

BOOK REVIEW - THE COINAGE OF BRITISH WEST AFRICA AND ST HELENA 1684-1958

by Trevor W. Hearl

“The Coinage of British West Africa and St Helena 1684-1958” by David Vice, Peter Ireland (Format) Ltd., 269 Broad Street, Birmingham, United Kingdom S1 2D8, 248 pages, 9.5 inches by 6.5 inches, hard back with dust cover, £12.75 (postage and packing £1.50 extra).

This recently published book by a small UK publisher deals with a topic related to St Helena interest. Of course, the section on St Helena is only a few pages, but there are some interesting and original observations on the financial history of St Helena, especially under the Honourable East India Company. Examples of currency (coins and tokens) are given and illustrated, including some previously unknown. The research has been at first-hand through the India Office Records of the Company, taking the authoritative work of the late Major Pridmore one stage further. Unfortunately, there are a few errors in transcription in the text, but the publisher’s standard of production is very good. Members of the St Helena and Dependencies Philatelic Society who are interested in this related aspect of “their” island’s history will find the material contained in this book well worth perusal.

It seems a pity that the author cannot produce a separate monograph on St Helena, bringing the currency up to date (to 1984) and including the relatively few medals associated with the island. St Helenians have coped with a bewildering variety of foreign coins for most of their history, some of them making a good business of it.

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