NUMISMATIC SIDELIGHTS ON THE BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH, A.D. 937.

BY W. J. ANDREW, F.S.A.

BRUNANBURH was described by Henry of Huntingdon as "the greatest of battles"; and we, who live a thousand years later than it, may still agree with him, for it was the most brilliant victory every won by Englishmen upon British soil; and in its day it was the theme of the sagas of the Northmen, the pride of the Anglo-Saxon race, and known to all as "the great fight."1 England was almost used to the ebb and flow of Danish strife, for during more than a century it had been the field of one hard-fought struggle of defence; but now Athelstan was faced with far more than that, for, instead of a single enemy, an alliance of nations on all sides had been formed against him for the reconquest of Mercia.

At the instance of Constantine III, king of the Scots, the Northumbrians had revolted and elected his son-in-law, Anlaf the Dane, the exiled son of their late king, Sihtric, to be their king and leader. Meanwhile Anlaf had become by hereditary succession one of the titular Danish kings of Dublin, and as such had arrived with a great Viking fleet at the mouth of the Humber. With him was his cousin, another Anlaf, also a Viking king of Dublin. Hordes of Picts and Scots marched southwards with their king and his unnamed son, whilst the Strathclyde Britons from the lands that are now Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire, flocked to the scene and were joined by their countrymen, the Welsh, from beyond Ethelfleda’s rebuilt stronghold of Chester. War-worn Vikings from the Isles,

1 Ethelweard’s Chronicle, written within fifty years of the event.
and from over the seas, sailed to the call of the Raven standard, and no doubt the men of the Danish Burghs in England revolted to the cause. The name of the host was legion, yet its strength was probably but that of a multitude of undisciplined units.

Although Brunanburh is reported in the chronicles as the event of a single year, it must have been the outcome of long conspiracy and armament, and it is significant that the two preceding years, 935 and 936, are left blank in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, for they were probably years of silent preparation on both sides. The Scots had been subjected to a punitive raid by Athelstan in 934, and from that time forth, no doubt, Constantine conspired against him. The actual advance by the combined forces in the autumn of 937 would, of course, be a mere matter of weeks or months, but time would be necessary for the organization of the Northumbrians, the recall and election of the exiled Anlaf as their leader, and the preparation of his great fleet, said to have numbered 615 vessels, which sailed from Ireland and entered the mouth of the Humber. This statement has been questioned on the ground of the improbability of the selection of a landing-place on the east coast of England for a fleet from Ireland, but the fact is vouched for by nearly all our early chroniclers, including Florence of Worcester, Melrose and Symeon of Durham, and the last-named, being a Northumbrian, should have known. But the general rendezvous of the alliance was York, as the only possible centre for its commissariat, and for which the Humber was the only port. We must remember that the Danes were accustomed to sail round our coasts, and in this instance the collection of the Viking allies of Constantine from the Isles of Mona to the Orkneys was a factor of the general programme, for they would join the fleet on its way, so also would the Cornish Welsh if part of the fleet sailed the southern route, as I believe it did. The landing in the Humber is also in a measure corroborated by William of Malmesbury, who tells us that Anlaf had advanced far inland before the battle, but, be that as it may, if there is any axe within these pages, it must be ground by the hard grindstone of facts as stated, and proved, not by any theoretical
correction or adjustment. As, however, the site presently described lies exactly midway between the east and the west coasts, the question of the Humber or the Mersey is quite negligible.

Then followed the Battle, of which every chronicler or poet gives his own account, but the story is so well known that Stevenson’s literal translation of the epic in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* will suffice:

Here king Athelstan,
of earls the lord,
of heroes the bracelet-giver,
and his brother also,
Eadmund etheling,
very illustrious chieftain
in battle fought
with the edges of swords
near the Humber.
The board-walls they clove,
they hewed the high lindens,
with the relics of hammers.
The children of Eadward,
such was their noble nature
from their ancestors,
that they in battle oft
'gainst every foe
the land defended,
hoard and homes.
The foe they crushed,
the Scottish people
and the shipmen
fated fell.
The field became slippery
with warriors’ blood
since the sun up
at morning-tide,
mighty planet,
glided over the deeps,
God’s bright candle,
the eternal Lord’s,
till the noble creature
sank to her rest.
There lay many a warrior
pierced with javelins;
northern men
over shield shot;
so the Scots eke,
weary, satiated with war.
The West-Saxons onwards
throughout the day,
in chosen bands,
pursued the footsteps
to the loathed nations.
They hewed the fugitives
from behind, exceedingly,
with swords mill-sharp.
The Mercians refused not
the hard hand-play
to any of the heroes

1. *Ymbe* is, literally, around.

2. I should translate this couplet “The wooden targe they clove, they hewed the tall shield with wroughten swords.”
who with Anlaf, over the ocean, in the ship's bosom, this land sought fated to the fight. Five lay on the battle-stead, youthful kings, put to sleep by swords; so seven also of Anlaf's eorls; of the army, countless shipmen and Scots. There was made to flee the North-men's chieftain, by need constrained, to the ship's prow with a little band. The bark drove afloat; the king departed on the fallow flood, his life he preserved. So there also the sage came by flight to his country north, Constantine. The hoary warrior had no cause to exult in the communion of swords. Here was his kindred band of friends o'erthrown on the meeting of the people, in battle slain; and his son he left on the slaughter-place, mangled with wounds, the young man in the fight; he had no cause to boast, that hero grizzly-haired, of the bill-clashing, the old deceiver; nor Anlaf the more, with the remnant of their armies; they had no cause to laugh that they in war's works the better men were in the battle-stead, at the conflict of banners, meeting of spears, concourse of men, traffic of weapons; that they on the slaughter-field with Eadward's offspring played.

