PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF SOME DISTINGUISHED NUMISMATISTS OF A PREVIOUS GENERATION

A talk given by C. E. BLUNT to the British Numismatic Society, May 1973

At a meeting of this Society a year or two ago, the Director asked me if I could tell members anything about W. J. Andrew personally. I had to confess that, by the time I came into numismatics, Andrew was on his way out and that in fact I never met him. But his question set me thinking that perhaps there were numismatists that I had known who might be little more than names to many people today, and that it might possibly be of interest if I made an attempt to clothe the bare bones of the names with some flesh and blood. The Director approved the idea and it has given me much pleasure to cast my mind back over the fifty years that I have been in numismatics and in so doing to revive many happy memories of them. This will be a personal—at times perhaps gossipy—account and I shall only in passing attempt assessments of the numismatic achievements of those of whom I speak. If I succeed in making those who are only names come in part to life, my purpose will have been achieved.1

First and foremost I want to speak of the man whose numismatic disciple I was, who first introduced me to the subject and to whom I am so deeply indebted, as will appear. John Shirley Shirley-Fox was, I believe, born in Wiltshire as John Shirley Fox and later assumed Shirley as an additional surname.2 The family went to live in Paris when he was eleven and this fact at once provided a bond between us as I had done the same thing at the age of eight. His brother, Harry Earle Fox, a few years his senior, was able to supplement his pocket money by taking a job for Thomas Cook selling entrance tickets at the great exhibition of 1878 that was then taking place in Paris. The job, in which Shirley helped, at times involved quite a lot of money—the two boys returning occasionally with as much as £200 in cash. In those days there was an international currency between a number of European countries and even America—England and Germany being the odd men out—and the five-franc pieces of France, Belgium, and Switzerland—large silver coins comparable to our crown pieces—circulated alongside five-peseta pieces from Spain, five-lira pieces from Italy and the Papal States, and even dollars from Peru, Chile, and Mexico. It was this mixture of currency passing through their hands that first aroused the interest of the two boys in numismatics and they added to their small collection by purchases from the various international couriers who thronged the Exhibition.

1 The Numismatic Chronicle does not publish obituary notices as such but reference is made in the annual Presidential addresses to the deaths that have occurred in the preceding year and these include a brief tribute to the more distinguished Fellows. The British Numismatic Journal used similarly not to publish obituary notices but started the practice in vol. xxiii (1938–41) on the death of its first president, Major Carlyon-Britton, and has since carried it on for its more distinguished members. References to both publications have been added as footnotes to this paper; the references to NC are to the Proceedings.

Shirley stayed on in Paris when his father was recalled to England—I rather think the father worked for Thomas Cook—and studied art there, which he was to make his profession. His brother became a journalist and, as a reporter in Athens, collected Greek copper coins. The best of the silver was even in those days beyond his means, but the no less interesting copper was much neglected and he was able to build a significant collection in this series which he bequeathed to the British Museum. Alas, I never knew him. I would have liked to have done so for he was clearly a distinguished scholar both in the Greek and the English series, but by the time I first met Shirley his brother had had a breakdown from which he never recovered. He spent the last years of his life at Woolhampton, a little village on the Bath Road where he was much loved by the children whom he taught about birds, flowers, and fishes. He died at Devizes at the age of fifty-seven.¹

The Fox brothers made a complementary team. Harry could interpret the documents; Shirley’s artistic eye caught the finer points of style on the coins. The results of their team-work are displayed in their masterly study of the coinage of Edward I and II which even now, after some sixty years, still in its essentials holds good. Shirley was a keen fisherman. He was good with his hands and tied his own flies—something which, as dry fly fishermen know, requires both skill and patience. This same technical proficiency prompted him to see whether he could engrave coins that might deceive even an expert. Fortunately he kept his products apart from his real collection and he was careful to retain them. There were only three or four. The most successful was a London penny of Henry IV’s heavy coinage, a well-known rarity. On one or two of these there was an object on the king’s breast that had been the subject of some controversy. Walters, the leading authority on Henry IV, had maintained that it was a star and, as if to satisfy him, Shirley engraved on his creation an object which could be nothing else than a star—and he posted it to Walters for his inspection. Style and lettering were of course impeccable and Walters told me later that the coin would have completely taken him in—had Shirley not made the mistake of not sending it by registered post.

