CHARLES WILSON PECK, F.S.A., F.P.S.

On 24 April 1968 after a brief illness Charles Wilson Peck died in hospital at Tooting. He had been a member of the British Numismatic Society since 1947, and was its President from 1964 until 1966. Few if any of the members have made so fundamental a contribution to our knowledge and more especially understanding of one major series, and his English Copper, Tin and Bronze Coins in the British Museum 1658–1958 (London, 1960) more than lives up to the too often hackneyed tag monumentum aere perennius. It was a volume which set, and still sets, entirely new standards where the study of milled coins is concerned, and even among British Museum catalogues it can boast one proud and indeed unique distinction. Within three years a larger than usual edition was exhausted, and the demand for a reprint too loud and too broadly based to be ignored. It is typical of the man that there could be no question of a second printing with asterisks to send the reader to a couple of pages of addenda and corrigenda. Although in the event the number of corrections was minute, each page of the second edition (London, 1964) was revised with the same meticulous attention to detail that had characterized the preparation of the original manuscript. In this connection it may still not be generally known that the whole of the first edition was set up by the compositors of the Oxford University Press from a manuscript and not a typescript. This “fair copy” with its small, neat but entirely legible hand in point of fact proved considerably easier to set than most products of a machine, the printers receiving immediate and precise indication of each and every change of typeface, type-size and indentation, while the astonishing consistency of the handwriting meant that the costing of the volume was really no more difficult than if the readers at the press had been confronted with a more conventional typescript. The bill for corrections in fact was nominal, and avoided of course by the process were all those subtle, intermediate errors inherent in the intervention of even the most skilled of copy-typists, and, provided only that the manuscript is still in existence, one hopes that the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum will persist with a suggestion that found favour in Dr. Walker’s heyday, namely that the manuscript should be bound for the delectation if not indeed stupefaction of some future generation of numismatists.

Essentially Peck was a shy man, though by no means averse to intimacy with those whom he felt shared to some degree his interests and standards. On one occasion, for example, he and his wife offered hospitality to a Dublin colleague fortunately still with us, and for third parties it was quite delightful to see how the two men with completely different backgrounds and numismatic interests warmed to each other. On such occasions there might be the odd revealing glimpse of the formation of an instinctive scholar dedicated as few laymen to the quest for absolute truth. In particular it soon became clear to the outsider that his father had influenced decisively his collecting tastes as well as his professional skills, and in both cases with the most benign consequences. He was an only child, the son of Thomas Whitmore Peck and his wife Louisa Marsh, and was born, on 24 February 1901, at Stechford in Warwickshire which was then very much on the outskirts of Birmingham. His father was the Chief Pharmacist at Birmingham’s General Hospital, and found relaxation in philately and in research into the career of William Withering, the eighteenth-century English chemist who was one of the first to explore the pharmaceutical properties of digitalis. This research bore fruit in a still standard biography in which his collaborator was Professor K. D. Wilkinson. The young Peck received his education at the well-known King Edward VI High School, and then began his professional training under his father. The Great War was still raging, and in August 1918 he had to interrupt his studies, and trained as a wireless operator for the hard-pressed Merchant Navy. A typical touch is that he obtained a first-class certificate in radiotelegraphy, though wireless was not to prove an abiding interest. Service at sea followed, and as Second Radio Officer aboard the S.S. Langorse he was as far afield as the Mediterranean and Canada.

He maintained his interest in the sea, and a very fine collection of photographs of the ships of this and to some extent later eras has been presented by his widow to the Photographic Records Committee of the Society for Nautical Research and is in process of incorporation in the archives of the National Maritime Museum. There could be no better tribute to his quite extraordinary skill as a photographer, and the quality of his meticulously labelled negatives and prints is such as to add enormously to their value as a record of the age of the passing of the...
Navy and took up again his professional studies, still under the direction of his father. In October 1920 he passed the assistants’ examination of Apothecaries’ Hall, and in July 1922 the qualifying examination proper. Leaving Birmingham he took up an appointment at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital as assistant to the distinguished J. Langford Moore. Further distinctions followed fast, the major qualification in July 1924, with a certificate of honour for chemistry and physics, and in June 1925 the so-called “Pereira Medal”, the coveted silver medal of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. It was a triumph without precedent, being the first time that the award had gone to one trained wholly in voluntary hospital service, and the achievement was the more remarkable when we consider that he was still only twenty-four years of age and was competing against the cream of the great teaching-hospitals.

