

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 1993

C.E. CHALLIS

TONIGHT, as the fifth and final year of my Presidency draws to a close, the Society has (allowing for the eight amovals just announced) 406 ordinary, 3 junior and 123 institutional members, or 532 in all. This compares favourably with the figure of 513 for my first year and it is in part I feel sure a pleasing reflection of Council's continuing concern actively to support the study of British numismatics in every way that it possibly can. It was with this aim very firmly in mind that in March Council agreed to underwrite part of the cost of circulating three times a year the newsletter of the Coordinating Committee for Numismatics in Britain, and has gone on to offer the Society as host for the BANS Congress in 1994. This will take place at Ramsay Hall, University College, London, between 8 and 10 April and a full and interesting programme has already been arranged.

In the last year we have lost five members through death: Mr Maurice Stanley Rolffe, of Southend, who had been a member since 1938; Mr John Charles Freeman, member of the Faculty of Law, King's College, London, who was elected in 1957; Mons. Emile Bourgey, a member since 1950 who lived in Paris where he was a leading dealer; Mr Wilfrid Slayter and Mr Gordon Doubleday. Of these five the first three were never members of Council whereas the other two most certainly were and each in his own way played a unique part in the running of our affairs. Wilfrid, our former Secretary, was cremated at Hendon on Friday, 15 January, and it was wholly fitting that the Society should have been represented not simply by myself but also by four of our Vice-Presidents, several of the officers, and others of our membership. Many of you will recall from the words which were spoken in 1978 when we presented Wilfrid with a special version of the Society's 75th Anniversary medal, and more recently in 1990, when we gave him his own portrait medal, how very much we owed to Wilfrid. For the better part of three decades he worked tirelessly in our cause, and did so with a quiet unassuming assurance. Just how selfless he was, and how little he expected or sought the plaudits of others, came home very forcefully after his funeral when I engaged his great niece in conversation. She knew that somewhere he had a few coins but had no idea whatsoever of how much he had done for us and that in consequence we had honoured him in the way that we had. It was with characteristic generosity that Wilfrid remembered in his will the Society he had so loyally served (and which for all the time I knew him had formed such a prominent part of his life) by bequeathing to us his numismatic books and papers, his 1978 medal and £2,000. We can only guess at the pleasure he would have felt had he been here to learn that subsequently Council agreed to my suggestion that, in order to assist a great institution in need of numismatic literature, we donate his run of our *Journal*, suitably attributed with book plates, to the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg.

Of Mr Doubleday, who died on 16 July aged seventy-eight, we saw nothing in recent years; nevertheless, he maintained his connection with the Society to the end, being a Vice-President from 1957 to 1980 and an Honorary Member from 1991. First elected to Council in 1948, he served as Secretary from 1951 to 1954 and as Director from 1955 to 1956. Vice-President Mitchell very kindly represented the Society at his funeral.

To all the Councillors and officers who have served in the last year I extend a warm word of thanks not simply for their ready attendance at meetings but for the wealth of sound advice they have offered me whenever I have asked and the unflinching goodwill they have brought to all our proceedings. It is particularly pleasing to see that our finances remain so sound and that our *Journal* maintains a high scholarly standard. In recent years we have been particularly fortunate in having Dr Cook and Mr Besly as our Editors and, just as three years ago Council awarded the latter its prize partly in recognition of his editorial achievements, so this year in April, again partly for the same reason, we honoured Dr Cook.

Once again, our lectures have been well attended, a tribute to our Director's skill in providing us with a wide-ranging and scholarly programme; and, once again, we enjoyed an excellent special meeting, this time at the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh, where the theme was 'Britain and the Severans'. Thirty-three people attended, Dr Burnett very kindly acted as Chairman for the day, Mr Jones entertained us afterwards to tea in his office and it was my very real pleasure to offer a vote of thanks for what all participants judged to have been a thoroughly worthwhile day.

