



A rare Rhodesian five pound note with an issue date of 1st July 1966 and signed by Noel Bruce. The initial print run of these notes were all destroyed in Munich as part of the 'Great Canine Robbery.' Any surviving notes with the date of 1966 (as per this sample) were all actually reprinted in Salisbury in late 1967 or early 1968.

THE GREAT CAINE ROBBERY

In August 1963 Ronnie Biggs and his gang of fourteen operatives robbed the Glasgow to London mail train in what was to become known as the Great Train Robbery. They escaped with £2.6M (worth the equivalent of approximately £40M today), which was a record amount at the time.

This audacious crime and the huge cash haul was a massive news story and almost everyone knew all about it.

Yet from a Rhodesian perspective that record didn't last for long. Just three years later a much bigger crime was perpetrated. It was a heist of more than ten times the £2.6M that Ronnie Biggs had got away with. Yet it was hardly reported and is now almost completely forgotten.

At the end of 1963, just a few months after the Great Train Robbery, the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland came to an end. On the very day the Federation officially dissolved the Rhodesian government in Salisbury passed the Exchange Control and the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia Acts of 1964. As a result of this, in May 1964, the new Reserve Bank of Rhodesia was established. It was announced the Mr. N. H. B. Bruce would become the Governor and Mr. G. C. Gough of the Bank of England would become the Deputy-Governor.¹

This was all in preparation of taking over full control of the country's financial affairs. One of the first, and most pressing duties of the newly established Reserve Bank of Rhodesia was the introduction of Rhodesia's own currency. As Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland had both withdrawn from the Federation becoming Zambia and Malawi respectively the The Bank of Rhodesia and Nyasaland had to be dissolved. Its assets and liabilities were allocated to the three new central banks in proportion of the amounts of Federal Currency, notes and coins, redeemed in each country at the time of the break-up of the Federation. In the event approximately 52% was allocated to Rhodesia, 33% to Zambia and 15% to Malawi each of whom launched their own national currencies. These new currencies were introduced on November 16th 1964² after an extremely quick design, production and distribution effort.

According to Noel Bruce, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia, "It usually takes about two years to design, manufacture, and issue new notes and coin of good quality. Reputable mints and note printers plan their programs at least twelve months ahead. But all three territories managed to have their notes ready for issue within eleven months and their coin within thirteen months of the Federal dissolution."³ This note printing work was done by Bradbury, Wilkinson & Company in the UK under the supervision of the Bank of England.

The Bank of England had also been instrumental in setting up the Federal Reserve Bank and several senior personnel were still deployed in Rhodesia on secondment through this

¹ *'New Reserve Bank comes into being'* article published in *The Rhodesia Herald* on 22 May 1964.

² *'New Rhodesian banknotes will be issued next Monday'* article published in the *Rhodesia Herald* on 10 November 1964.

³ *'Difficulties in break-up of Federal monetary area are described'* article published in the *Rhodesia Herald* on 6 August 1965.

complicated transition. As it became clearer that Rhodesia was not prepared to hand over power to the Black Nationalist agitators, these Bank of England staff, along with Mr. Gough of the Reserve Bank, were all quickly withdrawn in protest.

Preparing for further British retaliation and interference the Rhodesian government created a cabinet committee called the Ministerial Economic Coordination Committee (known as the MECC). This was chaired by John Wrathall from the Ministry of Finance and consisted of key ministries who cooperated and coordinated on fiscal policy priorities that required government financing to stimulate national economic development. The Rhodesian Reserve Bank's role in the early stages of this partnership was to represent the bank and its interests within the British Sterling Zone.

Towards the end of 1964 the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia ordered new notes and coins as the old ones in circulation were becoming worn out and needed to be replaced. At that time the country only had three different denominations of banknotes in circulation. They were a 10 shilling note, a one pound note and a five pound note. In those days nothing of higher value than five pounds was deemed necessary!

Noel Bruce, travelled to London to make the necessary arrangements for the new cash. He placed the order for the banknotes with Bradbury, Wilkinson & Company in the UK who had printed the first run of Rhodesian currency at the beginning of the year. But when checking with the Royal Mint to discuss new coins he was informed that the Mint in London was too busy to produce new coins for the colony. Snubbed, Bruce gave the order for the new coins to the South African Mint. In hindsight this was very fortunate.

For these coins the Queen's secretary provided Bruce with three portrait photographs of the Queen. He selected his favourite and provided it to the South African's to be incorporated onto the back of the new Rhodesian coins.⁴

An initial run of banknotes was provided and once they were approved in October 1965 a second, much larger, batch of twenty million new banknotes were ordered from Bradbury,

⁴ *Interview with Len Bruce on 18 January 2021 and personal notes provided on 20 January 2021.*

Wilkinson & Co (BWC).⁵ The intention of these new banknotes was to update the currency for the whole country.

Within a month of this order being placed, Rhodesia, who felt they had been pushed into a corner with no remaining alternatives, made their Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain.

Harold Wilson's government in Whitehall immediately froze Rhodesia's accounts in British banks, expelled the country from the Sterling Zone and excluded them from the London Money Market which, at the time, was Rhodesia's main source of finance. They also ordered their Treasury to track down any other Rhodesian assets and to move as quickly as they could against the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia.

Within the Reserve Bank's portfolio Rhodesia had considerable assets in London and elsewhere which the British wanted to impound. To legitimise this theft the British government decided to appoint their own board of directors for the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia who they felt could then more legitimately lay claim to these lucrative assets. This was done through the RBR (Reserve Bank of Rhodesia) Order (1965) as part of the Southern Rhodesia Act that was implemented on December 3rd 1965.

