

THE BRITISH NUMISMATIC SOCIETY



Newsletter

Summer 2005

**From the President
Dr Mark Blackburn**

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Dear Member,

Blunt Prize Established

Following the celebrations last year of the centenary of Christopher Blunt's birth (*Newsletter*, Summer 2004), it has been decided to rename and dedicate the Council Prize to the memory of Mr Blunt, with the warm approval of the Blunt family. The Council Prize was instituted in 1984 for younger numismatists, preferably under 35, who have made a significant contribution to our subject.

For almost fifty years Christopher Blunt (1904-1987) was the central figure in British numismatics. He achieved this through his own writings, his editorial work for the *BNJ* and the *SCBI* series, his organisation and support of the British and Royal Numismatic Societies, and his personal encouragement of and influence on others. He was particularly supportive of younger numismatists, and it is very appropriate that the Blunt Prize should be intended for them. The Council Prize had been a cash award of £150, and as the Blunt Prize this has now been increased to £300.

First Blunt Prize awarded to an Indian numismatist

The first Blunt Prize was awarded in May to Dr Shailendra Bhandare for his contribution to the study of the Indian coinages, especially those of the Mughals, East India Company and the Princely States, i.e. from the period of British activity and rule in India.

His interest in coins developed at a young age, but at university in Bombay (Mumbai) he first studied Pharmacy, qualifying for practice. After a few years he returned to university to study Indian history with a focus on numismatics. In 1999 he won a visiting fellowship to come to the UK to work on the Indian coin collection in the Fitzwilliam Museum, and subsequently he was awarded one to study in the British Museum, before being appointed to his present post of Assistant Keeper of South Asian numismatics at the Ashmolean Museum in 2002. He is one of the most promising numismatists India has produced, and his impressive publication record spans the broad range of Indian numismatics from the earliest punch-marked coins to modern banknotes.

The Prize was presented at our May meeting by Mr Simon Blunt, son of Christopher Blunt. After the presentation, Dr Bhandare showed that the award was fully deserved by delivering an accomplished and fascinating lecture on 'The East India Company Mint at Bombay: Early Years (1672 - 1715)'. This is the first time one of our awards has been made primarily for work on the coinage of one of the Commonwealth countries, recognising the breath of the Society's interests.

Sanford Saltus Gold Medal Rules Revised

Last year Council established a committee under the chairmanship of our Vice-President Dr Stewart Lyon to review the regulations governing the John Sanford Saltus Medal, the Society's premier distinction. As a result of its recommendations Council has made a number of significant changes, which will apply to the next award of the Medal that will be the subject of a ballot of members this November.

Previously the Medal was awarded for the best paper or papers appearing in the *British Numismatic Journal*. However, numismatic research is published in a much wider range of publications than was the case when the Medal was established in 1910, and greater importance is now laid on presenting numismatic evidence to a wider academic audience, particularly historians and archaeologists. Under the new rules the award will be made for a person's scholarly contribution to British numismatics, taking account of *all* his or her publications in the field, whether in numismatic or other periodicals, conference proceedings, collections of essays or independent books, including ones appearing in our own Special Publications series.

As before, the award will be determined by a ballot of members, and a list of people thought to be particularly well qualified will be circulated with a note of their principal publications. Council has decided to make non-members, as well as members, eligible for the Medal so that it may truly be seen to be the leading award for scholarship in British numismatics. It will continue to be awarded every three years, but provision has been made for the possibility of a special award, in exceptional circumstances, on the recommendation of Council. The revised rules are set out in full below, and those interested may compare them with the previous rules that were published in *BNJ* 63 (1993), p. 178.

Prize Fund

Having reviewed the terms of our two principal prizes to strengthen them and their reputations, Council turned to consider the way in which they are funded. Although Mr Sanford Saltus originally provided an endowment for the Medal, this has long since been exhausted, and for many years both the Medal and the Council Prize have been paid for out of our current income. The increase in value of the Blunt Prize to £300 and the rising costs of striking the 18ct gold Sanford Saltus Medal, currently around £600, would represent a significant charge on our subscriptions. The Society is currently in a good financial state, but it may not always be so, and we have therefore decided to launch an appeal to establish a Prize Fund which would bear costs of the Blunt and Sanford Saltus awards, securing their future.

I have set out details of the appeal in an accompanying letter. If we can raise £7,000-£10,000 this should ensure that these awards are self-sufficient in the long term. This could be achieved if each member gave just £20. I am delighted to say that already the Blunt Family, and several senior members and members of Council have contributed more than £3,500 towards our goal. Please read my letter and, if you are able, help us to meet our target. This is the first appeal for funds the Society has made since the 1970s. We do so from a position of strength, but with a responsibility to build for the future of numismatics.

BNS at Coinex 2005

The British Numismatic Trade Association has moved its annual coin fair to the Excel Exhibition Centre in London's Royal Victoria Dock this year. They have kindly offered the Society a free exhibition table for 30 September and 1 October so that we can display and sell our publications, collect subscriptions and promote the Society among collectors and dealers. We need volunteers to man the stall. If you are able to help, if only for a couple of hours, you will in return get free entrance to the Fair. The hours are 11am-6.30pm Friday 30th September and 10am-4pm Saturday 1st October. Please contact Frances Simmons, who is

coordinating helpers from the BNS: c/o Simmons Gallery, PO Box 104, Leytonstone, London E11 1ND; tel: 020 8989 8097 or info@simmonsgallery.co.uk.

