The Stockbridge Down Find of Anglo-Saxon Coins

By R. H. M. Dolley

In part 3 of volume xiii of the Papers and Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society published in 1937, the late Dr. N. Gray Hill gave a most interesting and able account (pp. 247-59) of excavations carried out on Stockbridge Down outside Winchester in 1935-6. The excavations established beyond all reasonable doubt that the spot was a place of execution in late Saxon and/or Norman times, most authorities—Dr. Gray Hill included—inclining rather to the later dating. Mentioned in the report is the finding, apparently concealed in the armpit of one of the skeletons, of a piece of linen cloth in which were wrapped six silver pennies of Edward the Confessor. The report states that these were submitted for identification to the Department of Coins and Medals, and that they were attributed by Mr. Derek Allen to the last two or three years of the Confessor's reign. It is further stated that four had been struck by the Winchester moneyer "Anderbode", and two by the Winchester moneyer "Leofwine or Lifine", and it is clear that there was contemplated at the time a separate publication to satisfy the special requirements of the numismatist. The intervention of the war seems to have prevented this, and a further reason for publication now may be the fact that the find is not recorded in Mr. J. D. A. Thompson's monumental Inventory of British Coin Finds. That the find can still be published is due to the kindness of Mr. Derek Allen who has made available a manuscript list of the find which, by noting the die-links, has made possible a reconstruction of its exact composition, although two of the coins cannot now be traced.

The six coins may be listed as follows, those marked "BM" being in the British Museum, and that marked "WCM" in the City Museum at Winchester.

Edward the Confessor (1042-66)
Pyramids Type (Brooke 10 = B.M.C. XV = Hildebrand I = Hawkins 223)

1. Obv. ÆÆÐFÆRÐ REX Rev. + ANDRBODEONI (= B.M.C. 1504)
   Weight: 19.0 gr. Die-axis 90°. (Reverse legend begins at 2 o'clock.) BM.

2. From the same dies as the preceding coin.
   Weight: 18.3 gr. Die-axis 90°. WCM.

3. From the same dies as the preceding coin.
   Weight, die-axis, and present whereabouts unknown.

4. Obv. ÆÆÐFÆRÐ REX Rev. + ANDERBCDEONP (= B.M.C. 1502)
   Weight, die-axis and present whereabouts unknown.

5. Obv. ÆÆÐFÆRÐR Rev. + LIFINEONPINI (= B.M.C. 1512)
   Weight: 17.8 gr. Die-axis 180°. BM.

6. Obv. ÆÆÐFÆRÐR Rev. + LIFINEONPINI
   Weight: 18.7 gr. Die-axis 0°. (Reverse legend begins at 1 o'clock.) BM.

The evidence of a large number of hoards, and notably Soberton
The Stockbridge Down Find of Anglo-Saxon Coins (Thompson 334) suggests that there were at this time only five Winchester moneyers, Ælfwine, Anderboda, Leofwold, Lифніс, and Spraceling, and to some extent the Stockbridge Down find provides corroboration of this. It will also reinforce the doubts of those who are unhappy concerning the attribution, however tentative, to Winchester of the penny of Godric with mint-signature ПІЄНЕ which occurred in the Rotherham hoard (Thompson 318).

The principal interest of the Stockbridge find, however, is that the deposit of the coins can be dated with considerable exactitude. There can be little doubt but that from the reform of Edward the Confessor which accompanied the abolition of the heregeld until the early part of the reign of Stephen, the type of the English coinage was changed triennially. The death of a king, however, necessitated an additional change of type, but the coins of his successor did not mark a new issue and were continued only until the expiry of three years from the introduction of the previous type which still remained current. Thus, a hoard like Soberton deposited soon after the accession of William the Conqueror is essentially a "one-issue" hoard, the coins, with one exception, having been struck for Edward, Harold, and William within a space of three years calculated from Michaelmas 1065. On the assumption that the type but not the issue was changed on the death of a king it is possible to reconstruct a triennial cycle running from 1050 until 1137 which utilizes the Brooke types, only running together classes VIII and XII of Henry I the reverses of which for practical purposes are indistinguishable. This slight adjustment seems a small price to pay for a pattern that is at once intelligible, consistent with what we know of Saxon and Norman administration, and in accordance with the evidence of the hoards. Until quite recently it has not been appreciated how many English—as opposed to Continental—finds of the late Saxon and Norman periods are composed substantially of coins of one or at most two issues, and here the present writer would like to put on record the fact that this phenomenon has been observed—and its implications understood—quite independently by Professor Sture Bolin of Lund, an achievement on the part of a foreign scholar that is the more remarkable when we consider the woeful inadequacy by modern standards of most of the printed hoard records for the late Saxon period.

