



C. H. V. SUTHERLAND

CAROL HUMPHREY VIVIAN SUTHERLAND

1908-1986

HUMPHREY SUTHERLAND, CBE, MA, D.Litt., FBA, FSA, the distinguished Keeper of the Heberden Coin Room in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, from 1957 till his retirement in 1975, died on 14 May 1986. He was the doyen of Roman numismatists of his time, but the great reputation he enjoyed derived not solely from the quantity and quality of his own work and publication. To him was due in very great part the building up of the Heberden Coin Room both as regards the strengthening of its collection in the several fields of coins and medals and the expansion of its academic staff to the point where Oxford was internationally recognized as an active centre of research and publication second only to the British Museum in the United Kingdom. His lecturing and teaching in the University gave an impetus to a whole generation of younger numismatic scholars, and gave young scholars in other related disciplines an awareness of the possibilities of numismatic evidence; and, in addition to all this, there were his many services to numismatic organizations, both nationally and internationally.

Humphrey Sutherland was born at Merton Park in Surrey on 5 May 1908, his parents being George Humphrey Vivian Sutherland and Elsie, daughter of James Foster. His father, who worked for many years in the then Board of Education, had been educated in the Classics at Derby School and New College, Oxford, and was also a keen musician, playing violin, viola, and piano. From him Sutherland inherited both his love for the Classics and for music; his mother was also an accomplished pianist. He was the middle child of the family: his brother Graham, his senior by five years, later gained fame as a painter, while his sister Vivien, his junior by another five years, was an accomplished ballet dancer in her youth.

His parents later moved to Sutton in Surrey where his education began, first with a family governess whom he remembered as an admirable teacher, and then at Homefield Preparatory School. There, having little aptitude for either cricket or mathematics, he much disliked his headmaster who was an adept at both, but it was in his prep. school years that he acquired his abiding love of

classical languages, Latin in particular, thanks to his teacher there, a Miss Hallwood. He gave her much of the credit for his success in winning an exhibition to Westminster School in 1921, where he entered Ashburnham House as a day-boy, and was taught first by A. C. Liddell.

In his third term there he again entered for the 'Challenge', the Westminster Scholarship examination in which he had previously gained the exhibition. This time he gained a scholarship which involved changing from being a day-boy to being a King's Scholar, one of forty, boarding in College. Life as a boarder proved initially somewhat Spartan, but he came to revel in the ambience of the Abbey and School, and with no commuting had more time for work and reading. Indeed, so content was he there, that, though free to go home every weekend, he preferred his life at Westminster. Of his six years at school he spent the last three in the Classical Seventh under the somewhat formidable Classics master, I. F. Smedley, and in his final year was Captain of the School.

In his final year he was also elected to a Westminster Scholarship at Christ Church, Oxford, and went up in October to read Classical Moderations, being taught by J. G. Barrington-Ward, the then very young T. B. L. Webster, and Stanley Casson. It was at Oxford, too, that his innate love of music brought him to the Bach Choir and the Musical Union where he acquired a deep love of chamber music. After a first in Mods. in 1929 he went on to Greats, finding Philosophy not much to his taste, but delighting in Ancient History under R. H. Dundas and R. P. Longden. That he got only a second class in his final schools in 1931, he used to say, was due to his having unwisely argued with a rather tetchy examiner during the viva voce examination. The result was a blow to his hopes of continuing a scholarly career in Oxford.

Rejecting the idea of school-mastering, he found work initially in London at the Hellenic Society's Library, and there amongst other classical scholars he first met that great Roman numismatist, Harold Mattingly, with whom he was later to co-operate. Perhaps the seed of his future career was then sown, but in any event the path to it was shortly opened by one of these happy chances by which several numismatic scholars have found their way into the subject. A colleague of Sutherland's father at the Board of Education, J. G. Milne, had recently retired to Oxford where he undertook the creation of the developing Heberden Coin Room in the Ashmolean. Milne, who elected to draw no Ashmolean salary, invited the young Sutherland to join him as a part-time Assistant Keeper at the princely salary of £200 p.a., non-incremental, and

not guaranteed as permanent. Though he knew nothing of coins at that time, he readily accepted the offer as a means of returning to Oxford and of continuing with some facet of classical studies. As Milne's own favourite field was the Greek coinage, the Roman side was left to Sutherland, and for this he quickly developed a strong interest. With Milne's guidance and advice he learned by doing, being given the initial task of cataloguing the Oriel College cabinet of Classical and Mediaeval coins, just then deposited on loan to the Ashmolean.

