THE STAMFORD MINT AND THE CONNEXION WITH
THE ABBOT OF PETERBOROUGH UNDER ETHELRED II
By ian halley stewart

Almost within days of Mr. Dolley having informed me of his discovery of a penny of the Medeshamstede mint from a Gotland find, I had the coincidental good fortune to find a remarkable and unpublished Stamford penny of Ethelred II, which has, as I shall hope to show, an intimate relevance to the opening of the Abbot of Peterborough’s own mint, separate from that at Stamford.

In his paper on A New Anglo-Saxon Mint—Medeshamstede, Mr. R. H. M. Dolley shows that the new penny necessitates a major revision of the views proffered by the late W. C. Wells in his learned discussions of the Stamford and Peterborough mints. Sound as much of Wells’s numismatics are, he was at pains to demonstrate that Peterborough coins should read Burgh, though the Laud chronicle specifically states that the old name of Medeshamstede was only superseded in the abbacy of Cenwulf, that is in 992 or after. The appearance of a coin inscribed MED of Ethelred’s First Hand type, is, however, as Mr. Dolley shows, not only possible, but almost expected. The Papal confirmation of Edgar’s lost charter provided implicit for the abbot’s use of a die at Medeshamstede. Many students had already, in fact, come to the conclusion that the Peterborough mint was operating in Norman times, although there is no definite agreement on this point. It is to be regretted that Mr. Dolley did not give a final opinion on this later activity of the Peterborough mint when he discussed the Anglo-Saxon mint of Medeshamstede. The actual coin evidence for the Norman working of the Peterborough mint is offered by W. C. Wells: the existence of a coin, reading ON BVR, was taken by Wells to mean that Peterborough was operating in the late part of Stephen’s reign when this particular coin of the “Awbridge” type (B.M.C. vii) was struck. It was recently sold as lot 1145 at the auction of the late Mr. R. C. Lockett’s English coins, and is illustrated clearly on the plates of the sale catalogue. The third letter of the mint name, though it may be an R, is indistinctly preserved; as Mr. F. Elmore Jones remarks, it may well have been some other obscure

1 B.N.J. xxvii. 263. I had hoped to append at least a short note of this coin to appear at the same time as Mr. Dolley’s paper on the Peterborough penny. The present essay has never been read in its printed form before the Society, but it may be remembered that when Mr. Dolley read his paper at the April 1955 meeting, I exhibited the Stamford penny now described, and made some tentative remarks on its significance. The exigencies of conscription prevented earlier publication, but I have now had time to approach the question more fully, and this rather more complete study is now offered. The substance of my remarks, however, made at the April meeting are reproduced here.


3 Garmonsway, p. 117.


5 Ibid., p. 71.

6 Previously in the Roth collection; B.M.C. Norman Kings, footnote to p. clxiv.
mint in a recoinage which involved such unlikely places as Bramber and Hedon.

There are, however, two Norman pennies which are attributed to Peterborough on more substantial grounds: they are of William the Conqueror, B.M.C. type II, and read on the reverse Leoppine on BVR(i), the one being in the British Museum, and the other in Mr. Elmore Jones’s cabinet. Dr. G. C. Brooke himself disallowed Wells’s attribution and prefers Barnstaple in the Norman Kings. Major P. W. P. Carlyn-Britton also disagreed with Wells, but suggested Bury St. Edmunds. Now Wells put up an adequate case for Burgh, or Peterborough, and it may now be considered an opportune time to restate briefly his argument, especially in the light of the new evidence, albeit circumstantial, of the abbatical symbol of an annulet on the Stamford coins both of the Ethelred period, and of Henry I.

Leofwine, the moneyer’s name which signs the putative Peterborough pennies of William I, is first found at Stamford early in the reign of Edward the Confessor: his coins continue without a break from that time throughout the reigns of Edward, Harold II and William I, down to B.M.C. type VI inclusive. There is, however, one notable omission, William I B.M.C. type II. The mule of B.M.C. types I/II is recorded for Stamford, but no true type II penny of Leofwine is known: unless, of course, the BVRi coins were struck by the same man. If Leofwine moved to Peterborough, the Stamford mint would not produce any of his coins during his period of absence. Type II, datable to about 1069–72, would cover the historical occasion to which the Peterborough coins may be best ascribed; that is, the stormy arrival of Abbot Turolfd in 1070. Such is Wells’s case for the identity of the BVRi Leofwine with Stamford’s moneyer of that name. Actually Spicer lists a Stamford penny of Leofwine, type II, but gives no provenance. If it does exist, it is of the highest rarity and would not invalidate Wells’s “proof”. Leofwine may as well have returned before as after the introduction of type II.