This Order demanded the suspension of the six-man Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia. In addition to Noel Bruce who was the Governor the other Directors were, C.A Bolt, T.E.S Francis, B.G. Hewitt, J. MacIntyre and Sir Henry McDowel. According to the English edict they were all to be replaced by a new Board appointed by the Bank of England and based in London. This new controlling body were then to "preside over the freezing of Rhodesia's financial and gold reserves." According to the Commonwealth Relations Office this move was, "far and away the most potent step that we could take in the financial field... We all believe that it will create a great deal of confusion and disturbance to normal trade and financial transactions between Rhodesia and the outside world."⁶

⁵ *'Unrecognized Countries and Their Currency, Part 1: Africa'* by Owen Linzmayer published on 17 May 2016.

⁶ *Letter titled, 'Control over the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia', sent from the Treasury Official Mr S. Bancroft to the Bank of England on 30 November 1965.*

This new English Board of Directors became known as 'The Reserve Bank of Rhodesia (London).' The governor of this board was Sir Sidney Caine and the other directors were Viscount Harcourt, Lord Poole, Sir Norman Kipping, Sir Gordon Munro and Sir Siegmund Warburg. This collective came to be known as the Caine Commission.

According to the British, "the primary function of this new board was to locate the external assets of the Reserve Bank, and, once they had located them, to assert their authority over them. This was to prevent the illegal régime from applying them towards the furtherance of the rebellion and to preserve them for the people of Rhodesia as a whole until such time as constitutional Government should be restored."⁷

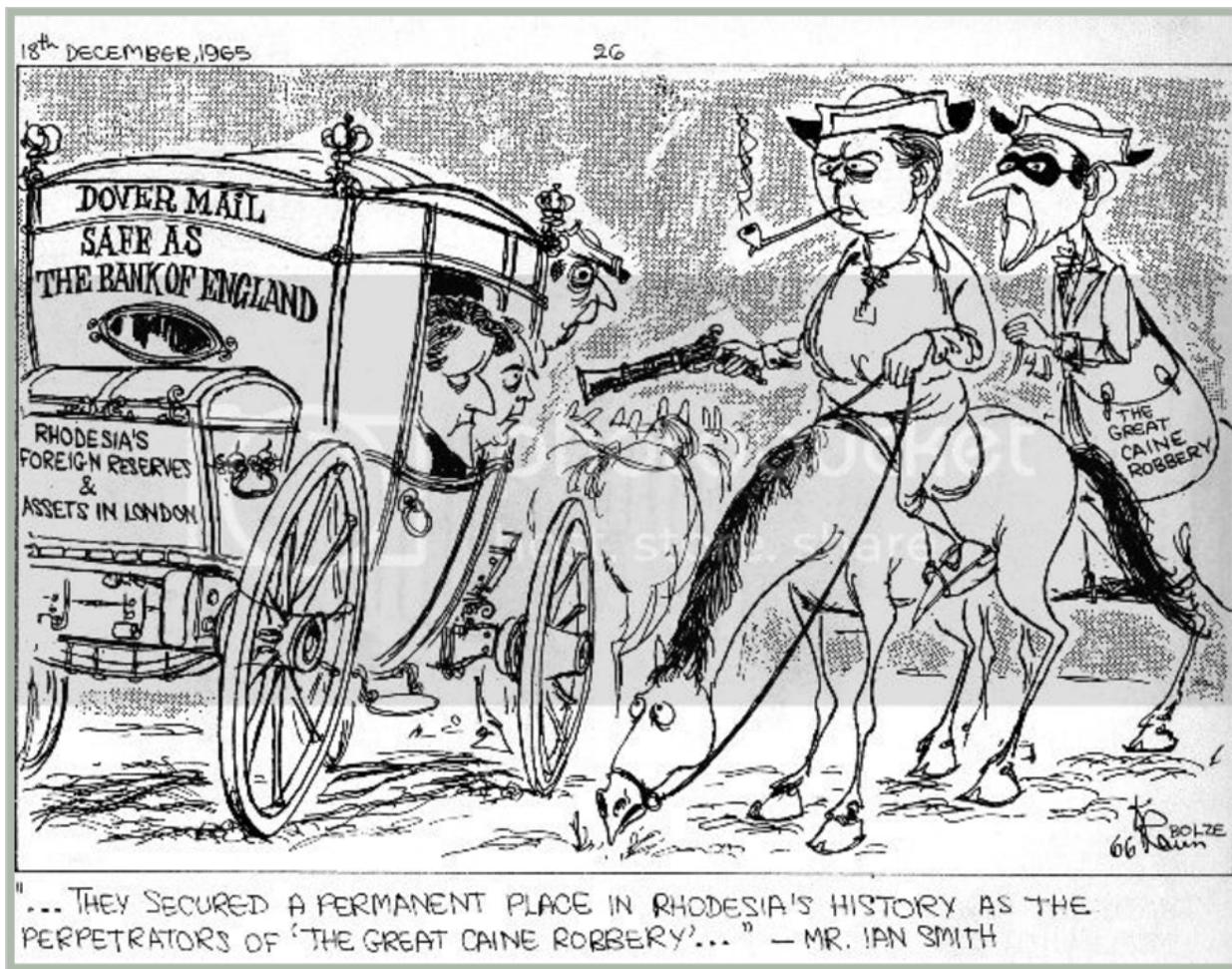
The bank's executives in Rhodesia were then directed to report to this hastily assembled English board. For some reason the British thought that Cecil Roberts, who was then Chief Cashier of the Rhodesian Reserve Bank in Salisbury, would abide by this ruling. As with many of their assumptions at the time of UDI they were wrong and this directive was simply met with derision.⁸

The first thing Caine's motley collection of co-conspirators did was withdraw Bradbury & Wilkinson's export permit effectively denying them permission to deliver the consignment of newly printed banknotes to Rhodesia.