The North-men departed in their nailed barks; bloody relic of darts, on Dinnes-mere (?) 1 o'er the deep water Dublin to seek, again Ireland, shamed in mind. So too the brothers, both together,

1 The first line of this couplet refers to the North-men, not the barks, and may be translated "Stricken remnant of war." To the second line Stevenson's query is unnecessary, as on dinnes mere means "on the stormy sea."
king and etheling,
their country sought,
the West-Saxons' land,
in the war exulting.
They left behind them
the corse to devour,
the dun kite
and the swarthy raven
with horned nib,
and the dusky "pada,"1
erne [eagle] white-tailed,
the corse to enjoy,
the greedy war-hawk,
and the grey beast,
wolf of the wood.
Carnage greater has not been
in this island
ever yet
of people slain,
before this,
by edges of the sword,
as books us say,
old writers,
since from the east hither,
Angles and Saxons
came to land,
o' er the broad seas
Britain sought,
proud war-smiths,
the Welsh o'ercame,
earls most bold,
this earth obtained.

This, with the additional information from Ingulph, no doubt
upon better authority than his own, that Brunanburh was, as we
should expect it to have been, in Northumbria, is, shortly, the story
of Athelstan's great victory as it has been handed down to us, and
it was thought that the last word on it had been gleaned from con­
temporary evidence. But in the many thousands of pages of the
British Numismatic Journal there is probably material worth the
search upon any English historical problem; and Brunanburh is no
exception to the rule.

It is a strange corollary that the site of England's greatest
battle should be one of the historical mysteries of modern times.
It may be that Brunanburh was so renowned a name that the
chroniclers no more thought it necessary to describe its locality
than do we when we speak of Waterloo. Or it may be that it
was in the wilds of Northumbria, an unknown district to them, and
far away from any town or place with which it could be identified.

1 Henry of Huntingdon translates this "et buffo livens."
When Gaimar wrote, "I believe that it will always be spoken of," he was a true prophet, for historian after historian, topographist and etymologist alike, have suggested place after place and county after county, from Wessex to Scotland, for the probable site, but oddly enough nobody has hitherto turned to Derbyshire. The discovery in 1840 of the Cuerdale hoard of treasure on the bank of the Ribble in Lancashire was long thought to offer the key of solution, but since I was able to show in the first volume of the Society's Journal that the date of its deposit could not have been later than A.D. 911, the claims based upon it have been abandoned. Similarly, those founded upon Athelstan's benefactions to Beverley have failed, because it has been proved that they were incident to his campaign of 934. So also no single theory has passed the censor of historical criticism.

Where men of the first knowledge have thus failed to solve the mystery, I, knowing the limitations of my own, would be the last to venture into the question were it not for two excuses. Firstly, because of the new numismatic information to which I have referred. Secondly, because Mr. Charles Plummer sums up his notes on the battle with the remark, "Symeon of Durham gives it the name of Weondune, or Wendune. This recalls the name Vinnheiði við Vinnskôga, i.e. 'Winheath by Winwood,' which the battle bears in Egils Saga. . . . But local research might discover a Winheath, etc., which would definitely fix the spot." In my youth I have shot over the spot, or what I believe to be the spot, and the old game-keeper, who could never have heard of Brunanburh, told me tales of a battle fought there long ago, and pointed across the valley to a great mound, where he said the dead were buried, but he added that men's bones were found all over the moor. I believed him then, and now I know that the tradition of the battle was recorded a century before his day, and a cartload of human bones had been

1 See also my present paper on the Northumbrian coinage, of which the first two portions have been read to the Society; and the British Museum's Guide to Anglo-Saxon Antiquities, p. 107.

2 Two Saxon Chronicles Parallel, 1899, vol. ii, p. 139.
discovered in a trench on the moor. The late Professor Skeat’s remark on place-names applies equally well to traditions, “Place-names are best preserved when they are left in the keeping of the illiterate, who speak naturally and are not ambitious to be always inventing theories.”

We will now turn to the numismatic sidelights, for I do not bring them nearer to Brunanburh than that. In 925 Athelstan had entered into a treaty with Sihtric, king of the Northumbrians, at Tamworth, and given him his sister in marriage, but Sihtric, dying in 927, was succeeded by his elder son by a former marriage, Guthferth. Athelstan seized the opportunity, and expelled both him and his younger brother Anlaf and nominally annexed Northumbria to his English possessions. From this date, if not before, he assumed the title of Rex totius Britanniae, and so used it on his coinage. Henry of Huntingdon adds that Guthferth was slain, but erroneously describes him as Sihtric’s nephew. The connection between the Danes of Northumbria and of Dublin was very close, Sihtric’s alleged grandfather Ivar having been Danish king of that city. Anlaf retired there and succeeded as king, in name at least, of Dublin. There is no reason to think that between his expulsion during the reign of his brother in 927 and his return for the Brunanburh rising he ever set foot in Northumbria; on the contrary, he is always styled king of Ireland or of Dublin and must have remained there. Therefore, as he fled back to Dublin from the battle and did not return to Northumbria until after the death of Athelstan in 940, any coin bearing his name with the Northumbrian title cununc, for king, which was struck at Derby in Athelstan’s reign, could only have been coined during the insurrection before Brunanburh.