Shirley-Fox became a portrait painter and when I first met him, about 1919, was living in a charming eighteenth-century house in Marlborough. He had married another artist, whose maiden name was Ada Holland, and you will find her name cropping up in the annals of the Chelsea circle at the turn of the century. Of the two she was generally judged to be the better artist and it was characteristic of her that, on marrying, she gave up painting professionally on the grounds that there was not room for two artists in one family, though she continued her interest in it by encouraging many boys at the school at Marlborough. Mrs. Shirley-Fox owned Rosetti Studios, a block in Flood Street, Chelsea, and, when one of the studios chanced to become vacant, they sometimes occupied it temporarily and had a little London season. After leaving Marlborough, they went to live in Bath, first in Lansdown Crescent with a splendid view over the town, and then in Brock Street where, in 1939 Shirley died. His wife, who had always been delicate, died from a heart attack when a fire bomb landed near their house in the Baedeker raid on Bath in, was it, 1941?

How can I give a picture of Shirley-Fox the man? He was wiry in build with, even when I first knew him, greying hair. Both he and his wife were devoted to young people and it was a sadness that they never had children of their own—or indeed any close

relations on the Fox side for his only brother was a bachelor and I never heard him talk of any other near relatives. But they made up for the lack by the gift of friendship, something that was rather charmingly illustrated by a fine black cloth that covered a table round which one sat looking at coins or some of the many objects that one or other of them had collected. Acceptance as a friend produced an invitation to write one’s name on it with a piece of tailor’s chalk. Next time one came it would have been embroidered.

Neither of the Fox brothers was well off, and collecting coins—and they shared between them their English collection—was an arduous affair, often demanding real sacrifices when a chance came that simply could not be missed. It came as a complete—and need I say no less welcome—surprise to find that Shirley had left me the bulk of his coin collection in his will—for he had never as much as given me a hint of his intention to do so.

So you will understand why I feel myself so much indebted to him—for his friendship, for introducing me to a subject in which I have found so much pleasure and interest and, finally, by sealing that friendship by leaving me his collection.

Shirley-Fox introduced me to his numismatic friends. There was F. A. Walters¹—Freddie Walters to his contemporaries—whose interests lay, like those of the Fox brothers, primarily in the Plantagenet to Tudor series. It was the three of us who, during one of Shirley-Foxes’ little seasons’ in London, started the habit of dining together after the meetings, a habit that grew until, today, it may almost be called a significant part of meeting days. Walters was a Roman Catholic and an architect and is chiefly remembered in architectural circles today for his work at Buckfast Abbey, where you may see portrayed in a stained glass window that curiously domed head. He lived at Dover but had an office in Great Ormond Street where he could sleep and he was always ready to bring up to London anything about which one inquired. I never went to see him in Dover, but someone who did so told me that, as they walked from the station, Walters said to him, rather diffidently, ‘I think perhaps I ought to tell you that it is generally understood in my family that I never spend more than a shilling on a coin’. When, in 1913, he found the need to raise some money and had to sell his collection, his family must indeed have been surprised. Prices realized were in fact higher than they had ever been for Plantagenet coins, and so pleased was Walters with the cheque that he received from Sotheby’s that in next to no time he started buying back some of his more treasured pieces. The sale that took place seventeen years later, after his death, showed that he had got together a collection hardly less good than the one he had originally sold, but prices were affected by the slump of 1930. Walters had the habit of cleaning his coins with ammonia—a habit rather to be deplored—and when they emerged from their bath bright and shiny he would put them out on his window sill in Great Ormond Street to get coloured by the London fog.

