

NEW TYPES AND FINDS FOR OFFA OF MERCIA

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RECENT years have seen the publication of several major works on the coinage of Offa, providing both a revised classification and a fuller understanding of the mints, moneyers and chronology of his issues.¹ The most recent of these was intended, in part, to update Chick's volume in order to take account of new finds which had been made once the Chick catalogue was closed in 2006. However, between the time when this was completed in May 2010 and February 2012 twenty-eight new pennies of Offa have been reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Corpus of Early Medieval Coin Finds, or come to light by other means,² five of which provide examples of previously unknown types. The coins are illustrated on **Pl. 4**.

These twenty-eight new finds constitute a powerful demonstration of the richness and complexity of Offa's coinage. It continues to produce surprises and challenges, and remains an unusually fruitful area of research.

1. EMC 2010.0287 [Chick 13, Offa: London, Æthelweald]

Obv. **OFFA** || **REX** in two lines divided by a beaded bar with a cross at each end.

Rev. **EθEL** || **UΛLO** in two lines divided by a beaded bar with a cross at each end.

Weight: 1.02 g (bent and chipped); axis: 270°.

Found near Papworth ('site 2'), Cambridgeshire, by 2010.

2. EMC 2011.0023 [Chick 13, Offa: London, Æthelweald]

Obv. **OFFA** || **REX** in two lines divided by a beaded bar with a cross at each end.

Rev. **EθEL** || **UΛLO** in two lines divided by a beaded bar with a cross at each end.

No weight; no axis.

Found near Wildhern, Hampshire, January 2011.

Probably same dies as Chick 13n.

3. EMC 2010.0384 [Chick 18, Offa: London, Ciolhard]

Obv. **⊕OFFΛ REX⊕** around a Roman-style draped and cuirassed bust right with curly hair.

Rev. **⊕CIOL** || **HΛRO** (lozenge-shaped **Θ**) above and below serpent-like creature forming a lateral figure of eight across the field.

Weight: 1.03 g (chipped).

Found at Rendlesham productive site, Suffolk, by 2010.

4. EMC 2010.0387 [Chick 20, Offa: London, Dud]

Obv. **⊕OFFΛ REX⊕** around a diademed bust right breaking a beaded inner circle, with ornamental spray projecting in front of bust.

Rev. **⊕ / Θ / V / D** divided by four enclosed lobes containing trefoil-headed sceptres; the inner circle contains a cross botonnée with four petals in saltire.

Weight: 1.25 g.

Found at Rendlesham productive site, Suffolk, by 2010.

Same reverse die as Chick 20a.

Acknowledgements. Our thanks are extended to the original finders of the coins, and to Martin Allen and the individual PAS Finds Liaison Officers for both the initial identifications and for bringing these coins to our attention.

¹ Metcalf 2009; Chick 2010; Naismith 2010. All type references given here take the form 'Chick'.

² The Portable Antiquities Scheme website can be found at www.finds.org.uk, and EMC at www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/coins/emc. Note that new sales of previously recorded coins have not been included here.

5. PAS BUC-F1ADC0 [Chick 27, Offa : London, Dud] (probable modern forgery)

Obv. **OFFÆ** (pellet above **O**) || **REX** (seven pellets dotted around the field) in two lines, divided by a beaded bar, each end terminating in a fleur.

Rev. **†D** (three pellets between **†** and **D**; four pellets visible to left, two to right) || **UD** (**†** beneath between **U** and **D**, with a pellet directly above; five other pellets dotted around the lower part of the field) divided by a beaded bar each end terminating in a fleur.

Weight: 1.48 g.

Found at Sherington, Buckinghamshire, 2010.

The style of the lettering on this penny is very unusual, and more sharply defined than is normally the case with Offa's pennies. It is also extremely heavy for a Light penny. For these reasons, it should probably be dismissed as a modern forgery but is included here for reference.

6. PAS DEV-530DA3 [Chick 28, Offa: London, Dud]

Obv. **OFFÆ** || **REX** (with two groups of three pellets and cross above) in two lines, divided by a beaded bar.

Rev. **†D** || **UD** (with cross below and surrounded by groups of pellets) in two lines, divided by a beaded bar, each end terminating in a fleur.

