

GRANTHAM – A NEW ANGLO-SAXON MINT IN LINCOLNSHIRE

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THE Anglo-Saxon penny which is illustrated here (fig. 1) was struck during the reign of Æthelred II (978–1016) and belongs to the First Hand type. The weight is 1.39 g, die-axis 180°, and the legends, which are slightly double-struck, read:

Obv. +ÆDELREDRE+AG

Rev. +MAN(N?)EM'OGRE



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FIG. 1. Aethelred II, First Hand, Grantham Manne. Photo: The Royal Coin Cabinet, Stockholm

There is no official provenance attached to the coin, but ultimately it probably derives from a hoard found on Gotland in 1980¹ which was subsequently dispersed by the finder. The coin was acquired in 1987 by the Royal Coin Cabinet in Stockholm which also houses other coins believed to originate from the same hoard. The *terminus post quem* of the hoard is 995 judging from the coins which so far have been associated with the hoard.

The mint-signature cannot be associated with any of the known mints of the period and the question is thus whether it represents a new mint or is simply blundered. Besides the mint-signature itself there are two important aspects to consider: the style and the name of the moneyer.

The style

The coin is unusually stylized for the late Anglo-Saxon period, and the drapery has no indicated front. The letters are carelessly executed with X rendered as +, and no distinction is made between M and N.

A provisional analysis of the styles of the First Hand coins based on the coins in the collection of the British Museum has been presented by Dolley and

Talvio.² Although they identified ten different styles none of them can be connected with the present specimen.

It has not been possible to examine the style in First Hand to the fullest extent because this would involve a complete survey of the material outside the British Museum. However, three more coins exhibiting the



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FIG. 2. Aethelred II, First Small Cross, Lincoln, Grind.

Photo: The British Museum.

style of the coin now under discussion have been identified and a few more may exist. The first is struck at Lincoln by the moneyer Grind.³ The second is a very crude example, with mirror drawn drapery and only the name of the moneyer, Theodgild,⁴ who is prolific at Lincoln during the type but not known at any other mint during this period. The third is confined to the reverse die of the unique Caistor penny by the moneyer Le(of)man.⁵ Based on this information the style can be connected with the east midlands and Lincoln in particular where the style designated as Midlands B by Dolley and Talvio is dominant in the British Museum collection.⁶

If there is minute evidence of the style during First Hand, the opposite is true for the preceding Reform issue.⁷ Some elements of the style are recorded from a (probably late) specimen of Edgar's Reform Small Cross (c.973–5) at Lincoln. During Edward the Martyr's Normal Small Cross (975–8) the style is fully developed and is the dominating supplier of dies in Lincolnshire and dies are also known from Northampton, Oxford, and Stamford. A total monopoly seems to have existed in Lincolnshire during Æthelred II's First Small Cross (c.978–9) and dies

¹ Hultungs, Bunge par., Gotland. K. Jonsson, *Viking-Age Hoards and late Anglo-Saxon Coins* (Stockholm, 1987), G 38. Anglo-Saxon *terminus post quem* c.991, German *terminus post quem* 995.

² M. Dolley and T. Talvio, 'The regional pattern of die-cutting exhibited by the First Hand pennies of Æthelred II preserved in the British Museum', *BNJ* 47 (1977), 53–65.

³ *SCBI* Lincolnshire 33.

⁴ *SCBI* Glasgow 815.

⁵ B. H. I. H. Stewart, 'A Caistor coin of Æthelred's Hand type', *NC* (1979), 219–21.

⁶ Dolley and Talvio, p. 60. Four out of five coins in the British Museum belong to this style.

⁷ K. Jonsson, *The New Era. The Reformation of the Late Anglo-Saxon Coinage* (Stockholm, 1987), pp. 89–90.

were then also supplied to other mints to the west and north: Derby, Northampton, Stamford, and York. Fig. 2 provides a good example of the style during the Reform issue, and there is no doubt that the dies were cut at Lincoln.

Of all the mints during this period which received dies of the style, Oxford is thus the exception in being located in the south. It is also evident that the style played a minute role in First Hand, when it must have been confined to the very beginning of the type. The distribution of the style was probably also very limited, and it is unlikely that the style would have been used at a mint distant from Lincoln during the First Hand type.

