OBITUARY

HARRINGTON EMERSON MANVILLE (1929–2015)

HARRINGTON Manville, or Harry as his many friends knew him, had been a highly significant contributor to the knowledge base of British numismatics for almost fifty years, despite being a long-term resident of Washington, D.C. He will be remembered as a collector, as a scholar, and as a staunch supporter both of the British Numismatic Society and of the British Association of Numismatic Societies.

Harry was born in New York, USA, on 6 September 1929. After education at Mount Hermon School and Amherst College, Massachusetts (BA 1951), he served in the U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps at several locations in Germany between 1952 and 1954, and after a further degree course at the University of Colorado (MA 1956), he became an officer in the US Information Agency (the agency responsible for the US Government’s overseas education and information programmes).

Initial overseas postings included appointments in Karachi, Madras, and South Korea, leading on to a longer period as Cultural Affairs Officer at the US Embassy in Vientiane, Laos, between 1961 and 1965. His years there coincided with the Vietnam War, but also brought him into contact with his future and much loved wife, Joelle Urquhart, whom he married in Vientiane in June 1962. After a return to the US and a brief posting to Lyon, France, he was to serve successively as Cultural Attaché and First Secretary at the US Embassy in Oslo, Norway, between 1968 and 1972, and as Public Affairs Officer in Montreal and Quebec, Canada, from 1972 to 1976, before taking early retirement in 1980.

Harry had been interested in the history of the British coinage, rather than that of the coinage of the United States, since he had been a young man, and it is appropriate to note that the subject matter of his MA thesis at the University of Colorado was in fact British coinage. As a collector, his primary interest was from the start in the English regal milled silver series (he did not collect coins struck in gold or copper), but he subsequently developed a keen interest in the countermarked Spanish silver dollars used in commercial and workforce payments by British businesses between the late 1780s and the end of the 1820s, and his monograph on these, Tokens of the Industrial Revolution, Foreign Silver Coins Countermarked for Use in Great Britain c.1787–1828, issued as a volume in the British Numismatic Society’s Special Publication Series in 2001, will remain the essential work of reference on this series.

Between the mid-1950s and his retirement from US government service in 1980 Harry had been able to put together a choice, and very carefully selected, collection of English milled silver coins struck between the Commonwealth period and the end of the eighteenth century. He decided to sell these via a Spink sale on 4 June 1980, to provide him with additional resources for his retirement years. The auction catalogue ran to 432 lots and is an excellent record of the coins concerned. A further disposal of one hundred coins from this series, many of them patterns, proofs or other exceptional items, was to follow, as lots 589–688 of a Spink sale, 16 November 1999.

Harry had parted with an initial collection of Spanish dollars countermarked by the Bank of England early on, in a Glendining sale of 19 June 1974, lots 384–412 (his ownership of these pieces was not mentioned in the catalogue), but he continued to build a fine collection of Spanish dollars countermarked for individual British businesses, and the cream of this was to pass by a private treaty sale in 1998 to the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum (gifts to the Department from his associated collection of counterfeits of countermarked tokens were to follow between 2001 and 2006).

He had also made a small collection of Jacobite medals, sold anonymously as lots 709–731 in a Dix Noonan Webb sale of 17 September 1997, and a very respectable collection of hammered

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silver coins of the Commonwealth period and of the early years of the reign of Charles II, which were to form the first 85 lots of a Spink sale held in July 2001. His Scottish and Irish coins of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries remained in his possession until his death, and disposal of them by auction was scheduled for September 2015.

Initially, the focus of Harry’s published writings was on topics arising from his specialist coin collecting areas, discussed by him in a number of useful notes contributed to Spink’s Numismatic Circular, Seaby’s Coin and Medal Bulletin, and so on. With the passage of time, Harry’s deepening interest in the published sources for the history of numismatics in Britain, drawing on a respect for the printed word engendered by the fact that his father, Arthur J. Manville, had been the proprietor of a bookshop in upstate New York in the interwar period, led him both to put together a notable numismatic reference library of his own and to embark on the compilation of a series of volumes under the collective title Encyclopaedia of British Numismatics.

