

# The Coin Collection of Christ Church, Oxford

## A Chapter in the History of Numismatics

By C. H. V. SUTHERLAND

IN recent years, many Oxford colleges have deposited their coin collections on loan in the Heberden Coin Room at the Ashmolean Museum; those of Balliol, New College, Corpus and Keble include especially valuable material. A great and noteworthy addition to these loan-collections has now been deposited in the Ashmolean, namely, the collection of coins housed formerly in the Library of Christ Church under the general title of 'the Wake Collection.' Owing mainly to the energy and good-will of Dr. A. T. P. Williams, formerly Dean of Christ Church and now Bishop of Durham, followed by the good offices of the present Dean, Dr. John Lowe, it has been possible to secure an amendment in the terms of the Trust (technically controlling only a section of the coins, although it was difficult to dissociate it from the whole, as a result of ancient confusion of the several elements of the collection) which previously confined the collection within the walls of Christ Church; and the transfer of the coins upon loan to the Ashmolean has now taken place. They number some 8,500 pieces. War-time conditions prevent their being so readily accessible as could be desired: nevertheless, it has been possible to give them a thorough preliminary examination, and to analyse the stages by which this great collection was formed.<sup>1</sup>

The nucleus appears to have been the cabinet of 488 coins presented to Christ Church in 1718 by Charles Brent.<sup>2</sup> This was the period in which the fashion of forming a private collection, stimulated by the publications of such continental scholars as Vaillant, Morell, Hardouin and Havercamp, was beginning to spread widely.<sup>3</sup> Brent's cabinet included 5 Greek silver, 351 Roman silver, and 126 Roman bronze: it was not conspicuous for its rarities.

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Lowe for permission to draw upon material illustrating Archbishop Wake, contained in my MS. Gaudy Oration of 1934, as well as to Dr. J. G. Milne, and to Mr. W. G. Hiscock (of Christ Church Library), for assistance on many points of detail. To Mr. Anthony Thompson, too, similar thanks are due.

<sup>2</sup> Born 1683; matric. at Ch. Ch. 1701; B.A. 1705; Library Keeper 1707; Rector of Heythrop, Oxon., 1714; died 17th January, 1722.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. E. Babelon, *Traité des monnaies grecques et romaines*, 1 (i) (Paris, 1901), cols. 136 ff.

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Nothing is known of any subsequent gifts to Christ Church until the great Wake bequest of 1737. William Wake, later Archbishop of Canterbury, was born in 1657 at Blandford in Dorset, of a line which boasted its descent from Hereward the Wake. At the age of 15 he came up to Christ Church; and, after taking his degree, abandoned all thought of the drapery business which his father had contemplated for him, and took Holy Orders. His career as a Churchman and courtier was rapid and successful. By 1705 he was Bishop of Lincoln; by 1715, Archbishop of Canterbury. During his long tenure of high office fell the famous correspondence between him and the leaders of the Gallican church faction in Paris, in which was explored—vainly, as it turned out—the idea of uniting the Anglican and Gallican churches. Like many another gentleman and scholar of his age, Wake was a natural and well-informed antiquarian. His later years found his interests extensive and deep: his library had become great, and his coins ran into thousands. On his death in 1737 his MSS., books and coins passed under trust to Christ Church.

Of the manner in which he acquired his coins, and of their source, we have virtually no information. His collection was not of particularly choice quality: it was representative, and not, like cabinets such as Dr. Hunter's, formed at great expense in the pursuit also of exceptionally fine or rare pieces. In both the Greek and the Roman sections, however, the scope is wide; and the varieties of type and denomination are carefully observed. Catalogues of the Greek and Roman coins were assiduously kept by an amanuensis, with occasional entries by Wake himself. Towards the end of his life, Wake's enthusiasm seems to have been attracted by English coins. In 1727, when he was 70 years of age, he wrote to Stukeley: 'I believe I once acquainted you, that I had been endeavouring to gather a perfect collection of our English money, of all metals, from the Conqueror to our present times. I am almost perfect from King Henry vii (inclusive): yet want several of the more antient reigns.' After requesting Stukeley to communicate to him, at reasonable prices, any coins of interest, he continues: 'You will have the goodness to excuse this liberty, and impute it to the desire I have to finish a collection intended for the use of the public when I myself must have done with it.' Included among the Wake numismatic archives now in the Ashmolean is a list of English coins, written in Wake's fine angular hand, which must have been composed at the time of his letter to Stukeley. From William I to Richard III the series is thin, comprising no more than 50 coins.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter the series is strong, amounting to over 150 pieces, and representing the principal denominations in each reign, both gold and silver. It is of interest to remark how scarce, in Wake's time, were the coins