Modern Derby had been founded by the Danes, and although wrested from them by Ethelfleda and annexed to Mercia in A.D. 917, it remained Danish in heart and customs, and as such was one of the famous “Five Danish Burghs.” Similarly, Nottingham, another of

1 Notes and Queries, April 16, 1904.
the five, had fallen to Edward the Elder in 924, and the Chronicletells us that all the Danes who had settled in Mercia submitted to him.

Until just before the Battle of Brunanburh no money had ever been issued from Derby, but now, during the currency of Athelstan’s last type, a mint was opened there and an unusually large output resulted. To start this, two moneyers, whose names are Danish, were brought, or borrowed, from Chester, and the dies were supplied from York. There can be little doubt that the mint was specially opened for the financial necessities of this Northumbrian rising, for payment of and catering for the host of Danes, Scots, Britons, and Welsh, whose gathering ground was at York. It is obvious that Athelstan was not likely to have opened a mint at Derby on the very borders of Northumbria during this period of northern unrest, but to the Danes both Derby and Nottingham for that very reason offered special facilities for trade with the richer merchants of Mercia, and for meeting the urgent demands of the many paymasters of the army for ready money. For general circulation it was necessary that the money so coined should bear the name of Athelstan upon it, and be of the design then current in England.

We will assume that the mint was opened at Derby in A.D. 936, a year before and in preparation for Brunanburh, and as Athelstan died in 940 it had a run of only five years to issue money bearing his name. Derby was Danish and therefore allied to, if not then under, Northumbria, so we should expect marked differences in the coins issued from its mint by the Northumbrians in revolt before Brunanburh, from those issued under Athelstan’s authority after Brunanburh, when Derby was restored to Mercia. This would divide the coins we have to-day into two classes as Northumbrian before, and English after Brunanburh, but the coins go further than that, and give us an intermediate issue struck during the actual military operations, namely, after the arrival of Anlaf at York and his election as cununc, as the Danes styled their king, and before his overthrow at the battle, a period of weeks or months only. These classes are quite distinctive and historically most interesting.
Perhaps I ought to explain that coins of Derby of this period are rare, but in proportion to those of similar provincial mints they postulate a very large original issue.

CLASS I.—Danish money struck at Derby during the insurrection, but before the arrival and election of Anlaf at York.

We have seen that it was necessary that, "to be accepted of the merchants," this money should conform with the currency of the day and therefore bear Athelstan's name upon it. So far, the Northumbrians were prepared at this time to go, but no further. Athelstan had assumed the somewhat pretentious title Rex totius Britanniae, and in a contracted form it so appears upon his regal English money.

![Silver Penny of Athelstan of Ordinary English Type Issued at Chester](image)

FIG. 1.—SILVER PENNY OF ATHELSTAN OF ORDINARY ENGLISH TYPE ISSUED AT CHESTER.

I here illustrate as Fig. 1 an example of Athelstan's ordinary English money, struck at Chester, kindly given to me for the purpose by Mr. Frank E. Burton, F.S.A. It reads, +/EDELSTAN RE + TO BRI; reverse, +BEORARD MO IN LEBEF, and thus shows the title Rex totius Britanniae in the usual contracted form.

Whilst it was necessary for the Danes in revolt to use Athelstan's name, they naturally were not prepared to advertise on the money they issued to pay their army that he was Rex totius Britanniae, so they compromised by, as they would term it, "putting him in his place" as merely rightful king of Wessex, for they claimed Mercia and Northumbria.

Hence the money now issued at Derby bears in bad Latin and generally blundered spelling the obverse legend Athelstan Rex Saxorum as king of the [West] Saxons only.
The example here illustrated as Fig. 2 is unpublished and is also the gift of Mr. Burton, and well shows its Danish origin. It reads, [VEDLES] TAN RE: SAI:SORVM, reverse, [BIENCEA MOT ON DEORABY], for Giencea Monetarius on Derby, but the lettering is of the rude Northumbrian character. In the field of the reverse there is a well-formed R, which is difficult to explain. The letter M occurs in the same position on some Derby coins of this class and might well be intended for Mercia, but we find s similarly on Chester coins, so this marking or countermarking of the dies awaits a better explanation.

So far as my search has extended I cannot find any instance either on his purely English money or in his charters, of Athelstan’s use of the title Rex Saxonom.

This class, and these proffered explanations of it, apply equally well to the contemporary coinage at Nottingham.

CLASS II.—Danish money struck at Derby by Anlaf during the short period between his election as king of Northumbria and the battle of Brunanburh.

This is the most interesting class of the series, and considering that the limit of time for its issue must have been short indeed, it is surprising that it is represented to-day by three coins, although the third is a mule under Class III, and this suggests that the original issue must have been plentiful.

