BRITISH NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

1979

The current year has been one of good progress for the Society and I am happy to be able to report that we approach our 77th year in excellent health. This present sound position must not, however, encourage us to feel complaisant, for the current pressures of high inflation and government spending economies represent respectively a threat to the value of our subscription and to the numbers of our members. All we can say now is that we are in good shape to weather the economic stresses that we can foresee.

Membership

This is the most pressing problem since for the second year running I have to report a small net loss, in fact, of 1. This time last year I reported a membership of 532. The comparable figure this year is 531. In both cases the figures are arrived at before deduction of amovals since these are subject to adjustment right up to this evening. Of the membership of 531 8 are junior members, 7 are honorary members, and the remainder, 516, are ordinary members. I should perhaps explain that institutional members, of whom there are 127, are, from the Society’s point of view, in every respect ordinary members.

New members elected in 1979 total 20—exactly the same as in 1978—and include 19 ordinary members and 1 junior one.

While the diminution of membership of only 1 cannot in any sense be described as a dramatic loss our continued success as a Society and our ability to continue to publish a Journal of high quality and reputation depends above all on maintaining and building our membership. I ask every member here tonight to consider whom he or she knows who might benefit from membership of the Society. Please remember that membership is a very good bargain indeed. The Journal alone is worth every penny of the subscription and the facilities we can offer in the form of our meetings and the joint library are of real value, not only to students of numismatics and collectors but to economic historians, archaeologists, and historians specializing in technology, art, and heraldry.

Finally, while on the subject of membership, I have to report that one of our losses was through death. This was Mr. J. M. Ashby, a member since 1953. Up to his later years Mr. Ashby, who was a student of the coinage of Charles I, was a regular attender at our meetings and from 1955 to 1959 he was Treasurer of our Society. His loss is a sad one for us and we extend our most profound sympathies to his family.

The Year’s Programme

The programme assembled by our director and published on our programme card was realized without any changes and I think that all members will agree with me that our year of meetings has been enjoyable and informative.

We had two evenings of short papers, one in June on medieval matters and one in January on post-medieval coins and tokens. Once again we saw demonstrated the value of this type of meeting to those who wish to air issues which do not in themselves warrant a full evening’s paper but which nevertheless can be of great interest and value. The names of those who contributed are recorded in the Proceedings.

To all who contributed to our meetings during the year I should like to offer my most sincere thanks. I should also like to thank our director, Mr. Brand, for assembling an excellent and well-balanced programme.
Other events of note during the year were well attended by our members. These included the International Congress in Berne early in September which was followed by the centenary celebrations of the Swiss Numismatic Society held in Fribourg—an event upon which we offer our respectful congratulations.

Two regular annual events, the Congress and the Lecture Course of the British Association of Numismatic Societies, took place in April and September at Colchester and Didsbury respectively. Both were well up to the standard we have come to expect from the Association for these occasions which provide the particularly happy combination of instruction and friendly social contact that so many of us have come to appreciate.

I should also like to notice here the Coin Fair organized by the British Numismatic Trade Association at the Europa Hotel in October. This was an admirable attempt to raise the standards of such events and it included an associated programme of lectures in which our members Miss Archibald and Mr. Linecar took part.

**Publication of the Journal**

The 1977 *Journal* was received by members towards the end of 1978 or early 1979. The 1978 *Journal* is due out very shortly but is not expected to be in members hands before the New Year.

As I mentioned in my previous address the 1977 *Journal* included a number of innovations—a new filmset process, photographically reproduced plates, and advertisements at the back. Reactions to these changes, all of which have had the effect of reducing the cost of the *Journal* to the Society, appear to have been favourable and the considered opinion of those members with whom I have discussed the changes seems to be that a fully acceptable standard has been maintained. It is certain that this has played an important part in permitting us to take the view that the subscription for 1980 can be held at the same level as those for 1978 and 1979—a period of three years across which inflation may well exceed 50 per cent.

I should like to offer my thanks to our two editors, Mrs. Delmé-Radcliffe and Mr. Mayhew, for the very substantial amount of work they have done in order to achieve this result.

**The Financial Position**

The Treasurer has reported to you on our accounts as at 31 October 1978. I am obliged to him for information from which I can see that we have been able to maintain our improved position. After receipt of subscriptions for 1979 we have sufficient resources to cover the costs of the 1978 and 1979 *Journals* (at least so far as the uncertainties of inflation allow us to predict the latter) and we should be left with a slightly increased provision. We are thus building on the position given to us by the donations made to my appeal and it is against that background that we were able to reach the decision that I have already alluded to, that we would not need to ask for an increased subscription for 1980.

A development in the year has been the registration of the Society as a National Charity. This will chiefly help to secure a favourable tax position in the future and will also, I understand, allow bequests to the Society to be deducted from estate before death duties are assessed.

I should like to thank our Treasurer, Mr. Seaman, for continuing his good work in the year. We also owe our thanks to Mr. Blackburn for negotiating with the Charity Commissioners and for bringing our application for charitable status to a satisfactory conclusion.

**The Joint Library**

Our librarian, Mr. Thomson, has once again provided me with an annual report. Referring to this I can see that loans from the library totalled 610 in the year, slightly less than last year's figure of 637 which was in itself, however, a great increase from the 1977 figure of 414.

