

PRESIDENT'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2005

MARK BLACKBURN

THIS year a good deal of our Council's time has been taken up with discussing the Society's awards and prizes. Following the celebrations last year of the centenary of Christopher Blunt's birth in 1904, it was decided to rename the Society's Council Prize as the Blunt Prize. The Council Prize had been established in 1984 during the presidency of Hugh Pagan, and Hugh told me that it had occurred to him then how appropriate it would have been to name the prize after Christopher Blunt, but he did not suggest it as he knew that Christopher would, through modesty, not have agreed to the idea. Now that he was no longer able to object, and with the enthusiastic support of the Blunt family, Council made the change. The first Blunt Prize was awarded in May to Dr Shailendra Bhandare, one of the most talented numismatists of his generation, and a specialist in the coinages of India. It is the first time that the Society has given one of its awards primarily for work on the coinage of one of the Commonwealth states, and I am delighted that we should have done so.

Meanwhile, Council had commissioned a small committee chaired by Stewart Lyon to consider terms of the John Sanford Saltus Medal, in particular whether they were serving the best interests of our subject in the early 21st century in the light of current patterns of research and publication. As a result of their recommendations a number of significant changes were made to the rules. In particular, while previously the award had been based on publications in the *British Numismatic Journal*, the regulations now require all an author's publications in the field to be taken into account and make non-members eligible, which was not the case before. A majority on the committee also recommended that the award should be decided discretely by Council, rather than by a vote of all the membership, but Council preferred not to implement this proposal. Today we have voted for the first time under the new rules, and I would be happy to receive comments in due course about how well they have operated. A new reverse die with revised wording will be prepared in time for the presentation of the medal in May 2006.

The third action undertaken in respect of the awards, was to launch an appeal for funds to establish a Prize Fund to support the Society's awards. The original endowment for the John Sanford Saltus Medal having long since been dissipated, and the Council/Blunt Prize only ever having been supported from current income, we wanted to secure the long-term future of these awards without their being a burden on members subscriptions. The Society is currently in very good health, and it seemed to me that this was the time to show our strength by providing a fund to protect these prizes if, through changes in fashion or whatever, times turned lean for our subject.

I am delighted to announce that within the last few weeks the appeal has met its target. We have raised £7,751 from more than 80 donors.¹ In addition Christopher Blunt's son and two daughters have very generously pledged that during their lives they will pay every third year the £300 awarded to recipient of the Blunt Prize. One member has also said that he will leave the Society a legacy under his will. I am immensely impressed by the support that the appeal has received from a broad cross-section of members in Britain and abroad, of those involved with the running of the Society and less active members. I am as grateful for the small gifts, as for the large ones. One member said to me that he had had a lot of pleasure and benefit from the society over many years and was pleased for an opportunity to repay this in some way. Although the capital in the Prize Fund is not ring-fenced as an endowment, my expectation is that the income will be sufficient both to pay for the awards and to allow for modest capital growth to keep pace with inflation.

Turning to the review of the year, there have been 39 elections (three of which are institutions), four deaths, eleven resignations and eleven amovals. This evening we elected no less than 19 new members, the highest number at one meeting since 1909. This wave of nominations was a result of the stall that we took at the Coinex fair in October, and which was manned by several of our members. As a result the total membership today stands at a record 619, compared with 606 last November. The previous all-time high of 617 was in 2002, before the increase in subscriptions.

	<i>Anniv Meeting</i> 2004	<i>Anniv Meeting</i> 2005
Honorary	9	9
Ordinary	478	488
Ordinary (students/under 21)	5	6
Institutions	114	116
Total	606	619

The four members we have lost through death are:-

Jerome (Jerry) Hosmer REMICK III (elected 1971), died 1 March 2005 at the age of 76. He lived in Quebec, and was one of Canada's best-known numismatists. He was a founding member of the Canadian Numismatic Association in 1950, and was the author or co-author of numerous books on coins and tokens of the Commonwealth, the best-known of which is *The Guide Book*

¹ By the close of the appeal the sum raised amounted to £8,295 from 97 donors.

and Catalogue of the British Commonwealth Coins (originally written with Somer James and Howard Linecar). He was a geologist by profession, working for the Quebec government, and after retirement he was a generous benefactor of the Canadian Geological Foundation.