On 23 June 1928 Peck was appointed Pharmacist to St. Thomas’s Hospital, and Lecturer in Pharmacy and Materia Medica in the hospital’s medical school. It was the first time that one so young had been appointed to the position, and he held it with distinction and real devotion until his retirement on 31 March 1963. It will be seen, then, that numismatics, a very early love, was only one facet of an extremely active professional career. The editorship of the 1931, 1935, 1941 and (with J. B. Harman) 1953 editions of the St. Thomas’ Hospital Pharmacopoeia alone would constitute a very considerable achievement. Already he was laying the foundations, though, of a choice collection of coins, and after an initial flirtation with the Roman silver series he turned increasingly to the English regal copper, a subject too often despised which for him represented a challenge. Birmingham-bred he found himself more and more fascinated by the problems presented by the products of the Soho Mint under Boulton, and one may feel that nothing in his numismatic researches was to give him a greater feeling of real achievement than his recognition of the essential problem of the restrikes and its definitive solution. The point that must be made here, though, is that it was many years before he felt able to present the results of his investigation. Mere brilliance never dazzled Peck, and he proved a singular judge of the most plausible superficiality. His closest friends will not easily forget his comments on a would-be overnight master of the Jacobean coinages in the precious metals who presumed to use him the phrase “when we come to put pen to paper” of the first of many promised chefs-d’œuvre not one of which, as it happens, was to have materialized by the time of Peck’s death.

On 27 June 1933 he married a friend from childhood Emma Louise Nisbett, only daughter of Lt. Col. William Gore Nisbett of the 92nd Punjabi Regiment and his wife Emma Mary Wright. The daughter of an Indian Army officer and grand-daughter of a general might seem an improbable match for the essentially reserved and studious Peck, and the more so when his bride’s background was as uncompromisingly Scots as his was staidly English. The marriage, however, was a singularly happy one, and colleagues fortunate enough to enjoy the hospitality of their quite delightfully comfortable home had now insight into how it was that conditions were so ideal for serious pursuit of his leisure interests. After three years or so at the house in Coombe Lane, West Wimbledon, where he had lived with his mother before his marriage, the family moved to a more commodious residence in Wimbledon proper, and characteristically he never moved house again. The war years with a young family—they had a daughter and a son both now married and themselves parents—were not easy for a conscientious professional man tied to London, and his deep sense of loyalty to the old St. Thomas’s meant that the exceptionally heavy damage there from the air-raids was a wound as well as a source of continual strain. It was about this time, though, that we may perhaps detect the first stirrings of the idea that he might himself be able to make some serious contribution to the study of the English regal coinage in the base metals. Already becoming intimate with the London dealers, and it is impossible not to mention here the name of the late Albert Baldwin, he was at once broadening and deepening his knowledge of the material, while his own cabinet was beginning to be without peer where his chosen series was concerned. He was always the first to admit, too, how fortunate he was to have gained the confidence of the Very Rev. Edgar Rogers, F.S.A., Dean of Bocking, who was in the way of becoming something of a numismatic recluse—he had parted from the British Numismatic Society during the membership crisis of the early 1930s—but who was a living if mildly eccentric and limited link with the almost legendary Weightman.

The immediate post-war years may be considered decisive for the numismatist in Peck. The British Museum collections were back in London and so once more available for study, and three successive Keepers of Coins and Medals, by no means coincidentally all three Fellows both of the British Academy and of the Society of Antiquaries of London, recognized in Peck a brother scholar albeit one who was treading paths completely unfamiliar and even incomprehensible. Seen in retrospect those were halcyon days, and the Coin Room, though housed
in cramped and highly inconvenient quarters hastily adapted from one of the old official residences, still managed to be open without formality during the lunch-hour—later Peck was to observe to an interviewer that the catalogue could never have been undertaken if he had not been able to slip up to the Museum in the middle of the day. Successfully re-introduced by Dr. John Allan the pre-war “shift-system”, which still gave the staff at least a whole hour for lunch, was working very smoothly, and one of the pleasures of “early duty” was the opportunity it gave for personal contact with Peck who came in frequently for a few minutes about half-past twelve. It was now that he began to contemplate the preparation of a major work on the English regal copper, tin and bronze, and to marshal his resources to this end. In 1946 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society, his election to our own society following in the January of the ensuing year. In May 1947 he exhibited to the “British” for the first time, and, pleasing touch of pièceas when we recall his father’s interests, he showed a Wyon medal with philatelic associations. It was followed up in May 1948 by the exhibition of a forgery of a 1566 Scottish ryal! Nor did a slight review in the 1948 Journal give any real inkling of what was to come, but his regular attendance at the meetings was noted and appreciated, and at the Anniversary Meeting of 1948 he was elected to the Council. Except for two years in the 1950s when ineligible for re-election he was to serve on the Council—after 1966 as a much-respected Vice-President—until his death, and few attended with such self-effacing but effective assiduity. He exhibited, though, only very rarely, and generally eschewed his chosen series, a group of six sceattas in February 1952 and contrasted specimens of the coinages of 1904 and 1951 in May of the same year representing the total of his contribution from that decade.