Whether Wells’s hypothesis finds favour or not, there is much to be said for it. Though only a die-identity with a Stamford coin can prove its validity beyond doubt, I must say that, to my mind, it is, at the least, a probability.

This digression is not as irrelevant as may be supposed. For, if we accept that there are coins of Peterborough under William I, the following situation emerges. A small proportion of the Stamford

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1 B.N.J. xxv. 119.
2 Ibid. xxvi. 28.
3 Catalogue of English Coins in the British Museum, Norman Kings, ii. 15 and pl. iv, no. 1.
4 It will be remembered that coins found at Beaworth in 1833 of the PAXS type (B.M.C. viii) were supposed to be of Peterborough as reading SEPORD ON BVRDI, but Lawrence was undoubtedly correct to read these as BARD I for Barnstaple, under which mint Brooke describes them, N.K. ii. 95.
5 B.N.J. ix. 143.
7 The Laud Chronicle, Garmonsway, p. 205.
coins of Edward the Martyr and Ethelred II's first type have the symbol of an annulet in the reverse field. In the following type, when the abbot is known to have opened his private mint at Medeshamstede, no annulet is found on Stamford coins. Analogously, at the only other period when Peterborough coins were produced, namely Norman times, an annulet is again found at the Stamford mint on the coin(s) of one moneyer, Leftien, in B.M.C. type XIV of Henry I.

In this case, I believe, as did Wells, that the annulet at Stamford was the symbol of the Abbot of Peterborough's money. For the Edward the Martyr and Ethelred II coins, this is virtually proved by a coin of the First Small Cross type of Ethelred, reading PVLFGAR MÒ STAM, and having the annulet on the reverse roughly erased in the die. When the mint was established at Medeshamstede, there was no need to strike Stamford coins for the abbot, or to use an annulet to distinguish them. This mark, as evidenced by Wulfgar's coin, was therefore removed from the design.

The definite association of the annulet with the Abbot of Peterborough under Edward the Martyr and Ethelred II notably strengthens the case for Mr. Elmore Jones's ideas on the annulet-marked pence of Henry I, type XIV. Indeed, it may seem to some, as it does to myself, that the theory is thereby proved. Mr. Elmore Jones' has mentioned the parallel instances which confirm his view: there are the renowned London pence of Edward I with an annulet on the breast attributed to the Abbot of Reading, the almost invariable annulet on Edward the Confessor's York pence (which, though not abbatical, is certainly ecclesiastical), and the annulet on the Edward the Martyr and Ethelred Stamford pence, which is discussed above. Mr. Elmore Jones did not, of course, know of the erased annulet of Ethelred II, which is perhaps the most conclusive point. It might even have been expected that some Norman coins of Stamford would have the abbot's annulet. In connexion with the Abbot of St. Augustine's known privilege of one moneyer at Canterbury, and of the two Canterbury annulet-marked type XIV pence of Henry I published by Mr. Elmore Jones, it may be felt that little doubt remains. This, in turn, supports the probability of Leofwine of Stamford having coined at Peterborough in 1070, if it is known that the abbot was exercising his privilege in Norman times.

Since the Stamford coin with the erased annulet is of Ethelred's earliest issue it may be that the Peterborough mint was opened during the striking of that type. A Medeshamstede signature must be looked for in the First Small Cross type: perhaps the coin purporting to read PIZTAN MÒ MEDEL, of which Mr. Dolley discovered a notice with no mention of type, is of the First Small Cross type. Anyway, it may be suggested that the Peterborough Mint was opened before the inception of the Hand type, that is before 985

