

A Kaleidoscope of Curiosities: Notes on the NSI-NB Show-and-Tell Competition 2021

The NSI-NB season of 2020/21 has been a most peculiar one for the Society since perhaps its foundation. The Society meetings moved online as early as July 2020 and it was just a matter of time that the technology prompts new modes of interaction between the members and coins. The NSI-NB Show-and-Tell Competition, the first of its kind for the Northern Branch, was meant to be a trial piece for such events in the future.

NSI-NB Show-and-Tell Competition 7th May 2021



- FIRST EVER event of its kind, aimed at new ways of communicating with private collections
- 15 (!) entries
- Coins, tokens, medals, banknotes, books etc.
- NSI Belfast and Dublin members and GUESTS
- FIRST PRIZE of a 50th Anniversary NSI-NB Medal - only 7 (!) available

The Competition was organised and held on Friday 7th May 2021 via Zoom web-conferencing, which features all essential tools for the event of this kind, including real-time polling capabilities. Fifteen anonymous entries on a range of subjects of interest to the Society have been submitted and many of the contributors were present during the Competition. In total, twenty members and guests joined the event and voted for the

best entry. No prescribed criteria or evaluation forms were used, so that the audience were called to exercise their own judgement. This article combines the entries submitted for the Competition, this time with the contributors named. In brief, David Collins with his article entitled "Irish Three Crowns Copper Farthing of Edward IV" snatched the first prize in the form of a bronze 50th Anniversary NSI-NB medal, with Garry Byrne's "Morbiducci – Irish Coins & Italian Medals" being close on the heels of the winner.

We sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading the submitted materials and we are looking forward to the second edition of the Competition in the new Society season 2021/22. For any questions and comments, please contact the NSI-NB by email <numsocirelandnb@gmail.com>.

COMPETITION ENTRY 1

1797 BELFAST SCHOOL MEDAL

Peter Francis

This small silver medal, 38 × 24 mm, was presented by "McMullan's School [Belfast, to] Jonathan Blackwood [in] 1797 as the Reward of Exemplary Writing".

According to a Belfast Newsletter advertisement published on 28th October 1753, "Rev. McMullin's School" was established in Stafford Street Belfast as an "Academy for young Gentlemen seeking entrance to University and the Polite Sciences. Teaching in Mathematicks, Book-Keeping, Geography, (with instruction in the use of Globes and Maps), French, Accompts, Music, Dancing, Fencing, Writing & Drawing" were undertaken. The school also offered to receive "pupils as boarders or day-scholars", but sadly there appear to be no subsequent records of its working history, nor indeed of its date of closure.



COMPETITION ENTRY 2

ANTIOCHOS GRYPOS, DAMASCENE TETRADRACHM

Dr Nicholas Wright

Member NSI-NB

Antiochos VIII was raised to the Seleukid throne in 125 BC by his formidable mother, Kleopatra Thea. She was a Ptolemaic Egyptian princess and holds the dubious honour of being the daughter of a king, the sister of two, the wife of three kings and the mother of four. Kleopatra poisoned Antiochos' eldest brother when he refused to let her rule as regent and crowned the adolescent Antiochos in his stead. On reaching maturity in 121 BC, Antiochos forced his mother to drink the very poison she had, in turn, prepared for him.

Although his official epithet was Epiphanes – the Divine Manifestation – his people knew him as Grypos – Hook-nose – a feature prominent on his coin portraiture. Throughout his sole-reign, Antiochos Grypos was engaged in a civil war with his cousin, half-brother, and namesake, Antiochos IX. In exchange for support, both kings made grants of ever-increasing autonomy and privileges to indigenous Syrian temples. The reverse of this tetradrachm shows the Syrian 'master of the heavens', Ba'al-Shamin, in the form of Zeus wearing a lunar crown and holding a star in his outstretched hand.



