

PETER SPUFFORD

PHILIP GRIERSON AMONG BELGIAN HISTORIANS AND NUMISMATISTS

PHILIP GRIERSON WAS BORN ON 15 NOVEMBER 1910 and spent his early years in the countryside of southern Ireland, then part of the United Kingdom, where his father, previously a government land-surveyor, was running a small farm. His rural childhood came to an end when his father, a trained accountant, moved to Dublin and embarked on a business career. Philip later regretted that so much of his life had been exclusively urban. After mediocre local schools in Ireland he was sent to Marlborough, a prestigious boarding school in southern England, and from there took the entrance examination to the University of Cambridge and secured a place at Gonville and Caius College, which was to be his home for the rest of his long life. He was a devout young man, brought up in a somewhat rigid protestant tradition of churchmanship, and regularly read the lessons in his home church, but at some point he was to lose his faith.

When the young Philip Grierson arrived in Cambridge from Dublin in 1929 the work of compiling the *Cambridge Medieval History* was still in full swing. The final three volumes were to come out in 1929, 1932 and 1936, under the editorship of Charles Previt -Orton and Zachary Brooke, who were to hold the chair of Medieval History in turn, and were to be his mentors in Cambridge, along with Michael Oakeshott and George Coulton. It was to be this vast multi-national compilation which provided the background to Philip Grierson's encyclopaedic knowledge of the political history of medieval Europe.

He already showed himself to be remarkable in his second year as an undergraduate in 1931 when he took the examination for the University's Lightfoot Scholarship. Candidates for the Lightfoot Scholarship are normally postgraduates undertaking research in the field of ecclesiastical history. It is extremely rare for an undergraduate to attempt the examination, much less succeed in winning the scholarship. At the same time he gained First Class honours in Part I of the Historical Tripos, the first half of the Cambridge history degree, and was promoted by his College to a Major Scholarship. The Lightfoot largely funded his final year as an undergraduate, as well as his first two years as a postgraduate. At the time that he took the Lightfoot examination he intended to undertake research on Hincmar (Archbishop of Rheims, 845-82). After obtaining another First in Part II of the Historical Tripos, the second half of the Cambridge history degree, he began research

on Hincmar, under the supervision of Charles Previté-Orton, soon to become the first Professor of Medieval History in Cambridge, and with the strong support of Zachary Brooke, his Director of Studies in Caius, and of James Whitney, the Dixie Professor of Ecclesiastical History, who had also been involved with editing the *Cambridge Medieval History*. This was nominally ecclesiastical history, but Hincmar was such a very political prelate, that it was really political history. After a few months Philip Grierson abandoned Hincmar, when he discovered that E. Perels was preparing an edition of Hincmar's letters for the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. He saw no point in duplicating work which was already being done elsewhere. So he did not become a great historian of medieval ecclesiastical institutions. It was to be the first of a number of false starts before he discovered the proper outlet for his skills and became the world authority on medieval numismatics.

Whilst working on Hincmar Philip had become fascinated by one of Hincmar's correspondents, Baldwin I, who was enfeoffed in 864 with the territories that were to form the core of the county of Flanders, on his reconciliation with the West Frankish King, Charles the Bald with whose daughter Judith he had eloped two years earlier. Baldwin consolidated his rule by repelling Norman invaders. Philip Grierson realised that there was no satisfactory account of the early counts of Flanders and envisaged writing a thesis, which would turn into a substantial book, on the growth of the county of Flanders from 862/4 to 1127. Dr Brooke and Dr Previté-Orton naturally put him in touch with their good friend François Ganshof, then Professor of Medieval History at the University of Ghent.

Philip was a young man who worked incredibly fast for extraordinarily long hours. He took up squash because, he said, he needed exercise, and squash was the sport that used the most energy in the minimum amount of time, and so took the least from research. He only gave up playing squash regularly on his eightieth birthday, because he said undergraduates could now beat him, or worse, allow him to win when he should not have done. He was sufficiently competitive, even in his sport, to hate that.

As a consequence of working so fast and so long, he had already drafted the first third of this book by 1934. It covered the first century of the county of Flanders from 863/4 to the death of Arnulf I in 965 and submitted this to Caius as his entry for the Colleges's prize Fellowship. He was not successful, but in the following year, 1935, he was able to submit the next third, on the 'Development of the county of Flanders from 965 to 1070' (four hundred and thirty typescript pages plus maps and genealogies) and was elected into the College's Research Fellowship. Ganshof foresightedly described it: 'Elle est l'œuvre d'un jeune érudit, qui possède son métier et donne les plus belles promesses d'avenir' (Brussels, 25 Nov. 1934). Philip showed himself as a fiercely critical young man, when writing in his introduction "The great Flemish historiographers of the centuries which succeeded the Renaissance

are erudite, diffuse, and uncritical, accepting with an easy conscience the legends of previous ages and transmitting them to their readers with calm assurance as the undoubted facts of history. The historians of the last century ... are more trustworthy but ... they too suffer from a surfeit of legendary material'. It is not surprising that he felt that 'There is not at present in existence any satisfactory work on the early history of the County or Marquisate of Flanders'.

