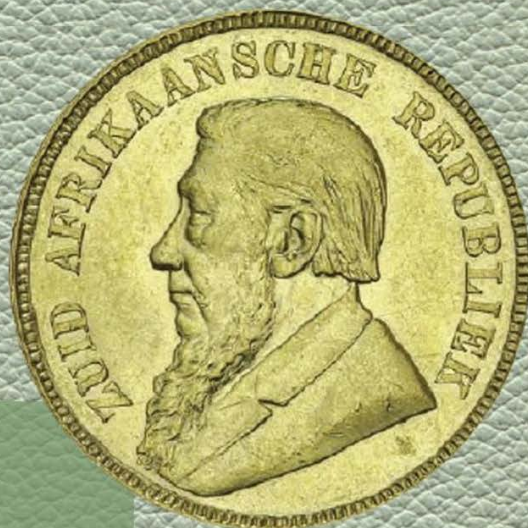


# The Menne Single Shaft Paul Kruger Half Pond of 1892

The story of a mysterious and unique gold coin



Pierre H. Nortje

**The Menne Single Shaft Paul Kruger  
Half Pond of 1892**





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## Introduction

On the 10th October 2009, this being the 184th anniversary of the birthday of Paul Kruger, the former President of the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek, an interesting article was published in the Afrikaans daily newspaper “*Die Burger*”.

Written by Martiens van Bart, this article was based on a discussion he had had with the late Stephan Wertz the renowned auctioneer and specialist in South African art and antiques. It concerned a gold Kruger Half Pond coin that was sold at auction in Johannesburg in 1977 for a then world record price for a South African coin. Following the sale this unique coin was mysteriously lost.

The story, a double tragedy, begins in 1935 when Mr William James (Bill) Menne, a well-known and respected farmer in the Northern Transvaal bushveld near Louis Trichardt, inherited his deceased father’s coin collection.

At that stage he had no interest in numismatics but thinking that some of the coins might be valuable he kept the coins stored in a bank vault. In 1955 while reading an article in his newspaper about the scarcity of some coins, he remembered his coin collection and decided to look to see what he had stored away for safe keeping 20 years before. He subsequently wrote a letter to the Director (Master) of the South African Mint informing him about his father’s collection.

One of the coins he mentioned, was dated 1892 with a “*one shaft ox wagon*” in the crest of the Transvaal Republic on the reverse of the coin. The Director responded and said that it was impossible as only a “*double shaft*” was possible for the issue of that date.

# Toe verdwyn die rare goue Kruger-halfpound

MARTIENS VAN BART

Koedipsaad

So op die verjaarsdagdenking vandag van wyle pres. Paul Kruger van die Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek, is dit heel gepas om 'n raar-maar-waar Kruger-storie te vertel. Die mitiese Kruger-miljoene laat mense gewoonlik op verbeeldingsvlugte gaan, maar hierdie besonder tragiese staaije, vertel deur mnr. Stephan Welz, oudhede-kenner van die afslaerfirma Strauss & Kie, van The Oval in Nuweland, is so eg as die goue Kruger-halfpound, wat in 1977 in Johannesburg teen 'n wêreldrekordbedrag opgeveel is – en toe spoortloos verdwyn het.

Die verhaal 'n dubbelle tragedie, begin in 1935 toe 'n plaasvoer van Louis Trichard in die bosveld, mnr. Bill Mennie, sy oulike vader se versameling munte geef het.

Hy het egter geen belangstelling in die numismatiek, oftewel die munt- en penningkunde, gehad nie. Omdat hy eger daarvan bewus was dat sommige van die munte waarskynlik waardevol was, het hy dit in

'n bankkluis laat bewaar.

Twintig jaar later, in 1955, het 'n koerant-artikel oor die waarde van ou munte wel sy belangstelling geprikkeld. Hy het daarop die besonderhede van sy versameling aan die direkteur van die

Suid-Afrikaanse Munt in Pretoria gestuur.

Een van die munte was 'n Kruger-halfpound van 1892. In sy beskrywing van die munt het Mennie gemeld dat die ampwapen van die Transvaalse Republiek op die keerkant onder meer 'n ossewa met een disselboom toon.

Die direkteur het daarop tenenge-skrif dat Mennie 'n fout maak. Die ossewa moet twee disselbome hê en die datum kan nie 1892 wees nie. Die graverder in Berlyn, Duitse Otto Schultz, het 'n fout gemaak deurdat



Die muntkant van die goue Kruger-halfpound van 1892.



Die kruiskant van die goue Kruger-halfpound van 1892.

hy in plaas van 'n Kaapse kakebeen-waarnet een disselboom, groot agter-wiele en klein voorwiele, 'n Duitse wa met twee disselbome en ewe groot wiele ontwerp het, het hy geskryf. Schultz het sy naamsafkorting, OS, onderaan die borsbeeld van pres. Kruger op die muntkant geplaas. Vir oningeligtes het dit gelyk of daar na Kruger verwys word as synde 'n os. Omdat die presidensiele verklaring die volgende jaar sou plaasvind, het die opposisie die spreekwoordelike munt uit die "OS" gestaan.

Die gevolg was dat die Volksraad beilis het dat die munt nie gestrukeer mag word nie, maar opgesmet en in die Staats-munt in Pretoria oorgegint moes word. Daar was dus geen amplike

Kruger-munte van 1892 nie, het die direkteur in

sy brief geskryf. Maar Mennie het nie 'n fout gemaak nie. Wat die oningeligte direkteur nie geweet het nie, was dat toe die nuwe Staatsmunt in Pretoria die reggestelde ontwerp in 1893 in gebruik geneem het, is 'n aantal proefmunte met die datum 1892 daarop wei gestaan. Ook is heel party van die Duitse "OS"-munte – punde en half-punte – nie opgesmet nie, maar as versamelstukke teruggehoi. Die 1892-munt in die Mennie-versameling is egter die enigste opgetekende

halfpound met die reggestelde ontwerp en die datum 1892 daarop wat as 'n proefmunt gestaan is. Van toe af het dié selfsame munt bekend gestaan as die Mennie-halfpound.

Mnr. Bill Mennie is in 1974 in 'n plaasroofrog wreedaardig vermoor, maar die muntversameling was veilig in die bank. Sy weduwee, mev. Hosenary Mennie, het later besluit om die versameling te laat opveel.

Die veiling, deur Sothobey's van Londen se numismatiese afdeling, is op 20 April 1977 in Johannesburg gehou. Daar was 122 lotte wat altesaam R114 000 behaal het. Die Mennie-halfpound het R24 000 behaal, inderbyd 'n veilingwêreldrekord vir 'n Suid-Afrikaanse munt.

Die hoogste bieder was 'n Durbanse munt-handelaar wat telefonies gebel het. Die munt is ná die veiling per geregistreerde pos aan hom gestuur, maar dit het spoortloos in die pos verdwyn. Vandaag, na 32 jaar, is dit steeds soek.

