

The
Ashmolean



The Heberden Coin Room
Origin and Development

C.M. Kraay and C.H.V. Sutherland

First Published 1972, Revised 1989, 2001

The Heberden Coin Room Origin and Development

On 24 October 1922 about one hundred persons, headed by the Vice-Chancellor of the University, assembled in Oxford at the Ashmolean Museum; in the company were a number of numismatists, whose names are still remembered today – Arthur Evans, G. F. Hill, Ernest Babelon, Théodore Reinach, and George Macdonald. The occasion was the public opening of the University's newly constituted Coin Room. For Evans it was a moment of personal triumph, for the unification under a single roof of Oxford's numismatic and archaeological resources was something for which he had striven for nearly forty years. In his address on that day he said "it would not be human – it would not certainly be honest – if I did not confess to a special personal satisfaction . . . at the opening of the Coin Room in the Ashmolean Museum. It is in fact the realization of a project for which I have contended from the very beginning of my actual Keepership in 1884, and was embodied in my Report in 1885 to the Visitors". 1884-1922: why had it all taken so long?

In sketching the circumstances of the foundation of the Coin Room in the Ashmolean in 1922 something must be said of the state of the numismatic collections of the University before Evans's appointment as Keeper in 1884. At that time the Ashmolean was not the building known by that name today; it was still the old Ashmolean building in Broad Street, erected to receive Ashmole's original gift in 1683. But by the 1880s the collections had been partly dispersed, and in particular the coins and medals had been sent in 1858 to join the main University collection in the Bodleian Library. This collection was large and varied, though it was by no means easy to consult. The material was classified not by the series to which it belonged but according to the donor, and for reasons of security, as Evans said, "The Bodleian statutes regarding the Coin Room have . . . been rendered so stringent that they have made it practically inaccessible to students" (Evans, 1885, p.10). One rather obscure and inhibiting rule reads "4. No person except the librarian and sub-librarians may handle one of the coins or medals when comparing it with a specimen not belonging to the University" (Draft statute, 18 March 1886). Apart from the main University collection in the Bodleian further collections, some of considerable size, were to be found in a number of the colleges. Archaeological material was similarly dispersed throughout the University.

Soon after his appointment, Evans prepared a comprehensive scheme for rationalizing the University's collections: the Ashmolean would surrender various anthropological collections and would receive in return archaeological material which had ended up elsewhere probably "by the simple process of misdirection". It was an essential part of his scheme that the coins and medals should be transferred from the Bodleian to the Ashmolean: "the juxtaposition of the Numismatic Collections with our other antiquities is of vital importance for the sound study of Archaeology in the University" (1885, p. 9). So far as the archaeological collections were concerned, Evans was wholly successful. Since the cramped site of the Old Ashmolean building could not provide the additional accommodation required, new rooms were built on to the existing University Galleries, and in 1894, the Ashmolean Museum was transferred to the new site, where it has remained ever since. But over the coins, Evans met with strong opposition; Bodley's Librarian (E.W.B. Nicholson) and the Curators refused to surrender their charge, though they did eventually offer to restore to the Ashmolean its own collection, which had been transferred to the Bodleian in 1858; but "it did not require the wisdom of

Solomon to persuade the Visitors to reject the proposed vivisection”, as Evans tartly remarked (Opening Add. 1922). When Evans resigned the Keepership of the Ashmolean at the end of 1908, to be succeeded by D. G. Hogarth, the coins were still in the Bodleian. The climate of opinion, however, was changing and the Ashmolean was beginning to be seen as the right home for numismatic material; in 1907, New College had deposited there its large collection on loan, and in the same year, H. de la Garde Grissell had bequeathed to the Ashmolean his fine series of Papal Coins: by 1912, the Curators of the Bodleian were believed to look favourably upon the idea of transferring the University Collection.

