

Scientific Medals—Writing and Exhibiting Title 75

As far as I could find out, scientific medals had never been collected before, nor was there any reference to them in the literature. To my mind they formed one of the few bridges between the two cultures, the arts and the sciences, and for that reason alone, they should be described and exhibited. Each is a miniature work of art, and, if struck in a suitable metal, they are, in addition, the most permanent record possible of science. They commemorate great scientific and engineering achievements which their contemporaries considered worthy of recording in a special and lasting form. So for example, space flight in the 1960s and the 1970s produced a plethora of medals, but only a few astronauts had portrait medals struck.

For 26 years, from 1961 to 1987, I lectured, wrote and exhibited them, until the collection was acquired by the Deutsche Museum in Munich. My first major article appeared in the *New Scientist* November 1961, followed in June 1963 in *Panorama*. Almost ten years later I was invited by Philip Handler, President of the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, to exhibit 250 of my medals at their Annual Meeting in 1972 which proved a great success. Two years later I could do the same at the Royal Society, London, during their annual *Conversazione*, through an invitation by Sir Eric Denton FRS.

I had the second major article published in the May 1975 issue of *Endeavour*, and this was followed in 1978 by a further exhibition in Innsbruck, Austria, on the occasion of the 110th Meeting of the Gesellschaft Deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte, through the invitation of Professor Dr Peter Sitte, the President. In June 1980 I wrote an article on the "Numismatics of Astronomy" for *Vistas in Astronomy* and in September of the following year, 1981, the British Association for the Advancement of Science celebrated its 150th Anniversary in York, and I was invited by Sir Frederick Dayton, the President, to exhibit.

My greatest honour was to give one of the famous Friday Evening Discourses at the Royal Institution on 10 February 1984, through the invitation of Sir George Porter, the Director. It was a full dress affair, dinner jacket for speaker and audience, and the lecture, with two projectors, uniquely showed obverse and reverse of each medal simultaneously. By tradition the lecture must last exactly 60 minutes, timed to the second. A bell strikes as the lecturer enters and 59 minutes and 59 seconds later, he must finish with his last word.

In 1986, for the 600 Year Anniversary Celebrations of the University of Heidelberg, the Rector, Professor Gisbert zu Putlitz invited me to exhibit and this took place at the Dresdner Bank, Heidelberg, in September. I wrote one more article for my own Journal, *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* (10/4) in December 1985 [See Title 344] and gave one more major lecture about Scientific Medals to the Cosmos Club on 11 May 1987.

Exhibitions

1972 National Academy, Washington
1974 Royal Society, London

1978 G.D.N.Ä., Innsbruck
1981 British Association, York
1986 University 600 years, Heidelberg