No weight or axis.

Found at Teignbridge, Devon, 1970.

Same dies as Chick 28b.

This is the first known find of a penny of Offa from Devon.

7. EMC 2011.0117/PAS SF-1DE6B3 [Chick 48, Offa: London, Ealhmund]

Obv. **†OFFÆ REX†** around draped and cuirassed bust right, breaking a beaded inner circle.

Rev. **...ÆL / MV / NÐ** around a large lozenge with incurved sides; a central annulet contains a cross bottonnée and four pellets in saltire.

Weight: 1.01 g; axis: 180°.

Found near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, March 2011.

8. PAS NARC-3B6140 [Chick 55, Offa: London, Ibba]

Obv. **OFFÆ REX** around diademed bust right with curved shoulders and collar, without diadem ties.

Rev. **I / B / B / Æ** in angles of a lozenge cross fleury with plain cross in the centre. The initial cross is beaded.

Weight: 1.16 g; axis: 20°.

Found at Cropredy, Oxfordshire, by August 2011.

9. EMC 2011.0122 [Chick 103, Offa: Canterbury, Eoba]

Obv. **○ / F** || **Æ / M** (**F** underlined marking a contraction) in the angles of a beaded long cross terminating in sprays, with a beaded annulet containing a pelleted cross at centre.

Rev. **€ / ○ / B / Æ** in angles of a long cross terminating in triangles, with a large annulet at centre containing a small cross with pellets in angles.

No weight or axis.

Found on the Isle of Thanet, Kent, 2011.

Same dies as Chick 103a.

10. Fossato di Vico, Umbria, Italy [Chick 106, Offa: Canterbury, Eoba]

Obv. **○F** (lozenge-shaped **○**) in pelleted frame with pellets radiating from each angle || **ÆM** below; cross enclosed by two y-shaped ornaments above, with floral ornament on either side.

Rev. **€ / ○** || **B / Æ** (lozenge-shaped **○**) in the angles of a cross fleury, with an annulet in the centre containing a saltire of pellets.

Weight: 1.13 g; axis: 0°.

The coin is illustrated and described in Chiari 2007, 260 (no. 348). No specific information on its provenance survives, but there is good cause to believe it to be a local find.

Same reverse die as Chick 106h.

11. PAS BUC-DEC7A8 [Chick 106, Offa: Canterbury, Eoba]

Obv. **○F** (lozenge-shaped **○**) in pelleted frame with pellets radiating from each angle || **ÆM** below; Latin cross above and at sides.

Rev. **€ / ○** || **B / Æ** (lozenge-shaped **○**) in the angles of a cross fleury, with an annulet in the centre containing a saltire of pellets.

Weight: 0.90 g.

Found at Longwick, Buckinghamshire, 2011.

12. PAS NCL-AF9BE4 [Chick 106 var., Offa: Canterbury, Eoba]

Obv. O^{F} in pelleted frame with pellets radiating from each angle || RM below; Latin cross above.

Rev. E / O || B / A in the angles of a cross fleury, with an annulet in the centre containing a saltire of pellets.

Weight: 1.20 g.

Found at Bardney, Lincolnshire, August 2011.

This coin is a variant of Chick 106, exhibiting a round O on both obverse and reverse rather than the normal lozenge-shaped O.

13. EMC 2011.0058 [Chick 125, Offa: Canterbury, Osmod]

Obv. $\text{+O} / \text{FF} / \text{AR} / \text{EX}$ in the angles of a long cross bottonnée over saltire bottonnée.

Rev. $\text{O} / \text{SM} / \text{O} / \text{O}$ in angles of a long cross bottonnée with a large annulet at centre containing a rosette.

Weight: 1 g (to one decimal place) (chipped and cracked); axis: 90°.

Found at Badsey, Worcestershire, 1978–82.

Same dies as Chick 125b.

14. T. Cleghorn collection [Chick 126, Offa: Canterbury, Pehtweald]

Obv. Ornatly detailed bust right with elaborate hairstyle; OFFA RE in field before face; X behind.

Rev. $\text{PE} / \text{H} / \text{VA} / \text{LO}$ in angles of celtic cross with a long cross fleury on limbs, over a small saltire cross of petals in centre.

