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PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH NUMISMATIC SOCIETY 1946

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The Council has invited me to deliver a presidential address at this our forty-third anniversary meeting, and I gladly accept their invitation as it presents an opportunity of reviewing the work done in the past year, of telling you the plans for the future, and of indicating certain lines on which research can usefully proceed. Its circulation to Members in the course of the next few days will, I hope, serve to bring those who are unable to attend our meetings regularly more closely into touch with our activities.

In the past year our losses have been mercifully light, three members through death and one by resignation. But in the person of Sir Charles Oman numismatics have lost a great figure. Many of you will remember the extraordinary breadth of scholarship he displayed during his long tenure of office as President of our sister society. More still will remember him from his historical works and his book on the coinage of England, surely one of the most readable books on our subject. In recognition of his valuable services to numismatics Sir Charles Oman was elected an honorary member of this Society in 1943. Members will be glad to learn that the English portion of his extensive collection has passed to his son.

Mr. J. O. Manton, whose death at the age of 95 occurred also last year, has not of late been seen at our meetings, but he had been in the past an enthusiastic supporter of the Society of which he was a founder member.

In the person of Mr. T. M. Turner, who died at an early age, the Society has undoubtedly lost a member from whom great things might have been expected. At one time our Secretary, he was a real student, and his loss is one the Society can ill afford.

On the other side it is encouraging to welcome no less than forty-two new Members. With the end of the war and a return to a more normal way of life, many have come to realize the interest and pleasure to be derived from our study, and parallel with this increase in our own membership has been the development of local societies, a movement to which we extend our best wishes.

The Year’s Work

Seven ordinary meetings have been held in 1946, six devoted to papers and one to an exhibition of coins of the Scottish, Irish, and Anglo-Gallic series. Outstanding among the papers was one from Dr. Sutherland on “Anglo-Saxon Gold Coinage in the Light of the Cronstadt Hoard”. The hoard itself was acquired in toto for the Ashmolean Museum as a memorial to Sir Arthur Evans, and no more fitting memorial could have been chosen, for, at the time of his death, Sir
Arthur was actively engaged in a study of the very series in which it plays so important a part. The presence in the hoard of a number of pieces of undoubted Merovingian origin confirms our belief in the existence of extensive commercial relations between England and the north of France and the Low Countries at this time, but primary importance attaches to those pieces of undoubted Anglo-Saxon origin and to a number of coins whose origin is not certain, but which Dr. Sutherland gave excellent reasons for ascribing in many cases to this country. His tentative attribution, moreover, of one coin to an historically known king of Kent, Eadbald (616-40), is one that is entitled to the most serious consideration. The results of Dr. Sutherland’s researches in this series are to be published as a separate monograph by the Ashmolean Museum and will be keenly awaited by numismatists both in this country and abroad.

Another paper of importance in the Anglo-Saxon period was given by Mr. Alexander Parsons, who reviewed the Viking coinage of London between 872 and 886 and produced arguments for believing that it may have been on a scale substantially larger than has generally been believed. This paper will be published in due course in the journal.

Approaching a period equally difficult owing to the paucity of historical data I read a paper on the early penny coinage of the Kingdom of Kent, a subject on which further research is certainly needed.

In the post-conquest period Mr. Whitton has given a summary of the conclusions that he and I have reached following a detailed study of the coinage of Edward IV. A first instalment of this work will appear in the next number of the Journal. Mr. Winstanley described a “lost” groat of Henry VII, lost in the sense that, although it appeared in eighteenth-century publications, its recent whereabouts had been unknown and modern authors had consequently felt unable to include so curious a piece in their works. The coin presents an entirely new type for the groat, resembling a large-scale sovereign penny. Mr. Winstanley was able to show conclusively where it fitted into the series and to suggest that it was a pattern not finally adopted for the current coin. To the same author we are indebted for a further instalment of his detailed study of the coinage of Henry VII, on this occasion the rose-marked issues of the first coinage.

On a more general subject we were glad to receive a paper from Mr. Wallace discussing the reasons for the relative rarity of certain coins.

**Directions for Future Study**

You may like me to say a word about the state of our studies in English numismatics and to indicate certain directions in which those studies could be usefully developed.