Seleukid kings of Syria

Antiochos VIII Grypos, dated 199 of the Seleukid era (114/3 BC)

Tetradrachm, Damascus mint.

COMPETITION ENTRY 4

A COIN THAT MEANS THE WORLD TO ME

Duncan Eccles

After much thought, I will share with you the most valuable coin in my collection.

This is an Italian 5 Lira coin made from aluminium. It was produced between 1946 and 1950 and was one of the first types to be minted by the new Italian Republic (formerly the Kingdom of Italy). The obverse shows a female with a torch, but I love the reverse showing a bunch of plump grapes. There is an 'R' on the reverse to the bottom right-hand side and this is the mark of the designer Giuseppe Romagnoli. On the inner rim of the obverse, to the right-hand side, there is a tiny inscription that bears the names of both Mr Romagnoli and Pietro Giampaoli (the engraver).

The coin currently has very little value as a collector's piece but means the world to me.

I cannot remember my age, but my mum (Jean) gave me a coin that she had had since being a little girl. She was born in 1936 in England, so I guess it was a gift from grandpa John after the war years. It was always precious to my mum and I still have it, as carefully protected as a number of collectors would store a valuable coin.

As mentioned, it is of little monetary value but priceless to me. I am 60 years old and would willingly swap anything (other than my wife and children) to see my mum sharing this with people all over the globe who I will, as likely, never meet.

I hope you will embrace the happy feeling that this coin brings to me whenever I look at it. Sorry but the memories are mine alone, but I hope all can take a moment to reflect on their own thoughts of lost loved ones.

I would hope that my coin inspires thought and reflection on what will become of our collections when we are gone. I think I saw on a forum that we are but keeping our coins for future generations. So true.

I would like you to smile when you see my coin. You did not know my mum but maybe somewhere she will feel the smile and remember her coin.



COMPETITION ENTRY 5

ST. GEORGE MEDAL AND DIE

Alan Dunlop

Member NSI-NB

The veneration of St. George seems to have developed in Asia Minor, though the roots probably stretch into antiquity. He has been part of Orthodox Christian iconography since at least the 7th century. It was then brought to Europe by returning crusaders, the legend and image of the Saint appealing to the chivalric ethos of the medieval courtly society of the time.

Saint George was adopted as a Patron Saint in many countries from Georgia to Portugal and Russia to Ethiopia. We are probably most familiar with him as the Patron Saint of England his adoption most likely stemming Edward III's formation of the knightly Order of The Garter, of which St. George is the Patron Saint his image featuring on the Arms of the order.

In the 17th century several European monarchs celebrated their installation as Garter Knights by striking commemorative medals and coins using the image of St. George on them.

This medal was designed by Hermann Roth von Rothenfels the die cutter at the Kremnitz mint in Hungary between 1690-95 and continued to be struck there until the late 1890's it was widely copied and used on medals and amulets which became popular with sailors and fishermen.



Saint George Medal & Die
Minted in Kremnitz Hungary
from 1690's until 1890's

COMPETITION ENTRY 6

INCUSE TYPE AR STATER OF SYBARIS

Keith Mawhinney

Member NSI-NB

For a period of approximately 70 years from the mid-6th century BCE a novel technique was used in the fabrication of the coins of southern Italy. This involved using a wider and thinner flan than was typical of the period with the reverse die being carved in relief, which resulted in an intaglio image. The reverse of this 'incuse' type was typically a mirror image of the obverse, as illustrated by this coin from Sybaris which has a striking image of a bull turning his head back as though he is leading the herd or watching over the fertile Sybarite meadows. Sybaris was founded in c. 720 BCE and rose to become the richest of the Greek colonies in Italy. It lends us the modern word Sybaritic, 'fond of sensuous luxury or pleasure', and this reflects the reputation of the people of Sybaris in that period.

