THE DUNWICH MINT.

By H.Alexander Parsons.

HERE is, perhaps, no more interesting but, at the same time, little known phase of English topographical history than that relating to the towns and villages overwhelmed by the encroachments of the sea. Unlike the effects of earthquake or fire, these disasters are, generally speaking, of so gradual a nature that centuries may elapse before destruction is complete, and in the meantime the effects of the sea's operations are unnoticed, except by the local people chiefly interested or, perhaps, by a more than usually observant diarist.

One of the chief of the ancient submerged cities was Dunwich, formerly situated about four miles south of Southwold on the Suffolk coast. It is a somewhat difficult matter to construct the history of a city which has disappeared, for so much of that which is legend, or at least exaggeration, tends to grow round the memory of such places. Dunwich may, it is thought, be considered to be no exception to this rule, and some of the statements of its historian, Gardner, cannot in all respects be regarded as absolutely founded on fact. It is not, however, the purpose of this paper to substantiate or correct the records of previous writers, except so far as they relate to the coinage. Some reference to the history of this city as a whole will, however, give completeness to the subject, and that must be the writer's excuse for supplementing and, in a few respects, repeating the details given in an article by Mr. E. R. H. Hancox entitled "Finds of mediaeval cut halfpence and farthings at Dunwich," published in this Journal in 1908.

In Roman times Dunwich was supposed by some writers to have been the terminus of one of the six great Roman roads which had
their junction at *Venta Icenorum* (Caistor), but of authentic historical references to it the earliest appears to be in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, where it is stated that a Burgundian named Felix, whose name is preserved in that of the present town of Felixstowe, fixed his see at Dunwich on his consecration by Honorius, Archbishop of Canterbury, as first bishop of the Angles, A.D. 630.

Stubbs, in his *Constitutional History*, says that the sees of the early bishops were, in many cases, planted in villages or country monasteries, which served as a nucleus for the later cities in accordance with a recognized plan of avoiding existing towns. He adds that in the case of the East Anglian see a village was chosen, or created, for the purpose. The statements that Dunwich was a flourishing town before the see was fixed there will not, therefore, bear critical investigation.

In A.D. 669 a Greek monk, Theodore of Tarsus, was despatched from Rome as Archbishop of Canterbury to reorganize the Anglo-Saxon Church, and amongst other changes effected by him was the division of the Saxon bishoprics. Hitherto they had practically coincided with the so-called heptarchic kingdoms, that of East Anglia being, as we have seen, at Dunwich. This was, however, in A.D. 673 or 674, divided into two, one for the north-folk located at Elmham, and the other for the south-folk retained at Dunwich. Matthew of Westminster circumstantially cites the infirmity of the then bishop of Dunwich as the reason for this division of the see, but there is little doubt that it was part of the organized plan of Archbishop Theodore. During the Viking conquest of the north and east of England in the ninth century, the see of Dunwich disappeared altogether, being overwhelmed, not by the ocean, but by a flood of paganism and barbarism. In A.D. 955 the bishopric of East Anglia was revived, but Dunwich was not chosen as the seat of the bishop, Elmham having that exclusive honour.

Advancing to Norman times, the reference to Dunwich in the Domesday Survey is the next most valuable and unimpeachable evidence of the size and importance of the town. In addition, it indicates that Dunwich was a borough and, in the light of the coinage law enacted at Greatley (about A.D. 928), as interpreted by Mr. Carlyon-Britton,¹

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this is more important to the present subject because it shows that Dunwich could, at least in later Saxon times, have coined money if circumstances had required it. *Domesday Book* says, *inter alia*—

"Edric de Lesefelde held Dunewic in the time of King Edward for one manor, and now Robert Malet holds it. Then there were two plough lands, now one, the sea hath washed away the other, then twelve Bordars, now two, and 24 freemen, each [with] 40 acres, who pay custom to this manor, and then 120 Burgesses, and now 236."