Although I was unable to attend the annual BANS Congress this year, I did try to get out and about by lecturing, first, on 10 June, on 'The Coinage of Edward VI' to the Wessex Numismatic Society and, second, on 14 July, on 'The Coinage of Henry VII' at the Tenth Harlaxton Symposium organised by the University of Evansville - British Campus - at Harlaxton College. On Saturday, 4 September, I attended the BANS lecture course held at Hertford College, Oxford, where I gave the vote of thanks for the Royal Mint lecture. The third in the series this lecture was given by Professor Vicky Bruce, professor of psychology at Sterling University, who told us about the research she had conducted for the Royal Mint some years ago into the shape, size and weight of modern coins, focussing especially on the new £1 and 20p pieces. Like her predecessors as Royal Mint lecturers, Mary Milner Dickens and

Raphael Maklouf, Professor Bruce brought a refreshing new light to bear on our subject and fully justified the Royal Mint's sponsorship.

During the year our Archive has grown thanks to the kindness of the executors of Peter Seaby and Wilfrid Slayter, and the diligence of our Secretary and Miss Archibald. We have also established a Benevolent Fund which will combine the bequests recently made by Helen Frizell and Wilfrid Slayter and which will enable us to support on an *ad hoc* basis such activities as Council, from time to time, deems worthwhile. The first beneficiaries of the Fund were the participants at the Edinburgh Conference who enjoyed a modest subsidy on the buffet meal provided at lunchtime.

My final comments concern the John Sanford Saltus Medal: first, because at its October meeting Council agreed to revised rules governing its award, which will be published in due course; and, second, because a year ago you were generous enough to award it to me. I have enjoyed my membership of the Society, for not only have you flattered me with your friendship but you have undergirded that friendship with unfailing support – for a decade when I was your Editor and for five years more as your President. As I said when the medal was presented to me in May, I had no right to expect it; nevertheless, it is a prize in which I delight. It is twenty-one years since I joined our Society and there could be no more memorable way of celebrating my coming of age.

As in previous years I shall omit here the recital of hoards found in the United Kingdom during the past year but will ensure that a full list appears when this Address is published.

[The list which follows was very kindly supplied by Dr Bateson, Mr Besly and Dr Cook]

SCOTLAND

None.

WALES

Llanddeiniolen, Gwynedd. 25 denarii and radiates, 1 sestertius, AD 256.

ENGLAND

Iron Age

Butser Hill, Hants. 6 Gallo-Belgic C gold staters.
 Buxton with Lammas, Norfolk (addenda). 2 Gallo-Belgic E gold staters.
 Little Totham, Essex. 2 gold staters of Addedomarus.
 Essendon, Herts. 153 gold staters and quarter staters, plus other objects, AD 43.
 Pershore, Worcs. c.17 gold and c.1,450 silver coins of the Dobunni.
 Cheriton, Wilts. (addenda). 7 gold staters and 2 quarter staters.

Roman

Membury, Wilts. (addenda). 3 silver denarii, AD 37.
 Needham, Norfolk. 8 silver denarii, AD 61.
 Roxby, South Humberside. 30 bronze asses, c.AD 96.
 Washington, West Sussex. 8 silver denarii, AD 134.
 Marlingford, Norfolk (addenda). 6 silver denarii, AD 172.
 Near Bridport, Dorset. 47 bronze sestertii, c.AD 180.
 Postwick, Norfolk (addenda). 14 silver denarii, AD 192.
 Near Kenilworth, Warwks. 42 silver denarii, AD 205.
 Morton, Derby (addenda). 60 denarii, AD 210.
 Near Doncaster, South Yorks. c.3,300 base silver radiates, ?270–90.
 Durrington, Wilts. 3,967 base silver and bronze, c.330.
 Chapmanslade, Wilts. c.5,300 bronze, c.341.
 Killingholme, South Humberside. c.3,800 bronze, c.341–8.
 Shuttington, Warwks. 158 bronze, 348.
 Burgate, Suffolk (addenda). 30 silver siliquae, c.402.
 Cattal, North Yorks. 16 silver siliquae, 402.
 Blagan Hill, Wilts. 1 gold, 1,646 silver and 5,535 bronze, 402.
 Deopham, Norfolk. 26 gold solidi and 4 silver siliquae, 402.
 Good Easter, Essex. 6 gold solidi, 405.

Medieval and Modern

Woodham Walter, Essex. 114 Anglo-Saxon sceattas, c.730.

Eynesford, Kent. 11 silver, Stephen, BMC 1, 1141.

