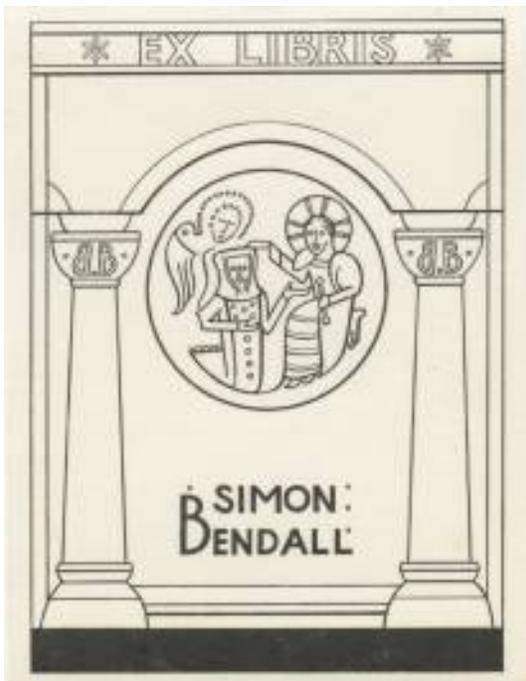


The Numismatic Library of Simon Bendall (1937-2019)

We are pleased to present for public auction the extensive library on ancient and medieval numismatics assembled over a period of fifty years of by Simon Bendall, one of best known specialists in Byzantine coinage.



SIMON THE NUMISMATIST

A eulogy delivered on Tuesday 6th August 2019 at St Stephen's Church, Rochester Row, Westminster, London, by Peter A. Clayton, FSA, FRNS.

Simon the Numismatist – a difficult word for many, but not for a large proportion of the congregation here present for Simon – numismatics means “the study coins”.

Simon was pre-eminent as a collector and scholar of Late Byzantine coins, the Byzantine Empire that continued in the East after the fall of the Western Roman Empire in AD 476 until its own fall to the Ottoman Turks at Constantinople on Tuesday, 23 October 1453.

I am a little older than Simon yet, curiously, our archaeological and numismatic lives ran on parallel lines over the years, and we had several friends in common.

Simon's interest in coins was sparked when he was a pupil at Cheltenham College and he found a Roman coin in a local field (my first schoolboy purchases were two late Roman coins of Valens and Gratian at 6p each, a shilling the two (5p) from Woodiwiss, then in Victoria Street not far from here). After that one might say for Simon, “and the rest is history”. He became a collector, especially frequenting the antique shops in Cheltenham with their bowls of unidentified Roman coins: his interest lay in Imperial Roman coins, not the Republican series, noting in his autobiography that: “I have never been able to raise any enthusiasm” [for them].

After his two years National Service in the Royal Artillery he was in need of a job and joined H. J. Heinz in London, 1959-65. At the suggestion of John Casey (an old friend of us both from his days as an assistant librarian in the Institute of Bankers, and later FSA in 1976), he enrolled at the Institute of Archaeology, London University, for the four-year part-time course on archaeology, 1961-65. I had similarly enrolled in 1958 as one of the first students when the Institute moved from St John's Lodge in Regent's Park to Gordon Square. After the first three years, respectively on Prehistory, the Ancient Near East, and Bronze and Iron Age Europe, there were options for the fourth year – Simon chose Roman Britain and I Ancient Egypt, my first love since the age of eight. Simon went on to his numismatic career and I to mine as an Egyptologist, lecturer and author, and a career in publishing as an archaeological editor. We were both volunteering on various archaeological digs but never actually met but our parallel lines were to come together later. Simon's interest in coins led to him being elected a Fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society (FRNS) in 1961, the requirement being an evident interest in ancient coins and the support of two existing Fellows. Subsequently he was elected an Honorary Fellow in 2010.

Seeking a job in numismatics, being very unhappy at H.J. Heinz, he and John Casey discussed Simon making an application to one of the big three prominent London coin dealers: Baldwins, Seaby and Spink. Simon was well known to all three as a collector with prominent numismatic knowledge. Baldwins he ruled out as at that time it was essentially a family-staffed firm; Seaby was dismissed as the head of ancient coins, Colonel Kozolubsky, a retired Polish cavalry officer, had recently died and a numismatist, David Sear, younger than Simon, had been appointed in his place, so Simon saw no chance of promotion. I well remember the Seaby advert in their Monthly Bulletin for a young man with an interest in ancient coins and who had completed his National Service. I fulfilled their requirements and had been tempted to apply. Fortunately for numismatics neither of us joined Seaby as David Sear went on to produce for Seaby the incredible series of books on individual coin series and their values – still in print in revised editions. They are now published under the Spink imprint since Seaby's publications were sold - and that is where Simon and I were later to come together professionally after being friends for many years.

So, for Simon, Spink it was; interviewed by George Muller he was offered a job and became assistant in the ancient coin department. In 1967 Simon moved to Baldwins and was to remain there for 20 years, 1967-87. It was in those years that his interest and study of the later Byzantine coinage really took root, enrolling for a four-year evening class course on the series under Dr John Kent at Goldsmiths' College, New Cross, London. It was in those years that Simon really began his extensive research and publications, he wrote over 200 articles published in major journals such as *The Antiquaries Journal*, *The Numismatic Chronicle* (journal of the Royal Numismatic Society); *Revue Numismatique: Schweitzer Münzblätter*, etc, together with several major books. Amongst them was *The Billon Trachea of Michael VIII Palaeologos 1258-1453* (1974), and *The Later Palaeologon Coinage 1282-1453* (both with Peter Donald, 1974). His book *An Introduction to the Coinage of the Empire of Trebizond* (also with Peter Donald, 1979) was the first book in over 100 years on the subject since the British Museum catalogues by Wroth and Retowski in 1908 and 1911.

