

The Coins of HRH Prince Leonard I

Dr Sir Kerry Rodgers unravels the issues of The Principality of Hutt River

FEW countries are as misunderstood as the Principality of Hutt River. Collectors will be hard-pressed to find its issues in the *Standard Catalog of World Coins*. Some other catalogues go so far as to dismiss its coins and notes as fantasies, placing them alongside those contrived for Easter Island, Antarctica or, even, Atlantis.

Yet the Principality is a self-proclaimed, independent, sovereign entity enclosed within the State of Western Australia. Its independence and legal status are tacitly recognized by the Australian Government. It lies some 370 miles north of Perth and occupies some 18,500 acres making it larger than Hong Kong or Pitcairn Island.

Independent ways

The founding of the Principality dates back to 1969 when a serious political stoush erupted between the wheat growers of Western Australia and the state's government. At the heart of the matter lay the government's intent to impose a draconian reduction in wheat quotas. This would see many farmers bankrupted and forced from their lands.

One of those affected was Leonard George Casley whose farm occupied 18,500 acres in the valley of the Hutt River. Not only was the economic viability of his farm about to be destroyed but he was also threatened with confiscation of his land.

When Casley failed to get satisfaction from either state or federal authorities he invoked International Law to form a "Self Preservation Government". He seceded the family territory of Hutt River from Western Australia and the Commonwealth of Australia. As Casley read the situation, his plight and that of his family was no longer a matter for Australian law.

He proclaimed independence of the Hutt River Province (HRP) on 21 April 1970. Casley was elected administrator of the new state. Following close examination of relevant law he assumed the title of His



His Royal Highness Prince Leonard of the Principality of Hutt River at his 80th birthday celebrations in 2005.

Royal Highness Prince Leonard I. The Hutt River Province then had a population of twelve.

On 12 September 2006, the word "Province" was formally dropped from the state's title to become The Principality of Hutt River (PHR).

Independent state

Since the Principality's founding, the Australian Government has been somewhat ambivalent over the legal position. The Commonwealth of Australia has never formally recognized PHR but has never tested its independence directly in court. At least two internal federal government memos accept PHR's legal status while a Commonwealth of Australia court has declared PHR postage stamps, "legitimated and validated."

In the Principality's early days various state and federal agencies went out of their way to make life difficult for the Prince and his family. The Australian Tax Office made a number of attempts to take action against Prince Leonard and other PHR citizens. These actions either failed or were withdrawn before getting to court. Indeed, in 2008 Prince Leonard and Princess Shirley received letters from the Australian Taxation Office declaring them to be, "non-resident of Australia for income tax purposes."

The Australian Federal Government would appear anxious to avoid any open legal challenge to PHR despite the Principality engaging in activities that would normally bring down the wrath of authorities. This includes issuing visas and passports, and, importantly, stamps and coins, as well as offering company registrations and car licenses.



Official crest of the Principality of Hutt River



Circulating coins of the HRP, 1976, struck at Canada's Lombardo Mint. At left the common obverse design shows a profile effigy of Prince Leonard; the reverses display the Province's coat of arms: 16.5 mm aluminium 5 cents, 19.1 mm copper 10 cents, 22.4 mm brass 20c, and 24.9 mm cupronickel 50c.



HRP .999 fine silver \$30 of 1976.

Today, conflicts with the Australian authorities, including a declaration of war, are a distant memory and Prince Leonard and PHR are the subjects of an exhibit at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. The 40th anniversary of independence was successfully celebrated in 2010. More than 2000 attended including many dignitaries among whom were the Prime Minister of Australia and the Governor and Premier of Western Australia.

Today Western Australian State Government tourist maps promote PHR. And a major tourism magazine rates PHR's settlement of Nain as one of Australia's 100 must-see places.

The Principality's claims to independence appear to be acknowledged throughout Australia without any official or politician of that country openly admitting anything.

Coining it

The currency unit is the PHR Dollar tied at a ratio of one-to-one with the Australian dollar.

The first coins were issued in 1976. They

consist of four denominations: 5c, 10c, 20c, and 50c. These base metal issues all have a common design. They showed a profile of Prince Leonard on the obverse and the coat of arms of HRP on the reverse. The coins were struck at Canada's Lombardo Mint with a mintage of 2000 of each denomination. Further issues were produced in 1977 (1000 coins each), and 1978 (500 coins each). Proof issues exist for all three years.

A .999 fine silver, 38.1 mm \$30 proof with a reeded edge and a .999 fine gold, 25 mm \$100 proof with a plain edge were produced in 1976. Mintages were 2000 and 500 respectively. Oddly, two different die pairs are known for the gold coin.

