

COINS DIGEST"
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Collecting coins of the Channel Islands



Gorey Harbour, Jersey, with Mont Orgueil Castle in the background

LOGICALLY, the Channel Islands, lying as they do just off the North-West coast of France, should not owe allegiance to the British crown. Their status is an accident of history—the last remnants of the ancient dukedom of Normandy held by Britain—and indeed for most of their history the official currency of the islands has been French.

In the case of Guernsey, it was not until as late as 1921 that British sterling currency replaced French money and was declared legal tender, though in 1848 it achieved parity with the French coinage. However, since 1830 Guernsey has had its own distinct local small value coinage. The first issues consisted of copper half-penny-size 4 Doubles and half-farthing size 1 Double pieces—the term DOUBLE originating from the old French coin Double Tournois, which circulated in the islands in the 18th century. These two denominations were shortly joined by a third, the 8 Double piece, which put in an appearance in 1834.

These first issues, all dated 1830 or 1834 but struck during a number of years, were all produced by Boulton and Watt's Soho Mint at Birmingham; however, the second copper issue was struck by an obscure Birmingham firm, Henry Jay and Company.

Following the example of the United Kingdom, a bronze coinage was introduced in 1864, and this has con-

tinued almost unchanged to the present day; indeed, the only novelty of recent years has been the appearance of a threepence in 1956, and the issue of Ten Shilling pieces in 1966.

Since its introduction in 1830, the designs of the coinage have remained practically unchanged; uninspiring in their simplicity, with, until the most recent years, a shield within a laurel wreath on the obverse and the mark of value and date on the reverse.

From a collector's point of view, the coinage presents relatively few problems—and, though not all are common, most dates are quite easily available in desirable condition. The only significant rarity is the 1917 2 Doubles with the very low mintage of 14,524. However, the early copper coins of 1834 and 1858 are not too easy to find in grades better than VF; while this is also true of some of the earlier bronze issues. Nevertheless, despite the fact that at the moment the coinage of Guernsey is not generally hard to find, a large number of the dates were issued in very small numbers and mint figures of about fifty to sixty thousand pieces, or less, are recorded for several dates.

Jersey, the other main island in the Channel Island group, made the changeover from French to Sterling currency in 1834 when British money was declared sole legal tender. At that time, the exchange rate of French coins was 26 livres to one British sovereign; as the livre consisted of 20 sous, and the sou was equivalent to the British halfpenny, the Jersey penny-size coin therefore became one-thirteenth of a shilling, with half-pennies and farthings adjusted accordingly. Although silver and copper tokens appeared at an earlier date, in common with the issues of Guernsey,



Did you know...

GUERNSEY is shaped like a wedge? — and that its three sides are respectively $6\frac{1}{2}$, 7, and $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles long; that it has an area of 16,005 acres, with about 10,000 under cultivation, and that the name Guernsey comes from an old Norman word, Grenezey, meaning "Green Isle."?



A Jersey 1/13 shilling of 1844

and indeed those of the United Kingdom, the first distinct Jersey coins were copper, first appearing in 1841. However, these were replaced in 1866 with a bronze coinage; while in 1877 the unwieldy denominations of one-thirteenth of a shilling was altered to one-twelfth of a shilling, with the smaller denominations obviously following suit.

Apart from changes occasioned by

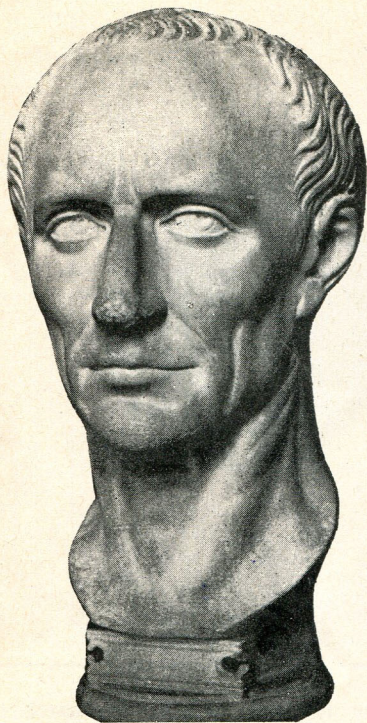
Facing page:

- 1 *Guernsey threepence, 1956*
- 2 *Four doubles, Guernsey, 1920*
- 3 *One quarter shilling, Jersey, 1957*
- 4 *Five shillings, Jersey, 1966*
- 5 *One forty eighth of a shilling, Jersey, 1877*
- 6 *Two doubles, Guernsey, 1899*
- 7 *One double, Guernsey, 1899*
- 8 *Eight doubles, Guernsey, 1899*
- 9 *Four doubles, Guernsey, 1830*
- 10 *One thirteenth of a shilling, Jersey, 1844*

the accession of a new monarch, the only novelty of recent years has been as with Guernsey, the introduction of a three-penny piece in 1956 (characteristically styled one-fourth of a shilling) and the issue of a crown in 1966.