H. W. Morrieson² was another friend. A retired gunner colonel he lived (I imagine as a widower) in a house in Beaufort Gardens, the dining-room of which was filled with large pieces of oak furniture—of whose alleged Jacobean origin I was always—possibly quite wrongly—rather suspicious. Anyhow it looked strangely out of place in a Victorian London house. I never knew him well—his interests lay more in the Stuart field than in the Plantagenet which was where mine then lay—but as his sale in

¹ NC 1932, p. 6. ² NC 1933, p. 23.
1933 showed, he was of the school that sought to build up a general collection of coins of these islands and he had in fact many important pieces outside his specialized field. A feature of the little study at the back of the house that was his coin room was a large piece of Swedish plate money standing on the chimney-piece.

Helen Farquhar—another friend—and what a remarkable lady—one of the very few of her sex at that time who was an authority on the subject and the only lady to whom the British Numismatic Society has ever given its medal. She came of the banking family of Farquhar and acted as hostess to her brother at his house in Belgrave Square. By the time I knew her she was living in Chesham Place. She had always been delicate and, I suspect, must have been advised that she ought not to marry. It is difficult otherwise to account for a person of her temperament and of so great charm remaining single. In the event she lived to the age of ninety-three, but in the latter years of her life she was able to go out but little. The last time I saw her, shortly before her death, she was as usual lying on a chaise longue in her drawing-room, surrounded by her collection of Jacobite relics of which she was justly proud. She said to me ‘The trouble with me, Mr. Blunt’—though she was old enough to be my mother, her generation hardly ventured on Christian names outside the family circle—‘the trouble with me is that I don’t know how to die.’

L. A. Lawrence was of course another close friend and colleague of Shirley-Fox’s. In some ways, by the time I knew him, a rather pathetic figure, for he was an aural surgeon and had himself become deaf—and finally virtually stone deaf. But his deafness may have had its compensations in that it insulated him from much that went around him and enabled him to concentrate on his numismatic work. He had already, when I first knew him, retired professionally and become effectively an honorary assistant keeper in the Department of Coins at the British Museum. Brooke gracefully acknowledged his debt to Lawrence by dedicating to him his classic work English Coins. Lawrence was a bit of a magpie. He collected all sorts of things, not always very critically; he could never resist picking up any curiosity that intrigued him. In coins, however, his specialized knowledge less often led him astray, though even here, when he strayed outside his own series, he did occasionally put a foot wrong.

He lived for all the time I knew him at 44 Belsize Square in Hampstead. He was a sincere practising Jew, born in the U.S.A. and living there until he was fourteen, and he had inherited an interest in a family business in New York called, I think, Lawrence & Cohen that produced playing-cards. In the American boom of the late 20s an unwonted measure of prosperity descended on Belsize Square, prosperity that was reflected in a more assertive attitude on the part of the master of the house who moved his coin room from the cramped quarters of a dressing room to the main room on the first floor front. The room then became lined with racks on which stood cabinet after cabinet. In the window was a somewhat small working table. The middle of the room was taken up by a dining-table on which grew an ever-increasing pile of letters, catalogues, and papers, some going back fifty or more years. I know, because I was charged, after his death to go through all this material with John Allan and to try to sort out what was worth preserving. No easy task!

Lawrence was a splendid friend. The house was open to all on whom he conferred his friendship and, when I was working on my first numismatic paper, on the Berwick

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coins of Edward I, II, and III, he insisted on lending me all his coins in the series, and he did the same again when later I was working on the coinage of Edward IV. He knew how little I had and he knew too that for any study to prove worth while it was essential to have original material to work on at home.