This reference is also important as indicating that the encroachment of the sea had begun, at least, as early as in the age of Edward the Confessor, but notwithstanding this, the evidence of charters and other contemporary records show, beyond doubt, that Dunwich was not, for a considerable period after that time, seriously affected by the aggression of the ocean. Indeed a charter of liberties was granted to the town, in the first year of King John, A.D. 1199, for which the burgesses paid 300 marks, besides ten falcons and five giffalcons.

By the time of Edward II., however, the fight against the ocean had almost overcome the burgesses, for, in A.D. 1325, they "prayed to have the town taken into the king's hand and a guardian appointed." Such a request on the part of a mediæval town shows that a state of practical bankruptcy had been reached, and it was a sure indication of the depths to which the inhabitants had fallen. In the reign of Edward III., one of the greatest calamities, which had a lasting effect on the town, occurred, a large section of it being then carried away by the sea. The later history of Dunwich shows that it never completely recovered from this disaster; and the subsequent recurrences, of more or less magnitude in every succeeding reign, still further rendered its position increasingly precarious until, by the time of Elizabeth, with natural calamities and trade rivalries, it had sunk for ever from the important position it had formerly held on the East Anglian coast. Its later history may be generally said to be that of gradual absorption by the ocean, until by the middle of the eighteenth century the town had, practically speaking, disappeared. One of the last remnants of the old

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1 *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, by Mrs. J. R. Green.
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place is a dilapidated church perched on the very verge of the cliff, and not many years can elapse before even this memorial disappears, as the winter tides are still taking their toll of the coast.

From these introductory remarks we will now pass to the main theme of this paper, which is to consider the evidence for the working of a mint in old-time Dunwich. Tradition is strong that coins were struck there, and even so early as in 1589 it is so stated. In a report of one, Ralph Agas, to Queen Elizabeth in that year is the following extract:

"Touchinge the State of the Toune in times past, it appeareth as well by their charter, as otherwise, that it hath been one of the ancient Tounes in this Yland; that there hath been a Bishoppes Sea, also a Minte, and a Market everie Daie in the Week."

Ruding, in his account of the various mints of Britain epitomises the references to the Dunwich mint as follows:

"Leland, in his Commentary de Scriptoribus Britannicis, under the article 'Sigebertus Rex,' says, 'Dunwich is an ancient city which indeed the ancient East Anglians, as is clear from the inscriptions on the coins, used to call Donmoc' [translation]. These coins, however, are now unknown.

"Sir John Pettus says, 'it appears by several coins of gold and silver that there was a mint at Dunwich in the time of Henry II. and III.' These also are unknown.

"Gardner... has engraved a coin which he supposed to have been struck in this mint. But it is clearly a penny of one of the Edwards coined at Durham, and the true reading CIVITAS DONOLI.

"Weever says, 'one Master Holliday told me that he had a grote, whose superscription on the one side was CIVITAS DONWIC.'

"It appears probable that these authorities made a strong impression upon the mind of Leake, and that whilst he was under their influence he read an indenture between King Henry VI. and Bartholomew Goldbeater, of which he has given the following account: 'Goldbeater,' he says, 'is called in it mint-master en le Cite de Londres, Cite de Denwyk, le Ville de Brisaut et en la Ville de Calais; and coins struck at the second place mentioned are inscribed CIVITAS DONWIC.' His authority for these coins, I presume, was the passage in Weever, which
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is given above; but his Cite de Denwyk is founded upon a palpable mis-reading of the record, where the word is most distinctly Den'wyk or De Everwyck, the city of York.

So far as the coins actually referred to by Ruding are concerned, it does not require an advanced numismatist to see, with Ruding, the fallacy of the attributions, but although no reliance can be placed on the evidence of the above authorities, with the possible exception of the first named, it does not necessarily follow that there is no foundation for the particular fact in question.

