

## PRESIDENT'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2008

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THIS is the last time that I will stand here reviewing the year past and thanking those who have given their time to support the Society. For me these five years have flown by very quickly, but that is a mark of how much I have enjoyed working with friendly well-motivated colleagues, in support of a membership that is really appreciative. Five years is, I think, the right length of time to occupy the position of President – long enough to leave one's mark, for better or worse, but timely too to let the next person come in with fresh ideas and a fresh face. I am very happy to be passing the gavel on to Robin Eaglen, who I am confident will be an excellent and inspiring President.

The Officers and Council have worked together as a team over the last five years, and, although it is always possible to do more, I think that the Society has moved forward in quite a number of useful ways. We established the new roles of a Publicity Officer and a Website Officer, that had been recommended by the earlier working party chaired by Mr Woodhead, and crucially, at Charles Farthing's suggestion, we divided the duties of the Secretary between a Meetings Secretary (constitutionally 'The Secretary') and a Membership Secretary. Following this successful example, there may well be scope in the future for a division in the role of Treasurer. We established a Finance Committee which, together with the Treasurer, reviewed our banking and deposit account arrangements, moving our main accounts to the CAF Bank, and we also set up an on-line credit card payment arrangement for Members' subscriptions with WorldPay. The Finance Committee started to set annual budgets, with a view to targeting expenditure on activities central to the Society's aims, but there is scope to develop our financial planning further. Traditionally the Society has held its investments as cash deposits, which fortunately has protected our capital in the recent stock market collapse, but for the longer term we should seek independent advice on the advisability of maintaining a more diversified portfolio of investments. I am sure that under Robin Eaglen's leadership, the finances will be managed judiciously and efficiently to the greater benefit of the Society.

We instigated some procedural changes in the interests of making our affairs more democratic and open. A committee was established to advise on the nomination of a new President, with representatives of Officers and Council. We introduced a degree of rotation among the Vice-Presidents, and revised the Bye-Laws to enable Ordinary Members to propose additional nominees for Officers and Council membership. There is now provision for sending out notices and receiving ballots electronically, via the internet, but a suitable system for doing this has yet to be devised. The Council has set down criteria for considering candidates for Honorary Membership,<sup>1</sup> and I am delighted that we have elected five new Honorary Members of distinction, culminating tonight with the much loved and respected Marion Archibald.

It is in the area of prizes and awards that there has been most development during the last five years. In 2005 an appeal was launched to establish a Prize Fund raising almost £9,000 to help finance mainly the Sanford Saltus Medal and Blunt Prize (this latter being the former Council Prize, renamed following the Centenary of Christopher Blunt's birth in 1904). By awarding the 2005 Blunt Prize to Dr Shailandre Bhandare, the Society signalled its interest in Commonwealth coinages and willingness to award its prizes to people who are not Society members. The regulations for the Sanford Saltus Medal were widened similarly to embrace non-members of the Society and take account of all a candidate's relevant publications, not

<sup>1</sup> The new Honorary Membership criteria are published below, p. 310.

just those published by the Society. It is important that we should be outward-looking, and should represent British numismatics in general at a national and international level, rather than focusing the interests of our members.

Thanks to a generous benefaction by Jeffrey North in 2006, the Society was able to establish a Book Prize, the first in our field dedicated to a work on British numismatics. More recently, through a further benefaction of Mr North, a new medal has been introduced, designed by Nicola Moss, to be awarded 'in recognition of outstanding services to British Numismatics'. The first Jeffrey North Medals have been presented tonight.<sup>2</sup> We had in the past found various ways of rewarding exceptional service to the Society – Wilfred Slayter had a special portrait medal made for him in 1990, and silver specimens of the Membership and Centenary medals have been used as presentations – but I hope this dedicated medal will show how much we genuinely appreciate the selfless work undertaken by many people in supporting our subject.

