SEPTEMBER MEETING:

Members at the last meeting had the pleasure of hearing Mr. J. Clyde Smith speak on the subject “Coins that have circulated in New South Wales.”

The story of the coins used in New South Wales highlights many of the interesting phases through which the colony passed but time will not permit more than brief mention of many of them; for that reason too I have not attempted to detail our gold coinage.
The First Fleet brought no supply of coins out—usually it is said because convicts were to receive no wages while civil and military personnel were to be supplied from a communal store; the colony was to be self supporting, its own produce would replenish the store and be exported for further supplies.

We know now how wrong that concept was.

However, my opinion is that the shortage of coins in England was so acute that the needs of a minor colony could not only be conveniently overlooked, but also in fact could hardly be supplied.

To understand this position we must go back as far as 1746 when and silver mines of the west of England and Wales were exhausted and silver for coinage had to be imported. Some small quantity was imported for a few years but between 1758 and 1788 no silver coins were issued other than a few small mintings that were quite negligible.

On top of this the price of copper rose to the point which made minting unprofitable and no copper coins were struck for 22 years between 1775 and 1797.

Living conditions were very different then but England's population was at that time about equal to our own today—so think how we would be placed with no silver coined for 30 years and no copper for 22 years!

There were many types of old coins in use and many foreign coins must also have been used but the shortage of small change was such that many private firms struck their own copper tokens for small change.

Gold coins were struck nearly every year but were of little use for small change and even the minting of these ceased temporarily in the latter years of the 18th century and Bank Notes were introduced for the first time in 1797.

Some other expedients were adopted notably the counterstriking of Spanish Dollars first by George III name and then by being completely overstruck for issue, not as a regal coin, but as a Bank of England dollar.

So that in 1788 we had few copper coins available and practically no silver coins—a few shillings and sixpences only. The need for coins in N.S.W. rose quickly with the need to buy from every Trader who called, and although numbers of foreign coins were in use these, too, quickly left the colony. We know by a proclamation of Gov. King that many of these were accepted. He fixed their value in N.S.W. by a proclamation in 1800 which said in effect:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coin Type</th>
<th>Proclamation Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£ s d</td>
<td>£ s d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An English Guinea</td>
<td>1 2 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A J ohnata (Portugal)</td>
<td>4 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Ducat (Continent)</td>
<td>2 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Gold Mohur (India)</td>
<td>1 1 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Pagoda (Ceylon)</td>
<td>8 0 0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Spanish Dollar—or Peso Duro of 8 Reales—is one of the outstanding coins of the world. Spain minted these in enormous quantities in Mexico and South America—in 80 years they coined 1320 million from 1734 to 1814. They have been adopted or adapted by countries all over the world, from England to China.

Popularly called pieces of eight, these coins were for a time the only European coin accepted in Oriental countries. They were often cut into pieces for small change, a practice as old as the first English silver pennies, discontinued today, but the terms "two bits" originating from this practice is still common in America.

The rupee was minted for the E.I.C. for its use in India.

The copper coin of 1 oz. is a most interesting penny. It had a partner, the copper twopence. Both of these were struck in 1797 to end the copper famine.

They were not struck by the Royal Mint. A private firm responsible for many of the fine copper coins of the E.I.Co. had the best machinery in the world for coins, and the first steam driven presses. Eight of these presses were installed, each capable of striking 50 large or 150 small coins a minute. Mathew Boulton was the Coiner, his partner is better known to you—James Watt, the inventor of the steam engine.
All told, 44,000,000 pennies and 716,800 twopence were minted. Of these £1200 worth were sent out to Governor King who proclaimed the penny to be worth twice face value—presumably the 2d. also circulated at 4d. but the proclamation does not say so.

The effect of such proclamation was to make it unprofitable to export these coins, nevertheless they did not stay in circulation; they were clumsy and unpopular and tended to get into few hands.

There is a story of the man who wanted to buy land from the Government. This had to be paid for in cash, so he presented himself with a horse and cart and £180 in copper. These were refused as they were only legal tender for 5s, so the cart was taken to the next street, £5 worth was brought in and accepted, then another £5 worth, until the official became tired of the game and accepted the lot.

Instances such as this lead to systems of barter and the issue of private promissory notes of doubtful value in some cases made the lack of coins a real source of hardship and paved the way later to the abuses of the rum currency.

The official records of 1803-4 commenting on these facts set out proposals to have a new currency and further proposed that this be based on the farthing as the unit of a decimal currency, 1,000 farthings to equal a guinea.

Attempts to use more Spanish dollars were unsuccessful. Every time the price of silver rose they could be and were exported at a profit.

So that in 1813 Gov. Macquarie impounded a shipment of £10,000 worth of Spanish Dollars and in 1814 issued his famous holey dollar and dump, making a profit of some 25% and furthermore making twice the original number of coins. These were called in in Sept., 1829.

