



Ss



Convenient in size and value, the **shilling** coin – or “bob” – was a mainstay of the pre-decimal British coinage. First issued in the reign of Henry II in the twelfth century, the coin was minted until 1967. At decimalisation in 1971 the shilling was replaced by the five-pence piece of the same value, size and weight, though the old coins remained in circulation until 1990, when the five-pence piece was reduced to its current size.



S is for ... **Shell**.

Founded in London and now operating in over 90 countries, Shell is active



in every area of the oil industry, producing over 3 million barrels of oil each day. In 1892 Shell introduced the world's first dedicated oil tanker, the 3,565 ton **Murex**. The ship was sunk by a German U-boat in 1916,



with the name later used for a 298,306 ton tanker launched in 1995.

A sickly and eccentric only child, **Robert Louis Stevenson** was born into a Scottish family of lighthouse engineers in 1850. In his twenties he produced a series of much loved novels: *Treasure Island* – where the one-legged pirate **Long John Silver** leads a mutiny against **Captain Smollett**; *Kidnapped*; *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*; and *The Black Arrow*. Suffering debilitating ill health he spent his last years in **Samoa**, where he championed native rights against colonial injustice, dying aged 44.



Built in just 38 years and consecrated in 1258, with its 404ft **spire** added in 1320, **Salisbury Cathedral** houses one of the four copies of *Magna Carta* and the world's oldest working clock, dating from 1386. Eight miles to the north, on **Salisbury Plain**, stands **Stonehenge**, dating from c 2600BC and aligning with the sun's position at the summer and winter **solstices**. The huge **saracen stones** were transported 20 miles to the site, while 43 smaller bluestones were brought 140 miles from Presceli in Wales.



Though foreseen in 1684 by the English scientist Robert Hooke, a **semaphore signalling system** using mechanical arms mounted on towers was developed in France during the Revolution. In Britain a line of signal stations linked the Admiralty in London with the naval base at Portsmouth, enabling messages to be transmitted in minutes. Semaphore messages are still sent using hand-held flags, red and yellow at sea, blue and white on land. In the 1950s the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament adopted the semaphore signs for N and D for their logo, now used universally as a generic symbol for peace.



With uniforms supposedly designed by Michaelangelo, the **Swiss Guard** – bodyguards of the Pope within the Vatican – are the last remnant of a six hundred year tradition of mercenary



soldiers supplied from **Switzerland** to other European states. For most of this time the troops were the country's chief export trade. Compulsory annual military service for all males to the age of 34 still underpins the national policy of armed neutrality.



In Anglo Saxon England the **shire reeve** or **sheriff** was responsible for keeping the peace within a county on behalf of the king, but is now a purely ceremonial office. In the United States the elected sheriff is still typically the chief law enforcement officer of a county.