Die kakebeen die munt was egter ten volle versaker en die weduwee het die veilingstbedrag ontvang.



Bill Menne however was not mistaken and from that day on his father's famous (and unique) Half Pond has always been referred to as the "Menne" Single Shaft Half Pond. Since then, vast numbers of ZAR Half Ponde have been eagerly examined by numismatists but another similar coin has never been found.

Tragically Bill was viciously killed whilst still living on his Louis Trichardt farm in the early 1970s, but luckily his collection was safely stored at the bank. His widow, Rosemary Menne, subsequently decided a few years later to sell her husband's coin collection at auction. The auction was held in Johannesburg by Sotheby Parke Bernet South Africa on 20 April 1977. The sale of the 142 lots on offer realized a total of R114 000. The famous Half Pond was bought by a telephone bidder for the amount of R24 000 which at that stage was a world record price for any South African coin. (In today's money this equates to almost one million rand).



The successful bidder was a recognized and well-known South African coin dealer living in Durban. As was the custom in those days the coin was dispatched to him by post but mysteriously it did not reach its destination. Today after more than 44 years the coin is still lost. Fortunately, the precaution had been taken to insure the parcel and Bill's widow Rosemary received the full auction price.

*Bill Menne and his wife Rosemary*



## The Menne Family History

William (Bill) Menne's grandfather, Theodore Menne, was born on 7 September 1813 on a farm in Neuhaus, near Paderborn, a city in eastern North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany.

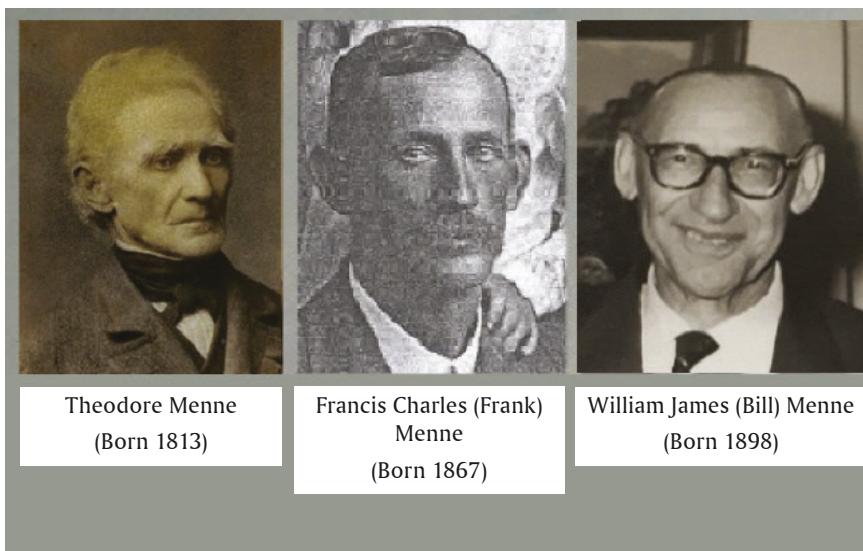
When he was still in his teens Theodore travelled to Holland where in order to learn to speak English he took on employment as a baker's assistant. In August 1832 he purchased a ticket on a sailing boat destined for America. The winds however drove the boat in which he was sailing far to the south and landing in Brazil rather than in America he was left with little alternative but to wait it out for the change of the season which would be expected to bring favorable winds to sail northwards or alternatively to continue with his maritime journey and sail further on to the Cape of Good Hope.

This was the option he chose and he arrived in Cape Town in March 1833. Clearly, he was an enterprising young man and he spent the next few years travelling up and down through what is now South Africa, trading with the indigenous tribes and for a very successful period with the Boers during their Great Trek northwards swapping goods for cattle which he drove back through the Karoo to sell to ships passing through Cape Town. His business brought him into contact with the Hellet family, in particular one Johan Pieter Hellet and his children. John Pieter was born in Regenswald in Prussia and had travelled to South Africa as a Captain of a British ship. On 7 April 1844 Theodore married one of his daughters, Johanna Wilhelmina Maria Gertruida Hellet, in Cape Town where Johanna had been born on 4 May 1821. Theodore subsequently farmed

at “Menneheim” near Greytown in Natal and died almost 20 years after Johanna’s death on 21 June 1905 at the age of 91.

During the course of the friendship between the two families Theodore also befriended Johanna’s elder brother Pieter Jurgen Ellis Hellet who was born in 1831 and later became a prosperous shopkeeper in Greytown. The Menne and Hellet families in fact became such good friends that Pieter named one of his own daughter’s Menne Hellet and appointed Theodore as the Executor of his Estate. One might guess that Theodore had much to do with his new brother-in-law’s prosperity as a shopkeeper.

Theodore and Gertruida had fourteen children, their eleventh being Bill Menne’s father, Francis Charles (Frank) Menne who was born on 17 April 1867. It was from him that Bill inherited the famous Half Pond. Frank was born on his father’s farm in Greytown, but later settled near Pietersburg (currently Polokwane) in the Northern Transvaal where Bill was born on 28 November 1898.



Theodore Menne  
(Born 1813)

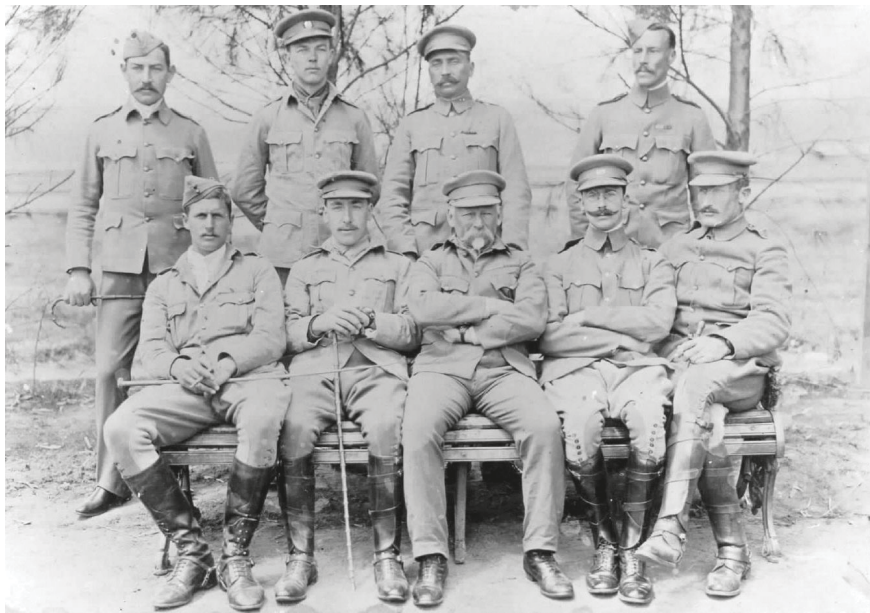
Francis Charles (Frank)  
Menne  
(Born 1867)

William James (Bill) Menne  
(Born 1898)



The advent of the Anglo Boer War sadly brought about opposing allegiances within many South African families. As a resident of Pietersburg, Bill's father Frank sided with the Boers during the Anglo Boer War and served in the Zoutpansberg Commando later claiming and being awarded the Anglo Boere Oorlog medalje.

