PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 2001

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Our Anniversary Meeting this evening brings to a close the ninety-eighth year of the Society’s existence. As with any living institution, the Society has experienced its fair share of ups and downs since its foundation in 1903. Indeed, the time is not beyond the memory of many present when, because of its financial straits, its very existence as an independent entity was threatened. Determination, loyalty and the careful husbanding of resources brought the Society through its difficulties to the position where today, as you have just heard from our Treasurer, our finances are fundamentally sound and where, I am confident, we can look forward to an assured future.

This state of affairs owes much to the skilful leadership of a succession of former Presidents, most of whom, I am happy to see, are here this evening. It owes a great deal, too, to the dedication of our Treasurers over this period and especially to Tim Webb Ware who has held the office for the past sixteen and a half years. As he has just told you, and as you would already have realized from the ballot sheets, he has decided to retire tonight from an office that is both burdensome in its responsibilities and time-consuming. He will be keenly missed from the Council table where, apart from his command of the complexities of accounting, he has always been a fund of common sense. We will have an opportunity of thanking him in a more informal atmosphere later this evening but I would wish here to put on record my personal appreciation of his financial stewardship over such a long period. I am deeply grateful and I am sure that in saying so I speak for us all.

As you have agreed, Philip Mernick will take over Tim Webb Ware’s mantle and we wish him equal success. He will have to contend with formidable operational challenges in the face of the continuing fall in our investment income but I am sure he will do so with aplomb.

The underlying strength of our finances is matched by the buoyancy of our numbers. I must admit that I had hoped to be able to announce tonight that we would end 2001 with a membership in excess of the figure of six hundred that has eluded us for so long. With the election of thirty-one new members this year this target seemed more than achievable but death, resignation and the eleven amovals just announced have taken their toll. Our roll now stands at 598 (eight honorary members, 481 ordinary and junior, and 109 institutional members). Almost there but not quite; and even then I must enter a caveat and stress a point made by the late John Brand when he was President. This total of 598 is a nominal figure. Amoval is effected after a two-year failure to pay one’s subscription but there are, as of today, thirty members included in our total who are a year adrift with their dues despite having received more than one reminder from our Treasurer. I am sure that many of these will shortly repair what is probably nothing more than an oversight but I would urge members in this category to reflect on the financial effect their dilatoriness has on the good health of the Society. If simple forgetfulness is the problem members are reminded that they may pay their subscription by bankers’ order.

I mentioned a moment ago that we have eight honorary members. This is a distinction that is conferred sparingly and only on someone who has achieved acknowledged eminence in numismatics or who has served the Society in outstanding measure over many years. It was a great personal pleasure for me that in May honorary membership was accorded to Lord Stewartby. In February he will have completed half a century as a member of the Society, having served as a Council member for sixteen years, Director for nine of them, and subsequently as a Vice-President for a further twenty-two. His devotion to the Society has been second to none and he is always someone who can be counted on for sage and positive advice. But, for all this, it was even more

\[1\] Subsequent to the meeting two members who had been included in the list of amovals renewed their subscriptions; as at 21 December 2001 the membership of the Society thus stood at 600: eight honorary members, 483 ordinary and junior, and 109 institutional members.
on account of his signally distinguished scholarship and his outstanding contributions to numismatic studies, made in the context of a public life that in itself would exhaust most of us, that Lord Stewartby was unanimously elected to honorary membership.

In the summer, we all heard with the greatest pleasure that Graham Dyer, our immediate past President, had been appointed an OBE in Her Majesty the Queen’s Birthday Honours List. The award recognized his notable work as Librarian and Curator of the Royal Mint but I am sure that members will regard it too as a tribute to his achievements in establishing the study of modern British coinage as a serious academic discipline. I have extended our warm congratulations to him on at least two previous occasions but it is not out of place for me to do so again at our Anniversary Meeting.

On a far less happy note I must report that our losses over the past year include three deaths. One, which the Society will feel keenly, is that of Jeffrey Mass (1984), Ichihashi Professor of Japanese History and Civilization at Stanford University and an Honorary Fellow of Hertford College, Oxford. Jeffrey Mass, a most human person as many of you will recall from congresses in Oxford, was an acknowledged expert in the complex field of Japanese medieval history – no mean achievement for a western scholar. But he will be remembered in numismatic circles as an authority on the English Short Cross coinage, his Journal paper on the early issues (Volume 63) being of seminal importance. It is particularly sad that he did not live to see the actual publication of the forthcoming Sylloge volume devoted to his remarkable collection of this series, a work that promises to be of fundamental significance. Michael Sharp contributes a fitting personal appreciation of Jeffrey Mass to the volume of the Journal now in the press.

