

THREE ANGLO-SAXON NOTES

By C. E. BLUNT

A COIN OF HEABERHT, KING OF KENT

LORD GRANTLEY'S ATTRIBUTION VINDICATED

IN the *Numismatic Chronicle* for 1900 (pp. 148 ff.) Lord Grantley published the following coin which he had recently acquired in Rome.

Obv.: +H-ÆBERHT, in centre R (for *Rex*)

Rev.: € ⊙ B Æ in the angles of a cross voided in the centre with an annulet enclosing a pellet and with similar ornaments at the end of each arm.

Wt.: 11 gr., but chipped. (Pl. VII, 2.)

Lord Grantley attributed this coin to a Heaberht, King of Kent, whose name is found on three charters,¹ two of them dated 764 and 765 respectively, the third undated but assigned to a period 765-91.² For this attribution Lord Grantley offered a number of reasons which may perhaps be summarized as follows (though reference should be made to his actual paper to follow in detail the trend of his argument):

1. The obverse type is similar to that of Ecgberht, King of Kent (Pl. VII, 3 and 4), whose exact dates are uncertain but who was a contemporary of Heaberht's.³ Both kings subscribe to Birch's Charter 196, Ecgberht making the grant and Heaberht confirming it.
2. It seemed, at the time he wrote, to be a matter of general agreement that these coins of Ecgberht were properly ascribed to a separate Kentish king of that name rather than to the Wessex king who defeated Kent in A.D. 825.
3. The type R for *Rex* is found on coins of Pépin who introduced the *novus denarius* in Gaul c. A.D. 755 and was probably copied by Heaberht and Ecgberht from it.
4. Eoba, the moneyer, struck early coins for Offa and also coins for Cynethrith, his queen.

The coin therefore was an early one in the penny series and the evidence of the charters provided the approximate date of issue. It filled, in Lord Grantley's words, "another numismatic gap in the series of Kent, as I can confidently ascribe it to a King Heaberht who reigned jointly with this King Ecgberht of Kent. It also adds another unique coin to our national series".

At about the time Lord Grantley wrote the above Sir Henry Howorth was engaged on a study of the kings who bore the name of Ecgberht and in the same volume of the *Numismatic Chronicle* he

¹ Birch, *Cart. Sax.* 195, 196, and 260.

² Powicke, *Handbook to British Chronology*, p. 9.

³ Powicke, *op. cit.*, gives Ecgberht's date as c. 765-c. 780 or later.

published certain preliminary conclusions. These he followed up in 1908 with a more detailed survey.¹

The burden of his conclusions, so far as they concern this paper, is that Ecgeberht who later became King of Wessex was in fact a prince of the Kentish royal house; that it was he who struck coins as King of Kent; that these coins were struck at the end of the eighth century; and that there is no reliable evidence of a King Ecgeberht in Kent at the date indicated by the earlier charters. In a word, that all the coins with the name of Ecgeberht were the product of the same monarch.

From this Sir Henry Howorth goes on to examine Lord Grantley's coin of Heaberht which he ascribes to the Kentish upstart King Eadberht Praen, who seized the throne of Kent in 796 on the death of Offa. He points out that the initial H is of little significance, and gives reasons for considering that Heaberht and Eadberht are only forms of the same name. This attribution is a logical one if the coins with the name of Ecgeberht were in fact struck as late as the end of the eighth century.

Howorth's arguments on this subject are based on a detailed study of the documentary sources of the history of the period, many of which he finds difficulty in accepting as genuine. This is a highly specialized matter and one on which I am not qualified to write, but it is significant that Howorth's views find little favour with historians today. Sir Frank Stenton in his *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2nd edition, 1947, pp. 205-6) accepts an Ecgeberht as being a King of Kent until 779 or later, but considers that in the later part of his reign he was entirely subservient to Offa. Powicke (op. cit., p. 9) supports his view. Both also accept the existence of a King Heaberht of Kent about this time. Stenton regards him as "ephemeral" and Powicke offers no certain evidence of his ruling later than 765.

