PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 1987

H. E. PAGAN

[As the text of this address indicates, the President had paid tribute at an earlier point in the Annual General Meeting to the Society's Vice-President and past President, Christopher Evelyn Blunt, who had died on 20 November 1987, at the age of eighty-three. This explains the absence of any tribute to him in the Address itself, but those who would wish to have a sense of the loss felt by the Society collectively at the death of its most distinguished and best loved member should turn to the obituary notice by Dr B. H. I. H. Stewart elsewhere in this volume and to the obituary notices by various hands which appeared in The Times, The Independent, Spink's Numismatic Circular, etc.]

This is our eighty-third anniversary meeting and the fourth at which I have addressed you as President. During the year we have elected twenty-two new members and this means that our membership again shows a small net gain, for it stands tonight, allowing for two deaths, five resignations and seven members whom we have just removed, at 512. 383 of these are ordinary members, seven are junior members and the rest are institutions.

I have spoken already of the death of our Vice-President and past President, Christopher Blunt, and the only other death of a member during the year was that of Roy Hawkins, a member of the Society since 1965, who died suddenly on 6 March aged sixty-nine. He served two terms on our Council, from 1983 to 1986 and again from 1980 to 1983, and he will be remembered by many of us as a friend as well as a fellow numismatist. His main numismatic interest lay in the coin-like advertisement tickets, checks and passes produced in great variety from early in the nineteenth century onwards. His publications on the series commenced with a very useful note on the “To Hanover” Counters, which appeared in the Numismatic Chronicle for 1959, shortly followed by an article in our own Journal on ‘Minor Products of British Nineteenth-century Diesinking’. It was however his Dictionary of Makers of British Nineteenth-century Metallic Tickets and Checks, published in issues of Seaby's Bulletin from 1960 onwards, with his 'Catalogue of the Advertisement Imitations of 'Spade' Guineas and their Halves', published in our Journal for 1963, with supplements in 1965, 1968 and 1983, that revealed to us and to a wider public how much could be done to elucidate the many obscure inscriptions and initials that appear on these pieces by reference to local directories and to other sources of that nature. He was the first researcher on the series to make systematic use of this sort of evidence and he was always glad to pass on to others any discoveries relevant to their own fields of research. Roy was not one to push himself forward - it took time to persuade him to join our Society and he was not elected a Fellow of our sister Society until after his retirement from the civil service - but he was by nature friendly and approachable, and I should record here that his oldest numismatic friendship was with our late President, Stuart Rigold, with whom he had served in the Intelligence Corps during the Second World War.

There have been two changes during the year among our officers and editors. At the beginning of the year Mark Blackburn, who had been joint editor of BNJ since the end of 1983, expressed the wish to be relieved of his responsibilities, and he has been succeeded by Dr Barrie Cook of the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum. We are grateful to Mr Blackburn for his services as editor, and most of all for persuading us in 1984 that it was practicable to revert to having BNJ properly printed.

In the summer our Librarian, John Brand, also expressed the wish to step down, bringing to an end a period of eleven years for which he had served as one of the Society's executive officers, first as Director, then as President and latterly in charge of our library. At the same time he ceased to be a member of Council, on which he had served, with one short break, since 1963, and we shall miss his experience and his keen concern for the interests of the Society.

Our new Librarian, Roger Bland, is, like Dr Cook, a member of the staff of the British Museum, and he is also the grandson of our late and much respected colleague and Medallist, Francis Elmore Jones.

Of our other officers our Secretary gets first mention tonight, for this evening is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the night Wilfrid Slayter was first elected as our Secretary in November 1962. He has now been Secretary for over a quarter of the period during which our Society has existed, and I myself cannot remember a time when he was not our Secretary. By 1967, when he had only held the post for five years, he had already become so familiar and valued a colleague that Stewart Lyon, in his Presidential Address for that year, was led to remark, with quite astonishing foresight, that ‘Presidents come, and Presidents go, but Slayter goes on for ever’. A
generation has passed since then and I know that I speak for us all when I say that our Society has been fortunate indeed to have had a Secretary who has served us so well, so loyally and so unselfishly for so long.

Our Director, Graham Dyer, as usual arranged an excellent programme of lectures during the year, ranging chronologically from a paper by Dr Melinda Mays on the coinage of the Iceni to one by Dr Challis on the new Royal Mint at Llantrisant. We were particularly pleased to have Dr Peter Spufford as our speaker on the evening of the Council Sherry Party. At the same meeting I had the pleasure of presenting the Society’s John Sanford Saltus gold medal to Mrs Joan Murray for her research into the later mediaeval coinage of Scotland.

This was the first time that we have awarded our medal solely for research into the Scottish coinage, and I hope that it will be taken as a sign that although our meetings take place in London the coinages of Scotland and Ireland are no less our province than the coinage of England.