Shrewsbury Summer Meeting

The Summer Meeting on the theme of Bullion and Money (9 July) was attended by some 45 members, many of whom travelled far to listen to six well coordinated papers ranging from Roman British currency to 20th-century British East Africa. A number brought their spouses, taking the opportunity to spend the rest of the weekend exploring this charming area of Shropshire.

Dinner After Meetings

Finally, after our meetings ten or twelve members normally take the speaker to dinner at an Italian restaurant off Tottenham Court Road. The meal is open to anyone who wishes to come along, so do join us if you wish – don't feel you need to be invited. The cost including wine is around £25 each. However, we also plan to experiment occasionally by taking the speaker for a simpler meal in order that members that cannot afford this can participate too. I hope we can try this out for the September meeting.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Blackburn". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Coenwulf Gold Mancus

The Culture Minister, David Lammy, has placed a temporary export bar on the gold mancus of Coenwulf, king of Mercia (796-821), found in 1991 at Biggleswade, giving UK Museums a chance to raise the money to keep it in Britain. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art had earlier found that the coin was so closely connected with our history and national life that its departure would be a misfortune; that it was of outstanding aesthetic importance; and that it was of outstanding significance for the study of numismatics, monetary history, royal government and the history of London, where it was produced. The Committee also awarded a starred rating to the coin, meaning that every possible effort should be made to raise enough money to keep it in the country.

Leaden Tokens Telegraph. A group of enthusiasts have started to publish a monthly newsletter on lead tokens. They are seeking to exchange information about tokens, foster contacts, particularly abroad, and inspire research into this neglected area of numismatics. Five issues have appeared so far, posted on the web at: www.leadtokens.org.uk.

Doctorate for *BNJ* Editor

David Symons, an Editor of *BNJ*, has been awarded a PhD from Birmingham University for his dissertation on 'Aspects of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman mint of Worcester, 975-1158'. This represents many years of hard work pursued entirely in his spare time while holding a busy curatorial post in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. We send David our warm congratulations.

REVISED RULES FOR THE JOHN SANFORD SALTUS MEDAL

1. The obverse of the medal shall bear a device representing Britannia on the seashore, surrounded by the legend THE BRITISH NUMISMATIC SOCIETY. The reverse shall bear the legend THE JOHN SANFORD SALTUS MEDAL AWARDED TO FOR SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS TO BRITISH NUMISMATICS (the name of the recipient and date of the award being engraved in spaces left for that purpose).

2. In case such device and legend, other than the name of Mr John Sanford Saltus, shall from constitutional changes or other unforeseen circumstances become inappropriate or obsolete, they may be changed or varied by resolution of the Society's Council.

3. The John Sanford Saltus Medal shall normally be awarded every third year.

4. The medal shall be awarded to the person, being a member of the Society or not, who shall receive the highest number of votes from the Members as having in their opinion made the scholarly contribution to British numismatics most deserving of such recognition, as evidenced by published work or works, whether in the *British Numismatic Journal* or elsewhere.

5. A successful candidate shall not again be eligible for the award.

6. The award shall be by ballot, and a form for this purpose shall be sent out together with the voting papers for the election of President, Officers and Council, and shall be returnable and counted with them at the Anniversary Meeting in each year in which the medal is to be awarded. Such a form shall include the words 'I vote for the award of the John Sanford Saltus Medal to . . .', with a space left for the Member's signature. It shall also contain the names of those previous recipients who are therefore no longer eligible for the award.

7. Council, acting on the advice of a committee of such disinterested persons

(normally being previous recipients of the medal) as in its absolute discretion it shall have appointed for the purpose, shall on every such occasion distribute to Members a list of such persons who are considered as particularly well-qualified for the award, together with a note of their principal publication or publications relating to British numismatics. Council shall also advise Members that publications of joint authorship should be considered as part of the total contribution by any of the individuals concerned, but should not by themselves be regarded as sufficient to qualify those individuals for the award.

8. Any canvassing by or on behalf of a candidate shall render his or her success inoperative, and the decision of Council shall be absolute on this head, nor need Council express any reasons for such a decision.

9. The result of the ballot shall be announced by the President or Chairman at the Anniversary Meeting in the year concerned.

10. The medal shall, if circumstances permit, be presented by the President or chairman to the successful candidate in person at a subsequent Ordinary or Anniversary Meeting of the Society. On this occasion he shall use the formula 'You have been awarded the John Sanford Saltus Medal of the British Numismatic Society for the year . . ., by the vote of the Members of the British Numismatic Society, for your scholarly contributions to British numismatics'.

11. Council may in exceptional circumstances propose to Members that a special award of the medal be made to a distinguished scholar whose work has had an important bearing on the study of British numismatics.

12. The foregoing rules shall, so far as is possible, evolve with and upon any constitutional changes in the Society, but it shall be open to the Society's Council to make such alterations to them, or authorise such temporary procedural variations, as shall from time to time be required.

Visit the Society's Web site: www.britnumsoc.org