1 F. Elmore Jones, op. cit., p. 179.
2 Ibid., pp. 180–1
which Mr. Dolley believes to be the approximate date for Hand's introduction. The basis for his chronology is the supposition that Ethelred's six main types (First Small Cross, Hand, Crux, Long Cross, Helmet, Final Small Cross) lasted for six years each. Now, though I would not question the idea of a regular type change, which quite possibly did recur every six years, I think there is some danger of over-simplification. After all, the system was in its infancy, and there is some indication of experiment. For instance, we have no clear-cut type division as in Norman times, when the system was firmly established: there are two very definite divisions of the Hand type alone, and two very rare odd types, the Benediction and Agnus Dei. Furthermore, the First Small Cross issue is merely a continuation of Edward the Martyr's; more substantial, admittedly, than the brief overlap of, say, Hand and Sceptre into Edward the Confessor's reign before the introduction of Pacx. But First Small Cross really is rare, and I rather doubt if it lasted six years until 985.2

Also, type-changing was evidently a difficult, costly, and unpopular operation. There is a good example at the end of Crux. There was, it seems, a period of dithering, while uninspired die-cutters at London and Canterbury were producing the Small Crux type (Hildebrand type Ca), and Wessex was even reviving Small Cross. This is unlikely to have happened before the end of the regular Crux's statutory period, of six years or whatever it was. Possibly then, if Crux, and maybe Hand and other types exceeded six years each, if only unintentionally, First Small Cross might not have to be allotted six years. On extant specimens, a shorter period would, I feel, be a little more satisfactory. In that case the opening of the Medeshamstede Mint, if it occurred before the beginning of Hand, might be as early as c. 982.

Certainly I believe that the erased annulet coin of Stamford is comparatively early in the First Small Cross type, even if the above very tentative comments on chronology should be wide of the mark. For the penny is, in fact, from a very old reverse die. The present coin is the fourth known type to have been struck from the one reverse die; this very fact alone is, I think, sufficiently extraordinary to justify its publication in full. The four coins are:

2 Mr. Dolley points out that if the type was changed in March 980 it would be possible to accept two Hand types each running for six years with a consequential change from Long Cross to Helmet early in 1004 (cf. Wilton/Salisbury). This scheme would unite the Small Cross issues of Edgar, Edward, and Ethelred into one six-year period, 974–80. The apparent lack of any Second Hand type coins from Lincoln, and the great rarity of the type at York (Hild. 696 seems to be the only specimen) may argue against two substantive Hands. But there may be some other reason for this lack of Northern Second Hand type coins; certainly there is a clear division elsewhere, particularly in East Anglia, where the First Hand pence are of curious, local style.
3 R. H. M. Dolley and F. Elmore Jones, A Preliminary Note on an Intermediate Small Cross Type of Aethelraed II in Relation to the Late Varieties of Crux, Spink's Numismatic Circular, lxiv, 1956, p. 4. I am grateful to Mr. Elmore Jones and Mr. Dolley for their helpful comments for this paper, but it must be understood that it is not necessarily their views that are represented.
1. Edward the Martyr. +EADPEARD REX ANGLOR
+PVLFGARM-OSTAM-
No annulet on reverse. (Formerly W.C.W.)

2. Edward the Martyr. Same dies as 1 with annulet added in reverse field at 7 o'clock. (British Museum.)

3. Ethelred II. +/ÆDÆLREDÆXÆNGLÆO
Same reverse die with annulet. (B.M., found at Chester.)

4. Ethelred II. From the same dies as 3, with the annulet erased from the reverse in the die. (B.H.I.H.S.)

In the context of the opening of the Medeshamstede mint, the significance of the new coin, no. 4, has been suggested above. It is nevertheless noteworthy that so many varieties should all have been struck from it, perhaps a record for any medieval die. I said above I thought the coin was comparatively early in the first type of Ethelred: its past history, as here tabulated, certainly implies that. The figure (PL. XIV, 8) shows the worn and rusty condition into which it had by then deteriorated. If the coin was struck towards 985, that could involve it in an exceptionally long—and demonstrably continuous—period of use. It does not seem likely. Incidentally, in addition to the above listed types, Wulfgar struck at Stamford in Edgar’s last type, without annulet, and in Ethelred’s second (Hand) issue.

1 Wells no. 56a, B.N.J. xxiv. 69, fig. 15.
2 No. 56, B.N.J. xxiii. 28 and xxii, pl. II, fig. 28.
3 No. 8, B.N.J. xxiv. 77 and xxii, pl. III, fig. 34.
4 Illustrated in this Journal (Pl. XIV, 8), for the first time. It has been suggested that the annulet was removed from the coin, not the die. Those who have examined the coin carefully under a glass, however, all now agree that the die has been altered.