Like Helen Farquhar he lived to a great age and the last years were rather sad. One never could tell how one would find him. I usually slipped into my pocket some coin that I thought might amuse him. At one time he would look at it quizzically and say 'What is it? Edward III?'—and remember he had been the authority on this reign. At another he would look at the coin and say, quite sharply, 'It’s a class C isn’t it? What’s funny about it?'

His last illness was a long one and, with day and night nurses, the family cash position was getting strained and they talked of having to move him into a hospital. Cure was out of the question and all agreed that he would wish to die in his own house. I talked it over with the family and we decided to take a gamble. He had directed, he had told us, that the British Museum were to have the pick of his Roman coins—at, of course, a valuation. We now moved a cabinet down to the British Museum, carefully adjusting the others so as not to leave any apparent gap. There Mr. Mattingly acted with great speed, selected what the Museum wanted, had them valued and paid for them. The cabinet returned to its place with the gaps in it easily filled by shifting coins around—in this series in particular there were as often as not several coins in one hole. Then the real anxiety began. There seemed no prospect of his ever getting up again, but he was lying in the first floor back and his coin room was next door on the first floor front. And he might suddenly have gained some strength and had a lucid moment. But the fates were kind to us and granted us our wish. He died shortly afterwards, quite peacefully, in his own bed at the age of ninety-one.

The name of Lawrence leads one naturally to that of G. C. Brooke the greatest student of English coins since Keary. His numismatic achievement is too well known and widely accepted to call for any eulogy on my part, but having already mentioned his English Coins, I cannot refrain from paying tribute to his two-volume Catalogue of the coins of the Norman kings in the British Museum. Time and again one finds his readings of coins in that often difficult series vindicated. This is not to say that he was invariably right—that would be expecting too much—but the student of today still ignores at his peril Brooke’s readings of over half a century ago.

Brooke was of a rubicund complexion—the last man one would have expected to die at a relatively early age of, of all things, anaemia. To me—and I suspect to many others—he was generous with his knowledge, and looking over the all too little correspondence with him that I still have—too much was destroyed in moves during the war—I am struck by the way he wrote to me—then a complete tyro—never seeking to impose his opinions on me but submitting them as would one scholar to another. He did much while at the British Museum and one can only deplore, both on personal as well as on scholarly grounds, that he did not live longer.

Another distinguished numismatist, with whom I was privileged to work closely, was C. A. Whitton—he disliked his Christian name, Cuthbert and never willingly used it. Whitton was a schoolmaster, at I think Newcastle-under-Lyme grammar school. He

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1 NC 1935, p. 18. This is a bare mention. A fuller obituary notice appeared in NC 1934, pp. 303-8. Also BNJ, xxii (1934-7), pp. 129 and 133.
2 NC 1950, p. 6; BNJ xxvi (1949-51), p. 96.
came late into numismatics and soon found his main interest to lie in the Plantagenet to Tudor series where he produced the first detailed study that had been made of the coinage of Henry VI. Before the war I had collected a considerable amount of material on the silver coinage of Edward IV but had never been able to do the same for the gold. Whitton, having completed his Henry VI, quickly got to work on this and we pooled our resources and published in the British Numismatic Journal a joint study of Edward IV’s coinage.

When, shortly after the war, Methuens were called upon to do a further reprint of Brooke’s English Coins, the suggestion was made that a supplement might be added, correcting the occasional error and including coins that had either come to light since Brooke wrote, or that he knew only from inadequate accounts but which had since been located. The British Numismatic Society undertook the sponsorship of this supplement and Whitton was the obvious choice as editor. With typical modesty he would not allow his name to appear on the title-page of a work that was essentially Brooke’s and you will only find his initials at the foot of the introduction to what was called the third edition—though the so-called second edition was in fact an unaltered reprint of the first.

