

PRESENTATION TO PROFESSOR PHILIP GRIERSON, 27 MAY 1997

In making the presentation, the President said:

TONIGHT it is my happy duty on behalf of the Society to present to Professor Philip Grierson a special striking of the Sanford Saltus Medal, our Society's highest award. That we should have adopted this somewhat unusual course to honour someone who is already an Honorary Member of the Society speaks for the very high regard in which he is held. And not just by us, for it is universally acknowledged that he is one of the truly great names of numismatics, a scholar of international stature. It was only a few months ago that one of our Vice-Presidents, Lord Stewartby, said of him that his knowledge and understanding of medieval coinage can surely never have been equalled. And it was another of our Vice-Presidents, Hugh Pagan, who as usual got it right when he wrote some years ago that Philip Grierson has more successfully combined the roles of historian, student of coinage and coin collector than any numismatist living and working in Britain in the past century and a half since the emergence of numismatics as an independent discipline.

When I wrote to Philip Grierson to tell him of the Society's intention he modestly expressed surprise as his contribution to the numismatics of the British Isles had been 'so marginal'. Yet when I looked through the *Journal*, I found an impressive number of papers and notes going back as far as the volume for 1949–51, ranging from the Anglo-Saxon period to the sixteenth century and demonstrating that astonishing breadth of learning that is his hallmark. For myself I well remember as a young man reading his paper on the origins of the English sovereign and being made vividly aware, perhaps for the first time in my life, of that deeper knowledge and understanding that comes from Philip Grierson's unrivalled ability to place the coins of this country in a wider European context.

The distinction of his career has naturally been recognised by many honours and awards, at home and abroad, and most recently, as many of you will know, by the award of the gold medal of the Society of Antiquaries. As long ago as 1958 he was the medallist of the Royal Numismatic Society, and in 1962 the recipient of the Huntington Medal of the American Numismatic Society. By delaying until now the presentation of our own medal we can at least point to the happy circumstance of being able to give it to him in the auspicious year which sees the fiftieth anniversary of his election to membership of our Society.