

Spin-A-Disc Metal Detectors - Book Review

107 Keighley Rd, Illingworth, Halifax HX2 8JE
Tel: (01422) 245401

**SPOTLIGHT
ON**

THE ROMAN IMPERIAL COINAGE *The Standard Catalogue of Roman Imperial Coins* *Published by SPINK since 1923*

In 1923 Harold Mattingley, Assistant Keeper of Coins and Medals, British Museum, and then working on the British Museum's own catalogue of the series, approached Spink with the idea of publishing a catalogue of Roman Imperial Coins. Volume I of the British Museum's *Catalogue of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* appeared in the same year. The new proposed work, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, was to be of wider coverage than simply based on the holdings of the Museum.

The main work which the majority of collectors were using was Cohen's monumental eight volume *Monnaies Imperiales* (second edition, 1880-1892). Here the coins of the emperors were catalogued with their reverse legends in alphabetical order, and were not chronologically arranged. *Roman Imperial Coinage* was not to be simply a rearrangement of Cohen, but a completely new work, taking into account the vast amount of new information recorded since its appearance forty years previously. Considerably more research would be undertaken as the new work progressed.

Spinks took on the project, and Volume I, covering the emperors Augustus to Vitellius, appeared in late 1923. Partly because collectors were used to Cohen it met with some resistance. Undeterred, the authors pressed on. Volume II (Vespasian to Hadrian) appeared in 1926 and Volume III (Antoninus Pius to Commodus) in 1930. The original concept of a 'compact catalogue' had been abandoned. It was also recognised that more authors would have to be recruited if complete coverage of the whole series was to be attempted. Percy H Webb, an authority on the coinage of the late 3rd century, wrote Volume IV part 1 (Valerian to the Interregnum) and that volume appeared in 1927. Probus to Amandus, was published in 1933. Both parts of Volume V were under the editorship of Mattingley and Sydenham. *Roman Imperial Coinage* was now beginning to be accepted as the standard work of reference to the series, especially as Spinks used it in their own *Numismatic Circular*.

It now became apparent that Volume VI, planned to cover the emperors from Pertinax to Uranius Antoninus, was going to be a massive work and would have to be divided. Part 1 (Pertinax to Geta) appeared in 1936 and part 2 (Macrinus to Pupienus) in 1938. With the advent of war the whole project came to a standstill. The appearance of volumes out of sequence was causing some confusion. However, work recommenced in the late 1940s, and in spite of the death in 1948 of Edward Sydenham, his co-editor Harold Mattingley, a great scholar of hard determination, oversaw the publication of Volume IV part 3 (Gordian III to Uranius Antoninus), and which appeared in 1949. D C H V Sutherland, Keeper of Coins in the Heberden Coin Room, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, had by now been co-opted as an editor.

Further numerical confusion was now arising, since J W E Pearce, an authority on the period Valentinian I to Theodosius I, had prepared for publication what was to be Volume IX. That volume appeared in 1951, under the editorship of Mattingley, Sutherland and R A C Carson, who had by that time, been drawn into the *RIC* net. It was to be Harold Mattingley's final contribution to this remarkable work. He had by then retired, and he died in 1964.

Since 1951 and the appearance of Volume IX, Spink had been inundated with enquiries for missing Volumes VI, VII, VIII and the proposed volume X, which eventually were to complete the series. Orders for these later volumes were placed as early as the 1950s! Again, numerical order was to be thrown to the winds. Dr Patrick Bruun, a scholar from Finland had ready the manuscript for Volume VII, and since chronological order had already been dispensed with, it was decided to publish. Volume VII appeared in 1966. The editors this time were by this time Sutherland and Carson. What had started as a relatively simple project had by now become not simply a complex publishing exercise but one of international importance.

The appearance in 1967 of Volume VI (From Diocletian's Reform (AD 294) to the death of Maximus (AD 313), by Sutherland, edited by himself and Carson, restored numerical order. This left Volumes VIII and X to come. By now all the earlier volumes were going out of print and the whole series was reprinted many times between the late 1960s and the late 1980s. By 1970 Humphrey Sutherland and Robert Carson were established as the editors of future volumes. John Kent, then Deputy Keeper of Coins and Medals at the British Museum, completed his Volume VIII covering The Family of Constantine I, AD 337-364, and this was published in 1981.

Some concern was growing about the relative inadequacy of the earlier volumes and Sutherland, now retired, commenced the complete rewriting of Volume I, the new edition of which was published in 1984, exactly 61 years after the appearance of the original edition.

The final volume X was published in 1994, over seventy years after this remarkable work was started. It would give great pleasure to the original authors, Harold Mattingley and Edward Sydenham, did they know that their concept is now universally recognised in the world of Roman Numismatics as the standard work.

Reproduced by kind permission of Spink & Son Ltd

To order, either ring (01422) 245401,
or e-mail us at:
sales@metaldetectingbooks.co.uk