<sup>1</sup> Wake's natural interest in Canterbury is to be noted; he specifies three groats of Henry II as struck ON CANT.

of the early English kings. We must suppose that the melting-down of hoards caused this scarcity, which was naturally remedied as soon as the Law of Treasure Trove began to study antiquarian interests. By contrast, Tudor and Stuart pieces were readily procurable—many of them being coins of great distinction. Among Wake's finer acquisitions we can identify the following:— Henry VII, half-groat (1st issue: full face: open crown: m.m. (?) lys over sunrose); Elizabeth, ryal (m.m. A: 1582-4); James I, 30s. ryal (1619); Charles I, triple unite (Wake's 'treble broad': Oxford: 1644: m.m.:  $\diamond$ : ; Morrieson<sup>1</sup> B 3), unite ('broad peice, single': Oxford: 1643; Morrieson D 6), half unite ('halfe broad': Oxford: 1643; Morrieson B 2), silver pound (Oxford: 1643; Morrieson [1642] A, [1643] 2), ten shillings (Oxford: 1643; Morrieson [1642] A [1643] 1); Commonwealth, unite ('broad peice, Gold': 1653; m.m. sun); Cromwell, broad ('Guinea mill'd Gold': 1656); Cromwell, Simon's pattern crown (1656-8); Charles II, Simon's pattern broad ('Broad-peice—Gold': 1662). We may emphasize, in passing, Wake's avowed motive in collecting coins—to put on record a representative series for public instruction. Such was the purpose of the great collection—Greek, Roman and English—which came, in 1737, to swell the original Brent donation of 1718.

During the next few years there is no record of any substantial addition to the Christ Church collection. Then, in 1749, we meet the name of John Swinton<sup>2</sup> as the donor of an isolated coin of the Roman Republic. It was, perhaps, at this time that the custom grew up of adding sporadically to the Christ Church cabinets, for in 1755 Swinton spent some £75 in purchases from the sale of Dr. Richard Mead's coins,<sup>3</sup> and, of the lots which he then bought (*e.g.*, one lot of 54 coins of Smyrna),<sup>4</sup> many coins can be identified among the Christ Church coins. Doubtless Swinton presented such pieces as he did not require for his own cabinet.<sup>5</sup> In 1764 we find the well-known name of C. M. Cracherode<sup>6</sup> recorded in the donation of a Republican coin, an *aureus* of Hadrian, and a

<sup>1</sup> H. W. Morrieson, 'The Coinage of Oxford, 1642-46,' in *Brit. Num. Journ.*,<sup>2</sup> vi (1924), 129 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Born 1703, matriculated at Wadham 1719, B.A. 1723, Fellow and M.A. 1726, Rector of St. Peter-le-Bailey 1728, F.R.S. 1728, Prebendary of St. Asaph 1743, came to Christ Church 1745, B.D. 1759, Keeper of the University Archives 1767, died 1777. On this learned man see also a note in G. Macdonald, *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the Hunterian Collection, University of Glasgow*, I (1899), p. xxv.

<sup>3</sup> This fact was brought to my notice by Dr. J. G. Milne, after his examination of a marked catalogue of the Mead sale (11th Feb.-19th Feb., 1755) now in the London Library.

<sup>4</sup> Lot 16 of the third day's sale (£2 12s. 6d.)

<sup>5</sup> Upon Swinton's death in 1777, his cabinet was bought by Dr. Hunter for £330 (Macdonald, *op. cit.*, p. xxv f.); and a preliminary investigation by Dr. Milne has identified not a few of Swinton's original purchases from the Mead sale now in the Hunterian collection.

<sup>6</sup> Born 1730, matriculated at Christ Church 1746, B.A. 1750, M.A. 1753, Trustee of the British Museum 1784, F.R.S. 1785, died 1799, leaving £1,000 to Christ Church. See also Macdonald, *op. cit.*, p. xxv.