As suggested elsewhere, Michaelmas is the most probable time for the type to have been changed, and it is interesting to see how well a change of type in late September 1065 accords with the evidence of the coins. It is generally admitted that the Pyramids type of Edward the Confessor is his last. The Soberton hoard alone would be almost

1 Coins of this moneyer undoubtedly do read Lифніс, and hence their attribution to Leofwine. A spelling LEOF- or LIOF-, however, is never found, nor does the second element appear once as -ПІЄNE. In contrast the spelling Лифінс is often found with both round and square "с", and any remaining doubts are put to rest by a spelling Lифінс with round "с" (B.M.C. 1489). On coins such as nos. 5 and 6 supra the final "е" must be considered either an aberration of the die-cutter or, perhaps more probably, a careless attempt at a square "с".
decisive, and there are also well-known mules not only with reverses of Harold II but even with one of William I. Nevertheless coins of the type are by no means common—and this despite the probability that the bulk of the coins of a given issue were struck in the months immediately after its inception. The Pyramids type is completely lacking from the Sedlescombe hoard (Thompson 327), presumably because it was that current at a time when frantic attempts were being made to conceal a parcel of bullion in the shape of demonetized coin which either was on its way to, or had been removed from, one or other of the Sussex mints. In the Chancton hoard (Thompson 81) which can be dated with confidence to October 1066, Pyramids type coins are outnumbered five to three by those of Harold II. In the Soberton hoard deposited early in the reign of the Conqueror they are outnumbered two to one. Only in the City hoard (Thompson 255) do they appear to have been present in very large numbers, and here the position is so confused that it would be dangerous to base arguments on the relative proportions in which the different types occur. For example, the virtual absence of Facing Small Cross coins of the Con¬fessor could mean that two distinct hoards have become inextricably confused, but just as plausibly it might be argued that a single hoarder had shrewdly rejected as far as practicable an issue struck on a weight standard notably lower than those which came before and after.

For one triennial issue calculated from Michaelmas to have embraced parts of the reigns of the Confessor and of the Conqueror, this issue must have begun either in September 1064 or in September 1065. The earlier date, however, seems precluded by the comparative rarity of coins of Edward's last type, and also by the fact that coins of William I's first type are more common—despite the absence of major hoards apart from Soberton—than would seem consistent with their having been current for only ten months. Conversely a very limited duration of Edward's last type seems indicated by the fact that no Pyramids coins are known from a number of mints, and also by the complete absence of the type from the Rotherham hoard. The National Collection, too, affords in this case a very fair indication of comparative rarity, and in 1893 contained substantially fewer coins of Edward's last type than of Harold II. Admittedly Harold may have been anxious to issue as much coin as possible for propaganda purposes, but under Edward between September 1065 and January 1066 the mints had been engaged on the important task of producing sufficient coin to enable the Facing Small Cross issue to be effectively demonetized. This operation had been foreseen and provided against, but the dies needed for Harold's coinage could not well have begun to be cut before Edward's death so that it is unlikely that they can have reached the mints in substantial quantities before Lady Day 1066. Whether the mints had been idle since Christmas is an open question, and one not likely to be solved in the present state of our knowledge. What does seem established is the probability amounting
almost to certainty that *Pyramids* type coins of Edward were not put into circulation before the end of September 1065, that their issue on any scale was confined to a matter of months, and that they were not demonetized until September 1068.

