

Coin Chronicles

The Newsletter of the Trenton Numismatic Club

March 2018

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The Ides of March

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VCoins Newsletter

"Cowards die many times before their deaths.

The valiant never taste of death but once.

Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,

It seems to me most strange that men should fear,

Seeing that death, a necessary end, Will come when it will come."

Julius Caesar (Act II, Scene 2, Julius Caesar, William Shakespeare)

By 44 BC Gaius Julius Caesar was the most famous and controversial man in Rome. A populist political star and great writer, he excelled in the military realm as well, pulling off a lightning conquest of Gaul – roughly, France and Belgium – as well as invading Britain and Germany (58–50 BC). When his enemies, the old guard in the Senate, removed him from command, Caesar invaded Italy. He went on to total victory in a civil war (49–45 BC) that ranged across the Mediterranean. His challenge now was to reconcile his surviving enemies and to convince staunch republicans to accept his power as



dictator. It was a daunting task.

Plans to assassinate Caesar are attested as early as the summer of 45 BC but the conspiracy that struck on the Ides of March did not gel until February 44 BC. At least 60 men joined it (of whom we can identify just 20 today – and some of them are little more than names). According to a later writer, Seneca, the majority of the conspirators were not Caesar's enemies – former allies of Pompey – but his friends and supporters.

That certainly can't be said for Brutus and Cassius, the best-known conspirators. Cassius was a military man and a former Pompey supporter who despised Caesar's dictatorial ways. As for Brutus, he was hardly the friend of Caesar whom Shakespeare depicts.

Brutus's mother was Caesar's former mistress. However, Brutus supported Pompey until the latter lost to Caesar on the battlefield in 48 BC, at which point Brutus switched sides. He promptly betrayed his ex-chief by providing Caesar intelligence about the likely whereabouts of Pompey, who had escaped after the battle. Afterwards, Caesar rewarded Brutus

with high office.

This, however, was to prove the high point of Caesar and Brutus's relationship. In the summer of 45 BC, Brutus divorced his wife and remarried. His new bride was Porcia, his cousin and, far more pertinently to this story, daughter of Caesar's late archenemy Cato.

Crucially, in the winter of 44 BC, Caesar's opponents began calling on Brutus to uphold the tradition of his ancestors, who included the founder of the Roman Republic, Lucius Junius Brutus, the man who had led the expulsion of Rome's kings hundreds of years earlier. And so, through a combination of pride, principle – and, perhaps, love for his wife – Brutus turned on Caesar.

The plot to assassinate Caesar succeeded because it was meticulously planned, and flawlessly executed. With generals such as Decimus, Cassius and Caesar's veteran commander Trebonius involved, one would expect nothing less than military precision. The assassins chose to end Caesar's life themselves rather than by hiring killers – a decision that showed their seriousness of purpose. And by striking at a Senate

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COIN SHOW SCHEDULE

By Bill Liatys

April 2018

LOCAL SHOW SCHEDULE

Colts Neck Coin & Currency Show April 15th Sunday 9 AM – 3 PM
St Mary's Church Rt 34 North & Phalanx Rd. Colts Neck, NJ 07728

Steve Middleton Memorial Coin & Collectible Show April 29th Sunday
332 Willow Grove Street Hackettstown, NJ 07840

Tri-State Monthly Coin & Stamp Show April 22nd Sunday
Sheraton Bucks County 400 Oxford Valley Road Langhorne, PA 19047

Whitman Coin & Collectibles Baltimore Expo
Mar 22nd - 25th, 2018 Thursday – Sunday
Thursday – Noon – 6 PM Friday – Saturday - 10 AM – 6 PM Sunday – 10 AM – 3 PM
Baltimore Convention Center One W. Pratt Street Baltimore, MD

WORLD'S FAIR OF MONEY

Pennsylvania Convention Center
Philadelphia, PA – August 14-18, 2018
Tuesday 1 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Wednesday-Friday 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (FREE admission on Saturday!)

meeting they made it a public act rather than a private vendetta – an assassination and not a murder.

That this was a professional operation is even reflected in the killers' choice of weapon. Caesar's assassins attacked him with daggers and not, as is sometimes imagined, with swords. In particular, the killers used a military dagger (the pugio), which was becoming standard issue for legionaries. Military daggers were not only practical weapons but also honourable ones. Caesar's supporters later called the assassins common criminals and accused them of using sicae, a short, curved blade that had the negative connotation of a switchblade or flick knife. So, in 44 BC, Brutus issued a coin that celebrated the Ides of March with two military daggers. Again, he wanted to show that the assassins were no mere murderers.