1. Major P. W. P. Carlyon-Britton, F.S.A., discovered this coin and described and illustrated it in the fifth volume of this Journal. Except in its legends it is exactly similar to coins of Class I. It reads, [+ANL]AF CVNVNE [space missing for three letters, probably σπι], reverse, [SIBPOLD]E MOT ON DEOREG (Sigwoldes being
the genitive case of Sigwold), letter M in the field. So, if I am right in assuming from the parallel instance on a coin of Anlaf struck at York that the missing letters on the reverse are ANL.

FIG. 3.—BROKEN HALF OF A PENNY OF ANLAF AS KING OF NORTHERBRIA, STRUCK AT DERBY JUST BEFORE THE BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH.

the coin reads in full "Anlaf King of the English, [the penny] of Sigwold, moneyer of (or at) Derby," with the letter M in the field of the reverse.

It will be noticed that the letters R and B in the mint-name DEOREB are represented by a form of L with the limb raised to the top of the upright. These have been explained as unfinished letters, but as the same form occurs for R in Rex and otherwise, on several varied coins of Anlaf struck at York, I think we must assume that it is a Northumbrian survival of the Frankish or Welsh-runic R, from which we get our minuscule r, although both were originally from the Roman. This fact practically proves that Anlaf's dies for Derby were cut at York.

FIG. 4.—PENNY OF ANLAF AS KING OF NORTHERBRIA STRUCK AT DERBY JUST BEFORE THE BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH.

2. This coin is in the British Museum, and in its Catalogue of

1 As this illustration has had to be reproduced from the collotype, Fig. A, Plate II, of Volume V, readers are referred to that for clearer detail.

2 On one coin at least it is also used, as here, for B, in the title Cununc Eb (for Eboraci) = King of York.
Anglo-Saxon Coins is attributed to the York mint, but that catalogue, although the latest on the subject, is dated 1887, when the class I am discussing was undiscovered, and even the British Numismatic Journal was unknown. So I feel free to follow Major Carlyon-Britton, and correct the attribution.

The coin reads +ÀNÃF CNVNE 0, reverse, +SIGARES MOT, with the usual Derby Ñ in the field. The 0 which concludes the obverse legend was the symbol of York and Northumbria as the ring of St. Peter of York, and although now used by a pagan king, its symbolism was nothing to him. So we get "Anlaf, King of Northumbria, [the penny] of Sigar the Moneyer," for Sigares is again a genitive. The inverted L in Anlaf is merely a diesman's blunder, but the punch used for it and twice on Fig. 3 was at York, and only at York.

It will be noticed that the moneyer's name is there, but that of the mint is absent. This only shows the emergency of the times and the difficulty of crowding a long legend into the confined space allowed on a die. Fortunately, the moneyer Sigar coined nowhere else than at Derby, and a coin in the National Museum at Rome settles his domicile, for it reads +SIGARES MOT DEORABYI, and is of our Class I. It also has the Ñ in the field of the reverse, which seems to be a symbol almost as peculiar to Derby at this period as the 0 was to York and Northumbria.

Class III.—The English money struck at Derby when it fell into Athelstan's hands by the Battle of Brunanburh.

FIG. 5.—REGAL PENNY OF ATHELSTAN STRUCK AT DERBY IMMEDIATELY AFTER BRUNANBURH, FOR ANLAF'S REVERSE DIE OF FIG. 3 IS CONTINUED FOR IT.

Brunanburh must have given Athelstan the mint of Derby instantly, because there is no break in its coinage, only the natural
change in the King's title, from the objectionable *Rex Saxorum* to *Rex totius Britanniae*. Immediately new obverse dies bearing the regal title must have been sent down to the Derby mint, because Sigwald, its moneyer, continued to coin without a break; for although Anlaf's obverse die of our Fig. 3 was scrapped, as we should naturally expect, when Sigwald received the new obverse die he continued to use for the new issue his own reverse die, which he had used for Anlaf's. The soft metal dies of those days lasted but a few months, or we should not to-day so rarely be able to identify two or three coins from the same die or dies.

It is to Mr. Grant R. Francis, F.S.A.,¹ that the discovery of this historically important coin is due, and he called attention to the very different character of the lettering on the obverse to that on the reverse of the coin. This difference, I think, can only be explained by the suggestion that the first regal obverse die was sent to Derby from Winchester because York was not yet directly under Athelstan's administration; but this soon followed, for the subsequent dies used at Derby adopt the regal title and are of York workmanship, and bad at that. Mr. Francis's coin, Fig. 5, therefore reads, *ÆDELSTAN RE*+ TO BRI, reverse, as Anlaf's, Fig. 3, *ÆGEOLODES MOT ON DEOREF*, with the usual M in the field. So far as I know, this obverse stands alone as evidence of a southern die being used at Derby at this period, and I think, therefore, that it was specially sent down as a pattern for the corrected obverse title.

The rest of the coins we have of Class III are from dies supplied from York and show the usual Northumbrian characteristics and blundering, retrograde inscriptions even being not unknown, and the Northumbrian o, as the annulet or ring of St. Peter of York, sometimes occurs; but always now, after Brunanburh, is the title *Rex totius Britanniae*, in a contracted form. Mr. J. O. Manton, in his excellent papers to the Derbyshire Archæological Society's Journal on the Mint of Derby, has included several of these, and kindly lent me his own specimens for these notes.

