



Krugger Pond Imitations



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Kruger Pond Imitations

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery then the Kruger Pond must rank as world's most favoured gold coin. A hundred years ago and more, huge numbers Kruger Pond imitations were produced in Britain. Indeed, some varieties of these tokens are so prolific that no collector of South African coins can have failed to encounter an example. How did this come about?

Parlour games were a popular pastime in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Many of these games, particularly card games, required tokens or counters to keep track of the progress and eventual outcome. Stationers would sell large quantities of these counters packed into boxes. To give the games an additional thrill it was fashionable to have the counters resemble British gold coins. The George III imitation Guinea with the legend, "IN MEMORY OF THE GOOD OLD DAYS" and the, "TO HANOVER", Victoria imitation Sovereign are commonly found examples.

The Counterfeit Medal Act of 1883 put an end to the production of unlicensed coin-like tokens and medals bearing the likeness of a British Monarch. Subsequently, medal manufacturers would frequently incorporate the medal's registration number onto the die to demonstrate their compliance with the Act. Presumably no licence of these sovereign-like counters was granted. Certainly no examples exist with the Jubilee-head or old-head of Queen Victoria.

Foreign coins were not covered by the Act. Tokens from Europe showing the Emperor Napoleon, Napoleon III or one of the German Kaisers were probably imported into Britain to meet the demand. With the advent, in 1892, of the coinage of the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (Z.A.R.), having the bust of President Paul Kruger on the obverse, came a more appealing replacement opportunity. For a start, the Kruger Pond was identical to the British Sovereign in size, weight and gold content and could be, and was, used interchangeably in trade. A large fraction of the resident population in the Z.A.R. was either British by birth or colonists of British descent from other parts of South Africa. The result was that the coins would have become familiar to people in living in Britain. The country was in the midst of a wild gold rush and the names and exploits of the pioneers who amassed great fortunes appeared frequently in the British press. Thus the Z.A.R. became associated with gold in the British public's mind. Later on, the conflicts between the British and Z.A.R. governments which escalated into the Anglo Boer War greatly dramatised the appeal of the coinage. Soldiers returning home would bring back examples as souvenirs. Lastly, the Kruger Pond is a lovely coin. The image of President Kruger is distinctive and, even in those days, iconic.

Most of the Kruger Pond imitations are dated 1896, so it can be assumed that their production started from about that time. From the many different varieties of these counters and also from the fact that large numbers still exist, it can be inferred that they became very popular in Britain. Some of the varieties exhibit evidence of extensive rust pitting on the dies. Others show that the original dies had been reworked and repaired. From this it would appear that production continued for many years, perhaps decades. Judging from the major differences which exist between some of the varieties, probably more than one company was involved in their manufacture, but the names of the companies are not known.

The intention was never to make accurate copies of, or to counterfeit, the Kruger Pond. All contain the word 'imitation'. None of the counters were well made, and some were dreadfully

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crude. Little care was taken in the metal alloy used which runs between bronze and brass. Examples of the same counter can be found in different alloys. Some of counters may have been lightly gilded. All have an upright milled edge in keeping with the real Pond. Not much attention was paid to the size and weight although all are roughly 22 mm in diameter which corresponds reasonably to the Pond and the thickness is realistic. The weight is variable and about half that of a real Pond.

Paul Withers in his booklet *Kruger Pond Imitations* (Galata Print Ltd., 2002) records 14 varieties of the counter including the ½ Pond. These varieties are also recorded in Brian Hern's handbook, *The Medallions of the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek and the Anglo Boer War*, pages 127-29. The numbering given by Withers has been followed here. No new varieties have been found but a 5a has been added because, although made from the same dies as variety 5, the dies had been harshly cleaned to remove rust deposits with the result that the counters have a markedly different appearance.

Some varieties have either an obverse or a reverse in common. As a consequence there are only 10 different obverses and 8 different reverses. The high resolution colour images provided here will aid in their identification. Each of the 14 varieties is listed first. This is followed by images of the 10 obverses and 8 reverses together with an indication of the more obvious points of distinction. Most are easy to identify. Some require more care (e.g. Withers 3-7).