Our Treasurer, Tim Webb-Ware, has again managed our finances very capably and the strength of our Society’s current financial position can be judged from the fact that whereas on 31 October 1980 our Society’s liabilities were £400 greater than its assets, our surplus of assets over liabilities at 31 October 1986 stood at £15,663. In 1987 we shall not add as much to our reserves as we did in 1986, but there is certainly no immediate prospect of us having to increase the level of the subscription, which has now stood unchanged at £18 since 1 January 1981 and represents better value for money with every year that passes.

That is not to say that we should be complacent about our finances, for we are still heavily dependent on our subscription income, and we did indeed suffer an unexpected blow during the year when the Inland Revenue informed us that the covenant scheme that we have operated successfully for many years was invalid and that we can no longer hope to recover the income tax involved. We are fortuitously unrequired to reconsider this situation, for our covenant scheme does not differ from that operated without challenge by other learned societies, but Council has concluded that our resources are not sufficient to fight this ruling on our own, and we must await the result of a future test case.

I have also to thank Dr Challis and his editorial colleagues for volume 55 of our Journal, which to my mind was one of the best volumes that we have had for a long time, and for the progress which they are making with volume 56, which we hope to receive in the New Year.

Finally, members will have noticed that our Vice-President Ian Stewart has been promoted to the position of Minister of State for the Armed Forces in Her Majesty’s Government. I am pleased to say that notwithstanding his ministerial responsibilities he has accepted our invitation to deliver the first Howard Linecar lecture at our October meeting next year; as I reported in 1986, we intend to use the sum of £5000 which the Society received from Howard Linecar’s estate to provide an endowment for a biennial lecture in Mr Linecar’s memory, as he himself wished.

In the wider numismatic world, 1987 has been a year of comparative calm and the excitement has not been Congresses but coin sales, notably those of the Scottish coins collected by our late Honorary Member, Lieut-Col J. K. R. Murray, and of the Anglo-Saxon coins amassed in the 1940s and 1950s by Gordon Doubleday, who is now our senior Vice-President. A very recent sale was that at Glendinings on 4 November of a hoard of coins of the later types of Henry I and of the first type of Stephen, evidently discovered in northern France in the not too distant past; the catalogue, although good, will not quite do as a definitive publication, for there was insufficient time before the sale to identify the less legible specimens, and I hope that the hoard can be written up properly in our Journal.

In this connection it is satisfactory to note that a full photographic record of the coins has been made, as I believe should now be done with all English treasure trove coin hoards, apart from those predominantly composed of coins struck after 1820. I understand from Miss Archibald and Dr Cook that it is now normal practice to make a photographic record of mediaeval treasure trove coin hoards, and it should not therefore be long before Elizabethan and Civil War hoards get the same treatment. Members may like to know that the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum holds photographs of various unpublished or partly published hoards, notably those from Prestwich, Lincoln and Colechester, and no doubt would be glad to allow serious students to consult them.

This leads me to a more general observation. Back in 1966 Stewart Lyon chose as the theme for the second part of his Presidential Address the words ‘Consultation in Research’, and he made a series of very sensible remarks about the need for close contact between amateur and professional scholars, and between scholars working in different but related fields. I am not going to cover the same ground tonight, but I think that collectively we numismatists are still sometimes at fault in not making relevant information available to those who may need it; this is not because we consciously wish to withhold it, but because it does not occur to us to volunteer it, and I mention this now because it has a relevance to something that the British Numismatic Society might do.

For many years now the main vehicles of communication between those numismatists who take a scholarly interest in British numismatics have been the columns of Spink’s Numismatic Circular and Seaby’s Coin and Medal Bulletin, but circumstances change, and we might well now give thought to our Society publishing some form of regular newsletter, on the model of that produced by the American Numismatic Society, which would serve to advertise our own activities; to provide information about current numismatic events, discoveries and
publications; and even perhaps to carry short notes and correspondence on matters worthy of record but too trivial for *BNJ*. The financial and editorial arrangements that would be necessary would of course need very careful consideration, but the costs of a four page, or even eight page, newsletter would not be astronomical, and I commend the idea to you in principle, for our Society ought to be playing its part, and to be seen to be playing its part, in making sure that those who are seriously interested in studying the coinage of Great Britain and Ireland are kept abreast of the news and information that they deserve to have.

I now come to the year's list of coin hoards. Mr Besly tells me that there are no hoards from Wales, but from Scotland, as Dr David Caldwell informs me, there are the two hoards following:

Dykebar Hospital, Paisley. 220 silver pennies, deposited in a small earthenware jar. The coins seem mostly Edward I-II, but include one or two of David II. They were found scattered in a garden. They have been claimed with the pot, and await cleaning.

Fauldhouse, West Lothian. 178 silver coins, apparently deposited c.1670–80. There are 38 large continental pieces, and the rest are mostly English shillings, half-crowns and sixpences Elizabeth–Charles II. The coins were found scattered in the foundations of a house being built. The hoard has been claimed and is in the process of being cleaned.

From England the hoards are as below. I am as ever grateful to Miss Archibald and her colleagues in the Department of Coins and Medals for providing me with the list.