The legality of this seizure was loudly and vocally contested by Rhodesia who took the British to court. They argued that the order for the printing of the notes had been placed long before December the third 1965 when the RBR Order came into effect which made it a legitimate order that had been confirmed and acted upon. Ultimately Rhodesia lost, but they refused to settle the printing bill as they had not received the consignment, which the court did agree with. Given the liability Britain had assumed by suspending the RBR (Salisbury) Board and replacing them in

⁷ *The British Hansard, vol. 282 cc314-23 314, 'Reserve Bank of Rhodesia Order 1967.'*

⁸ *Interview with Len Bruce on 18 January 2021 and personal notes provided on 20 January 2021.*



A cartoon illustrating 'The Great Caine Robbery' that appeared in the Rhodesian press at the end of 1965. © 'Life with UDI. A cartoon history of independent Rhodesia' by Kouis Bolze and Klaus Ravn.

London, after almost ten months of hostile debate, the new Board simply used Rhodesia's blocked funds to clear Bradbury and Wilkinson's £64 337 account.⁹

So much for preserving the seized funds "for the people of Rhodesia."

In his loud complaints to the international media the Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith described the torrid undertaking as 'the Great Caine Robbery.' Predictably it was hardly reported anywhere outside Rhodesia.

⁹ 'Financing Rebellion: The Rhodesian State, Financial Policy and Exchange Control, 1962-1979' by Tinashe Nyamunda published by the University of the Free State in November 2015.

Although the immediate loss of their U.K. assets and investments was a huge blow to Rhodesia, especially in the first few years of independence, in time they were able to recover and, on balance, Rhodesia probably fared better than Britain herself. Rhodesia had, in fact, been unhappy with Britain's handling of their economy since the end of the Second World War and felt that imperial control had curtailed their "autonomous economic development." By the early 1960's the new Rhodesian Front government were actively preparing to extract themselves from the London money market and the yolk that came with it. According to Nyamunda, in contrast to London who viewed the expulsion of Rhodesia from the Sterling Zone as a fatal blow to the rebellious colony, Salisbury viewed this as a fulfilment of Rhodesia's interests in attaining a post-sterling monetary system.¹⁰

In response to London's freezing of Rhodesia's ten million pounds worth of external investments Ian Smith announced that the country would freeze Britain's twenty six million pounds worth of internal investments. He also said the country would be compelled to default on their debts owed to Britain and their other international obligations that Britain had guaranteed.

He stated "I contended that since the United Kingdom had seized Southern Rhodesia's London reserves, it should also pay for Southern Rhodesia's external debt." This included payments to the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) for the massive Kariba dam hydroelectric project. To legitimise this, Rhodesia filed a lawsuit against the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia (London)'s Board for freezing their external financial reserves. As a result Britain were compelled to pay an unanticipated cost of more than twenty million pounds per year to cover Rhodesia's debt and interest servicing.

Because Britain had failed to honour its undertaking to assist Rhodesia with development finance in return for the financial obligations accepted by Rhodesia as a consequence of the Federal dissolution, this money was instead used to finance infrastructure development schemes within the country. This saw an accelerated expansion in agriculture and mining, development of the Tribal Trust areas and African education. It quickly became clear that London had seriously underestimated Salisbury's financial acumen. By the middle of 1966,

¹⁰ *'Financing Rebellion: The Rhodesian State, Financial Policy and Exchange Control, 1962-1979'* by Tinashe Nyamunda published by the University of the Free State in November 2015.

instead of succumbing to British sanctions, Rhodesian initiatives instead produced a 'hothouse' atmosphere for economic development.¹¹

But all of this didn't help the Reserve Bank's problem of updating and replacing the country's banknotes which were becoming almost completely worn out and were in dire need of replacement.

After doing some research, and with the assistance of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation,¹² the Reserve Bank surreptitiously started building a relationship with a German banknote printer, Giesecke & Devrient who were based in Munich. The German CEO of the company, Siegfried Otto, was particularly sympathetic to the Rhodesian cause. He did not like the British, but hated the Communists. He therefore strongly supported Rhodesia's stand against the Communist inspired African nationalists who were trying to take over the country. Apparently the background to this sentiment was that before the Russians annexed East Germany Otto had owned a very successful printing works in Leipzig which he had been forced to abandon when the Wall was built.¹³

Soon a deal was agreed with Otto and in the middle of 1966 the Rhodesians confirmed an order for completely new Rhodesian banknotes from Giesecke & Devrient with a face value of sixty four million pounds.¹⁴

In about November 1966 when the order was ready Noel Bruce and his Chief Cashier, Cecil Roberts travelled to West Germany to inspect and take delivery of the notes. As both men were on Britain's 'wanted' list careful precautions had to be taken. To get around this Bruce used a couple of fictitious South African passports issued in the names of "Brice" and "Bryce" to ensure he could travel a bit more safely.¹⁵ There is no doubt Roberts did the same.

¹¹ *'The Rise and Fall of the UDI Economy', African Studies Seminar Paper, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, published on 22 February, 1993.*

¹² *'Serving Secretly' by Ken Flower.*

¹³ *Interview with Linda Manley on 31 January 2021.*

¹⁴ *'Rhodesia is printing banknotes' article published in the Cape Times on 19 July 1967.*

¹⁵ *Interview with Len Bruce on 18 January 2021*

The banknotes were approved and moved to a warehouse at Munich airport and a chartered aircraft was arranged to come and collect Bruce, Roberts and all twenty eight tons of the newly printed and palleted cash.

