THE FIRST AUTHORIZED ISSUE OF EDWARD THE
CONFESSOR.¹

BY H. ALEXANDER PARSONS.

HERE are reasons for thinking that there is still some doubt regarding the first issue of coins authorized for currency in this country after Edward the Confessor was acclaimed king on the death of Harthacnut in A.D. 1042. The first scientific arrangement of the types of coins of this king was that of Hildebrand when he catalogued the Anglo-Saxon coins in the Royal Collection in Stockholm. This arrangement dates back to the year 1846, and no drastic alteration of it was made on the publication of a second edition of the catalogue in 1881, notwithstanding the fact, convincingly set forth by Dr. Head, in his remarks on the Chancton hoard of 1865,² that Hildebrand’s type A variety c must be placed as a substantive type, struck towards the end instead of at the beginning of the reign. The only substantial alteration in Hildebrand’s second edition was the inclusion of two important varieties called by him, in the second edition, type C, varieties c and d.

In the British Museum Catalogue of English Coins, Anglo-Saxon Series, vol. ii, 1893, the initial issue of the reign is the same as that given the premier place by Hildebrand; but in the latest treatise on the coins of Edward the Confessor, namely, that by Major P. W. P. Carlyon-Britton,³ this is displaced by some coins called by the author, the “Harthacnut” Type. This is represented in Hildebrand’s second edition as Type C, varieties c and d.

¹ Read at the Society’s Ordinary Meeting of 25th March, 1931.
² Numismatic Chronicle, 1867, pp. 75-6.
³ “Edward the Confessor and his coins,” Numismatic Chronicle, 1905.
These two types of coins, which in previous works have been regarded as the first issue, may be illustrated and described as follows:—

**FIG. 1.—FIRST TYPE ACCORDING TO HILDEBRAND AND THE BRIT. MUS. CAT.**

Obverse: Mantled bust to left with radiate crown. The bust divides the inscription which reads: + EDPARD ERX (E and R transposed).

Reverse: A small cross pattée within an inner circle. An inscription around, as follows: + STIRE (for E) OLL ON E (for E) OFER = York.

This coin has an annulet in the field of the reverse.

**FIG. 2.—FIRST TYPE ACCORDING TO MAJOR CARLYON-BRITTON.**

Obverse: Diademed bust to left, showing also the left arm and hand in which is held a sceptre, terminating in a fleur-de-lis. The bust divides the inscription which reads: + EDPEREX ANL.

Reverse: Over a short cross voided, a quadrilateral ornament with a pellet on the cusps and in the centre. An inscription around, as follows: + BVRRED ONN SVDL = Southwark.

There are no reasonable grounds for thinking that Hildebrand’s first type, figure 1 above, is not a substantive issue, but a closer examination of the evidence now available gives rise to grave doubts
of the theory that that status can be given to Major Carlyon-Britton's first type, figure 2 above. On examining the coins representing Major Carlyon-Britton's type 1, two decidedly different varieties of bust and sceptre are given. In one variety there is no arm and hand holding the sceptre, which has a finial head, and in the other both hand and arm are delineated and the sceptre has a fleur-de-lis head. The exclusion of the arm and hand and the presence of the finial-headed sceptre of the one variety produces a design identical with another issue of Edward the Confessor, namely, Hildebrand type C, *British Museum Catalogue*, type III, and in my view converts the coins into a mule type. Eliminating these muled coins we are left with a few extremely rare pennies which, in design, exactly imitate the final issue of Harthacnut. The obverse inscriptions on some of them are irregular, although there is no doubt that they are intended to represent the name of Edward. One reads, + EEDI RECCE and another is inscribed, + EEDI RECEE. This fact of irregular inscription and the excessive rarity of the coins—I know of the existence of only four and a fragment—preclude, in my view, the idea that they are an authorized issue of the new king. A brief reference to the history of the time will, it is thought, bear out this conclusion.

It is well known that, with the accession of Edward the Confessor, a reversion to a former dynasty, antagonistic to the last, was effected. It is therefore unlikely that Edward would adopt, as a type, a design identical with that of Harthacnut whose House supplanted his own father's, namely, Æthelred II. We should, it is thought, expect something different. The coins of this "Harthacnut" issue, but bearing Edward's name must, however, have been struck at the opening of the reign and, if we examine the events of the time, there is ample reason for the supposition that they form an unauthorized emission between the proclamation of Edward in A.D. 1042 and the time when the advisers of the king could give attention to the question of the issue of a new coinage. This naturally could not be done until the coronation of the king had been accomplished, thus firmly establishing the restored dynasty.
Delay was certainly expedient in the case of Edward, for his supporters had first to contend with several rivals who had strong claims to the throne of England. The first and most important were the posterity of Edmund Ironside, but these were so far away, in Hungary, that little trouble was experienced on their account. A more dangerous claimant was Cnut's nephew, Sweyn Estridson, who afterwards became King of Denmark. He landed in England with a view to enforcing his claim but, according to Adam of Bremen, he was bought off with the empty promise of succession on the demise of Edward. Magnus, King of Denmark and Norway, also made pretensions to the crown of England based on the well-known treaty with Harthacnut that on the death of either the survivor should succeed to the dominions of the other. Magnus, however, was not at the time in a position to make good his claim in so far as England was concerned. The uncertainty caused by these rival claimants resulted in Edward's coronation being delayed until the spring of 1043.