*Celtic and Roman Hoards*

Kingsclere, Hampshire, June 1986. 7 AV Gallo-Belgic E staters. 1st century BC.


Snettisham, Norfolk, 31 Mar. 1987. 26 A ‘Norfolk Wolf’ staters. 5 AV British N staters. 8 AV ‘Whaddon Chase’ staters, 3 AV uninscribed quarter-staters, 1 AV Iceni coin. 1st century BC–1st century AD.

Ironshill, Hampshire, 14 May 1987. 19 AV British B staters. 1st century BC.


Winterbourne Monkton, Dorset, July 1987. 21 AR coins of the Durotriges. 1st century AD.


Silchester, Hampshire, Dec. 1986. 51 AR siliquae and fragments of siliquae to Honorius (AD 393–423), with 3 bronze coins of the fourth century, and 7 Roman rings and fragments of rings.

*Mediaeval and Modern Hoards*

Uncertain site (Kent ?). 14 pennies, cut halfpence and farthings. Stephen types I–VII. c.1135 or later.

Brackley, Northants, 15 Nov. 1986 following. 13 ‘Tealby’ pennies of Henry II, with a silver ring exactly like one of those in the Larkhill hoard.

Canterbury, Kent, 18 May 1987. 36 Short Cross pennies and cut halfpence (mostly the latter). (Within a miscellaneous group of coins and not certain if all found together; not a T.T. hoard.)


Rickerby, Cumbria, Nov. 1986. 2072 pennies, halfpennies and farthings Edward I–III. c.1350s.

Spalding, Lincolnshire, Sept. 1986. 6 more to add to 1985 list of nobles of Edward III and Richard II. Total now 99 AV.


Thames foreshore, uncertain date (coins found by grandfather of current owner). 48 billon stampees of 1779, 248 two sou pieces of 1789, French colonial issues.
The subject of the second part of my address is the first century of the history of the study of our subject in Britain, a period extending from the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I to the end of the reign of William III. This is not virgin territory, for some of the ground was well covered in Michael Grant’s Presidential Address to the Royal Numismatic Society in 1954, but I think that there is some merit in looking at the topic again and I shall in any event be looking at the material from a different point of view, for Professor Grant’s remarks concentrated on the study of Roman coins while I shall be concentrating on the study of post-Roman coins.

It is not clear from the literature when coin collecting as such first took hold in Britain, but Lord Burghley, the principal minister of Queen Elizabeth I, had a collection of coins by 1577, and when William Camden came to revise his book, *Britannia*, for its third edition in 1593 he chose to illustrate it by engravings of four Ancient British coins of Cunobelin. By the time the 1600 edition of *Britannia* appeared Camden was able to illustrate many more coins, some of them again Ancient British, the rest Roman, and this time he credits them to the collection being formed at the time by Robert Cotton, a young man in his late twenties who had once been his pupil and was still his neighbour, and who had recently made an archaeological tour with him in the north of England. It may seem just a little surprising that Camden began with illustrations of Ancient British coins only and that Ancient British coins still occupy a proportionately large amount of space on the plates of the 1600 edition, when one considers their relative rarity and the difficulties involved in attributing them correctly, but it is not necessary to look far for an explanation, for sixteenth-century historical writing gave much attention to pre-Roman rulers in Britain, some scholars still giving credit to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s fiction that the British kings of Caesar’s time were descended from immigrants from Troy, and all scholars being conscious that the ruling Tudor dynasty came from Wales and was therefore presumptively of Celtic rather than Roman, Saxon or Norman stock.

It was thus not until the antiquary John Speed came to publish his *History of Great Britain* in 1611 that illustrations of Anglo-Saxon and English coins first figure in a printed book. Speed was not himself a numismatist, but he was obviously in close touch with Robert Cotton, by now a knight and a baronet and a confidant of James I’s leading minister, Lord Northampton, and Speed describes Cotton as ‘another Philadelphus in preserving old monuments and ancient records: whose cabinets were unlocked, & library continually set open to my free accesse; and from whence the chiefest garnishments of this worke have beene enlarged and brought . . . coins of gold, silver, alcumy, and copper, of the Britaines, Romanes, Saxons, Danes and English’. It was thus that Speed’s book is illustrated throughout by woodcuts of coins from Cotton’s collection, selected on the basis that there should be an illustration of one coin of each ruler to whom Speed devotes a section of his text. This has the automatic effect that Anglo-Saxon coins, struck by many short-lived rulers, get a better showing than coins of the period from 1066 to 1603, and there are in fact illustrations of thirty-four Anglo-Saxon coins – Speed appears to illustrate thirty-five but one coin is illustrated twice over under different reigns – as against only twenty-one coins of Norman, Plantagenet and Tudor date put together.