To ensure that it couldn't be tracked apparently the aircraft had been rebranded with a fictitious registration number in Gabon. But because of the time constraints this had to be done in a rush so water based PVA-paint was used which dried much quicker. As fate would have it, during the approach to Munich the aircraft went through an unusually heavy thunderstorm, which washed off much of the PVA paint. As soon as he realised this and the serious consequences of tampering with the registration numbers the pilot aborted the mission and left the two bewildered bankers and their mountain of cash stranded on the ground.¹⁶

As the British secret service had discovered that Giesecke and Devrient were printing the banknotes they were carefully watching the facility and had hoped to catch everyone red-handed as the plane was being loaded. Being forewarned Bruce and Roberts knew that they were in deep trouble and quickly slipped away, abandoning their extremely valuable cargo. Their German hosts helped smuggle the men through the closing net onto a series of nondescript slow rural trains that weaved their way across Europe eventually getting them into Portugal where the government were much more sympathetic to the Rhodesian cause.

¹⁶ *There has been an implication that Jack Malloch would most likely have been this pilot and that the aircraft was one of his Rhodesian Air Services aeroplanes. While it does seem to be the sort of mission Jack would have relished there is nothing but some thin circumstantial evidence that he was involved.*

For the last few months of 1966 Jack had a crew based in England training on a DC-7 which he had agreed to buy from British Caledonian. During that time they regularly "flew to a range of European destinations." As the aircraft was still registered to Caledonian they would have had to quickly mask the official registration for this mission which does add a bit of credibility to the theory. Plus we do know that Jack 'amended' the registration numbers on his aircraft with remarkable frequency - which landed him in jail on at least one occasion. The 30-ton carrying capacity of the DC-7 would also have been ideal for this cargo which weighted in at 28 tons.

When asked about the question about Jack's possible involvement one of the senior Reserve Bank officials at the time stated, "I think that Jack Malloch was the likely one to have been involved with his Affretair business."

Yet the aspects of this story which don't add up are the Gabon link as Jack only established his Gabon operation out of Libreville in 1968. Also it is very unlikely that Jack would have abandoned either the bank executives or the cash (although perhaps one of his crews based in England might have...?). While we know that Jack was flying regularly in Europe and Africa throughout 1966, due to the nature of his flying he only made one single, unrelated, entry into his flying logbook between June 17th 1966 and April 24th 1967 so unfortunately there is no written record of any Rhodesian Air Services flight into Munich in December 1966.

At one point during this high-tension escape the men, who were painfully aware that they were travelling on forged passports, noticed what they considered to be a possible British agent monitoring them. To avoid arrest they jumped off the moving train in the dark as it slowed on the approach to an isolated rural siding. They hid for a while and then walked into a nearby village to catch yet another train going in the opposite direction. As it was the middle of winter the men had to struggle through deep snow which, coming from the tropics, they were neither used to, nor dressed for.

Eventually they reached Lisbon and were finally able to take a commercial flight to Johannesburg, from where they chartered a small single-engined aircraft to fly them back to Salisbury. By the time they got home they had been missing with no indication as to their whereabouts for a full three weeks, much to their families' grave concern.¹⁷

While Bruce and Roberts were making their long dramatic escape, Britain blocked the export of the banknotes from Germany. Once again Rhodesia refused to pay for the notes and sought an interdict to prevent them from paying the costs. Caught in the middle of the dispute Giesecke and Devrient sought legal recourse in the German courts to firstly overturn Britain's insistence that the notes could not be delivered and secondly to secure the payment of their outstanding sixty four thousand pound invoice, plus they added damages and costs which were quickly ramped up. One court sided with the British but the appeals court then sided with Giesecke and Devrient.¹⁸

Realising that their case was collapsing the British were desperately concerned. If the court publicly ruled against them it would be a legal precedent and the entire credibility of British sanctions and their ability to enforce them was in jeopardy. To salvage the situation they blackmailed Rhodesia by threatening one of their main supporters.

Exactly what the nature of this clandestine action was history does not record, but in Noel Bruce's own words; "Since it is well known to you through a wide variety of news reports, I do

¹⁷ *Interview with Len Bruce on 18 January 2021 and personal notes provided on 20 January 2021.*

¹⁸ *Reports published in the New York Times on December 22 and December 23 1966.*

not propose to dwell on the sorry story of the legal actions which were instituted against our West German note printers, Messrs. Giesecke and Devrient. Except perhaps to remind you that the German courts clearly established the de facto position of the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia in Salisbury. When it became clear that the British authorities would lose in their attempts through the German courts to stop delivery of our notes, they resorted to other actions which could only result in considerable embarrassment to a foreign government who were in no way connected with our quarrel. For this, and other reasons which were carefully considered, we agreed to release Messrs. Giesecke and Devrient from their contractual obligations and so to allow them to effect a settlement with the British, subject to conditions which were insisted on by the Bank. These conditions, which involved acceptance by the British of the German court's decisions in our favour and the disposal of the notes held in Germany were, of course necessary to protect the interests of this country.¹⁹

While we don't know what these 'other actions' were or who the 'foreign government' that would be embarrassed was, it is likely to have been Portugal. They were a strong supporter of Rhodesia, had helped in the escape of Bruce and Roberts in December 1966 and, most interestingly, the Portuguese Consul-General Dr. J. de Freitas-Cruz was a guest of honour at the launch dinner where Noel Bruce made the above comments.

For all this intrigue and after a whole year of drama including this court litigation, Rhodesia still did not have any new banknotes. The business community were beginning to worry that it was just a matter of time before they were going to have to do all of their transactions in coin as the notes in circulation were by now "liberally decorated with scotch tape."

The Rhodesians, who were always independently minded, realised that the best way around the constraints of sanctions was to be as self-sufficient as they possibly could be. So they decided that the only long term solution to the currency crisis was to print their own banknotes. Although by Bruce's own admission they had been thinking about the idea of printing banknotes locally for some time. "At the first sign of trouble in Germany, the Bank decided to implement and to

¹⁹ *Speech by the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia, Mr. N. H. B. Bruce, at the Dinner Party on 18 July 1967 at the Meikles Hotel, Salisbury, to mark the launch of the new domestically printed Rhodesian £1 banknote.*

proceed immediately with plans which had been under consideration for some time and which were aimed at printing banknotes in Salisbury.” He said.

