

NÉCROLOGIE

Gilbert Kenneth Jenkins (2.07.1918 – 22.05.2005)⁽¹⁾

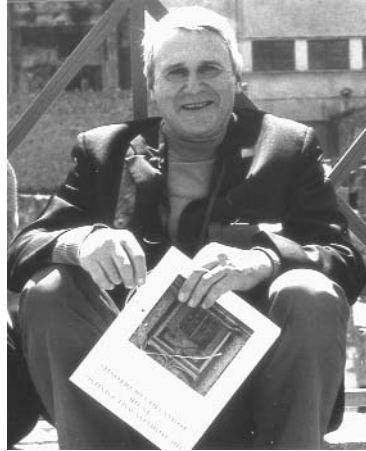
On May 22nd, 2005, the numismatic community lost one of its most prominent scholars and one of its kindest and most generous.

Gilbert Kenneth Jenkins was born on July 2nd, 1918, only child of Julia Louisa. His father died before he was born. He grew up in Bristol, attended the Bloxham School and there he received an open scholarship in classics to Corpus Christi College in Oxford. He began his studies in 1936, won a first in Honor Moderations. In those years, he visited the Heberden Coin Room in the Ashmolean Museum and was introduced to numismatics by Edward Robinson and Humphrey Sutherland. In 1939, World War II interrupted his studies.

He served in the Royal Artillery and reached the rank of Captain. He spent part of those years flying as a reconnaissance pilot in Southeast Asia. He then returned to Oxford, where he got his degree in 1946.

In 1947, G.K. Jenkins was appointed Assistant Keeper in the British Museum's Department of Coins and Medals and put in charge of the Greek coin collection. He learned from the coins themselves, cataloguing British coin hoards brought to the Museum through the Treasure Trove system. His first article was on a hoard of Roman coins found in Britain.⁽²⁾ In those years he published Roman, Medieval and Civil War period hoards.

Jenkins spent more than thirty years at the British Museum – most of his active “numismatic” life – promoted to Deputy Keeper in 1956, then Keeper in 1965, a position he held until his retirement in 1978. A few months after his appointment, he was joined by another young scholar, Robert A. G. Carson, who would become a leading authority on Roman coins, and with whom Kenneth Jenkins worked close-



(1) My thanks to Andrew Burnett and to Catherine Merrigan Jenkins, her brother Sebastian and her sister Isabel, for providing personal and professional information on Kenneth Jenkins.

(2) “The Caister-by-Yarmouth hoard,” *NC* 1947, pp. 175-9.

ly for all his years at the BM.⁽³⁾ Those years immediately after World War II must not have been easy: though the collections had been taken to a safe place and remained intact, the offices of the Department of Coins and Medals had been destroyed by a bomb in May 1941 and some of the records too. It was not until 1959 that the Department moved into a permanent renovated location. Yet Jenkins and Carson managed to produce important works and establish the highest standards of numismatic scholarship.

At that time Jenkins also met a young Indian scholar studying at the University of London, A.K. Narain, who was writing his dissertation on the Greek coinages of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Kenneth helped Narain with the British Museum collection and in turn Narain infected Jenkins with his enthusiasm for these regions. Jenkins wrote his first book on: *The Coin Types of the Saka-Pahlava Kings of India* (Varanasi 1957) and later several seminal articles on Scythian, Indo-Scythian and Bactrian coins, which won him the Akbar Medal of the Indian Numismatic Society in 1966.

In the 50s Jenkins also developed strong ties with Sydney P. Noe and George Miles at The American Numismatic Society in New York, who suggested that he worked on their large collection of coins from ancient Spain. It was a project that Sir George Francis Hill had started, while Keeper at the BM. These Celtiberian coinages bear inscriptions in local scripts and present intricate problems of interpretation and mint attribution. Though Jenkins never published the book he wanted on the subject (and with characteristic modesty somehow felt guilty about it), he brought order into the geographic classification and the chronology,⁽⁴⁾ and laid the groundwork for all the studies published by so many Spanish scholars since.

Jenkins's interest for peripheral cultures expanded to North Africa and to the coinages of the Carthaginians in particular, and he continued the work of his predecessor Sir Edward G. Robinson in this field. This resulted in his second book: *Carthaginian Gold and Electrum Coins*, with R.B. Lewis (London 1963) – groundbreaking for the stylistic analysis and for the very accurate use of metal analysis and specific gravity, new at that time – and a series of four articles on: “Coins of Punic Sicily,” published between 1971 and 1978 in *SNR*, and reprinted together as a book in 1997, as well as in two fundamental volumes of the *SNG Copenhagen*, vol. 42: *North Africa* in 1969, and vol. 3: *Spain* with Ann Kromann in 1979.

(3) To honor these two giants of ancient numismatics, a joint Festschrift was published in 1993: *Essays in honour of Robert Carson and Kenneth Jenkins*, ed. M. Price, A. Burnett and R. Bland (Spink, London), which includes a complete bibliography by U. Wartenberg, pp. 281-4.