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*siliqua* of Gratian. In 1763 occurred the death of Philip Barton, D.D., LL.D., Canon of Christ Church,<sup>1</sup> and by 1764 there was bequeathed to the college his small but extremely choice cabinet of English coins, amounting to 591 pieces, many of them of rarity and distinction; included in this number were 14 British gold and silver, 102 English gold, 339 English silver and 59 Scottish gold and silver. Barton's bequest appears to have stimulated interest afresh. His executors added to his cabinet a heavy Calais noble of Henry IV 'bought out of Mr. Muſſel's Collection for 8.18.6,' and in 1766 Cracherode purchased, as fresh additions, a portcullis crown, half-crown, shilling and sixpence 'out of Mr. Granger's cabinet.' Thenceforward, until about 1791, Cracherode made many isolated gifts—Greek, Roman, and English—to the collection, the most important being that of 20 Roman *aurei* in 1789: the principal part of his fine cabinet passed to the British Museum on his death in 1799. Among other stray additions we may note the 12 pennies of Henry II (part of a hoard found at Ellesborough, Bucks.) presented by Sir John Russell, Bt., in July, 1777. A very fine series of lead and pewter shop-tokens of Edinburgh may well have been the gift, a few years later, of Dr. Thompson, of Christ Church, Professor of Anatomy at Oxford. It appears that, between 1781 and 1782, Thompson made a collection of these tokens in Edinburgh, and that some of them were subsequently given to the British Museum by Sir Joseph Banks.<sup>2</sup> Presumably the Christ Church tokens represent Thompson's duplicates after the Banks set was formed: of some types there are several specimens. Continental coins were given in 1789 by W. M. Garthshore.<sup>3</sup> An exceptionally interesting record is that of the purchase of a James I half-laurel and a Charles I unite and half-unite, all found in Oxford in 1790: from this we may surely deduce yet another Civil War hoard buried in or near Oxford.<sup>4</sup> Early in the nineteenth century, a Roman hoard was given to the collection; found at Ham Hill in Somerset, it was presented by 'Mr. Phelips of Montacute' to William Wood,<sup>5</sup> who deposited it in Christ Church Library. This hoard contains 491 *antoniniani*, from Gallienus to Quintillus, and was originally concealed c. A.D. 270.<sup>6</sup> Donations, mainly of small importance, continued to be noted until 1826—at which period, though the scientific study of numismatics in England was fast gathering strength, the general impulse towards the formation of private collections was slackening.

<sup>1</sup> Born 1717, matriculated at Christ Church 1732, B.A. 1735, M.A. 1739, died 1763.

<sup>2</sup> See Dalton and Hamer, *The Provincial Token-Coinage of the 18th century*, III, part XII (1916), 440.

<sup>3</sup> Born 1764, matriculated at Christ Church 1782, B.A. 1786, M.A. 1789, M.P. for Launceston 1795, and for Weymouth 1796, Lord of the Admiralty 1801-4, died 1806.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the hoards found at Wolvercote (*Oxoniensia*, II (1937), 101 f.) and near Headington (*Brit. Num. Journ.*,<sup>3</sup> III (1939), 91 ff.)

<sup>5</sup> On Wood's connection with the Phelips family, and also with Christ Church, see J. N. L. Myres in *Num. Chron.*, 1936, p. 30 f.

<sup>6</sup> See *Num. Chron.*, 1936, pp. 34 ff.

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It remains to mention the fine cabinet of Oriental coins which forms a part of the Christ Church collection. These number some 520 pieces; and they appear to have been collected during the 18th century. Some, at least, seem to have been acquired in the middle of that century; and it is possible that this cabinet may have owed its formation to Dr. Richard Browne,<sup>1</sup> the eminent orientalist who was among the first Englishmen to study eastern numismatics. A hand-list of the coins was compiled in July, 1886, by S. Lane-Poole:<sup>2</sup> it appears from this that the latest dated coin is 1202 A.H. = A.D. 1787-8, but the majority of the dates certainly falls before Browne's death in 1780. Whatever Browne's connection with the Oriental cabinet may have been, its formation may certainly be placed in the 18th century, for Browne himself read most of the coins, as his surviving MS. notes clearly prove.

It is probable that, during the first half of the 19th century, the separate elements originally constituting the collection were becoming confused. Additions of Greek and Roman coins were placed, as a matter of course, in Wake's great series: English coins, etc., would find their way into the Barton series, already swollen by the inclusion of Wake's English coins. Finally, the whole collection—Greek, Roman, English, Oriental, and miscellaneous—came to be designated (conveniently, if inaccurately) 'the Wake Collection.'