William Ferguson (1972), a banker by profession, was a student of Scottish medieval coinage, especially of the issues of Alexander III. As recently as February 2000 he had contributed to the Numismatic Circular a paper on the St Andrews pennies of John Balliol and more was expected. A staunch promoter of local numismatics, he was Honorary Treasurer of the Edinburgh Numismatic Society, a society that he had been instrumental in re-founding in the early 1990s.

Both Jeffrey Mass and Bill Ferguson were cut off in their prime with much yet to offer. Noël Woolf (1971) was in his ninetieth year when he died in May. He was also an enthusiastic local numismatist and a former Chairman of the Worthing Numismatic Society but he will be remembered primarily as a long-standing authority on Jacobite history. He made substantial contributions to its literature both in this Journal with his papers on ‘Touch Pieces’ (Volumes XLIX and L) – republished as a BANS monograph in 1990 – and in his Medallic Record of the Jacobite Movement (1988), a work that will remain a major reference for years to come. Noël Woolf’s collection, dispersed by Glendining’s in 1992 was, in the view of one expert, the finest of its kind ever put up for sale.

Someone who was not a member of the Society but who will have been known to all of you, if not personally then certainly through his numismatic creations, must also be mentioned: William Gardner, the calligrapher, engraver and designer of coins, medals and seals, who died in December. He designed and, as he always stressed, also engraved, among many other choice works, the reverses of the 1953 twelve-sided threepence, the English and Scottish shillings and what many of you will have in your pockets tonight, that stalwart workhorse, the twenty pence piece with its elegant heraldic Tudor rose design.

Turning now to internal matters I am happy to be able to say that after a rather difficult interim period, the Library is now operating regularly, under the aegis of a designated key-holder, on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12 noon to 5 pm although it does close early on the Tuesdays when the Royal Numismatic Society meets. I am grateful to the Librarian and the team of duty keyholders, who have made these arrangements possible. Naturally, we all regret the restrictions now imposed on members but I am sure that everyone fully appreciates the necessity of introducing such security measures following the losses that have occurred in the recent past.

More positively, the Library has at last been able to acquire a less archaic computer. Stuart Brookes has been appointed to the Library as Computer Assistant and, with the help of Dr Blackburn and colleagues at the Fitzwilliam Museum, has re-formatted the computer system. As the Librarian has pointed out if this had not been done, and soon, the system would have become so outdated that, in the event of a breakdown, an enormous amount of data could have been irretrievably lost.
Of donations to the Library I must mention one in particular. Harrington E. Manville has presented to the Society a complete run of the American Numismatic Society’s *Colonial Newsletter* and has also undertaken to have the extensive series bound for us. It is an important publication and vital to anyone working on the pre-Independence coinages and currency of North America. We are very grateful to Harry Manville for his most generous gift.

In May Mr Manville’s *Tokens of the Industrial Revolution: Foreign Silver Coins Countermarked for use in Great Britain, c. 1787–1828* was published as the third volume in the Society’s Special Publications Series. This elegantly produced book has been very well received, one review I have seen referring to it as ‘a work that is monumental, ground-breaking and definitive’, and already virtually half of the print run has been taken up. It is ample justification of the Society’s wise decision to use Roy Osborne’s bequest for such Special Publications. As you know several more volumes are firmly in prospect, the next in the Series being Martin Allen’s *The Durham Mint*, which, it is hoped, will appear in the autumn of next year.

The summer of this year saw the publication of a new edition of Robert Thompson’s *Contents of the British Numismatic Journal* extended to include Volume 69 (1999). Copies are available to members from the Honorary Secretary.

As you would again have gathered from your ballot papers, Edward Besly has decided to stand down as Director. When he accepted the office he made it clear that he would not wish to serve for more than three years and he has now completed that span. Before he became Director he had been Production Editor and then Senior Editor of the *Journal* and he has therefore been an Officer of the Society for eleven years. None of these assignments is, by any stretch of the imagination, a sinecure and Edward Besly has had responsibility for nine volumes of the *Journal* and has also devised for us lecture programmes of variety and appeal. All this, of course, undertaken in tandem with his demanding professional responsibilities to which, I must confess, I had a hand in appointing him fifteen or so years ago. His departure from the Directorship is to be greatly regretted but we are fortunate that we will not forfeit his wealth of experience since he will remain a member of Council. His successor as Director, Kevin Clancy, although relieved of the responsibility of organizing next year’s lecture programme at the Warburg Institute, is already turning his mind to our Special Summer Meeting in 2002. This will be in Bath on, appropriately enough for the centre of the cult of Sulis Minerva, the general topic of ‘Coins and Ceremony’.

