

## PRESIDENT'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2006

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It has been another active and successful year for the Society. Our membership has risen again, establishing another record high. In August we launched a completely redesigned website, and we have appointed Richard Kelleher as our Website Officer to generate new content for the site. We are hoping soon, with the Royal Numismatic Society, to make available a Catalogue of the Library on a members only area of the site. We have also appointed a Publicity Officer, William MacKay, who has already been feeding material to the numismatic and general press, and who is redesigning our publicity leaflets.

As the Treasurer has reported, our finances are in a very healthy state. Since the subscription was raised in 2003, the balance on our General Fund has increased by 50% from £32,177 at the beginning of 2003 to £48,218 by 1 January 2006, providing us with a substantial cushion should hard times come. Notwithstanding this, Council has established a Finance Committee, to have oversight of our finances so that we may both maximise our income and commit to expenditure in an informed way. On its advice, we have established new banking arrangements with the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) offering better rates of interest than our previous bankers, although for the present their services will be retained since many standing orders are directed to the current account with them. Next year the Finance Committee will be looking at investment policy more generally and advising Council. The other area it has been looking at is income and expenditure, preparing a draft budget for 2007, from which it emerges that with a rising membership and rising interest rates, we can afford to expand our activities to some extent, while retaining a prudent and careful budget. In the New Year Council will consider what new initiatives should be supported. One possible project is digitising back numbers of the *Journal* to make them available on-line. If members have opinions about activities they would like to see us engage in, please let me know.

In October we published Dr Robin Eaglen's long-awaited book, *The Abbey and Mint of Bury St Edmunds to 1279*, as vol. 5 in the Society's Special Publications series. Much thought went into the layout and design of the book, which I hope does justice to the scholarship that went into its preparation. I would like to thank Dr Martin Allen for acting as

its editor on the Society's behalf. Copies of the book will be on display and can be bought after the meeting.

One highlight of the year was the very generous donation received from Mr Jeffrey North of £10,000 (plus £2,800 to be recovered under Gift Aid). He made no stipulations as to how the money should be used, but Council decided to put part of the income from it to establish a Book Prize in his honour. This will be awarded every second year to the book, published in the preceding three years or so, deemed to have made the best contribution to British Numismatics. The Council has this evening voted to award the first North Book Prize to Dr Martin Allen for his book *The Durham Mint*. The Prize will be awarded at a convenient meeting in the Spring.

Speaking of prizes, our premier award, the John Sanford Saltus Gold Medal for 2005 was presented to Peter Woodhead in May 2006.

In January you will be receiving a bumper volume of the *Journal*, extended to include a report of the Rogiet hoard by Edward Besly, and subsidised by a publication grant from the National Museum of Wales. At 480 pages, including 60 plates, it is the largest volume we have produced since 1908 (when the type size was larger, so there was in fact less content). Our congratulations to the Editors, David Symmons and Philip de Jersey, for managing this. We expect copies to be with members in January.

The programme of meetings was well balanced, by subject matter, period and approach, including three papers by scholars from outside our immediate discipline – Dr David Griffiths, an archaeologist talking on the finds from Meols, Dr John Maddicott, an historian talking about Anglo-Saxon bullion, and Janet Snowman, an art historian, talking about George III's coronation medals. In July our one-day Summer Meeting was held, for the first time, jointly with the RNS. We went to York, to the charming 14th-century Bedern Hall, where we were treated to six lectures on the theme of *Power, Politics and Coinage*. It was a well-attended, enjoyable event, with a program of a high academic standard. As in previous years, our thanks go out to our Director, Dr Kevin Clancy, for arranging these activities, with imagination, care and attention to detail – something we should not take for granted.

This year, there have been 49 elections (one of which is an institution), four deaths, 20 resignations and eight amovals. This evening we elected no less than 14 new members. This is, once again, a result of our presence at the COINEX fair in October, and I am very grateful to the organisers of COINEX (especially Rosemary Cooke) for giving us space and to those members who gave their time to represent the Society. As a result the total membership today stands at a record 636, compared with 619 last November.

|                              | <i>Anniv Meeting</i><br>2005 | <i>Anniv Meeting</i><br>2006 |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Honorary                     | 9                            | 7                            |
| Ordinary                     | 488                          | 507                          |
| Ordinary (students/under 21) | 6                            | 9                            |
| Institutions                 | 116                          | 113                          |
| Total                        | 619                          | 636                          |