¹ *British Numismatic Journal*, vol. xvi, pp. 1-4.
NOTTINGHAM.—As I have explained, this Danish Burgh joined the rising, its mint was opened from York, and its moneyer Ethelnoth was supplied from Derby, which shows the close connection between the two neighbouring towns. But this was only in Class I, before Brunanburh, and as yet I have not found any evidence that the mint was continued afterwards during Athelstan's reign.

OXFORD.—In Major Carlyon-Britton's collection there was a very puzzling and irregular coin of the type and character of Class I, reading +EDELSTRG S7+ORVM, reverse, +IGEL7N MO ORVBIS. As all the other coins of Oxford to which I have been able to refer bear the regal title Rex totius Britanniae, and this has a blundered obverse, I can only imagine that during Class I a York die-sinker made the obverse die as usual, but too literally copied that for the reverse from a regal Oxford coin, for it is the only instance, so far as I know, of the title Rex Saxorum being then used south of the Trent. This seems the more probable because the same blunders on the obverse of this coin, H for N, RG for Rex, and the initial cross + for X, occur on a Nottingham example of Class I, and suggest the probability of the same obverse die. I therefore think that the dies must have been made at York and both coins struck at Nottingham.

Hitherto the coins of Anlaf struck at York have been credited to his return four years after Brunanburh as the elected king of the Northumbrians, but although I need not now enter into any details, I think that they also are similarly divisible into two general series, one of which was coined for the Brunanburh rising and therefore bears the title cum unc for king, and includes similar types to those struck at Derby, and another bearing as its device the Raven, the war-standard of the Danes. The other is much more English in character and was, I suggest, issued after Anlaf's restoration in A.D. 940-41.

THE SITE OF THE BATTLE.

The numismatic evidence of the mint at Derby proves that certainly for one year, probably for two years, and possibly for three
years, the Danes of Northumbria had extended their frontier thirty miles southward of the old "Mercian Mark," the boundary of Northumbria, to include Derby, and had thus established a frontier town as a salient into Mercia, and, finally, when he had arrived and been elected king at York, Anlaf their leader caused his own money to be struck at Derby in Mercia, and therefore within Athelstan's inner kingdom. This was a direct challenge to the English king, and it would not have been offered until Anlaf had the support of the whole Viking nation behind him at York—the Armada of 615 ships that had sailed into the Humber, and the land forces of Constantine from the north, and Owain with the Welsh from the west. Truly on paper an invincible host. Where the mint, exchange, and money were, there would be a strong garrison to defend them, so Derby would be held in force.

In A.D. 827 Egbert conquered Mercia and led his army against the Northumbrians to Dore in Northumbria, where they submitted to him. He would therefore come through Mercia by the Roman Watling Street to Derby and Buxton, Roman *Aquae*, and thence by the Roman *Batham Gate* to Brough, the Roman *Anavio*, and Dore, for the only possible military roads then were the Roman. In 924 Edward the Elder had led his forces from Nottingham by the same Roman road through Derby into Peakland to Bakewell, about ten miles from Dore, and there received the homage of the Scots, Northumbrians, Danes, and Strathclyde Britons. In 941 King Eadmund advanced through Mercia against the Northumbrians, again to Dore, and received King Anlaf in baptism, so he also went by the same road and with the same objective. Dore is now a place, but was then a district, on the confines of Northumbria. "Mercia recovered as the Dor flows," to use the words of the *Chronicle*, "the White Well Gate and Humber's river"—the line of "The Mercian Mark" or boundary. According to Earle and Plummer Dore meant the door into Northumbria, and the river has been identified by McClure as the *Bdora* of the *Ravennas*. The White Well

1 *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.*
Gate was, I think, the Grey Dyke at Bradwell presently described. Thus, in a very few years more than the century that included Brunanburh, there were three separate revolts of the Northumbrians, and every time the English king successfully advanced against them by the same route, the Roman road through Derby towards the district of Dore; twice he arrived at Dore, and the third time he was met at Bakewell, ten miles as the crow flies short of Dore. There is therefore no reason why we should doubt that the fourth English king, Athelstan, in 937 followed the same route and advanced first against Derby. Probably the Northumbrians expected this, and that was why they had established themselves in force there. Modern Derby was never fortified, but the old Roman station of Little Chester adjoining it was still a walled stronghold, and I have no doubt that it was there that the Danes in 917 had defended themselves against Ethelfleda, the Lady of the Mercians; for the Chronicle tells us that, with God’s help, she obtained possession of the burh at Derby, but to her sorrow lost four of her thanes within its gates, the term burh here, as in Brunanburh, implying a fortress.

But the Battle of Brunanburh was not at Derby, or we should have been told so, and there would have been no mystery at all about it. Where it was fought must have been at a place that could only be described by the place-names given to it. They are descriptive rather than definite, and this is their list:

**English authorities.**

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<tr>
<th>English authority</th>
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<td>Brunefeld</td>
<td>William of Malmesbury.</td>
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<td>Bruningafeld</td>
<td>Two doubtful charters, one dated 938, but probably reliable for the name in vogue at their true date.</td>
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the Battle of Brunanburh, A.D. 937.

Northumbrian, Norse, and Welsh Authorities.

Bruneswerc . . . Gaimar.
Brunanwerc . . Symeon of Durham.
Weondune or Wendune . . Symeon of Durham.
Vinnheiði víð Vinnskôga,
that is, "Winheath by
Winwood" . . . Egils Saga.
Brun, Brune, Brynnev . . Brut y Tywysogion.