By the time he was elected to his Fellowship, Philip had already published an article in the *English Historical Review* arising from his abortive work on Hincmar,^[1] and another was in the press for *Le Moyen Âge*.^[2] Furthermore he had already been commissioned to produce an edited volume of monastic annals. In his work on manuscripts in Flanders which related to the early history of the county, he had been fortunate enough to discover the hitherto unnoticed manuscript in the University Library at Ghent of the *Annales Elmarenses*, the annals of the priory at Elmare in Flanders-Zeeland, written at St Peter's at Ghent to the tenth century and then continued in the daughter house down to the mid twelfth century. Moreover when he looked at the manuscripts of the *Annales Elnonenses*, from the Benedictine abbey of Saint Amand near Valenciennes, and the *Annales Blandinienses*, of St Peter's on Mont-Blandin at Ghent, he realised that the existing printed editions were thoroughly inadequate. Prof Ganshof, seeing the importance of this, arranged for the Commission Royale d'Histoire of the Belgian Academy to commission the young Philip Grierson to produce definitive texts of these manuscripts, together with that of the *Annales Formoselenses* from Voormezele near Ypres in west Flanders.^[3]

In the custom of the time, election to a Fellowship meant the abandonment of the Ph.D. in favour of publication. Philip used the first two years of his Fellowship to complete his edition of the Ghent monastic manuscripts. It was a *tour de force* of minute scholarship, with elaborate annotations to show the sources used in each manuscript, to point out agreements and contradictions, to identify all the persons involved, and to place everything in the widest possible context of then current scholarship. He drew on the formidable bibliographical expertise that he was building up for his intended main work on the early county of Flanders. By the beginning of the Second World War, he had already published nine articles on the abbots and rulers of Flanders and neighbouring principalities, now parts of northern France. These included articles on Eudes, bishop of Beauvais, and on the Carolingian origins of the eleventh-century rulers of Flanders and of the then united counties of Amiens, Valois and Vexin, complete with one of his beloved

[1] Grierson 1934A.

[2] Grierson 1934B

[3] Grierson 1937.

genealogies.^[4] Seven more articles appeared during the war, including, astonishingly, some in the *Revue Bénédictine*, published at the Abbey of Maredsous in Belgium, during the German occupation.^[5]

Unfortunately, Philip Grierson was not alone in seeing the early history of the county of Flanders as a subject in need of a book. In 1935 Heinrich Sproemberg in Berlin produced a slim first part of *Die Entstehung der Grafschaft Flandern*.^[6] When Philip came free of the monastic annals in 1937, he teamed up with Jan Dhondt in Ghent, who had also become interested in the same subject, to write the book on Flanders from the ninth to the twelfth centuries jointly. This joint project never came to fruition because Philip was cut off from his manuscript sources by the German occupation of Belgium. Jan Dhondt, on the other hand, was able to continue working on the source material and published his *Het ontstaan van het vorstendom Vlaanderen* in two parts in 1941 and 1942.^[7] In 1944 François Ganshof himself took the study of early Flanders further with his *La Flandre sous les Premiers Comtes*, in which he gave due acknowledgment to the pioneering work of Grierson, Sproemberg and Dhondt.^[8] Philip had meanwhile published a long series of articles in both French and English on various aspects of the county, culminating in a paper read to the Royal Historical Society in London in March 1940 on the relations between England and Flanders in the two centuries before the Norman Conquest.^[9] A number of these articles came out in journals of ecclesiastical history, like the *Revue Bénédictine*, but they were only ecclesiastical history in the sense that they dealt with ecclesiastical institutions, or with men who held ecclesiastical positions. Many of them impinged on political history. These articles, like the edition of the *Annales*, are marked by an extraordinary keen attention to the detail of the documents involved, together with a phenomenal awareness of the secondary literature. They also show him as an argumentative young man, with no hesitation in pointing out the errors of his predecessors, in their interpretations or their ignorance of the manuscript sources. Although he was argumentative, it was with no sort of malice, but only with a concern for getting historical explanations right. He was equally pleased when what he had proposed was shown to be wrong, and a better explanation and interpretation of documents presented. It was best of all if he was the person who corrected his own work. He therefore kept interleaved copies of much that he wrote, to be able to

[4] Grierson 1935, 1938 & 1939.

[5] Grierson 1940.

[6] Sproemberg 1935.

[7] Dhondt 1941-1942.

[8] Ganshof 1944A.

[9] Grierson 1941.

annotate them (an example I have followed myself). His three volumes of collected articles incorporate his own corrections to them.

In view of the publications of Sproemberg, Dhondt and Ganshof, Philip, after the war, abandoned the idea of continuing with a substantial book on medieval Flanders. Although it seemed yet another false start, he had made a major contribution to the early history of the county. In 1944 François Ganshof had also produced a general study of feudalism in the legal sense, using the Low Countries for his exemplars.^[10] This was very different from Marc Bloch's *Société Féodale* published in Paris around the outbreak of the war.^[11] Philip was much happier with Ganshof's politico-legal approach to the analysis and description of feudal institutions. As well as translating it into English, Philip used his own detailed knowledge to help Ganshof revise it, so that *Feudalism*, when it appeared in 1952 was a fresh statement of this approach. It has continued to be a frequently revised and reprinted standard text.^[12] Even later Philip continued to write on manuscripts from the Low Countries. He did so in 1957 on both the *Testamentum* of sixth-century S. Remigius and the various *Livres des Meſtiers* of late medieval Bruges.^[13]

Meanwhile Philip was building up a formidable knowledge of the history of Europe as a whole. Partially this was achieved by writing a prodigious number of reviews. One of Philip's mentors in Cambridge, Charles Previté-Orton, was also editor of the *English Historical Review* from 1926 to 1938 and from 1935 Philip began to write reviews for that journal. From 1937 Philip was writing five or six reviews a year for it, and by 1939 he was writing a dozen reviews a year for a variety of journals. He began by reviewing books on topics related to his work on Flanders by Fernand Vercauteren, Charles Verlinden and Joseph Cuvelier, but soon broadened out to review books on France and the Low Countries in general from the Carolingians to the end of the Middle Ages. They were mostly political works, and, understandably, he particularly liked to review editions of primary sources.