The first commemorative coin appeared in 1977. It was a pierced cupro-nickel, 33 mm diameter \$1 struck to mark the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. The obverse showed the HRP coat of arms with the inscription "QUEEN'S JUBILEE" on the reverse. Mintage was 1000. In 1978 a similar design, but without the inscription, was produced as a circulation strike. Mintage was 500.



Personal service: Prince Leonard briefs a visitor on the history of the Principality.



HRP 1977 cupro-nickel holey dollar struck for the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

Silver \$30 and gold \$100 coins were issued also in 1977 showing a Red-capped Robin on the reverse of the \$30 and a Wedge-tailed Eagle on the \$100. Mintages were 1000 and 500 respectively. A small number of trial strikes, possibly 10 coins, of the \$100 exist in cupro-nickel. In 1978 \$30 and \$100



Reverses of HRP gold \$100s struck to commemorate Skylab (1979) and The Queen Mother (1980).



Example of an unauthorized silver high denomination 'HRP' coin struck by Johnson Matthey. The obverse lacks the effigy of Prince Leonard. © Ω Collection.



One of Gale's more spurious issues: a .999 fine gold 'sovereign' of 1986. The denomination has no legal standing in the Principality. Image courtesy Stack Bowers.

coins saluted Captain Cook's ship, HMB *Endeavour*. Again mintages were 1000 and 500 respectively.

Throughout this initial period Christine Norman designed all the coins which were struck *in toto* by the Lombardo Mint.

In 1979 \$30 and \$100 issues celebrated Skylab and in 1980 The Queen Mother got the nod with a \$100 coin. Again Lombardo Mint produced the coins but the designer is unknown as are the low mintages. No further coins were issued until 1984.

Scamming it

From 1984-on an extraordinary raft of coins were issued under the stewardship of Kevin Gale.

Gale had inveigled himself into Prince Leonard's trust in the 1970s. He was based in Queensland, on the other side of Australia from HRP. From here he undertook to manage several of HRP's commercial operations including the marketing of its coins and stamps. At no time did Gale have



Examples of unauthorized 'HRP' issues struck by The New Queensland Mint. From left .916 gold \$20 Operation Desert Storm (1991), .999 fine silver \$5 proof "Fathers of Baseball" (1992), cupronickel \$5 50th anniversary WWII with Lady Liberty in Amazon mode. © Ω Collection.



Visitors' Centre, Principality of Hutt River. German dignitaries were visiting on the day as shown by that country's flag flying alongside that of PHR.

power to authorize any coins. All issues, including their designs, had to be approved by HRP.

For a number of years all seemed set fair. A quality mint produced the coins. Sales were good. Interest in HRP was promoted. Gale was knighted for his efforts by the Prince.

But then Prince Leonard became aware that all was not what it seemed in sunny Queensland. He made enquiries. These poin-

ted to the wholesale issue of unauthorized stamps and coins, with many of the latter being struck by an unknown Queensland mint.

In 1995 the Prince demanded a full accounting of the Queensland operation. He was set to arrive in person when Gale died suddenly. It was now found that Gale had in fact registered 'Hutt River Province' as the name of a Queensland company of which he was sole owner and from which no



PHR \$30 Diamond Wedding silver commemorative marking 60 years of marriage of HRH Prince Leonard and HRH Princess Shirley and 37th anniversary of secession.



Designs for PHR 2007 \$5 and \$10 issues showing the armorial bearings of Prince Leonard and his four sons.

profits accrued to HRP. The records of this operation could not be located but it was clear vast numbers of coins had been produced for the US market.

Few if any coins from this period show the effigy of Prince Leonard. The associated issues can be divided into two groups. The first were struck by Johnson Matthey.

These include commemoratives for George Orwell (1984), the inauguration of President Regan (1985), centenary of the automobile (1985), centennial of the Statue of Liberty (1986), America's Cup (1987), Olympics (1988), and US Oath of Office Bicentennial (1989). Denominations, sizes and coin composition vary but most were struck in .999 fine silver or .999 fine gold.

Stormy weather

In 1989 Gale shifted operations to the New Queensland Mint, a subsidiary of the

Continental Coin Co of California.

The first coin from this period was a .999 fine 1 oz \$100 palladium issue reflecting CHEMISTRY · PHYSICS · INDUSTRY. In 1990 a 1 oz silver \$5 appeared with the legend ONE SILVER KOALA / AUSTRALIA'S TEDDY BEAR. And in 1991 a single 22 carat gold-plated cupro-nickel \$20 marked the 50th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbour. Designer was Frank Gasparo. Its mintage was an all-time high at 10,000 coins. This was a foretaste of what was to come as issues and mintages went through the roof.