As we have seen, the Oriental coins were listed in MS. in 1886 by Lane-Poole. In 1890 a MS. catalogue of the English coins was prepared by Sir Charles Oman—a valuable and accurate record of 876 pieces. A quarter of a century later the Greek series of some 3000 coins was catalogued in MS. by Mr. E. S. G. Robinson, himself of Christ Church. A few years ago I myself made a MS. catalogue of the Roman Republican coins—some 600 in number—and of the 491 Roman coins of the Ham Hill hoard,<sup>3</sup> then preserved at Christ Church but now transferred to the Ashmolean with the main collection. Now, in its new setting, the whole series will be assured of rearrangement and of the closer and more continuous attention which it deserves.

A brief mention may be made of some of the finer specimens or sequences. Among the Greek series may be noted an octodrachm of the Derrones (Gaebler, 4), a didrachm of Philip V of Macedon (monograms ΜΞ ΒΞ; Gaebler, 4), two didrachms of Rhaucus in Crete (one a variety of Svoronos, 6; the other not in Svoronos, *obv.* head of Britomartis), a tetradrachm of Prusias II of Bithynia (Waddington, *Receuil*, 10 (12)), a tetradrachm of Abydos (ΠΑΡΜΕΝΙΚΟΣ), a

<sup>1</sup> Matriculated 1727, B.A. 1731, Fellow of Trinity 1734, Lord Almoner's Professor of Arabic 1748-1780, Regius Professor of Hebrew 1774-1780, died 1780. For this and other information about the Oriental cabinet I am indebted to the kindness of Sir Richard Burn.

<sup>2</sup> Lane-Poole published some of the more noteworthy specimens in 'Oriental Coins at Christ Church, Oxford,' *Num. Chron.*, 1886, pp. 233 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See *Num. Chron.*, 1936, pp. 30 ff.

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tetradrachm of Alexandria Troas (*Nomisma*, vi, pl. III, 6), a bronze medallion of Germe (Severus Alexander; *rev.* Herakles and lion), a tetradrachm of Ptolemy IV (Svoronos, 1124), a tetradrachm of Ptolemy V (Svoronos, 1282), and an Alexandrian bronze of Nero, of year 9, with *rev.* hawk (no bronze of year 9 has been hitherto recorded). The Roman series of Republican *denarii* is rich: included in it are specimens of the rare issue of P. Lentulus (*cf.* B.M. Cat., *Rom. Rep.*, 1, no. 3329), and of Antony and Cleopatra. Among the Roman Imperial coins may be noted a 'cistophorus' of Augustus (Mattingly-Sydenham, 17), some fine *aurei* of Claudius—including specimens struck in the name of the young Nero (Mattingly-Sydenham, 93, 95, 98), a superb *aureus* of Nero and Agrippina (Mattingly-Sydenham, 9), seven fine *aurei* of Hadrian, a *denarius* of Orbiana, two *antoniniani* of Saloninus, a *denarius* of Carausius (mint-mark RSR) and *antoniniani* of Zenobia and Quietus. From the general series of English coins the following may be noted:—an irregular penny of Stephen (rosette in front of head); a quarter-noble of Edward III (1344); a heavy (Calais) noble of Henry IV; a Bristol ryal of Edward IV (group IV: mint-mark, crown; B on waves); an angel of Richard III (mint-mark, boar's head, on both sides); a Perkin Warbeck groat; a sovereign of Mary, pierced as a touch-piece; a pound sovereign of Elizabeth (mint-mark, rose, 1565);<sup>1</sup> a very fine series of the coins of Charles I; and a Pontefract siege-piece of Charles II (1648, old style). Scottish coins include a two-thirds bonnet-piece of James V (1540); and a thistle-noble (1588), hat-piece (1593), and rider (1594) of James VI: among the Irish coins there are an Inchiquin crown (1642: irregular shape) and an Ormonde crown (1643) of Charles I. Finally, we may mention a Massachusetts oak-tree shilling of 1652, and a Plantation tin halfpenny of James II, 1685-8.

Such is the measure of this notable loan; and such in brief outline is the interesting chapter in the history of numismatics which lies behind the formation of this fine collection. Added to the great material already in the Ashmolean, its use will, in normal times, be great and constant; and the thanks of students are due to the Wake Trustees,<sup>2</sup> and to the Dean and Governing Body of Christ Church, for their generous and far-sighted decision to make the collection so readily accessible.

<sup>1</sup> See *Num. Chron.*, 1934, p. 136 f.

<sup>2</sup> The Dean of Christ Church, the Regius Professor of Divinity, and the Regius Professor of Hebrew.