In his first undergraduate year the friend with whom he shared lodgings had introduced him to a cousin, Monica Porter, a young widow with three small children. In 1933 he proposed marriage, and they eventually made their home at Westfield House, a renovated eighteenth-century farmhouse on the edge of Cumnor village. With a family now to support he set about supplementing his income, and was happy to be awarded a Senior Scholarship at Christ Church. He corrected proofs for the *Journal of Roman Studies*, a training that was to stand him in good stead in subsequent activities. He broadcast whenever he could on numismatic subjects, and his pleasant voice and the excellent diction, which his friends and pupils well remember, impressed so much that he was invited to apply for a BBC announcer's post. It was fortunate for Roman numismatics that he just failed to get the appointment, and, encouraged by winning the Barclay Head Prize for Ancient Numismatics in 1934, he began to publish the first of that series of several hundred articles and reviews which he was to produce over something more than half a century. At the same time he was busy on his first major publications, *Romano-British Imitations of Bronze Coins of Claudius I* in 1935, followed in 1937 by *Coinage and Currency in Roman Britain*, a wider study including an account of all the imitative coinages as well, which, after half a century, remains a standard work of reference. His Latin he kept fresh, and in 1936 he composed the Latin epilogue for Terence's *Adelphi* for its performance at Westminster School to which King George VI and Queen Elizabeth came.

Sutherland was fortunate that the War, when it came, did not totally disrupt his scholarly activities. Though the Ashmolean coin collection was largely stored away below ground for security, it was still possible to carry on research on some parts. He was called on for more teaching, now for Greats; and teaching of another kind too, with the Sixth Form at St Edward's School. He was involved with the Fire Service during the War, with his house at Cumnor functioning as a fire station and the base for a team

which often was called on to assist at the bombing conflagrations in the Midlands. An accident on one expedition caused damage to an eye which happily did not interfere too much with the close work of numismatics. To him, too, as to so many, the War brought sadness when his only stepson in the RAF was killed in action in 1944.

The end of the War in 1945 brought a greater degree of stability to Sutherland's personal circumstances. Christ Church made him an Ordinary Student in that year, and shortly afterwards his post in the Ashmolean was established on a full-time basis and an incremental salary scale. For something more than a decade it had been for him a struggle to fulfil his ambition to pursue a scholarly career in the ambience of Oxford and to further his numismatic studies. Now, with a greater degree of security, his career could blossom, and his productive energies be given full rein.

In the Ashmolean Museum the advance of Sutherland's career was to a great extent reflected in the growth in status and strength of the collection of the Heberden Coin Room. Just after the War he was finally formally confirmed as an Assistant Keeper. In 1952 he was appointed Deputy Keeper, and, on Milne's retirement in 1957, he became Keeper, a post he held until his retirement in 1975. When he joined the Ashmolean in 1932, the coin collection consisted of the various University and College cabinets, largely uncatalogued, and only partially integrated into a central collection; and it had a staff of two, Milne, an unpaid Curator, and Sutherland himself, a part-time Assistant. The Heberden Coin Room which he handed on to his successor was no longer simply a section of the Department of Antiquities, but had become an independent department headed by its own Keeper, and with an academic staff of five covering the major numismatic fields. The collections, too, had been built up by judicious acquisition either by purchases, the funds for which Sutherland was singularly adept and persuasive in obtaining, or by donations which he was successful in attracting. Amongst the latter, outstanding examples were the Horace Hird Collection of Scottish coins in 1953 and the Stanley Robinson Bequest of Greek coins in 1960. He was particularly proud of having been instrumental in his early years in securing for the Ashmolean the Crondall hoard of early Anglo-Saxon gold coins, when it was threatened by dispersal at auction in 1944. In 1949 he was able to make considerable purchases of fine Roman imperial bronze coins from the Earl Fitzwilliam Collection, and also the eighteenth-century cabinet which had housed the collection. Later in the 1950s he obtained means to

purchase both Greek and English coins at the dispersal of the famous Lockett Collection.