In October 1912 the Visitors appointed a sub-committee to examine the whole problem of creating a coin room equipped to receive the Bodleian collection; it consisted of Evans, Macan, the Master of University College, Gardner, the Professor of Classical Archaeology, Madan, Bodley’s Librarian, and Hogarth, the Keeper of the Ashmolean. The problem was that the strong room of the Ashmolean was thought to be too small to accommodate the Bodleian cabinets, and a new coin room would therefore have to be constructed; this would, of course, cost money. The Committee wasted no time, for by the end of 1912 their plans and estimates had been prepared:

| | |
|--|--------------|
| For building coin room and consequential alterations | £1,300 |
| Exhibition cases and books | 600 |
| Curator | 200-300 p.a. |

It is interesting to note that it was already envisaged that “ultimately the Curator of Coins might well give instruction in some branches of numismatics”; the idea that the Coin Room should be a teaching department has thus a very respectable antiquity. But of course the *sine qua non* was the £1,300 for the construction of the physical room itself.

On the basis of the sub-committee’s report Hogarth next approached the Curators of the Bodleian, who in January 1913 resolved that they “would be prepared to transfer the coins, medals and similar objects now in the Bodleian to the Ashmolean Museum as a loan” provided that certain reasonable conditions about security and responsibility were fulfilled. The Hebdomadal Council proved sympathetic, but the Curators of the University Chest declared that they had no money available. On 4 March 1913, Bodley’s Librarian wrote to Hogarth “Now what is to be done? Sir Arthur Evans? Oxford University Endowment Fund? Will any College contribute a Fellowship for the Lecturer in Numismatics? Can the capital sum be borrowed as a loan? Anything’s better than nothing!”

In October 1913 the Visitors again applied to the University for funds, but received the same reply; they tried again early in 1914 with the same results. In March, Hogarth felt that if he could raise part of this sum from College contributions, the University might be forced or shamed into providing the rest; he wrote to the President of Magdalen, “the matter is an absolute *impasse* . . . and this great collection, which ought to be one of the assets of the University, remains practically useless”. The President’s reply is not on the file, but since Hogarth was a Fellow of the College it was probably given verbally.

The outbreak of war in 1914 inevitably blocked all schemes involving fresh expenditure but even during the war years Evans remained optimistic. In 1916 when sending to the Ashmolean some contemporary war medals, including that for the “Jutland Bank Victory”, he

hoped that some progress could soon be reported, and wrote “this is a matter of permanent importance to historic studies and should not be affected by temporary conditions due to the war”.

Immediately after the war the question of the transference of the Bodleian coins was revived with vigour. In order to circumvent the financial impasse Hogarth was now able to discover by “careful measurements” that the Bodleian collection could in fact just be accommodated in the existing strong room of the Ashmolean and was therefore prepared to accept custody of it at once. To win support in the University for the transfer the Professor of Classical Archaeology (Percy Gardner) circulated a resounding memorandum on the value of coins as a source of history: “unlike the writings of historians, they cannot misinform us; they constitute a very bedrock of fact. Historic statements which they contradict cannot stand; historic statements which they confirm are placed in an unassailable position”. Thus armed, Hogarth tried to elicit from the Curators of the Bodleian approval for an immediate transfer.

Bodley’s Librarian (by now A. Cowley) expected to secure the necessary approval without difficulty, but there was opposition from an unexpected quarter – a numismatist! Charles Oman, without apparently fully understanding the prevailing conditions, argued that whereas there was always someone available in the Bodleian to show coins to accredited students, the same would not be true in the Ashmolean. On these grounds he persuaded the Curators to reiterate their conditions of 1913, which, strictly interpreted, implied that the transfer could not be approved until both a secure room *and* a specialist curator had been provided in the Ashmolean.