The moneyer

The third letter of the moneyer's name is uncertain but can hardly be anything else than N, producing the less common spelling of MANNE for the Old English name which can be normalized as Manna.⁸ The name is otherwise recorded as a moneyer in the Reform issue (c. 973–9) at Leicester (Edgar), Stamford (Edgar and Edward), Tamworth (Edward and Æthelred II), and York (Edgar and Æthelred II) as well as at Nottingham during First Hand.⁹ It is striking that all mints are confined to the midlands and the north and it is reasonable to assume that there were two active moneyers with the name Manna, although there remains a possibility that only one moneyer is involved. In any event, it is clear that if the moneyer responsible for the coin published here was also active at other mints, the new mint was no doubt located in the eastern midlands, or further north. The evidence of the name of the moneyer and of the style are thus fully compatible.

The mint

As pointed out above, the dies for the new coin have carelessly executed letters. Mis-spellings are also found during the Reform issue. However, the legends on the present coin are altogether legible (with the single exception of the ethnic AG in place of the correct ANG). There is thus no reason to suspect that the mint-signature, rendered GRE, is blundered.

The possibility of the mint-signature being a variant spelling for an already known mint would seem to be limited to Cambridge (GRANT-), but that is ruled out for geographical reasons, and furthermore there is no moneyer Manna recorded at Cambridge in this period.

From the above it is clear that the mint GRE- cannot have been located far from Lincoln, but there is no immediate candidate based on the spelling on the coin. Grantham in Lincolnshire (halfway between Lincoln and Stamford) is attractive, but it was rendered 'Grantham', 'Granham', and 'Grandham' in Domesday Book. However, Little Gransden (where a common origin for the first element is plausible) was rendered as 'Grantadene' in 973 and 'Grentedene' c. 1050.¹⁰ The latter spelling is thus evidence of the use of GRE-. It should also be noted that there is no recorded spelling for Grantham before Domesday Book.¹¹ Grantham was a borough, and Loyn has pointed out that Grantham is a conspicuous absentee among boroughs which are recorded from Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman coins.¹² The suggestion made here is that the new coin should be attributed to Grantham, which would thus be added to the list of Anglo-Saxon mints. The objection that it would represent a previously unrecorded spelling for the borough must be of less importance since the attribution finds firm support in the style and the name of the moneyer.

The monetary and regional context

There is a remarkable expansion of activities in Lincolnshire during the Reform issue and the First Hand type when new mints were set up at Caistor, Horncastle, Torksey and most probably at Louth.¹³ Horncastle and Louth were only active for a very short period, and only Caistor and Torksey are found striking coins beyond this period and then on a very modest scale. The reasons for this expansion of monetary activities is unknown, but if Grantham had a mint in the Anglo-Saxon period the decade following the reform is by far the most likely period for its operation.¹⁴

⁸ V. Smart, *SCBI* 28, Cumulative index of volumes 1–20, p. 58.

⁹ Jonsson, *Viking-Age Hoards*, pp. 38–41.

¹⁰ E. Ekwall, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names*. Fourth edn (Oxford, 1980), pp. 202–3.

¹¹ I am very grateful to Professor Kenneth Cameron for information of the recorded spellings of Grantham.

¹² H. R. Loyn, 'Boroughs and mints A.D. 900–1066', in *Anglo-Saxon Coins, Studies presented to F. M. Stenton on his 80th birthday 17 May 1960*, edited by R. H. M. Dolley (London, 1961), pp. 122–35, at p. 135. The other borough without a mint which Loyn particularly noted was Droitwich and his suggestion for associating a coin with this mint has

since been proven correct with the help of added material – see B. H. I. H. Stewart and C. E. Blunt, 'The Droitwich mint and BMC type XIV of Edward the Confessor', *BNJ* 48 (1978), 52–7.

¹³ Jonsson, *The New Era*, p. 182 and elsewhere.

¹⁴ Dr Veronica Smart has very kindly informed me of a Long Cross coin (Kviende hoard, Othem par., Gotland – Jonsson, *Viking-Age Hoards*, G 128) of Æthelred II by the moneyer Leofhun with the mint-signature GREN. The moneyer does not seem to be recorded elsewhere and an association with Grantham is of course possible. It must, however, remain speculative in anticipation of a stylistic analysis of the type and further evidence for an association.