Whitton’s career as a schoolmaster was brought prematurely to an end when he developed tuberculosis—the cure was not then known. He was forced then to sell the more valuable part of his collection and it is an indication of the affection in which he was held that Mr. Glendining opened the sale by saying ‘We all know the reason for this sale. Will you express your sympathy in practical form by making one bid beyond the limit you had in mind?’ The disease gradually wasted him away but his courage was undaunted. We carried on an extensive—and at times light-hearted—correspondence even when he knew that he had not long to live. Bed-ridden at last, he took to correcting proofs of the Bible, a task that demanded accuracy not granted to many. He was disappointed if he had not completed The Times crossword puzzle before his breakfast tray was taken away.

Time was running out and the new Brooke had not appeared. But Methuens co-operated splendidly and the last letter I had from him a few days before his death told of the intense pleasure that having the book in his hands had given him. His wish that it should be known as the Whitton edition has not been fulfilled—but perhaps it is not too late to remedy this.

R. C. Lockett, the Mycaenas of English collectors, was a member of a long-established firm of Liverpool merchants, R & J Lockett. When I first knew him he was living in Cadogan Place. When staffing problems became too difficult, he and his wife moved to the Rembrandt Hotel, but the house was kept on with a skeleton staff and it was there that he took infinite pleasure in welcoming anyone he knew who showed an interest in his collection. There was only one person among our mutual acquaintance, he told me, at whom he drew the line! The drill was always the same. One rang up and asked if it would be convenient to come at such and such a time. It nearly always was. What did one want to see? He would have it brought up. I pictured to myself a strong-room in the basement, but one of his sons told me after his death, that in fact the cabinets lined the passage from the back door to the kitchen. Times change!

Lockett, as the catalogues of his sale show, had got together over many years the

finest collection of English hammered coins that had ever been in a single private hand and his collection of Greek coins must also be placed in the first rank. At one time he had collected English mill coins, but he found less interest in this series and disposed of them. As time went on it became increasingly difficult to add to the collection—Anglo-Saxon coins, in particular the earlier ones, had virtually become concentrated in three cabinets, Lockett’s, Ryan’s, and Grantley’s. Both Lockett and Ryan were able to participate in the dispersal of Lord Grantley’s collection, but neither participated at the dispersal of the other’s. Though Lockett slightly predeceased Ryan, his coins were retained by the family until his widow’s death some years later.

Other names flit across my memory. Sir Charles Oman,1 president of the Royal Numismatic Society when I first joined in 1923, for many years M.P. for Oxford University, and one of the famous Oxford ‘figures’ with his great head of white hair and his invariable tie-pin made from a stater of Philip of Macedon. He was, of course, primarily a historian and no president that I have known was better able to make a serious contribution to the discussion after a paper, no matter what the subject.

E. C. Carter, a name less well known to many because his remarkable collection was sold privately on his death and so no catalogue of it was published. The keynote of his collection was quality and a pedigree ‘ex E. C. Carter’ is virtually a guarantee that condition will be exceptional. I only visited him once and, beyond being dazzled by the superb specimens he produced, my only recollection is that when the maid brought in tea, Carter hurriedly put a newspaper over the tray of gold at which we were looking, in the belief (which I find hard to think justified) that the household was unaware of what he had in those locked cabinets.

E. H. Wheeler. Now here was an odd man to be a numismatist—or should I rather say coin collector, for he would never have claimed to be a scholar. He ran a printing business and specialized, I believe, in printing race cards. He attended sales in person and bought somewhat indiscriminately—he once said to me ‘I reckon that if a coin is worth £20 to Spink or Baldwin then it’s worth £25 to me’. Another time when, somewhat impertinently, I asked him what had led him to take up coin collecting his reply was ‘Well, it would go on whisky if I didn’t spend it on coins’. Suddenly, he lost interest and put a portion of his collection in the sale room. It was a good catalogue but he was disappointed in the prices realized and sold the remainder privately to Seaby’s.