Cowley thought that he had been let down by his Curators and expressed his feelings in a letter to Hogarth (1 December 1919): “it’s hopeless to try to get anything done in place – tho’ one only wants what is best for one’s institution”. Evan’s reaction was more forceful, for he wrote to Hogarth on 9 December 1919 a long letter which was intended to produce results: not only are there several typescript copies of his not very legible autograph letter on the file, but he also ended with a postscript saying “I do not mind your showing any part of this letter to any discreet persons concerned with these matters”. After expressing his irritation over a project which had dragged on for more than twenty years, he delivered an open threat in his last paragraph, and declared in a phrase which has since become classic that his patience was at an end:

Personally, I am sick of these delays. You know that I am in a position to further the development of the Coin Collections in a very considerable degree, but, for over twenty years, I have been thwarted by a state of opinion on these matters existing among those who control University affairs, which is impervious to the place which Numismatics should occupy in historical research. This indeed is not surprising in a University which has no Ancient History School and leaves to sidetracks of its curriculum some of the most important ages of history, such as those of Alexander and Constantine. But my own personal patience is at an end, and I have taken sure measures that further delays on the part of the University in properly housing its Coin Collections and in putting the Numismatic science on its proper footing shall result in the diversion of anything that I have to contribute to quarters where it will be of greater usefulness.

After this events moved relatively fast. Hogarth again wrote to the Hebdomadal Council on 9 December 1919 pressing the case for the transfer of the coins: “the comparison of the equipment of the University of Cambridge in Numismatics is at present, and must remain till

the Bodleian Coin question is settled, very unfavourable to Oxford". Council, after considering his letter on 19 January 1920, set up a Committee to examine the question once again. Early in March the Committee invited three representatives of the Visitors (Evans, Gardner and Hogarth) to join their deliberations, and finally, on 8 June 1920 a Decree in Congregation was passed authorizing the transfer to the Ashmolean. The Decree was quickly acted on, and in October the Keeper of the Ashmolean could report to the Visitors that the University collection, to the number of about 65,300 pieces was now "stacked" in the Ashmolean strong room. The important word here was "stacked", which, as Hogarth explained, did not imply convenient access: "accredited students can only see coins on giving long notice to the Keeper, who must extract from the cabinets specimens, particularly designated, and bring them to his private office. The Honorary Curator . . . will have to work upon single trays carried to and from a distant room" (Hogarth to Vice-Chancellor, 22 January 1921).

The provision of a secure coin room was now urgent, and on 21 October 1920 the Visitors passed a resolution urging upon the Hebdomadal Council "the necessity of the provision of a properly protected Coin Room", and asking them to take steps to procure the necessary funds; at the same time they reminded Council that at long ago as 1917 it had agreed to raise such funds after the war. At the same meeting Dr F. P. Barnard was invited to act as Honorary Deputy Curator of Coins – "honorary" because the post was unpaid, and "deputy" because responsibility for custody remained with the Keeper of the Ashmolean. In transmitting this invitation to Barnard, Hogarth was able to mention "a distinct hope of funds being found".

The above meeting of the Visitors was the first to be chaired by the new Vice-Chancellor, L. R. Farnell, Rector of Exeter College, to whose beneficent interest the eventual realization of the Coin Room was largely due; of him Evans was to say at the opening ceremony two years later "no man has a clearer conception of the intimate bearing of numismatic science on our central studies, and of the light they throw on ancient art and religion, as well as on general history and economics". Early in the new year (on 22 January) Farnell obtained from Hogarth a statement of his requirements in which he estimated that some £1,500 would suffice for the basic work: this statement was forwarded by the Visitors to the Council University Endowment Fund.

It was not until 2 May that the Trustees of the Fund were able to inform Hogarth that they had decided "to make a grant of £1,500 for the provision of Cabinets for the Ashmolean Collection of Coins". Hogarth acknowledged their grant "with great joy and much appreciation", but he did not fail to point out that, since he had cabinets in plenty, what he wanted was a *room* to put them in. Though this little difficulty was easily overcome by the adoption of the equivocal phrase "the provision of new accommodation for the coins" further inquiry elicited that the Trustees did not have the whole sum immediately available, and that its full payments would be "a case of years rather than months". Nevertheless, on the strength of the Trustees' assurance, Hogarth was able to negotiate a loan of £1,500 from the University Chest payable over ten years.