Apart, however, from the coins, which it is hoped will be shown to have been minted at Dunwich, there is no direct contemporary evidence for the actual working of a mint; although it does not seem reasonable to suppose that so important a borough failed to avail itself of the privilege, at some time or other, when coins were issued at and are now known of far smaller and more insignificant places. It is improbable, however, that coins were struck at Dunwich so early as in the time of Æthelstan. It had not, it is thought, by then recovered wholly from the shock of the Viking invasion, which swept away its see. In searching, however, for the readings of coins which might reasonably be supposed to represent the name of the town, it is requisite to advert to the well-known fact that the place was not always called by the name which is familiar to us. As before mentioned, it is referred to in Bede's Ecclesiastical History, and I am indebted to Mr. Alfred Anscombe for the following renderings of the town name from the varying manuscripts of that work:

Domnoc, Moore MS., written A.D. 737 or 738.
Domnoc, Cotton MS., written later in the same century.
Domnoc-ceastre, King Alfred's version, written about A.D. 890.

In addition to the above readings Canon Taylor, in Words and Places, gives Dunmoc, and other authorities give Dunmoc and Dumoc, whilst the Domesday rendering is Dunewic.

The first coin which appeared to the writer to approximate to one of the renderings of the town name given above is a silver penny of Æthelred II., of type D of Hildebrand, Type IV, variety a, in the

1 See also British Numismatic Journal, vol. viii, pp. 34–35.
British Museum Catalogue, No. 207 of Hawkins, and type 4 of the writer's arrangement of the coins of Æthelred II.¹ This coin is now lying as No. 397 amongst the unappropriated coins of Æthelred II. in the British Museum and discloses the following inscriptions:

Obverse.— +ÆDELÆDE REX ANGO [the NG ligulated].
Reverse.— +OZÆÆIA DINVII [? V].

The obverse inscription clearly shows unintentional mis-spelling, and the same might, therefore, have happened in the reverse reading. Apart from this, however, the name as it is inscribed on the coin is not far removed from Dunmoc or Dommoc, the old names of Dunwich, or at least it approximates as near to those names as to any other possible mint.

The moneyer's name is, no doubt, Osgar. A moneyer of this name coined at Bedford and Derby in the same reign, and it is not impossible that he is the same person. The name is most rare on Saxon money, and it is significant that the coins of Bedford and Derby struck by this moneyer are of Type A of Hildebrand, the last of the types of Æthelred II., and that which immediately succeeds the type of the coin before us.

Although the attribution to Dunwich of the above coin may be open to question, there seems to be no doubt that the silver penny, of which the reading is given below, was correctly attributed to Dunwich by Hildebrand in his catalogue of Anglo-Saxon Coins in the Royal Cabinet at Stockholm.

Obverse.— + ÆÐELÆÐ REX A • NIL : L :
Reverse.— + EÆÐÆI M • O DVN • II •

¹ Numismatic Chronicle, 1910.
This coin is of Type A of Hildebrand, Type I of the British Museum Catalogue, and No. 205 of Hawkins. In the writer's arrangement of the coins of Æthelred II, it is placed last of the types of that king, and immediately follows that of the DINMII piece.

In the 1841 edition of Hildebrand the reading appears as DVNPI, and on examination of the cast, the section of the flan between the two final down-strokes of the mint name appears to be slightly raised at the upper part, which lends some colour to the supposition that, after all, the letters P are intended. If so we have a reading which substantially agrees with that in the Domesday Survey, the Saxon P being the Norman W, and so DVNPI the contraction for DVNEWIC.

It has been considered that this coin and the next to be attributed to Dunwich may have been struck at Durham, formerly Dunolm, Dunelm, etc., but in view of the fact that Durham was not founded until A.D. 995, and as the coin in question was probably struck between A.D. 1011 and 1016, it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that Durham was not in a sufficiently advanced state by then to have possessed a mint.

Mr. W. J. Andrew, in his luminous account of the mint at Durham, contends that the judgment upon the claim of Bishop Beck in A.D. 1293, that his predecessors had the right of coinage before the Conquest, gives to the northern city the prior claim to any Saxon coins which might, in their readings, equally apply to both towns. While admitting the justice of such a contention in the absence of any evidence for the working of a mint at Dunwich other than similarity of readings, the position in this case is changed by the facts that, firstly, the inscriptions of the coins in question lean more to Dunwich than to Durham and, secondly, that the report on Dunwich in 1583 constitutes a record of the existence of a mint there of a

1 Numismatic History of Henry I., pp. 176-186.
similar character to Bishop Beck's reference to the Durham mint in the time of Edward I., in so far as, in both cases, the statements are made centuries after the alleged facts. It should, perhaps, be mentioned that Mr. Carlyon-Britton, when touching on the mint of Durham in his "Numismatic History of William I. and II.," also agrees with the old attribution to Dunwich.

