

THE ELDON SERJEANT COLLECTION OF Z.A.R. COINS

By DR. R. BICKEL

(ON EXHIBIT)

The ELDON SERJEANT COLLECTION, as far as I am aware is unique in South Africa, since no other Z.A.R. Collection has the documentation and historical back up material, to compare with this one.

Johannesburg was only 18 years old at the time and the correspondence, etc., reflects the mood of our City during those years.

It has been called the Eldon Serjeant Collection, because the full name of the gentleman who put this collection together was:-

Lt. Colonel WM.C. Eldon Serjeant

In his "Introductory Remarks" he writes as follows:-

"About a month or so, after the conclusion of the WAR in South Africa on the 31st May 1902, and whilst at Kroonstadt, Orange River Colony, awaiting orders for home, I conceived the idea of forming a collection of Transvaal coins and medals by way of occupying the spare time in camp. My first purchases were made in July 1902".

He concludes the first paragraph of the Introduction with:-

... "I was thus enabled to obtain a complete collection of Transvaal coins and medals, many in MINT state and all in excellent condition, by the end of August 1902, just two days prior to the departure of my Battalion from Kroonstadt for England".

The complete collection consists of:-

1. *The Case:*

An attractive tailor made wooden case with a glass lid containing on the upper level, a velvet lined tray with recesses for the 59 coins and medals.

2. *The Book:*

On the lower level in the case, a green leather bound book or journal containing the ORIGINAL letters, advertisements, photographs, correspondence, etc., engaged in and connected with the putting together of this collection. In my opinion the book is by far the most fascinating part of the collection.

3. *The Coins and Medals:*

The 50 specimens constituting the collection.

Later in the article the two full CONTENTS pages of the journal are reproduced which give one an idea of all the subject matter contained in the 40 pages and in each appendix (A to Q).

How and Where the Collection has travelled:

It is of interest here to briefly cover the path by which this collection came into my possession. It seems that the collection in this case was:-

- i) Sold by Colonel Eldon Serjeant to Messrs. Spink and Son Limited, of London.
- ii) Purchased from Spink and Son Limited for the S.A. Mint by Mr. J.M. Becklake, a former Deputy Master of the Royal Mint, Pretoria and later Director of the South African Mint.
- iii) Taken over from the S.A. Mint by Mr. J.M. Becklake for his own Collection.
- iv) Sold by Mr. Becklake to Alec Kaplan and Sons.
- v) Sold by Alec Kaplan and Sons to a school teacher in Nylstroom, Transvaal.

- vi) Sold by the school teacher to Mr. A Bickel.
- vii) Sold by Mr. A. Bickel to his son, Dr. R. Bickel.

In a letter of the 19th October 1946 entitled:

CASE OF COINS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Mr. Becklake writes as follows:

This case was purchased by the Royal Mint, Pretoria, on representations by me to the Treasury, from Messrs. Spink & Son, Ltd. of London.

The reason for this purchase was the desire to improve the collection of the South African Republican coins in the Mint Museum. When this purpose had been served, I requested Treasury permission, at the time of my retirement from the post of Director of the South African Mint, to purchase the case of coins in its then condition.

This permission was given in 1943 and I was able, eventually, to replace one important piece which was taken over by the Mint and to replace certain other pieces by better specimens than had been left by the Mint.

J.M. BECKLAKE
19.19.46

formerly Deputy Master of the Royal Mint, Pretoria and later Director of the South African Mint.

THE CONTENTS OF THE JOURNAL

A study of the contents pages gives one an idea of just how many interesting letters, advertisements, articles, cuttings and photographs were accumulated by Col. Eldon Serjeant in the course of his efforts to complete his collection.

Although the section of the Journal dealing with each Appendix refers to "Copy of Letter", "Copy of Article", etc. all the original letters, articles, photographs, etc., now form part of this collection.

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MATTERS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM A STUDY OF THIS COLLECTION

1. No mention is made anywhere in the journal or in any correspondence of the existence of a "fine beard" or "coarse beard" variety of the BURGERS POND. It seems as though the two varieties had not yet been discovered (1902). Strange, considering that the coin had been in existence since 1874. Does anyone know who was the first person to discover the difference?
2. Also, at the time of purchase (1902) Eldon Serjeant and others appeared not to have realised how scarce certain coins were. In his 1903 valuation, a year after he put the collection together, the following coins showed the greatest increase in price.
 - a. 1893 Z.A.R. Half Pond
Paid 15 Shillings
1903 value - 50.0.0 Pond
 - b. 1899 Z.A.R. Pond (Overstamp)
Paid 10 Pond
1903 Value - 50.0.0 Pond
 - c. 1902 Z.A.R. Veld Pond
Paid 7.0.0 Pond
1903 value - 30.0.0 Pond

THIS COLLECTION IS ON EXHIBIT AT JOHANNESBURG CENTENARY COIN CONVENTION.