As frontier farmers members of the Menne family had served in the military years before. The elder Theodore's brother-in-law Pieter Jurgen Ellis Hellet had been appointed as the Officer Commanding the Natal Hussars in 1874 while his son, a younger Theodore, Bill's uncle, was appointed as Quartermaster and later served as a Lieutenant during the Zulu War in 1879. Twenty years later he once again sided with the British and after the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War in October 1899 he initially served in the Colonial Scouts commanding 'G' Squadron taking part in the operations of the Relief of Ladysmith and Tugela Heights. He then served



*Lt. Brooke, Capt. Barker Lt. Dickinson Q.M. Capt. Hodgkinson. Adj.  
 Lt. Lubbock, Lt. Eason, 'Mijn Menne', Lt. Jones P.M. Lt. Clifford  
 MENNE'S SCOUTS 1901.*

as Officer Commanding “F” Squadron in Bethune’s Mounted Infantry taking part in the actions at Laing’s Nek. He later raised and commanding the unit known as Menne’s Scouts on 16 December 1900 taking part in the operations in the Orange Free State and the Eastern Transvaal and continued to command the Scouts bearing his name through to the end of the War. The Menne family history is yet another which illustrates the deep tragedy of the Anglo Boer War. Hopefully the uncle and nephew never aimed their rifles at one another.

Bill married Rosemary Harrison on 16 May 1932 and they settled on the farm Vergenoeg, near Louis Trichardt in the Zoutpansberg. Rosemary’s grandfather, John Skinner Cooksley was born in Devon, England in 1837. Having come out to South Africa in the mid 1860’s John had first worked as a local trader and in 1880 began farming in the area of Lovedale Park, Spelonken in Polokwane where Rosemary’s mother “Tish” grew up.

Bill Menne took a keen interest in his local community and served on the local Rapportryers Reëlingskomitee of Louis Trichardt in 1949 when the Voortrekker Monument was officially opened in Pretoria. He was also one of the founding members of the Rotary Club when a branch was first established in Louis Trichardt in 1959. He was undoubtedly a man of good standing in his community.



## The Striking of the first Paul Kruger Coins in 1892

In his book *From Real to Rand*, published in 1963, James Thomas Becklake (the last Deputy Master of the Royal Mint, Pretoria and the first Director of the South African Mint) described how President Kruger was anxious “for political reasons” to get the first series of coins, ordered from the Berlin Mint, into circulation.

*“As soon as the first consignments of 1892 consisting of the ponde, half ponde and five shillings, arrived from Germany and began to circulate among the population, there was at once severe criticism of the coins owing to the fact that the wagon on the reverse of the design (the Coat-of-Arms of the Republic) had two shafts instead of the single ‘disselboom’ typical of the Transvaal wagons of the period”.*

A second error was the fact that the coins struck in Germany showed the wagon with the same size front and back wheels, whilst the usual South African ox wagon’s front wheels were always smaller than the back wheels. Becklake continues *“From the President’s point of view there was yet another unfortunate circumstance about these coins, since the engraver’s very small initials, inserted as is usual on the truncation of the bust of the President, were O.S. (Otto Schultz). In the Dutch language ‘OS’ stands for ‘Ox’.”*

As the next Transvaal election was due to be held in early 1893 President Kruger made every effort to recover the situation by withdrawing the error coins from circulation. As events transpired Paul Kruger won the presidency by the slightest of margins receiving only 845 more votes than his main opponent, Piet Joubert.

The success in withdrawing the erroneous double shafted coins in 1892 is however a debatable point as according to mintage figures provided



by Becklake himself the number of coins minted in 1892 were as follow:-

- Five shillings, 4 327 double shafts (Berlin Mint) & 14 000 single shafts (Pretoria Mint).
- Half Pond, 10 150 coins were struck (all in Germany).
- Pond, 15 650 coins were struck (all in Germany).

It is believed that all these Ponde struck in Germany were double shafts, while the scarcer single shaft Ponde dated 1892, were actually struck in Pretoria the following year in 1893 using the remodeled 1892 dies (see Becklake page 26).

Some South African numismatists believe that the number of 15 650 Ponde bearing the date 1892 include both the single shaft and double shaft coins, but I deduce from Becklake's reasoning that this number only refers to those double shaft coins which were struck in Germany.

Experienced coin collectors know that the single shaft Pond (not the Half Pond) of 1892 is much scarcer than the double shaft Pond, so one must assume that either the withdrawal of the double shafts was relatively unsuccessful or only a small number of single shaft Ponde were struck in 1893 with 1892 dies.

If one for instance looks at the number of 1892 Ponde graded by the two largest international grading companies being the NGC and PCGS, the single shaft issue (219 coins graded) is more than three times scarcer than the double shaft with 692 coins graded.

As noted above, Becklake states that the first pieces with the corrected single shaft wagon appear to have been struck in Pretoria in the following years: –

- Ponde struck in 1893 with 1892 dies,
- Half Ponde struck in 1894 with 1893 dies,
- Five–Shillings struck in 1893 with 1892 dies.

From this one can deduce that no single shaft Half Ponde were struck bearing the date 1892.

Becklake then continues to tell the story of the single shaft Half Pond of 1892 which was presented to members of the Transvaal Numismatic Society for inspection by Mr. W.J.C. Menne of Louis Trichardt in 1956. The majority of these learned numismatists were of the opinion that the coin was genuine.

*“This coin, which showed considerable wear, was inherited by Mr. Menne together with a set of ZAR coins, from his father in 1935. At that time they were withdrawn from the bank together with a memo, dated 9 January 1905 which had been made by his father. It listed each coin in the collection, which consisted of all the denominations and years of issue from 1892 – 1902 but not the 1892 single shaft Half Pond. The collection was returned to the bank for safekeeping for a further 21 years. Thus it appears that the coin in question was acquired by Mr. Menne’s farther between 1905 and 1935 and added to the collection in the bank. Efforts were made to ascertain whether the reverse die of the 1892 single shaft (half) pond was ever officially made, but without success, and the circumstances of the manufacture of this piece have apply been described by H.M. Stoker as a mystery.”*



## The Stoker article – The Mystery of the ZAR Single Shaft ½ Pond of 1892

As his reference to his story on the Menne Half Pond, Becklake referred to the article that was written by Dr. H.M. Stoker, an experienced numismatist and then President of the Transvaal Numismatic Society and which was published in *De Nummis*, the Journal of the Transvaal Numismatic Society (Number 2 1956-1957).

