

STEWART LYON 1926-2021

I first met Stewart Lyon when I was an 18-year old schoolboy, late in 1962 or early in 1963, and I remained in regular contact with him from then almost until his death in March this year. The original, and lasting, reason for this was that both of us had a long-term commitment to the study of the Anglo-Saxon coinage, but our acquaintance, and friendship, was deepened by the fact that in 1969 I joined Stewart on the Council of this Society, serving on it alongside him, more or less without a break, for over half a century, and we were also to serve together on the British Academy's Committee for the Sylloge of the Coins of the British Isles for a period of thirty-two years between 1988 and 2020.

I speak therefore with a profound sense of loss that Stewart is no longer with us, but also with real gratitude for having known him, and for having profited from his company, his encouragement, and his wise advice over this long period.

I have written about Stewart's contribution to Anglo-Saxon numismatics both in a forthcoming obituary of him for our Journal and in a chapter for a volume of essays to be published in his memory, but it is proper to highlight now just a few of his most significant contributions to our knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon series.

His initial research, in the mid 1950s, was into the coinages of eighth and ninth century Northumbria, which he was the very first person to investigate with proper scholarly rigour, and his success in making sense of this difficult topic showed that he possessed just the right qualities of judgement and intellect to assist in what was at that time a collective effort, led by Christopher Blunt and Michael Dolley, to bring order to the Anglo-Saxon coinage generally.

Stewart's first contributions to this was a major paper, written jointly with Ian Stewart (Lord Stewartby), on the Viking coinage of York as revealed by the famous Cuerdale hoard of 1840. This was followed by a masterful survey of the coinage struck in Southern England during the first forty years of the ninth century, this time written jointly with Christopher Blunt and Ian Stewart. He was to repeat this partnership with Blunt and Stewart many years later in a shared programme of research into the coinage of tenth-century England up to the 970s, with the difference that in their resulting book on *Coinage in Tenth-Century England* Stewart was himself entirely responsible for the portion of it that deals with the very extensive coinage of Edward the Elder.

I regard this as one of the most triumphant achievements in his published output, for the localities where the coins were struck are almost never named on them, and it is only possible to make sense of Edward's coinage by identifying characteristics of type and style which associate particular coins with particular parts of the country. This Stewart very successfully managed, and the conclusions that he reached about the coins' places of manufacture, and their absolute and relative dating, have been fundamental to the study of the coinage of this period.

No less important was the contribution that Stewart made over a long period of time to our understanding of the coinages of Aethelred II and Cnut. These are difficult coinages for British numismatists to grapple with, since the coins of these kings survive in huge quantity and the great majority of them are held today in institutional collections in one or other of the Scandinavian countries. At the time Stewart first took an interest in these coinages, Michael Dolley had made them his particular numismatic territory, but Stewart was able to bring to their study a clarity of intellect, an eye for stylistic detail, and a capacity for mathematical calculation that made him the ideal person to build on the foundations that Dolley had laid.

His easy command of the whole sweep of the Anglo-Saxon coinage between the time of Offa of Mercia and the death of Cnut was to be demonstrated for a final time in his first and only published book as a sole author, volume 68 in the SCBI series, published in Stewart's ninetieth year. Although this takes the form of a published catalogue of Stewart's collection of Anglo-Saxon coins, it is much more than this, for its text sets out for the benefit of present and future readers his considered views on all the major issues which he had had to confront in a lifetime's involvement with the Anglo-Saxon series.

It remains to stress that Stewart, as well as being a very distinguished scholar, was an example to all of us in the manner in which he managed to fit a lasting commitment to our subject into a demanding and successful business career, and an almost equally busy retirement. He was helped in this by the fact that he had the steady support throughout provided by his long and happy marriage to his beloved wife Elizabeth. He also brought a profound sense of duty, allied with a natural charm of manner, to every undertaking in which he was involved, and, beyond that, he believed strongly in the benefits of working together with others for the common good. It was characteristic of him, in this context, that after he had been elected President of our Society for the year 1966, the first of his five Presidential Addresses to us had as its title "Consultation in Research", and he was unsparing with advice and help to all his numismatic colleagues.

The contribution that Stewart made to our subject will be an enduring one, both in practical terms in broadening our understanding of the coinages which he studied, and in the important contributions of a theoretical nature that he made to our understanding of such difficult topics as the calculation of the size of medieval coinages, weight standards generally, and the significance of short-term reductions in weight during the periods within which particular coin types were issued. I take this opportunity to record that in an email to me on 19 November 2020, which was very possibly the last carefully considered email that he sent to any one on a serious numismatic topic, he took the opportunity to observe that he had, (I quote), "belatedly ... come to realise that there is much work to be done in studying regional weight variations in the late Anglo-Saxon series", and he then appended some detailed comments, wholly remarkable in that he was then three days short of his ninety-fourth birthday.

He was, all in all, one of the ablest and most deeply respected scholars that our subject has ever had, and it would be altogether fitting if in the future some younger scholar will choose, in reference to Stewart and maybe to Christopher Blunt and to Lord Stewartby as well, to adopt the words once used by Sir Isaac Newton, who like

Stewart was a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, and was not bad at mathematics, and say that “if I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants”.

Hugh Pagan.