Satisfaction at this grant of £1,500 was not unanimous. Evans argued strongly before the Visitors (5 May 1921) that in 1919 a committee had found that £4,000 was the minimum required for the establishment of a coin room (including structural alterations, exhibition cases, and library), and that the whole operation was "one and indivisible". Hogarth on the other hand felt that it was expedient to take what was offered and proceed with the

construction of the room, in the hope that provision for equipment would follow. In the upshot, as will appear, his faith was justified, but Evans remained convinced that it was a tactical mistake to accept part instead of the whole. The next day he wrote furiously to Hogarth, “the truth is that the idea that numismatics forms an integral part of historical research, so strongly felt by mere Germans, like Mommsen, is foreign to our lecturers here. It is almost unimaginable, but it is true!”

Nothing further of importance happened until Hogarth received a letter from the Vice-Chancellor dated 1 July; it is short and deserves to be quoted in full:

My dear Hogarth,

As a sum of £1,000, free of legacy duty, has been left by the late Dr Heberden to the Vice-Chancellor of the time being, to devote to any University purpose that he thinks fit, I hereby inform you that I have finally decided to devote the sum to the further equipment of the new Coin Room in the Ashmolean Museum; and you can act on this assurance.

Yours very sincerely,

L. R. Farnell

Vice-Chancellor

Charles Buller Heberden was a classical scholar who had been Principal of Brasenose since 1889, and who had recently died on 30 May 1921. It is worth noting at this point the close connection which has existed between B. N. C. and the Ashmolean. Ashmole himself was a Brasenose man, and the College has long maintained a benevolent interest both in the Museum named after Ashmole and in the Coin Room which bears the name of one of its Principals. Since 1931 this interest has taken the very practical form of an annual grant to the Coin Room from the Hulme Surplus Fund – a record of liberality doubly welcome for its regularity.

Hogarth now had at least the promise of the funds he needed – £1,500 for structural alterations and £1,000 for exhibition cases and other furnishings – and the work could now be put in hand; the alterations were in fact completed well before the end of 1921. At this point, Hogarth applied to the Chest for the promised loan of £1,500; the Chest in reply agreed to pay over the money before the end of the year, but cunningly said they would pay only £1,350, that is £1,500 less £150, as the instalment of the repayment. But Hogarth protested that the figure was £1,500 and £1,500 he must have, no repayment being due until a year hence. In the face of this show of strength, the Chest climbed down.

By 24 October 1922, when the Coin Room was formally opened, the coin collections were installed in their new premises, the foundation of a numismatic library had been laid, valuably supplemented by the loan of a number of books and periodicals from the Bodleian, and fifteen out of the eighteen show-cases, provided from the Heberden bequest had been filled. The range of the display and the number of people involved in its preparation is of some interest:

| | | |
|---|---------|--|
| English coins (including Ancient British) | 3 cases | |
|---|---------|--|

| | | |
|------------------------------|---------|---|
| Greek coins | 2 cases | Selected by Prof. Gardner “from our somewhat meagre collections of Ancient Greek coins”. That adjective could no longer be used of the Ashmolean’s Greek collection. |
| Greek Imperial of Asia Minor | 1 case | Nearly all “a gift from J. G. Milne to whom the University is already indebted for numerous benefactions”; this beneficence was to be maintained until his death twenty-nine years later, and is indeed still active today through the terms of his will. |
| Roman | 3 cases | Selected by the Rev. E. A. Sydenham |
| Chinese | 1 case | Selected by the Assistant Keeper, E. T. Leeds, who had spent his youth in the Chinese customs service at Shanghai, and who later devoted the years of his retirement to arranging Oxford’s vast collection of Chinese coins. |
| Italian Medals | 1 case | For which the Keeper of Fine Art, C. F. Bell, had helped to select the exhibits. |
| Special Medals | 1 case | Included those presented to Elias Ashmole, and two splendid Naval Medals of 1653, one of which had been presented to Admiral Blake; these had last been deposited on loan by Wadham College and are still in the Museum. |
| Unfilled | 3 cases | One destined for Indian coins and two for European. |

Looking back over this saga, it is clear that the original policy of uniting the University’s coin collection with the other archaeological material was due to Evans, its ultimate realization was achieved by Hogarth through the powerful support of the Vice-Chancellor, Farnell. The chief delaying factors had been first the opposition of Bodley’s Librarian, and then the restriction on all developments necessarily imposed by the War of 1914-18.