Edward Besly’s skill in putting together an imaginatively diverse sessional programme was demonstrated again this year. We ranged happily across the spectrum of our terms of reference, from the Iron Age to the Festival of Britain and from medals to coin weights. Most of our speakers were very well known to us: Graham Dyer, Stephen Minnit, Kristin Bornholm, Tim Crafter and Nicholas Mayhew, Donal Bateson, Jonathan Williams and Robert Heslip; all but one members of the Society. Finally, it was especially pleasing to welcome Professor James Graham-Campbell, FBA, Professor of Archaeology in the University of London, to deliver the seventh biennial Linecar Lecture, an assured and polished exposition of his thoughts on the Danelaw and its dual economy which was followed by a spirited discussion. The Lecture is published elsewhere in the volume of the *Journal* carrying this address.

The 2001 Special Summer Meeting was held in Birmingham with papers on varying aspects of Colonial and Overseas Numismatics. The contributions to a theme not visited for some considerable time brought out clearly the necessary interrelationship between numismatics and other academic disciplines. Altogether, it was a particularly enjoyable and fulfilling day, enhanced by the hospitality provided by David Symons and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

For me another pleasurable occasion was the opening by Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II Great Court at the British Museum in December. I was privileged to attend as your President and it was good to see our warm relationship with the Museum underscored by the presence of a number of Society members at this celebration of the remarkable transformation of the old Reading Room and its long ‘lost’ courtyard into a magnificent focal piazza with new exhibition galleries, a public reference centre and attractive visitor facilities. With its glazed canopy it is an architectural feat worth seeing for its own sake.

Among other activities I addressed the Royal Institution of South Wales in Swansea in September. I mention this engagement purely because it brought to mind two interconnected if
somewhat oblique associations with our Society that might entertain you. One of the luminaries of what was founded as a typical nineteenth-century literary and philosophical society was a local antiquary, Colonel George Grant Francis, FSA, editor of the Welsh section of Boyne’s *Seventeenth Century Tokens*. As it happens he was the grandfather of Grant Richardson Francis, President of this Society between 1922 and 1925. Furthermore, our late President’s forename ‘Richardson’ was derived from George Grant Francis’s wife, Sarah. She was a descendant of the armigerous Durham grocer, John Richardson, a seventeenth-century token issuer whom Robert Thompson touched upon in his talk to us about Heralds’ visitations a couple of years ago. Somehow, I do not think that the gallant Colonel, knowledgeable as he was about tokens, was ever aware of this familial numismatic link but it is a snippet of historical whimsy that I can at least share with you.

I have paid tribute to our out-going Treasurer and Director. In conclusion I must thank our other Officers and Council for their support, advice and encouragement – and for their forward thinking. However comfortable we may think we are there is never room for complacency. For all our achievements there is always more that we can do. As we approach our centenary the future is much in our mind. Thoughts are turning to such questions as to how the Society might best promote research, encourage education and help young numismatists, and the extent to which the rapid developments taking place in information technology can be harnessed to the Society’s aims. These are all areas, among others no doubt, to which we must direct our attention. And as a first step I have invited our Vice-President, Peter Woodhead, to form a small working group to look at some of these questions and produce a discussion paper for Council. I am sure that many of you will have contributions to make to the debate and I know that Mr Woodhead will welcome members’ views.

So another year comes to an end. Shortly we will adjourn to toast the future of the Society and also to express our thanks to Tim Webb Ware for his sterling services as our Treasurer for so long. This moment of relaxation has been made possible, the Treasurer tells me, thanks to the beneficience of an anonymous donor and, even I do not know who that is. Before the party spirit descends, however, I should like to say something about the productions of the eighteenth-century Birmingham die-sinker and medallist, John Stubbs Jorden.

(The President then delivered a paper entitled ‘John Stubbs Jorden, Die-Sinker and Medallist’, the text of which is published at pages 121–137, above).