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A NEW MONEYER OF THE SHORT CROSS COINAGE FROM WILTON AND SOME THOUGHTS ON THE WILTON AND WINCHESTER MINTS IN CLASS 1a

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IN autumn 2005 a penny of the Short Cross coinage was submitted to the British Museum for identification. The coin had been discovered by a metal detectorist in the vicinity of Oxford. It proved to be a coin of the Wilton mint from a previously unknown moneyer. Its details are as follows.

Penny, Short Cross, class 1a1 (1180), wt: 1.09 g; die axis: 300°
Obv.: hEN[]CVS RE/X
Rev.: †[]hAN.ON.WILT.

The coin (see Fig. 1) is slightly chipped, which inhibits a full recording of its legends. While, thanks to the chipping, the initial two letters of the moneyer's name are unclear, it seems evident that the full reading would be Iohan.



Fig. 1. Short Cross class 1a1 penny of the Wilton moneyer Iohan.

The coin unquestionably has all the diagnostic features established by Mass for his class 1a1: most notably, the 'dot-dash' outer circle, as well as the square letters E and the most common form of break in RE/X.¹ The base of the second upright of the N on the reverse die is unseriffed. It is a different die from known 1a1 obverses from Wilton.

The significance of the coin is its provision of a second moneyer for Wilton in this class, at the very start of the Short Cross coinage. Previously, while two moneyers, Osber and Rodbert, were known at Wilton for classes 1a2, 1a4–5 and 1b1, Rodbert alone was known for 1a1. At the other mints operating in this subclass, Exeter has two moneyers, Northampton three, York and Winchester four each and London six.

¹ Mass 1993, 22–6.

The status of the Wilton mint and its relationship to Winchester has received significant attention. In 1966 Brand and Elmore Jones proposed that the Wilton mint opened on an emergency basis only when the mint at Winchester was destroyed by fire on the night of either 1/2 or 14/15 July 1180.² It is certainly the case that, for some reason, two obverse dies of 1a1 and one of 1a2 and one retooled reverse of 1a2 from the Winchester mint were transferred to Wilton for the use of the moneyer Rodbert.³ However, Brand and Elmore Jones's interpretation was questioned in 1993. In his analysis of class 1a, published in that year, Jeffrey Mass showed that coins of Rodbert were in production from class 1a1, the start of the coinage, although it should be noted that in this paper Mass still accepted the proposal of Brand and Elmore Jones that Wilton was opened on an emergency basis after the fire.⁴ However, in an accompanying paper, Martin Allen took on board the implications of Mass's evidence: that Wilton was a functioning mint before the Winchester fire had its supposed impact on mint production.⁵ In 2001 Allen continued to accept that Wilton was active from the start of the coinage and also made the point that Winchester and Wilton were both among the mints which had been active during the *Cross and Crosslets* coinage, in the 1160s, so they both had a reasonably recent tradition of activity.⁶ The appearance of a second moneyer at Wilton in class 1a1 would certainly appear to give clear confirmation, if this were needed, to the idea that Wilton was indeed operating from the start of the Short Cross coinage and that it was not an emergency mint.

It also seems likely that the moneyer Rodbert was active at both mints at the same time and right from the start of the coinage. The transfer of a reverse die of Rodbert from Winchester to Wilton, where it was retooled to fit the different mint name, is the primary piece of evidence here, confirming the fact of the same moneyer operating at both mints. The obverse dies he used at Wilton had also been used previously by Henri and Gocelm at Winchester, as well as by himself. The only counter-argument to Rodbert having a dual role from the start would be to suggest that Iohan was originally the single moneyer at Wilton, and that his unexpected disappearance in 1a1 was the cause of Rodbert being hastily co-opted from Winchester and given this dual position. However, given that the dies transferred from Winchester include examples for class 1a2, this seems a needlessly convoluted speculation. Instead, it may be correct to view the two mints as having always had a strong connection, with Wilton a subsidiary operation of Winchester, this being, as Martin Allen suggests, either an aspect of Winchester's central role in the organization of the recoinage, or else because Wilton was a mint with the special role of being primarily for the king's use.⁷

At Winchester Rodbert worked alongside Clement, Gocelm, Henri and Osbern in the production of class 1a1, whereas at Wilton his only companion was the newly-discovered moneyer Iohan. By the time 1a2 dies were being used, Iohan has apparently disappeared from Wilton and, during the use of 1a2, the nearly-as-ephemeral Henri also ceased production at Winchester. Given that it is only thanks to this new coin that we know about Iohan at all, it is of course possible that a die for him in 1a2 might still at some point be forthcoming. Although Henri disappeared from Winchester in 1a2, a new moneyer named Adam joined the complement in the same issue, perhaps as his replacement, while at Wilton Iohan would appear to have been replaced by Osber, who commenced activity there in 1a2.