Dr. Stoker recorded that Mr. Menne presented the coin for inspection at the Annual General Meeting of the Transvaal Numismatic Society held at Mint House on 7th May 1956. During that month, the coin and enlarged photographs thereof was closely scrutinized by the Executive Committee of the Society. The coin was then submitted to the Director of the South African Mint for testing and further examination.

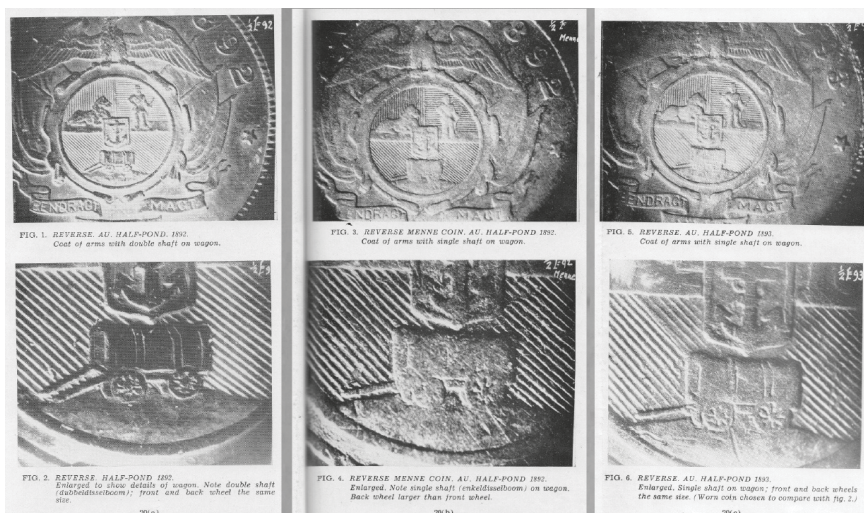
He states: *“The Director of the S.A. Mint, who has personally made an exhaustive examination of the piece, stated that it is a genuine ½ Pond. He added that in view of the fact that many valuable records of the Transvaal Republic’s Mint has disappeared, he was doubtful if the original purpose of its minting will ever be known ... It is probably a parallel coin with the gold Tickey dated 1894, presently in the Mint’s Numismatic Museum.”*

Herman Stoker went on to describe the efforts that were then made to ascertain whether the reverse die of the single 1892 Half Pond had ever been made. Apparently, there were a considerable number of dies of ZAR coins kept at the “Old Museum” in Boomstraat, but the die in question was not amongst them. Interestingly enough, amongst the dies in the collection were eight 1898 Half Pond reverse dies and two for an 1894

Crown – coins that were never struck. Stoker also noted that before the Second World War he saw a reverse die for an 1893 Crown (5-Shillings) displayed in a showcase at the German Mint in Berlin.

With regard to the weight of Mr Menne's coin, Dr. Stoker stated that the standard weight of a Z.A.R. Half Pond was 3.99402 grams with a lowest weight of 3.96083 grams. The Menne Half Pond underwent a weight and density test by an official of the S.A. Mint's Gold and Silver Assay Department. It weighed 3.9208 grams and was struck in 22 carat gold and he noted that *"The coin, although it falls short of the least current weight by 0.04 grams, is still a very collectable collector's piece"*.

Dr. Stoker's brother, Mr. P. Stoker of Pretoria, took some close-up photographs of the Menne Half Pond and for comparison also photographs of a similar double shaft coin dated 1892 as well as a single shaft coin dated 1893. Letters, accompanied by these enlarged photographs were then submitted to eminent numismatists in England and Holland for comment.



Dr. Stoker concludes *"The consensus of opinion, although not explicitly so expressed and with certain reservations, was that the coin appears to be genuine."*

*It was stated by some that nothing suspicious could be found from the photographs and that there seemed to be no doubt that the single shaft is not a double shaft altered ... furthermore, the fact that the coin had been in circulation is in its favour and tends to substantiate its authenticity.”*





## The Exhibition of the Menne Half Pond

The Menne Half Pond was exhibited by Mr. Menne at the Second South African Numismatic Convention held at the Old Supreme Court in Cape Town from 7 to 12 January 1964. The coin was once again re-examined by the leading numismatic experts in Cape Town. A short write-up of the coin was published on page 70 of the catalogue of the convention's exhibits, edited by M.G. Hibbard.

On 6 January 1964, the Cape Town daily newspaper *The Argus*, published an article entitled "*Numismatist to display rarest coins tomorrow*" and states how Mr. William Menne came 1,350 miles by road to Cape Town bearing a gold coin that leading numismatists have assured him never existed. The coin was to be part of the numismatic exhibition at the Old Supreme Court starting the next day.

Mr. Menne relays to the reporter how he became a coin collector by chance after inheriting a gold coin collection from his father many years ago. Many years later he retrieved it from the



bank where it was stored and showed it to Dr. Alec Kaplan of Germiston (Dr. Kaplan wrote the first South African Coin Catalogue in 1950) who replied that such a coin has never been minted.

Menne then wrote to Mr. J.P. le Roux, Master at the South African Mint who told him that it was the first ever recorded single shaft Half Pond. He then showed it to Dr. Stoker, the President of the Transvaal Numismatic Society who said it was genuine and probably the only one ever minted.

The article concludes ...*“So among coin collectors the coin has a fabulous reputation. And now it is in Cape Town for all to see.”*

The unique Half Pond was once again exhibited by Mr Menne (with some family military medals) at the 4th South African Numismatic Convention held at the City Hall in Pretoria from 26 October to 31 October 1970. A guide to the exhibits (it was exhibit 3) states *“The 1892 Single Shaft 10/- (half-pond) is absolutely unique and is undoubtedly the rarest coin on exhibition in the hall”*.

*De Nummis*, the Journal of the Transvaal Numismatic Society (number 4 1971) provides a record of the papers read at this 4th Numismatic Convention held in Pretoria. A paper was read by Dr. Robert Morris on *Notable Firsts in Transvaal Numismatics* and remarked *“There is also the mystery of the only copy of the unique Single Shaft Menne half pond which is exhibited by Mr. Menne and of which I can say nothing except that it is an authentic coin of the Kruger series, but how or why it was minted remains unknown.”*