Near Box, Wilts. 88 silver, Stephen and Robert of Gloucester, 1140s.

Wainfleet, Lincs. Short Cross, 380 pennies and 3 cut halfpennies, classes I–IVa.

Eynesford, Kent. 8 silver, Edward II–Edward III, latest coin 1369–77.

Hill Deverill, Wilts. 5 gold and 56 silver, Edward II–Richard II, latest coins 1377–99.

Mendelsham, Suffolk. 28 silver, Edward III–Henry VII, latest coin 1486–1504.

Middleham, North Yorks. 5,098 silver, Edward VI–Charles I, 1640s.

Burton Overy, Leics. 282 silver, James I–Charles II, latest coin 1673.

THE coinage of Edward VI upon which I wish to speak in the second part of my Address is the fine silver issued pursuant to the commission of 5 October 1551. The ostensible fineness was 11 oz 1 dwt and the weight of the shilling 96 grains. Though customarily unesteemed by numismatists, this issue is, nevertheless, of considerable historical interest: partly because it has the highest silver standard of any in the Tudor period, and partly because the king himself was party to its planning.

Everyone knows that, time out of mind, the traditional standard of English silver coin was sterling, i.e. 11 oz 2 dwt fine, and this being so it may at first sight seem puzzling that in giving the fineness of the 1551 issue at 11 oz 1 dwt I should say that this was in fact the finest silver issued at any time during the Tudor period. However, as those of you will know who are familiar with my exposition of the dispute in the 1580s between Richard Martin, master-worker and warden of the Tower Mint, and Thomas Keeling, assay master at Goldsmiths' Hall, London, there is in reality no contradiction at all. Traditionally, the fineness of silver had always been expressed in terms of the silver and alloy which had been put into the melting pot – 11 oz 2 dwt of fine silver and 18 dwt of copper – but in 1551 it was expressed in terms of an alternative convention which had been introduced during the debasement period as the standard which came 'out of the fire', i.e. which emerged by assay after the melting. Since contemporary assayers were agreed that in any assay 2 dwt of silver 'lay "hid from report" for the simple reason that it had drained away with the impurities into the cupel', it followed that 11 oz 2 dwt at the comixture would report as 11 oz out of the fire, while 11 oz 1 dwt out of the fire would be the equivalent of 11 oz 3 dwt at the comixture. The 1551 standard was, then, unique; and it is frustrating indeed that while Thomas Stanley, assay master in the Tower at the time of issue, clearly recognised it as such, he failed, as did other contemporary commentators, to spell out why this should have been so.¹

In turning to the part which the king played in the 1551 issue of fine coins, let us note first of all that, notwithstanding the publication of a great deal of valuable work since the Second World War, the popular image of King Edward VI, who reigned from 1547 to 1553, is all too often that of a sickly child. 'Edward would have become eighteen, the usual age of royal majority, in October 1555; and what we know of him suggests that he would then have taken over direction of affairs and have managed them as personally and as purposefully as his father and grandfather had done. But from early in his reign it became doubtful whether he would live so long, and the problem of the succession acquired an urgency which only increased with the deterioration in the King's health.'² These words, written by the late Professor Bindoff in 1953 epitomise such a view and stand in marked contrast to those of the late Professor Jordan who depicted Edward as enjoying 'normal health throughout his

¹ C.E. Challis, 'Lord Hastings to the Great Silver Recoinage, 1464–1699', in *A New History of the Royal Mint*, edited by C.E. Challis (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 262–66.

² S.T. Bindoff, 'A Kingdom at Stake, 1553', in *Conflicts in Tudor and Stuart England*, edited by J. Roots (1967), p. 41. Originally published in *History Today*, III (1953), 642–8.

childhood and boyhood'.³ In his later years, according to the Venetian ambassador, Edward 'soon commenced arming and tilting, managing horses, and delighting in every sort of exercise, drawing the bow, playing rackets, hunting, and so forth'; according to the Imperial ambassador, he also fenced.⁴

In fact, Edward only fell seriously ill for the first time in April 1552 from what he himself diagnosed as a combination of measles and smallpox. From this first setback he seems to have made a complete recovery and it was not until mid-February 1553 that once again his health gave cause for concern. What had begun as a cold deteriorated rapidly: during the whole of March he did not leave his room and was so weak and thin 'that the doctors warned that any change in his limited routine would place his life in great danger'.⁵ In April and early May he rallied, but quickly relapsed at the end of the month in what were the final stages of pulmonary tuberculosis. He died on 6 July 1553 three months short of his sixteenth birthday.

