

# PRESIDENT'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2016

ROGER BLAND

THE Society has enjoyed another active and productive year, thanks, as ever, to the hard work of your officers and Council. Our Secretary, Peter Preston-Morley, has continued to conduct the business of meetings and Council with great efficiency and we are greatly in his debt. We should also record our thanks to our former Membership Secretary, Philip Skingley, formerly of Spink's, not only for looking after our members, but also for enabling us to meet here. We are very grateful to Philip for arranging this and also for organising our parties at Spink's. Our Secretary and Treasurer have decided that between them they can cover the role of the Membership Secretary, and we are grateful to them for agreeing to take on this additional responsibility.

Last year the Society introduced a number of measures to bring in new members, especially younger ones: these included halving the subscription rate for two years for all new members and giving two years' free membership to all those who applied for one of the Society's bursaries. At the same time, our Secretary used the talk that he gave at the New York International Numismatic Convention in January as an excellent recruitment tool for the Society and we also circulated a revised membership leaflet in *Coin News*. I am glad to report that the membership drive has proved to be very successful: we have elected no fewer than sixty-nine new members this year, against which must be set ten resignations, five deaths and fourteen amovals under Bye-Law IV.7. This is a net gain of forty, a very creditable number. Our total membership stands at a very healthy total of 592 and great credit is due to those who worked hard to achieve this, especially our Secretary.

Last year, we also agreed to spend up to £5,000 on a professional re-design of the Society's website, as this is an essential vehicle of communication and publicity and the current website is not as easy to update as it could be. We are very grateful to Andy Woods for leading on this and for drafting a detailed brief: we hope the work will be done soon. Andy has also established a Twitter account for the Society.

As we have heard, our Treasurer continues to ensure that the Society remains in good financial health; we should remember that it was not always like this and we are very grateful to Philip for looking after our finances and also to our Honorary Auditor, Tony Merson, for his work on the accounts. Thanks to our Treasurer's careful management we have been able to hold our subscription level for fourteen years now while our reserves remain stable at around £204,000. Our income continues to exceed our outgoings, and this has for the last few years enabled us to donate money to good causes within the Society's remit in response to requests received, as well as establishing the bursary scheme. It is important that we do this to justify our charitable status. This year Council agreed to establish a British Numismatic Society Fund for Research with a formal application process and £3,000 a year to start with; grants will be made from 2017. The intention is that this Fund should be separate from the student bursary programme.

These bursaries are now in their fourth year and, as in previous years, we supported three, but we have increased the grants to £750 each. The interns were Fiona Johnstone from Edinburgh University at the British Museum, Tristan Griffin from York University at the Yorkshire Museum and Cristina Sanna from the University of Bologna at Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum. We are grateful to those museums for hosting the interns and to Sam Moorhead for administering the scheme. We also gave grants of £300 to Tony Abramson for the Sixth Symposium on Early Medieval Coinage at Cambridge in October and £90 to Murray Andrews for workshop on 'Coins, Hoards and Special Deposits' in London in June.

The most important and lasting benefit that members receive from the Society is the *Journal* and this year Martin Allen has continued to hold the fort as our sole editor, responsible both for the *Journal* and for Special Publications. The *Journal* is printed so regularly every year and to such a high standard that it is easy to forget all the work that Martin puts into editing it and seeing it through the press with typesetters and printers and we congratulate him on producing yet another excellent volume, 86, which was published in September, probably the earliest time in the year that it has ever appeared. No Special Publications came out this year, but future volumes are in the pipeline.

Turning to our meetings, we thank our new Director, Rory Naismith, for organizing another varied programme of meetings this year and thanks to our speakers Philip Attwood, Christine Desan, David Dykes, Marta Fanello, Ceri Houlbrook, Frida Pellegrino, Jeremy Piercy and Gareth Williams. Our Joint Summer Meeting with the Royal Numismatic Society was held this year in Cambridge on the theme 'A Sense of Place: Coinage in context from the Iron Age to WWII' and was attended by forty-eight people. We are grateful to the speakers Ian Leins, Sam Moorhead, Adrian Popescu, Andrew Woods, Stefano Locatelli and Gilly Carr and, above all to Richard Kelleher for organising it. I have already mentioned the Society's first ever meeting held abroad, when our Secretary spoke at the New York International Numismatic Convention in January, and was able to recruit the very impressive tally of fifteen new members as a result. We are grateful to David Guest for agreeing to speak at the Convention again in January 2017.