Once safely back in Rhodesia Noel Bruce floated the idea of local printing with his friend Siegfried Otto. Otto was open to the idea and after discussing it with his other directors they made arrangements to supply some old litho and background printing machines to Salisbury while they started sourcing brand new intaglio machines for a more permanent, long-term solution.

The initial machines were broken up and smuggled out of West Germany²⁰. According to Wikipedia the equipment was delivered in secret to a South African registered proxy company. By the time the British secret service realised this, the printing machines had already been slipped across the border from South Africa into Rhodesia, reassembled and installed at the Bank Chambers, commonly referred to as the Old Reserve Bank Building in Salisbury’s city centre. To facilitate this new printing operation in the back yard of their office building the Reserve bank demolished the old caretakers cottage that was there and build a new highly secure printing works in its place.

While there is some truth to the ‘caretakers cottage’ anecdote, it hid a much more ambitious project. The Caretakers flat situated at the back of the Banks building was converted into the finishing and administration departments of the printing works. But the main development was the digging of a whole new basement complex. This highly secure, temperature and humidity controlled facility housed all of the heavy equipment for this ambitious, top-secret production line.²¹

According to one of the people who worked in this secret facility the imported machinery comprised of two full colour Roland printing machines along with a numbering machine and a collection of auxiliary equipment including a couple of sheet and note counting machines.²²

²⁰ *Sidney Caine’s note to the London Board (BoE (OV) 191/40 Reserve Bank of Rhodesia (London), dated 3 November 1966.*

²¹ *Personal correspondence with Ian Cooke, 4 March 2021.*

²² *Personal correspondence with Linda Manley, 1 March 2021.*

Even with this initial consignment of printing equipment the currency that the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia produced wasn't entirely 'homemade' and there were steps, skills and specific supplies that still needed to be imported. For example the special watermarked banknote paper could not be produced locally and was all brought in from a Giesecke & Devrient subsidiary called Lousenthal, who were appointed as the official banknote paper supplier to Rhodesia. That turned into a long term relationship and Lousenthal continued to supply banknote paper to Rhodesian, and then Zimbabwe for at least the next twenty years.

The printing plates were also imported from Germany and as this was well before the digital printing revolution they were all painstakingly engraved by hand. Consequently they took an extremely long time to be produced before they could be flown back to Salisbury²³ (which from 1970 onwards was usually done by Jack Malloch's Affretair, or Air Trans Africa, as it was better known within Rhodesia). Due to the time it took to complete and deliver the printing plates the date of issue on the final banknotes was usually months (and sometimes even more than a year) before the final notes made it into circulation.

In fact the very first successful print-run that The Reserve Bank of Rhodesia produced entered circulation more than a year after the date of issue printed on them. This is fascinating evidence that Giesecke & Devrient most likely just provided Rhodesia with the very same printing plates that they had used for their own initial print run in the second half of 1966 that was eventually destroyed.²⁴ To allay this speculation at the time the currency was launched a spokesman for the Reserve Bank said "no special significance can be attached to the date of June 15, 1966 which appears on the new Rhodesian one pound note."²⁵

On March 6th 1967, after the under-the-counter deal had been agreed between Britain and Rhodesia, Giesecke & Devrient agreed to settle out of court with the RBR (London) Board for the extraordinary amount of three million Deutsche Marks. This included a significant amount of 'damages' and a healthy fee of six thousand Deutsche Marks per quarter for having had to store the notes. As part of this settlement the printer agreed not to print currency notes for Rhodesia

²³ *Interview with Linda Manley, 31 January 2021.*

²⁴ *Personal correspondence with Len Bruce dated 29 January 2021.*

²⁵ *'PM says note comment by U.K. is 'pompous' article published in the Rhodesia Herald on July 20 1967.*



The front and back designs of one of the actual £1 banknotes presented in the menus of the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia's 'reveal' dinner on 18 July 1967. Note the extremely low serial number which confirms this was one of the very first notes off Rhodesia's new printing presses. No doubt these initial notes are now all extremely valuable collector's items.

in the absence of a political settlement and to destroy any and all of the note printing material.²⁶ Yet it seems that at almost exactly the same time these same printing plates were smuggled out

²⁶ 'Financing Rebellion: The Rhodesian State, Financial Policy and Exchange Control, 1962-1979' by Tinashe Nyamunda published by the University of the Free State in November 2015.

to Rhodesia to be used in their own printing endeavour. This just goes to show how far Siegfried Otto was prepared to go to help the Rhodesians.

The bank also lacked any sort of printing experience and did not have any staff to actually operate the complex printing and production line. Once again Siegfried Otto came to the rescue and offered to send four or five of his best machine operators to Salisbury to not just set up the machines, but to actually run them. These Germans were accommodated in nearby guest houses, including one on Third Street and another called the 'Tally-Ho' on North Avenue, both within walking distance of not just the Reserve Bank but many of the city's restaurants, bars and nightclubs. How long this team were based in Salisbury is not clear, but it seems likely to have been more than a year. In fact it was so long that one of the young men actually got married in Salisbury and Cecil Roberts hosted the wedding reception at his own home.²⁷

And it was not just expert printers and machine minders that the Bank needed. There were a lot of other people who needed to be employed and trained up as quickly as possible to get the facility not just running, but able to produce banknotes to the highest international standard. To ensure this standard there was a great deal of manual verification and quality checking that needed to be done.