In this interval of nearly a year the die-sinkers would naturally be uncertain as to the name of the king which should be punched on any new dies required in replacement of broken ones, or for fresh moneyers, and, although the bulk no doubt continued to punch in the name of Harthacnut in conformity with their last instruction, a few inserted, apparently for patriotic reasons, the name of the new Saxon King Edward. Hence the presence, in our cabinets, of these coins of Harthacnut's last type but bearing the name of Edward. The excessive rarity of the pieces and the obscurity of the king's name on them is at once explained by the above view of the reason for their issue.

Similar unauthorized coins are common practically to all the reigns of the late Saxon period.

Under Æthelred II we notice some rare coins identical in design and workmanship with the main issue, the small cross type, of Edward the Martyr who is reputed to have met his death at the instigation of the supporters of Æthelred. The latter is unlikely to have authorized a design exactly similar to that on his rival's money immediately on his accession to the throne.
The next reign, that of Cnut the Great, also witnessed the issue of a number of unauthorized coins which are imitations of Æthelred's last two types, or comprise mule coins combining these and other types.\(^1\)

Similar unauthorized coins are evident under the reign of Harthacnut.\(^2\)

The question of a successor to Harthacnut having been finally settled, and Edward's claims established by his coronation in A.D. 1043, the question of a new issue would not likely to be long delayed having regard to the fact that the Danish dynasty had been displaced by a Saxon one. In the view of the writer this first authorized coinage of Edward the Confessor is that of which the following is an illustration.

![Fig. 3.—First type according to H. A. Parsons.](image)

Obverse: Diademed bust to left. In front a sceptre with finial head. The bust divides the inscription which reads: + EDPER·D REX

Reverse: Over a short cross voided, a quadrilateral ornament with three pellets on each of the cusps. An inscription around, as follows: + ERNEYTEL ON ÉOF = York.

The cardinal reason for this view arises out of a line of investigation not pursued by the previous writers on the subject of Edward's coins. I refer to a detailed examination of the symbols, such as annulets, pellets, crosses and other objects in the field of the coins, which

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\(^2\) "The Anglo-Saxon coins of Harthacnut," *British Numismatic Journal*, vol. xi, p. 44.
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are so noticeable a feature on the money of this reign, as of others in
the late Saxon period. Although these symbols had, in the past,
been frequently commented upon, the article in this Journal\(^1\) on them
from the pen of the present writer was, it is believed, the first to
deal with them as a whole. The deductions possible from a study of
the comprehensive view of this interesting feature of our Saxon
money then published are not confined to the remarks made at the
time, and I now venture to claim that they have an important
bearing on the subject of the present article. It was mentioned
on page 19 of the work on Symbols on late Saxon Coins referred to,
that an annulet appeared on practically all the York coins of Edward
the Confessor with the exception of Major Carlyon-Britton’s types 1
and 3, Hildebrand’s type C, varieties c and d, and type C respectively.
The almost universal presence of the annulet on the York pennies of
Edward the Confessor is a characteristic so marked that it would
necessarily have engaged the attention of other numismatists.
Dr. B. V. Head in his account of the Chancton hoard\(^2\) mentions the
symbol and states that Hildebrand’s types C and D alone are without
it. Equally with the other types, except Hildebrand C, the annulet
symbol does, however, appear on the officially issued coins of
Hildebrand D. Dr. Head was no doubt misled regarding type D
through lack of specimens of this type of York, for no examples of it
occurred in the Chancton hoard, and certainly, at the time, the
British Museum did not possess a specimen, for none were described
in the Anglo-Saxon Catalogue of 1893.

As was demonstrated above, the coins of Major Carlyon-Britton’s
type 1, Hildebrand’s type C, varieties c and d, are not authorized
emissions, and therefore the broad fact is presented to us that an
annulet is present as a permanent part of the design of the reverse
of the coins of York on all the types of Edward the Confessor except
one, namely, my type 1. I claim the annulet as part of the design
for the reason that although the symbol may have had a definite

\(^1\) “Symbols and Double Names on late Saxon Coins,” British Numismatic

significance when first used, it certainly developed as part of the type later. This is proved by the fact that it takes the place of one of the pyramidal ornaments on the last issue of the reign. The omission of the annulet from only one type of King Edward constitutes, I venture to think, almost conclusive evidence that that type was the initial issue of the reign, and that the annulet was first introduced on his second issue, to be continued without a break throughout the period to the death of Edward.