Elizabeth (Liz) Jean Elphinstone PIRIE (elected 1960), died 1 March 2005 (the same day as Mr Remick) at the age of 74. Liz trained as an archaeologist, but working as a museum curator at Chester, Maidstone and then Leeds her research interest focused on numismatics. She published articles on various topics and a number of books, including two *SCBI* volumes, Chester part 1 and Yorkshire Collections, but it will be for her contributions on the Northumbrian styca series that she will be most remembered. Although her interpretation was in part controversial, her meticulous die-studies published in particular in *Coins of the Kingdom of Northumbria, c.700-867* will stand as the basis for all future work. A full obituary will appear in the forthcoming volume of *BNJ* 75 (2005).

Ivan Robert BUCK (elected 1967), died 7 March 2005, aged 71. For many years Ivan Buck was a central figure in the Essex Numismatic Society. In 2000 he published a well-illustrated survey of *Medieval English Groats*, a subject that had long interested him.

David Arnold CHAPMAN (elected 1976), died 7 August 2005, aged 69. He lived at Maidstone, Kent. After his death Mr Chapman's widow sent a donation to the Prize Fund in his name, saying what a vital part his interest in coins had played in helping him deal with his long terminal illness.

Although not a member of the Society, I would nonetheless like to mention the death of :-

Dr Vsevelod POTIN, former Director of the Numismatic Department at the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, who died on 12 September 2005 at the age of 87. He had been responsible for curating the Anglo-Saxon coins, among others, for over 50 years, and had written on them in the 1960s. More recently he enthusiastically accepted the Sylloge Committee's invitation to prepare the British coins in their collection for publication in the Sylloge. His Hermitage vol. 1 appeared in 1999, and vol. 2 should be published later next year. Vol. 4, by his colleague Marina Mucha, was published in 2004, which leaves vol. 3 on the Scandinavian imitations, which Dr Potin and I had been

working on together. There is no retirement age at the Hermitage, and because of the economic situation there he continued as head of the Numismatic Department until he was about 82, and at the time of his death he was still nominally curating part of the collection.

On a happier note, tonight, although he is unable to be with us, Stewart Lyon (our Senior Vice President) completes his 60th year of membership, and John Porteous completes 50 years. I am pleased to say that Mr Porteous is here, and has generously sponsored the champagne reception that will follow this meeting. During the year Rev K. V. Hewitt also joined that elite club of members of more than half a century's standing.

We also have cause to congratulate David Symons, one of our Editors, on the award of a PhD from Birmingham University for a dissertation on *Aspects of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman Mint of Worcester, 975-1158*. Three of our members have been elected Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries during the year: Nick Holmes, Anthony Freeman and William Mackay. Our Secretary, Elina Screen has been appointed to a Temporary Lectureship in Early Medieval History at Cambridge, and the British Museum has a new curator for modern coinage and paper money, namely Kate Edgerton, who lectured to us at our Summer Meeting in Shrewsbury.

The program of monthly lectures has ranged widely across time and subject matter, offering I hope something to interest everyone. The Shrewsbury meeting was well attended, though mainly by people who had travelled far taking the opportunity to turn it into a weekend break.

There are a number of volumes that should be coming forward for our Special Publications series, the most advanced of which is Robin Eaglen's work on *The Abbey and Mint of Bury St Edmunds to 1279*. This is currently being edited and should appear next Summer.

Four people will be retiring from Council, and I thank them for the time and support they have given in this capacity – Donal Bateson, James Morton, John Roberts-Lewis and David Sealy. Thanks as usual to my fellow officers for the enthusiastic spirit and efficiency with which they have performed their duties. The separation of the Secretary's role between Charles Farthing and Elina Screen has, I think, been very successful. We are also very grateful to those who have worked quietly behind the scenes, whether organising our parties, such as that tonight, or manning the library on rota days. I thank them for their contributions, and I thank you all for your support in attending our meetings in such strength.

The President then delivered the second part of his address, 'Currency Under The Vikings. Part 2. The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw, c.895-954'.