We have lost two of our Honorary Members through death – both towering figures of their generation:-

Philip GRIERSON (elected 1947; honorary member since 1980), died 15 January 2006 at the age of 95. The doyen of medieval numismatics; simultaneously professor at Cambridge and Brussels and Honorary Adviser on Byzantine Coinage at Dumbarton Oakes in Washington; Honorary Keeper of Coins at the Fitzwilliam Museum for 56 years and Fellow of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge for 70 years; honoured by many learned societies around the world. In 1997 we presented him with a special award of the Sanford Saltus Medal for his contributions to British Numismatics, although he would have said that they were incidental to his main interests which were in Continental European and Byzantine coinages.

Robert [Andrew Glendinning] CARSON (elected honorary member 1979), died 24 March 2006 at the age of 87. Keeper of Coins and Medals at the British Museum 1978-83, and *the* leading Roman numismatist of his generation in Britain. A past-president of the RNS and of the International Numismatic Commission, he too received many international accolades. His main contribution to British Numismatics was in the Roman period, but an early work was a study of the Anglo-Saxon mint of Thetford (*NC* 1949).

We have also lost two ordinary members of long standing:

Andrew [William] MORRISON (elected 1963), died in January 2006 at the age of 80. He was an Ear, Nose and Throat surgeon at the London Hospital.

Gerald [George] SOMERVILLE (elected 1978), died in December 2005 at the age of 80. A Chartered Engineer, he had served on our Council from 1990-92.

No less than two of our members celebrated their 60th anniversary of election in May – Laurence Brown and the Hon. Robert Erskine – while in October Michael Anderson celebrated 50 years as a member. The Society is indeed fortunate to have such loyal and experienced members.

I should also mention that the Reception tonight after this meeting is sponsored by Stewart Lyon to mark both his 60th anniversary of membership which fell last November, when he was travelling in South America, and his 80th birthday last week. I hope that you will be able to stay to raise a glass to him.

Notable accomplishments by our members include the election as Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries by Barrie Cook, Harry Manville and Tuukka Talvio.

Five people will be retiring from Council, and I thank them for their time and support in this capacity. Two ex-Presidents, Graham Dyer and David Dykes, have given us the benefit of their long experience and wise advice, while Tim Crafter, as a research student, has represented the younger end of the spectrum of our members. Our greatest thanks, however, go to our two longest serving officers.

Charles Farthing became Secretary in 1999, on the retirement of Donal Bateson, and with David Dykes as the new President, together they had to feel their way. David has told me how much he depended on Charles during that period, and I too came to lean on him heavily for getting the procedures and paperwork right. Although initially a reluctant user of computers, he has harnessed their power to systematically reorganise our membership records. After six years as Secretary, he proposed that the job could sensibly be split between two roles: a Meetings Secretary and a Membership Secretary, and he kindly agreed to stay on for a further two years in the latter role while Elina Screen found her feet in the former. This is a useful reform of our administration, and I am particularly grateful to Charles for suggesting and implementing it.

The other Officer we are losing is Tony Holmes, who has held the post of Librarian, also for the RNS, for no less than 12 years, and he served on our Council for the two years prior to that. Here too there has been innovation, which Tony has managed quietly and effectively. The computerisation of the Library Catalogue has been a major undertaking, frustrated at times by changes in the casual staff that we have employed, as well as software going out of date, but it resulted in the production in 2003 of a CD with a catalogue of our joint holdings of books, a version of which we are about to put on-line as I mentioned earlier. Catalogues of our Periodicals and Sales Catalogues are also in preparation. The other major change that Tony introduced was the switch to supervised opening of the Library to members, following a number of thefts from our holdings. Tony organised a team of volunteers to man the Library on a rota basis, in order to provide regular access to members. We are enormously grateful to them and him.

Finally, I thank my other co-Officers and Council Members for their support over the past year. To my surprise this is the end of my third year as President – the time has passed quickly. There are still quite a number of things I would like to achieve for the Society; one of the themes that I intend to concentrate on is ensuring that our communication with members is as good as it can be, and that there is transparency in the way that the Society is run and perceived to be run. My experience has been that this is a thriving and happy organisation, and I would like to ensure that that feeling is shared by the membership at large.