The measure of scarcity given by Withers has been reproduced here as no compelling reason was found to make any changes. The price ranges have been judged from the prices fetched on the two internet auction sites, *eBay* and *Bid or Buy*. The denomination is in American Dollars because that currency is (at least for the immediate future) the world's standard. In any given week there is usually at least one of these counters being offered for sale (although, it should be noted that the images provided are often too poor to identify the counter correctly). The diameter and weight have been given for the particular counter in the image. However, for the manufacturers, quality control was hardly an issue, so significant variations are to be expected.

Kruger Pond Imitations are an interesting back-water of South African numismatics. They will never gain serious collector appeal, but they remain, as they were originally intended, items for fun and amusement that can be enjoyed and collected without heavy demands on the pocket.



Michael Laidlaw
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Withers 1 – ½ Pond no date

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: ½ POND * IMITATION

Motto: EENDRAGT MAAKT MAGT

There is only one type of the ½ Pond



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
19.2 mm	1.83 gm	R2	\$55 - \$80

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Withers 2 – Pond no date

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * IMITATION

Motto: EENDRAGT MAAKT MAGT

Obverse 1

Reverse 1



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
22.3 mm	4.65 gm	Scarce	\$20 - \$35

Withers 3

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 2

Reverse 2



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
21.9 mm	3.80 gm	Common	\$6 - \$10

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Withers 4

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 2 (Rust spots. Die cracks progressively form)

Reverse 3



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
21.9 mm	4.06 gm	Common	\$4 - \$7

Withers 5

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 3

Reverse 3



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
22.0 mm	3.89 gm	Scarce	\$15 - \$25

Kruger Pond Imitations

Withers 5a

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 3

Reverse 3

This is not properly a different type, but the dies have been severely cleaned to remove rust, and then repaired so that the resulting strike looks different. This is most apparent on the reverse where the diagonal hatching behind the lion on the shield is missing. The lettering on the obverse legend is very weak, the beard looks to have been re-worked and a die crack runs along the top of the truncation.



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
22.0 mm	3.89 gm	Scarce	\$15 - \$25

Withers 6

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 4

Reverse 3 (Rust damage. Die cracks progressively form. Probably from the 5a die with further deterioration)



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
22.0 mm	3.89 gm	Scarce	\$15 - \$25

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Withers 7

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 4

Reverse 4



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
21.9 mm	4.40 gm	Common	\$4 - \$7

Withers 8

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 5

Reverse 5



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
22.0 mm	4.13 gm	Common	\$4 - \$7

Kruger Pond Imitations

Withers 8a

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 5

Reverse 5

This is not properly a different type, but the dies have been severely cleaned to remove rust, then polished and repaired so that the resulting strike looks different. This is most apparent in the obverse legend where the bottoms of many letters are either weak or missing, for example the U of ZUID.



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
21.9 mm	4.35 gm	Very Common	\$4 - \$7

Withers 9 – Crude face

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 6

Reverse 6



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
22.6 mm	3.46 gm	Rare	\$20 - \$35

Kruger Pond Imitations

Withers 10 – Crude face

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 6

Reverse 7



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
22.6 mm	4.06 gm	Rare	\$20 - \$35

Withers 11 – Clown face

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 7

Reverse 7



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
22.7 mm	4.42 gm	Scarce	\$6 - \$10

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Withers 12 – Ugly face

Obverse Legend: ZUID AFRIKAANSCH E REPUBLIEK

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 8

Reverse 8



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
22.6 mm	3.46 gm	Rare	\$20 - \$35

Withers 13 – Fra Diavolo Cigars

Obverse Legend: FRA DIAVOLO CIGARS ARE THE BEST

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 9

Reverse 5



Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
22.0 mm	3.65 gm	R3	\$60 - \$90