His knowledge of the history of Europe as a whole was greatly enlarged by his work for the *Cambridge Medieval History*. Although Philip was too young to contribute to the original essay volumes of the *Cambridge Medieval History* themselves, there remained the compilation of the ninth volume. This was to be a volume of genealogies to match the equivalent volume of the *Cambridge Modern History*. The editors commissioned Philip to compile this volume, and he spent three years working on it. Although the war prevented the volume ever being published, Philip said that he was always grateful for the opportunity of having to master the intricacies and inter-relationships of

[10] Ganshof 1944B.

[11] Bloch 1939-1940.

[12] Ganshof 1952.

[13] Grierson, Jones & Crook 1957; Grierson 1957.

ruling dynasties all over Europe. He was able to use part of this prodigious knowledge when Charles Previt -Orton died in 1947. Philip was asked to continue the task of synthesising the eight immense volumes of the *Cambridge Medieval History* into the two manageable volumes. The title page only carries the name of Previt -Orton, but Philip's introduction makes it clear how much the volumes published in 1952 as the *Shorter Cambridge Medieval History* owe their appearance to Philip.^[14]

By this time he had also been able to express his enormous knowledge in lectures. Owen Chadwick (PBA 1981-5) was struck by them when he attended the first ones that Philip gave in 1936. Philip became a University Assistant Lecturer in 1938, and a University Lecturer in 1945. In 1946, on the premature death of Zachary Brooke, by then Professor of Medieval History in Cambridge, Philip took over the main series of sixty-four lectures on Europe from Diocletian to Columbus. Some of his lectures, like that on the sewers of Byzantium, became famous and drew large crowds.

When war broke out in 1939, Philip attempted to enlist, but was turned down on medical grounds, which must have galled him, since he took pride in his physical fitness to the end of his life. He therefore remained in Cambridge, researching and teaching, throughout the war.

He did his share of historical chores at a very early age. The Academic Secretary of the History Faculty Board in Cambridge is normally an established person. Philip did this during the war, while he was still an Assistant Lecturer, nominally on a short-term contract. After the war he became Literary Director of the Royal Historical Society, responsible for the *Transactions* and the Camden series of historical texts. Between 1945 and 1955 he was responsible for the publication of no fewer than thirty-one volumes, including two Handbooks. He was sole Literary Director. Earlier, and later, there were two Literary Directors, one medieval and one modern. He was not a professor like his immediate successor Denys Hay, and had only just been promoted to a full university lectureship the previous month, so his appointment must have been fixed whilst he was still an assistant lecturer. It was an extra-ordinary recognition of his abilities. He became a Vice-President of the Royal Historical Society from 1957 to 1961. He was later given notable recognition when he was made an Honorary Vice President for life.

One of Philip's enduring interests was in historical bibliography. It lay behind his work on the early county of Flanders and was expressed again in his interest in Soviet Russia, the greatest political experiment of his lifetime. He was already a school-boy at the time of the revolutions of 1919 and outlived the end of the experiment in 1989. He went to see for himself, in 1932, in the summer after graduating. As well as following the Intourist package from Leningrad to Kiev, he and a friend took off and went by themselves

[14] Previt -Orton 1952.

across Ukraine to Odessa and saw something of the 'real' Soviet Union, even before the deliberate ruining of Ukrainian agriculture and the show trials. It is not surprising that he came away with very mixed impressions. The visit to Russia was part of a grand tour which included Istanbul and the countries around the Black Sea. Three quarters of a century later he was still able to show off the scars from the injuries he suffered when the flying boat from Greece to Italy crashed into the Adriatic.

He also went to Nazi Germany in November 1938, with money provided, I believe, by the very young CARA (Committee for the Assistance of Refugee Academics) and bought out two Jewish academics from the Dachau concentration camp. They were the father and father-in-law of David Daube, a friend of Philip and subsequently regius professor of civil law at Oxford.

At some point, he lost the Christian beliefs in which he had been brought up, and also modified his left-wing principles, which had made him refuse to go to Italy whilst Mussolini was in power and to Spain until after Franco had died. When I knew him he had no specific religious or political stance.

During the war he read through some three thousand books and pamphlets, mainly in English, to create in 1943 an annotated 'Guide to Reading' of *Books on Soviet Russia 1917-1942*, to cover the quarter century from the peace of Brest-Litovsk that took Russia out of the First World War up to the time of writing. He added annual supplements in the *Slavonic and East European Review* up to 1951. The original guide proved so useful that it was reprinted in 1969. He added to each item a note on its character and the point of view from which it was written. He tried to be as objective as possible, but was aware that a personal factor was involved in his judgments. His starting point were the extensive holdings of the Cambridge University Library, but he acknowledged that he was scarcely less indebted to the authorities of Marx House in London. He used his experience of writing about post Carolingian Europe to distance himself from the events of his own day. In a politically emotionally charged area he very largely achieved the objectivity at which he aimed. If he had ever been a left wing idealist himself, and it was not clear that he ever had been, he had clearly become a detached and sceptical observer by the time he wrote these annotations. He perhaps veered very slightly towards being favourable to the achievements of the régime. He was pitiless to those he thought 'scrappy' or 'tendencious' or 'highly prejudiced', although in one case he explained an 'unfavourable account' by a journalist - 'he spent most of his time in Russia in prison'. However he praised those he thought 'useful' or 'valuable' for their information and, very occasionally, 'brilliant' for their analysis. He showed his awareness of the possible change in the opinions of individuals, for example charting the disillusionment with the régime of W.H. Chamberlin over three books published between 1930 and 1940. He was particularly careful to pick up whatever could be used as primary source material. This creation of such a bibliography looks like the background for a grand study of Soviet Russia, which never

came about. Was it yet another false start? Instead it was E.H. Carr, who returned to the subject after over a decade working on British Foreign Policy, to start producing his massive multi-volume *History of Soviet Russia*.^[15] It is noticeable that like Philip, he consciously used Soviet Russia in his title rather than Soviet Union. Philip's bibliographical work on Soviet Russia stopped when Carr's first volume came out. His fascination with bibliography fits with being College Librarian for a quarter century from 1944, and a Syndic of the University Library for a third of a century from 1944, latterly as Chairman of the Syndics, as the governing committee is known. He was also an indefatigable book buyer and put together an extraordinary numismatic library of books and offprints and photocopies of academic articles, which is now in the Grierson Room of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