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2 Grant, p. viii.
3 This aspect of Tudor historiography is admirably treated by Sir Thomas Kendrick in his *British Antiquity* (London, 1950).
4 J. Speed, *The historie of Great Britaine*, various editions 1611 onwards. The edition most readily available to the present writer is that of 1632, in which this description of Cotton occurs on an unpaginated leaf which, if paginated, would be pp. 1241–2 of the book.
Where the Anglo-Saxon coins are concerned, there exist contemporary lists of that part of Cotton's collection both in the British Library and in a volume of Peiresc's papers in the Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum in The Hague, and there is also a catalogue, compiled by Samuel Pegge in 1747, of those coins which still remained in the collection when it was acquired for the British Museum in the eighteenth century. I am not going to discuss the Anglo-Saxon coins in detail, for our Honorary Member Drs Gay Van Der Meer has for many years had a paper on the subject in draft form, and it is sufficient to say that the coins illustrated by Speed represent only the tip of the iceberg of what was evidently a very substantial collection, incorporating a large group of coins of Edward the Elder evidently from a hoard, and other smaller groups of coins, e.g. coins of Athelstan I of East Anglia and coins of Harold Harfott and Harthacnut, which no doubt also have their origin in some long-forgotten discovery.\(^5\) What scholars have not yet grappled with is the post-Conquest part of the collection, of which there is a catalogue by Martin Folkes.\(^6\)

It is not easy to assess Cotton as a numismatist, for although he was undoubtedly a great collector of coins, we lack evidence about his skills in interpreting them, and if, as seems likely, he was responsible for telling Speed which coins to illustrate under which reigns, his numismatics was very much of a hit-and-miss variety. This can be seen at once from a consideration of the coins illustrated for English kings between William I and Edward IV, where the coin attributed to William II is a coin of Two Stars type of William I; the coin of Henry II is a coin of Pellets and Quatrefoil type of Henry I; the coin of Richard I, with an obverse legend seemingly beginning RICVS, is a double-struck Short Cross coin of class Vb or Vc, i.e. a coin of the reign of John; the coin of John, understandably, is Irish; the coin of Edward II is a coin of Edward I; the coin of Edward III is a coin of Edward IV; the coin of Richard II is Anglo-Galic; the coins of Henry IV and Henry V are both Calais coins of Henry VI; the coin of Henry VI is a sovereign of Henry VII; and the coin of Edward IV is one of those anonymous Three Crown Irish groats which having rested safely under the heading Edward IV for some three and a half centuries was reattributed by Michael Dolley to the opening months of the reign of Henry VII.\(^7\)

We may, however, underestimate Cotton, for there is just one indication in Speed's book that Cotton's approach to numismatics may have been more sophisticated than we imagine. This has to do with the book's woodcut illustrations. These were done by a woodcut engraver identified by Speed as a certain 'Christ(opher) Swisher'\(^8\) – other sources indicate that the surname was actually Switzer – and readers of the book will notice that each illustration incorporates a number ranging from one to six, usually the number two or three. The explanation for this is provided by a diagram nearly at the end of the book, comprising six circles of increasing diameter inscribed on the same base line and respectively numbered from one to six, and although the heading above it is rather obscurely worded, its purpose is clearly to show that although the woodcut illustrations in the body of the book are all of the same size, the dimensions of the coins themselves vary and the true size of any coin can be established by correlating the number by the illustration with the correct circle on the diagram.\(^9\) The idea must surely have been Cotton's rather than an idea of the engraver or of Speed, and whether Cotton thought of it

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\(^{5}\) A preliminary account of the Anglo-Saxon coins in Cotton's collection, based on Pegge's catalogue only, is given by R. H. M. Dolley and Mrs J. S. Strudwick (subsequently Mrs Martin), 'An early seventeenth-century collection of Anglo-Saxon coins', *BNJ* 27 (1952-4), 302-12.

\(^{6}\) Dolley and Strudwick, p. 308, n.1 and n.3.

\(^{7}\) M. Dolley, 'A note on the attribution of the regally anonymous Three Crown coinage given by Smith and Coffey to Edward IV', *N Circ* 76 (1968), 118.

\(^{8}\) Speed, 1632 edn, p. (1242).

\(^{9}\) The diagram appears at p.1236 of Speed, 1632 edn.
himself or came across a similar diagram in some continental numismatic book, it shows an interest in numismatic method well ahead of his time.10