Throughout, Edward's reign was a minority in which we can distinguish two quite distinct periods of influence: that of Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset; and that of John Dudley, duke of Northumberland. Interpretations of these two periods, like views on Edward's health, have varied widely. The old Pollardian view, is that of a good duke being followed by a Machiavellian Northumberland. More recent scholars have tended to rehabilitate Northumberland and be more critical of Somerset.

There are also clear disagreements on just what was the role of the king during these years. Professor Jordan, whom I have already mentioned, saw the development of Edward into a young man visibly reaching out for power and, until the onset of his fatal disease in 1553, well on course for achieving it. To him, the numerous political papers and unique diary or chronicle which the king compiled are evidence not only of Edward's ability but also of his growing political influence. In Edward was a true potential for greatness: in 1553 he stood on the threshold of power.⁶

To Dr Hoak, nothing could be further from the truth. He sees Edward in the traditional schoolboy picture, the godly imp, far removed from any real governmental participation. A puppet, cunningly manipulated by Northumberland, as seen in the staged meetings of the mysterious Council for the State, and the control exercised by Sir John Gates over the young king. Edward did little, if anything, on his own initiative, and merely transcribed what was put in front of him: 'this bright, pathetic lad was in fact the manipulated one, more the parrot of Northumberland's plans than the Renaissance prodigy of legend'.⁷

In deciding which of these two views is the more acceptable, the evidence concerning the coinage is of particular relevance. There are three quite distinct aspects to be considered, all three being mentioned in the king's own diary or *Chronicle*, a document which begins nominally at Edward's birth, but which from about March 1550 become almost a day-to-day record of events, before ending suddenly on 30 November 1552 for reasons which are unexplained.⁸

The first is the agreement made by the government with Sir John York, under-treasurer at Southwark, on 30 September 1550 whereby he was to supply the Mints with bullion and make repayment of the Crown's debts on the Continent. In the king's words

It was agreed that [Sir John] York, master of one of the mints at the Tower should make this bargain with me, viz: To make the profit of (~~my crossed out~~) silver rising of the bullion that he himself brought, [he] should

³ W.K. Jordan, *Edward VI: the Threshold of Power* (1970), p. 423.

⁴ *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, V, 535; *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, X, 592; cited by Jordan, *Edward VI*, pp. 402-3, 420-21.

⁵ Jordan, *Edward VI*, pp. 510-12.

⁶ Jordan, *Edward VI*, pp. 419-23.

⁷ D.E. Hoak, *The King's Council in the Reign of Edward VI* (Cambridge, 1976), p. 265.

⁸ Note: The last entry, for 28 November 1552, is misplaced. *The Chronicle and Political Papers of King Edward VI*, edited by W.K. Jordan (1966).

pay all my debts, to the sum of £120,000 or above, and remain accountable for the overplus, paying no more than 6s and 6d the ounce, till the exchange were equal in Flanders, and after [ward] 6s and 2d. Also that he should declare all his bargains to any [who] should be appointed for to oversee him and leave off when I would. For which I should give him £15,000 in prest [-money] and leave to carry £8,000 overseas to abase the exchange.

This exposition of what was intended is the fullest to be found in any contemporary source of which I am aware and, notwithstanding that Edward VI is 'insufficiently explicit for us to be sure of the precise way in which the scheme was to function, that it did so is beyond question'.⁹

