

BANS Congress Isle of Man, April 2019

Alan Dunlop, Chair NSI-NB

Three members of NSINB were delegates at the congress this year. They were John Rainey, Randal Scott and Alan Dunlop.

This year's congress was based in the Sefton Hotel Douglas with some of the lectures taking place in the Manx Museum.

After the short flight to Ronaldsway Airport, Randal and Alan arrived at the hotel and caught up with John who had been on the island helping with the organisation of the event for a few days beforehand.

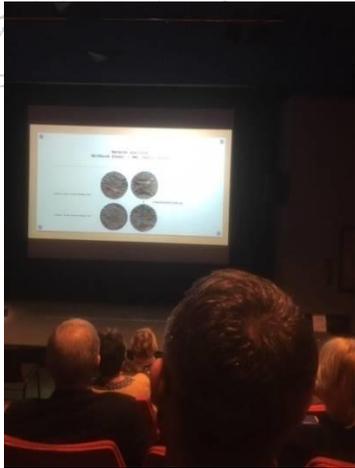
The first event was a visit and tour of the House of Keys where the Parliament of the Isle of Man sits. The House of Keys is the longest continually functioning parliament in the world - it was established by the Vikings over 1000 years ago. We were given a detailed and interesting account of the history of Tynwald and the House of Keys and how they function. This was followed by a short talk about the processes involved in the selection and production of the Manx coinage currently being released into circulation.



We then walked the short distance to the Manx Museum where, whilst waiting on everyone arriving, we were treated to an impromptu talk by Frank Cowin about how the Isle of Man was used during the two World Wars as an internment facility for foreign aliens and prisoners of war. He described from personal experience how the island coped with the huge influx of people and how and where they were housed and fed. This dovetailed well with the paper included in our congress pack, written by Alan Kelly, about the medals and notes issued during WWI at Knockaloe Internment Camp.

We then went into the main lecture theatre for a talk by Kristin Bornholdt-Collins about the Hiberno-Manx Coinage and Viking Age hoards from Man. Kristin began with the original theory by Michael Dolley that there was a separate coinage struck by Norse kings on Man using reworked dies from Dublin. The speaker expanded on the work carried out over the years using more recently discovered evidence from finds which proves the theory proposed by Michael Dolley. We were then able to see some of the coins in question, along with other recent finds.

After dinner in the hotel we had the opportunity to meet up with old friends, including four members from the Dublin Branch of the Society.



On Saturday morning we were again back at the Manx Museum. Before the lectures began John Rainey, the BANS President, welcomed the delegates and then said a few words about the passing of two staunch congress supporters. Our own friend and Treasurer Neil McCormick and Chris Comber, a member of Bexley Numismatic Society and a frequent congress lecturer.

The morning session of lectures, chaired by Frances Simmons, began with Edmund Southworth who gave us an introduction to the history and archaeology of the island. This was followed by Martin Allen who described the medieval economy of the island as it changed rulers from Norse to Scottish and finally English, and how this affected the coins in circulation and how this in turn was reflected in the makeup of hoards which have been discovered on the island.

Mike Southall then brought us up to date with a presentation about the modern Manx coinage issued since decimalisation up until the latest issue of circulating coins in 2017. The next talk of the afternoon was by Allison Fox who described the revised treasure legislation and its importance to an island with such a rich heritage. There must be a robust system of recording and preserving the full range of finds of Manx portable antiquities. The final lecture was by Michael Arbory about the iconic 1733 Manx coinage struck at Rushen Castle and his theory that the copper alloy used for the production of the coins was mined on the island.

After lunch we headed on a tour of the north of the island, which included the open-air site of the Tynwald. All laws passed by the House of Keys can only be enacted after they have been read out during a ceremony on the ancient hill. Then on to Peel, to the House of Mannanan, to see coins from the Glenfaba and Kilkenny hoards. Also on display was a reconstruction of a Viking longboat.



Tynwald Hill



Longship on the beach at Peel

We then went to Kirk Michael, the find site of two Viking Hoards and the home of some wonderful Viking carved stone crosses. We were very fortunate to be accompanied by Frank Cowin as our guide who was present at the discovery of the second hoard and described to us in detail the full story of how it was located. We then returned to Douglas via the mountain road.

The evening began with the BANS Annual General Meeting for the election of office bearers and the election of Jonathan Morris as incoming President. This year the AGM included short reports from several branches giving an insight to way other societies are reaching out to new members.

We were then treated to a most wonderful dinner.



Bright and early on Sunday morning Charles Farthing introduced the first speaker of the day, Jeremy Cheek, who gave us an insight to his role as the Advisor to the Royal Collection. He began with a brief history of the collection which dates back to the early 17th century and James I's eldest son Prince Henry. He then described how the collection developed and which monarchs took an interest in it. The collection is particularly strong in commemorative medals, Maundy Sets and patterns.

The next lecture with the intriguing title 'Wild men and running horses' by Jonathan Morris explored the coinage of the Hanoverian Kings of England and the coins issued for their German territories focusing on the relationships of the designs, especially portraits.

After the coffee break Kevin Clancy discussed what effect war had on currency. From the military mints of the Romans, the mixed bullion hoards of the Vikings, the sudden increase in the deposit of hoards during the civil war to the use of captured coin to be countermarked and used in circulation, he was able to demonstrate some of the methods used to cope with difficult and desperate situations.

The final presentation of the congress was given by Barrie Cook, in which he examined the way the image of the monarchs changed in the later Stuart period, depicting them in classical style and dress, to present, a more imperial image, why this was done and why it continued for so long. He also included the reaction by some contemporary commentators to these changes.

After lunch we took another coach trip, this time towards the south of the island towards Castleton, on the way passing some Celtic and Viking sites. Before we went to the castle we went to the Old House of Keys where we enjoyed a video based debate in the Chamber Room.

A short walk took us to Castle Rushen - a most impressive building dating back to the 12th century. It was founded by Reginald Godredsson. After a turbulent period, when the island was fought over by the Scottish and English kings, it was granted to William Monacute 1st Earl of Salisbury by Edward III. He restored the castle much of which is still visible today. Henry IV gave the island to the Stanley family in 1405 and it remained in the family until 1736. It then passed by decent to the Dukes of Atholl. Coins were struck at the castle in 1733.



Finally, we went to the very south of the island to view the Calf of Man in the hope of seeing some seals or dolphins, only to be disappointed.



During our trips around the island we were accompanied by Frank Cowin who gave us a wonderful running commentary, full of information about all aspects of the history and geography of the island punctuated by many of his personal memories.

It was really enjoyable weekend and we look forward to next year when the Congress is in Portsmouth.



NSI-NB April 2019