Brooke’s *English Coins* is, of course, our standard work and is likely to remain so for some years to come. But since its publication fourteen years ago certain new material has come to light and a few, though very few, of the attributions made may require revision. I
have little doubt that many Members have notes of minor additions and corrections, and these should be collected so that, if a revised edition is produced, it may be as authoritative and complete as possible. Mr. Whitton has volunteered to be a collecting point for such material but, as his movements are uncertain, has asked that they should be addressed to him care of myself. I hope Members will co-operate in this. Ancient British coins were outside the scope of Brooke's book and the standard work on the subject is still Sir John Evans's. This, it need hardly be said, requires bringing up to date. A start was made by Dr. Brooke in a paper published in the *Numismatic Chronicle* and recently Mr. Derek Allen has carried the work further by a valuable paper in *Archaeologia*. These deal with two particular parts of the series, but much work remains to be done elsewhere in it, work on which I believe Mr. Allen is now engaged.

Among the early coins of this island none has in recent years received more attention than the Romano-British series. The names of Webb, Pearce, Mattingly, and Sutherland testify to the excellence of the work done, and their contributions from numismatics towards the history of the Dark Ages have proved most valuable.

Emerging from the Dark Ages we come upon the thrymsa and sceat coinage, a series that can only be studied in relation to the corresponding issues across the Channel. The work of Sir Arthur Evans and Dr. Sutherland has already been mentioned, and on the Continent valuable contributions to our knowledge have been made by M. Le Gentilhomme and Colonel Belaiew. It seems probable that the general lines of these issues have now been fairly established, but, in the case of the sceats especially, their attribution to districts is still far from certain. A valuable first step towards establishing this was the list of sceats, the find-spots of which are known, which was published by Dr. Sutherland in the *Numismatic Chronicle*. Members will help in this work if they will tell Dr. Sutherland of any further specimens that can definitely be associated with known find-spots.

The earliest penny coinage is a series round which there is still controversy. And it is likely to remain so, for the historical data is so sparse that there is little background against which to place many of these coins. This very lack of historical data, however, makes the series of particular importance. In a number of cases, for instance, our only knowledge of a Saxon king is derived from the coins he struck, and the series is therefore fully deserving of further study. To those who may feel that the rarity of the coins makes them impossible to collect and consequently to study I would say that this very rarity has its uses, for hardly a specimen passes through the sale-room without being illustrated; those in our national collection are well recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Catalogue*; and a remarkably fine series of coins of Offa from public and private collections alike is to be found illustrated in Mr. Lockett's paper in the *Numismatic Chronicle* on that reign.

In the later Saxon period there are still many gaps to fill. To name
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but two, the coinage of Alfred, a most fascinating series, and its Danish imitations. Do, for instance, the words ELI MO on a piece that Brooke describes as "somewhat unreasonably called an "Offering Penny"" stand, as on a coin of Pépin le Bref, for "Elimosina" or is "Eli" the moneyer? Again, the coinage of Eadward the Elder consisting of two quite different series usually known as the "common" and the "rare" types. Must we for all time restrict ourselves to Brooke’s comment that "an attempt to form a chronological sequence of Eadward’s types is doomed to failure"?

The Norman series has been covered in a most scholarly way by Brooke’s catalogue of the coins in the national collection. This is not to say that there are not many minor points still to be cleared up, but it may with confidence be asserted that the broad outline is well fixed.

In the early Plantagenet series a gap will be filled when the catalogue of the "Tealby-type" coins of Henry II in the British Museum, on which Mr. Derek Allen is now working, appears. Here again is a case where he would welcome any new varieties that may be known to Members.

In the later Plantagenet, Yorkist, and Lancastrian series the names of Lawrence, the Fox brothers, Brooke, Walters, and Whitton are sufficient guarantee that this has been well covered. Curiously the reign of Richard II has come in for little attention and a detailed study here might be expected to produce interesting results.

Our Secretary, Mr. Winstanley, has, as has been mentioned, for some time devoted considerable attention to the coinage of Henry VII, and Mr. Whitton and Mr. Parsons have studied Henry VIII. The views of the latter on the Wolsey coinage will appear in our next Journal and we shall await Mr. Whitton’s with interest on the reign as a whole.

Among the coins of Charles I Mr. Lockett and Mr. Allen have done interesting research, the results of which have appeared from time to time in our Journal. There should, however, still be material to be obtained on the provincial coinages of this reign, and probably much information lies in private papers of the seventeenth century, many of which are now finding their way into local museums and libraries.