First up was a whole series for Operation Desert Storm dated 1991. At least 107 different coins were produced in three denominations in three different compositions and two different qualities with three different obverses.

These were followed by 46 designs mark-

ing the 50th anniversary of World War II. The first in 1992 consisted of numerous 39 mm, BU cupronickel \$5s. A second, 1991-1995 set of 44 mm, BU \$10s with identical designs were struck using WWII cartridge brass.

Then in 1992 and 1993 came two series of "Fathers of Baseball", again produced in a confusing series of compositions and denominations.

These were followed by the inauguration of Bill Clinton (1993), a proposed giant dinosaur series (only one coin in 1993), twelve \$10s struck in cartridge brass to mark the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of WWI (1994), and four different 1994 coins for the "Los Angeles International Soccer Competition". The latter was a renaming of the 1994 FIFA World Cup to circumvent the copyright FIFA exercises over its name and logo.

With Gale's death the spate of unauthorized US-themed HRP coins stopped abruptly. Prince Leonard declared Gale a traitor and posthumously stripped him of all titles and honours.

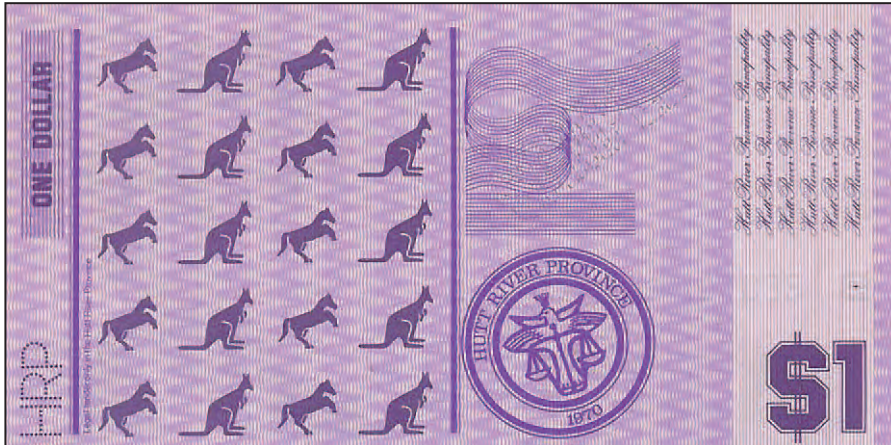
Few if any of the coins struck by the New Queensland Mint were authorized by HRP. The Johnson Matthey strikings are equally as murky. In the absence of records, the Principality has found it easier for them - and collectors - to accept all as official issues.

The straight and narrow

A decent hiatus in HRP coin issues now occurred. When they recommenced in 2000



Lest We Forget: Hutt River's 2009 BU \$5 that expresses Prince Leonard's concern about the 8,000,000 Australians, particularly that country's service men and women he argues have become stateless people due to legal bungles.



Face and back of Hutt River dollar bill.

Prince Leonard had the reins firmly in his hands. His focus was directly on the Principality.

The 2000 coin was a \$100 commemorative to celebrate the 30th anniversary of secession. Mintage of the 24 mm, 8 g .999 fine gold coin was limited to 25. The obverse showed the Principality's state crown; the reverse design by Allan Sterling depicts HRP's biblical gateway. The coin was struck at the Wyndham Mint. Two trial strikes are known in .999 fine silver.

The next issue, in 2007, celebrated the 60th

wedding anniversary of the Prince Leonard and Princess Shirley. It also served to mark the 37th anniversary of independence. The 50 mm \$30 coin was struck in .999 fine gold plated brass and weighed-in at 78.5gms. Mintage was 1000. This was the first coin to show the state's name as PRINCIPALITY OF HUTT RIVER.

A contemporary 2007 set depicted the Armorial Bearings of Prince Leonard and his four sons: Crown Prince Ian Grand Duke of Hutt, Prince Wayne Duke of Nain, Prince Richard Duke of Carmel, and Prince



The selectively gold and silver plated 40th anniversary \$30 showing the location of star HRH Prince Leonard appropriately at Virgo's right hip.

Graeme Duke of Gilboa. Prince Leonard and his arms figured on a \$10, 35 mm, 15.4 g nickel-plated, zinc alloy coin. His sons and their arms were depicted on 30 mm, 11 g, \$5s of the same composition.