*Prima facie*, therefore, the possessor of the Stockbridge coins that are the subject of this note was executed not earlier than the autumn of 1065. At this point we may recall Mr. Blunt’s remark concerning a group of coins in another Hampshire hoard, namely that “coins that are so strongly die-linked can only recently have left their places of issue”. The fact that no fewer than three of the coins should be from one pair of dies would in itself suggest that they had not long been current, and taken in conjunction with the absence of coins of Harold argues strongly for their owner having been put to death before the summer of 1066. Michaelmas 1065 and midsummer 1066 seem therefore the most probable limits within which this particular Stockbridge burial is to be dated, and if only we could be certain that there was a complete cessation of *Pyramids* coinage upon Edward’s death the bracket could be narrowed very considerably. As it is, there is a strong presumption that Winchester was one of the first mints to strike coins with Harold’s name, and were it not for an inference based on the coins and Domesday that by 1065 all dies were supplied from London, one would not hesitate to assume that Harold dies were in use at Winchester within a matter of weeks from his coronation. Consequently the numismatist would tend to favour for the Stockbridge burial a date before rather than after Christmas 1065, and at the other end of the bracket would prefer to place the deposit at least a few weeks after the introduction of the *Pyramids* type inasmuch as the evidence of other small finds of this century¹ is that there was normally a short period of grace when two types could circulate together.

The numismatist, then, would incline to the view that the coins were buried with the corpse of a felon executed in the late autumn of 1065. The position of the coins suggests that they had been concealed by the criminal on his person before his execution, and it would have been natural for a condemned man to seek to cheat the hangman of his plunder. On the other hand there is the interesting possibility that the coins had been suspended around his neck as the subject of the charge on which he had been condemned. This was certainly a practice in medieval Scandinavian society, and the explanation would meet admirably the presence in one of the graves of the head of a sheep.² In the case of the coins, however, there are difficulties that are perhaps decisive. In the first place the Stockbridge victims do not appear to have been gibbeted, the normal method of execution

¹ For example, a small hoard from Nottingham (Thompson —) discussed in *N.C.* 1956, pp. 295–7.

² The writer is most grateful for information on this point to Dr. Nils Ludvig Rasmusson. As argued below, however, the practice is only really appropriate where the felon is suspended with his breast at least on a level with the eyes of the onlookers, i.e. when the condemned man is hanged and not beheaded or throttled.
appearing to have been decapitation or a crude method of garrotting inflicted while the subject lay or knelt. In the second place the hands of the victim appear to have been tied behind his back before execution, and the body to have been buried with the hands still tied. It is difficult to see how the coins could have slipped from a prominent position on the chest into the armpit once the hands had been tightly strapped, nor is it *prima facie* probable that so intrinsically valuable a symbol of guilt would not have been recovered before the corpse was committed to the grave. The coins, too, had been wrapped in a piece of cloth, and thus their nature would not have been patent to the onlookers as would have been the case if they had been contained in an obvious purse or pierced and threaded on a cord.\footnote{Miss Rosalind Hill, M.A. of Westfield College, London, has been kind enough to read through the typescript of this note, and the following comment may seem to endorse the arguments put forward in this last paragraph:}

\footnote{"I was working with my brother on the day when the coins were found. They were tucked in between the bone of the upper arm and the ribs—I remember my brother's suggesting that the man had stuck the roll of linen with wax to the hairs in his armpit so that it wouldn't be found. I do not think that it could possibly have slipped into that position if it had been suspended round his neck. Moreover, the coins were tightly wrapped up in a strip of linen rather like a modern finger bandage, and there didn't seem to be any trace of a string or thong by which they could have been tied on. We noticed first a slight green metallic stain on the inside of the arm-bone, where corrosion from the metal had worked through the cloth, and this rather suggested that the man had been buried with his arm closely pressed to his side, enclosing the linen roll in his armpit. The linen was of a rough but fairly close weave, rather like the unbleached 'Russian crash' on which I used to do cross-stitch as a child..."}