*Bill Menne at the Convention*



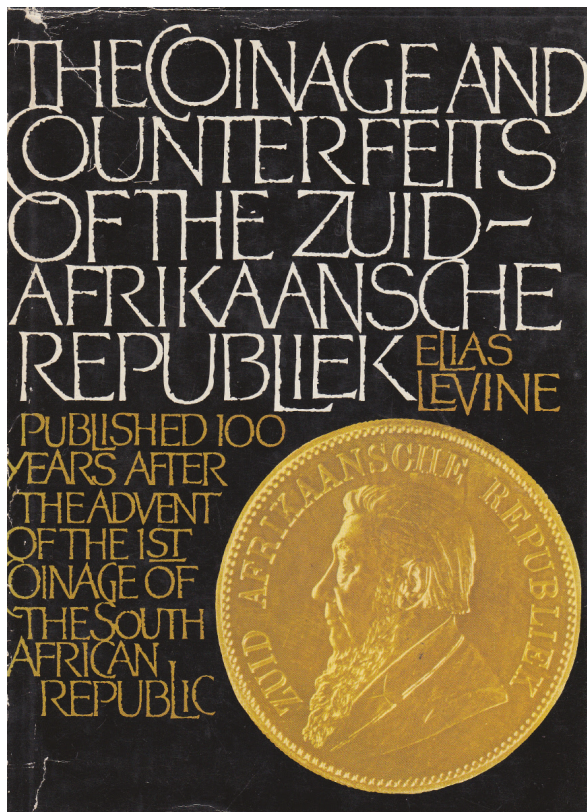
It is interesting to note that Mr. Menne himself read a paper at the convention entitled *Thoughts on collecting and disposal of a coin collection*. This paper is of so much relevance today as Menne was tragically murdered a few years later and his collection disposed thereafter by his family. (The short paper is reprinted in full as an addendum to this booklet).

The paper that followed Menne's at the conference was read by Dr. Herman Stoker on President Kruger's last visit to Europe and his stay in France and Germany. Dr. Stoker was the person who wrote the article on the Menne Half Pond that was published in *De Nummis*, the Journal of the Transvaal Numismatic Society (Number 2 1956-1957).



## Elias Levine's assessment of the Menne Half Pond

In 1974, the centenary year of South Africa's first gold Pond, the Burgerspond, Elias Levine published *The Coinage and Counterfeits of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*.



On page 74 he discusses the Menne Half Pond describing it is a great rarity due to the fact that it was the only single shaft variety of the 1892



Half Pond known. He stated that leading experts have long debated its authenticity, and have come to the conclusion that the coin is genuine.

*“However, in the light of new knowledge and information which has developed as regards to forgeries, it is necessary to reconsider all aspects relating to its genuineness.”*

1892 HALF POND, SINGLE SHAFT



69 XX (a) Genuine (1892 D/S)



69 XX (b) Genuine (1895)



70 XX Single Shaft Half Pond (Menne)

Levine then lists three “detracting” factors that he follows up with three “factors which militate in its favour.”

The detracting factors are the following:-

1. The coin weighs 3.9208 grams, which is a variation of 1.83% from standard. Compare this with sample weighings, where the lowest weight recorded for a coin in Fine condition is 3.952 grams – the variance is 1.05%.
2. *Comparisons of the lack of detail on the wagon and the anchor with correspondingly graded coins, 1892 and 1895 half ponde in Fine condition, weighing 3.952 and 3.953 grams respectively* (Levine then refers the reader to the illustrations on page 41 of his book).
3. *The similarity of the lack of detail on the wagon and anchor with known forgeries, viz. the 1892 half pond, wagon variety, F16* (Illustration: Page 40 of his book) *and the 1898 Pond “Elite” variety, F27* (Illustration: Page 47 of his book).

And factors which militated in favour of the Menne Half-pond being genuine as follows:-

1. In his book “Die Deutschen Reichsmunzen”<sup>\*</sup> by Dr. Hugo Hammerich, published in Berlin in 1905, the 1892 Half Pond die is included in a list of master dies (or punches) “for all subsequent minting in Pretoria” preserved at that date (1905) at the Berlin Mint. The list follows Dr. Hammerich’s account of the correction of the double shaft errors. As only one each of the 1892 Pond, Half Pond and Crown dies are listed, one must assume that these refer to the single shaft varieties, including the Half Pond. This indicates that although there is no record of the single shaft Half Pond dies having been received by the ZAR mint, nor any of these pieces officially minted, such genuine dies are most likely to have been produced by the Berlin Mint”.



2. The indentation between the front and the rear wheels on the wagon is more pronounced on the Menne Half Pond than on F16 and F27, in spite of the former being greatly worn.
3. The most important, although subjective, test is that only one of these pieces has come to light in all the years of this coin's existence.... Mr. J.P. le Roux, a former Mint Master, considered the coin to be genuine, although it was too worn for him to be able to check the number of flutes on the milling, and the number of beads. On balance of probabilities the coin would be genuine, but the writer would need to see the coin itself before finally committing himself either way.

I ordered a digital copy of the book *Die Deutschen Reichsmunzen* from the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives in the USA. On page 83 of his book Dr. Hugo Hammerich gives the actual number of ZAR coins struck for each denomination in the first year 1892. (One notes that some of the Ponde were actually struck in 1891, with 1892 dies).

Dr. Hugo Hammerich then reports that the dies were made by the medalist Otto Schultz and describes in detail the errors that occurred on the Ponde, Half Ponde and 5-Shilling pieces. When the Berlin mint was informed of this, the dies for the other denominations were immediately changed accordingly, so that “*only small numbers of these coins (5/-, ½ Pond and Pond) came into circulation*”.

If I read this correctly, dies were already made for the other denominations, but they were changed and these erroneous dies were probably destroyed and thus never used.

Dr. Hammerich then says that all the dies for the later minting of the new coins issued in Pretoria from 1 August 1892 were supplied by the Berlin Mint. He then provides a list of the various dates and denominations. Dies that are listed, but that we know were not used for striking coins for general circulation, is 1898 for the Half Pond, 1893 and 1894 for the 5-Shillings, and 1898 for all the other silver denominations. Hammerich

states that the Berlin Mint were in possession of examples of all these dies. (It is worth noting that Dr. Hammerich notes the date of 1 August 1892 as being the date when the Pretoria Mint started production. In his recent book *Kruger's Gold* (2019:52) Professor Francois Malan notes that the State Mint in Pretoria only started producing coins during November 1892).

The important question here is the following: In terms of what Dr. Hammerich wrote, is Elias Levine correct in saying “*As only one each of the 1892 Pond, Half Pond and Crown dies are listed (by Dr Hammerich), one must assume that these refer to the single shaft varieties, including the Half Pond?*” If Levine’s assessment is correct, then the Berlin Mint must have had an example of the single shaft 1892 Half Pond reverse die in their collection when the book was written in 1905.

However, although Hammerich states that the corrected dies were then sent to Pretoria in 1892, he does not specify that the Half Pond die was included with the shipment. We actually know that the first corrected Half Ponde were only struck in Pretoria with 1893 dies in 1894 and for some unknown reason only a relatively small number of these dated 1893 were struck.

If the Berlin Mint indeed sent the 1892 die, why did the Pretoria Mint not use it like they did for the other denominations? It is also not clear to me why Levine thought that the list of dies produced by the Berlin mint (as supplied by Hammerich), only refers to the corrected dies. As my understanding of the German text is perhaps incorrect, I have included the relevant page here.

Berlin.

Republik Transvaal.