The British Numismatic Society, as many of you will know, was conceived in disgust and born in anger, and the mutual distrust between the two societies and between the British Society and the British Museum took many years to eradicate. In fact, when Harold Mattingly was President of the Royal and I of the British and I invited him to dine with me, he remarked ‘You realize, Blunt, don’t you that we are making history. This is probably the first time that the Presidents of the two Societies have had their knees under the same mahogany.’ The feud—for feud it really was—did not finally die until the last of the old brigade who had been in at the start had gone. Two of the last to go were H. W. Taffs2 and H. Alexander Parsons,3 and it would be difficult to think of two more contrasting characters. Both were civil servants, Taffs, I think, in the audit department—in any case on a job that took him on a fairly regular circuit in the course of which he established connections with jewellers and others in various

provincial centres and picked up in this way some rare coins; Parsons in the Post Office. Taffs's features some of you will know from the photograph of him in the catalogue of his sale that took place after his death—a splendid old-fashioned moustache, which until he gave up smoking cigarettes was heavily stained with nicotine, and an old-time and friendly manner. When I first became an editor of the *British Numismatic Journal* it was under him that I worked and no more honest or painstaking colleague could be sought. Parsons had the misfortune to have to sell his collection in 1929, but by the time of his death he had got together another no less good.

Other figures come to mind: Percy Webb, whose interests, of course, lay in the Roman field. French numismatists persisted in identifying him with a certain Captain Webb, who as a distinguished cross-Channel swimmer was at that time much in the news. French reviews tended to be lively and one that disapproved strongly of some views that he had expressed, ended up ‘We would venture to suggest that Mr Webb would do better to confine himself to swimming the Channel’.

E. A. Sydenham was another Romanist (though not in the religious sense for he was a Church of England clergyman). Again, our paths did not cross much, but he once told me of a visit he had paid to a provincial Italian museum at which, on entering the coin room, he found placed at the end of the table between himself and the curator, a fully armed police officer. At the end of his visit he felt that a protest should be registered both on account of his position as President of the Royal Numismatic Society and of his cloth. To which the curator replied with some surprise ‘But it was not you that he was sent to watch’.

*Harold Mattingly.* A very great man, the volume of whose work was only matched by its quality. He would work wherever he happened to find himself and I have seen him sit down on a luggage truck on a station platform, while waiting for a train, and calmly go on with whatever writing he had in hand. Thus must have made him, incidentally, an editor’s nightmare, because by the very nature of his working methods he could often not complete his references—and his enthusiasm to press always onwards would have made him reluctant to turn back and do so.

*Sir John Evans*, of course, never knew—he was born in 1822. But his wife, his third wife, the mother of Joan Evans who recently celebrated the 150th anniversary of her father’s birth, used to come to meetings of the Royal in Russell Square and I once attended there a lecture by his son, *Sir Arthur Evans*, the excavator of Knossos. This proved to be pure *opéra bouffe*. Sir Arthur was one of those scholars who simply cannot realize that other people do not know as much as they themselves. His lecture was on some of those masterpieces of Greek art produced at Syracuse of which he had made a deep study. Slide after slide was thrown on the screen; Sir Arthur would look at them at first in rather a puzzled way, then, as recognition dawned, with affection. Still with his back to his audience, he would say ‘Wonderful things, aren’t they? Look at them carefully’. Long pause. ‘You’ll know, of course, why I show this. Next slide please.’

Among the dealers, *Leonard Forrer* senior will probably be remembered by some of you as the grand old man of Spinks and a wonderful person he was. Besides his full-time employment in that firm, he produced his great six volume *Dictionary of Medallists*.

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1 *NC* 1937, p. 21.  
2 *NC* 1948, p. 16.  
3 *NC* 1964, p. xvii; *BNJ* xxxiii (1964), p. 188.  
and the scholarly catalogue, four volumes of text and three of plates, of the Weber
collection of Greek coins which the firm had bought. This, of course, besides number-
less auction catalogues. One of my most vivid memories is calling on him just after
Spinks's premises in King Street had been bombed. He was in the middle of cata-
loguing Lord Grantley's vast collection for the auction and I found him, away from
his normal office which had lost all its windows, in a dark back room surrounded by
the dust that the bomb had brought down, dressed as usual in a neat black suit and
working as quietly as ever. The only concession he had made to the chaos around him
was to fix with paper clips a sheet of foolscap round each of his white cuffs. All collectors
of the time will, I think, have shared the affection and admiration I felt for one of the
great men of the trade.