(4) “Notes on Iberian denarii from the Cordova Hoard,” *ANSMN* 8 (1958), pp. 57-76. “Literaturüberblicke der griechischen Numismatik: Spain,” *JNG* 11 (1961), pp. 79-155 and “Spain” in: *A Survey of Numismatic Research 1960-1965* (Copenhagen 1967), pp. 97-105.

Jenkins is perhaps best known for his many works on Greek Sicily: *The Coinage of Gela* (Antike Münzen und Geschlittene Steine II, Berlin 1970) a model die study and one of the best in that series, because it uses the numismatic evidence to enlarge our knowledge of the history and art of ancient Sicily. The wonderfully written and lavishly illustrated *Ancient Greek Coins* (1972)⁽⁵⁾ remains to this day the best general introduction to Greek coins for students, collectors and laymen (Jenkins called it his “opus horribile,” he probably didn’t enjoy the general approach). With Ulla Westermark he published *The Coinage of Kamarina* (London 1980). The many articles on the bronze coinages of Sicily and on those on smaller mints can be found in his bibliography. There is hardly a region or coinage of the ancient Greek world, it seems, that Jenkins did not explore, from Spain to Afghanistan, through Italy, Sicily, North Africa, Egypt, Rhodes, Ephesos.

The most remarkable aspect of Jenkins’s work is that most of it – if not all – still stands and often remains the definitive treatise on the subject, no matter how modest the title. For the present writer Jenkins’s greatness is best illustrated in the series of short notes in *BMQ* or *NC* on new coins he acquired for the British Museum: “Greek Coins” “New Acquisitions” etc... in a few paragraphs the most difficult coins are put in sound historical, philological and art historical context.

Kenneth Jenkins also paid more than his dues to the discipline in general, from setting the highest standards of scholarship in his writings, to serving as editor of several important publications: the last edition of B.V. Head, *Principal Coins of the Greeks* (1959), J.M.F. May, *The Coinage of Abdera* (1966) with C.M. Kraay and also with C.M. Kraay, *Essays in Greek Coinage presented to Stanley Robinson* (1968). His knowledge of North Africa and Spain resulted in his contributions to the *Survey of Numismatic Research 1960-1965* (INC Copenhagen 1967) and to the *Survey 1966-1971* (INC New York 1973) for these regions, and made him an important regional editor of *An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards*, a fundamental instrument for the dating of Greek coins, published with his friends Margaret Thompson, Otto Mørkholm and Colin Kraay on the occasion of the 8th International Numismatic Congress in New York and Washington in 1973. Jenkins was also assistant editor of the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* from 1950 to 1955 and Honorary Secretary of the Royal Numismatic Society from 1964-74, co-editing its journal *Numismatic Chronicle* in 1964-65. He considered it a sad duty to edit the memorial volume in honor of his friends who died prematurely: *Kraay-Mørkholm Essays* (1989), with G. Le Rider, N.M. Waggoner and U. Westermark.

Jenkins could not shun due recognition: after the Akbar Medal from the Indian Numismatic Society mentioned above, he received the Silver Medal of the Royal Numismatic Society in 1975, and the Huntington Medal of The American

(5) 2nd revised edition (London 1990).

Numismatic Society in 1976. He was an Honorary Member of many institutions including the German Archaeological Institute and the INC.

Kenneth Jenkins was an accomplished musician, playing the piano and the harpsichord, and music was probably as important in his life as numismatics. He organized regular musical *soirees* at his home, and in the homes of the other two members of his chamber music trio. Various grandchildren participated too and remain forever grateful for their grandfather's encouragement in their musical endeavors. The staff of Cecil Court, the first retirement home he went to, still remembers how he would regularly play to a group of adoring old ladies. Many will remember his trio performance at the British Museum during the INC London Congress in 1986, with David Sellwood, flute, and another friend, Andy Tittensor on the violin. To the end music brought him pleasure and peace and when he could no longer play, he would listen to CDs; Bach's *Goldberg Variations* were one of his favorite pieces.

Jenkins had a keen interest in the natural sciences, in zoology in particular, perhaps developed by the study of all the insects and animals he so thoroughly investigated on Greek coins. At the Convegno on the origin of bronze coinages at the CISN in Naples in 1977, he delighted some of the audience (and no doubt irritated the more pompous participants) by talking more about owls than about the controversial chronology of Gela and other Sicilian mints. He had a passion for cats and on his walks derived an enormous amount of pleasure in getting to know all the cats in the neighborhood.

Jenkins had lived the horrors of World War II and he became a strong opponent of nuclear weapons and a supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). He was active in environmental causes as well, never drove a car but rode his bicycle, ahead of his time in seeing the risk of using up the energy resources of the planet. His political beliefs prevented his returning to the USA, in particular after the bombing of Lybia, even when awarded the highest numismatic recognition.

Kenneth Jenkins with his gentle manners, his sense of humor, his generosity and high scholarly and ethical standards, will remain a model and an inspiration for generations to come. His numismatic and his human impact are immeasurable.

Kenneth's wife Cynthia died in 1985. He is survived by a son and two daughters, by seven grand children, one step-grandchild and five great-grand children.

Carmen ARNOLD-BIUCCHI