The fundamental role of the Society has not changed significantly over the years since its foundation in 1903. Its priority has always been to promote high-quality numismatic research and publication in British Numismatics, which it achieves through its lecture programme and its publications. These core activities have acted as a conduit for bringing together academic and amateur numismatists, which, as I said in the latest *Newsletter*, is one of the exceptional strengths of numismatics in Britain – something to be celebrated and protected. One area where the Society could perhaps do more is in consciously acting as an advocate for the subject in the wider world: to other academic disciplines, to Government, to the general public and to the media. These can only be achieved if the Society has at its core healthy finances and a strong supportive membership. We are currently blessed with those, but we should not take them for granted, and so being attentive to members' wishes and concerns should always be in the minds of those entrusted with running the Society.

Enough of this reflecting; it is time to report specifically on the year past. Our membership has increased once again. During the year, there have been thirty elections (including one student member), one death and five resignations. Five ordinary members have been elected to honorary membership. The number of amovals is twenty (including one institution), which is unusually high and not quite understood. The total membership at the end of the year then stands at 653 compared with 649 last year; a small increase but we have for the first time more than 650 members.

	<i>Anniversary Meeting</i> 2007	<i>Anniversary Meeting</i> 2008
Honorary	7	12
Ordinary	516	515
Ordinary (students/under 21)	11	12
Institutions	115	114
Total	649	653

The one member who has died during 2008 is:

Ernest William DANSON (elected 1957), died on 26 September 2008 aged 86. Mr Danson was a school teacher of physics. In the 1960s, encouraged by Michael Dolley, he published two excellent numismatic papers: one a study and corpus of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman mint of Tamworth, and the other a reassessment of the highly important Nottingham hoard of Stephen's reign.<sup>3</sup> He had been a member of this Society for 51

<sup>2</sup> To Joe Bispham, Michael Bonser, Charles Farthing and Tony Holmes; see the award citations and the regulations governing the medal published below, pp. 307–9 and 310.

<sup>3</sup> E.W. Danson, 'The Anglo-Saxon and Norman mint of Tamworth, Staffordshire', *Transactions. South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society* 11 (1969–70), pp. 32–57; *ibid*, 'The Nottingham find of 1880: a Stephen hoard re-examined' *BNJ* 37 (1968), pp. 43–64. For a full list of his numismatic publications, see Dix Noonan Webb sale 12 December 2005. A short note on a possible penny of Tamworth was in the press at the time of his death: E.W. Danson, 'An enigmatic penny of Henry I', *BNJ* 78 (2008), pp. 235–6.

years, and a long-standing member and officer of both the Nottinghamshire and the Derbyshire Numismatic Societies. His collection of coins and tokens of Leicester, Nottingham and Derby was sold by Dix Noonan Webb in December 2005.

I should, also, mention the death of one former member of the Society:

Stella Margaret GREENALL (elected 27 May 1980, resigned 2003), died on 18 June 2008 aged 81 (born 8 October 1926). Stella was known to us as a popular figure who shared an interest in English seventeenth-century tokens and Venetian coins with her husband, Philip Greenall (d. 1991), but, as her *Guardian* obituary discloses, she was more widely recognised as an education activist, a long-serving official of the National Union of Students and an adviser to the Labour Government in 1975–79.<sup>4</sup> Their Venetian collection was donated to the British Museum and their tokens were auctioned by Baldwins, 30 October 1997.

Two of our members this year marked their 50th year of membership; both were elected as Ordinary Members in February 1958: Richard Falkiner and Miss Gay Van der Meer (an Honorary Member since June 1986).

