He looks a lot older, too. The statue, again has the flowing curls and soldier's bearing that proclaim it could be again Bartholomeus Vermuyden. Why not? It's contemporaneous with the South African money being printed.

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Coin of Syracuse Revisited

By Paul



**Sicily Syracuse Electrum
25 Litrai, 317-289 BC
with ring attached.
Obverse Laureate head of
Apollo left
Ex. A.H. Longhurst.**

Here is the story of the first ancient coin I was given. When I was about twelve years old my father brought home a small box of coins - a gift from the wife of Mr Longhurst, Archaeologist to India who had passed away in 1955. Mrs Longhurst knew I was interested in coins. What a start for a young kid to get hooked on coin collecting!



**Sicily Syracuse Electrum
25 litrai, 317-289 B.C.
with ring attached.
Reverse: Lyre with "Of the
Syracusans" left and right
Ex. A.H. Longhurst.**

Amongst the coins was a little pale yellow gold coin (with a gold ring attached) that caught my attention. The little coin is a 25 litrai made from electrum, in ancient Syracuse, Sicily. These coins were made from locally mined electrum - a naturally occurring alloy of gold and silver. Syracuse was founded by Corinthian colonists c.734 BC on the island of Ortygia. It became the dominant Greek city state in Sicily. The remains of 6th Century BC temples are located here dedicated to Zeus, Apollo and Athena.



**Sicily, Syracuse electrum,
25 Litrai, 317-289 BC.
Obverse. Head of
Apollo. Image courtesy
noble.com.au**

The 25 litrai coin was minted between 317-289 BC and is one of a series of electrum litrai coinages struck during the time of the tyrant Agathocles to help finance his war with Carthage. This tiny coin type weighs in at 1.89 g and is just 11mm diameter. The obverse features the laureate portrait of Apollo facing left. Apollo was one of the most respected gods in Greek mythology. He was god of



**Sicily, Syracuse Electrum,
25 litrai, 317-289 BC.
Reverse: Lyre with "Of the
Syracusans. Left & Right
Image courtesy
noble.com.au**

medicine and healing, knowledge and prophecy, music and poetry, archery and heroic excellence and was recognized as a sun god. He played the lyre and was leader of the Muse's choir. The coin's reverse features Apollo's *kithara* or lyre with the inscription "Of the Syracusans". A similar, better example featured in CAB article - Coins of Apollo - Vol. 22 Number 10, November issue is also shown here.



The remains of the Temple of Apollo on the small island of Ortygia that was the centre of ancient Syracuse. Image wikipedia

With a gold chain attached, I wore the coin for many years. I planned to use the coin in a display about ten years ago but couldn't find it. The coin had disappeared! I searched and searched for it for a long time eventually conceding that it must have "slipped through the cracks" and was lost. Then in 2019, I saw a piece of the gold chain hidden in a draw. Miraculously the coin revealed itself as I gently pulled out the chain. Now, more than ever, the coin has sentimental value because of its

history and link with an archaeologist. Just recently, I decided (after all these years) to go online and find out more about Mr Longhurst.

Mr Albert Henry Longhurst (1876-1955) was a British archaeologist, art historian and author who worked in India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). In 1913, he was appointed Superintendent of the Southern Circle, Archaeological Survey of India.

From 1927 to 1931 he was in charge of the systematic digging of Nagarjunakonda an island in the Krishna River Valley in the north-east of India known for its numerous ruins of Buddhist shrines. His books and records of his work are hard to access online. However one reference compares Apollo with Buddha as similar youthful gods.

Mr Longhurst served as the Archaeological Commissioner, Archaeological Survey of Ceylon between 1934 and 1940 mainly working at Polonnaruwa but also at Anuadhapura and Sigiriya concentrating more on conservation/restoration rather than excavation. After his retirement, they moved to Australia. I was very lucky and fortunate to receive Mr Longhurst's small collection. He may have been keen to acquire a coin of Apollo because of his work.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

John

[a] 1969 New Zealand Cook commemorative coin issue in a lovely case.

[b] A Facsimile collection of historic Australian coins Captain James Cook.

The coins include a Dump, Early Tokens, George 111 Coin, gold 2 oz coin and several other pieces all stamped on the back, this is not a coin, from the front they look very real, all stored in a beautiful case with documented story of the coins.

[c] 1972 Coins of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to commemorate the silver wedding Anniversary of Queen Elizabeth 11 and Prince Philip 1947-1972.