Lest we forget

Also in 2007 Prince Leonard authorized a special Lest We Forget issue to express his concern about the legal standing of Australians born in the country prior to January 26, 1949. The Prince has long been concerned by what he considers to be the problematic legal status of 8,000,000 folk persons born in Australia before that date.

Anyone curious to follow the legal argument could do worse than check out the PHR website: www.principality-hutt-river.com.

In brief, in 1948 Great Britain withdrew UK citizenship from Australians making them "British Subjects" or "Commonwealth Citizens". Australia's Federal Government did not get around to passing its Citizenship Act until 26 January 1949 when it granted citizenship to all British Subjects and those born in Australia after that date.

However, in 1973 the Australian Citizenship Act was amended. All reference to "British Subjects" was deleted. Consequently, Prince Leonard argues that unless Australians born before the 26 January 1949 have since become naturalized, they are stateless persons.

The \$5 nickel-plated zinc alloy coin is 35 mm in diameter and weighs-in at 16 g. The coins' reverse design stresses the Prince's

Their Royal Highnesses Prince Leonard and the late Princess Shirley toast their Principality's 40th anniversary of independence.





*HRH Princess Shirley
19 July 1928 – 07 July 2013*

especial concern for those servicemen and women who fought for Australia but who he regards as having lost their citizenship due to legal bangles.

The LWF coin was re-issued in 2009.

HRH Prince Leonard

One of the more impressive coins from the Principality is a \$30 struck in 2010 to mark the 40th anniversary of independence. The reverse shows Prince Leonard's star in the Constellation of Virgo.

Prince Leonard was born in Virgo. In August 1999 star SAO 119916, located at RA: 13h 24m 42s, D: + 4° 24' 08", was named *HRH Prince Leonard* in his honour. In star catalogues it is referred to as HIP 65442, PPM 159732 or HD 116621. [Stars seem to be almost as bad as coins in having multiple catalogue numbers.]



*"Celebration of Life": PHR nonagonal \$10.
Prince Leonard's tribute to the late Princess Shirley, his wife of over 66 years.*

The striking design for the coin's reverse shows the maid Virgo, goddess of justice, agriculture and the harvest, draped tastefully in classical Grecian style and carrying a sheaf of wheat in her left hand and a palm frond in her right. She is overlaid by the stars of her constellation with the position *HRH Prince Leonard* shown at her right hip, an appropriate place for the chivalrous man guarding his lady.

For Prince Leonard Virgo's wheat sheaf is a compelling symbol. It recalls the government-imposed draconian reductions in wheat quotas that threatened to destroy his farm and led to his declaring independence 40 years earlier.

The dual, gold-and silver-plated coin is struck on a 45 mm diameter, 3.5 mm thick, 40 g brass flan. Virgo is picked out in matt gold as is the Prince's effigy on the obverse. The lettering, including that defining the location of the Prince's star is selectively-plated in matt silver. Mintage is 1000.

HRH Princess Shirley Joy Casley: 1928-2013

At 8.30 am on Sunday 7 July HRH Princess Shirley, Matriarch of the Principality of Hutt River, passed away, her husband of over 66 years by her side. They had seven children who together have given them 22 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren.

As part of the Celebration of the Princess Shirley's Life, Prince Leonard has authorised a special commemorative coin. It is a first for the principality in being both non-agonal and flat-sided.

Mintage is 2000 all up of which 1000 are available in a clam-shell box.

And if today anyone asks Prince Leonard if he believes his secession succeeded, he simply says, "We are still here." He might also add that citizens of his Principality have paid no Australian taxes since 1970.

Acknowledgments: Unless otherwise stated, all images are courtesy of and copyright Principality of Hutt River.

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China Strikes Silver ¥10 For BICE

THIS year The Beijing International Coin Exposition (BICE), "devoted to the joys of coin, banknote and medal collecting", was held on October 11-13. For the occasion the People's Republic released a 40 mm, 1 oz .999 fine silver proof ¥10. The

coin was designed jointly by the Nanjing and Shanghai mints and struck by Shenzhen Guobao Mint. Mintage is 30,000.

The obverse consists of a series of dotted line patterns symbolizing coins, a quarter globe projection, the BICE logo and the

year date. The Chinese legend is the title of the PRC.

The reverse features a Hungwu Tongbao coin from the Ming Dynasty along with a Habsburg Maria Theresa Thaler. The design combination reflects the cultural richness of the Beijing show with its integration of ancient and modern, Chinese and foreign coins.

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