Books purchased for the library include vol. 7 of the *Correspondence* of Sir Isaac Newton; *Wiltshire XVII-Century Tokens* by E. G. H. Kempson; the British Museum catalogue of *The Hull Grundy Collection of Medals*; *The Struggle for Control of the Irish Mint* by S. G. Ellis; the University of Rhodesia catalogues of the Courtauld collection of medieval coins, and the Pallet collection of English coins.

Exchange arrangements have brought us a book by Federov on Baltic coins of the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries from the Estonian Academy of Sciences; booklets on bracteates and Sasanian
coins in addition to a journal from the Staatliches Museum, Berlin, and a book by Kubiak on finds of Roman coins from the Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society.

Donations have included *The Art of the Medal, The Dance of Death,* and *Medals of the Sun King,* all by Mark Jones, and *Ancient Greek Portrait Coins* by Ian Carradice, all from British Museum publications. We have received review copies of Tuukkan Talvio’s *Finnish Sylogse* and of R. C. Bell’s *Building Medalets of Kempson and Skidmore.* Mr. Mallis has donated a bound copy of his article ‘English coin weights for Portuguese coins’ and a copy of his joint work with Van Allen on U.S. Morgan and Peace dollars. Mr. Zoethout has given Schon’s catalogue of twentieth-century coins of the world and the Mevius catalogue of Netherlands coins. Mr. Somerville has presented *South Africa’s First Gold Coins* by M. Esterhuysen. Dr. Mikolajczyk has given an issue of a Polish periodical; the Yapi re Kredi Bankasi has sent a booklet on Ottoman paper money; and Mr. Rigold has donated his article on the St. Nicolas or ‘Boy Bishop’ tokens. Other gifts to the library have been *A Survey of Numismatic Research 1972–7,* with twenty pages on the British Isles; a well-illustrated catalogue of the medals of the Swiss canton of Vaud compiled by Charles Lavanchy; booklets on the coins of Hong Kong and on money in the past life of Berne; handlists to Swiss exhibitions (in connection with the 1979 International Congress) of numismatic books in Lausanne and of medieval coin hoards in Fribourg.

All this from Mr. Thomson’s report. To this I can add that for the first time for several years your Council has been able to set aside some funds towards repairing old bindings and having periodicals bound, a very necessary undertaking in view of the intensive use to which the library is now being put.

As well as the maintenance of the library Mr. Thomson also supplies information on the Society to a number of official bodies both in Great Britain and overseas. In addition, and with the assistance of a number of our members, he deals with a considerable volume of correspondence on a diversity of numismatic matters from all over the world. I should like to thank Mr. Thomson for his comprehensive report and for the efforts of himself and his helpers during the year.

**Coin Hoards**

The year 1979 has seen a good crop of hoards and I must here thank Miss Archibald for providing me with some details.

There was one hoard of Celtic coins from Ringwood, Hants. It consisted of 45 AV, mostly Biocassii, deposited around the mid first-century B.C.

There were six Roman hoards:

- Mildenhall, Suffolk. 258 AR denarii to Domitian, deposit c.79.
- Epping Forest, Essex. 53 billon. Gallienus to Tetricus, deposit c.273. (This was found in 1977, the treasure trove inquest was in November 1978. It was not in the list I read out last year.)
- Cunetio, Wilts. About 55,000 AR and billon from Commodus to Tetricus. Deposit c.273.
- Roche Abbey. 61 billon folles of Constantine II. Deposit c.330.
- Thetford, Norfolk. 47 AR siliquae from Constantine II to Valens.
- Barton upon Humber, Humberside. 193 AR siliquae from Constantine to Honorius. Deposit c.400.

There are eleven medieval and modern hoards:

- Bryn Maelqwyn, near Llandudno, Wales. 205 AR Pennies, Cnut quatrefoil plus one Cnut helmet type and one Hiberno-Norse of Sihtric III. Deposit c.1025.
- Maidens, near Turnberry Castle, Ayrshire. 49 AR pennies of Edward I and II with Scottish and Continental. Deposit 1320s.
- Innerwick, East Lothian. 250 AR. Edward III to IV, David II to James III and of Ireland, Edward IV. Deposit after 1471.
- West Wycombe, Bucks. 18 AV, Henry VII to Elizabeth I and Continental. Deposit c.1600.
- Washbrook, Suffolk. 1 AV, 288 AR, Edward IV to Charles I. Deposit c.1645.
- Penbryn Hall, near Ruabon, Wales. 105 AR, Edward IV to Charles I. Deposit c.1645.
- Winsford, Cheshire. 4 AV, Charles II to George I. After 1718.
- Bishops Canning, near Devizes, Wilts. 21 AE English and Irish halfpence including counterfeits and defaced. After 1822.
- Potters Bar, Herts. ‘A pot of’ early Victorian coins and tokens.
- Ockham, Surrey. 33 AV, 458 AR, George III to Victoria after 1853.
- Kings Lynn, Norfolk. 436 AR, Victoria to George V. After 1918.
This, then, brings me to the end of the first part of my address. In the course of speaking I have
thanked several of our officers for the part they have played in the current year’s activities. One name
I have not mentioned so far is that of our secretary, Wilfrid Slayter; to him I should like to record my
special thanks for his support and hard work during the year. I should also like to thank your Council
for their valued guidance. I have felt myself very fortunate to be at the head of such a devoted and
enthusiastic team.

Following the elections the President read a paper entitled ‘Monetary Motives in the later Middle
Ages’ a version of which will be included as a paper in a future volume of the Journal.