With its increased resources the Heberden Coin Room under him came to be a centre for active research and publication by its own staff, and to be a source of material worthy of study by numismatic scholars from around the world. Its collections and staff also came to be drawn on for the teaching of numismatics in the University. Sutherland himself held the post of Lecturer in Numismatics between 1939 and 1975, concerned mainly with Roman numismatics, and not a few of a younger generation of scholars owe their introduction to and subsequent successful pursuit of the subject to him.

In the pre-war years in addition to his book on the coinage of Roman Britain he had published a study on *The Romans in Spain, 217 BC-AD 117*, the fruits of his immediate post-graduate work. In the 1940s he began to concentrate his attention on the coinage of the early Empire, especially the Julio-Claudian principate, a subject which was to remain one of his prime interests right to the end. After a series of articles on specific aspects and problems he published a more comprehensive treatment, *Coinage in Roman Imperial Policy, 31 BC-AD 68* in 1951. This was followed by *The Cistophori of Augustus* in 1970, and the *Catalogue of Coins of the Roman Empire in the Ashmolean Museum, Pt. 1: Augustus, 31 BC-AD 14* (in collaboration with his colleague, Colin M. Kraay), in 1975. He returned to the topic of his first major work in this field with the publication in 1976 of *The Emperor and the Coinage*, modifying some of his earlier views and taking cognisance of the contributions made to the subject in the intervening quarter-of-a-century, many by himself. His work on the coinage of the early principate was crowned in 1984 by his completely new edition of *Roman Imperial Coinage, I: 31 BC-AD 69*. In the days immediately before his death he was busy with the proofs of his final work, *Roman History and Coinage, 44 BC-AD 69*, a detailed consideration of the evidence of contemporary sources in relation to the coinage.

In 1938 he had joined Harold Mattingly and Edward Sydenham as an editor of the series *Roman Imperial Coinage* with which he continued to be involved until his death. After the War, when the series had progressed to the end of the third century AD, it became apparent that there was no specialist prepared to undertake the volume covering the coinage of the Tetrarchies, and Sutherland set himself to meet the challenge. In his usual thorough fashion he mastered the material in a succession of visits to study the collections in the major museums around the world, and in a series of

articles in the 1950s and early 1960s he explored specific problems in the coinage of the period. The completed work, *Roman Imperial Coinage, VI: From Diocletian's Reform (AD 294) to the death of Maximinus (AD 313)* was published in 1967. This was a veritable *tour de force*, the first complete scholarly presentation of this coinage in its consecutive issues as produced by the empire-wide chain of mints of the Diocletianic system. Fresh inscriptional evidence relating to Diocletian's monetary reform, and a number of new studies have required modification of some of Sutherland's views, but much of the subsequent work in this field was made possible, or at least facilitated, by Sutherland's original work.

He was, however, anything but a blinkered specialist, and presented a general account of the whole Roman series in his *Roman Coins* in 1974. He had a familiarity with coinage at large and collaborated with his Ashmolean colleagues in a general volume *Coin Collecting* in 1950. He contributed the article 'Numismatics' to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1966, and in the months before his death was busy with the revision of the article for a new edition. His interests extended to the English coinage also. A famous hoard of early Anglo-Saxon gold coinage was rescued by him for the Ashmolean from the auction room in 1944, and his *Anglo-Saxon Gold Coinage in the Light of the Crondall Hoard*, published as long ago as 1948, remains one of the basic works of consultation for this series. In 1973, having observed the lack of a modern comprehensive account of the country's coinage, he remedied this by producing his volume, *English Coinage, 600-1900*. His wider interests in the background of his subject are reflected in his books, *Art in Coinage: the Aesthetics of Money from Greece to the Present Day* in 1955, and *Gold: its Beauty, Power and Allure* in 1959. His published work is impressive in its scale and scope. In 1978 a Festschrift, entitled *Scripta Nummaria Romana*, essays by friends and pupils, presented to him on his seventieth birthday, recorded his extensive bibliography; and this was supplemented by a bibliography included in an obituary in *Spink's Numismatic Circular* (1986), pp. 219-22.