So far as the name of the moneyer EADZI goes, it is strongly in favour of Dunwich, since that form of the name occurs only on the London coins of the same type. It is by no means improbable that the EADZI of London was the moneyer who also struck at Dunwich if, as is not unlikely, there was nobody in Dunwich capable of the work of coining. On the other hand, any moneyers who might have been required at Durham would probably have been drawn from York, the northern capital, having regard to the well-established fact that the north of England, even in the time of Æthelred II., was almost as much a separate province as in the days of its independent kings.

Turning now to the reign of Cnut, the long peace which the country enjoyed naturally tended to the development of trade, and in view of the fact that England became the centre of the king's Scandinavian empire, it is no matter for surprise that the ports on the eastern coast prospered considerably during his reign. The historian Green, in his Conquest of England, says, "Dunwich, though even then threatened by the sea, was growing fast," and as also Cnut ordained that the laws which obtained in the time of Eadgar, i.e., Æthelstan's laws, should be observed, it is natural to expect that Dunwich possessed a mint during at least some part of Cnut's reign, and the following coin, attributed to Dunwich by Hildebrand, it is thought, may safely be so placed—

Obverse.— + LNVT REX ANGLOV.
Reverse.— + LEOOFRIC M DVH.

FIG. 3.—PENNY OF CNUT ATTRIBUTED TO DUNWICH. FIRST TYPE.
This coin is in the Royal Swedish Cabinet and is of type E of *Hildebrand*, type VIII of the *British Museum Catalogue*, and No. 212 of *Hawkins*. The writer has reason to think that this is the first real type of the reign of Cnut, and the coin therefore follows consecutively the previous type attributed to Dunwich. *Hildebrand* reads the mint name as DVM, but the cast clearly reads DVH (see illustration, fig. 3). The last letter is, no doubt, intended for N with the bar placed in a horizontal line instead of obliquely. This form of letter is not uncommon on coins of the period, and the antithesis to it, viz., N for H, is also in evidence.

The moneyer’s name, LEOFRIC, is so common that very little can be deduced from it. It occurs of, at least, twelve mints in this reign, mostly situated in the eastern counties, including the towns of Norwich, Thetford, and Ipswich. The balance of evidence, such as it is, tends, therefore, to prove that the DVH coin came from an eastern mint.

The fourth and last coin to be attributed to Dunwich has not hitherto been recorded and is in the writer’s collection. The reading is as follows:

**Obverse.** — + LNVT REUX A:
**Reverse.** — + GODPINE ON DV.

*Fig. 4.—Penny of Cnut attributed to Dunwich. Second type.*

This coin is of *Hildebrand*, type G, type XIV of the *British Museum Catalogue*, and No. 213 of *Hawkins*. It probably follows in type immediately that of the first coin of Cnut attributed to Dunwich. As in the case of the last described coin very little can be deduced from the moneyer’s name, GODPINE, because it is also very common. It occurs of, at least, twenty-four mints. These mints are situated all over the country, and the eastern counties are well represented.
The writer has not been able to discover any other coins which might reasonably be attributed to the mint under discussion, and in the absence of specimens of any of the numerous and large coinages of Edward the Confessor, it seems almost certain that Dunwich ceased to coin after the reign of Cnut. Incidentally, this tends to prove that the last two coins mentioned, on which the reading of the mint-names equally applies to Durham, do not belong to the northern city, for otherwise it would be very difficult to explain the hiatus between Cnut and William the Conqueror, the latter being the first monarch to whom undoubted coins of Durham can be attributed.

In conclusion, the writer desires to acknowledge his indebtedness to the authors named in the text, and to the custodians of the coins in the British Museum and in the Royal Cabinet at Stockholm for casts of the Dunwich coins in their care.