

THE BRITISH NUMISMATIC SOCIETY



Newsletter

July 2007

**From the President
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Dear Member,

It is the time of year to bring you bits and pieces of news and gossip about the Society.

Simon Keynes to give the Linecar lecture

It is a great honour for the Society to have Professor Simon Keynes, LittD, FBA, the Elrington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon in Cambridge University, giving the Linecar Lecture on 25th September. Prof. Keynes, the country's leading Anglo-Saxon historian, comes from the bluest academic blood – his great-great grandfather was Charles Darwin, his great-uncle John Maynard Keynes, his grandfather the Nobel prize winner Lord Adrian, to mention but a few members of his distinguished family. As a student of Dorothy Whitelock, he was from the outset encouraged to take account of the full range of numismatic and other evidence, as many of his publications show. He has been a member of the British Numismatic Society since 1974, and chairman of the Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles Committee since 2003.



Simon Keynes has published on a wide range of Anglo-Saxon and Norman history, but particularly on King Alfred and the historiographical tradition that followed him. His lecture to us in September, 'History and coinage in the reign of King Æthelred the Unready', will pick up on work he did for his first book *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'the Unready'* (1980).

Award for Service to British Numismatics

The Council has agreed in principle to institute a new medal to be presented to people who have made an exceptional contribution to the organisation and promotion of British numismatics, other than through scholarly publications, for which the Society has other awards. There are many people who devote a great deal of time, energy and enthusiasm to maintaining and developing British numismatics, whether through national or local societies, through projects or as individuals, and their work deserves recognition. A working party is drawing up a more detailed proposal for the production of the medal and draft regulations for its award, while the Finance Committee will advise on how best to finance it. The question of how the award should be named is also under debate. There will be more news on this in the next issue of the *Newsletter*.

Constitutional Changes

The Society's By-Laws were drawn up in 1903, and although there have been changes over the years, many of the procedures and practices are a century old, and even then they were modelled in some respects on the eighteenth-century constitution of the Society of Antiquaries. Council is now seeking to bring these into line with twenty-first-century concepts of transparency and democracy, appropriate to a society of our size and composition. It has agreed in principle to make changes in three areas.

Elections

The By-Laws provide that the Council should draw up a list of nominations for the Officers and for Council members that is to be circulated for a ballot of members in November, but there is no mechanism for alternative nominations to be proposed and circulated except that a member may delete a name on their ballot paper and write in another. Council is considering changes that would enable alternative nominations to be proposed by members before the ballot papers go out. Any new scheme would probably need the approval of the membership, and would not come into effect until 2008. We would also like to consider the possibility of introducing optional electronic voting in due course, particularly for our overseas members.

Nominating the President

For the election of a new President, which normally occurs every five years, the Council has hitherto been advised by the out-going President and Past-Presidents. In order to make the process of finding the most suitable candidate more representative, it has been agreed that Council will appoint a nominating committee composed of the President, two Vice-Presidents, one other Officer and two ordinary Members of Council, and the committee will be chaired by a Vice-President. This committee will offer a recommendation to the Council, which will remain responsible for the final selection of the nominee whose name will appear on the ballot paper.

Vice-Presidents

One of the remarkable strengths of the Society is the loyalty and wealth of experience of our senior members. In a previous *Newsletter* I remarked that we have no less than 18 people who have been members for more than fifty years, and I am pleased to be able to draw on the support of six of my predecessors, whose experience as Presidents stretches back more than forty years. The active involvement of so many of our senior members is greatly welcomed, and for some it is formalised through being Vice-Presidents. The By-Laws provide for the annual election of six Vice-Presidents, and until World War II there were regular changes among them. However, the practice then developed that once elected a Vice-President would continue to be re-nominated annually until they died or asked to step down. When the Society was smaller, this was not inconvenient, but with a membership more than three times the size it was in the 1940s, and with more senior members remaining active than ever before, it is time for a change in this policy.