Among the distinctions received by members, we were delighted to hear that Dr Roger Bland had been awarded the OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. It is entirely appropriate that recognition should be given for Roger's tireless work in pressing for a reform of the Treasure Trove laws, resulting in the Treasure Act 1996, and in setting up and heading the Portable Antiquities Scheme. The British Academy awarded the Derek Allen Prize to Prof. Michael Metcalf. And during the year we awarded the North Book Prize to Dr Robin Eaglen for his *The Abbey and Mint of Bury St Edmunds to 1279*, and the Blunt Prize to Dr Timothy Crafter.<sup>5</sup>

Our Lecture programme has ranged healthily from Roman through Anglo-Saxon and Tudor to contemporary coinage, with speakers spanning the beginning and the end of their careers. If I may pick out just two. In June we were pleased to have Michael Metcalf return to lecture to us once more, talking about the enigmatic period in the mid-eighth century when the 'sceattas' were declining in weight and fineness and before Offa's coinage revived production on a substantial scale. And the previous month we were honoured to be addressed by Sir Christopher Frayling, Chairman of the Arts Council, Chairman of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee, Rector of the Royal College of Art and an acknowledged expert on films and in particular 'spaghetti westerns'. His lecture on the history and work of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee was very carefully researched and crafted, but I think that the audience was most captivated by the account of his personal experiences in selecting designs for the UK coinage, and the compromises that occasionally had to be accepted for political and other reasons.

The July Summer Meeting at my college in Cambridge, Gonville and Caius, followed a related theme, *Art in Coinage*, and the programme again struck a balance between art historians, numismatists and practising artists. The latter (Ian Rank-Broadley and Stephen Raw) offered fascinating insights into the practical considerations of designing a coin, which in turn related well to the observations made by other speakers about Roman Imperial, Anglo-Saxon and Italian Renaissance coin designs. The previous evening (4 July) we held a dinner, also in Gonville and Caius College, for Society members and their guests, the first, we think, since before the Second World War. Lord Stewartby talked about his memories of the Society in the 1950s and 1960s, before proposing its health, and in reply I reflected on the dinner to have been given by the Society in 1922 in honour of its president, John Sanford

<sup>4</sup> F. Beckett, 'Stella Greenall: champion of student grants for the NUS and adviser to ministers' *The Guardian*, 25 June 2008; R. Thompson, 'Mrs Stella Greenall (1926–2008)', *NCirc* 2008, p. 261.

<sup>5</sup> The citations read on the award of the Blunt Prize and the North Book Prize are published below, pp. 305–7. The Regulations governing the Blunt Prize are also set out below, p. 309.

Saltus, but which had to be cancelled because of his death from cyanide poisoning six days earlier.<sup>6</sup>

Before finishing this Review, I must thank those who are coming off Council, Gavin Scott, Philip Skingley and Frances Simmons; they have made lively contributions to the discussions and Philip has been particularly helpful in arranging our drinks parties, as he and colleagues from Spink are doing for the Reception tonight. Stewart Lyon is also stepping down as a Vice-President this year as part of the rotation of Vice-Presidents, but we very much hope and expect that he will return. I could hardly believe it when I looked back at his record and realised that Stewart has been a member of Council for fifty-one of the last fifty-two years, and held all the major offices – Secretary, Treasurer, Director, President, and for the last thirty-two years Vice-President, which rivals Christopher Blunt's record of fifty-three years on Council.

I have already said how much I have enjoyed working with the other Officers and Council Members over the last five years. But in closing I must mention three people whom I worked with longest and on whose professional and selfless support I have relied heavily: Kevin Clancy, Charles Farthing and Elina Screen; and among the Vice-Presidents those whose advice has been invaluable: Stewart Lyon, Peter Woodhead and Hugh Pagan. Finally, may I thank all of the Members who have been so welcoming, and tolerant. It has been a pleasure and privilege to lead the Society; thank you very much.

The President then delivered the second part of his address, 'Currency Under the Vikings. Part 5. The Scandinavian Achievement and Legacy', printed on pp. 43–71 above.

<sup>6</sup> For a recent account of this event see the *American Numismatic Society Magazine* 7.1 (2008), pp. 55–8, at pp. 56–7.