We also thank Robert Thompson for looking after that very important asset, the joint library, which we share with the Royal Numismatic Society. Andrew Burnett, President of our sister Society and a member of our Council, has initiated a review of the library, as it is not as well used as it deserves to be. Our Society is fully engaged in that review and one meeting of a joint working party has been held, with Sam Moorhead representing this Society. This initiative will no doubt develop over next year.

I would like to express my thanks to Ken Eckhardt and Bradley Shepherd who are standing down from Council by rotation; we also lost Marion Archibald from Council. We welcome the three new members of Council who have been elected this evening: Elina Screen of Oxford University, Anja Rohde of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent universities and Rachel Wilkinson of the University of Leicester, and also our new President, Kevin Clancy, Director of the Royal Mint Museum and former Director of this Society.

It is my sad duty to record the deaths of five members: Marion Archibald, was the much-loved Curator of Medieval coins in the Coin Department at the British Museum for most of her career and Sanford Saltus medallist in 1980 besides being the recipient of a major Festschrift ten years ago: she died on 23 April at the age 79. An obituary is published in this volume of the *Journal* (pp. 297–301).

John Casey, who died in June at the age of 81 was an expert on Roman coins, particularly coin finds from Roman Britain, and author of a book on Carausius and Allectus; a memorial event is to be held at the Society of Antiquaries on 2 December. John generously remembered the Society in his will.

Jeffrey North was the author of the standard work *English Hammered Coins*; he had been a member since 1957 and he too was a Sanford Saltus medallist (in 1995). He was also a generous benefactor to this Society, endowing the book prize that we awarded this evening and also the North Medal for Services to British Numismatics. Jeffrey died on 31 March at the age of 96. An obituary was published in last year's volume of the *Journal*. We also lost Robin Baker, of Essex, a member since 1978, who died in January at the age of 58 and Alan Blake, of Kent, a member since 2007, who died in April at the age of 69.

In January we elected our former Vice-President, Peter Mitchell, and Professor James Graham-Campbell, as Honorary Members, and in September also elected our Vice-President Hugh Pagan as an Honorary Member, all well-deserved honours. The North book prize was awarded to Philip de Jersey for his book *Coin Hoards in Iron Age Britain* (see below).

As my term as your President closes this evening, I will conclude with a brief glance back over the last five years. When I arrived, the Society had just made digital versions of all the

back issues of its *Journal* freely available online – a tremendous resource and far in advance of most other societies. In that period, besides publishing five excellent issues of our *Journal*, we have also produced four special publications (*The Brussels Hoard*; *The Diaries of Leonard Wyon*; *The Abbey and Mint of Bury St Edmunds from 1279* and *Coin Hoards in Iron Age Britain*). We have also supported twelve student bursaries and have given out several other grants. While doing all this, our finances have remained sound: the subscription has been held steady for fourteen years, but we have been able modestly to increase our reserves from £189,000 in 2010 to £204,000 now – quite an achievement. In the first three years of my term as President we were losing members – we suffered a net loss of twenty-nine between 2012 and 2014, and I am glad to say that in the last two years that trend has been more than reversed, as we gained nine members last year and forty this year. For all these achievements, we have to thank our hard-working officers and Council. I do believe the Society is in good heart and well placed to face any challenges that may lie ahead.

I know that my successor Kevin Clancy will guide the affairs of the Society with a sure hand and I wish him all success in doing so.

**The North Book Prize**, established in 2006, is awarded every two years for the best book on British numismatics published in the last three years. A sub-committee, under our Librarian, Robert Thompson, had several excellent books to review but Council felt that there was one outstanding candidate this year, Philip de Jersey's *Coin Hoards in Iron Age Britain*. This is our Society's twelfth Special Publication, published in 2014.

Philip has given us the definitive treatment of Iron Age coin hoards from Britain which will stand for many years to come, but the prize also honours Philip's great contribution to the study of Iron Age coin finds from Britain, not only in his many other published books and articles, but also as the long-serving curator of the Oxford Celtic Coin Index. And just after Philip had returned to his native Channel Islands, Celtic coin hoards continued to pursue him, as there was discovered on Jersey by far the largest hoard of Celtic coins ever found, the Grouville hoard, with which Philip has been deeply involved.