As established in 1922, with Barnard as its Honorary Deputy Curator, the Coin Room was constitutionally part of the Department of Antiquities (as the “Antiquarium” was then renamed); and it remained so until it became a substantive and independent department in 1961, although from 1957 it was administered by a titular Keeper. The early relationship with the Department of Antiquities was reflected in the fact that, as Assistant Keepers in that department first E. T. Leeds, and later for a time, D. B Harden had their desk in the Coin Room. This personal association meant that the Department of Antiquities had from the beginning a sympathetic understanding of Coin Room problems, especially those of space and money. Pressure on space was indeed very severe. Until 1938, a single and not very large strong room accommodated (with mathematical precision) coin cabinets, exhibition cases, a library, a counter for use by students and public, an Antiquities Assistant Keeper, and a Coin Room Deputy Curator, latterly with his Assistant Keeper: that precision, *mutatis mutandis*, has had to be applied ever since, even after each of the three extensions of 1938, 1956, and 1965, which carved out new space from the old Slade Lecture Room and from the attic areas of Evan’s building. As for money, it was virtually non-existent. Though Bernard Ashmole (1923-5) and Humfrey Payne (1926-7) were appointed part-time Assistant Keepers of Coins,

the payment of any stipend at all – and it was very small – was made possible only by the generosity of Brasenose College in making annual grants from the Hulme Surplus Fund. By 1927 any small residue of the original capital funds provided by the University for the Coin Room was officially reported to be exhausted.

Financial improvement, with enlargement of function, came very slowly but yet steadily from 1926, when Barnard's curatorship having suffered because of his ill health, J. G. Milne was appointed Assistant Honorary Curator. Milne, who had just retired from a long career in the Board of Education, as it then was, had also built up a reputation as a sound scholar in the fields of Numismatics and Egyptology. At the age of 59 he now had a second career, which was to last 25 years. In 1928 he was placed in formal charge of the Coin Room. In 1929 the title of Assistant Keeper was given to him, and that of Deputy Keeper in 1931 (he had become Reader in Numismatics in 1930). His numismatic knowledge was very wide, and his professional contacts too; and he delighted in the patient labour of slow but massive re-organization. Moreover, he quickly decided to help the Coin Room financially by ceding the modicum of salary he received (still through Brasenose) from 1929. This allowed, in turn, the revival of the part-time post of Assistant Keeper in 1932 and the preparation and publication (1933) of Milne's Catalogue of Alexandrian Coins in the Ashmolean Museum – a volume of permanent value reprinted in 1971.

Milne saw clearly, and from the first, what function the Coin Room should seek to perform for the University. He had been impressed by Percy Gardner's use of coins in the teaching of classical archaeology, and he was of the generation of G. F. Hill; in whom the mastery of numismatics and of history were brilliantly combined. Even before accepting the Readership he had begun to conduct small classes on Greek and Roman coins, attended perhaps mainly by interested dons: after 1930 these were a regular feature, being supplemented later by classes given by the Assistant Keeper as University Lecturer in Numismatics (from 1939). Milne, in brief, turned the Coin Room into a joint instrument of curatorship, research and teaching; and the University could see, and did see, that the embryo of 1922 had grown, a short decade later into an active and potentially useful element in University studies, especially *Literae Humaniores*.

For the moment, however, with the collections integrated and re-organised, it remained true that their scope was still very uneven. The Greek series was patchy and poor; the Roman much better, though still with some very bare sections; the English, especially the post-medieval, good; the Byzantine, the medieval (other than English) and the Oriental, all slight. Three factors have since combined to transform all these sections.