That there is a growing interest in the milled coinage is apparent from the number and quality of the exhibits shown from time to time at our meetings. But little enough has appeared of late in the pages of our Journal. Undoubtedly many minor varieties remain to be placed on record, and I hope Members will from time to time collect these and make them available to us.

Time does not permit me to go into details of the other series with which we deal, the Scottish series so rich in beautiful and varied types; the Irish series often so ill struck and still in many ways almost a virgin field for research; tokens, a fitting subject for study by local societies who will have easy access to county records and parish registers; medals, a subject that has almost passed out of our Journal but
which should be encouraged to keep its place in our pages; the Anglo-Gallic series, another of those points where our studies join up with those of our colleagues on the Continent.

But incomplete though this review must of necessity be, I shall be more than content if it serves to indicate one or two directions in which future study may usefully lie. And I would particularly invite that the results of such studies be laid before our meetings, whether in the form of short notes or of full-length papers. At times it may even be of value to bring to the notice of the meetings problems which, after study, Members cannot satisfactorily solve, in the hope that a solution may thereby be forthcoming.

There is one great impediment to our studies to which I would draw special attention, and that is the inability of the Museum authorities to keep the Coin Room open after working hours. The blame for this does not attach to those authorities, for they have always been anxious to offer every facility to the student. Rather is it to be attributed to financial considerations which we must assume are governed by the Treasury. This is a matter of interest to students generally and not to numismatists alone. The fact remains, the disquieting fact, that whereas in Soviet Russia museums and libraries are open at hours to suit the working man and woman (the Lenin Library in fact never closes at all), in this country scant attention is as yet paid to their needs.

**Future Policy**

The war over, the Council has been considering its future policy, and I should like to outline its conclusions to you. In the first place you will, I feel sure, endorse our intention to work in the closest harmony with the Royal Numismatic Society. I had hoped that by this meeting it might be possible to announce that new premises had been secured, but so far this has not proved possible. The urgent need for them so that the library may be once again available to Members is fully appreciated. The difficulty, as you will realize, is the general shortage of accommodation as a result of bombing and the consequent high rents.

It is intended, as soon as paper restrictions are relaxed, to restore the *Journal* to its pre-war dimensions, and it is hoped in due course to publish it at half-yearly intervals. This year publication was delayed by factors beyond our control, but these should not recur, and it is hoped to issue the next number in the late spring of next year.

An arrangement has been made with the Royal Numismatic Society whereby Members may mutually attend the meetings of the other society. If any Members wish to avail themselves of this arrangement and do not already receive the notices of the Royal, the Secretary will be glad to send them if they will communicate with him. When we secure our new premises we hope to share them with the Royal and to amalgamate our libraries. This we feel will be of use to both Societies. Another arrangement of which we trust Members will approve will
result in offprints of papers on English numismatics that appear in the *Numismatic Chronicle* being made available at a small charge to our Members, on application to our Secretary.

The feeling has been expressed, and I think it is a reasonable one, that papers of too specialized a nature are not suitable for reading at the meetings in the form in which they will eventually be published. I would ask authors when delivering their papers to fill in the background, most of which will have been published elsewhere, so as to enable the average listener, who will not have studied the matter as closely as he, to appreciate the problem involved and to be in a position to contribute towards its solution. I would also specially invite Members, when they exhibit coins, to be prepared to say a few remarks about them and the circumstances in which they were struck.

**THE DISPERSAL AND RECORDING OF COLLECTIONS**

As we all know only too well, it is the fate of the greater part of private collections to be dispersed on the death of their owners. Such dispersals, if they take place without a proper record of the collection being made, inevitably result in the waste of much of the work expended on it, work in many cases of a lifetime. Earlier in the century printing costs were low enough to permit of the production of lavishly illustrated catalogues that constitute a permanent record; an outstanding example is the catalogue of the late Major Carlyon Britton's Saxon and Norman coins which even to-day no student can afford to be without. But times have changed and, although coin prices have risen, their rise has not been as great as the increased cost of plates. Consequently we see, from time to time, collections of prime importance to the student dispersed in every direction with only the most temptingly incomplete catalogue to give a clue as to their contents.