In the late 1940s, whilst still producing his supplementary guides to reading for books and pamphlets on Russia, he was transferring his bibliographical techniques to early medieval history for the *Annual Bulletin of Historical Literature* in 1946, 1947 and 1948. In 1948 he summarised the then present position of medieval studies in England for the *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, essentially another bibliographical exercise. He also compiled bibliographies of his mentors Zachary Brooke and Charles Previté-Orton.

In 1945 he went home, as usual, to Ireland and whilst there looked into a small box of coins of his father's. There was one coin that he could not work out what it was, so it caught his attention. He brought it back to Cambridge and showed it to Charles Seltman, a Greek numismatist at Queens' College, who explained that it was a half-follis of Phocas, the Byzantine Emperor from 602 to 610.

Philip then thought it might be a good idea to have some medieval coins to illustrate his lectures on Medieval European History, so he went to Spinks to buy a few coins and said that he was prepared to spend £5 (the equivalent of perhaps €300 now). He said that he was not a collector, and had no intention of being a collector. However, Leonard Forrar guided him to buy a few more coins than he originally intended and he then got hooked. He bought a thousand coins in 1946, two thousand coins in 1947, he had seven thousand coins within five years and had twenty thousand coins of medieval Western Europe at the time of his death, after disposing of his Byzantine coins. He latterly claimed that his collection had become the second best for almost every country of Western Europe after the National Collection for that country. The years immediately after the war were a marvellous opportunity of building such a collection. In London he bought, not only from Spinks, but especially from Baldwins. Because of his interest in the history of the

[15] Carr 1950-1978.

Low Countries, he soon came across to buy in Belgium and the Netherlands. In Belgium he bought a great quantity from Tinchant and Franceschi from 1946 and also, early on, from Madame Dillen and from Delmonte. In the Netherlands he bought a great many pieces from Schulman by 1948. By 1987 he was buying from Elsen, as well as, in smaller quantities, from dealers and auctions all across Europe. He was still buying at the time of his death, and left money in a fund, the income to be used after his death, for purchases to fill the gaps, which is still being used.

At the suggestion of Professor Ganshof, it was arranged that he should come across in 1947 to give lectures in Brussels, Liège and Amsterdam under the auspices of the British Council. Professor Ganshof no doubt expected that he would say something important about the early political history of Flanders, in which Philip had made himself such a large reputation before the Second World War. Instead, Philip chose to lecture on fourth- and fifth-century coinage, as evidence for the decline of Rome. The morning after his lecture in Brussels, Professor Paul Bonenfant, together with Dr Jan de Sturler, called on him to say was he interested in the Chair of Numismatics and the History of Money in the Free University of Brussels, which had newly become vacant on the retirement of its first holder, Victor Tourneur. He accepted, because he realised that he could combine the Professorship in Belgium with his lectureship in Cambridge, because of the different timing of the terms. So he spent six weeks a year living in the very comfortable Fondation Universitaire in the rue d'Egmont in Brussels, whilst giving his fifteen lectures and examining. He took up the chair in 1948 and lectured in Brussels every year till he retired in 1981, at the age of seventy.

He became part of a large circle of Belgian academics, with whom he maintained long running friendships. He was already part of a Ghent circle, around his patron François Ganshof, which included the political historian Jan Dhondt, who died young in 1972, and the economic historian Hans van Werveke, who already had an interest in money, having disputed with Einaudi about the nature of medieval and early modern moneys of account. Later there was Walter Prevenier at Ghent. In Brussels, his friendship with Paul Bonenfant, a fifteenth-century Burgundian specialist, continued until the latter's early death in 1965, and with Bonenfant's star pupil Jean Stengers, initially a medievalist, but ending up as historian of the Belgian Congo. In Leuven, which was then not divided, he numbered Léopold Genicot amongst his friends. At Liège he came to know Fernand Vercauteren, who had like Ganshof at Ghent been a pupil of Henry Pirenne, and also Paul Harsin and Léon Halkin. Close by in French Flanders, there was Michel Mollat, who although living in Paris, was for long Professor at Lille. When in the 1950s I was researching *Monetary Problems and Policies in the Burgundian Netherlands 1433-1496*, Philip sent me to see most of these Belgian friends. Since Philip's focus was not economic but political, he did not make friends at Leuven with Van Houtte and his pupils Herman Van der Wee and Raymond

Van Uytven, who were to be so important to me later. As well as numismatists and historians in Belgium, he extended his gift of friendship to numismatists and historians in the neighbouring parts of Europe, like Hendrik Enno van Gelder in the Netherlands at the Koninklijk Penningkabinet, then in The Hague, and later a professor in Leyden. He also made a firm friendship with Walter Hävernick, director of the Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte and Professor of Anthropology in the University of Hamburg, and founder of the Hamburg 'school of Numismatics', and his pupils Peter Berghaus, whom Philip first met in 1947, Gert Hatz, Vera Jammer (later Hatz) and Wolfgang Hess. In due course Peter Berghaus was to continue the Hamburg school in Münster. In Paris there was Jean Lafaurie and later Cécile Morrisson and from Italy he had already met Carlo Cipolla in 1946, who was to become a very distinguished economic historian and did a great deal of work on the money of Northern Italy. He was perhaps Philip's closest friend.