To do this work the bank employed twenty-two young women, recruiting them both externally and from within their existing workforce. According to a bank official, "We picked each for good eyesight, sensitivity to colours and for good health and employment records." Attention to detail in this role was critical because "each tiny marking must be precisely registered, colours must not blur or be superimposed and numbers must not vary by a minute fraction from the correct position."²⁸ The women carefully scrutinised each and every printed sheet that had thirty banknotes printed onto each of them. This they did at large flat tables with magnifying glasses, carefully searching for almost undetectable flaws, blurred colours or registration issues. If they found anything questionable the sheet would be marked with an X for destruction, while the perfect sheets would be send on to guillotining, bundling and packaging.²⁹

²⁷ *Interview with Linda Manley, 31 January 2021.*

²⁸ 'We're in the money now! An exclusive look at our newest industry' article that was published in the *Sunday Mail* on 23 July 1967.

²⁹ *Interview with Linda Manley, 1 February 2021.*

Finally, on the night of Tuesday 18th July 1967, the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia hosted a very large dinner for Government dignitaries and business executives at a local banquet venue. The guest list numbered some one hundred and thirty people including the Rhodesian Prime Minister, five cabinet ministers, the Mayor, the entire board of the Reserve Bank and numerous ambassadors and business leaders.

Every invited guest was presented with a menu with a brand new, locally printed bank note inside. That was the first time that anybody outside of the Reserve Bank knew of the endeavour and everything that had been achieved since The Great Caine Robbery. It was a euphoric celebration and a major morale-boost for the entire country.³⁰ As can be determined by the extremely low serial numbers, these 'menu notes' were all from the very first sheets that were printed and were specifically selected for their historic value. No-one realised that the date of issue on the notes was still the original date of 15th June 1966 that Giesecke & Devrient had been given right at the start of the whole drama.

The news of this unexpected and astonishing feat, and its remarkable implications spread quickly with it being widely reported the next day in the Rhodesian, South African and English media. British newspaper correspondents based in Salisbury variously described the coup from the Chaucerian "cocking a snook at Britain's sanctions" to "the rebel government's most spectacular triumph of the sanctions war."³¹ In the same vein the South African Cape Times reported the news as "one of the most spectacular secret operations since UDI."³²

The fact that no implication or rumour of this endeavour had been leaked at any point prior to the launch dinner was also noted in the press, "The secrecy surrounding the whole operation is one of the biggest success stories of the year. The twenty two girls and other technicians in the

³⁰ *Interview with Len Bruce on 18 January 2021 and personal notes provided on 20 January 2021.*

³¹ *'Equipment for note printing not subject to U.N. sanctions' article that was published in the Rhodesia Herald on 20 July 1967.*

³² *'Rhodesia is printing banknotes' article published in the Cape Times on 19 July 1967.*

The quiet man behind Rhodesia's big bank-note triumph

LEAST known to the public of the top men in Rhodesia's fight against sanctions is, without doubt, the Governor of the Reserve Bank, 46-year-old Noel Hugh Botha Bruce.

Noel Bruce is the kind of man who dislikes—and shuns—publicity instinctively. But it goes deeper than that. He believes that publicity has no place in a banker's life—particularly in the life of a high official in an institution like the Reserve Bank.

Up to now that's the way he's played it—and everything has been in his favour, even his appearance. Noel Bruce is a quiet, unassuming man of medium height, with a bald dome and a little moustache. His dress, too, is unassuming. In a crowd you wouldn't give him a second look—unless you know who he was.

That suits him down to the ground.

But this past week it's been different. Noel Bruce has suddenly found himself with the glare of publicity fully upon him. On Tuesday night he was host at a dinner—a banquet—given by the Reserve Bank to 130 guests, among whom were some of the most distinguished men in this country.

When the invitations to the dinner went out some weeks before there had been whisperings. It isn't every day that the Reserve Bank throws a dinner—and what a magnificent dinner it was—at a leading hotel.

Guests knew as soon as they sat down at the long tables that the whisperings had been correct. For at

each place was a souvenir menu, beautifully printed; and in each menu, in a plastic compartment, was a brand new Rhodesian 11 note—the first of the Rhodesian notes printed by the Reserve Bank at its own printing works in Salisbury.

In less formal surroundings the dinner would have got off to a resounding cheer. As it was the applause was delayed—but only until the eating was over and Mr. Bruce got up to make his speech.

The speech, like the man himself, was competent. It cocked a snook at Britain in the quietest, most effective way—though I shouldn't imagine that thought came into Mr. Bruce's mind. The same could not be said of the Prime Minister—the

POLITICS and PEOPLE

politician—when he spoke after Mr. Bruce!

Noel Bruce was 43 when he was appointed Governor of the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia in 1964 after the break-up of the Federation—one of the youngest bank governors in the world. His Scottish ancestry rings out in his father's name—Lennox Gordon Crawford Bruce.

But Noel Bruce himself speaks with a strong Afrikaans accent. That is not surprising. He was born at Fauresmith, a platteland town in the Orange Free State, and was at the Outeniqua High School in George in the South-Western Cape before

going on the Rondebosch Boys' High.

He has been in banking all his life—first with the Reserve Bank in South Africa and since 1956 up here.

The last 18 months have been a great strain on him and his staff. They have worked long hours—and at week-ends and holidays. The sense of achievement when they performed the "impossible" and those crisp new 11 notes rolled off the presses must have atoned for a lot of it.

Noel Bruce, say those who know him, thrives under pressure. If the contradic-

tion is permissible, he is never more relaxed than when working flat out.

After his announcement at the dinner on Tuesday he was inundated with requests for interviews by newspapers, radio and TV. He handled it all with aplomb. His answers were forthright when he was interviewed on TV.

His delight at the success of one of the best-kept secret operations since UDI was obvious. But he did not gloat. For that he gets full marks.