Brand and Elmore Jones suggested that Osber was, like Rodbert, a moneyer working jointly at the two neighbouring mints.⁸ There are two assumptions here: first, that the moneyer named on the coins of class 1a1 at Winchester as Osbern is the same individual as the Osber who

² Brand and Elmore Jones 1966. The date of the fire as given here follows the discussion of Allen 1993, 53–4.

³ A reverse die of Rodbert of class 1a4 was also altered in this way, but this was presumably done somewhat later: see Mass 2001, no. 171.

⁴ Mass 1993, 36–7, esp. n.41.

⁵ Allen 1993, 54–5.

⁶ Allen 2001, 1. Wilton was active in *Cross-and-Crosslets* class A, until c.1160, and Winchester continued until class D which, according to Crafter, concluded c.1170: Crafter 1998, 48–56.

⁷ Allen 1993, 54–5.

⁸ Brand and Elmore Jones 1966.

coins at Wilton in 1a2, 1a4, 1a5 and 1b1–2; and secondly, that the Wilton Osber is the same as the Osber coining at Winchester in 1a3–4 and 1b1. Unlike Rodbert, there is no die link to demonstrate the connections between these three appearances of Osber(n). Martin Allen has pointed out a potential problem of nomenclature in equating the Winchester moneyer named as Osbern on the coins with the *Osbertus monetarius de Wilton* who is mentioned in the Pipe Roll for 1183/4 as owing rent for the use of the moneyers' house at Winchester. The fact that *Osberto monetario* at Wilton is also mentioned in the Pipe Roll for 1184/5 reinforces this question: the name-form was not just a single usage.⁹ Although the 1183/4 reference in itself is a strong suggestion that the Osbers of Wilton and Winchester were one and the same, for this to be the case either the reverse die reading Osbern or the Pipe Roll readings *Osbertus* must have recorded the name incorrectly.¹⁰ 'Osber' was not an uncommon name for a moneyer at this time: it is also found at London, Exeter and Worcester during class 1.¹¹ There is, therefore, the possibility that the moneyer Osber(n) of Winchester and the Wilton moneyer Osber(t?) were different individuals, although the link between *Osbertus monetarius de Wilton* with the Winchester mint would tend to give one pause here. The alternative position would be to accept the moneyer's name OSBERN as a mistake, regard this moneyer as the same as Osber(t), and thus the dual Wilton/Winchester moneyer from later in class 1 and (as Allen suggested) view the Osbern of classes 3–4 as a different individual entirely. The main problem with this is that it has been suggested that it was at Winchester itself that the dies for the coinage were being made, which might make it unlikely that they would misspell the name of a moneyer on the spot.¹² However, one could envisage Winchester's role being a storage, accounting and distribution centre for dies, rather than the actual place of their manufacture.

The simplest and perhaps the likeliest situation, given the certain dual position of Rodbert and the Osber link provided by the Pipe Roll reference, is to accept the idea that there was indeed one single moneyer named Osber(t) active first at Winchester alone in class 1a1 and then at the two mints simultaneously thereafter.¹³ A supporting circumstance is provided by the fact that, unlike the other Winchester moneyers, Rodbert, Henri, Gocelm, Clement and Adam (who, apart from Adam, all worked through 1a1 and into 1a2), Osber struck no coins of 1a2 at that mint, while there are such coins at Wilton: Osber might at that time have been setting up his activities at the latter mint, which was, thus, briefly the focus of his operations.¹⁴

All this may have the capacity to throw some doubt onto the importance of the Winchester fire. Its original significance was seemingly clear: the fire caused two of the existing Winchester moneyers, Rodbert and Osber, to set up a new emergency mint at Wilton, while subsequently coining by them continued at both Wilton and Winchester for some unexplained reason, even though the emergency had passed and there was, on the face of it, nothing to inhibit Wilton's closure. However, Mass was able to show that Rodbert had a joint role at the two mints before this event and this appears to demonstrate that the existence of the Wilton mint was part of the very earliest organization of the Short Cross recoinage. It is also the case that there seems to have been some reorganization in the structure of the moneyers at the two mints occurring in and around the time of the introduction of class 1a2. This may have arisen from, or else had as a consequence, the termination of the position of Iohan at Wilton and maybe that of Henri at Winchester (although the arrival of Adam at Winchester has to be factored in as well). The two mints appear to have ended the period of issue of class 1a2 with the same number of moneyers they had started with in 1a1 (and this is counting both Henri and Adam),¹⁵ in con-

⁹ Allen 1993, 54, esp. n.19.