This coin has a *terminus ante quem* of 510 BCE, which marked the destruction of the city by its neighbour Kroton. Tantalisingly, it has also been suggested that the design of later incuse coinage of the region was influenced by the philosopher and celator Pythagoras of Samos, who spent his final years in Kroton.



LUCANIA. Sybaris. Ca. 550-510 BC. AR stater (29mm, 7.03 gm, 11h). Bull standing left, head reverted, on dotted ground line; VM in exergue, dotted border on raised rim / Incuse bull standing right, head reverted; incuse dotted border on incuse rim

COMPETITION ENTRY 7

PRIVATE BANK NOTES OF A GRAND 'PONZI SCHEME'

Maurice Kane

Member NSI-NB

MMM was a private bank set up in Russia which perpetrated one of the largest frauds or 'ponzi schemes' of all times in the 1990s. It is estimated that 5-10 million people lost their savings.

MMM was taken from the first letter in the three founders' surnames, Sergei Mavrodi, his brother Vyacheslav Mavrodi, and Olga Melnikova. Promising annual returns of up to 3000% at its peak, the bank was taking in millions of roubles each day.



It was reported that Sergei had rooms full of money at his house. Some people were aware that MMM was not an honest company but thought they could withdraw funds before it collapsed. Thousands of investors staged a mass protest in front of the company's headquarters, prompting the intervention of riot police (1994); some reportedly setting themselves on fire. MMM owed between 100 billion and 3 trillion roubles.

MMM was founded in 1989, shut down by Russian police in 1994, declared bankrupt in 1997. Thought no longer current, MMM 'share certificates' bearing a resemblance to banknotes were issued in denominations of varying amounts. Mavrodi won election to the Duma (a Russian assembly with advisory or legislative functions) in 1994 giving him immunity from prosecution for a while. Mavrodi died aged 62 in 2018 of heart problems.

COMPETITION ENTRY 8

PRECURSOR OF THE TRAGEDY: RUSSIAN AWARD MEDAL OF 1849 FOR THE PACIFICATION OF HUNGARY AND TRANSYLVANIA

Dr Alexey Shitvov
Member NSI-NB

Deserting the roaring streets, I popped under the canopy of a Victorian arcade which sheltered a small curiosities shop. Browsing through the boxes full of replica Nazi decorations, deeply displeased seeing the growing appeal for such gruesome memorabilia, I suddenly stumbled upon a Russian silver medal. Quick search online resulted in the purchase. The medal, 29.3 mm/10.4 g., attached to the contemporary ribbon, features the Russian Imperial Eagle topped by the rayed all-seeing eye on the obverse, within a circumscription in Old Slavonic meaning 'God is with Us, People Take Heed and Submit'; the reverse inscribed 'For the Pacification of Hungary and Transylvania 1849'. It was instituted by Nicholas I in 1850 to award the Russian forces who had helped restore the authority of young Emperor Franz Joseph I, following the uprising in Hungary and Transylvania in 1848 against Habsburg rule. The campaign cost Russians 708 killed, 2447 wounded and 10,885 died of diseases, alongside massive expenditures. Arguably, easy gains and conspicuous gallantry, puffed-up by the Austrians hymning the praises, threw the Russians of their guard. The lack of critical assessment of this campaign led to stagnation of the military reforms, which imminently brought Russia to the bitter defeat during the Crimean War of 1953-1856.



COMPETITION ENTRY 9

'THE GRAND TOUR' MEMORABILIA

Derek Kerins

Member NSI (Dublin)

In the 18th,19th Century it was popular for wealthy young men and occasionally young women to travel on what became known as 'The Grand Tour'. The Tour was considered the finishing touch to their education. The Tour would typically take in most of the major countries in Europe and particularly Greece and Rome and visits to all the major archaeological sites were the highlights. Those wealthy enough would purchase ancient artefacts and have them shipped home for display. The coins displayed and cast in wax were possibly bought on such a tour as a reminder, much as we would do in the present age and don't forget this was before the age of the Camera, or perhaps as a gift to someone they knew interested in Numismatics. The coins shown would have been expensive to buy as originals and some of them were in Gold.