There was only one other substantial coin collection in early seventeenth-century Britain, and although the evidence for it is fragmentary, its path crossed Cotton’s, as we shall shortly discover, and its non-Roman portion typifies a different strand in the collecting of British coins. This was the collection commenced by Henry, prince of Wales, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, which was inherited, and enlarged up to the outbreak of the Civil War, by his brother, King Charles I.11 The starting point for this collection seems to have been the acquisition by Prince Henry of two very expensive cabinets of Roman coins from the Netherlands, but no early list of it survives and by 1639, when the surviving lists of the collection were drawn up by Abraham Vanderdort, the coin engraver and medallist who doubled as keeper of Charles I’s collection of works of art, its original character had been somewhat diluted by losses and later accessions. Vanderdort’s lists are none the less instructive. Some of the coins, of course, were classical, mostly Roman, but including the occasional coin that was Greek or Celtic. Others, though, were medals and high denomination coins of relatively recent date, which had drifted into the collection in a random manner as gifts from courtiers, or as presents from foreign crowned heads, or as part of the effects of Charles I’s parents, James I and Queen Anne of Denmark. The collection’s British element was thus not a conscious collection in any sense, but an accumulation of the sort of valuable items and curiosities that had sculled about the palaces of rulers since the earliest times. Among them we can dimly glimpse from Vanderdort’s descriptions a series of patterns and trial pieces for the coinage of James I, and a fair number of Scottish coins of the second half of the sixteenth century, reflecting the origins of the ruling dynasty. Accumulations of this character were made not just by royalty but by the nobility and the more substantial gentry before the days of banks, and many of the groups of coins that came up for sale in the nineteenth century and early this century should be regarded as surviving examples of such accumulations rather than as conscious collections.

The outbreak of the English Civil War placed in jeopardy both the Royal collection and the Cotton collection, which after Cotton’s death in 1631 had continued to be housed in his library at Cotton House, which although a private house stood within the precincts of the Palace of Westminster and only a stone’s throw from the Houses of Parliament.12 Here, though, fortune took a hand. Although Cotton as a younger man had had a successful career at Charles I’s court, enjoying the patronage of the powerful Howard family, his antiquarian researches led him to the discovery of legal and other precedents not to the liking of later ministers, and in the parliaments of the 1620s he attached himself to the opposition, with the result that he came to be regarded as one of the spiritual fathers of the movement to assert parliamentary control over the crown.13 Disciples of his were thus likely to be found on the parliamentary side in the Civil War and one of them, the

10 It is interesting to note that in the text of his Chronicon Precieosum (London, 1707) at pp. 43–4, William Fleetwood, who had noticed the diagram, assumes that the figures 2 and 3 beside Speed’s illustrations indicate that ‘the honest and industrious Mr Speed’ believed that Anglo-Saxon and Norman kings issued twopennings and threepences. Fleetwood corrects himself in his preface, having realised that Speed intended the numbers ‘for another purpose’, but it looks as if he still had not found the diagram.
12 Cotton’s library and coin collection remained in Cotton House until 1712.
13 See Kevin Sharpe, Sir Robert Cotton 1586–1631, history and politics in early modern England (London, 1979). As its title indicates, this study of Cotton is primarily concerned with Cotton’s activities as a politician and as a student of history, but it gives a good picture of antiquarian pursuits as practised in Cotton’s circle in the first thirty years of the seventeenth century.
antiquary and numismatist Sir Simonds D'Ewes, found himself sitting as a member of the Long Parliament right through the Civil War until Pride's Purge.14

D'Ewes, who had already been able to take advantage of wartime conditions by buying the coin collection of the earl of Winchilsea in 1646,15 was just the person to take charge both of the Royal collection and of the Cotton collection in 1648-9.16 D'Ewes unfortunately died in April 1650, and it was thought until recently that the only surviving evidence for what he did with the coins when they were in his possession was some rather scrappy documentation in the British Library.17 It now appears that a large sheet of very careful woodcut engravings of coins, bound in a volume in the National Library of Ireland which once belonged to the earls of Wicklow and therefore to their forebear Hugh Howard (1675-1738), government official, numismatist and artist, was, as Joan Murray has suggested to me, most probably produced for D'Ewes in 1649.18 If so, this is useful evidence for the history of the particular coins illustrated, although it is not clear which of the coins belonged to D'Ewes himself and which were coins that he just had on loan. It is clear, though, that the coins illustrated, which range from Ancient British coins to coins of the late sixteenth century, do include Ancient British coins and Anglo-Saxon coins certainly from Cotton's collection, and also include high denomination coins of Henry VIII, Mary, Elizabeth and James VI as king of Scotland which might well have figured in the Royal collection.19 D'Ewes also had in his possession at the time of his death fifty-six coins from the collection of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and these the Oxford University authorities were never able to recover; the late J. G. Milne suggested that they were purchased by Robert Harley when he purchased D'Ewes's books from the D'Ewes's family in 1705, and would therefore have figured in the sale of Harley's son's collection in 1742,20 but Elias Ashmole told a friend in 1656 that 'one Herveigh a gentleman hath bought all the silver coins of Sir Simon D'Ewes' and the likelihood is that this 'Herveigh' was John Hervey (1616-79), a Suffolk neighbour of D'Ewes, who made a fine collection of coins inherited by his descendants the earls of Bristol.21