His great contribution to the scholarship of numismatics was but one aspect of his activities. He was concerned for the advancement of his chosen science, and was unremitting in its promotion. He served on the Royal Mint Advisory Committee from 1963, one of the very few numismatists to be included in that body. He had been elected a fellow of the Royal Numismatic Society in 1936, and served as its President from 1948 to 1953. The Society, in common with most smaller learned bodies, had suffered attrition and disorganization during the War years, and its re-establishment

owed much to the reviving influence of Sutherland's presidency. He was also at that time one of the moving spirits in the still flourishing British Association of Numismatic Societies of which he for a time served also as President. His services to the Society included a long stint from 1953 to 1965 as a joint editor of its periodical, the *Numismatic Chronicle*. His scholarly eminence and his services to the Society were recognized by the award of its silver medal in 1954.

He played an eminent and active part in international numismatics also. He was for a time a member of the Council of the International Numismatic Commission which was set up in 1953, and was its President from 1960 to 1973. During this term he presided with that diplomatic urbanity which was one of his notable characteristics over no less than three International Numismatic Congresses—at Rome in 1961, at Copenhagen in 1967, and in New York/Washington in 1973. His address at the opening of the Rome Congress was memorable, for it was delivered in four languages—Italian, French, English, and Latin. The latter, spoken as it was in the pronunciation taught in England, was obviously not universally understood, for it was one of Sutherland's favourite anecdotes that he was subsequently complimented on his command of Romanian. As part of his commitment to international numismatics he also served a term as President of the Consiglio of the Centro Internazionale di Studi Numismatici at Naples from 1966 to 1973.

A long list of honours and awards testifies to the high regard in which he was held for his numismatic scholarship and no less for his many services to numismatics. Oxford conferred on him a D.Litt. in 1945. In 1950 the American Numismatic Society awarded him its Huntingdon Medal, the Royal Society of Arts its silver medal in 1955, and he was created Officier, Palmes Academiques, by France in 1965. In addition to being a Corresponding Member of the German Archaeological Institute and of the American Numismatic Society, he was elected an Honorary Member of a whole range of bodies: the Royal Numismatic Society, the International Numismatic Commission, the Société française de numismatique, and the Société royale de numismatique de Belgique. In 1970 he was created a CBE and elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

Humphrey Sutherland was, however, anything but a desiccated scholar. Amongst his scholarly and professional activities he found time for and cherished a variety of other interests. The aesthetics of coins and medals, as already noted, had always attracted him, as

did the arts in general, and especially painting (he was after all the brother of the famous artist, Graham Sutherland), and not surprisingly, then, was Christ Church's active Curator of Pictures from 1947 to 1955 and again from 1970 to 1975. Classical music was a great love, and he had a special fondness for chamber music. Though his taste ranged over a wide field, if he had any favourites, they were, as he said, the three Bs—Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. He was not an instrumentalist, but for many years he enjoyed singing in the university's Bach Choir.

A love of quite a different kind was that for his garden. The grounds around his former farmhouse home in Cumnor had over some half-century of occupancy been transformed by his wife, Monica, and himself into a wide-ranging garden. Its practicalities of orchard and garden served them well in the War years, but its beauty lay in its flowers and extensive lawns. The many hours required to keep these mown he regarded not as a waste but as a time for fruitful contemplation of some knotty numismatic problem.

Both he and his wife found great pleasure in travel, both in Britain and on the Continent, much of the travel done by car, for he was a keen and competent motorist, and was proud of having passed the Advanced Motoring test. They were particularly fond of the United States where, by a happy combination of work and pleasure, they spent several lengthy periods. Sutherland was Winslow Lecturer at Hamilton College, in Clinton, New York, in 1944 and 1957, and was a visiting member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton for one or more semesters in 1962–3, 1968, and 1973. In Europe they preferred the warmer climes, and were fortunate in having the use at times of his brother Graham's villa at Menton in the south of France. His final journey took him on a visit to friends in Australia in the early months of 1986, where he much enjoyed the warm sunshine of an Australian summer.

Humphrey Sutherland had a full and many-faceted life which brought him a wide circle of acquaintances and friends at home and abroad, but he was in many ways a very private man. He was not bonhomous, but in a small circle he was the best of company, for he was a raconteur and conversationalist of a high order. His every day talk also was marked by the command of language and the polished periods which were the hallmarks of his writing. He wrote, too, a most beautiful hand which added to the pleasure with which his friends received his letters, and which made his manuscript a publisher's dream.

His work and worth earned him a high place in the history of numismatic scholarship. His personality gained him the affection of his friends.

*Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus
tam cari capitis?*

R. A. G. CARSON