¹⁰ Allen 1993, 54.

¹¹ However, it thereafter disappears from the moneyers' name-stock, apart, that is, from Osbern at Winchester.

¹² Brand 1994, 31.

¹³ This would place the mistake at the door of the mint engraver.

¹⁴ It remains, of course, possible that a coin of Osber from Winchester of class 1a2 might still turn up, to render this point moot.

¹⁵ In 1a1 Wilton had Iohan and Rodbert, and Winchester had Clement, Gocelm, Osbern and Rodbert (five individuals in total), whereas in 1a2 Wilton had Osber and Rodbert, and Winchester had Adam, Clement, Henri, and Rodbert (five individuals in total). Although it is possible that a coin of Gocelm of 1a2 will turn up to expand this number to 6, this is still not taking into account the likelihood that Adam was a replacement for Henri. In 1a5 and 1b1 the total combined complement was definitely up to 6, with a moneyer added to the Winchester total.

trast to the other active mints, London, Exeter, York and Northampton, which received additions to the complement of moneyers.¹⁶ Alongside this, furthermore, there had been some apparent rationalization to the functioning of the Wilton mint, which lost its independent moneyer and was now, seemingly, more explicitly linked with Winchester through the joint moneyers Osber and Rodbert. One argument could be that experience was demonstrating that, unlike the other mint centres, there simply was not the need for so many moneyers at these two physically-close institutions – the scarcity of Iohan's output may also be an indication of this. Nevertheless, the original reason for the establishment of the Wilton mint was still in place and Martin Allen's suggestion that it had a very specific purpose or role seems all the more likely.

The current chronology for 1a is based on the Winchester fire (dated to July 1180) having inspired the transfer of a few dies (two obverses of 1a1 and one of 1a2; and one altered reverse die) used by Rodbert from Winchester to Wilton. From this comes the view that 1a1 was superseded by 1a2 in June/July 1180.¹⁷ This dating rests on the assumption that there could be no other reason for this transfer of dies, and this now seems a little less certain, given the apparently close and evolving links between Wilton and Winchester throughout 1180. An efficiency assessment, some circumstance of Rodbert's activity (since he already had dies being used at Wilton and he would also transfer a Winchester die to Wilton later, in class 1a4), and/or the disappearance or removal of Iohan from the scene could be alternative reasons for consideration. The main sign of a break in the output of coins at Winchester is the disappearance of Henri during the issue of 1a2, but since a new moneyer Adam began in 1a2, this does not seem conclusive.¹⁸

It is of course the case that, whatever the extent of any damage and disruption, the Winchester fire might nevertheless still have provided the occasion for a transfer of dies and for a Wilton/Winchester reorganization – since, obviously, it looks as though something did. However, there is probably a larger element of doubt over the fire's significance, and especially its chronological implications for the coinage, than has been recognized. In terms of the broader picture, this would not involve a dramatic change, since the whole issue of class 1a probably took place between about May and November 1180 and it seems likely that 1a3 was in use by the end of August at the latest.¹⁹ The main revision would be to consider changes to the organization at Wilton and Winchester at this time as perhaps being driven by questions of administrative policy and not as emergency measures.

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¹⁶ See Allen 2001, 1–3.

¹⁷ Allen 1993, 53–4, 57–8.

¹⁸ The absence of Osber in class 1a2 at Winchester is another possible sign, if this is still the Osbern who issued coins of 1a1. However, as has been suggested above, this could be the consequence of a reorganization, not its inspiration. Gocelm is another moneyer with coins missing from class 1a2, but it is possible these may yet turn up, since he was active in 1a3–5. In such 'missing' subclasses for some moneyers during class 1a, Winchester is no different from the other active mints, and no fire is required to account for it.

¹⁹ Allen 1993, 55.