PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS, 1998
G.P. DYER

QUITE by chance I recently reminded myself of Derek Allen’s last Presidential Address, delivered in 1963. A man as many of you know of formidable intellect and scholarship, he bravely looked ahead at the end of his Address and speculated that in the 1990s, in all its essentials, the Society would be indistinguishable from the Society of the 1960s. And so in a real sense I suppose we are: extending and evolving, of course, but still, quite properly in my view, giving precedence to the basic tasks of publishing an annual *Journal* and providing a monthly programme of lectures. And I hope, were he here tonight, that we should also satisfy him that we have a membership, to use his simple terms, as good and happy as it was in 1963.

Now happiness, as every reader of Dickens is aware, is directly linked to financial solvency; and on that front we have just heard the very satisfactory report of our Treasurer, Tim Webb Ware, whose expectation that last year’s small deficit was a temporary aberration has indeed proved to be the case. This year we again show a surplus of income over expenditure and your Council therefore felt able to recommend for the seventh year in succession that the annual subscription should remain unchanged. Very healthy sums are held in reserve and in our three major dedicated funds, and I think we may justly have that feeling of financial security and comfort that for so long eluded Mr Micawber. For this happy state of affairs I want particularly to thank Tim Webb Ware, who for more than ten years has supervised our finances with that wise quality of prudence so often referred to by the present Chancellor of the Exchequer.

During the year I am glad to say that we have elected thirty-three new members and one has been reinstated. After allowing for deaths, resignations and the fourteen amovals just announced, membership now stands at 473 individual members and 114 institutional members. Whether we would wish to claim to be a better membership than that of 1963 I am not sure, but we are certainly larger by some sixty per cent. I wish, however, we could boast thirty-two junior members as we did then, though on a more positive note I calculate that no fewer than forty-nine of us were members in 1963, something that speaks eloquently for the loyalty that we all feel towards the Society.

Of the deaths that have been reported during the year, our sadness has been alleviated by the knowledge that those lost were full of years and achievement. Obituary notices of Raymond Lax and Vincent Newman have already appeared in the CCNB *Newsletter* and it is for that reason alone that I shall say nothing more about them tonight. Within the last few days we have learned of the death at the age of ninety of Pat Brettell, who having been elected in 1942 was one of our longest-serving members. A rare visitor to London, he will be remembered best for his collection of coins of the Devon mints, a lasting record of which has been provided by his sale catalogues with their introductions by Lord Stewartby.

Our regular programme of meetings here at the Warburg has offered the usual broad variety of subjects and has, I hope, catered for the catholic interests of the Society as a whole. We began in January with Venetia Porter speaking about Moroccan gold coins that had been found off the Devon coast, and thoughts of international trade and international movements of bullion remained in our minds in February and March, when first John Kleeberg spoke about the role of Spanish American dollars during the Napoleonic War and then Barrie Cook threw light on the bezant in Angevin England. In April our Editor, Nick Holmes, described the circulation of base metal coinage in Scotland and we stayed in Scotland for the May meeting, when Gareth Williams introduced us to the mysteries of land assessment and the silver...
economy in Norse Scotland. In June, thanks to Hugh Williams, we returned to a subject, the coinage of Carausius, which has previously held our attention and which from its complexity will no doubt do so again. Peter Preston-Morley, in September, revealed a surprisingly raffish John Symonds Udal and we heard with pleasure of the almost chance discovery by Barrie Cook of Udal's cabinet of seventeenth-century Dorset tokens in the British Museum. And finally last month our incoming Secretary, Charles Farthing, spoke of the difficulties encountered in the study of the coins of Carlisle, difficulties that we gathered would be diminished if it were possible to re-locate Carlisle in the middle of Essex.

This year's out-of-town meeting, attended by nearly fifty members, took place on the first Saturday in July and with his usual skill our Director contrived to produce another gloriously sunny day. The venue was Lincoln, in the shadow of the massively impressive Cathedral, and the day's five lectures took as their theme mints, dies and coinage in the East Midlands. Jeffrey May got us off to an intriguing start by using archaeological evidence to re-examine Iron Age minting techniques, and he was followed by Alan Vince, who spoke about the archaeology of Lincoln, and then by Mark Blackburn on coinage in the Southern Danelaw. After a break for lunch, our Vice-President Stewart Lyon gave a characteristically thoughtful account of coinage in the East Midlands after the recovery of the Danelaw, leaving Edward Besly with his description of Civil War siege pieces to take his accustomed place at the rear. It was an excellent day, fully up to the standards that we have set for these out-of-town meetings, and in expressing thanks to our speakers I want also to acknowledge Andrew Burnett and Hugh Pagan, who kindly shared the duties of Chairman.