Weight: 1.04 g; axis: 90°.

Uncertain find-spot.

Same dies as Naismith 2010, no. 39.

15. PAS IOW-C8BD83 [Chick 91B/133 (new type), Offa: Canterbury, Tirwald]

Obv. $\text{O} / \text{F} / \text{F} / \text{A}$ (lozenge-shaped O) in the angles of a Celtic cross containing a fleury with R at the centre.

Rev. $\text{T} / \text{IR} / \text{VV} / \text{AG} / \text{D}$ in the angles of an ornate long cross fleury over a cross bottonnée.

Weight: 1.09 g; axis: 270°.

Found at Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, 2010.

No other specimen of this type has been recorded previously, and its design provides some important new evidence regarding the mint attribution of the moneyer Tirwald. The obverse design is most similar to that seen on Chick 91B, for which a single example exists, with OFFA in the angles of a Celtic cross and a central R .³ There is also a general resemblance to the obverses of other pennies produced by Tirwald (Chick 132–4) although none is an exact match, and so this coin is within the previous stylistic remit of the moneyer's other known coins. The reverse is paralleled by Chick 133. The principal point is the similarity of the obverse to that of Chick 91B, which is a product of the Canterbury moneyer Babba. Tirwald's attribution to Canterbury, whilst suspected, has remained uncertain but the evidence of this coin provides strong additional support for this proposed attribution.⁴

16. PAS LIN-FF2C55/EMC 2011.0218 [Chick 140, Cynethryth: Canterbury, Eoba]

Obv. EOBA to right of curly-haired, draped female bust right with Latin cross and pellets behind head.

Rev. +CYNEARYD REGINA around a beaded inner circle containing M .

Weight: 1.13 g.

Found near Louth, Lincolnshire, by 2011.

17. EMC 2010.0339 [Chick 180, Offa: East Anglia, Wihtred]

Obv. +OFFA+REX+ around a curly-headed and draped bust right breaking a beaded inner circle.

Rev. $\text{+F} / \text{IH} / \text{TR} / \text{ED}$ in the angles of a beaded lozenge cross fleury with a plain cross and a saltire in centre.

Weight: 1.1 g (recorded to one decimal place).

Found near Diss, Norfolk, by 2010.

18. EMC 2010.0171 [new type, Offa: East Anglia, Wihtred]

Obv. +OFFA REX+ (lozenge-shaped O) around beaded inner circle containing cross pommée on mound consisting of two concentric semicircles, breaking inner circle.

Rev. $\text{+w} / \text{ih} / \text{tre} / \text{d}$ (runic) in the angles of a lozenge cross crosslet containing a cross of petals over a saltire of petals, with pellet in centre.

Weight not recorded; axis: 0°.

Found near Sturry, Kent, by 2010.

Pennies of Offa's reign bearing an obverse design of a standing cross flanked by two smaller crosses – an allusion to the crosses of Christ and the two thieves at the crucifixion – had been known only for the moneyer Oethelred prior to the discovery of this penny. Stylistically it shows links to both the obverse and reverse designs of Oethelred's types (Chick 174–7), not least in the form of reverse cross and in the pelleted terminals of letters and other devices

³ EMC 2006.0348.

⁴ Chick 2010, 120–1 lists Tirwald under Canterbury; Naismith 2010, Table 4 is more cautious, listing Tirwald under 'Uncertain Moneyers'.

(which were characteristic of at least one East Anglian die-cutter under Offa). Minor differences in obverse design between Wihtred and Oethelred – use of a cross pommée rather than cross potent, and of a mound rather than steps – may indicate an effort to differentiate dies intended for different moneys, or slightly earlier or later production. Either way, this penny strongly suggests that Wihtred drew on the services of the same die-cutter at Oethelred, albeit temporarily: there are no other close comparisons within the work of Wihtred, although his name is also given in runic script on Chick 181.

19. PAS KENT-56D318 [Chick 203, Offa: London, Ciolhard]

Obv. \mathfrak{M} with five pellets visible to each side || $\cdot\text{+OFF}\mathfrak{A}$ (lozenge-shaped O) || REX with three pellets surviving to left, in three lines divided by two beaded bars.