First, the willingness of colleges, one by one, to deposit on loan the coin collection housed in their libraries, and to have these collections integrated with the main collection brought an immense addition of often admirable comparative material in all sections. As already noted, New College in 1907 had been the first to deposit in large and varied collection in the Ashmolean; in 1914 there came an offer of Keble College's magnificent Greek and Roman collection formed by Canon Liddon, but Hogarth had then reluctantly to postpone acceptance until more accommodation became available in the Museum. Curiously, the offer seems to have been lost sight of, and the question was not raised again until 20 years later, when the original correspondence of 1914 was "rediscovered". After the establishment of the Coin Room the Balliol collection in 1924 brought a valuable supplement to the "meagre" Greek series. In the thirties a whole group of colleges offered their collections; Oriel and University in 1932, Corpus and Jesus in 1933, Keble in 1934 and Magdalen in 1936. The great Christ

Church collection was delayed until 1940, partly because of the involved legal procedure which was required to vary the terms of the original trust under which the coins had been given to Christ Church. After the war further contributions came from Merton in 1951, when a cabinet of coins came to light in the college, from Somerville in 1954, and from St. John's in 1955-6.

The second factor was due both to Milne's persuasiveness and to the sympathy of the Department of Antiquities, especially through Leeds; now its Keeper: money was from time to time provided for the purchase of a few *desiderata* as they became available, and thus began the Coin Room's purchasing policy, now made more secure by annual grant and designed to acquire either significant individual additions to series already strong or large groups of material to supplement sections hitherto weakly represented. The ultimate purpose has always been on the one hand to have available actual examples of coins and medals significant for teaching or illustration, and on the other to provide a number of dense series as a basis for detailed research. Such purchases have usually been made possible only by generous and informed contributions from many bodies: the University and its Colleges, the Pilgrim Trust, the National Art Collections Fund, the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, the Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund and others.

From this purchasing policy nearly all sections have benefited at different times. The range of the Greek section was greatly extended by the purchase of a large part of Sir Charles Oman's collection in 1947, and of selected pieces, often of superb artistic quality, from the dispersal of R. C. Lockett's collection from 1955 onwards. Many rare Roman items were bought in 1951 from the huge accumulation assembled by L. A. Lawrence. The British series received a unique supplement through the purchase of the Crondall hoard of Anglo-Saxon gold coins as a memorial to Sir Arthur Evans in 1944, and has been further strengthened by a large number of selected pieces from the R. C. Lockett collection and by the scholarly collection of coins of Henry VI formed by E. J. Winstanley (1958). English medallic art has been well covered by the purchase of the late Col. H. M. Grant's collection in 1953, and the Islamic orient by large sections of the collection formed by P. Thorburn (1966). In 1975 funds were raised to purchase the entire collection of Derek Fortrose Allen who by the time of his death in that year had made himself the leading authority in Britain on the Celtic coinage of Britain and Europe. Coins of the Gauls of France, Switzerland and Belgium form the greatest part of his collection of Gaulish coinage into one of the most important in Britain. In the same year, opportunity arose to purchase the Chinese collection of A. W. von Halle. This acquisition, the first major accession to the Far Eastern series of thirty years, enriched the Museum's collection to a truly remarkable degree. The great strength and interest of the von Halle coins lies in the early period, from the origins of coinage in China. There are more than ninety examples of cowrie shells and their imitations in bone, shell and bronze; more than a hundred of spade money and a similar number of knife money.

The third factor contributing to the growth of the collections as a whole has been the good will of benefactors, stimulated by the demonstrable fact that the Coin Room was not only a going concern but was also engaged in the extension of its collections, and in their active use in teaching and research. Already, long before the foundation of the Coin Room, the Ashmolean had been seen as the proper home for the fine Papal collection bequeathed by H. de la Garde Grissell in 1907. Sir Arthur Evans, who has appeared frequently in these pages, gave specialised groups from time to time (Ancient Britain, Illyrian, Thracian and Cretan) and on his death in 1941 bequeathed more than 10,000 coins which remained in his possession; the majority were Greek or Roman, but the range of his interests ensured that

many other sections benefited to a lesser degree.