The second issue which should engage our attention is the decision in April 1551 to introduce a silver coinage 3 oz fine out of the fire, the lowest standard during the whole debasement period. The order for the mints at Southwark and in the Tower to proceed went out on the fourteenth; on the tenth the king had recorded 'it was appointed to make twenty thousand pound weight for necessity somewhat baser, [in order] to get gains [of] £160,000 clear, by which the debt of the realm might be paid, the country defended from any sudden attempt and the coin amended'. Traditionally, these words have received a bad press from historians and numismatists alike because, having failed to fathom the young king's meaning, they have attributed that failure not to their own shortcomings but to Edward's inability to understand and accurately record what he had heard. If this view were correct there could, in fact, be no clearer evidence against the case for Edward VI having a clear grasp of the affairs of State. But the king was not mistaken in what he recorded. As I have calculated elsewhere, if one assumes that the 20,000 lbs of metal alluded to by King Edward as being made into the new coinage was actually fine silver, it follows that it would represent approximately 80,000 lbs of silver 3 oz fine out of the fire which, valued at 72s per lb as was stipulated in the commission, would have had a face value of £288,000. Since the silver for this coinage was bought at 10s per oz, 20,000 lbs would have cost £120,000 and, if we allow £8,000 for the cost of coinage, this would indeed leave £160,000 'clear', i.e. net profit, just as Edward recorded.¹⁰

In 1551, then, just as in the previous year, the *Chronicle* is prime evidence on the matter of the coinage and we can show beyond peradventure that what Edward VI said concerning the worst debased silver coins was correct. This being so, it seems to me that we have clear support for two notions. First, Edward VI was not just 'bright' but highly intelligent and sufficiently well trained to be able to grasp a complex issue, even when that issue was as difficult as the coinage; and, second, Edward VI was not just a 'puppet' manipulated by the real decision takers who only fed him with what they wanted; rather he was someone who really was caught up with the great affairs of the day. Had it been otherwise, he could not have known and recorded what he did.

It is because I take the more optimistic view of Edward VI that I incline to take at face value what contemporary documents tell us about his personal involvement in the planning of the fine silver issue of 1551. This time the evidence does not come from Edward's *Chronicle*, for there (under 24 September 1551) we read simply:

Agreed that the stamp of the shilling and sixpence should be: of [on] one side a king painted to the shoulders, in Parliament robes, and with a chain of the Order; five shillings, of silver, and half-five shillings, should be a king on horseback armed, with a naked sword hard to his breast. Also that York's mint, and Throckmorton's mint in the Tower, should go and work the fine standard. In the city of York and Canterbury should the small money be wrought of a baser state. Officers for the same were appointed.

⁹ C.E. Challis, *The Tudor Coinage* (Manchester, 1978), pp. 177-78.

¹⁰ Challis, *The Tudor Coinage*, pp. 107-8.

Nor does it come from the *Acts of the Privy Council*, which record only (under 25 September 1551) the sending of 'a letter to Mr Pekham as by the minute thereof appeareth'.¹¹ It is this letter which contains the information which is of interest to us and, fortunately, it has survived in draft amongst the State Papers.¹² Let me quote it in full.

Privy Council to Sir Edmund Pekham, 25 September 1551

After our very hearty commendations, you shall understand that upon our coming to the Court we have made declaration to the King's majesty and the rest of the Council of our conferences with you touching the amendment of the coin and establishing the same in fineness. Which thing as it is of itself of much worthiness so does his majesty most earnestly desire the furtherance and advancement of the same for the which cause we have thought meet to participate unto you his pleasure and resolution as follows:

As to the patterns of the coins, his majesty likes best those patterns both of the 12d and of the 6d which have their signs not in arithmetic cypher but in this manner. XII. and VI. and have the parliament robe with the collar of the order; and in the style of the pattern of VI this word HIBERN is written HIBEN which must be amended making the N.a[n] R.

The King's majesty also, and we, think that his majesty's face will not be well expressed wholly and totally in the coin and, therefore, you shall do well to express in the coin three parts of the face [*crossed out after 'also and we' – doubt that as the face of his majesty is in the pattern wholly set out it will not be so well expressed in the stamp and the coin and therefore we pray you to have good consideration hereof and except you shall think it will show as well in the coins as it seemeth to be in the patterns, we think it shall do better to be so ordered as the face may be set forth with 3 parts of the whole*].

