

# COINS OF THE HUTT RIVER PROVINCE

by **George Cruickshank**

The Hutt River Province is without doubt the most prolific coin-issuing secessionist state in history, having released well over two hundred unique coin types over a period of nearly thirty years. The history of these issues encompasses four periods:

## 1. Early Circulating Coinage 1976-78

Worldwide media interest in the Principality in the early 1970s led to the development of a thriving tourism industry, and as visitor numbers to the fledgling state located in a remote corner of Australia's rural west coast increased, the benefits of establishing an independent currency system became apparent. A set of low denomination banknotes was therefore introduced in 1974, and this was followed by the issue of the first series of six Hutt River coins in 1976.



HRH Prince Leonard I



State Arms of Hutt River Province

*HRPC 004A—Proof. HRPC 004B—Unc. 1976. Cupro-nickel. Designer: Christine Norman. Mint: Lombardo Mint. Mintage: 2000. Diameter: 24.9 mm. Denomination: 50c. Edge Type: unreeded.*

As the new coins were intended for actual use within Hutt River's borders both uncirculated and proof varieties of the four lowest denominations were produced. The latter were sold via mail order—along with high-value silver and gold pieces—to coin collectors, whilst the former could be exchanged for Australian Dollars (at a 1:1 conversion rate) by visitors to the Province, and used to purchase items from the range of philatelic material and souvenirs on offer. Many tourists elected to keep their change as a souvenir of their visit rather than exchange it for Australian currency again on their departure—and thus provided a small but useful additional source of revenue for Prince Leonard's coffers.



Earl of Astron Arms



British Crown and Wreath

*HRPC 011A—Proof. HRPC 011B—Unc. 1977. Cupro-nickel. Designer: Christine Norman. Mint: Lombardo Mint. Mintage: 1000. Diameter: 33 mm. Denomination: \$1. Edge Type: unreeded.*

The issue of the Province's coins and banknotes went unacknowledged by the Australian government—although it appears that they did achieve some level of legitimacy in the eyes of others; advertisements from the mid 1970s note that Hutt River currency was exchangeable at that time for other foreign currencies at the Hong Kong offices of Deak & Company. It is not known for how long this arrangement remained in place.

## 2. Early Precious Metal Coins 1979-84

An active tourism industry notwithstanding, the need for circulating currency appears to have declined towards the end of the 1970s, as the mintage figures for the 1977 series were half those of 1976—and the numbers for 1978 were halved again. This reality was reflected in a change of issuing policy in 1979; from that year the Province ceased to mint



HRH Prince Leonard I



Skylab

*HRPC 021. 1979. .999 silver (1 oz) Condition: Proof. Designer: ? Mint: Lombardo Mint. Mintage: ? Diameter: 39 mm. Denomination: \$30. Edge Type: reeded.*

low-value circulating coinage, but instead turned its attentions exclusively to the release of high-value, commemorative, non-circulating coinage for the numismatic collector and investor markets—a greatly more profitable business—particularly as 1980 witnessed a tenfold increase in the price of silver bullion on world commodity markets.

For the next few years the Hutt River Treasury maintained a conservative minting policy, releasing a single, low-mintage precious metal coin annually. During this time the contract for the production of the Province's coins was transferred from the Lombardo Mint in Canada to the California-based New Queensland Mint.



Crusaders Cross of Jerusalem



George Orwell

*HRPC 023A. 1984. .999 silver (1 oz) Proof. Designer: ? Mint: New Queensland Mint. Mintage: ? Diameter: 39 mm. Denomination: \$25. Edge Type: reeded.*