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Withers 14 – Perl-Bier

Obverse Legend: “PERL-BIER” THE PEARL OF GERMAN BEERS

Reverse Legend: 1 POND * 1896 *

Motto: IMITATION KRUGER SOVEREIGN

Obverse 10

Reverse 4

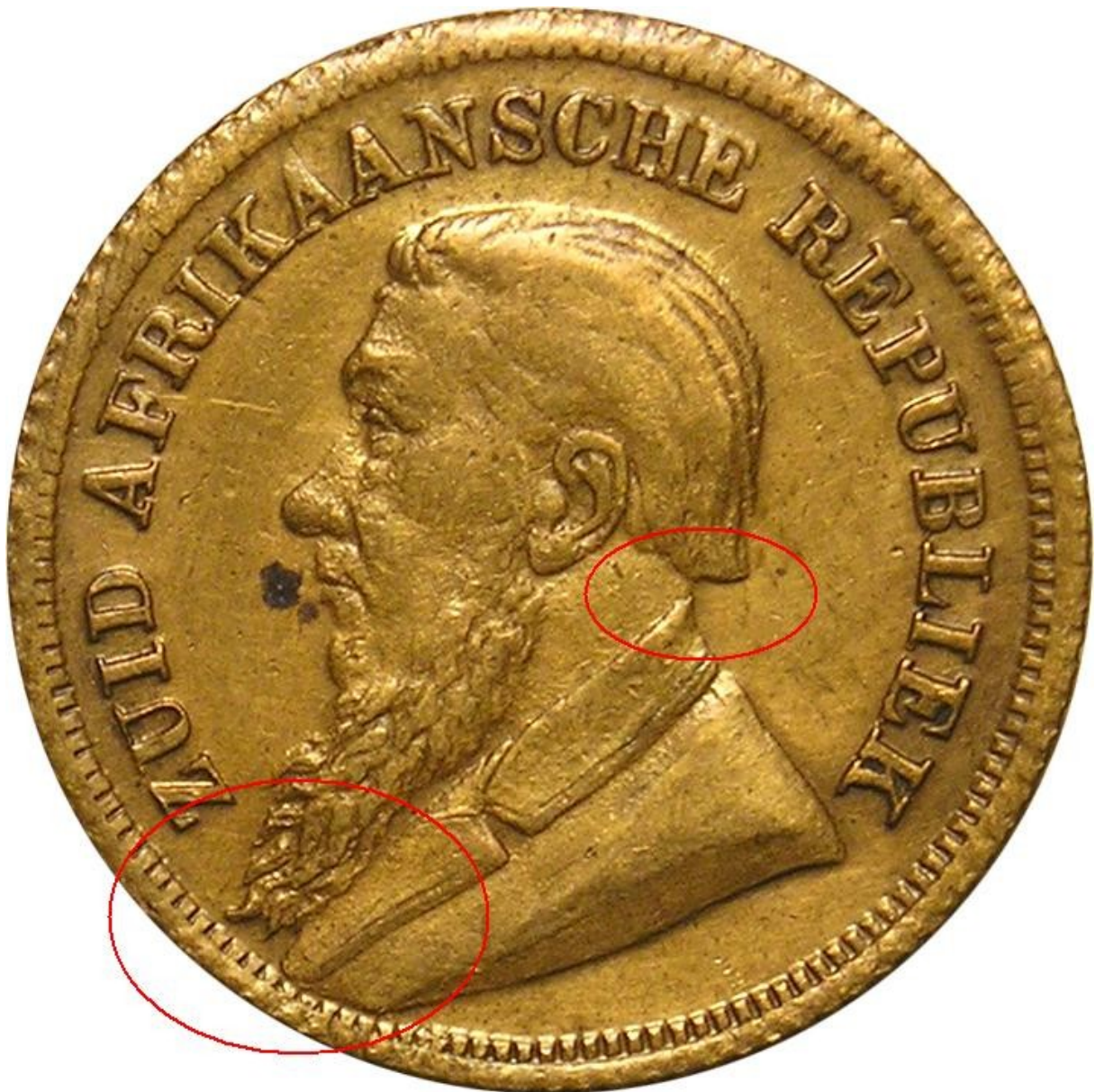


Diameter	Mass	Scarcity	Value
21.9 mm	4.43 gm	R3	\$55 - \$80

Obverse 0 – The obverse of an actual Kruger Pond for comparison



Obverse 1 – One Pond no date



- The beard ends in two points
- The end of the beard and the jacket almost touch the border
- There is a gap between the end of the hair and the collar of the jacket
- A die crack (not seen here) develops in later strikes along the base of the letters LIKE of REPUBLIEK and extends onto the truncation of the bust.