The coinage of Jersey was issued in larger numbers than that of Guernsey, and for this reason ought to be commoner. This does not seem to be the case, and if anything it is rather harder to find in attractive condition. (However, it is a more popular series with collectors, and this may account for the apparent scarcity).

Virtually no dates are impossibly hard to find, though the earlier copper issues are not common coins in EF or better condition. Among the more difficult coins to find are the rare one-fiftysecond of a shilling of 1841 and the scarce one-fortyeighth of a shilling of 1877.



ANCIENT COINS OF THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

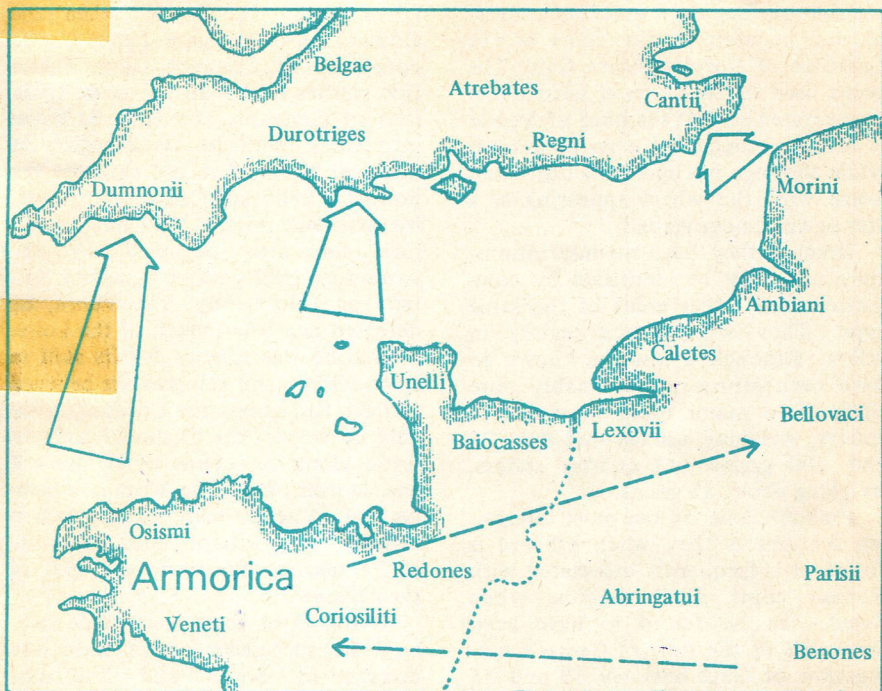
by JOHN MATTHEWS

ALTHOUGH MOST collectors are familiar with the modern coins of the Channel Islands, few realise that the coinage of these islands has its origins in the second century before the birth of Christ.

The area now mostly occupied by France and Belgium, and bounded by the Mediterranean, the Pyrenees, the Atlantic, the Channel, the Rhine and the Alps, was originally the home of a number of tribes of Celtic origin known as Gauls. These tribes, although from a similar cultural background, were quite independent from one another. Archaeological research has shown that they were to a certain extent nomadic, but built primitive

settlements of timber within banked enclosures. In spite of their apparent lack of civilisation, they were excellent craftsmen and produced exceptionally fine articles for personal adornment in silver and gold. An examination of the types of coins they were capable of producing will show that the Gauls were not hordes of savages as scholars in the past have assumed.

The coinage of the Channel Islands was struck by a member of the group of tribes known as the Armoricans. The name of the tribe is unknown as it was not recorded, as were many other, by chroniclers of Julius Caesar's campaigns. The coins used in Gaul were derived from copies (or copies of



This map shows the location of Armorica in Northern Gaul, its eastern boundary marked by a dotted line. The broken arrows show Julius Caesar's advance between 57 and 55 BC. The broad arrows show the major routes taken by members of some of the tribes at the time of the Gallic Wars. The Armoricans crossed the Channel in the west, and the Belgae tribes also crossed in the west to settle in the south-west of England.

copies) of a gold stater struck by Philip of Macedon between 359 and 336 BC. A number of theories have been advanced as to why this coin was chosen. In 1905, a theory was put forward by Monseieur A. Blanchet that the coins were introduced through the Greek colony at Massalia, now Marseilles. A more recent theory is that the coin, known as the Philippus, was used by Macedonian traders who were in contact with Gallic tribes in the region of the Danube. The Gauls then spread the use of the coin among themselves until it had spread to North Western Gaul. Yet another expert has suggested that the coin was introduced by the Romans, who used it after

quantities of them had been levied from Macedon after its capture.