The agreement to have the standard of 11 oz fine for the 12d and 6d pleases his majesty very well and of the same standard his majesty's pleasure is to have also 2 other coins, one of 5s and one other of 2s 6d. Of the which coins his majesty would you should (when you shall begin) coin a small number to see a proof thereof, the pattern whereof we send you herewith noted by his majesty's own hand with the cypher of 5, (being the lowest pattern of 4 on a card of 3 of the spades).^{*} And on the other side of the 5s to put the cross which shall be upon the 12d and upon the 2s 6d the cross which shall be upon the 6d. The other standard also for the small moneys, viz. 1d and ½d, to be of 4 oz fine his majesty well likes and would have also of the same standard a coin of [a] ¼d. And, therefore, we most earnestly require you to cause all good speed to be had that may be for the graving and sinking of the irons and prints of all these said coins, viz. of the standard of 11 oz fine the coins of 5s, 2s 6d, 12d and 6d, and of the other standard of 4 oz fine the coins of 1d, ½d and ¼d, and if Derryck shall be found fit for the graving then we would he were appointed with John Lawrence, being named by you and others for a cunning sinker. And if Derryck be not fit therefore then to certify us of your opinions.

Concerning those which shall be in commission for these purposes, these be to let you understand that the King's majesty's pleasure is that for the coinage of the fine Sir John York and Mr Nicholas Thockmorton's deputy, whose name you shall know shortly, shall be in commission. And for the small moneys George Gale at York and Lawrence Warren at Canterbury. And therefore we would also speed were made with making the minutes of these commissions and further to put into the same commissions authority for the other officers requisite hereto, taking the same men which have served last heretofore, except some of them shall be thought not convenient and in that case we would you also certify us of such as you shall think meter for the same and of any other things requisite to the furtherance hereof.

And the said minutes being sent to us we shall shortly return you commissions for your proceeding and answers also to your desires. We shall also shortly resolve upon a man fit for the receipt of such moneys as shall be employed in the coinage of the small moneys, and your other coins which you made for proofs we shall deliver to you at our next coming thither.

In summary, what we learn from the letter of Sir Edmund, who was high treasurer of all the Mints, is as follows. First, the king has come down in favour of the patterns which expressed the denomination in Roman rather than Arabic numerals. Incidentally, I have found amongst the coins in the Winchester cabinet at the University of Leeds, an odd example of a sixpence

¹¹ Jordan, *Chronicle*, p. 83; *Acts of the Privy Council*, New Series, edited by J.R. Dasent (1891), III, 364.

¹² Public Record Office, London. SP 10/13 no. 47 fo. 93. There is now an admirable new calendar of these papers which all students of the period must be grateful for. *Calendar of State Papers preserved in the Public Record Office. Domestic Series:*

Edward VI, 1547–1553, edited by C.S. Knighton (1992). However, it should be noted that in respect of this particular letter I have begged to disagree with the editor both on what the insertion made by Cecil says and on where it should come.

^{*}a marginal insertion in the hand of William Cecil, secretary of state.

of this issue which has no numeral at all; but this, I believe, has been tampered with. The explanation of this is suggested by the coinage of 1549 in which the shillings 6 oz fine, out of the fire, had had a similar flan size to a half-sovereign. The legends of the two coins were not identical and the half-sovereign had a crowned rather than an uncrowned garnished shield, but otherwise the two were so alike that by gilding the shilling a very passable half-sovereign could be made. There is contemporary warrant from the reign of Elizabeth to show that such gilding actually did take place.¹³ With these facts in mind, if one looks again at the Winchester piece one does not need too much of an eye of faith to see that the slight depression where the numeral should have stood is evidence of the VI being tooled away, as has the rose, and, further, that the traces of gold to be found in various places are all that remain of what was once a fully gilded coin. The puzzle is, which gold coin was the gilder aiming at? In 1549 the fit between the shilling and the half-sovereign had been close; in 1551 gold and silver coins were different in almost every particular. Judged purely on weight, the nearest gold coin to a sixpence (48 gr) would have been a 22 c gold crown (43.65gr).

The second way in which the Privy Council letter to Sir Edmund Pekham tells us that the king has personally been involved in the design of the 1551 fine issue is the king's correction of the engraver's Latin, changing HIBEN to HIBER. This reading comes not on the shillings and sixpences I have seen but on the crowns and half-crowns. I say 'which I have seen' because I have not yet had the benefit of a sight of two shillings in Mr Bispham's collection, to which he has kindly drawn my attention, which do indeed read HIBER.