Talpièce: Best comment yet on Sir Sydney Climes' silly statement that the new notes are not legal because they have not been authorised by his committee in London, came from the bank teller when I went to cash a cheque on Thursday: "What will you have, genuine or counterfeit?"

Gordon Street



MR. NOEL BRUCE

printing room all have families, husbands, friends. But the secret was not betrayed by the slightest hint of a whisper to anyone."³³

The next concern was whether foreign Reserve Banks and regional commercial banks would accept the new currency as legal tender. Britain immediately declared that the banknotes were illegal counterfeits as they had not been authorised by the Caine Commission. No-one, especially in Southern Africa, took this rash objection seriously and within twenty-four hours of the notes being launched all five of the largest banks in South Africa "indicated that they will make no distinction between the controversial new Rhodesian banknotes and the old."³⁴ Over the next few days almost every other regional financial institute had followed suit.

Less than a week after the launch of the currency the Sunday Mail ran a large feature on the new banknote printing operation. It was the first time reporters and photographers had been allowed into the production line and every precaution was taken to conceal any details that could be leaked. Even the brand names of the printing machines were carefully covered so that nothing compromising would be revealed. Everyone was fascinated by the story, including a young printer by the name of Cecil Manley who worked for Bardwell Printers in Salisbury. He poured over the pictures to try and appreciate more of the impressive machinery. For him

³³ 'We're in the money now! An exclusive look at our newest industry' article that was published in the Sunday Mail on 23 July 1967.

³⁴ 'Rhodesia's new notes accepted' article published in the Cape Argus newspaper on 19 July 1967.

banknote printing was the pinnacle of his craft, and he boldly stated that more than anything he wanted to get a job in this remarkable facility.³⁵

All the banknote printing in Salisbury was still being done by the highly qualified German journeymen seconded to Rhodesia by Giesecke & Devrient (G&D). But this dependency was not sustainable, especially considering the risks that G&D were taking for their central African client. The Reserve Bank of Rhodesia needed to secure their own print operators.

To find them the Reserve Bank requested the names of the best printers in the country from the national Printers' Union. Amongst the shortlisted names two were selected. It was just a few weeks after Cecil Manley had seen the enticing newspaper feature that he got the call. He and another printer by the name of Ivor Neumann had made it into the final selection. After a couple of interviews offers were made and in September 1967 both young men agreed to sign the Official Secrets Act and join the bank, reporting in to Vic Evans, who was the new Head of the Printing Department, and Ian Richardson, who was the Works Manager.

Cecil relished every moment learning perfection from the Germans and the nuances of their incredible printing machines. But even better equipment was on its way. Back in Europe Siegfried Otto managed to find and order five brand new printing lines for Rhodesia. The machines were the top of the range intaglio printers supplied by the reputable Italian firm Giori S.A. and they were being shipped by Giori's partners De La Rue Giori.

Ironically banknote printing machines and printing plates were not included on the list of items banned by the U.N. sanctions against Rhodesia.³⁶ As a result the British secret service were unable to interfere with the delivery of the machines which were brought in directly via De La Rue in Switzerland.

Intaglio printing was the latest thing and produced a thick, raised effect which gave the banknotes a completely different feel making them almost impossible to forge. But it required a great deal of skill and experience. Cecil and Ivor had the skill but not the experience so it was

³⁵ *Interview with Linda Manley, 31 January 2021.*

³⁶ *'Equipment for note printing not subject to U.N. sanction' article published in the Rhodesia Herald on 20 July 1967.*

decided they should spend some time in Germany learning the trade. But with the travel embargo it was going to be difficult get two young Rhodesians into Europe.

Cecil had the right to a South African passport so he was instructed to go there and get one, which he did, claiming his aunt's address as his own on the application forms. Once both Manley and Neumann had legitimate foreign passports they spent the next six months in Germany training to become master Intaglio printers at the G&D facility in Munich.³⁷ Cecil loved his 'dream job' and would go on to marry one of the 'twenty-two girls' who worked in the secret printing works. He would eventually retire as the Technical Director of the entire printing operation.