The Encyclopaedia was to appear in five volumes in six instalments over a period of twenty-eight years between 1986 and 2014. The first volume, British Numismatic Auction Catalogues 1710–1984, co-authored by Harry and Terence J. Robertson, provides a comprehensive listing of the extant catalogues of coin auctions held over this long period, and remains indispensable for scholars, collectors and members of the coin trade alike. The second volume, Numismatic Guide to British & Irish Periodicals, published in two separate but substantial parts in 1993 and 1997, may not be as regularly consulted, but is a very reliable scholarly resource which can prove unexpectedly helpful to researchers. Of the other volumes, the fourth, Biographical Dictionary of British and Irish Numismatics, published in 2009, is almost as essential an aide to the researcher as the auction catalogue volume, and benefits throughout from Harry’s eye for interesting detail and his apt quotations from the published literature of the past.

Throughout his retirement years Harry made regular visits to Britain, normally timing them to coincide with meetings of the British Numismatic Society, to which he was elected a member on 22 October 1963, and with the annual Congresses of the British Association of Numismatic Societies (BANS). His involvement with the British Numismatic Society led him to contribute a number of papers and short notes to the British Numismatic Journal, of which the most substantial are two in which he used previously overlooked published sources to amplify or correct J.D.A. Thompson’s Inventory of British Coin Hoards and Brown and Dolley’s Coin Hoards of Great Britain and Ireland 1500–1967, and a more recent paper on the 1787 shilling, written jointly with Peter Gaspar. His services to the study of the history of the British coinage, which had already been recognised in a small way by the presentation to him in 2003 of a striking in silver of the British Numismatic Society’s Centenary Medal, were further recognised in a fitting manner by his election as an Honorary Member of the British Numismatic Society on 28 April 2009, and by the dedication to him of vol. 83 of the British Numismatic Journal in 2013.

The pleasure that Harry took in attending BANS Congresses, involving journeys over the years to almost every major city in the British Isles (latterly made arduous by his declining health), led to his being commissioned to write BANS’s official history, The British Association of Numismatic Societies: the First Fifty Years 1947–1997, published in 1999. He was also, in later life, a familiar figure at successive International Numismatic Congresses, contributing the sections devoted to the post-1485 coinages of England, Wales and Scotland for the Survey of Numismatic Research volumes produced for the Congresses held in 1997 and 2003.

Harry was a Life Fellow of the American Numismatic Society (to which he had been elected on 5 January 1963), a Fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society (20 November 1963), a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (30 November 1994), and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London (18 May 2006), as well as being a former President of the Washington Numismatic Society.

Harry’s cheerfulness and friendly nature made him a general favourite among his numismatic acquaintance, and served him well both as a collector of coins and in building up his very impressive numismatic library, focused on the coinages of the British Isles and especially strong in coin auction catalogues of the later eighteenth century and of the nineteenth century.
Highpoints of the catalogue collection included the only copy so far to be traced of the catalogue of the auction sale held at Preston, Lancashire, 15–18 December 1851, offering the local collector Joseph Kenyon’s remarkable parcel of coins from the celebrated Cuerdale hoard of 1840, and also a splendid run of the coin auction catalogues issued in the third quarter of the nineteenth century by the Dowell firm of auctioneers in Edinburgh, assembled at that time by the Edinburgh-based coin collector George Sim.

In putting together his library Harry was materially assisted by one of us (DS), to whom he entrusted the disposal of his numismatic books in the last months of his life, and also by the encouragement that he received over many years from his close friends Frank and Laurese Katen, dealers in coins and numismatic literature from Silver Spring, Maryland.

A final failure in Harry’s health led to Joelle and him relocating in July 2014 to Seattle, in Washington State on the opposite coast of the USA, in order to be close to their son Duncan and his family, and he was to die there on 18 February 2015.

HUGH PAGAN
DOUGLAS SAVILLE