In 1975 Hugh de Sausmarez Shortt bequeathed to the Coin Room a first and unrestricted choice from all his numismatic material. This added to the trays a wide variety of interesting specimens in all fields, but over 250 coins selected from his Bactrian and Indo-Greek series represent an accession of great significance for this was the centre of Shortt's interest and he chose deliberately and with deep knowledge. In 1988 work begun (with generous outside funding) on cataloguing this series. Another bequest by which the Coin Room acquired 25 superb European Renaissance coins and 25 equally fine English seventeenth century medals arrived in 1985. This was due to the imagination and thoughtfulness of Owen Parsons of Gloucester, who also gave a charming miniature coin cabinet in walnut which he had made himself.

Throughout the years of his connection with the Coin Room, J. G. Milne consistently sought out and presented large numbers of Greek bronze, especially of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, and J. M F. May on his death in 1961 bequeathed a collection which reflected his predominant interest in the Greek issues of Macedonia and Thrace. But the transformation of the "somewhat meagre" Greek collection into one which no student of the subject can now afford to neglect was due primarily to Sir Edward Robinson who succeeded Milne as Reader in Greek Numismatics from 1938 to 1957. Year by year he selected and acquired for the Oxford collection historically significant coins and especially types and varieties hitherto unknown. In addition, he gave from time to time important collections of single mints, such as the Ravel Collection of Corinth (1955) and those of Thurium, Velia, the Brettii and the Achaemenid Empire which he had himself formed over many decades. Sir Edward died in 1976 but under the terms of a trust set up during his life-time the Coin Room continues to receive a generous annual sum, ear-marked for the purchase of Greek coins. Through an inspiration of the late Colin Kraay, it has also been possible (with the co-operation of Wolfson College) to finance from this source visits to the Coin Room for study by foreign scholars.

The Roman series, massively increased by the Evans bequest, received further important additions in the cabinets of A. R. Bayley and E. T. Leeds: and the British series, though always one of the strongest in Oxford, has been still further enhanced from several sources. The A. T. Carter gift (1946) to the Wake Trustees of Christ Church, for deposit in the Ashmolean, consisted of a sequence of gold coins of superlative quality and H. Hird's Scottish collection (1953) was of quite exceptional historical and artistic interest. The purchase of E. J. Winstanley's scholarly collection of Henry VI, mentioned above, was followed in 1963 by H. Schneider's gift of Winstanley's equally comprehensive collection of Henry VII, which formed the nucleus of a catalogue of the Ashmolean's collection of that reign. Of special local interest was C. L. Stainer's collection of the medieval issues of the Oxford mint which arrived in 1934. In the related field of tokens and jettons Barnard's own incomparable collection came in 1931 - on a lorry from Lincolnshire guarded by Leeds and an escort armed with cocked revolvers.

Nor have gifts been lacking to supplement Oxford's useful but hitherto patchy older collections of Oriental coins, such as deposited by Christ Church in 1939. Particularly noteworthy have been the T.B. Horwood collection of Indian coins (1934), the R. Laird collection of Chinese (1947), and Sir Bernard Eckstein's bequest of a near unique set of gold medallion coins of Persia (1948).

In 1956 and 1958 the collections of the Sultans of Bengal and Assam formed by H.E.

Stapleton have given Oxford an exceptionally full coverage of these two series.

A most welcome gift, covering a highly unusual area from which previously only sporadic examples were available in Oxford was received in 1976 from Lt. Col. J.K.R. Murray. His collection of the coinage of Poland and the Baltic States contains coins dating from the eleventh to eighteenth centuries and filled a large gap in the collections. Another gift in a different field was made when in 1982, Lady Margaret Florey decided to give her late husband's medals (already on loan to the Coin Room) to the Ashmolean. This group of over 50 medals presented to one most eminent scientist must surely be unique?

