

THIS MONTH'S BOOK REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS A NEW LOOK AT A STANDARD WORK . . . DR KERRY RODGERS TELLS US MORE . . .

WAR COINS of the SUN WARRIORS

THERE are abundant numismatic classics out there but too many are out of print. It is always a delight to see one reprinted. This is the case with Norman Rybot's masterwork *Armorican Art* published in 1937 in *Bulletin of the Société Jersiaise*. For the next 80 years its meticulous drawings have been the go-to visual reference for Coriosolite staters. It was sufficiently important to be reprinted in 1952.

It has been reproduced in full by Chris Rudd and Liz Cottam. But they have done far more. They have supplemented it with a preface providing background information along with an interpretation of Coriosolite staters that they confess is "mostly subjective and speculative". Be that as it may, it makes for a great story that is both a page turner and an eye opener.

Further they have cross-referenced Rybot's illustrations and classifications to John Hooker's *Celtic Improvisations: An Art Historical Analysis of Coriosolite Coins* (British Archaeological Reports International Series 1092, 2002). They also provide names for the different coin types since while, "Academics love numbers, we prefer names". Rudd and Cottam's penchant for names includes providing them for primary identifiers such as "Severed Head above horse"—another useful whimsy but abhorred by scholars.

If you have not heard of the Coriosolites (Army of the Sun) I am not surprised. Before reading *War Coins* I hadn't either. They were a Celtic tribe that lived in northern Brittany (Armorica) and, along with their neighbors, were subjugated by Caesar's legions in 57 BCE.

When tribes in the Armorican region revolted in 56 BCE they were crushed by Caesar who then used the conquered peoples to set an example to the rest of Gaul. In his own words he, "had all their councilors executed and the rest of the population sold as slaves." In short these tribes were erased from the map. Today only their coins remain.

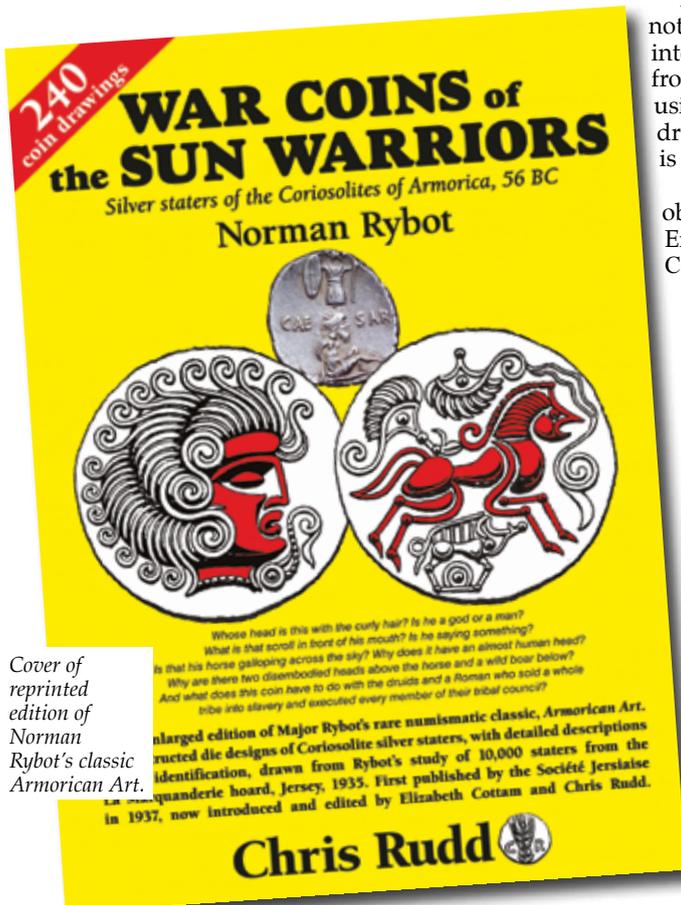
In many ways *War Coins* is the history of these coins. Rudd and Cottam argue the numerous and substantial hoards of Coriosolite coins found over the years represent but a small fraction of over 2,000,000 silver staters struck to pay the troops during the 56 BCE rebellion. They were in effect silver MPCs.

Rudd and Cottam's sympathies lie very much with the Coriosolites. The dedication of *War Coins* is unambiguous: "This book is dedicated to the untold thousands of men, women and children of Armorica, especially those of the Venetia, who were invaded, bullied, robbed, raped, enslaved, deported or slaughtered to feed the greed of one man".

This is a small book, just 88 pages., but I unhesitatingly recommend it not just to Celtic collectors but to all numismatists and especially those interested in the history of coins. Clear comic-strip-style illustrations at the front demonstrate how the staters were mass-produced in a few months using Bronze Age tools. And Rybot's explanation of how he made his drawings in 1937 is an object lesson to all who would illustrate coins. This is a book that should grace all numismatic libraries.

Readers wanting their own copy of *War Coins of the Sun Warriors* can obtain one from Chris Rudd, PO Box 222, Aylsham, Norfolk NR11 6TY England or email: liz@celticcoins.com. Sterling price is £15 + £2 postage. Contact Liz for PayPal, card payments or direct bank transfer.

And if you ask nicely, your copy will come signed by the authors.



Cover of reprinted edition of Norman Rybot's classic *Armorican Art*.



H76. Ogmios and Boar. Anchor Nose with S-Mane, 3X Lash and Union Jack.

One of Rybot's meticulous illustrations as shown by Rudd and Cottam cross-referenced to Hooker and provided with a word descriptor. Please note "Union Jack".