This being the verdict of the historians of today, we can ourselves consider the numismatic aspect.

In the first place it can be said with confidence that the format and weight of the Kentish Ecgeberht and Heaberht coins render a date as late as Eadberht Praen (796-8) improbable.² The coins are for the most part of the small size, associated both in England and on the Continent with the transition from the sceat to the penny, and are markedly different from the larger-sized coins that were introduced by Offa in the later part of his reign and to which all coins of Eadberht Praen conform (Pl. VII, 7).

The moneyers Babba and Udd on Ecgeberht's and Eoba on Heaberht's coins all struck for Offa, but as they produced both early and late coins for him the evidence of their names alone does not contribute to the solution of the problem. The types, however, do so. An

¹ *Num. Chron.*, 1900, pp. 66 ff., and 1908, pp. 222 ff.

² The weights available to me of nine coins of Ecgeberht are as follows: 17.3, 17, 18.2, 17.6, 15.7, 17.6, 15 (holed), 19, 16.8. Of Eadberht Praen I have by a coincidence weights of a similar number of specimens: 20.4, 18.4, 18.4, 18.5, 18.5, 20.9, 16 (chipped), 22.3, 19.6.

early coin of Offa by Eoba (**Pl. VII, 5**) gives us the same reverse type as Heaberht's coin and this reverse is also found on an anonymous sceat in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, hitherto unpublished (**Pl. VII, 1**). A sequence from sceat to penny seems clearly designated here. Of Babba there are comparable early coins of Offa (e.g. **Pl. VII, 6**), though the resemblance is not so close as with Eoba. Of Udd there is nothing comparable in type. On balance it would seem that the evidence available supports Lord Grantley's original attribution of this coin of Heaberht to the Kentish king of that name mentioned in the three charters. The exact date must remain in doubt. But as Babba and Eoba struck early issues for Coenwulf who came to the Mercian throne in 796 (Udd may also have done so, but this is very uncertain), it is hardly likely that they would both have been working more than, say, twenty-five years earlier. Powicke's tentative dating of Ecgberht to *c.* 765–*c.* 780 or later is therefore borne out by the coins and Heaberht appears to have shared the throne of Kent with him.

One small correction may perhaps be added. Howorth mentions (*op. cit.*, p. 228) "that specimens of these very rare coins of Ecgbeorht exist in the Bergen Museum in Norway, probably the result of the Norwegian raid on Kent in 793". Professor Shetelig of Bergen has kindly supplied a cast of the only Ecgbeorht coin in the Museum which proves to be a styca of the Archbishop of York of that name (732–4 to 766).

Since the ownership of a coin may be held to prejudice one in the views one takes of it, it is right to add that the Heaberht coin is now in my cabinet. I bought it out of Lord Grantley's collection (lot 878) because I believed it to be what he originally thought, and subsequent study has fortified me in that view.

I am indebted to the Keeper of the French National collection for the cast of the sceat illustrated in the plate and for permission to publish it here; and to the Keeper of Coins, the British Museum, and the Curator of the Hunterian Coin Collection for the remaining casts.

KEY TO PLATE

1. Sceat. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
2. Heaberht penny, ex Grantley Sale (878). ·Writer's collection.
- 3/4. Ecgberht pennies. Hunter Museum, Glasgow.
5. Offa penny. British Museum, ex Montagu Collection.
6. Offa penny. Margate Public Library.
7. Eadberht Praen penny. British Museum, ex Evans Collection.

A BURGRED-TYPE COIN WITH, APPARENTLY, THE NAME OF KING AETHILBEARHT OF WESSEX

The coin illustrated (**Pl. VII, 8**) is of the type of the Mercian King Burgred, *B.M.C. Id.*, that is, with the reverse legend divided by two crook-ended lines. This type was also struck by the Wessex King Aethelred. Its curious feature is that it appears to read Aethilbearht. Aethilbearht was a contemporary of Burgred, and there is ample