The 1954 Journal, however, gave an earnest of what had been maturing for years with his major paper “The Royal Farthing Tokens of James I”, a trial-run for one section of the eventual corpus, and it was plain for all to see that a giant had arrived in our midst. The idea that his projected volume should take the form of a British Museum Catalogue had already taken root—and in making this decision Dr. John Walker would not allow himself to be deflected by an already unhappy experience in the matter of Sutton Hoo—and those of us who gave a new welcome to Peck on his visits to the Coin Room found a new readiness to discuss outstanding problems. More than one was made to feel that we might ourselves have something to contribute, the perfectionist in Peck—and he was a perfectionist—making him patently anxious that the volume should have no avoidable defects. It did not matter if an idea was not his if it advanced in any way the cause of truth, and it was almost embarrassing to have a master sitting as it were at the feet of his pupils and so scrupulous in his acknowledgement of such trifling contributions as they were able to make on the basis of experience in other disciplines. The decision finally taken that the book should be a “BMC” relieved Peck from anxiety that standards of production might have to be sacrificed to render it a commercial proposition—ironically the volume was in the event to be a source of profit to the Trustees—and he threw himself into the preparation of a worthy manuscript. His visits to the Coin Room became more frequent and more protracted, and for a period all other interests appeared to have been subordinated to the one end. A note “Three Rare Soho Pieces” in the 1957 Journal was a bare record, dictated by courtesy, of a critical exhibit on behalf of the Birmingham Museum, while in the next number there appeared a definitive paper “The Pattern Halfpennies and Farthings of Anne” which represented still another highly successful experiment in techniques, and cleared the way for one of the most applauded sections of the by now imminent corpus.

The whole of the year 1959, with portions of 1958 and 1960, was given up to the correction of the proofs of the text and plates. Peck, of course, knew exactly what he wanted, and a characteristic touch was a visit to the Oxford University Press. In the case of a lesser scholar such insistence on personal contact might have aroused some resentment, but his quick recognition and open admiration of craftsmanship in others made him new friends both at Oxford and at the Cotswold Collotype Company. Just as the compositors at the former appreciated at once the labour that lay behind so consistent a manuscript, so the highly skilled photographic staff at the latter could not fail to be impressed by the superb quality of the enlarged details taken by Peck himself. As each batch of proofs arrived, Peck, the Keeper and the present writer would scrutinize them each from his own viewpoint, and then meet at the Department of Coins and Medals to produce an agreed recension. Very often this meeting would be timed so that the London representative of the Press came in at the end to take back to Oxford both the corrected proofs and minute verbal instructions on the often extremely subtle corrections needed for the printed page to convey exactly what the author intended. For the obituarist it remains a source of pride that Peck should have asked that he assist with the proofs, and no less happy are memories of how about noon these often arduous sessions would break up
with Mr. Keep making his way back to Amen Court, Dr. Walker going to a small restaurant in Soho, and Peck and the writer adjourning to a particular public house in High Holborn for the really very frugal and even abstemious repast which went by the name of a "liquid lunch".

The volume appeared in 1960, and reviews such as those from the pen of the late Albert Baldwin in the 1960 Journal and of Mr. P. J. Seaby in the 1964 Numismatic Chronicle are evidence for posterity of what his contemporaries made of a tome which for once disproved the Callimachan stricture μέγα βιλβίον μέγα κακύρ. Recognition from the Royal Numismatic Society was unusually prompt, and in June Peck received the medal instituted by Sir John Evans seventy-seven years before. In his extraordinarily interesting reply to the President, by a happy chance Mr. C. E. Blunt, Peck remarked that work in the English series had not been so honoured since G. C. Brooke, and it is a wry reflection that once again our own society has allowed to go to the grave one who had more than merited the Sanford Saltus, and whose papers published in our Journal could be thought to have more than met the letter of the law. In 1960 appeared the meticulous two-page note "English Copper, Tin and Bronze Coins in the British Museum: Addenda and Corrigenda", and the very next year a highly important if very technical full-length paper entitled "Photography of Coins in Monochrome and Colour on 35 mm. Film".