When he was selected as the new Professor of Numismatics and the History of Money he had only written a single one page article on a numismatic subject! It was on the attribution of a Byzantine coin of Miletus. In 1948 he published his first West European article on a numismatic subject. It was a two page article on a coin of Arnold II of Randerode which appeared in Walter Hävernick's newly founded *Hamburger Beiträge zur Numismatik*.^[16] When I was revising the section on Randerode for volume 7 of Philip Grierson's great *Medieval European Coinage* series, I found that, compiling that section himself 65 years later, he had forgotten that he had ever written this article, and made no mention of it! He published two other numismatic articles that year, five each in 1950 and 1951 and eleven in 1952. It rapidly became obvious that he had at last found his life's work as a medieval historian. After so many other enterprises, he was still only in his mid-thirties. As well as transferring his bibliographical skills, he also transferred other skills. Those that he had honed on the precise study of manuscripts, he was readily able to transfer to the precise study of coins. Again he had no hesitation in pointing out the errors of his predecessors, in their interpretations, or plain ignorance of the coins themselves.

It is not surprising that he was elected a 'membre étranger' of the Société Royale de Numismatique de Belgique in February 1949, at the next meeting after he was appointed to the Professorship. When the society celebrated its 125th Anniversary, in April 1966, he was promoted with great ceremony to be a 'Membre Honoraire', along with two other medieval numismatists, Karel Castelin from Prague and his good friend Jean Lafaurie from Paris, and an ancient numismatist, Humphrey Sutherland from Oxford.

[16] Grierson 1948.

He gave his inaugural lecture in Brussels in 1950 entitled 'La numismatique et l'histoire'.^[17] It was translated and republished as a separate booklet in England the following year as *Numismatics and History*.^[18] It made a plea for incorporating numismatics in the study of history, specifically in political history.

Louis West, the President of the Americal Numismatic Society, read this booklet and was inspired by it. With the financial assistance of Archer Huntington he set up an annual summer seminar at Cornell University for historians to learn about numismatics. Philip Grierson went across to lead this seminar on several occasions. The first time was in the summer of 1953 and had a number of consequences. Since he had a sabbatical term from Cambridge that autumn, he stayed on at the American Numismatic Society for six months.

Philip had already used his bibliographical skills to produce a report on medieval numismatics since 1930, in preparation for the International Numismatic Congress in Paris in 1953.^[19] While at the American Numismatic Society he further used these bibliographical skills to produce the fundamental bibliography of numismatics, based on the Society's library. *Coins and Medals: a Select Bibliography*, which came out in 1954, gave critical comments about the advantages and disadvantages of the listed publications.^[20] The notes he added to his numismatic bibliography, like those to his medieval historical bibliographies have very much the same incisive flavour as his guide to reading on Soviet Russia. The preparation of this comprehensive reading list on coins took him outside his expertise on medieval Europe and made him read extensively on other parts of the world. One of the by-products was that from 1955, for several years, he put on a regular course in Cambridge on 'Europe and the Outside World in the Middle Ages', effectively Asia, from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, beginning with Mongol expansion and ending with European voyages of discovery. It consisted of sixteen weekly lectures and accompanying tutorials for individual students, and I was fortunate to take it in its first year. Like all his work it was based heavily on primary sources, with typically astringent comments on the reliability of those original sources, and their editors.

A greatly enlarged edition of the numismatic bibliography, in French, came out in 1966, produced for the Cercle d'Études Numismatiques here in Brussels. It was thoroughly revised and enlarged again in 1979.^[21] It covers all periods and all parts of the world, although its core is naturally medieval

[17] Grierson 1950.

[18] Grierson 1951.

[19] Grierson 1952.

[20] Grierson 1954.

[21] Grierson 1979A.

European. It is still the only general bibliography of numismatics aimed at historians rather than collectors.^[22] A new edition is badly needed, perhaps as a by-product of the *Medieval European Coinage* series, and baseable on the numismatic library of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, hugely enriched by the numismatic books and articles that Philip himself accumulated, and once again on that of the American Numismatic Society.

Whilst he was at the American Numismatic Society in 1953, he also met Professor Alfred Bellinger of Yale, an archaeologist and numismatist of classical Greece. Bellinger invited him to Washington DC to look at the Byzantine coins in the Center of Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks. Mr and Mrs Robert Bliss, who had given this grand house and its contents to Harvard, continued as benefactors. When Philip Grierson saw the collection, which was already at Dumbarton Oaks, and also the Whittemore Collection at Harvard itself, he realised that there was the potential for creating the finest collection of Byzantine coins in the world, provided that Mr and Mrs Bliss were happy to continue with the funding. They were and Philip, to avoid conflict of interest, sold his own Byzantine collection to the center at Dumbarton Oaks and proceeded to visit dealers and auctions, all over the world, to bring the collection to its peak. He spent part of every summer as Adviser on Byzantine Numismatics at Dumbarton Oaks from 1955 to 1998. Alfred Bellinger had already started to catalogue the collection and Philip took over, firstly with Bellinger, then by himself and then with younger scholars, like Michael Hendy, Melinda Mays and Cécile Morrisson. The eventual catalogue was published in five two-part volumes, between 1966 and 1999, with a sixth volume on late Rome, from 383 to 491. This made eleven actual physical volumes in all. The description of the coins, both in the Dumbarton Oaks collection itself and those that Philip and his collaborators knew about elsewhere, is as complete as could be made at the time. The coinage of every ruler was preceded by a section on the political context of the reign, so that the coinage could be fitted into the historical background. In this way Philip saw that his own plea, in his inaugural lecture in Brussels, for integrating numismatics into political history could be fulfilled for Byzantium.