Obverse 2



- The beard ends in three distinct points
- There is a gap between where the beard and the jacket end and the border
- There is a gap between the end of the hair and the collar of the jacket

Obverse 3



- The beard ends in faint strands
- There is a gap between where the beard and the jacket end and the border
- There is a gap between the end of the hair and the collar of the jacket
- The hair is very neat and cut to end in an almost straight line above the collar
- The top of the head is closer to the legend than in obverse 3
- The Letter B in REPUBLIC is doubled at the base.
- There is a stop near the foot

Obverse 4



- The beard ends in three strands similar to obverse 2
- There is a gap between where the beard ends and the border
- The jacket almost touches the border
- The collar of the jacket rises in a point to touch the hair
- The bridge of the nose is very weak

Obverse 5 – Flat Face



- The beard ends in four strands and is wider than obverse 2
- There is a gap between where the beard and the jacket end and the border
- The hair at the back is over the collar
- The shape of the face from the nose to the upper forehead is straighter than obverse 2

Obverse 6 – Crude Face



- Overall the design is obviously cruder.
- The relief is higher.
- The border is beaded and not toothed

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Obverse 7 – Clown Face



- The design is cruder still.
- Kruger appears comical with a pointed nose
- The nose points to AF

Obverse 8 – Ugly Face



- The crudest design of all.
- The hair is stringy
- The nose is pointed
- The border is beaded and not toothed

Obverse 9 – Fra Diavolo Cigars



Withers believes that the puncheons used for Kruger's bust were probably the same as for obverse 4

Obverse 10 – Perl-Bier



The puncheons used for Kruger's bust are the same as for obverse 2.

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Reverse 0 – Reverse of an actual (1894) Pond for comparison



Reverse 1 – Pond no date



Apart from the unique legend and motto which make this reverse easy to identify, the following distinctive features can be noted:

- The wagon is unusually tall with equal sized wheels
- The flower at the foot is a cinquefoil with small central pellet
- A curious flaw encircles most of the die from the top of the letters in the legend extending round to the flower at the foot.

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Reverse 2



- The lettering of the motto is small
- The wagon is well proportioned
- The tip of the top-left flag pole touches the right end of the serif of N
- The flower at the foot has five rounded petals with a large central part
- The R of KRUGER is under OV of Sovereign
- Die cuds develop above the P of POND (seen here) and below the I of IMITATION
- Die cracks develop downwards from the M of IMITATION and across the floral design at the foot (both seen here)

Reverse 3



- The lettering of the motto is larger than reverse 2
- The wagon is well proportioned
- The tip of the top-left flag pole touches the serif of N almost in the middle
- The flower at the foot has five rounded petals with a central annulet or ring
- The R of KRUGER is under OV of Sovereign

Reverse 4



- The lettering of the motto is larger than reverse 2
- The wagon is tall with the rear wheel slightly larger the one at the front
- The tip of the top-left flag pole is to the left of N
- The tip of the top-right flag pole touches the right of 8
- The flower at the foot has five rounded petals and a central pellet
- The R of KRUGER is under SO of Sovereign

Reverse 5



- The lettering of the motto is larger than reverse 2
- The wagon is tall with the rear wheel slightly larger than the one at the front
- The tip of the top-left flag pole just touches the left end of the serif of N
- The tip of the top-right flag pole is slightly to the right of 8
- There is a die crack between the bottom of the 1 and the 8 in the date
- The flower at the foot is like a spoked wheel with a central annulet
- The R of KRUGGER is under the O of Sovereign

Reverse 6



The design is noticeably cruder. The following details can be seen:

- The lettering of the motto is larger than reverse 2
- The tip of the top-left flag pole points to, but does not touch, the left leg of N
- The flower at the foot has five arcs for petals and a central pellet
- The R of KRUGER is under the O of Sovereign
- The letters UG of KRUGER are doubled
- The left point of the star at the top is missing or weak
- The top point of the star on the right is missing or weak.
- The border is beaded and not toothed

Reverse 7



This reverse is similar to reverse 6. The following features are the same:

- The lettering of the motto is larger than reverse 2
- The tip of the top-left flag pole points to, but does not touch, the left leg of N
- The left point of the star at the top is missing or weak
- The R of KRUGER is under the O of Sovereign
- The border is beaded and not toothed

The following differences can be seen:

- The flower at the foot has five arcs for petals but the centre is larger
- The part of ribbon showing KRUGER is more curved
- The right star is deformed and possibly doubled
- The horizontal line which divides the Transvaal shield is on two levels with the left part higher than the right. Also the wagon appears to have been lifted up at the front

Reverse 8



- The lettering of the motto is larger than reverse 2
- The tip of the top-left flag pole is before the left leg of N
- The tip of the top-right flag pole touches the right of 8
- The head of the eagle crest has a comb
- The R of KRUGER is under the VE of Sovereign
- The flower at the foot is a cinquefoil with a small central pellet
- The border is beaded and not toothed