What distressed his numismatic friends was that his interest in coins appeared to be flagging, and the time is not yet ripe for all to be said that might be on this subject. Some factors are well-known, and we may instance the mad upward spiralling of prices which followed the publication of his magnum opus. Not only was it impossible for him to continue to collect, but it was no longer safe for him to retain his now priceless collection in his own house. It was this inability to study that led him to put on the market for the benefit of others those portions of his collection which he felt were academically the least rewarding and also the most popular the other side of the Atlantic. The major London dealers were invited to put in their bids, and there can be no doubt that there was waspish disappointment in certain quarters. On one visit to London the writer's attention was drawn gleefully by one "old friend" of Peck's in the trade to an admittedly tasteless piece of advertising by an American dealer, and there were those who pretended to deplore the export of the scientifically trivial 1954 penny who had evinced no interest in the piece while it was still in the market. Fortunately for numismatics in this country Peck was persuaded that it was his duty to accept the presidency of our Society, and his two presidential addresses repay reading with the closest attention. Posterity should have no difficulty in naming those on whose shoulders Peck fairly laid the blame for the malaise afflicting the English series as a whole.

On 31 March 1963 he laid down his appointment at St. Thomas's. That summer the present writer moved to Ireland and so missed less than he might have done what had been fairly regular meetings on the evening train from Waterloo which remain a happy memory. Peck was not a malicious man, and certainly not uncharitable, but his comments on the contemporary numismatic scene were spiced with some mildly Rabelaisian asides which of their nature cannot be passed down in the pages of this Journal. Dr. Walker's illness and death still further weakened the links which bound him to their common discipline, and attempts by other friends to interest him in a new series were unsuccessful. It is not a coincidence, one feels, that he could not be persuaded to serve for a fourth term on the council of the Royal Numismatic Society and, while very sensible of the distinction of being elected in 1961 a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, he did not attend there with sufficient frequency to get to know the museum curators who were among the warmest admirers of his work. One still recalls, though, with pleasure the welcome given him when he did come as a guest to one of the dining-clubs. The truth was, however, that his retirement was being dominated by another of his early loves—and one that had contributed to his expertise as a numismatist. Before the war he had been very interested in microphotography, and now the study of pond-life claimed more and more of his attention. At the time of his death he was working on a paper, to be illustrated by superb cine sequences based on his own microphotographs, which one understands would have vindicated his election on 11 April 1967 to that pleasantly exclusive body known as the Quekett Microscopical Club.

It would be a mistake, though, to suppose that Peck's last years witnessed anything like a complete break with the numismatic world. He was consulted from time to time by the more serious class of student, and pestered far too frequently by those with no claim whatever on his time or attention. If he could not be prevailed upon to contribute to the pages of the Journal any major paper, he still showed himself capable of turning out an incisive review, as in the 1963 number, and in 1966 he was happy to exhibit to our society a pair of eighteenth-century forgers' moulds on behalf of the Birmingham Museum. There were those of us who still hoped that he could be prevailed upon one day to apply his
singular talents to some new series— the writer hoped it might even be the eighteenth-century copper coinage of Ireland—and that Peck's eye and hand had not lost anything of their old deftness is well shown by the last note from his pen which appears in this very number of the Journal. There is an Irish tag which may well be slightly altered to fit the present case, and which tells of how the track of the pen endures when the scribe is no more, and it may serve as an epitaph for one who already can be seen to have exerted a decisive influence on the shaping in this century of the English numismatic tradition:—

*Maireann lorg an phinn ach ni mhairreann an té a chum.*

**M. D.**

**SIR FRANK MERRY STENTON**

It would be presumptuous on the part of a numismatist to attempt to make an assessment of the work of a man who has been described as 'the greatest historian since Maitland', but the death of Sir Frank Stenton on September 15th 1967 at the age of 87 cannot be allowed to pass without something being said in this Journal of his services to numismatics.

From childhood he had been a collector and his varied interests are reflected in an entry for May 17 1893, 'my thirteenth birthday', in the diary he kept for that year. His mother gave him a 'Garter' half-guinea; 'Frank' a 'bank note for 2d£'; his half-sister 'a splendid Spanish coin and a piece of oak from the historical oak-tree in Norwood Park'; a Mrs. Binns four silver coins; and a Miss Hartcup 'a number of foreign coins, a piece of lapis lazuli, a piece of stone from the palace of Caesar at Rome, another from the baths of Caracalla at Rome and a piece of wood from a tree growing near the grave of the poet Grey (*sie*). Elsewhere he is found showing 'the museum' to friends.