At any event it is certain that by 125 BC its use had spread to the region occupied by the Armoricans.

After successive copying, the gold Philippus had become a silver coin with a design that bore no resemblance at all to its prototype. This was due to the fact that the coiners of the tribes did not have the necessary equipment to produce good dies and their techniques were often very primitive. Another reason for the degradation was that the diemaker would often have a worn coin to use as a model. When an original coin of Philip reached the coiner's hands, he, was often quite

capable of copying it quite accurately, as can be seen in the coins of the Carnutes of North Western Gaul. The coins used in the Channel Islands had degenerated so that the head of Apollo is barely recognisable even as a head, while the biga has become a disjointed horse with the wheel appearing as a star or disc underneath.

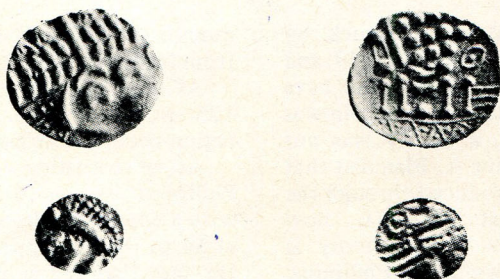
Because they have no inscriptions, they can only be identified by comparison with other coins of the same type. They were struck mainly in billon, although a few are known to have been struck in reasonably pure silver. Two major types were struck: staters, weighing usually between 95 and 100 grains and quarter staters, weighing about 25 grains.

Probably one of the most interesting features is that, when a hoard is found, it is frequently associated with Roman coins. Such hoards, when dated, can be found to have been deposited at the time of Caesar's subjugation of Gaul between 59 and 55 BC.

The Roman campaign against the

Gauls began in 59 BC when the Roman Assembly gave Julius Caesar command of Cisalpine Gaul. Caesar first pushes northwards to stem invasions of Germanic and Helvetic tribes into Gaul. With his flank secure he marched North West and defeated the powerful Bellovaci. Caesar next turned his attention to the West and moved into the area occupied by the Armorican tribes, which occupied Brittany and Normandy. The Ventii, he defeated near the mouth of the Loire. This tribe was famous for its skill in shipbuilding, and refugees are believed to have fled across the Channel, probably by way of the Channel Islands to settle along the coasts of Hampstead and Dorset. With the West now subjugated, Caesar marched Eastwards through the northern Gallic tribes until he reached the narrowest part of the Channel.

Refugees of these wars made their way in successive waves onto the coasts of South and Southeast England, bringing with them their cultures, and their own styles of coinage.



These coins, a stater and quarter stater of the Durotriges, were part of the Le Catillion hoard in Jersey. The head of Apollo has become unrecognisable - only part of his laurel wreath is left. The horse has become a disjointed series of lines, but the wheel of the biga can still be seen on both coins.



This a Chute type stater (named after the site of large hoard) struck in the area later occupied by the Durotiges, now Wiltshire. This coin was found in the Channel Islands and indicates that there was commercial activity between the Channel Islands and the South coast of England.

The Armorican tribes fled north to the Channel Islands, and the South coast of England, where they were assimilated into the cultures already thriving there. Hoards of Armorican coins have been frequently found along the coast; a notable hoard was found at Plymouth showing how far the invaders travelled.

An important British tribe, the Durotriges, centred in what is now Dorset, had a trading link with the Armorican Gauls on the Channel Islands. In 1957 a find of a hoard of Armorican coins was discovered at Le

Catillion in Jersey. This hoard contained a number of Durotrigian coins as well as several other British coins. This serves to emphasise the close connection between the coinages of Gaul and those of Britain at this time.

Although the coins of the Channel Islands are only a very small part of a much larger subject, they do have a very definite place in ancient numismatics, forming a connection between the gold stater of Philip of Macedon, and the coins used in this country immediately prior to the Roman invasion of AD 43.



On this coin no recognisable design can be seen. It was struck in Britain after Caesar's invasion of Gaul by one of the widely dispersed tribes. This coin was found in the Channel Islands, taken by a trader or perhaps by a refugee returning to his homeland