

OBITUARIES

NICHOLAS LOWICK

By the death of Nicholas Lowick on 11th November 1986 at the early age of 45 the Society loses a steadfast supporter, and the country a leading specialist in Muslim numismatics and epigraphy. A Fellow since 1964, he served on the Council as Honorary Secretary from 1977 to 1986, taking regular part in the work of its Committees, and giving special help to the Publications Committee and the *Journal*.

Educated at Clifton College, and Christ's College, Cambridge, where he showed his talent for languages by gaining a First in French and German, Nicholas Manning Lowick joined in 1962 the British Museum's Department of Coins and Medals. As curator of Oriental Coins he was to succeed John Walker, the distinguished Keeper of the Department, by whose training he was to benefit until the latter's death in 1964. Lowick soon became proficient in Arabic, and was quickly known here and abroad as a rising authority on Islamic coinage and epigraphy. His series of more than 50 substantial articles on the mediaeval coinages of Central Asia, India, Iran, the Persian Gulf, the Yemen, and the nearer East, began in 1964, and attracted worldwide attention. The moment was a formative one in the development of these studies, and besides the regular work of identification and classification, important new directions of theory were presenting themselves.

Among his most original contributions was the paper ("A Sāmānid/Kākwayhid 'mule'", *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes*, XIV, 1968, 159–162) in which he described a strange dinar with the mint-date formula Naysābūr 375 (A.D. 985–6) on the obverse, and an Isfahan reverse of Muḥammad b. Dushmanzar between 422/1030 and 433/1041. A coin struck from two such quaintly unrelated dies raises complex problems concerning the mint organization. Fifteen years later the follow-up appeared ("The wandering die of Nisābūr: a sequel", *ANSMN*, XXVIII, 1983, 187–93), when a further specimen came to light, where the same obverse die was combined with another *obverse*, of the Seljuq Tuḡhril Beg, dated al-Baṣra 449/1057. Further novel problems were explored in his monograph (with S. Bendall and P. D. Whitting) *The 'Mardin' Hoard*, London, 1977. Late Byzantine coppers from eastern Anatolia had occasionally been found to bear enigmatic Arabic countermarks, but only this painstaking analysis of numerous coins, with attention to stamps both *juxtaposed* and *superimposed*, provides attribution to rulers of the Artuqid, Zengid, Inalid, and Begtimurid dynasties during the VIth/XIIth century. For the *Revue Numismatique* he wrote in French, on an 'Alid issue of Baṣra dated 145/762–3 (XXI, 1979, 218–24), and on the coins of the little-known Sulaymanid dynasty at Ténès and Sūq Ibrāhīm (XXV, 1983, 177–187). On the materials of the Siraf excavation, where he acted as finds assistant during three seasons, he produced a major monograph (*Siraf XV: The coins and monumental inscriptions*, British Institute of Persian Studies, 1985, reviewed below, p. 330), which to speed publication he also helped in financing. One of his latest contributions was that published by the R.A.S., "Islamic weights and coins" in John Hansman's *Julfar: an Arabian port*, 1985. These and many other publications show the grounds on which, in 1979, he was awarded by the British Museum a personal Deputy Keepership in recognition of his academic distinction.

Besides our own, Nicholas Lowick was active in the work of several societies. He was Library Secretary on the Council of the Royal Numismatic Society from 1964–1981, Reviews Editor of the *Numismatic Chronicle* from 1975–1986, and a regular contributor to that Society's supplementary publication *Coin Hoards*. His membership of the British Institute of Persian Studies led to his participation at Siraf. For his major task, a catalogue of the coins of the early Abbasid Caliphate, to follow Walker's Arab-Sassanian and Umayyad catalogues, his work was well advanced. He had hoped to finish within a year, and we learn that his family, with the Department of Coins and Medals, have plans to secure the completion of what will surely be a much needed scholarly resource. (Friends and colleagues, in recognition of his work, have set up in his memory under the auspices of the Royal Numismatic Society a fund for the promotion of Oriental Numismatic Research. Those interested in giving support are invited to write to the present organizers, Mr J. E. Cribb and Mr N. G. Rhodes, Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum, WC1B 3DG).