Looking for a moment beyond the direct concerns of the Society, I was pleased in April to attend the Annual Congress in Bristol of the British Association of Numismatic Societies, though sadly for the organisers, who clearly lacked the prescience of our own Director, they picked what seemed at the time to be the wettest weekend of the year. The following month I was in Dublin as the guest of the International Association of Professional Numismatists, where I spoke on the subject of counterfeiting, evidently causing surprise as a lifelong bachelor by taking my text from Dr Spock's famous book on baby and child care. BANS was rather more fortunate with its autumn weekend, which was spent at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge - fortunate not just with the weather but in the support it received from the College and from the Fitzwilliam Museum, with the participation of Professor Grierson giving special pleasure. Having long been a supporter of BANS I am delighted that it remains in such good heart and I take this opportunity to congratulate our member Joe Bispham on his recent election as President. Also in September I attended the symposium at the Institute of Historical Research on monetary union from ancient Greece to modern Europe, a symposium noteworthy for the stimulating contribution of the British Museum contingent of Andrew Meadows, Gareth Williams and Andrew Burnett. And just a few days ago I was honoured to be the guest speaker at the fortieth birthday celebrations of the South Wales and Monmouthshire Numismatic Society.

But to return to matters closer to home, the Society's year has seen the publication of Robert Thompson's updated edition of the Contents Listing of the Journal. The professional expertise of Galata ensured that in its final stages production went as smoothly as could have been wished, and I am pleased to see Paul and Bente Withers in the audience tonight to share the thanks I want to express to Robert Thompson for a job well done. By your response you have shown how eagerly this new edition has been awaited and I can tell you that well over 120 copies have already been sold and our costs have already been covered. A copy will now be given to each new member on election and I harbour the hope that its publication will encourage the sale of back numbers of the Journal.

The past month has also been marked by the appearance of the second volume in our Special Publications Series, Dick Doty's account of the Soho Mint. As events transpired, the volume became a three-way co-operation between the Society, the Smithsonian Institution and
Spink’s and I confess that at times it seemed a case of two’s company three’s a crowd, but Douglas Saville picked his way through what could have been an administrative jungle with all that professional care and skill that we have long come to associate with him. The book that has emerged is a handsome volume and, written in the readable style that Dr Doty has made his own, I hope it will do well. We shall need to sell something like 120 or so copies to break even and Douglas Saville tells me that to date he has already received more than thirty-five orders from Society members.

I should like to think, therefore, that it has been a more than ordinarily successful year for the Society and for this I thank Council but also more particularly the Officers, to whom I now turn. Of Tim Webb Ware I have already spoken and I will only add my satisfaction that, at a time when a number of changes have coincided, he has kindly agreed to continue as Treasurer and to provide that guarantee of financial stability that is so important for the future welfare of the Society. Continuity has also been preserved in the person of Tony Holmes, our Librarian, who was able to announce with evident relief at our last meeting that the library has completed its move to new quarters within the Warburg and is again accessible to members. For this he deserves our warm gratitude and I know that he would wish me also to acknowledge the assistance he has received from Michael Anderson.

As for our Editors, with the publication of the next volume of the Journal expected at the beginning of the New Year, we may congratulate them on their success in the vital task of keeping the Journal on schedule. Edward Besly, with nine Journals under his belt, has not unreasonably felt that the time has come to move on and Nick Holmes, currently Production Editor, deservedly steps up to the senior post in place of Edward. For the moment, in view of the firm promise of an ideal candidate next November, there is no replacement for Nick as Production Editor but we do not anticipate any difficulty since Edward, despite the new duties of Director which you have just imposed upon him, has agreed to provide assistance as required.

Speaking of the Director, Thomas Curtis has relinquished the post after five years. I have spoken with some feeling on a previous occasion of how much we owe Thomas for his careful planning of our programme, now with the added burden each year of organising an out-of-town meeting, and tonight I say of him only that I could not have wished, during my Presidency, for a more congenial Director. This same compliment I would pay with equal sincerity to our retiring Secretary, Donal Bateson: quietly efficient, always good-humoured and, despite his onerous duties at the Hunterian Museum, never failing each month to make the long and inconvenient journey from Glasgow. He is replaced by Charles Farthing, who has I am sure the goodwill of us all in ensuring the continued efficient running of the Society.

Nor must I omit to mention the Vice-Presidents, always available as a source of wise advice either privately or at Council, ready to contribute to meetings either as speakers or as chairmen.

But for my final comment, however, I want to return to Derek Allen in 1963. Like him, I look around and find it hard to imagine a happier or better membership and I step down tonight as your President confident that you will give David Dykes the same generous and kind-hearted support that you have always given me, and confident, too, that the Society will continued to prosper as it approaches the auspicious milestone of its centenary.

[The second part of the Presidential Address, a study of the copper coinage of William IV, will appear in the next volume of the Journal.]