COMPETITION ENTRY 10

CELEBRATION OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Anonymous

This coin is described as a Roman Provincial Coin (RPC) and was minted during the reign of the Roman emperor Gordian III, AD 238-244. It is a bronze coin, diameter 25 mm, weight 12.55 g and its designation is RPC VII.2.

The obverse depicts Alexander with ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΝ (Alexander in Greek) around. The reverse has Alexander on his warhorse, Bukephalos, galloping right, holding his spear and with chlamys (cloak) flowing behind. The lettering, ΚΟΙΝΟΝ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΩΝ Β ΝΕΩ, is around and is Greek for State/Province of Macedon.

Alexander III of Macedon ruled from the death of his father, Philip II in 336 BC to his own death in 323 BC. He firstly consolidated his father's conquest of Greece and then, from 334 to 323 BC, set out on his own huge conquest of Egypt and the East up to the borders of India, earning himself lasting fame and the epithet "The Great".

Greece started to come under Roman influence from about 200 BC and Macedon was made a Roman province in 167 BC. Greece was now part of the Roman Empire.

The Roman Empire controlled minting of gold and silver but permitted local issues of bronze coinage – the Roman Provincial Coinage (RPC) series. These usually had the Emperor on the obverse and a local theme on the reverse. This coin is an exception – no Emperor and thus described as a "Quasi-Autonomous" issue.

In summary, this coin is about 1780 years old and celebrates a "local hero" from about 570 years previously!



COMPETITION ENTRY 11

THE DARDANELLES TEN SHILLING TREASURY NOTE

Dr Stephen Seawright

Member NSI-NB

The Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF) commanded all Allied forces in Gallipoli and Salonika in World War I, including the Gallipoli campaign, from 15th February 1915 to 9th January 1916, an Anglo-French operation to free the straits of Dardanelles from the Ottoman Empire to give access to Constantinople and the Black Sea.

The Dardanelles Strait lies between the Gallipoli peninsula on the European side of Turkey and the mainland Turkey in Asia Minor around the ancient city of Troy. An initial naval operation failed so the MEF reverted to an amphibious operation to occupy Gallipoli including the ANZAC beach assault by Australia and NZ forces.

£1 and 10s treasury banknotes were issued for use by the MEF, the banknotes were overprinted from May to November 1915 in Arabic and used by the Allied troops to purchase goods from locals. The translation of the Arabic reads (*from right to left*):

Piastres silver 60 / Piastres silver sixty

The example shown is a 10s Bradbury Treasury note with a Dardanelle overprint. Pick P348b/TR4 1,620,000 were transported, main prefixes tranches being Y/1 to Y/30 and Z/1 to Z/30. W/1 to W/30, W/61 to W/90 and X/1 to X/90 were printed, some transported, all later destroyed.



COMPETITION ENTRY 12

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN SILVER MEDAL

Michael E. Kenny

Member NSI (Dublin)

Trinity College Dublin was founded in by Queen Elizabeth I in 1591 and it is the premier university in Ireland. TCD is a sister college to St. John's College Cambridge and Oriel College Oxford. Medals were awarded from 1867 in gold for senior moderators and silver for junior moderators.

Obverse: Splendid portrait of Queen Elizabeth in richly embroidered dress, struck in high relief, facing three-quarters, right; legend COLL SS ET INDIVID TRIN REG ELIZABETHAE JUXTA DUBL 1591.

Reverse: Arms of the College on ornate shield. Legend: within a beaded circle, LITERIS RECENTIORIBUS FELICITER EXULTIS; engraved ANNE BEATTY 1912.

Wt. 59.8 Grams; 48 mm, 2.11 oz. plain edge. In leather box of issue by West & Son, The Kings Jewellers, 18 and 19 College Green, Dublin.