15 This collection was purchased from Sir William Waller and Thomas Walker, gent., executors of Thomas, 2nd earl of Winchilsea (died 1639), by Thomas Hall, of London, gent., on 21 May 1646 for £440. Hall was acting for D'Ewes who was the real purchaser (cf. British Library, Harleian MS 298, fos. 174). It is necessary to distinguish this collection from a collection formed in Charles II's reign by Henega, 3rd earl of Winchilsea (died 1689), who as Ambassador to the Sublime Porte was one of the earliest English coin collectors to acquire a good collection of coins of Athens; this collection passed to his younger son Henega, 5th earl of Winchilsea (1657-1726), also a keen numismatist. By 1762, when Horace Walpole corresponded on the subject with his friend Michael Lort, dates and ears had become incredibly confused (cf. The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's correspondence, xvi, (1952), 152 and 158).
16 Watson, pp. 14-5.
17 British Library, Harleian MS 255, is a volume of miscellaneous papers of D'Ewes's on numismatics.
18 One of the woodcut illustrations portrays a specimen of the well-known early 17th century goods medal of John, Duke of Albany, and Mrs Murray has pointed out to me that 'one gold piece of John Duke of Albany governor of Scotland' was among a number of coins delivered by D'Ewes to 'Mr Abraham Sweetzer' on 6 August 1649 (and returned to D'Ewes by this individual on or before 30 August 1649) (British Library, Harleian MS 298, fos 168-9). If 'Mr Abraham Sweetzer' was a wood engraver, as Christopher Switzer had been earlier in the century, one might not unreasonably conclude that D'Ewes was here lending the coins so that woodcut illustrations such as those on the sheet in Dublin could be made of them. It does however remain to be established that Abraham Sweetzer was a wood engraver and it is pure conjecture that he might have been a relative of Christopher Switzer.
19 The coins illustrated also include a specimen of the gold solidus of Dorestad in the name of the Emperor Charles which has been the subject of comment by a number of scholars including the present writer.
20 Although some coins remained in the D'Ewes's family's possession when Huntray Wanley visited the family seat in Suffolk in 1704, the collection had by then been 'grievously plunder'd' and the purchase price of twenty guineas finally agreed on for the coins between Wanley and the D'Ewes family does not suggest that they were by then exceptionally splendid or numerous (cf. Watson, pp. 58-9).
21 There is little contemporary testimony to John Hervey as a coin collector - he is mentioned in passing as such by John Evelyn - but his was no doubt the collection meant when 'Mr Batley said the Earl of Bristol hath the best collection of coins & medals in England, even beyond my Lord Pembroke's' (diary entry of 18 August 1716 by the Oxford antiquary Thomas Hearne, Collections, V, 277). The nineteenth-century bookseller and coin dealer J. H. Darr believed that an earl of Bristol - either the 2nd earl (1721-75) or the 3rd earl (1724-79) - bequeathed the collection to King George III, in which case many of the coins may now be in the British Museum.
What does emerge from the documentation in the British Library is that D’Ewes was especially interested in Anglo-Saxon coins, and this ties up with the current of opinion at the time that viewed the Anglo-Saxon period as one when the English had enjoyed a freedom and a liberty taken away from them at the Norman Conquest. This idealised view of Anglo-Saxon England and negative view of Norman England no doubt accounts for the time it took for numismatists to take any serious interest in the issues of the Williams, Henries and Edwards.

It was thus that although the study of Anglo-Saxon numismatics was given a nudge by the publication in 1678 of five plates of coins in Obadiah Walker’s edition of Sir John Spelman’s life of King Alfred, and a further nudge by the presence of four larger plates of coins in Edmund Gibson’s edition of Camden’s Britannia in 1695, in both cases with some accompanying comments of a scholarly nature, it was not until 1699, eighty-eight years after Speed, that the first publication appeared that shed any real light on post-Conquest coins, and I think that it is high time that we gave it its due place in numismatic literature.

It was in fact preceded by William Lowndes’s A report containing an essay for the amendment of the silver coins, published in 1695, which includes a long historical account of the English coinage, and by John Evelyn’s Numismata, A discourse of medals, ancient and modern, published in 1697, but Lowndes’s book sticks to the documentary evidence for the coinage and does not seek to discuss actual coins, while Evelyn knew virtually nothing about coins and medals and the only value of his book is that it publishes the very fine collection of medals which had been accumulated, not consciously collected, by the statesman and historian, Lord Clarendon, and his son. The insufficiency of Evelyn’s book must indeed have been obvious to readers from the start, and we have our author’s explicit testimony, in a letter of 17 March 1698, that it was ‘upon perusal of Mr Evelyn’s Numismata’ that he decided to put pen to paper on ‘our English coins, from the Conquest to the end of Queen Elizabeth’.

Who was our author and what was his publication? Here we must go back three years, and explain that in 1696 William Nicolson, archdeacon of Carlisle, had published a book called The English Historical Library: or, a short view and character of most of the writers now extant, either in print or manuscript, which may be serviceable to the undertakers of a general history of this kingdom. As the title indicates, this was a critical review of works on English history by previous writers, and although it includes a few pages on Ancient British and Roman and Saxon coins Nicolson’s treatment of these is brief, and his casual attitude to the material can be judged from his remark that ‘there’s not much to be learned from any coins we have of our Saxon kings, their silver ones being all of the same size, and generally very slovenly minted’. For this he was somewhat held up to scorn by Mrs Joan Martin in her contribution to the volume of essays on Anglo-Saxon coins published in honour of Sir Frank Stenton, and he lays himself equally open to criticism by his absurd belief that Ancient British coins were not coins at all but amulets.

