

## TWO EARLY ANGLO-SAXON GOLD SHILLING TYPES

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### 1. The Wragby find

AN early Anglo-Saxon gold shilling was found with a metal detector near Wragby, Lincolnshire in May 2016 and recorded as EMC 2016.0213 (Fig. 1). The coin weighs 1.26 g has a die axis of 180° and diameter of 12 mm. Both obverse and reverse are well centred and executed.

*Obverse:* †AVNAUNTAVOA. The serifed inscription is clockwise around a diademed bust with braided hair surrounded by a serpent or *Ouroboros*, clockwise, biting its tail at six o'clock. The body of the serpent is articulated in wedge shapes as seen in the 'wheel' type gold shilling (see below and Fig. 7). The inscription commences with an elaborate initial cross pattée with first and last characters mirrored, which may be decorative rather than lettering.

*Reverse:* [ ]VVO MCNVATOA. The serifed inscription is clockwise around a long cross pattée with an annulet at the end of each upper limb and a bracketed annulet below. The brackets break a double beaded inner circle. The border is beaded.



Fig. 1. Wragby find (EMC 2016.0213). Image courtesy CNG.

Note: All images are twice actual size.

The composition of the coin has not been analysed, but it appears to be of good gold content, and it is likely to date from the third quarter of the seventh century. The chronology of the Anglo-Saxon gold coinage is a matter of ongoing debate. Recent work on graves and grave-goods indicates an earlier date for the transition from gold to silver than was previously thought, conceivably around 670 or even earlier.<sup>1</sup> The Crondall hoard is no longer regarded as the main point of reference and it cannot be assumed that there is a linear decline in gold content over time.<sup>2</sup>

The style of both obverse and reverse of the coin have much in common with the Crispus type known from coins found at St Albans, Coddensham and Eyke (Fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> The similarities include the braided hair style on the obverse bust, which recurs on the earliest types of the Pada coinage (PaIA, Fig. 3).<sup>4</sup>



Fig. 2. Crispus (*delaiona*) gold shilling with characteristic bubble obverse surface (author's collection)



Fig. 3. Pale gold shilling of Pada (author's collection; EMC 2010.0248)

<sup>1</sup> Archibald 2013, 493–515.

<sup>2</sup> Williams and Hook 2013, 51–70.

<sup>3</sup> Abdy and Williams 2006, 69–70, xxvi.

<sup>4</sup> My thanks to Arent Pol for his thoughts on the design of this specimen.



Fig. 4. Constantine 'oath-taking' or Trophy type shilling (author's collection; EMC 2008.0037)



Fig. 5: CNG, auction 100, 7 October 2015, lot 1060, Dr Lawrence A. Adams, ex Spink auction 162, 27 March 2003, lot 119 (courtesy of CNG)

The annulet cross in a double-beaded circle on the reverse is also familiar from the Crispus shilling, though this is unbroken. A broken double border also occurs on the Constantine 'oath-taking' or Trophy type shilling (Fig. 4).<sup>5</sup> However, it is the obverse of the 'Daisy' type shilling found at Bulmer Beck, North Yorkshire (Fig. 5),<sup>6</sup> which most closely resembles the Wragby reverse. The styles of lettering are not dissimilar. The diademed head, the *Ouroboros* and the elusive legend on the Wragby specimen are reminiscent of early pennies of Series B. These similarities may point to a relatively late date for the Wragby shilling. The early penny illustrated at Fig. 6 was also found in north Lincolnshire.



Fig. 6. Obverse of Wragby find (courtesy CNG) compared to Series B 'sceat'<sup>7</sup>