Brun-, Brune-, Brunan- and Bruninga-, like Domesday's "Brundala," = the Hall of Brund, merely indicate the name Brun, or Bruna, of some early Saxon, or Anglian, possessor of the -burh, -fort, -dune, or -werc, a very common name, so it does not help. But burh, fort, and were describe an actual fortress, the walled enclosure of Athelstan's Camp. Walled enclosures, other than the numerous stone-walled Roman stations which were then fairly intact, were very few in A.D. 937, and only of the earthen vallum-and-ditch type around towns. If Brunanburh had been then a walled town we should know all about it and it would have been one of the eighty-three mint-towns under Ethelred II. So the -burh, -fort, or -werc must almost certainly have been a Roman station.

Brunefeld and Bruningafeild compare with Winheath, for fell, Danish fjeld, heath, and moor, all mean the same in Northumbria to-day. Brunandune is the hill of Brune, and Weondune or Wendune, like Weonod-land, the Winedaland, is Win hill. But I prefer to re-quote Mr. Plummer on this, and take my text from him. "Symeon of Durham also gives it the name of Weondune or Wendune. . . . This recalls the name Vinnheiði víð Vinnskôga, i.e. Winheath by Winwood, which the battle bears in Egils Saga . . . local research might discover a Winheath, etc., which would definitely fix the spot."

It is therefore my case to accept this challenge, and every one of the conditions of identification, stated or implied, and to add others, namely:—
Essential Conditions.

1. A large fort, or wale, for Athelstan's walled camp.
2. A hill, known as Wim Hill, that is, according to Mr. Plumtree, (and myself,) the Hill.
3. A field, known as With Hoath by Wim Wood.
4. On wild moorland still covered by the twelfth century, kite, kite, etc. Sax. Chron.
5. Among hills ten Henry of Huntingdon.
6. On or over the Northumbrian border is Mercian Mark, because after the pursuit the English returned.
7. At least twenty-one miles from navigable tributary to the Humber (or Mersey), if the Humber, which I believe in, be questioned, for the pursuit of the Danes lasted, for the long day.
8. An earthwork on hill fort for the Ethon ward, as the camp of the Danes, opposite to the Athelstan's.
9. Some evidence by tradition, or of some kind of battle.

Natural Conditions.

10. The Danes, as I have previously explained, expected Athelstan by the Roman road leading towards the Dorset district.
11. Athelstan was the assailant, for he returned.
12. Therefore the site of the Danes, natural defence was the border of Northumbria, on The Mercian Mark, as it was termed, on the way to Dorset.
13. Also, it was strategically the strongest position, for there the great moorland hills abruptly subside.
14. The Roman—practically then the only military roads there unite, from York, from Scotland, from the Strathclyde Britons, from Wales, and from the sea on both sides. A general gathering ground.
15. A site that could have no better descriptions than those given, therefore in open unnamed moorland or mountainous land far away from any named towns.
Athelstan, with his brother and successor Eadmund, raised the whole forces of England, and added Norse mercenaries, and every man who could be called up, for the cause was vital to him and his country, and the recorded presence of three bishops in the army gave it almost the status of a crusade. Probably he started from Winchester with the Wessex forces, then on to London, collecting the South Saxons and men of Kent on his way, thence northward along the Watling Street, gathering the East Anglians, and Norse mercenaries on his right, and the Mercians on his left, until he approached Derby. Here we read of no incident, so, as we should expect, the Danish garrison probably retired before him to join the gathering ground of Anlaf’s host on the Mercian Mark.

Derby must have been Athelstan’s first objective, because if it was sufficiently important to be a mint-town for Anlaf’s money, it must have been a rich and strong salient into Mercia, and correspondingly garrisoned. Therefore, wherever Brunanburh was to be, by whatever road Athelstan led his army northward, it was tactically impossible that he could leave Derby behind him, or even on his flank, if held in force. So this again indicates the central route by the Watling Street and through Derby. The coinage there also suggested that Derby fell almost so soon as Anlaf’s money was struck there, for the same short-lived reverse die stood duty for both issues, Anlaf’s before, and Athelstan’s directly after Brunanburh. But need we labour the question of Athelstan’s route? He had to choose one of the Roman roads northward, and as the three successful English expeditions, against the Northumbrians in 827, 924, and 941, all took the Derby road towards Dore, it would be very unlikely that Athelstan would take any other.

From Derby the Roman road leads N.-W. by N. to Aquae, now Buxton, and there turns at almost a right angle N.E. along the Batham Gate directly towards the Northumbrian border. Although this name is obviously an Old-English rendering of “the road to the baths,” the Roman baths at Aquae, modern place-name experts have assumed the name, not the road, of course, to be modern, but I find it as Bathum Geat in a charter of 1404. Along the Batham
Gate at nine miles from Buxton it crosses "The Mercian Mark" or boundary. Here the Mark is "The Gray Dyke," an earthwork exactly similar to Offa’s Dyke, and cut across the road at exactly right angles, thus suggesting that it was post-Roman. It is an earthen vallum from 8 to 10 feet high, with its ditch facing Northumbria, and gives its name to the village Bradwell = Broad Wall, and to Wall Head close to it, "Wall" in both instances being Old English from, and meaning, Latin vallum.