Council has decided to introduce a degree of rotation among Vice-Presidents, so that in future in drawing up its list of nominations Council will see that at least one of the nominees for Vice-President has not served in that capacity during the previous year. It is hoped that this simple change will recognise the important practical and constitutional role played by Vice-Presidents, giving advice in Council and standing in for the President when necessary, and will provide scope to involve more of our senior members in the running of the Society.

Council Membership

The Council plays a crucial role in ensuring the wellbeing of the Society, and acts as its trustees. It normally comprises 26 people, of whom ten have particular offices or roles, six are Vice-Presidents and the remaining ten are ordinary members. It meets nine times a year for an hour or so before the normal Society meetings. Some of the ordinary members also serve on committees or working parties, or assist with particular tasks or projects. When deciding who to nominate for Council membership, we try to keep a balance of interests, ages, backgrounds etc., while looking for people who can contribute actively to the running of the Society. It can be a very satisfying role, and if you think you can spare the time and would like to be considered for nomination by Council, please contact me.

A New Editor for the *British Numismatic Journal*

The Editors, Dr David Symons and Dr Philip de Jersey, have just sent vol. 77 (2007) of the *Journal* to press, and they say it will be another substantial issue. This is the last volume to be edited by David, who will step down as an Editor at the end of the year.

He will be succeeded by Dr Elina Screen, who was appointed an Editor in May, so that she and Philip might start assembling material for the next volume. Elina will step down as Secretary at the end of the year in order that she may take up her new role.



Society Parties

The two social events in our calendar are the parties with drinks and nibbles laid on in the Common Room at the Warburg Institute after our meetings in May and November. They provide a welcome opportunity for members to chat over a glass of wine – and curiously these meetings seem to be rather well attended! The November party has generally been sponsored by an individual member of the Society, often to mark an anniversary, while the reception in May – rather anachronistically called the ‘Council’s Sherry Party’ although few people drink sherry these days – has normally been paid for by members of the Council. Spink has now generously offered to sponsor the May reception in coming years. If anyone would like to sponsor a November party, do speak to me.

If you have not attended one of our lecture meetings before, why not make a point of coming to one next November or May and sharing a convivial drink with us?

COINEX

COINEX – the UK’s largest Coin Fair – will be held at Earl’s Court on Friday 28th-Saturday 29th September, and we hope to have representatives of the Society there talking to members and recruiting new people to join. We have done this for the last two years to great effect, signing up some 17 new members in 2005 and 12 in 2006. If you plan to go to COINEX or would be pleased for an excuse to do so, and could spare an hour or two to help man the Society’s stand, we would be very grateful. In previous years we have been

able to offer free entry to those assisting us. Please contact Elina Screen who is co-ordinating the event on 01223 332918 or secretary@britnumsoc.org.

For more information about COINEX see the British Numismatic Trade Association web site (www.bnta.net).

Library Computer

A new computer has been bought for the Library, and a monitor and keyboard have kindly been donated by Dr G. Sveinbjarnadottir. The computer will be used both for the Library cataloguing – which is moving on apace – and for looking up books by title or author.

Chichester Summer Meeting

This year's out-of-town meeting was held on Saturday 7th July in the stunning new extension to the Pallant House Gallery, winner of the prestigious 2007 Gulbenkian Prize for Museums and Galleries. If the building and collections of modern art were fabulous, the six numismatic papers presented during the day rose to the occasion admirably. Taking the theme *Currencies in Crisis*, topics ranged from the late Roman and Byzantine nummus to the abandonment of the silver standard in 1920. As in previous years we enticed historians to explore the context for numismatic events, in this case the baronial coinage of Stephen's Civil War and Henry VII's issue of debased half-groats in 1492. Other papers looked at the reforms of the 1690s and 1790s, and the complex coinages of Southern India in the early modern period.

This was the second year in which we have teamed up with our sister society, the Royal Numismatic Society, to explore topics of common interest and to reach out to members in the provinces who may not easily attend lectures in London.

Centenarian

Finally, I'd like to send our warmest congratulations to our member, Mr Charles MacKechnie-Jarvis, who celebrates his hundredth birthday on 29th August.

Here's wishing you all an enjoyable (and dry!) Summer.

Yours sincerely,



Mark Blackburn