In 1982, part way through the grand work on the Dumbarton Oaks collection, Philip produced a summary work on Byzantine numismatics.^[23] Over thirty years later, it still remains the standard work on the whole series.

From 1955 onwards the pattern of his life was set for the next quarter century. He was firmly established in his three bases, spending some six weeks each year in Brussels, two months in Washington, and the rest of the

[22] Elvira Clain-Stefanelli, for many years keeper of the American National Numismatic Collection in the Smithsonian Institution produced such a *Numismatic Bibliography*, Battenberg, Munich, 1984.

[23] Grierson 1982.

year in Cambridge, and was free to research and teach in all three. He had wardrobes and libraries in all three places and travelled between them with only a briefcase of his current paperwork.

He was also involved in a great many other enterprises, starting in the 1950s. For example his continuing interest in all aspects of the early Middle Ages meant that for nearly half a century he was a regular participant in the annual study weeks of the 'Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo' at Spoleto, which brought together the leading historians of the early middle ages once a year from all over Europe. He was always much appreciated for his brilliant interventions and lively company, as well as for the important papers that he gave. As well as his numismatic papers there in 1961,^[24] he read non-numismatic papers in 1963 and 1979. The Centre showed their appreciation of his link with them by publishing a volume collecting some of his historical as well as numismatic papers in 2001.

His numerous articles were heavily focussed on Byzantine and early medieval numismatics. His interest in the coinage of Byzantium led him into a variety of other related fields. One of these was yet another manuscript study, on the tombs of Byzantine Emperors from 337 to 1042. The majority of imperial sarcophagi were once in the mausolea of Constantine and Justinian in the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. Because nearly all of them have since been destroyed, this had to be a reconstruction, from a tight analysis of half a dozen manuscripts, now scattered around Europe.^[25]

A different spin off was imperial prosopography. In the nineteenth century Theodore Mommsen had started on a gigantic programme to create such a prosopography from Augustus to the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, collectively describing many of the people attested or claimed to have lived in the 'Roman' world. Between 1950 and 1992 the work, a research project of the British Academy, was concentrated on what was called 'later Roman', from Gallienus to Heraclius. Half of it was really early Byzantine, since the capital was moved to Constantinople in 330. Philip was naturally interested since he had effectively used a prosopographical approach in his work on the Ghent *Annales*. Philip therefore sat on the Academy's project committee and was, I believe, at one time its chairman.^[26]

This was not the only large project in which Philip was involved. His experience in editing manuscripts, in reviewing the editions of others, and in running the Camden series of editions for the Royal Historical Society, together with his fascination with historical bibliography brought Philip to the International Congress on Historical Sources for Medieval Europe, held in Rome in 1953. The organisers of the Congress, the Istituto storico italiano

[24] Grierson 1961.

[25] Grierson 1962

[26] Jones, Martindale & Morris 1971-1992.

per il Medio Evo, then set up a general international committee, of which Philip was a personal member, to produce a *Repertorium fontium historiae medii aevi*. Individual countries then set up contributory national committees. Fernand Vercauteren was chairman of the Belgian committee. This is often known as the 'New Potthast', since it was inspired by the great guide produced by August Potthast in the second half of the nineteenth century.^[27] When the first of the eleven volumes came out in 1962, Philip was still an active member of the committee. That first volume, on the series published by learned bodies all over Europe,^[28] was an essential guide for me when I set out in the 1970s to produce my *Handbook of Medieval Exchange*, as one of the background projects behind my *Money and its Use in Medieval Europe*.

In 1956, he began yet another new enterprise himself. He started the *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* as a research project of the British Academy. He edited the first volume himself, which was devoted to the Ancient British and Anglo-Saxon coins then in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, where he had been Honorary Keeper of Coins since 1949. He remained Honorary Keeper until his death in 2006. That first Sylloge volume came out in 1958, and set the pattern for all the successive volumes. In June 2016 we celebrated sixty years of continuing publication. Over these six decades an average of more than one volume a year has appeared, and a further nine volumes are in preparation. Philip remained on the project committee of the Sylloge until his death.

In October 1958 he read a paper to the Royal Historical Society which caused a considerable stir at the time. He was the first historian to look at the evidence for a 'gift economy' in the early middle ages, in which he was inspired by the French sociologist Marcel Mauss.^[29] Over the next quarter century other medieval historians, like Georges Duby, also took this line, but Philip was the first. His work was enthusiastically picked up by anthropologists and reprinted in *Studies in economic anthropology*.^[30] In an article in *Speculum* in July 2006 Florin Curta traced the influence of Mauss and Grierson in a reconsideration of Merovingian and Carolingian gift-giving, concluding that it was primarily about politics not economics, although admitting that the two spheres were not entirely separate. Philip, atypically, had seen it in the context of economics, and titled his lecture 'Commerce in the Dark Ages'.

[27] Potthast 1862.

[28] *Repertorium fontium historiae medii aevi*, 1, *Series Collectionum*, Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, Rome, 1962.

[29] Mauss's original piece was entitled 'Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques', *L'Année Sociologique*, 1925. The essay was later republished in French in 1950 and translated into English as *The gift; forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies*, Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1954.

[30] Grierson 1959.