Reasons of space preclude the specific mention here of any but the largest acquisitions, but smaller gifts, bequests and purchases continue to augment the collection in a steady flow, most notably perhaps in the field of Anglo-Saxon sceattas, where responsible modern metal detecting has transformed a previously very limited picture.

It is impossible to complete this survey without mentioning the quite outstanding generosity of D.R. Walker. Over many years he has continually donated coins and helped with purchases. His publishing company (B.A.R.) has contributed to the series of Oxford Symposia on Coinage and Monetary History by support in the publication of the volumes of Proceedings. He is depositing on long term loan his large and carefully chosen collection of Roman and Greek Imperial coins and finally and most generously of all, has through his own personal initiative made possible the appointment of an Assistant Keeper to partially fill the gaps left by the death of Dr Kraay in 1982 and the resignation of Dr Nash in 1985.

With these increases by gift and purchase from so many sources the Oxford collection probably now amounts to perhaps a third of a million items, more than three times the number recorded as having been transferred from the Bodleian in 1921.

In the last 65 years the techniques of numismatic study have greatly changed. Leeds, an archaeologist and very much of a polymath, was equally at home with Roman, English and Chinese coins, on all of which he did memorable work. Milne too, had a great range – ancient, medieval and modern, and even with a working knowledge of some oriental series. To his recently appointed but numismatically unversed part-time Assistant Keeper, he said, in 1932 (indicating the general cabinet just deposited on loan by Oriel College) “Catalogue these”. This laconic north-country instruction had its value. Today specialised reading in a specialised field would precede cataloguing. But then, there was a harder (and perhaps not worse) way of learning – seeing a wide range of unfamiliar objects and identifying them by unremitting research.

This account was first written in 1972 to mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Coin Room. It was revised in 1988 and 1989. Only the list of staff has been revised in 2001.

STAFF LIST

The following, apart from those already mentioned, have worked as curators in the Coin

Room

| | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------|
| A.D.H. Bivar | Assistant Keeper | Oriental Coins | 1952-57 |
| H. Brown (Mitchell) | Assistant Keeper | Oriental Coins | 1958-94 |
| | Senior Assistant Keeper | | 1968-94 |
| D.R.W. Bryer | Departmental Assistant | Oriental Coins | 1972-74 |
| C.J. Howgego | Assistant Keeper | Roman Coins | 1988- |
| | Senior Assistant Keeper | | |
| H.S. Kim | Assistant Keeper | Greek Coins | 1994- |
| C.E. King | Departmental Assistant | Roman Coins | 1979- |
| C.M.Kraay | Assistant Keeper | Greek Coins | 1948-75 |
| | Keeper | | 1975-82 |
| S. Lieu | Departmental Assistant | Oriental Coins | 1974-76 |
| N.J. Mayhew | Assistant Keeper | Late Medieval & Modern Coins | |
| | Senior Assistant Keeper | | 1988-99 |
| | Keeper | | 1999- |
| D.M. Metcalf | Assistant Keeper | Byzantine & Early Medieval | 1971-87 |
| | Senior Assistant Keeper | | 1981 |
| | Keeper | | 1982-99 |
| D.E.M. Nash | Assistant Keeper | Roman Coins | 1975-82 |
| | | Greek Coins | 1982-85 |
| C.H.V. Sutherland | Assistant Keeper | Ancient Coins | 1932-51 |
| | | Roman Coins | 1952-61 |
| | Keeper | | 1961-75 |
| S.M. Stern | Assistant Keeper | Oriental Coins | 1957 |
| J.D.A. Thompson | Volunteer | English Coins | 1936-46 |
| | Departmental Assistant | | 1946-57 |
| | Assistant Keeper | | 1957-70 |
| R.Yim | Departmental Assistant | Oriental Coins | 1976-78 |