

## Stewart Lyon – A Personal Tribute.

By William MacKay, Director, The British Numismatic Society.

I first got to know Stewart in the early years of this century when I started to get involved in the BNS and the study of Anglo-Saxon coinage. From the beginning of this I recall his easy ability to engage with a fellow collector researcher and long conversations at BNS meetings exploring ideas.

Many of us will have experienced his kindness to fellow ‘travellers’. His commitment to the Society was that of quiet professionalism, of duty to what it stood for. His passion for his collection, where he took the approach of the scholar collector developing depth in the areas that interested to him while also endeavouring to acquire the major types in the sequence as a whole, was an example to all collectors. It was fitting that he left a permanent record of this in the *Sylloge* he completed and published in 2016.

His rigour in seeking to enhance our knowledge of various coinages, ranging from the ninth-century Northumbrian issues to the last small cross type coinage of Æthelred II, always set high standards. All these series provided their own challenges and Stewart was never to be put off by these. Indeed I cannot help but feeling he relished the challenge.

But one thing above all stands out for me; his intellectual generosity. Coming into numismatics relatively later in life, I was gently prodded by Mark Blackburn to publish something. A short article wisely followed, the subject of which I now forget but it might have been something to do with an early penny.

Thereafter discussion with Adrian Lyons, another enthusiastic collector and ‘newcomer’ to the pursuit led us to team up to publish something more significant. We chose Æthelred I because it seemed relatively uncomplicated but also a coinage that had not been examined in detail before. But in doing this we were both novices to the scale and depth needed for research and writing. Stewart no doubt knew this and we both got to know him well at post BNS meeting dinners at the Mondello in Goodge Street. Lively discussion became a feature of these meals and we soon learnt that often Stewart would make a point not to correct our errors but to see if we had thought about it. Over time we came to know that in fact he knew the answer but like every good tutor, he wanted us to work it out for ourselves. This was an unselfish style of scholarship, something which in times past might have been described as that of a gentleman.

It was around this time that I mentioned to my late father in law, also a London actuary, that I had met Stewart Lyon. ‘Oh Stewart, I know him’ he responded, hardly surprising as both were Fellows of the Institute of Actuaries. They both had a shared passion not just in the numbers of actuarial work, but also music. Reminiscing my father in law then added ‘We used to go off to the Wigmore Hall when we were stranded in town by rail strikes’ and he added ‘Stewart helped me you know, when I was studying for my actuarial exams.’ In this comment I then saw something I, a generation on, had also experienced. His passion for something he loved and his generosity in helping others succeed by sharing his expertise.

Earlier today I met with Deborah Stewartby to hand her a copy of the newly published first volume of the *Sylloge* of the Lord Stewartby collection of Scottish coins. We talked of the great friendship between Stewart Lyon and Ian Stewart, later Lord Stewartby, and of their collaboration in numismatics over more than sixty years. She spoke warmly of the strong friendship between the Lyon and Stewart families and she recalled with gratitude the tremendous effort Stewart and Elizabeth

made to travel up to The British Academy in June 2019 for the Symposium on the numismatic legacy of Lord Stewartby at which he spoke generously on Ian's numismatic legacy.

Stewart Lyon will be missed by many. I hope the sense of duty and generosity that he so possessed will be an example that we can all emulate and which will not be lost on future generations. And in so doing it can enable fellow numismatic travellers to succeed and numismatics as a whole to thrive.

His example is much missed.

*William MacKay*  
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