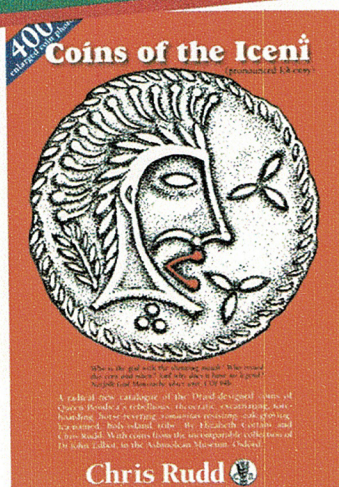


Review

One for every collector



COINS OF THE ICENI, Cottam, Elizabeth and Rudd, Chris. Paperback. 96pp. Illustrated throughout. Published by Chris Rudd Ltd., Aylsham. ISBN 978-0-9566889-5-8.

THIS is a remarkable little book. The front cover tells us what it is all about. First up is a subtitle that informs us that "Iceni" is pronounced "Ick-enney". Secondly, the contents are described as "A radical new catalogue of the Druid-designed coins of Queen Boudica's rebellious, theocratic, corpse-cremating, torc-hoarding, horse-revering, romanitas-resisting, oak-groving, Ica-named, holy-island tribe." In this respect the book does not disappoint. It is exactly that.

The first 21 pages are devoted to telling readers all about the life and times of the Iceni. It is here we learn Ica was the tribal moon and water goddess of the Iceni. She controlled the recurring rhythms of life.

As Cottam and Rudd explain, they have lived 30 years in what was Icenia and is today Norfolk. For all of those 30 years they have studied many many Icenian coins.

They clearly love the Iceni and are intimately familiar with Icenian culture. They present a superb summary of the people and their land and make no apologies for presenting it from three unconventional points of view that, they cheerfully acknowledge, lack historical, archaeological, numismatic, and semiotical support: 1. Icenia/Norfolk was a holy island

ruled by the Druids; 2. the coins of the Iceni were designed by the Druids; 3. Druidism was born in Britain c. 3,000 BC.

This introductory section is a fascinating and well-written read. It is beautifully illustrated. Admittedly Figure 23 might give sensitive readers a nightmare or two. Its caption taught me a new word, "excarnation". And it does not refer to a former flower.

The coin catalogue is based around the incomparable and important Iceni collection of Dr John Talbot now held in Oxford at the Ashmolean Museum. It is subdivided into five phases: 1. Gallic War unity (c.55–50 BC); 2. Post-war austerity (c. 50–35 BC); 3. Peaceful prosperity (c. 35 BC–AD 20); 4. Client-state conformity (c. AD 20–47); 5. Claudian regality (c. AD 43–47).

The coins are cross-referenced to Ancient British Coins (ABC) wherever they have been catalogued. Many are not.

Features on the coins that are important in their descriptions are highlighted in red on the 400 excellent illustrations. These include, by way of example, spiky teeth (of a wolf), big blobby pellet linked to smaller pellet, phallus in wolf's crotch, corn ear, multi-spoke wheels, and pellets galore.

You don't have to collect Celtic coins, let alone those of the Iceni, to include this book in your numismatic library. Those first 21 pages are a delightful romp through little known pages of British history. If nothing else they are a tribute to the people who rebelled against the Roman yoke in AD 60–61 and, led by a remarkable woman, sacked and destroyed Camulodunum (Colchester), Londinium (London) and Verulamium (St Albans). Along the way some 70,000 to 80,000 Romans were killed.

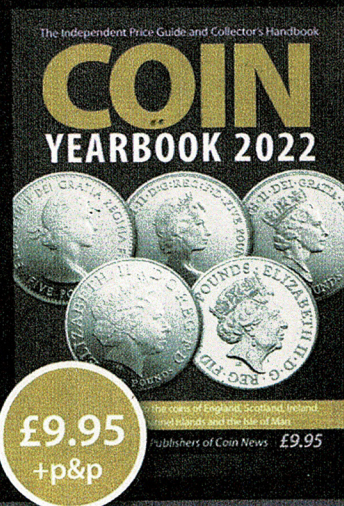
You can find the book at the Chris Rudd website <https://celticcoins.com/>. Go to the menu at upper right, go to "Liz's Shop", open "Celtic Books" and scroll down. Yours for £20. I can but thoroughly recommend it.

Dr Kerry Rodgers

Image courtesy Chris Rudd Limited.

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