In 1817 the value of copper coins was reduced to 50% above face value, provided they were dated prior to 1800, and from January 1, 1818, they reverted to face value.

Spanish dollars continued to be the principal basis of exchange and were so common that as late as in 1823 the Bank of N.S.W. issued notes on this basis.

In England the end of the Napoleonic wars saw the price of silver fall to normal and in 1816 it was decided to make a complete recoinage, a mono-metallic standard based on gold was adopted and the silver coin became, as it is today, of token value only; to do this the weight of the shilling, etc., was reduced. The guinea was abandoned and the English 20/- gold sovereign was re-introduced and became the standard coin of the world for the next 100 years.

This recoinage solved the N.S.W. problem from 1823 until the 1840s when difficulty was again experienced because of the shortage of coins.

The population of N.S.W. in 1836 was approx. 77,000; in the next 5 years it rose by the assisted emigration in most cases of 52,000 free emigrants.

This increase in population, plus a drought and depression saw paper money beginning to circulate again and then in 1849 the first use of copper tokens.

I regret to say that Melbourne led the way here. In the Argus of the 20th October, 1849, there appeared this news item:—

“To obviate the extreme inconvenience occasioned by the scarcity of coppers, particularly by the grocers, who have not infrequently to pay a premium of from 6d. to 1/- a pound for their Saturday nights' supply, Mr. Councillor Annand has had coined at Birmingham a large supply of penny pieces, having on one side the figure of Britannia, and on the obverse the inscription ANNAND, SMITH & CO., family grocers, Melbourne”.

This example was soon followed in N.S.W. where 24 different traders or firms issued 1d. and 3d. copper tokens and three firms issued silver tokens for 3d. mainly, although one 4d. was struck.

The majority of these were Sydney firms, but the country was represented by tokens from Bathurst, Goulburn, Morpeth, Campbell-town, Kiama, Jamberoo, Wagga and Wollongong.
The Kiama and Jamberoo tokens were struck for the two Allen Bros., the Campbelltown one for Buckland, Draper. These are all extremely rare. The Wollongong tokens are scarce. These were struck for W. F. and D. L. Lloyd in 1859 and include both the penny, a specimen of which this Society holds, and the ½d.

The bulk of these early tokens were brought from England but Australian firms were not backward in attempting to make their own. One Mr. Peak, of George St., Sydney, was the originator of the Australian token coinage and a J. C. Thornwaite, an engraver, went to considerable trouble in striking his first tokens.

Following this, Thomas Stokes of Melbourne produced the best of our tokens from a coining press brought out from England in 1862 by W. S. Taylor to strike gold coins, a story in itself.—The firm of Stokes is still active in Melbourne as medallists, etc.

Tokens originally were fair value and served a good purpose. Debasement and short weight made them later only a nuisance to the public, and in 1868 in N.S.W. they were made illegal and for a short time were accepted at face value in exchange for the new Bronze Coinage of England provided there was an equal amount of the old copper coins of England returned with them.

The change to bronze coinage was made in England in 1860. This produced a more durable and lighter coin, less expensive to make and much more convenient, which has stayed with us since.

Another interesting coin of the era is the florin of 1849. This was the result of agitation for a decimal coinage and is engraved 1/10th of a pound—it was the first florin struck, but received much criticism which finally caused it to be replaced, by the omission of the usual Del Gratia and Fidel Defensor—this gave it the name the "Godless Florin".

One other curiosity of the time was the hal1farthing. I have an old book on coins—published in 1863, it has this to say:

“The copper coinage of Victoria is continued on the same principles as in the two preceding reigns, with the exception of the half farthing—a very pretty little coin, not yet issued in sufficient numbers to test its convenience, especially to the poor; in the purchase of small portions of cheap articles of food . . .”

The remaining years of Victoria's reign and that of Edward have little to comment on tonight. Let us look now at our coinage.

The founding of the Commonwealth in 1901 brought sufficient problems for our Parliamentary representatives and it was not until 1910 that our first coins were struck. These were the silver set 2/-, 1/-, 6d. and 3d., and were followed by the bronze 1d. and ½d. in 1911. Apart from the 1937/38 crown no other denominations have been struck. These coins were supplied by English mints until 1916 when the first coins of the Commonwealth were struck at the Sydney Mint. Melbourne and Perth mints followed and in times of scarcity we have had coins struck for us at Calcutta, San Francisco and Denver.

Many collectors have complete sets of the Commonwealth coins. These include a coin of every date and each mint and number some 300 coins, such a collection today is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain in good condition.

The scarcest coins are the 1923 halfpenny and the 1930 penny while the 1934-36 florin commemorating the Melbourne Centenary is rarely seen in circulation.

In conclusion, there has been much written of our coins, but detailed histories of most of the issuers of our tokens are rare and any information at all which members may have of W. F. & D. L. Lloyd, of Wollongong, of the Allens of Kiama and Jamberoo, and of Buckland, of Campbelltown, would be welcomed and appreciated.