As women were only admitted into the hallowed halls of Trinity since 1904, very few female students would have been at Trinity in 1912. Quite an achievement for Anne Beatty who would have been an early recipient of this medal.

These medals have usually been cleaned and worse still polished, which spoils their appearance. This example is beautifully toned with blue and green patina showing off the intricate detail of the design.



COMPETITION ENTRY 13

EDENDERRY, UNIVERSAL PROVIDING STORES, M. P. O'BRIEN DRAPERY
PRINTED LABEL ATTACHED TO THE REVERSE OF A WORN VICTORIA YH 1D.

Elizabeth McKeown

Member NSI-NB

When I first spotted this item, I was impressed by the business acumen and ingenuity of the owner. Borne out by the following:

"... one of the local merchants who made most use of the canal was M.P. O'Brien whose name was to become a byword in retailing throughout mid-Leinster. He set up his store in Edenderry in 1855 and before long had opened branches in Tullow, Allenwood, Clonbullogue, Moyvalley and Kilmeague under the name of the Universal Providing Stores. However the business was to become better known by the name of its proprietor M.P.O'Brien who became a household name through Offaly and Kildare. The family business was to the forefront of retailing innovation well into the twentieth century bringing Naas its first supermarket – known as O'Brien's – which opened in the town's South Main Street in the mid 1960s".

*Source: Co Kildare Online History Journal THE CHANGING FORTUNES OF DENDERRY MOHARA on MAY 27, 2010

Universal Providing Stores Edenderry

(around edge) and in the centre of coin

M.P. O'Brien

DRAPERY

Is up to date in

STYLE

& underneath in

PRICE



COMPETITION ENTRY 14 (RUNNER-UP)

MORBIDUCCI – IRISH COINS AND ITALIAN MEDALS

Garry Byrne

Member NSI (Dublin)

While Morbiducci did not win the Irish competition for the design of the new coinage in 1927, he made good use of the reverse designs for Italian medals. Four of them were used for show awards (mostra), for bulls (bovina), stallions (equina), poultry (avicola) and rams (ovina). The latter is of particular note as it was only produced as a plaster model for the Irish coinage, the others were produced in various metals.

1. The top row features the use of the bull in different formats for the obverse and reverse. The first is bronze, the others silver.
2. In the centre are the Irish shilling with the harp and penny with the harp, in nickel-silver and bronze respectively.
3. The last row features the stallion, poultry and ram, all in bronze, with different obverses.

Over the years, I have noted many combinations of the Italian obverses and reverses in different metals. The bulls are the most frequently encountered and it is likely that they were made for collectors rather than as awards at shows. These coins and medals are a fitting tribute to an important figure in Irish Numismatics.



COMPETITION ENTRY 15 (WINNER)

IRISH THREE CROWNS COPPER FARTHING OF

EDWARD IV

David Collins

Member NSI-NB



This is a three crowns copper farthing of Edward IV with the obverse inscription of EDWARDVS DS HYBERN and rose mintmark. The reverse shows a rose and cross superimposed upon a sun in splendour, with the legend CIVITAS DVBLIE (with E retrograde).

It represents the lowest denomination of the infamous 'doubles' issue dating to between 1467 and 1470 when the value of the currency was doubled, so it should probably be regarded as a halfpenny. The entire issue was withdrawn in 1470 as it had created high inflation and economic chaos.

This is the first instance of an Irish coin displaying the three crowns, representing the medieval arms of Ireland, preceding their portrayal on the issues of Richard III.

Heraldry became first established in Ireland following the Norman invasion of 1169. It seems that these particular arms originated with Norman and Gaelic supporters of Edward I in his war against Scotland in the late thirteenth century, reflecting the arms of Saint Edmund the Martyr which the Irish lords used as their banner.

It is still adopted as the arms of the province of Munster, in the past representing the three great lordships of Desmond, Ormond and Thomond.