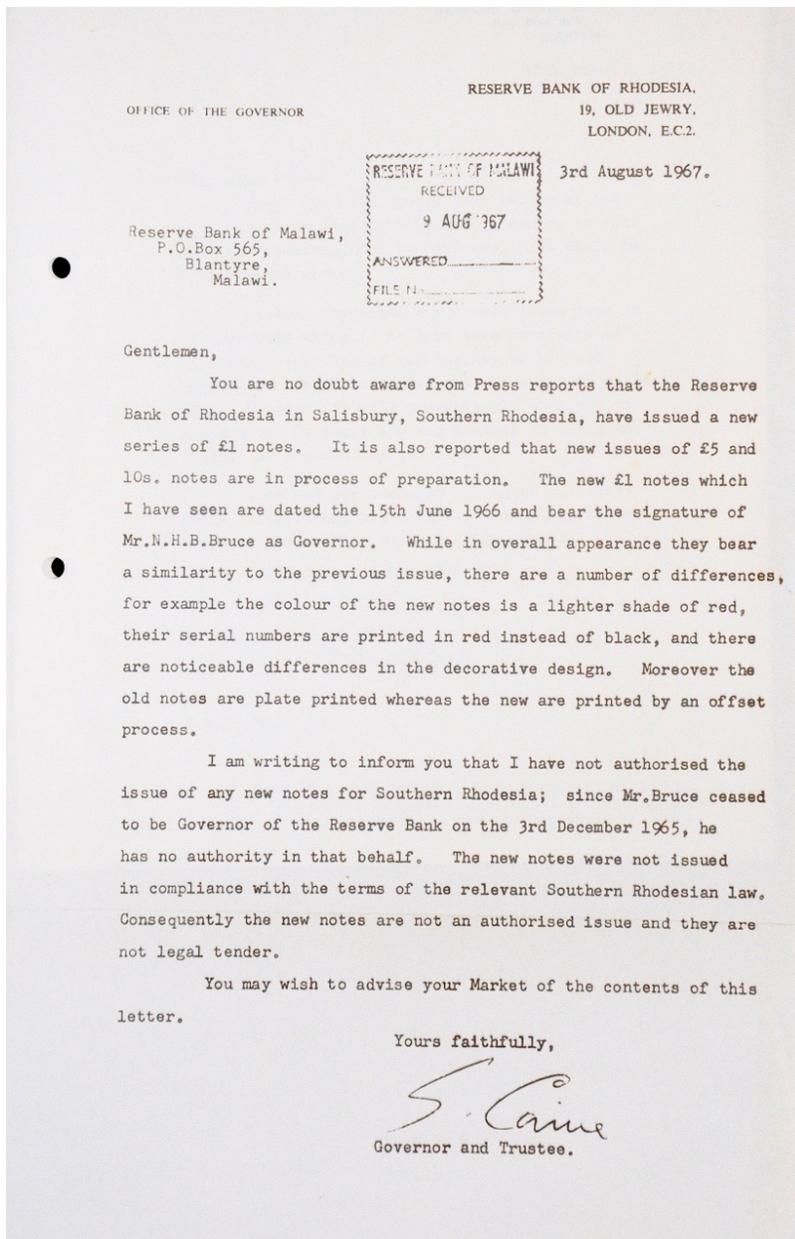
Noel Bruce, Cecil Roberts, Cecil Manley and Ivar Newman had all helped to make Rhodesia not only self-sufficient in terms of their own currency printing, but they set a very high standard in doing so. Manley was clearly a craftsman of the highest order, and by the end of the 1970's Fidelity Printers, as this clandestine operation became known, had come to be recognised as one of the smallest, but one of the best banknote printing operations in the world.

Although things didn't always go according to plan. The combination of tons of paper and lots of flammable chemicals was dangerous. One night there was a fire in the printing works which caused an immediate stop to production. Fortunately the machines were spared and whilst they all needed to be thoroughly cleaned and the quality-controllers were briefly redeployed to other parts of the building, production was able to resume remarkably quickly. Considering that it would have been almost impossible to replace the imported machinery new safety policies were put in place and there was a major focus on very careful and attentive maintenance. After this experience even the strict Germans were impressed at how well kept the machinery was.³⁸

As for Caine and his fellow directors, by the end of 1966 they had become despondent with their ineffective positions which they realised were nothing more than political window dressing and they all tendered their resignations. The Chancellor of the Exchequer accepted the Board's wish

³⁷ *Interview with Linda Manley, 28 January 2021.*

³⁸ *Personal correspondence with Linda Manley dated 2 February 2021.*



to resign, but requested that they extend their tenure for a few more months until the court case with Giesecke & Devrient, in which they were all named defendants, could be resolved.

Most of the Board agreed to the extension but they were not pleased or committed. According to Nyamunda, "The Board members became the lead actors in the United Kingdom government's theatrical display of power over Rhodesia when in fact their action actually indirectly benefited the colony. Its members were frustrated by their incapacity to take any practical action of their own and they had no real influence over Rhodesian developments."³⁹

A letter send by Sidney Caine to the Reserve Bank of Malawi soon after Rhodesia successfully issued their own new banknotes. He was desperately trying to coerce Rhodesia's neighbours not to recognise the new currency, but by this stage it was obviously, even to the Malawians, that Britain's impetuous objections were meaningless. Within a few weeks of this letter being issued Caine's resignation was accepted and he left, frustrated and disillusioned.

Original document provided courtesy of Mr. Len Bruce.

Within less than three years of the introduction of the first 'home-made' banknotes Rhodesia changed their currency from the pound to the dollar and removed the portrait

³⁹ 'Financing Rebellion: The Rhodesian State, Financial Policy and Exchange Control, 1962-1979' by Tinashe Nyamunda published by the University of the Free State in November 2015.

of the Queen from their currency. Interestingly the name 'dollar' was not a foregone conclusion for the currency. In the early discussions on the matter a variety of names were proposed, including the Rand, the Rhodes, the Sable, the Starr and the Dyke (referring to the Great Dyke being the mineral rich watershed that runs through the centre of the country).

Fortunately the Minister of Finance John Wrathal suggested that the new national currency simply be called the Rhodesian dollar. The name was neutral, easily identifiable and related to the prevalent international trading currency, the United States dollar.⁴⁰

Six years later, in February 1976 Noel Bruce retired from the Reserve Bank of Rhodesia. He was succeeded by Dr. Desmond Krogh as governor. Dr. Krogh decided that the banknote printing works should no longer be a department of the Bank. So a new company, wholly owned by the Bank and called Fidelity Printers (Private) Limited was set up. A plot of land was purchased in Masasa, a nearby industrial area about eight kilometres from the city centre. The new printing complex was designed in Germany with the help and supervision of Giesecke & Devrient. It was modelled to match the leading banknote printing plants in Europe. Construction of the new building was started in April 1980 and was completed some eighteen months later at the end of 1981.⁴¹

Having suffered the Great Caine Robbery with the loss of not just one, but two, entire national consignments of banknotes, in the end, Rhodesia emerged, stronger and more self-sufficient than anyone, most of all the British, could have ever imagined.

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I would like to thank Len Bruce, the son of the Rhodesian Reserve Bank governor Noel Bruce, for bringing this remarkable piece of our history to my attention and for all his help in compiling this article.

⁴⁰ 'Financing Rebellion: The Rhodesian State, Financial Policy and Exchange Control, 1962-1979' by Tinashe Nyamunda published by the University of the Free State in November 2015.

⁴¹ Personal correspondence with Ian Cooke, 4 March 2021.