Early in his career he appreciated the value of coins as an aid to the teaching of history, but it was not until 1946, when Reading University placed at his disposal a sum of money for the purpose of forming a small teaching collection for the University, that the cabinet attained importance. This was a move that brought them and us, as numismatists, a rich reward and its timing was peculiarly fortunate, for the money was available before the sharp rise in prices that has taken place in recent years. As a result, Sir Frank was able to get together a series of Anglo-Saxon coins, each one of which is carefully selected either for its historical importance, its beauty, or for some significant point in the legend or in the moneyer's name. That the collection now contains coins of Offa and of Cynethryth, his queen, is alone indicative of its importance and it is gratifying to learn that the Committee for the *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* plans to publish it in their series.

The success of this series, of which eight volumes have appeared under the aegis of the British Academy, with a companion volume published by the British Museum, is largely due to Sir Frank's personal interest in it. It was he who introduced the project to the British Academy and from the inception until his death he was chairman of the Academy Committee that organized it. Without his constant support and encouragement it is unlikely that the project would ever have been realised and it is certain that it would not have achieved what it has.

Sir Frank's other service to Anglo-Saxon numismatics was in bringing it to the notice of historians, who at times had tended to neglect it, and in making numismatists understand that, if they wished to be taken seriously by historians, they must impose on themselves the same strict disciplines that historians applied. In his great work, *Anglo-Saxon England*, use is made of the evidence of coins, especially at times when documentary evidence is scanty, or even completely lacking, and in the Bibliography at the end a section under 'Sources of incidental information' is devoted to 'Coins'.

In 1958 he addressed this Society on 'The Anglo-Saxon Coinage and Historians', a stimulating talk which will be vividly remembered by those fortunate enough to have been present and of which he allowed a recording to be made. In the following year he was elected an Honorary Member in recognition of his services to our subject.

If I may be allowed to do so, I would like to end on a personal note by trying to say something of the man. Slight in build, the quickness of his movements reflected the alertness of his mind. His manner was quiet and his manners, even when expressing disagreement, were of extreme courtesy. But the meaning would be clear, and he was uncompromising when he thought that standards were liable to be sacrificed to expediency or that historical truth was at stake. Few were more generous with their knowledge and few had more of it to offer. Working under him on the *Sylloge* Committee, I was constantly struck by how much he achieved with seemingly so little effort; and, when discussing a problem with him, one had to be
constant on the alert not to miss a point of importance put forward in a gentle, almost diffident, manner. Those who were privileged to enjoy his friendship will always treasure the remembrance of it.

C. E. B.

ALBERT HENRY BALDWIN

ALBERT HENRY BALDWIN, whose death took place on 14 November 1967 at the age of 55, was a much respected member of the family firm of numismatists. Born at Eltham (then Kent) on 25 February 1912, he was the son of Percy Joseph Dunn Baldwin, the eldest of three brothers who carried on and built up the business that had been started by their father. Albert Baldwin was educated at St. Olave's and St. Saviour's Grammar School, Southwark and joined the family firm in 1936. Elected a member of the British Numismatic Society in 1938, he always took a keen interest in its work and was a regular attendant at its meetings, even in the last years of his life when ill-health had prompted his doctors to urge him to take things easier. But he was one of those men who have to live life to the full and it was all that his friends and colleagues could do to make him give up anything to which he himself attached importance.

That he contributed little to the Society's Journal is hardly surprising, because, as time went on, the management of the business fell increasingly on his shoulders and this can have left him little leisure for research. Where he made his great contribution to numismatics was in the help and encouragement he gave to others, and in particular to young collectors and students. In the post-war years there gradually developed a regular gathering on Saturday mornings, first in the charming Adam building in Robert Street, Adelphi, overlooking the Thames, and more recently in the gaunt building that stands on the site of the former Adelphi Terrace. At these gatherings, which came to be known informally as 'The Saturday Morning Club', friends met to discuss problems of mutual interest, to consult the firm's library, to look at (and even rarely to buy) coins. Rarely, because it was an unwritten rule of 'the club' that nobody was expected to buy on a Saturday—indeed it was rather a matter of surprise if anyone tried to do so.

The writer is indebted to Albert Baldwin for many kindnesses. He will be among many who will mourn him as a good and loyal friend, but there will be even more who will remember him as a man who carried on the best traditions of coin-dealing that have always been associated with his firm.

C. E. B.