Third, the king, supported by the Privy Council, has decided that the full-face portrait on the patterns will not do, and argues for a three-quarter face portrait. Full-face portraits had been tried by his father, with hardly flattering effect, and Henry VIII's three-quarter portraits were hardly better, standing in marked contrast to the profile busts on his earlier coins. Edward VI had also had various profile busts and was to have a half-bust portrait on the sovereigns of this issue.

It was a three-quarter profile which Edward in fact preferred for his larger silver coins and in this he may well have been influenced by the portrait now in the Queen's Collection at Hampton Court for which he sat at approximately this time.

The fourth point which comes out of the Privy Council letter is that Edward has agreed to an 11 oz standard for the shilling and sixpence. Note that, if this was 'out of the fire', the standard was still intended to be sterling at the comixture. This may have been a slip; alternatively, it may indicate that the move to 11 oz 1 dwt, out of the fire, came at a very late date indeed.

Fifthly, we learn that it was the king's own decision to introduce the crown and the half-crown and that he himself had drawn a design. Whether that which finally emerged was his in every particular we do not know, but certain it is that the form of the numeral five used in the date was his alone. The letter, as we have just seen, specified this as being that on 'the lowest pattern of 4 on a card of 3 of the spades'. Despite my best endeavours I have not seen such a card, but the letter has the shape, which tallies exactly with that on the coins. Incidentally, this reference by Edward to playing cards should not surprise. Since their introduction into Europe in the late fourteenth century, their use had spread, not least at the English Court. Henry VII played cards, as did his fourteen-year-old daughter, Margaret, queen of Scots. Edward's sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, did the same.¹⁴ Indeed so popular were cards that Hugh Latimer, the future bishop of Worcester, could in 1529 build reference to them into his sermon, to give force to his imagery.

¹³ C.E. Challis, 'The Early Story', in *Royal Sovereign, 1489-1989*, edited by G.P. Dyer (Royal Mint, 1989), p. 30.

¹⁴ W.A. Chatto, *Facts and Speculations on the Origin and History of Playing Cards* (1848), pp. 60, 97-98, 108-9, 120.

And for because I cannot declare Christ's rule unto you at one time, as it ought to be done. I will apply myself according to your custom at this time of Christmas: I will, as I said, declare unto you Christ's rule, but that shall be in Christ's cards. And whereas you are wont to celebrate Christmas in playing at cards, I intend, by God's grace, to deal unto you Christ's cards, wherein you shall perceive Christ's rule. The game that we will play at shall be called the triumph [a kind of whist], which if it be well played at, he that dealeth shall win; the players shall likewise win; and the standers and lookers upon shall do the same; insomuch that there is no man that is willing to play at this triumph with these cards, but they shall be all winners, and no losers.¹⁵

In suggesting that the cross ends on the crown be the same as those on the shilling while those on the half-crown should be the same as those on the sixpence, Edward appears to be suggesting that the two should differ. If so, his wishes were ignored, for all the cross ends, so far as I am aware, are the same. These neat, uncluttered ends were in contrast to those of his father's reign and his own, earlier years.

Finally, in telling us that Edward VI had agreed to an issue at 4 oz fine of pence and halfpence at York and Canterbury and wanted the farthing also to be added, the Privy Council letter at once confirms and confuses. It confirms in the sense that we know that there was a commission to York on 17 December 1551 to coin at 4 oz fine and, although that commission appears not to be extant, we do have York base pence of Edward, *mm* mullet.

It confuses in that no halfpence or farthings are known for York, and we have no evidence whatsoever of a base issue in any denomination at Canterbury. We should also note that neither the Privy Council letter, nor any other source, discloses why the fine threepence and penny were struck at the Tower and the fine sixpence and threepence at York, even though these do not figure in the extant commission of 5 October 1551.

Thus, loose ends concerning Edward VI's last issues remain to be tied up and we still await a full die study. None the less, I hope I have said enough this evening to convince you that this is a most worthwhile issue, both for the historian to study and for the numismatist to collect.

¹⁵ *Sermons by Hugh Latimer, sometime Bishop of Worcester* (Everyman edition), p. 6.