## 2. The 'Wheel' type gold shilling

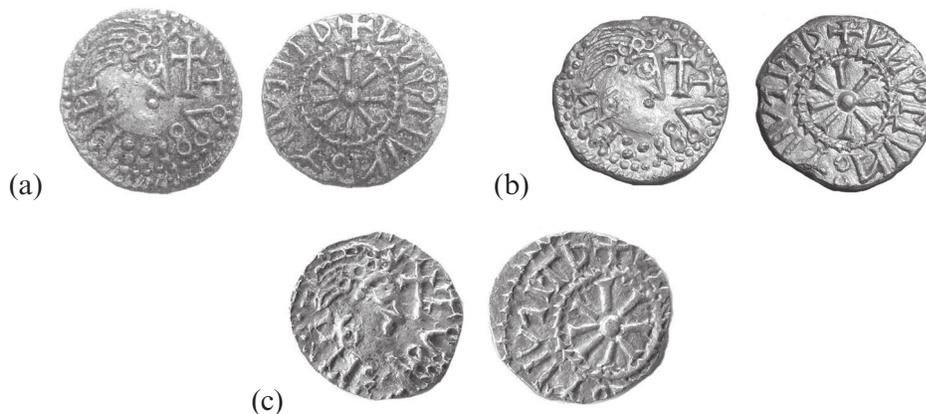


Fig. 7. 'Wheel' type gold shillings: (a) EMC 2003.0219, found Coddendam, Suffolk (b) PAS SF-0C182A, EMC 2016.0124, found Freckenham, Suffolk; (c) EMC 2016.0143, found near Eyke, Suffolk

The early Anglo-Saxon pale gold shilling in Fig. 7a (probably dating to c.660s–670s), the first specimen of this 'wheel' type, was found at Ladycroft Field, Shrubland Hall, Coddendam, Suffolk on 23 October 2003 (*BNJ Coin Register* 2003, no. 62; weight not recorded), and offered for auction by Lockdales, unsuccessfully.<sup>8</sup> Metal detectorists had found a dozen gold and pale gold shillings and tremisses in early 1988 at Coddendam, which were auctioned by

<sup>5</sup> Blackburn 2006, 137. Now referred to as the Trophy type, see Marsden 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Blackburn 2006, 135–40. CNG 100, 7 Oct. 2015, lot 1060.

<sup>7</sup> Abramson B240, *Sceatta List* variety 16–40. Rigold type BI A/C.

<sup>8</sup> Lockdales Auction 50, 25 Sept. 2003, lot 691.

Sotheby.<sup>9</sup> A second specimen of the ‘wheel’ type (Fig. 7b), a die-duplicate of the first, was found by a member of the Ipswich Metal Detecting Club, about thirty-six miles to the east, at Freckenham in Suffolk (EMC 2016.0124; PAS SF-0C182A; 1.24 g). The excellent condition of the new specimen shows that the coin had not long been in circulation before loss.

*Obverse:* V (cross pattée) T (annulet-V) (double annulet) / III. A crude diademed bust, right, with hair swept back from four large annulets and cross pattée before. The pellets below the head may represent mail. The uncertain legend is divided by symbols. The letters have serifs and are neatly engraved. The border is beaded.

*Reverse:* (cross pattée) VN (annulet-V symbol) ΓΙΥΙΠ:ΤΙΙΥΠΙΤΔ. A wheel design of eight flat-topped spokes around central boss within border composed of conjoined wedges or pheons. The inscription is competently executed but undeciphered with an initial cross pattée and including a runic L. No border.

In March 2016 yet another specimen was found, on this occasion near Eyke in Suffolk, only a mile or so from the prolific site of Rendlesham (EMC 2016.0143; 1.3 g) (Fig. 7c). While the condition falls short of the second specimen, with the obverse weakly struck and the reverse off-struck, it is undoubtedly a die duplicate of the first two specimens.

The unusual annulet-V (and possibly double-annulet symbol) occurs on both sides. Metcalf’s *Thrymsas and Sceattas* illustrates a comparable reverse from Caistor-by-Norwich (Fig. 8), matched with an obverse of the Constantine ‘oath-taking’ or Trophy variety supporting the proposed date for this new ‘wheel’ type.<sup>10</sup> The Caistor specimen has a different, undeciphered, reverse legend. The juxtaposition of bust and cross pattée is another similarity.



Fig 8. Constantine ‘oath-taking’ shilling, found Caistor-by-Norwich, de Wit collection (courtesy of Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH)<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Sotheby, 4–5 Oct. 1990, lots 281–92. See also Sadler 1990.

<sup>10</sup> Metcalf 1993–4, 48.

<sup>11</sup> Fritz Rudolf Künker GmbH, *The De Wit Collection of Medieval Coins. 1000 Years of European Coinage. Part IV: The Sceattas (sic)* (Osnabruck, 2008), S7, p. 12.