The road has been steeply descending to the river Noe, and here, only three-quarters of a mile beyond the old Mercian Mark, is the Roman fort "Anavio," now Brough. It is a stone-walled enclosure of 2½ acres, of the usual Roman character. When, in 1903, I assisted Professor Garstang in its excavation, its outer walls were 6 feet thick, but only 3 or 4 feet high, for they had been the quarry for the neighbourhood. Probably in 937 they were almost intact, or at least an excellent defensive ruin. This was, I submit, Athelstan’s walled camp, Bruna’s burh, the fort of Brunfort and the wer of Brunanwerc. Brun, Brune, or Bruna, would be merely the name of some early Anglian or Saxon owner. The name is common, and occurs five times in the Domesday of Derbyshire. Although Brough in place-names is usual for Roman stations, in this case we can identify it directly with the -burh, for until modern times it was known as Burgh and Burg, and is so named on the early manuscript maps of the Forest of the Peak in the Record Office, in Speed, and Camden, and on other printed seventeenth-century maps of Derbyshire, and to-day the name is still retained on the Ordnance map in its bridge as Burghwash Bridge.

It also, I think, gave its name to Hope, less than a mile away, and formerly the largest parish in England, for Hope is O.-E. hop, a piece of enclosed land, or "place of safety." Hope probably arose after, and in consequence of, the battle, and Castleton, a mile and a half farther to the west, was of Norman foundation. It is very unlikely that there was even a village anywhere near here in Athelstan’s time.

Northward from Brough and Hope there is the vast mountainous waste of the Peak, one series of grouse moors extending nearly
20 miles to the north, by a dozen broad, and rising to over 2,000 feet above Ordnance datum. In the time of Domesday, 150 years later than Brunanburh, this great forest was left a blank, and so appears on the maps compiled from it, so here there was no town, nor even village, to give its name to the battle. Brough is 7½ miles from modern Dore, but only 4 or 5 from the old district "where the Dor flows," and the Roman road divided at Brough, one branch leading to York and the other to the Strathclyde Britons and Scotland.

This mountainous moorland comes down to the river Noe at Brough and extends beyond it both to the east and west; but exactly opposite to Brough and rising from the river is Win Moor, surmounted by Win Hill, 1,532 feet high. Win Hill possibly derives its name from W. gwyn, clear, for it stands out above Brough as the clearest landmark from the south of any hill in the district. But, as Win Hill rises abruptly from Athelstan’s presumed camp Brough, and the adjoining hill to the west is called Lose Hill, upon the ridge of which stands the “Ethenwerc” of the Saga, the assumed camp of the Danes where, according to it, they were finally defeated, it is more probable that both hills were so named by the English in their hour of victory. In either case Win Hill, to me, is the Weondune or Wendune, the Win Hill of Synewon of Durham, and Mr. Plummer.

Win Moor runs down to Brough on the south and is bounded by Woodland Dale on the north, but the whole mountainous country, of which Win Hill is the southern headland, is known to-day as The Woodlands, but in the eighteenth century as “Woodland.” It is the name given to what should be the Forest of the Peak—or the Peak itself—for neither is otherwise defined, whereas The Woodlands is treated almost as a separate county, as any Derbyshire fisherman will know when the water bailiffs, far south, speak of rain in The Woodlands, spoiling the rivers. Hence, if you wished to give the best description of Win Hill, you would say to-day Win Hill or Win Moor in The Woodlands, or, in the eighteenth century, in Woodland. As moor and heath are the same thing, we thus get Mr. Plummer’s

1 Bateman’s Ten Years’ Diggings, 1861, p. 254.
Win Heath by Win Wood of the Saga. The name Bruningafeld follows as either Bruna’s fell or moor, or possibly, like “Saxon field,” a later name for the field of battle.

There is no wilder district in England, so Henry of Huntingdon’s “amongst the hills,” and the Chronicle’s wolf, eagle, raven, kite, etc., need no comment. Brough, too, is at the correct distance from the then navigable tributary to the Humber for the pursuit to have lasted “the live-long day.”

Due west of Win Hill and north-west of Brough, as already described, is the sister hill even slightly higher, known as Lose Hill. The name of this may be merely a corollary to Win Hill, but it is more likely that both were so named after the battle because on Lose Hill the Danes suffered their defeat. It is on the ridge¹ of Lose Hill, at a height of 1,700 feet, that the great earthwork Mam Tor stands, the “Ethenwerc” of the Danes, and the fort is large enough to have contained them all, and below it is the place-name Odin’s Sitch. The ancient road down from it is the narrow pass known as “The Winnatts,” formerly The Win Gates, or entrance to the Win-Moor or Win-Heath district, now called Hope Valley.

Turning now to the traditions and relics of the battle. The story the old gamekeeper told me, and I have heard it from others since, is confirmed by the manuscript notes of the antiquary John Wilson, of Broomhead Hall, near Penistone, who died in 1783, included by Thomas Bateman in his Ten Years’ Diggings, published in 1861. He writes, “The tradition [is] that Winhill, near Hope, and Losehill, by Castleton, took their names from a battle here, but at what time is quite uncertain.” After describing an excavation of a prehistoric tumulus on the edge of Darwen Moor, where it adjoins Win Moor, he continues, “there was found . . . a large trench, above a yard wide, on the east end of the low, quite filled with human bones, but so decayed they would scarce bear touching.