As a general, Caesar had a bodyguard but he made a point of dismissing it after returning to civilian life in Rome. He wanted to seem accessible and fearless. What's more, only senators could enter a Senate meeting, so most of Caesar's retinue would have had to remain outside the building. This made the dictator uniquely vulnerable inside the Senate House. Still, Caesar had appointed many of the senators personally, and they included military men. If they came to Caesar's aid, they could overwhelm the assassins.

The assassins' response to this threat was to attack at speed, isolating their target before striking. Even before Caesar took his seat

on the tribunal, several assassins stood behind the chair while others surrounded him as if trying to grab his attention. The truth is that they were forming a perimeter.

Then the attack sprang into action. Tillius Cimber, a hard-drinking scrapper of a soldier whom Caesar favoured, held his hands out disrespectfully and pulled at Caesar's toga. At this signal, his co-conspirators struck, led by Publius Servilius Casca.

Caesar immediately called out to Cimber, "Why, this is violence", and hurled an oath at Casca, labelling him either "impious" or "accursed". Ancient authors report a rumour that Caesar said to Brutus, in Greek: "You too, child."

Caesar, the old warrior, tried to fight back. He stabbed Casca with his stylus – a small, pointed, iron writing utensil – and managed to get back up. Two of his supporters among the senators, Lucius Marcius Censorinus and Gaius Calvisius Sabinus, then attempted to reach him but the conspirators blocked their way, and forced them to flee.

Meanwhile, Trebonius had been assigned to button-hole his old comrade Mark Antony and engage him in conversation outside the Senate's door. Antony was a veteran soldier, strong, dangerous and loyal to Caesar. If he'd entered the Senate room,

he would have sat on the tribunal with Caesar and could have come to his aid.

With Mark Antony detained by Trebonius, there was little Caesar could do to defend himself. It probably took only minutes for him to die – succumbing to what most of the sources state were 23 wounds. Before the end, he wrapped his toga around his face and, in an ironic turn of events, fell at the foot of a statue of his rival, Pompey.

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Medal commemorating the abolition of the slave trade.

By: [Harry Garrison](#)

The Slave Trade Act was passed by the British parliament in 1807 abolishing the slave trade within the British Empire. The act did not prohibit the ownership of slaves, but made it illegal for slaves to be exported from, or imported into, British Colonies; for slaves to be transported on British ships; and prohibited slave ships of other nations from using ports and territorial waters under British control. The Act did not halt the slave trade but changed its nature, and more slave ships came to operate from the east coast of Africa. The voyage to the Americas was much longer and the ships had to round the Cape of Good Hope. The British Navy in South Africa was charged with the task of enforcing the Act which could be diplomatically difficult when foreign vessels were

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Trenton Numismatic Club

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challenged, and often had horrific consequences when captains of British slave ships would chose to jettison their cargo rather than face the penalties of £100 per slave.

In the early days of the slave trade, Sierra Leone had been a major source of supply, but by the end of the eighteenth century a reverse process of repatriation had begun. Several hundred "poor blacks" from London were settled in Freetown to be joined by about 2,000 "Black Loyalists" from Canada who had been granted their freedom for volunteering to fight for the British in the American War of Independence.

The medal commemorating the abolition of the slave trade. GRADED PCGS AU55



Obverse: British official (left) and African chief (right) approaching each other shaking hands. In the background, four huts and palm trees (left), two Africans with hand ploughs (middle), five Africans dancing round a tree (right). Legend: "WE ARE ALL BROTHEREN". In the exergue: "SLAVE TRADE ABOLISHED / BY GREAT BRITAIN / 1807". Signed: "G.F.P." at the foot.



Reverse: Arabic across: "(translated) Sale of slaves prohibited in 1807, Christian era, in the reign of George the Third; verily we are all brothers". Signed: "J.P FECIT." at the foot.

36 mm, 17,4 g.
 Eimer: 984; Laidlaw: 0243;
 Notes: The first striking in about 1814 was not as a medal but as a penny trade token.

Give us your two cents!

**Send an article to Coin
Chronicles.
Joe@pargola.com**

The club depends on the contributions of its members. Think about an article today!

Meeting Schedule

The Trenton Numismatic Club meets on the fourth Monday of each month at the

**HAMILTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
ONE JUSTICE SAMUEL A. ALITO JR. WAY
HAMILTON, NJ 08619-3809**

Mailing Address: T.N.C. P.O. BOX 8122
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