Es sind geprägt im Jahre	Goldmünzen		Silbermünzen						Bronzemünzen
	$\frac{1}{4}$ Pond	$\frac{1}{2}$ Pond	5 Schil- lings	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ Schil- lings	2 Schil- lings	1 Schil- ling	6 Pence	3 Pence	1 Penny
	Pond	Pond	Pond	Pond	Pond	Pond	Pond	Pond	Pond
1891	15.650	—	—	—	58.20	683	—	—	—
1892	mitd. Jhrz. 1892	5.075	1.081.75	2.037.50	2.030. —	4.015. —	707.50	303.75	111. <sup>22</sup> <sub>240</sub>
Stück- zahl	15.650	10.150	4.327	16.300	20.300	80.300	28.300	24.300	27.862

**Anmerkungen.** Die Stempel sämtlicher Sorten, welche die überhaupt erste Transvaaler Prägung darstellen, sind vom Medailleur Schultz geschnitten.

Bei den zuerst abgeliferten  $\frac{1}{4}$ - u.  $\frac{1}{2}$  Pond-Stücken befinden sich die Initialen des Medailleurs Schultz — O. S. — auf dem Halsabschnitt des Bildnisses des Präsidenten Krüger; dieselben mussten auf Verlangen der Transvaaler Regierung auf den Stempeln wieder entfernt werden, sodass nur relativ wenige Stücke mit den Initialen zur Verausgabung gelangt sind.

Es wurde ferner bei den zuerst geprägten  $\frac{1}{4}$ - und  $\frac{1}{2}$  Pond-, sowie bei den 5 Schillings-Stücken beanstandet, dass das Wappen nicht ganz vorschriftsmässig war, indem der Ochsenwagen nur **eine** Deichsel, keinen Scherbaum haben sollte, und dass ausserdem die Vorderräder kleiner als die Hinterräder sein sollten. Es wurden in Folge dessen sämtliche Patrizen, auch die der anderen, noch nicht geprägten Sorten, sofort entsprechend geändert, sodass auch von diesen fehlerhaften Münzen nur eine kleine Anzahl in den Verkehr gekommen ist.

Für alle späteren, auf der am 1. August 1892 neugeschaffenen Münze zu Prätorja stattgehabten Prägungen, wurden die Stempel von der Berliner Münzstätte geliefert. Nach den hier aufbewahrten Ur-Patrizen wurden folgende Jahrgänge der verschiedenen Sorten, bis zur Annexion durch England, hergestellt:

- $\frac{1}{4}$  Pond: 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898, 1900.
- $\frac{1}{2}$  Pond: 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898.
- 5 Schillings: 1892, 1893, 1894.
- 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  Schillings: 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898.
- 2 Schillings: 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898.
- 1 Schilling: 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898.
- 6 Pence: 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898.
- 3 Pence: 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898.
- 1 Penny: 1892, 1893, 1894, 1898.



## Other References to the Menne Half Pond

There are various other South African Numismatic publications which refer to the Menne Half Pond, but none of these provide any additional details (or new information) than those given by either Dr. Stoker or Elias Levine. Examples are: *Ons Gelderfenis* (1980:35) by Matthy Esterhuysen and *Money in South Africa* (1987:77) by Carel Engelbrecht.

In September 2009, Dr. Georg Jacobs, a prominent coin collector from KwaZulu Natal started an interesting online thread on the South African Bidorbuy Coin Forum entitled “*The lonely Single Shaft Halfpond.*” Amongst other interesting observations, Dr. Jacobs stated that the NGC (Numismatic Guarantee Corporation of America) graded a single shaft 1892 Half Pond two years ago, only to remove it from their population report a few months later.

A number of coin enthusiasts participated and some very interesting inputs were given and comments made.

Jan Kleinhans from Gauteng commented:-

*“Considering the article in the DE NUMMIS Nr 2. 1956-1957 and the photographs that accompanied the article by Mr. H.M. Stoker there is no doubt in my mind that such a piece exist or at least at one time existed. In those days it would have been simply impossible to “tool” any half-pond to such perfection and besides it is a Single Shaft wagon with the back wheels of the wagon larger than the front. The mount on which the wagon stands is also different in a single shaft and double shaft with the mount on the double shaft at a sharper angle downward at the shaft end to that of the single shaft coins”.*

Mike Klee from Port Elizabeth responded:-

*“What worries me is that it is “a VF type of Halfpond”.....which indicates that it was poorly minted or subjected to wear and tear from being in circulation. Since this was supposed to be a specimen coin - like the single “9” and double “9s” - why would it be badly minted? Secondly, as a specimen coin, it is even less likely to have been put into circulation.....from which it mysteriously is rediscovered, rather like the proverbial needle in a haystack. Also, I would imagine that it is easier to make a fake of poor quality and justify this poor quality to wear and tear than it is to fake/alter a specimen so perfectly that it appears to be the genuine thing? Because of the reported poor quality of this 1892 single shaft half pond, the balance of probabilities to my mind tilt towards this 1892 single shaft half pond as being a fake...”.*

After I responded to this, Mike Klee asks:-

*“I would really like to believe in the existence of this coin, but I would like you to explain to me how a prized non-circulating coin can end up in a VF condition?”*

I then responded with this answer:-

*“A world famous coin is the 1894-S Barber Dime. With only ten specimens of this coin existing today (from the 24 originally minted in San Francisco), this coin is considered one of the most famous rare coins and also one of the most expensive being priced at \$2 million. The 24 coins were produced in the mint in San Francisco in 1894 by the order of the mint superintendent, J. Daggett. The coins were especially made to be given as gifts to banker friends while three were given away to the superintendent’s daughter, Hallie Daggett. Hallie bought one dime worth of ice cream. This barber dime is now called the **“Ice Cream Specimen”** and she sold the two others in 1954.”*

Another interesting input was by Thomas van der Spuy from Cape Town who says...

*“Just a comparison to this coin: November 15, 1973 - New York City New Netherland Coin Co and Seaby’s Coin Auction Lot no# 787 - 1892 DS 1/2 Pond Trial Striking in Silver. Estimate: R1650.00 - R2500.00. A local newspaper article just before the scheduled date of the sale mentioned that this rarity would possibly fetch R4000.00. Comparing the sale price of this coin to the 1973 CAT price of a normal ½ pond in UNC this coin would according to coin inflation sell for R1 100 000.00 (normal 92 ½ pond unc being R200 in 1973). The mint master at the time stated that there was no official record of this trial striking, and that it had to be a forgery. If it was not for more of this “trial striking” pieces being discovered this lot would have been sold for “a house’s price“ What makes this coin any different from the 1892 SS 1/2 pond?”*