At the museum, Nicholas was characteristically generous with his help to all sorts of visitors, collectors, scholars and dealers, and in constant touch with discoveries and developments everywhere in the field of Islamic coinage. To discuss with him a projected line of research in Islamic studies was always fruitful. For some months before the 10th International Numismatic Congress, held again in London during September 1986 after 50 years, friends had been aware that he was unwell. Still he courageously continued his work at the museum, and attended the Congress to greet colleagues and correspondents from all over the world. The suddenness with which news came of his death, only a month later, was particularly sad. At the Society his willingness to help, constant cheerfulness, and kindly sense of humour, no less than his standing in an important area of scholarship, make him keenly missed. The gap he leaves amongst British Islamists is one that will not easily be filled.

A. D. H. BIVAR

J. V. G. MILLS

Four characteristics stood out in the personality of John Vivian Gottlieb Mills (1887–1987): he was by vocation a colonial administrator and judge trying to live by the ideals of the Raj; he was by profession a lawyer; he was a sinologue for the love of it; and he was an Edwardian gentleman from head to toe. Educated at home by a Royal Navy father until it was time to enter Oxford, he differed from the run of his Malayan Civil Service contemporaries by delighting, not in the romance of the jungle and unsophisticated people, but in Southeast Asia's seaways and advanced trading communities. Appointed to the Straits Settlements aged 24, he was selected for the Chinese side of the government and went to Canton for two years; he learnt Cantonese, Fukiense and eventually standard Chinese. Back in Singapore, he read for the Bar (Middle Temple 1919), married, and was posted to Christmas Island for a tour among the Cantonese phosphate workers. He became interested in Chinese seamanship, navigation, and old charts—a hobby that possessed him more and more as time went on. His positions during the second decade and a half of his service were as Solicitor-General for the Straits Settlements, as Attorney-General, and lastly as a judge in Singapore and Johor. He retired in 1940 (aged 53), went to Australia, worked in the Federal Attorney-General's office for a time, and returned to England after the war to take his MA at Oxford in 1945 and lecture at the School for a year in Chinese law. His first wife died, and he settled in Switzerland for the rest of his life. There he found his second wife, who, thanks to her own acquaintance with Chinese art, was able to create for him an elegant penthouse *shu-chai* above Lac Léman and assist in the recording of his reading notes.

Mills was nearly 40 before he joined the Malayan Branch of the R.A.S., but was soon on its council and in 1937 was elected president; he joined in London in 1945. We have no list of his writings, but short notes occur in *JMBRAS*, certainly from 1929 onwards. In Raffles Library he found a printed version of Emanuel Godinho de Eredia's 1613 *Declaração de Malaca e India Meridional com o Cathay* and published notes on it in 1930 and 1931. At the same time he came across the XVIth century sea chart of Mao K'un and the *Wu-pei chih* by Mao's grandson Yüan-i (Eredia's contemporary); this treatise on China's strategic defence contains valuable information about navigation across the southern seas built round the sea chart. From late Ming, Mills was drawn back to sources in early Ming, and thence to the voyages of eunuch Chêng Ho (the Sam-poh Kung patron of Overseas Chinese legend) round Southeast Asia and across the Indian Ocean commissioned by the emperor Yung Lo, in the age of Henry the Navigator. He was now equipped to undertake translation and commentary on the *Ying-yai Shêng-lan*, in which, in 1433, Ma Huan told the story of Chêng Ho's seven voyages, rather as Pigafetta was to record Magellan's. Mills spent fifteen or more years on the task, using the modern text established by Fêng Ch'êng-chün (1935 and 1955) and drawing on the collaboration of half a hundred other scholars to light up dark corners. The book was eventually published in 1970 by the Hakluyt Society (of which Mills had been an Honorary Secretary) as *Overall Survey of the Ocean's*