Rev. +CIOL . (lozenge-shaped O; single pellet above I and O) || $\text{H}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{R}\mathfrak{R}\mathfrak{a}$ divided by a beaded bar terminating at each end with small bars, all within a Boeotian shield-like device.

Weight: 1.23 g.

Found at Lydd, Kent, 2010.

20. PAS SF-660703/EMC 2011.0130 [Chick 203, Offa: London, Ciolhard]

Obv. \mathfrak{M} with three pellets visible each side || $\cdot\text{+O.FF}\mathfrak{A}$. (lozenge-shaped O) || REX with one pellet surviving to left, in three lines divided by two beaded bars.

Rev. +CIOL . (lozenge-shaped O; single pellet above O) || $\text{H}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{R}\mathfrak{R}\mathfrak{a}$ (single pellet above H) divided by a beaded bar terminating at each end with small wedges, all within a Boeotian shield-like device.

Weight: 1.13 g; axis: 180°.

Found at Glemsford, Suffolk, 2010.

When the catalogue for *The Coinage of Offa and his Contemporaries* was closed, only a single surviving specimen of Chick 203 was known. These two new finds therefore add substantially to our evidence for the type. Neither of the coins is die-linked to the previous specimen.

21. PAS SUSS-42DD45 [new type, Offa: London, Diola]

Obv. \mathfrak{M} with three pellets visible to right, one surviving to left || $\text{+OFF}\mathfrak{A}$ (lozenge-shaped O) || REX with one pellet surviving to left, in three lines beaded bars.

Rev. +DIO (lozenge-shaped O) with a pellet below the D and O, and three pellets to right || $\text{L}\mathfrak{A}$ (retrograde) with three pellets to right and two surviving to left in two curved lunettes, with two crosses between.

Weight: 1.14 g; axis: 180°.

Found near Lewes, East Sussex, 2010.

This new type is comparable with other examples of the Heavy coinage whose design places the moneys name in two lines, either within lunettes or divided by a bar or cross.⁵ For Offa's reign Diola was previously only known from two examples of Chick 204 which show the moneys name in the angles of a long cross. This coin is the first example of Diola's coinage using the more typical two-line reverse design of the Heavy coinage, and is firmly within the style of the other London moneys. One feature of interest on this coin is the nature of the spelling of $\text{DIOL}\mathfrak{A}$ which is intended to be read left to right on the top line, and left to right on the bottom, in a similar manner to some contemporary coins of Winoth, another London moneys for Offa.⁶

22. PAS LIN-040716 [new type, Offa: London, Dud]

Obv. \mathfrak{M} with three pellets visible to right, one surviving to left || $\text{+OFF}\mathfrak{A}$ (lozenge-shaped O) || REX with one pellet surviving to right, in three lines divided by two beaded bars.

Rev. D/V/D within the angles of a crude cross, each arm composed of three lines around a beaded circle containing a plain cross.

No weight or axis.

Found at Granby, Nottinghamshire, September 2011.

This new type is the first known coin of Dud for the Heavy coinage. The obverse is in the range of typical styles for the London coinage in this phase.⁷ The reverse is unparalleled although within the remit of other Heavy coinage London coins.

23. EMC 2010.0364 [new type, Offa: London, Ealhmund]

Obv. \mathfrak{M} with three pellets on either side || $\text{OFF}\mathfrak{A}$ (lozenge-shaped O) with three pellets on either side || REX with three pellets to left, all in three lines divided by two beaded bars.

Rev. $\text{E}\mathfrak{A}\mathfrak{L}\mathfrak{H}\mathfrak{M}\mathfrak{V}\mathfrak{N}\mathfrak{O}$ around a cross pattée standing on tripod, with square superimposed on head.

Weight: 1.41 g; axis: 270°.

Found near Dunmow, Essex, by 2010.

The reverse of this Heavy penny by the probably London-based moneys Ealhmund is a new departure for this phase of Offa's coinage, and is otherwise most closely paralleled by the East Anglian issues of Oethelred and

⁵ Chick 201, 203, 206, 210–12, 215–17, 222, 227–8 and 231–2. Cf. also Chick 45, 54 and 147.

⁶ Chick 214.

⁷ Chick 202–8.