## A NGC certified Single Shaft Half Pond of 1892

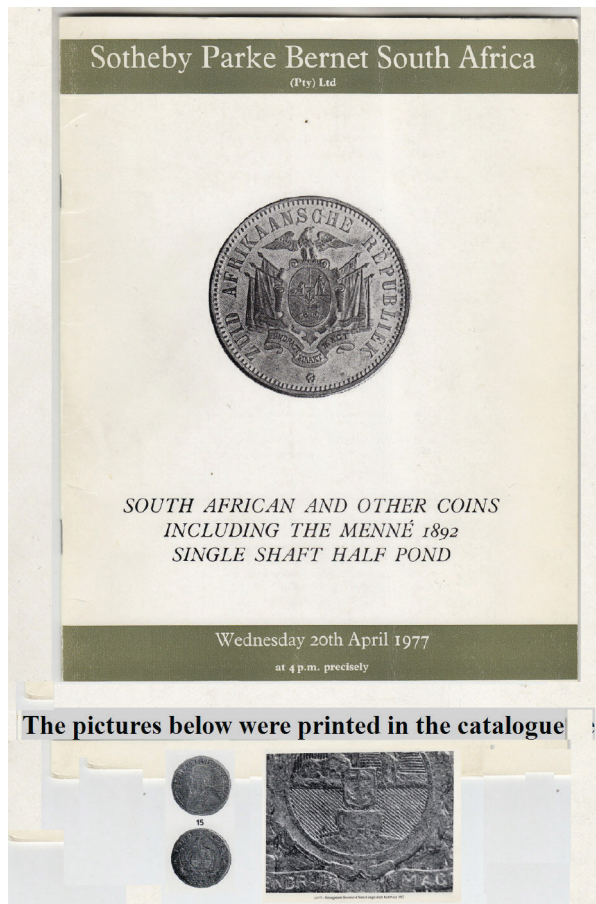
Recently I was commissioned to offer for sale a pair of NGC graded 1892 Half Ponde. These two coins had been certified by NGC as a single shaft (XF40) and a double shaft (AU58) – both dated 1892! On closer inspection it was obvious that NGC made an error – the single shaft was actually a double shaft coin as is clear from the following two pictures.





## The Sale of the Menne Half Pond

The Menne coin collection, including the famous single shaft Half Pond of 1892, was offered for sale by Sotheby Parke Bernet South Africa (Pty) Ltd in their Johannesburg Auction held on Wednesday 20th April 1977. They published a 17 page catalogue which included black and white plates



titled *Catalogue of South African and other coins including the Menné 1892 single shaft half pond*. It is not known if all the lots in the sale belonged to the Menne family: - they probably did not.

There were various other rarities offered in this sale.

The first nine items were Thomas F. Burgers issues including three uncirculated 1874 Ponde, two being the fine beard, and one the coarse beard variety. Patterns of the crown, half-crown, two-pence and two penny pieces were also offered.

In the Paul Kruger coinage series there were 36 lots, including various proof sets and individual proof coins of 1892. Surprisingly, a proof *single shaft* 5-Shillings was offered as lot number 18. This was either a typing mistake or another unique coin in the sale, most probably the former. (Lot 34 for example, was erroneously described as a Pond dated 1857).

The Numismatic Guarantee Corporation (NGC) has never graded a **proof** single shaft 5-shilling coin – only the double shaft variety.

Another rarity was lot number 38A, an 1898 Pond with the rare “99” overstamp that was sold with a certificate from the British Museum in London. Two Sammy Marks Tickeys and a Veld Pond were also offered.

Three dies for ZAR coins were listed as lots number 45, 46 and 47 respectively and all three were described as **probably unique**, being:-

Lot 45: *Obverse die from a proposed Burgers Penny, c. 1874. Oval central shield etc. as the pond reverse. No patterns are known to have been struck using this die, very fine and probably unique.*

Lot 46: *Master die for the reverse of a crown proposed Kruger coinage c. 1890. The oval shield with ornate frame and arrangement of the banner are typical of the previous Burger coinage, very fine and probably unique.*

Lot 47: *Obverse working die for a proposed Kruger Pond, 1892. Burgers type oval shield etc. but eagle's spread wings similar to design finally approved. The die is signed and dated O.S. (Otto Scultz) 28.5.92, very fine and probably unique.*

The next section in the auction consisted of 8 patterns of the Orange Free State, Cape of Good Hope and South African Republic. Then followed coins of the Union of South Africa, coins of the Republic of South Africa and finally 14 lots of foreign gold coins.

The star of the sale, the Menne 1892 Single Shaft Half Pond, was described as follows:-

*Lot 15: Half pond, 1892, single shaft (K. –; Bi-), obverse and reverse identical to 1893 issue except for the date. See De Nummis Number 2, for further information and enlargement photographs. The coin is fully authenticated and it is now known that dies were proposed for an 1892 single shaft half pond. Although worn, the coin is unique and the rarest coin of the South African series.*

As reported in the introduction, 142 lots were auctioned off for a total of R114 000, a sum that equals almost R4.5 million in 2021. The Half Pond realized R24 000 against a rather optimistic pre-sale estimate of R30 000 – R40 000 (but then one must take into account that the catalogue was poorly conceived – even for its day).

The sum of R24 000 was at that stage a world record for a South African Coin. (In today's money just under a million rand.) The winning bidder was a South African coin dealer from Durban who had placed his bid telephonically. The coin, duly insured, was dispatched to him by post, but mysteriously it did not reach its destination. Today after more than 44 years, the coin is still lost.



## Conclusion

In my opinion, the famous Menne Single Shaft Half Pond is genuine.

Firstly, although it would be very difficult, it might be possible to retool a double shaft to appear like a single shaft coin, but it would simply be impossible to change (reduce) the size of the front wheels of the ox wagon. It would also be impossible to change another date to 1892 without the deception being spotted by an expert.

This means that the Menne Half Pond must have been struck with the reverse die intended for an 1892 single shaft coin. This die could either have been manufactured officially (as is Elias Levine's take on the corrected dies mentioned in *Die Deutschen Reichsmunzen (1905)* by Dr. Hugo Hammerich) or else the die itself must have been unofficially and illegally manufactured.

Illegal dies for gold Kruger coins have been made before, the best example being for striking the fake gold Ponde dated 1900 that surfaced in the 1960s. However, when counterfeit coins are struck, the reason is usually for financial gain, so the forger would like the coin(s) to be struck "perfectly" and sold as high grade specimens.

The Menne Half Pond was a circulated coin worn down to almost F condition, so the forger either used a worn self-manufactured die (improbable to impossible) or put the coin in circulation for a couple of years and then retrieved it (impossible) or kept the coin in his purse and "played" with it for a couple of years to wear it down (improbable to impossible). Secondly, if the illegal die was made (surely at a great cost) why strike only one coin (or at best a few) with it?

Thus, if one accepts that the Menne Half Pond was struck with official dies, perhaps as a specimen or trial-strike coin, the question might be asked: “How did it end up in circulation?”

This question is not that difficult to answer. I have already mentioned the ultra-scarce 1894-S Barber Dime, valued at US\$2 million, which was used to buy an ice cream by the daughter of the San Francisco mint superintendent, J. Daggett. Closer to home I have personally seen a fairly worn 1949 South African shilling and would not have given it a second glance if it was not for the fact that no South African shilling dated 1949 were struck for general circulation. All shillings dated 1949 were struck as Proof and the uncirculated 1949 coin sets sold by the South African Mint did not include a shilling of that year. Clearly this was a Proof coin which had never the less circulated for many years.