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23 Sir J. Spelman, Aelfredi Magni Anglorum Regis invicissimi vita (Oxford, 1678). Spelman himself had died in 1643 and all the numismatic information in the volume is supplied by O. Walker.
24 The Clarendon collection of ‘the most noble medals, and glorious medallions, both for number and for choice’ was one of the main sources for the illustrations in John Evelyn’s Numismata, A discourse of medals, ancient and modern (London, 1697), and it is obvious from the illustrations that the medals in the collection must simply have been medals such as those by Thomas Simon and the Roettier family which the 1st and 2nd earls of Clarendon would have acquired in virtue of their positions at court.
25 Letters of eminent men, addressed to Ralph Thoresby, F.R.S., now first published from the originals, I (1832), p. 316 (Nicolson to Thoresby, 17 March 1697/8).
well to remember that Nicolson was a native of Plumbland, near Aspatria in West Cumberland, and that apart from the years which he passed successively as an undergraduate, graduate and Fellow at Queen's College, Oxford, his entire life up to 1696 had been spent in rural parishes in Cumberland where the prospect of coming across Ancient British coins was virtually nil, and the prospect of finding Anglo-Saxon coins not much better.

He followed his 1696 volume by a part II, 'giving a catalogue of most of our ecclesiastical historians', published in the summer of 1697, and by the end of 1697 he was at work on a part III, intended to deal with the literature on the history of English law. It was while engaged on this that he came to the decision to conclude it with a chapter on the English coinage, which ran in the end to some sixty-eight pages of text. He begins with a brisk review of previous publications on the subject, and he then turns to the coins themselves. Here he has to take Speed as his point of departure, for there was nothing else to go on, and he goes through the coins illustrated by Speed, reign by reign. His own observations show common sense but are not particularly knowledgeable, and it does not look as if he would have made all that much progress on his own in unscrambling Speed's attributions. Luckily – and there is probably a moral here for us all – he had the sense to apply for help to two other numismatists in northern England.

One was Ralph Thoresby, who was then forming a famous private museum of antiquities of all kinds at Leeds, to whom Nicolson wrote the letter of 17 March 1698 from which I have already quoted. Nicolson asked Thoresby to let him know if he had coins not taken notice of by Speed, and Thoresby responded promptly, for when Nicolson wrote to him again on 7 May 1698, he thanked him for 'the instructive pains you have taken in sending me the inscriptions of your most rare coins since the Conquest. Several of them are perfectly new to me, and shall be mentioned with the respect which is due to their owner and my friend'.

That, though, was all that Thoresby did immediately, and it was left to another fellow numismatist, John Sharp, archbishop of York, to give Nicolson decisive help with the all important matter of attributing post-Conquest coins to the right reigns. Sharp seems at first to have been drawn into the affair not by Nicolson but by Thoresby, for Sharp, writing to Thoresby on 17 August 1698, began by saying that 'I know no other marks for the distinguishing the three Henries, viz. the 4th, 5th and 6th, but those I told you of at Bishopsthorp', which implies that Thoresby had talked over such matters with Sharp at the archbishop's official residence at Bishopsthorpe, just outside York, sometime in the recent past. Sharp does not in this letter say what these distinguishing marks were, but we know that Sharp thought that coins of this period with annulets by the neck should be attributed to Henry V, that coins without annulets should be attributed to Henry IV, and that, by and large, coins with the Calais mint signature should be attributed to Henry IV or Henry V and not to Henry VI. Not much of this is correct, but Sharp was plainly making an effort to get the attributions right, and further down in his letter to Thoresby he made the perfectly correct observation that 'as for your other Edward IV's groat, you may know whether it belongs to him or the Third Edward by the weight. For Edward the Fourth's groats weigh the same that Henry Sixth and Henry Seventh's do, viz. something more than 6½d of our present money; whereas Edward III's groats weigh almost our ten-pence'. Sharp referred in a later letter to Thoresby to his having 'heretofore' read Thoresby some of his shorthand notes on the English coinage, and that Thoresby 'was then pleased to express your desire that they might be written at length, and that you might have the

30 This is evidenced both by Sharp's own manuscript notes on English silver coins and by Nicolson's citations from them in pt iii of the *English Historical Library*. 
perusal of them', and it seems on the whole likely that this happened on Thoresby's visit to Bishopsthorpe.