He taught very few postgraduates. In the immediate post-war years there was Janet Matthews (later Sondheimer) of Girton College, (sent to Philip by Helen Cam) who wrote an excellent Ph.D. thesis on the early Carolingian aristocracy. It was never published, because of Jan Dhondt's work in the same area. She did not attempt to pursue an academic career, but married a fellow research student and translated into English many of the most important works on medieval history originally published in French and German. In the 1950s Philip had three of us together. Here in Brussels there was Pierre Cockshaw, an institutional historian who ended up running the Royal Library, and in Cambridge Michael Metcalf, who remained a numismatist and ended up running the Heberden Coin Room at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and myself, Peter Spufford, who became primarily an economic historian, and inherited the later part of Philip's general course of medieval European lectures in Cambridge, that he himself had inherited from Zachary Brooke. He also taught a number of young historians at his seminars in America, including some who became very distinguished like David Herlihy and William Bowsky. As well as the people whom he actually taught, he influenced a great many other people, and many of his protégés also became part of his vast international circle of friends, like Mark Blackburn, who became Keeper of Coins at the Fitzwilliam and a Fellow of Caius until his early death in 2011, and Lucia Travaini, now a Professor in Milan.

In the 1950s his eminence was being recognised both inside and outside Belgium. For his Flemish work he became a Corresponding Fellow of the Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie in 1955 and in 1957 received his first Honorary Doctorate, that from the University of Ghent. He was elected to the British Academy in 1958. It is the highest academic honour in Britain and rarely achieved by those who are not already full professors, and uncommon before the age of 50. Philip was 47 when he was elected, and still only a university lecturer in Cambridge. Cambridge appointed him to a personal readership (the equivalent of a professorship elsewhere) the following year. The Académie Royale de Belgique added him to their Fellowship in 1968.

In the same year, 1958, as well as election to the British Academy, he received another form of recognition of his eminence, the medal of the Royal Numismatic Society. Four years later this was followed by the Archer M. Huntingdon Medal of the American Numismatic Society. Much later, after many other medals, he received the Gold Medal of the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1997.

A different form of recognition came in his election as President of the Royal Numismatic Society in 1960. He used the opportunity of his five presidential addresses from 1961 to 1965 to express his general thoughts on numismatics.^[31] His vast background reading for these lectures provided

^[31] These were published originally in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, 7th ser, vols. 2-6, 1962-6, and were all reprinted in the second volume of his collected papers.

the impulse for the first French edition of his numismatic bibliography in 1966. In the following decade he amplified his general thinking on numismatics into writing what is still the standard textbook on *Numismatics*, published in English in 1975,^[32] followed by translations into French and Italian in 1976 and 1984. *Numismatics* itself only contained a very cursory reading list, but the preparation of the revised edition of his numismatic bibliography in French went with this general book.

Another form of recognition of his eminence was the invitation to give grand endowed historical lectures. Some, like his Ford lectures for the University of Oxford, he never published. Others he did. In 1970 he gave the Prothero Lecture for the Royal Historical Society.^[33] The same year he gave the Creighton Lecture for the University of London on the *Origins of Money*, which, despite its title, was not a work of numismatics. Once again he caught the attention of anthropologists, who republished it.^[34] In his 1971 Stenton Lecture for the University of Reading he spoke about *English Linear Measures*. Although he focussed on the Assize of Weights and Measures of 1196, it was another display, in miniature, of his encyclopaedic knowledge, ranging from the seventh to the fifteenth century.^[35] As a pendant he wrote on weights and measures for the great 900th anniversary facsimile reproduction of the English Domesday Book of 1086.^[36]

He was also called upon to contribute to the Festschriften of other eminent persons. He used the coins mentioned in the papers of the Cely family of Staplers in Calais to explore the currency circulating in the Low Countries in the fifteenth century,^[37] just as he had used the notebook compiled by Franceco Pegolotti to explore the currency circulating in the Mediterranean around 1300.^[38]

After disposing of his Byzantine coins, Philip continued building up his West European collection of medieval coins in Cambridge, which is now in the Fitzwilliam Museum. He thought about this on an even larger scale than the Byzantine work for Harvard. In 1976, he produced the single volume *Monnaies du Moyen Âge*. There was also a German and, much later, an English version.^[39] It was effectively a preliminary sketch for a proposed work for his retirement from his professorships in 1977 and 1980. This was to be a multi-volume standard work on *Medieval European Coinage* to match

[32] Grierson 1975.

[33] Grierson 1971.

[34] Grierson 1977.

[35] Grierson 1972.

[36] Grierson 1987.

[37] Grierson 1967.

[38] Grierson 1957A.

[39] Grierson 1976 & 1991.

up with his then still unfinished multi-volume work on Byzantine coinage. Once again, it was to be based on a catalogue, but with a description of the complete coinage of every ruler in Western Europe in its political context. I must confess, that when he told me about the project, I expostulated that it was improbable to start such a huge multi-volume work at around the age of seventy. He protested that those in his family generally lived to their mid-nineties, so he had a quarter century to do it in! His original plan was, I believe, for something like thirteen volumes, which he said, would reflect the increase in knowledge since the previous general survey at the end of the nineteenth century.^[40]