As reported before, Becklake stated that the first coins with the corrected single shaft wagon appear to have been struck in Pretoria in the following years: -

- Ponde struck in 1893 with 1892 dies
- Half Ponde struck in 1894 with 1893 dies
- Five–shillings struck in 1893 with 1892 dies.

The Half Ponde of 1892 (double shaft) were struck in Berlin in 1892 and the first single shaft Half Ponde (dated 1893) were struck in Pretoria in 1894. No Half Ponde were thus struck in 1893. Why not? Probably because the corrected single shaft dies were not yet available (as opposed to those for the Pond and 5-Shillings which were).

So in my view the corrected dies for the 1892 Pond and 5-Shillings were sent to South Africa but the Half Pond dies were not yet ready and were not included with the batch. The first Half Pond dies to arrive in the Transvaal were for the 1893 issue which were actually struck in 1894. I firmly believe that the corrected 1892 Half Pond dies (if they were indeed manufactured as suggested by Levine’s take on *Dr. Hugo Hammerich’s book*)



were never sent to South Africa.

I am therefore of the opinion that the Menne Half Pond was most probably struck in Berlin as a once-off (or very limited) trial piece and that it was then sent to the Pretoria Mint. (There were constantly correspondence and items sent from Berlin to Pretoria as most of the minting machinery and equipment was manufactured in Germany). But even if was indeed struck in Pretoria as a trial piece (with the dies that supposedly did arrive), it then found its way into circulation, either by being stolen or by mistake with other Half Ponde.

The theft of coins from Government Mints is a practice as old as Mints have existed. In 2002 an American Double Eagle gold coin of 1933 was sold for \$7.6 million. The coin was originally smuggled out of the mint by a cashier and it later ended up in the collection of King Farouk of Egypt. The King was coincidentally also the owner of another unique South African gold coin, the so called “single 9” Kruger Pond.



## A few last observations

The Menne Half Pond was part of a coin collection that Bill Menne inherited in 1935 from his father Frank, but it is interesting to note that Frank only died five years later in 1940. When Bill inherited the coins they were accompanied by a note written by his father dated 9 January 1905, the same year that his grandfather Theodore died. Could some of the coins in the collection span three generations of the Menne family?

Not all the coins in Bill Menne's collection was valuable – in the Argus newspaper article of 1964 he mentions “another very rare coin” of his that will be put on exhibition at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Numismatic Convention in Cape Town. He described it as a gold coin featuring the head of a Portuguese King on the one side and on the other side the words in English “Thirty-six Shillings”. Menne says, *“The coin is a mystery which I hope will be solved during the conference.”*

I did some research on this piece and found that it turns out to be a brass coin weight for a Portuguese 4 Escudo. Dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it is indeed old, but of little value.

Nevertheless, to have been once the owner of the unique Single Shaft Half Pond of 1892, more than makes up for whatever modest coins might have landed up in one's coin cabinet throughout the years!

**Pierre H. Nortje**

**June 2021**



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## Thoughts on collecting and disposal of a coin collection

by W.J. Menne

MANY YEARS AGO I inherited a small collection of coins. At that time I knew nothing about the art of Numismatics. In fact, apart from the face value of the coins, I had very little interest in them. I knew nothing about the importance of condition. I was under the impression that if a coin was worn it must be old, and being old it must be of more value than a modern good coin. And, because of my lack of knowledge and therefore lack of interest, this little hoard lay locked up and undisturbed for more than 50 years.

It was only through a chance remark that I was fortunate in meeting a very keen and well known numismatist. He showed no interest in the value of my coins, but was intensely interested in the coins themselves. As a result, and because of his knowledge and experience a coin was discovered amongst this little hoard which proved to be a great rarity.

The spark that was necessary to generate my interest had flashed. My coins now became my hobby. Since then I have had no end of pleasure and joy, not only in collecting more coins, but collecting many new friends sharing the same hobby as myself.

The point I wish to make to beginners and young collectors, is the importance of knowledge and understanding of one's hobby.

A few good books on your subject will more than reward you for the expense involved. These books which contain much information, could save you making many mistakes as well as giving much advice in guiding you.

To really enjoy the hobby, one must share it with others, and here one cannot do better than to join one or more Numismatic Societies. At their monthly meetings, many interesting talks are given, from which many useful hints can be learnt. It is never too late to start collecting. It took me over 50 years to start, but in my old age my hobby has served a very useful purpose.

This second part of my talk concerns the old established collector. After many years of collecting and many happy hours spent in studying and enjoying our hobby, we suddenly realise that the few coins we started with has developed into a collection running into many thousands of coins. No longer do we keep our collection in a little wooden box locked up in the top right hand drawer of our desk.

Our collection is now probably locked up in a bank safe or we have built a special strong room in our home. The truth is, and we must face up to it, we now have a very valuable collection. Amongst our collection we have many beautiful coins, many rare coins and many

coins of historical interest. During the period we collected these coins, our main concern was the search to find the missing coin to fill a gap or to complete a particular series. If we lived to be a hundred, there would still be new coins waiting to be collected. However, the day must come when we must make up our minds as to how we wish to dispose of what is now a very valuable asset. I am in a quandary! What is one to do! I could donate my collection to a museum or some other Public institution. Leave it to one of the family or split it up between my heirs. Again I might decide to sell the lot and enjoy the proceeds in some other form.

What ever one does with this collection is his personal concern. I would however like to think, that most of these coins will come back eventually into circulation, so that collectors in generations to come will have the same pleasure, fun, and excitement in hunting for, and finding that elusive coin, the same as I did during my life time.





This story, a double tragedy, begins in 1935 when Mr William James (Bill) Menne, a well-known and respected farmer in the Northern Transvaal bushveld near Louis Trichardt, inherited his deceased father's coin collection.

At that stage he had no interest in numismatics but thinking that some of the coins might be valuable he kept the coins stored in a bank vault. In 1955 while reading an article in his newspaper about the scarcity of some coins, he remembered his coin collection and decided to look to see what he had stored away for safe keeping 20 years before. He subsequently wrote a letter to the Director of the South African Mint informing him about his father's collection.

One of the coins he mentioned, was dated 1892 with a "one shaft ox wagon" in the crest of the Transvaal Republic on the reverse of the coin. The Director responded and said that it was impossible as only a "double shaft" was possible for the issue of that date.

Bill Menne however was not mistaken and from that day on his father's famous Half Pond has always been referred to as the "Menne" Single Shaft Half Pond. Since then, vast numbers of ZAR Half Ponde have been eagerly examined by numismatists but another similar coin has never been found.

This is the story of the Menne Half Pond, a mysterious and unique South African gold coin.

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