The type in question, figure 3, which I now venture to place as the first authorized issue of Edward forms the third issue in the arrangements of previous writers on the subject. Further acceptance of the earlier allocations would produce the anomaly that the annulet was universally used on two types, that it was omitted altogether from the third one, that it was re-instituted on the fourth type and that it was continued on all the remaining issues of the reign. Such a mixture is, I venture to say, highly improbable. The suggestion that the annulet was omitted from the type in question through lack of space is negatived by the fact that the angles of the reverse cross are as fully filled on two other types on which the annulet nevertheless is inserted, in one case by its substitution, in one angle, for the usual pyramid ornament of the type.

Although I consider as of primary importance the evidence of the York annulet in this demonstration of the first authorized issue of Edward, the more usual methods of testing the sequence of the types, namely, by “mule” coins and by the records of hoards of coins will be found to be not inimical to such evidence.

Up to the last decade or so “mule” coins have been regarded as perhaps the best evidence for the solution of the question of the sequence of the types of our early coins, and it has been held that they were officially authorized for a short interval at the close of the period of circulation of each type. Could this be proved it follows that no better evidence than that of “mule” coins could be found when arranging the coins of any given period, but I have long held the opinion that “mules” are unauthorized coins, and expression of this view was published as long ago as in 1918 when, writing on the
coins of Harold I, it was suggested that "the confusion arising out of a re-coinage was made the occasion of the use, by some moneyers, of obsolete dies." In a study of the coins of the whole period there is ample justification for this view of muled types, and in none is it greater than in connection with the coins of Cnut the Great. But although not authorized currency the evidence of muled coins cannot be ignored, and this is specially the case in the reign of Edward the Confessor, for a remarkably full series of muled types is in evidence amongst the coins of this reign. This series includes a complete chain of muled coins connecting the last issue of Harthacnut with my type 1 of Edward the Confessor, and connecting the latter with my type 2 of the same reign, which is also type 2 of Major Carlyon-Britton's arrangement, but is type 1 in Hildebrand and in the British Museum Catalogue. A description of this sequence is as follows:

(a) Last issue of Harthacnut, see figure 4 below.

Obverse inscription: + HARDACNVT RE
Reverse inscription: + MANLEOF ON EEEXE = Exeter.

(b) Harthacnut-Edward muled type. Obverse design as Edward type 1 of my arrangement, see figure 3 ante. Reverse design as Harthacnut's last type, see figure 4 above. An example is figured as No. 1771, Plate XXXIX, in the Carlyon-Britton sale catalogue.

(c) Edward type 1 of my arrangement, see figure 3 ante.

2 Ibid., vol. xix, pp. 35–38.
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(d) Edward muled type 1 and type 2 of my arrangement. Obverse design type 2, see figure 1 ante. Reverse design type 1, see figure 3 ante. An example is illustrated hereunder, figure 5.

![Coin Image]

FIG. 5.

Obverse inscription: + EDPERD REX A.
Reverse inscription: + ODEN ON EFROPIC = York.

(e) Edward type 2 of my arrangement, see figure 1 ante.

As has been shown in the writer's paper on "Hoard of late Anglo-Saxon coins" the evidence derivable from the "finds" of coins of Edward the Confessor is of a conflicting character although valuable hints are obtainable when the facts are collated with other data. The three principal hoards of the time unearthed in this country are those of Chancton, the City of London, and Sedlescombe, but none of these were intact when examined by competent persons. The Sedlescombe hoard included only coins of the latter part of the reign and, as this paper is limited to a consideration of the first authorized coinage of Edward the Confessor, no evidence bearing on the subject is derivable from that "find." As regards the other two, the entire absence from them of specimens of Major Carlyon-Britton's "Harthacnut" type proper, that is the varieties with hand and arm delineated and with lis-headed sceptre, supports the present suggestion that that type was not an authorized issue of the reign. The presence, in the "City" hoard, of a specimen of the muled type combining Harthacnut's last issue with the first issue of Edward under my arrangement to the exclusion of mules combining Harthacnut's last issue with coins of Edward's first issue as given by

1 British Numismatic Journal, vol. xvi.
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Hildebrand and in the British Museum Catalogue, also supports the present arrangement.

As Edward's reign was out of the main "tribute" period, comparatively few coins of his time make their appearance in the Scandinavian hoards, prolific, as they are, in coins of the time immediately preceding, and none produces anything of a convincing character on the present subject.