It all took much longer than he thought. The first volume of the *Medieval European Coinage* series was on the coinage of the early Middle Ages, from the fifth century to the tenth. It was only completed in 1986, with the co-operation of Mark Blackburn. By the time that he died, the only other volume to be completed, was that for Southern Italy, which he completed with the assistance of Lucia Travaini in 1998.^[41] He had however already written part of every other volume. In some cases, a very large part. After his death a whole range of scholars, from across Europe, including myself, have taken on the responsibility of completing his work. As we see it at the moment, it will occupy some twenty volumes. Volume 5 on France will be published in two parts, so will Volume 7 on the Low Countries, and so will Volume 9 on the British Isles after the Norman Conquest. Since Philip's death, the Iberian Peninsula volume has been completed and it seems that in 2016, Volume 12 on Northern Italy will come out and possibly at the end of the year, or early in 2017, that on the British Isles, before the Norman Conquest. We hope that Volume 9 (A) on the British Isles between the Norman Conquest and Edward I, will appear in 2017, along with Volume 10 on the Nordic and Baltic countries. I am aiming to complete the two volumes on the Low Countries, 7 (A) and 7 (B) in 2018. Philip was fascinated by details of earlier collectors and students of coinage and kept exceedingly detailed notes on numismatists in every part of Europe. The Low Countries section I have transmitted to Dr Johan van Heesch and I believe that it will be published in this volume. I believe that it in part lies behind later contributions that are being made today.

Three volumes of collected papers were published in his lifetime,^[42] and a complete bibliography of 274 items that Philip wrote, up to 2000, is inclu-

^[40] Engel & Serrure 1891-1905.

^[41] Grierson & Blackburn 1986; Grierson & Travaini 1998.

^[42] Grierson 1979A. This contains 29 articles with 23 pages of addenda, corrigenda, and index. Grierson 1979B. This contains 22 articles with 21 pages of addenda, corrigenda, and index. Grierson 2001. As well as 17 further articles, with addenda and corrigenda, this contains a detailed bibliography of all 274 known publications by Philip between 1934 and 2000, and the text of an interview on his numismatic career given in Finland in December 1987.

ded in the third volume of his collected papers, and a further two items are included in the list of publications with his British Academy memoir.

The last public lecture that Philip gave was the opening paper at the conference in 2002 to commemorate the 750th anniversary of the creation of the Florentine florin.^[43] He insisted, typically, on delivering it in Italian, on the eve of his 92nd birthday. It was part of his pride in his linguistic abilities. Working on Flanders before the war he had naturally added Flemish to his knowledge of French, German and Italian, and he also added a little Russian. After the war he extended his language ability still further. The three papers that he read in Spoleto in 1961 were in three different languages, Italian, French and English. He claimed even to have lectured in Polish on one occasion.

After that he concentrated on the Low Countries volumes of *Medieval European Coinage* and was still working on the problems of the minor mints of the eastern Netherlands at the time of his death. This gave him plenty of scope for one of his pre-occupations, his fascination with imitations and derivatives. He had already written on groups of florins, ducats and gigliati elsewhere, but the Low Countries gave him scope for much more writing on this theme. He was also fascinated by metrology and with the chemical analysis of coins. He had already written on weight standards elsewhere and sponsored chemical analyses. His interest in this went back to his schooldays when he had concentrated on chemistry and had expected to read 'Natural Sciences', particularly chemistry, for his Cambridge degree. He only changed to 'History' at the last minute. He kept up an interest in chemistry all his life, which, once he took up numismatics, he was able to apply to the analyses of particular groups of coins which interested him. His work on the Low Countries volumes also gave him scope for his insistence on tying the coins themselves, as far as possible, to documentary evidence. It also enabled him to express his scepticism for tying the hoarding of coins to particular events, even though he frequently cited Samuel Pepys burying his gold at Cottonham in Cambridgeshire when he feared a Dutch invasion in 1667.

Although his historical writing was primarily numismatic, from the 1950s onwards Philip continued to be a political historian all his life. All his numismatic writings were firmly rooted in political history. In his great numismatic volumes, those from Dumbarton Oaks, his single volume summary on Byzantine coins, and his *Medieval European Coinage* volumes, he was adamant in placing coinage in its political context, including always a discussion of genealogical links. To write these background sections, he perpetually referred back to primary written sources, within an extraordinary bibliographical framework. He transferred to numismatics all the skills that he had built up earlier.

[43] Grierson 2006.

Philip did indeed live to his mid-nineties and was active until within three weeks of his death, working at the end on the coinage of some of the minor mints of the eastern Low Countries, which provide a particularly difficult set of conundrums to resolve. He lived in college until Christmas 2005, when the college felt that it was too hard to look after him over the holiday season, when the college was effectively closed. They asked him to go to a care home for Christmas and the New Year. I took him out for a drive a few days before his death, at the age of ninety-five. He was totally lucid and died quite suddenly at lunchtime, early in the New Year of 2006.

Numerous obituaries appeared in newspapers and historical and numismatic journals, of which the fullest are the biographical memoirs in the proceedings of the British and Belgian Academies,^[44] and, on the centenary of his birth, a memoir edited by Lucia Travaini.^[45] A CD was made of the 'Celebration of the Life of Philip Grierson' at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge on the 14th March 2006.^[46]

As well as all that he published, and all the enterprises which he initiated and still continue, a large part of his legacy is to be found in the large workroom in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, dedicated to his collection of coins, his library of numismatic books and his collection of offprints and photocopies of articles. His library overflows into an adjacent room, filled with mobile book cases. As in his lifetime, the Grierson Room hosts a perpetual sequence of numismatic and historical visitors from all over the world, who have come to consult his collection and his library.

The Low Countries section of the collection includes five cabinets, each with twenty trays. Each tray has forty slots, but since some of these are taken up with headers, each tray only holds between twenty-three and thirty-two coins, so I believe that the total Low Countries cabinets contain nearly three thousand coins from the end of the tenth century to the early sixteenth. Since Philip left a fund for buying additional coins, the collection is still growing all the time, although rather slowly.

[44] Brooke & Stewartby 2008; de Callataj & Devroey 2010.

[45] Travaini 2011.

[46] Published by Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge.

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