Of Mr. A. H. Baldwin,¹ the founder of the firm, I was always rather frightened. I
should, no doubt, have outgrown this, but he died in 1936 before I had a chance to do
so. I first met him at his very conveniently situated, though restricted, premises in
Duncannon Street, opposite St. Martin's in the Fields. When that site became due for
development, he moved to somewhat larger premises in Craven Street nearby. One of
his greatest coups was the purchase of the English, Scottish, and Irish coins of the
time of Henry III in the great Brussels hoard. The story is told—and I know not with
what truth—that Carlyon-Britton and Lawrence set off for Belgium with the intention
of buying it at the auction. But fog in the Channel delayed them and they arrived in
time to see Mr. Baldwin staggering away under the weight of over 80,000 silver pennies
in great bags. True or not, one thing is certain, namely that Mr. Baldwin secured the
treasure—and they failed to do so.

Mr. F. W. Lincoln² (perhaps not even a name to some today?) I hardly knew person-
ally though I often visited his shop in New Oxford Street, not far from the British
Museum. It was a small place with a little, rather dark room at the back in which
Mr. Lincoln himself sat. The wants of the likes of me were dealt with by a rather aged
and disillusioned assistant. The walls of the shop were lined with coin cabinets—a
measure of security no doubt since they were visible at night from the street—and, as
an added protection against nimble fingers, a number of the cabinets were fitted with
mirrors in place of the usual panels so that a watch could be kept even when the dealer's
back was turned. You will occasionally see these cabinets today, though some have had
the looking glass replaced by mahogany.

I have left to the end of this talk some account of the man who was the most colourful
figure in the numismatic circle of his day, Lord Grantley.³ Picture to yourself a large,
well-built man who looked his best in a suit of Harris tweed, preferably with game
pockets in it, and with fingers that you would never think could handle the delicate
Anglo-Saxon pennies that were his particular joy. There was curious blood here. He
descended from Sheridan, the playwright and wit—his Christian names were John
Richard Brinsley—and his grandmother, Caroline Sheridan, became the Mrs. Norton
the break-up of whose marriage caused so much scandal when her husband unsuccess-
fully sued her for divorce, citing as co-respondent the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne.
His father, a Yorkshire squire, took (I suspect) one too many falls in the hunting field
and, according to his grandson, was never normal again. He went to Capri where he

¹ NC 1937, p. 24.
² NC 1929, p. 25.
made a romantic marriage with a local girl—the daughter of a solicitor, according to his grandson; a peasant girl according to the historian Motley.\(^1\) Whichever it was, Vicary Gibbs records that she made a good wife to a man who must have been far from easy to live with. It is to this unlikely match that there was born in Capri in 1855, the year of the battle of Sebastopol, the Lord Grantley that we knew.

He succeeded to the title at the age of twenty-two, and living to the age of eighty-seven, became the father of the House of Lords. But I believe that he never took his seat.

Two years after he had become a peer, when his cousin and heir presumptive, Charles Norton, brought his charming American wife to meet the head of the family, the head of the family quickly succumbed to those charms and eloped with her on his yacht Polly. The somewhat bewildered heir instituted divorce proceedings and as soon as these were completed the couple married, on 5 November 1879. Five days later their first child was born.

After the death of his first wife, Lord Grantley married a lady who was the only person I have known who voluntarily described herself in the books of reference as a natural child—in this case of an Irish peer, Lord Ranelagh. A somewhat chequered private life ended, after the death of his second wife, by Lord Grantley being cited as co-respondent in a divorce suit at the age of eighty-seven. He died shortly after.

