

Home Rule for Wales and Scotland – Unusual Overprint

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This is not my opinion, or indeed that of the BNS, but refers to a ten-shilling note seen for sale recently⁽¹⁾.

The note shown below is a standard O'Brien ten-shilling note, first issued on 21st November 1955 (Duggleby B271⁽²⁾). The issue was followed by the Queen Elizabeth II design on 12th October 1961. With the introduction of the decimal 50 pence coin on 14th October 1969, the ten-shilling notes ceased to be legal tender after 22nd November 1970, a few months prior to Decimalisation, D-Day, on 15th February 1971.



Fig. 1. L.K. O'Brien 10s note **B89Z 777533** with political overprint on back (137×78 mm).

The back has a very neat pink overprint with the message **JUST TO REMIND YOU THAT WALES AND SCOTLAND MUST HAVE HOME RULE SOON**, within a circle which has been sized to fit in the blank space in the design through which the watermark can be viewed. There is some bleed through of the pink ink to the front of the note.

This surprisingly polite message was intriguing, as was the inclusion of both Wales and Scotland at the same time. This all happened before I was paying much attention to such matters (b. 1965), so the search began.

A first significant step took place in 1966 when Plaid Cymru president Gwynfor Evans had won the Carmarthen by-election⁽³⁾. Looking to the popular press suggests the topic rarely made the headlines, but appeared sporadically in the media. One short editorial from 1966 brings it all together⁽⁴⁾.

Liberals Cite Ulster Type Home Rule

HOME RULE for Scotland and Wales and regional government throughout England is advocated by the Liberal Party in their evidence to the Royal Commission on Local Government, in England, published today.

The “extensive devolution of responsibility for decisions and actions to elected regional and reformed local authorities,” is also urged.

The English regional governments, or councils, should, say the Liberals, have legislative and executive powers with the responsibility for and the supervising of educational services, trunk roads, location of industry, new towns and overspill, health, police, water, and the organisation of housing consortia.

The evidence cites Northern Ireland as an example of regional government, with its ministerial and Cabinet system. One of the strengths of the Northern Ireland Parliament, it says, is its governmental constitution.

A further search revealed debates in the House of Lords – e.g. The Government of Wales Bill on Tuesday 30th January 1968⁽⁵⁾, with Lord Ogden stating.

Your Lordships may ask whether Wales is a viable State, whether we could pay for ourselves so far as our domestic affairs are concerned. It would be rather odd if your Lordships did ask that, because in recent years this House, in common with the other place, has granted independence to all sorts of curious places, little strips of desert, remote islands, teeming Asian cities, all with far lesser populations and infinitely fewer resources than Wales has. Indeed, Wales has almost twice the population of Northern Ireland; it has the same population as New Zealand and the Republic of Ireland. I am told, although I have not checked this, that it has a larger population than forty States in the United Nations, and of course far greater resources than a large number of them.

With the emergence of Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party, the labour government of Harold Wilson set up the Royal Commission on the Constitution on 15th April 1969. Initially under Lord Crowther, the commission finally reported under Lord Brandon on 31st October 1973.

Various models of devolution, federalism and confederalism were considered, as well as the prospect of the division of the UK into separate sovereign states. Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man were dealt with separately from the core issue of Scotland and Wales⁽⁶⁾.

The rest is history with the National Assembly for Wales and the Scottish Parliament both meeting for the first time on 12th May 1999.

Thus it is suggested that the overprint was applied sometime around 1966-69. This was some 30 years before devolution took place, at the time when the process began. Do readers know of any other specimens, or other designs from this campaign, or contemporary references to this overprint?

References

- (1) eBay item number: 184814593868. Ended: 09 May, 2021 20:50:33 BST.
- (2) V. Duggleby. *English Paper Money – Treasury and Bank of England Notes 1694-2006*. 7th ed. Pub P. West, 2006.
- (3) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Commission_on_the_Constitution_\(United_Kingdom\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Commission_on_the_Constitution_(United_Kingdom))
- (4) Anon. Liberals Cite Ulster Type Home Rule. *Belfast Telegraph*. Tuesday 18 October 1966, p.6 col.1.
- (5) Hansard vol 288 col.702-63 quote from col.706. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1968-01-30/debates/f6458a99-f92c-4cce-97e4-2ed65bd47394/GovernmentOfWalesBillHl>.
- (6) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Commission_on_the_Constitution_\(United_Kingdom\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Commission_on_the_Constitution_(United_Kingdom)).