The Council has been considering how this Society can serve the interests of numismatics in this matter. Clearly it is no part of our function to provide plates to enhance the selling value of a collection, but we believe we could serve a useful purpose by arranging for extra plates to be produced, in selected cases, of coins whose commercial value does not warrant their illustration but whose value to the student is likely to prove important. Such plates would be issued only after the sale and would constitute in the Council's view a valuable appendix to the ordinary sale catalogue in the case of dispersals involving coins collected primarily for the purpose of study.

Whether such a venture will prove self-supporting remains to be seen, but the Council feel that they must establish a publications and research fund of £100 to £200 before they can embark upon it. And for subscriptions to this fund I appeal to the generosity of Members. Subscriptions may be sent to me at Wilton House, Hungerford, Berks., or to the Treasurer, and will be welcomed whether large or small.

It is not proposed to restrict this fund to the preparation of the plates I have mentioned. It will be available for any publication or
research work the Society wishes to sponsor, though it will not be the intention in the ordinary way to use it for the *Journal*. It may be found desirable to publish from time to time special monographs, whether on hoards or on some of the less accessible public collections; a bibliography of papers on English coins and another on hoards in which they occur, especially on the Continent, would be of value. These are just two possibilities for the future and I mention them to indicate the potential uses to which our proposed publications and research fund could profitably be put.

Before leaving the subject of dispersals I should like to mention the interest of museums, libraries, and other public bodies. Often it may be the desire of an owner that a body of this kind should acquire such of his collection as they may wish to select. Yet with the heavy rates of death duties now ruling it may not be possible for him to give effect to his wishes by means of a bequest. It may not be generally known that under the terms of the Finance Act 1930 the proceeds of objects bought by museums or similar public bodies, including the National Art Collections' Fund, are exempt from estate duty. Consequently if provision is made by will that such a body is to have the right to select from a collection at a price to be agreed, far greater effect can be given to the testator's wish than if the museum or body has to compete at auction. For the same outlay, and with no loss to the estate, the museum will be able to acquire one and a half times, twice, or, in the case of large estates, even three times as much as it could get in the sale-room. The estate, moreover, can be completely protected by stipulating that an impartial valuer shall ensure that the price paid is equivalent to the amount the estate might expect to receive in the open market, less the amount it would have to pay by way of estate duty. Should any member want further particulars on this subject, the National Art Collections' Fund will, I feel sure, be glad to supply them.

**The End of Silver Coinage**

I cannot conclude without referring, with sadness, to the impending loss of our silver coinage. For some 1,200 years England has had silver coins, often so much the envy of our neighbours that they have been subjected to that most invidious form of flattery, imitation. Of late our pride in them may have become somewhat alloyed, but it will be with real regret that numismatists will see their passing, and this regret will be accentuated by the fact that for technical reasons, the validity of which I am not competent to judge, we are to have inflicted on us a cupro-nickel coinage, which even its most optimistic supporters admit is liable to discolour and wear badly. Some slight comfort may be gained from the fact that the Crown is still to be issued on suitable occasions.

I take this opportunity to place on record my warm appreciation of the support I have consistently received from the Council and of thanking the officers, in particular our Secretary, Mr. Winstanley, and
Mr. Whitton who has been our Editor, for their unstinted efforts on behalf of the Society. Mr. Wrightson, having very generously carried on as Treasurer through the difficult war years, has asked in view of his increasing commitments to be relieved of this office, and we welcome in his place Mr. Elmore Jones.

You will notice that in the list of Officers recommended by the Council for your consideration at this meeting the post of Librarian has been left unfilled. When we secure new premises there will be important work to be done in getting the library back on to the shelves, in attending to deferred bindings, and in listing those books of which we stand in need. I would ask any Member who would be prepared to undertake this work, which should incidentally prove of considerable interest, to let the Secretary know, as it is desirable that this appointment should be filled.

It only remains for me to tell you of our preliminary plans for the forthcoming session. In January Mr. Derek Allen will read a paper on "The Tealby Coinage of Henry II. How was it organized and financed?" Later we hope to have papers from Mr. Thompson on Continental imitations of the ryals of Edward IV, and from Mr. Whitton on the coinage of Henry VIII. Mr. Allen will also give us a short paper on some Continental coins of the type of the English groat, and I plan a short one on Anglo-Saxon influence on certain Continental issues. At least one evening should be devoted to exhibitions and short notes, but this will still leave us with one or two vacancies for which the Secretary will be glad to receive offers either of full-length or shorter papers.