Be that as it may, it was not until nearer the end of the year that Nicolson, whether off his own bat or at Thoresby's prompting, sent the archbishop a draft of his intended remarks, and it was this that actually provoked Sharp into putting down his thoughts on the coinage in a systematic way. Sharp put it this way in a letter to Thoresby of 14 December 1698:

But since that, Mr Archdeacon Nicolson was pleased to send me his discourse about the English coins . . . and to desire my thoughts and corrections of it. Here now what you had desired came into my mind, and I presently thought, why may not I, with one labour, pay my respects to Mr Archdeacon and gratify Mr Thoresby, that is, in the Yorkshire proverb, 'kill two birds with one stone'? Upon this, instead of making any remarks upon what he had writ upon the silver coins (though I did upon the gold ones), I set myself to get transcribed my notes (that I had by me) of the silver coins to which I made additions and improvements; which being done, I sent them to him.32

We can judge the impact on Nicolson both from the final text of Nicolson's book, where every observation deriving from Sharp is duly acknowledged, and from Sharp's own notes, which survive in a number of manuscript copies.33 We also have a letter from Nicolson to Thoresby dated 22 December 1698 in which Nicolson refers to having been 'most ravishingly entertained with the perusal of some papers which my Lord Archbishop had sent me of his own composing, touching our English coins', and says that 'I am sure that they gave me that satisfaction which I thought was nowhere to be had'.34

Sharp, like Nicolson, started on the basis of Speed, but whereas Nicolson goes through the material reign by reign, Sharp groups his material under the headings 'The Two Williams', 'Of the Eight Henrys', 'The Six Edwards', and 'The Three Richards', and within each of these headings he provides a careful critical discussion of how the coins should be divided between the various kings. In the course of this he makes at least one very important deduction about Edwardian pence which I set down here in the form in which Nicolson prints it:

My best guide [by which Nicolson means Sharp] has observ'd that Edward the First set up four mints at Dublin, and coin'd a great deal of money in that Kingdom; and that the Old Edward Pennies, that are Irish, have only the three first letters of the name. He likewise takes notice that most of the English have the like: and therefore (considering that this king coin'd far more money than his son) he thinks it reasonable to conclude that all such pennies as have EDW belong to the First of that name; whereas those with EDWA, EDWAR or EDWARD are the Second's, and those with EDWARDVS (at length) were coin'd either by the Third or the Fourth.35

Here we have Sharp combining documentary evidence with the evidence of coin legends in a manner that brings us to the threshold of modern numismatics, and although he himself never got quite the credit for insights of this sort that he should have – his notes only circulated in manuscript during his lifetime – by passing on his notes to Nicolson he did ensure that Nicolson's was, as Thoresby put it, 'the best account that hath ever been published, of the monies of England, from William the Conqueror to the Union of the Two Kingdoms'.36

31 Letters of eminent men, I, 342 (Sharp to Thoresby 14 Dec. 1698).
32 Letters of eminent men, I, 342.
33 The copy of Sharp's notes that he gave to Thoresby was acquired in 1764 by the antiquary Richard Gough, and was printed in vol. vi of John Nichols's Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica (London, 1785). Other manuscripts of Sharp's notes offer textual variants and it is apparent that Sharp revised them as time passed.
34 Letters of eminent men, I, 347.
It is tempting to conclude on that upbeat note, but before numismatists of today go rushing off to consult Nicolson's book, or Sharp's notes (which were printed for the first time in 1785), or the section on post-Conquest coins in Thoresby's catalogue of his museum, published in 1715, I should stress that what they have to say about the coinage is sharply limited in value by one fact common to them all. That is, that they all lived north of the Humber and their familiarity with the English coinage was therefore chiefly with the coins likely to be found in the northern counties. Thus, they were familiar with Edwardian pence (when Nicolson discusses Edward I he refers to 'those pieces of silver which we find on the Borders of Scotland (where this king parted with a great share of his treasure, and afterwards his life)'); they were familiar with groats of Edward III (Nicolson says that 'we have his groats very plentifully . . . numbers of 'em are still dayly discover'd, especially on the confines of the two kingdoms'): and Thoresby, on the strength of a local coin hoard, was the first person to work out that the letters E and B on the king's breast on coins of Edward IV stood for York and Bristol. By contrast, they knew next to nothing about the gold coinage of mediaeval England, which had never circulated as widely in the poorer northern counties as it had further south, and the study of our gold coinage consequently did not make any real progress until well into the eighteenth century.

The upbeat note on which I shall actually end is a rather different one. I have said that Archbishop Sharp's notes on the coinage survive in a number of manuscripts (and eventually found their way into print), and these manuscripts give us a pretty good idea not merely of Sharp's views but of the extent to which these views were based on coins in his own collection. Therefore, it seems wholly appropriate that while mightier collections have come and gone in the last three centuries the mediaeval part of the archbishop's collection remains intact as testimony to one of the fathers of English numismatics.

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37 R. Thoresby, Ducatus Leodiensis . . . to which is added . . . a catalogue of his museum, with the curiosities, natural and artificial, and the antiquities (London, 1715).
39 I must here express my gratitude to the late Miss Olive Lloyd-Baker and to the late Owen Parsons for showing me the Anglo-Saxon coins and a selection of the later coins in the Archbishop Sharp collection on two separate occasions in the late 1960s.