My first meeting with Lord Grantley was on the quays in Paris—it must have been about 1920—when, as a schoolboy, I found myself standing beside a large man—unmistakably English—at one of those little stalls that dealt in inexpensive coins. An Edward penny in one tray struck me as a little odd and I thought I could not do better than consult my neighbour about it. He gave it one glance and said ‘It’s one of those continental imitations’. We then fell into conversation. Specialization was the great thing at that time and I asked him in what series he specialized. Characteristically he replied ‘I don’t specialize; I collect everything’.

We parted without my knowing who the stranger was, but Shirley-Fox quickly identified him from my description and from the fact that few people at that time could recognize a continental imitation at a glance. And his identification proved correct.

Later I saw him a number of times—not at Red Rice, the 5,500 acre estate which he bought in 1913 (one of the best shoots in Hampshire) but had sold before I visited him, but at Weeke Manor near Winchester where he had cut off the end of the drawing-room to make a strongroom so as to have his coins always at hand.

He and his wife were the most charming of hosts. I wish that I had then had more interest in Anglo-Saxon coins of which he had a superb collection, but I do remember his showing me the famous Crondall hoard which he had bought at Sothebys in 1895 when it was sold by Mr. C. Maxwell Lefroy, a member of the family that had actually discovered it. With the Crondall coins was a little case lined with red velvet containing the jewellery that was discovered with them. On his death this could not be found and it has never since been traced. The jewellery has, however, been illustrated and, should it one day turn up, would be readily identifiable. The theory, widely canvassed at the time, that he had bestowed it on a lady I do not accept. It would be completely out of character for him to have disposed of such an Anglo-Saxon treasure in this way.

Lord Grantley bought extensively himself in the sale room and the catholic range of coins

\(^1\) Complete Peerage, vi, 87 n.
his interests is reflected in the catalogues of his collection that was dispersed during the war—a dispersal that caused much sadness to curators and collectors on the continent when they learnt of it after hostilities had ceased, for he had the finest private collection of European coins in England—and one probably matched by few on the Continent.

For all his knowledge—and it was encyclopedic—Lord Grantley published but little. Inherently he was a modest man and his modesty stood me in good stead on one occasion. He had bought in Rome an Anglo-Saxon penny bearing the name Heaberht rex, previously unknown on the coinage, but recorded as an eighth-century king of Kent in one or two charters. In a short but masterly paper in the Numismatic Chronicle Lord Grantley published the coin and, on the strength of the charters, attributed it to the Kentish king Heabeart. This drew from Sir Henry Howorth a lengthy reply in which he argued that the charters in question were spurious and that the coin should more properly be attributed to another and slightly later Kentish king, Eadberht Præn, coins of whom, though very rare, were already known. Lord Grantley must have noted Howorth’s objection on his label for when it came to be catalogued for the sale it was included under the coins of the latter King (of whom incidentally Grantley had two undoubted specimens) with the note ‘Said to be unique, if properly attributed’. This reservation caused it to sell for a price that I could afford. Since then Sir Frank Stenton has vindicated the charters and he for one, and I believe numismatists generally, now accept it as one of the earliest, if not the very earliest, surviving products of the penny coinage.

Lord Grantley, it has always seemed to me was a man born out of time. He would have fitted quite naturally into the society of the eighteenth century, where it was not unusual for a sporting peer to combine a measure of free living and gambling—and Grantley enjoyed the tables—with serious academic interests. To me he seemed always to be a survival from a past age.

Preparing the notes for this talk has been for me a sentimental journey. It has made me dig back into memories previously half forgotten. Duff Cooper wrote a book called Old Men Forget. I hope my memory has not mis-served me in anything I have said. But if anyone knows that it has done so, I would be grateful if he would tell me.

1 NC 1900, pp. 148 ff.  2 NC 1908, pp. 228 ff.