Wihtrud (see above) and, perhaps more pertinently, by two London pennies issued by the moneyer Pendwine in the immediately succeeding coinage of Coenwulf attributable to the years 796–7/8.⁸ The latter two coins bear a standing cross on the reverse, surrounded by a moneyer's name with no inner circle, very similar to the reverse design of this new type. However, exact precedents for this form of cross cannot be found: a square frame is found enclosing crosses on the carpet pages which introduce the gospels of Mark and Luke in the Lindisfarne Gospels, but not on physical crosses such as could have been mounted on a stand similar to that shown here.⁹ This is, consequently, an important coin both numismatically and iconographically, which demonstrates that creative imagery on pennies of Offa was not restricted to the Light coinage.

24. PAS KENT-566617 [Chick 206, Offa: London, Eama]

Obv. \mathfrak{M} with three pellets on either side || $\text{OFF}\bar{\text{A}}$ (lozenge-shaped O) with Latin cross to left || REX with three pellets to left, all in three lines divided by two beaded bars.

Rev. $\text{+E}\bar{\text{A}}$ / $\text{M}\bar{\text{A}}$ in two lunettes divided by a beaded bar.

Weight: 1.26 g.

Found at Westwell, Kent, 2011.

Same dies as Chick 206b.

25. EMC 2010.0173 [Chick 211 var., Offa: London, Ludoman]

Obv. \mathfrak{M} with triangle on either side || $\text{+OFF}\bar{\text{A}}$ (lozenge-shaped O ; pellets in angles of initial cross) || REX with pellets around, upper and lower parts of legend in two lunettes.

Rev. +LVD || OMON (lozenge-shaped O) within boeotian shield-like device, divided by a beaded line.

Weight: 1.41 g; axis: 0°.

Found near Devizes, Wiltshire, by 2010.

26. PAS BH-00E844 [Chick 233 var/235 var., Offa: Canterbury, Ethelnoth]

Obv. \mathfrak{M} with eight pellets to left, three to right || $\text{+OFF}\bar{\text{A}}$ (lozenge-shaped O) with three pellets to right || REX with three pellets to left and one to right, upper and lower parts of legend in two lunettes.

Rev. + surrounded by pellets || $\text{E}\bar{\text{P}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{P}}$ with two groups of three pellets between $\bar{\text{P}}$ and $\bar{\text{E}}$, three pellets in a vertical line between $\bar{\text{L}}$ and $\bar{\text{P}}$, and two single pellets to right || NO in three lines with three pellets to left and right; upper and lower parts in two lunettes.

Weight: 1.40 g; axis: 180°.

Found at Barkway, Hertfordshire, January 2010.

27. PAS LIN-278218 [Chick 239, Offa: Canterbury, Osmod]

Obv. \mathfrak{M} with triangle on either side || $\text{+OFF}\bar{\text{A}}$ (lozenge-shaped O ; pellets in angles of initial cross) || REX with pellets around, in three lines divided by two plain bars.

Rev. $\text{+}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{+}}$ || OSMOD || inverted \mathfrak{M} with triangular symbol either side, in three lines divided by two plain bars.

Weight not taken; axis: 270°.

Found at Irnham, Lincolnshire by April 2011.

Same dies as Chick 239e.

28. EMC 2010.0047 [Chick 244, Offa and Archbishop Æthelheard: Canterbury]

Obv. \mathfrak{M} with triangle on either side || $\text{+OFF}\bar{\text{A}}$ (lozenge-shaped O ; pellets in angles of initial cross) || REX with pellets around, upper and lower parts of legend in two lunettes.

Rev. $\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{D}}\bar{\text{I}}\bar{\text{L}}\bar{\text{H}}\bar{\text{E}}\bar{\text{A}}\bar{\text{R}}\bar{\text{D}}$ PONTI ($\bar{\text{N}}\bar{\text{T}}$ ligatured; lozenge-shaped O ; preceded by three pellets arranged in triangle) around a cross crosslet within a plain inner circle.

Weight not recorded; axis: 120° (bent and chipped).

Found near Harlow, Essex, by 2010.

Same obverse die as Chick 244b.

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⁸ Naismith 2011, L5.

⁹ British Library, Cotton MS Nero D.IV, fols. 94v and 138v; Anna Gannon, *pers. comm.*.