In 1977 Simon married his American wife, they had met when she was studying archaeology in London. Her homesickness for the USA led him to seek a numismatic job there, which he obtained and joined Numismatic Fine Arts (NFA) in Los Angeles in November 1987. It was shortly after he had gone to NFA that he published *A Private Collection of Palaeogon Coinage* (actually the coins in his own collection). The book was dedicated to Dr F. A. Linville, a private collector who had financed it and it was marketed through NFA.

Simon was always generous in sharing his knowledge and expertise with others. In Vol. V. of the *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore*

Collection. Michael VIII to Constantine XI, 1258-1453 (published in 2006), Professor Phillip Grierson recorded how Simon had spent August 1980 with him in Dumbarton Oaks, when, “my work was checked and where necessary corrected by Simon Bendall whose knowledge of the series is unrivalled” – there can be no higher accolade than that!

Recognised as an acknowledged authority on late Byzantine coins Simon was proposed as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London (FSA, founded 1707) in November 1985. This was no straight forward election as with the RNS. The initial sponsoring Fellow had to acquire a “Blue Paper” from the General Secretary and submit it with full details and qualifications of the proposed candidate for approval by the Council. That hurdle passed, it was then required that at least eight Fellows should sign as sponsors from “Personal Knowledge.” Simon’s initial sponsor gathered 11 other signatories, many of them prominent numismatists including Professor Phillip Grierson (medieval coins); Christopher Blunt (Anglo-Saxon coins); Ian Stewart (later Lord Stewartby, Scottish hammered coins); Dr John Kent (Roman coins) and others. Then the candidate’s name and details were circulated to Fellows and then went to a secret ballot at a Society meeting, voting in 18th century ballot boxes casting a small cork ball for “Yea” or “Nay”. Every “Nay” vote cast cancelled out four “Yeas” – this meant that a 75% overall vote was necessary for election. Simon was successfully elected and remained a Fellow for 34 years until his death. Of the original 12 signatories from “Personal Knowledge”, only two of them are still alive: Robin Porteous whom I saw a few months ago, and me.

Simon’s wife’s homesickness for her East Coast origins grew – NFA was on the West Coast, and a return was made to London. Simon decided to become self-employed as a numismatic consultant, cataloguer of collections and auctions, and writer. Although he nominally retired in 2010 he continued publishing many articles.

It was in 1980 that I left the British Museum as its Managing Editor and was invited to join Seaby, Numismatists to HM The Queen, as an Associate Director to set up an antiquities department and take their publications list further, publishing revised editions of older books, editing and commissioning new titles. Thus it was that Simon’s career as a professional numismatist and mine as a publisher and archaeological editor, came together. Gavin Manton was now head of the Ancient Department at Seaby and David Sear had gone to NFA.

The first edition of *Byzantine Coins & Their Values* had been published in 1974 and it was decided to produce a second revised and enlarged edition by David Sear in 1987, and Simon agreed to assist as the co-author. Michael O’Hara had been working on identifying fake Byzantine coins and I suggested to David and Simon that I should ask him to contribute that work as an Appendix. They were both in agreement, as was Michael, and Simon carefully checked the text. After the detailed Introduction, 2645 coins are listed and described: the book still stands as the immediate *vade mecum* to the series even after all these years.

In February 2018 Simon suffered a grievous loss when burglars knocked down the front door of his house in Chelsea and stole his huge major reference collection of late Byzantine coins, plus medals, tokens and antiquities. The police opinion was that it was a “targeted” burglary, particularly by the nature of the items stolen. Such a large collection of Late Byzantine coins would be a problem in the market. I recall a similar burglary many years ago, that of the Anglo-Saxon coin collection of F. Elmore Jones. The coins disappeared and several years later when the strong box of a murdered East London gangster was opened there was the Elmore Jones collection, complete. If Simon’s coins have not been spirited abroad there are hopes perhaps that one day history may repeat itself and they will reappear.

Simon had been taking an interest in bronze and glass Byzantine weights and wrote a text: *Byzantine Weights: An Introduction*. I edited and produced it and it was privately printed. Although only 68pp it illustrated 207 weights and has a valuable Appendix of drawings of the monograms

that appeared on the glass weights. It is a seminal work of enormous value, but often missed in the list of Simon's publications.

But, finally, to return to Simon's love of bright colours and my taking the Institute's fourth year on Ancient Egypt and a career as an Egyptologist and archaeological editor - hence my tie featuring the Egyptian falcon god Horus. On many large stele inscribed with the details of the deceased's life, the hieroglyphic text often opens with the prayer: "Speak my name that I may live". Simon's name will be spoken with love in the family but in the world of the study of Late Byzantine coins when a query is raised the immediate reply is going to be: "Check it out in Bendall", both now and by future collectors and students. The prayer will be answered: Simon's name will be mentioned and he will live on.