¹ This ridge at the main entrance to the camp is named on the ordnance map Rushup Edge—an old name and possibly significant. The camp is probably of the Early Iron Age, and comprises about 30 acres.
the Battle of Brunanburh, A.D. 937.

The workmen say there was a cart-load, they were sure.” I may explain that in mountainous districts where, as here, the shale, grit, or other hard ground, comes up to within a few inches of the surface, the soil heaps of tumuli were an almost necessary resort for burials; and I have on several occasions found them so used for burial of horses and cattle; in fact, in Cheshire one of my excavations had to be abandoned for that reason. The trench and cart-load of bones could have had no other relation to the prehistoric tumulus than that of selection. He also mentions that “this year, 1780, in ploughing a field at Brough, in Derbyshire, [there was] found a piece of a bridle-bit, as supposed, with a large brass top, cast with figures; in my possession,” which reads like the description of a Norse bit; and from “Abbey, in Woodland,” “I have also a small piece of brass, found in it some years ago, of the ancient metal, two inches long, and edged on each side, as if part of a sword.”

The best description of battle relics found here is, however, given by Bray in 1783, in his description of the Grey Dyke, which then ran down from the earthwork Mam Tor to behind the burh of Brough, and along which I therefore believe the brunt of the battle was. “The slope or front [of it] is towards Brough: it is about 20 feet high and 12 broad at top. There is no tradition concerning it, but pieces of swords, spears, spurs and bridle-bits have been found on both sides, and very near it, between Batham Gate and Bradwell-Water.” Bradwell-water is the stream that runs down from the Grey Dyke to Brough itself, and therefore where the first fighting would be. The bridle-bits remind us that it was the custom of the Danes to fight on horseback, that of the Saxons on foot.

Between the Grey Dyke and Brough, due west of the latter, is the great mound pointed out to me by the gamekeeper as the grave of the dead killed in the battle, and as it is on the English side of the River Noe it is more likely to be that, than if on the Danish, for only the conquerors would stay to bury their dead. I have had as much experience in excavating tumuli as most people, and I do not think that it is prehistoric, nor do the Ordnance authorities, or they would have printed its name in black-letter.
It is a very large artificial mound, circular, 75 feet in diameter, quite flat, and not above 5 or 6 feet above the ground. It is not modern, because the stunted thorn trees upon it are old, nor is it prehistoric, for instance, in the slope of its sides, as well as in its general character. I have made plans and sketches of it, and it would well serve the purpose of its tradition. In the Ordnance map it is called "The Folly," but that name may be modern, although I see no reason for it. The shape of the mound is suggestive of a cheese press, and it may therefore be a corruption of Old-English *foler*: or, again, it may be reminiscent of the battle, from Anglo-Saxon *folie* [the mound of] the multitude or army. Our frontispiece, from an impression by Miss Shaw, well illustrates its character, and the wild beauty of the scenery.

That it was the burial mound of Athelstan's slain bears some corroboration in the fact that close to it, nearly a century ago, was found the remarkable Anglo-Saxon stone cross, now in the rectory grounds of Hope. At Bakewell stands the very similar, but better known, Christian cross, which is believed to have been set up by Edward the Elder when he there received the homage of the Danes in 924. If that be so, then there is very little doubt that this cross at Hope was set up by Athelstan in 937 in commemoration of his great victory. The central panel may well represent Athelstan and his brother and chief of staff, Eadmund, exalting the cross. This is the more likely because three Bishops were with the army, and this cross differs from the other Derbyshire crosses in being more of Mercian character. I reproduce a drawing made by E. E. Wilmot when the cross was discovered; it was given to me thirty years ago in a collection of Derbyshire drawings by the late Dr. Brushfield, the well-known antiquary of that county.

**Summary of the Place-Names.**

I submit that in Roman Brough, formerly Burgh, we have the *Brunan-burh*, -*fort*, and -*werc* of the chroniclers; in Win Hill, the "Weon-dune or Wen-dune" of Symeon, and the Win Hill of Mr. Plummer, also the "Brunan-dune" of Ethelweard; and in Win Moor,
The Anglo-Saxon Cross at Hope, drawn at the time of its discovery near "the Folly" at Brough in the Peak.
or Win Heath, as bordered by Woodland Dale and Woodland, both also bounding Win Hill, we have the "Winheath by Wimwood" of the Saga, asked for by Mr. Plummer, also the "Brune-fěld" and "Bruninga-fěld" (feld meaning -moor) of Ethelweard and Malmesbury. The ancient road (believed to be Roman) through the remarkable mountain pass known as The Winnats formerly Win-Gates, indicates that it was the gate or entrance to the valley of Brough, and that it and the adjoining moors and heaths took their names from Win Hill which dominated them. The great earthwork known as Mam Tor is well described by "The Ethenwerc" of the Saga, for it is the most prominent hill-fort in the county.

In closing these pages I must most gratefully acknowledge the assistance I have always received on technical questions from my friend, Mr. Alfred Anscombe, F.R.Hist.S., during a very long but intermittent correspondence upon this subject. But he must be taken as non-committal, for whether after many arguments he agrees with me, or I with him, I do not know.