A NINETEENTH-CENTURY MANUSCRIPT BOOK ON COINS

By ROBERT J. SHERLOCK

The following coins, except nos. 5a and 5b, are figured in a manuscript book which was bought about 1952 at a Minehead shop by Mr. P. M. Rivers and which has since been acquired by Mr. C. E. Blunt. The book was written by Harriet Sophia Bockett and appears to have been begun in August 1840, the date on the fly-leaf. The main part is a transcript of a manuscript entitled "A Brief Account of the Saxons and their Coins" by B. Mackerell. Benjamin Mackerell was Librarian of the Norwich Public Library, 1716–32, and died in 1738. His manuscript, as it is transcribed, contains second-hand information and drawings of coins that are mostly copies, and these inaccurate ones, of Fountaine’s plates in Hickes’s Thesaurus. But occasionally amusing phrases occur, reflecting the prejudices and feelings of his day, as for instance where Mackerell writes of Offa:

He was the first Fool who granted a perpetual tax to the Pope out of every house in the Kingdom, when he was in Rome, and after his return he gave very bountifully to the Clergy, by way of penance for his sins.

However, the part of the Bockett MS. of interest to the numismatist is that at the end, separated from the transcript by the following paragraph:

Thus far I have copied Mackerell. The following were drawn from the actual coins with the exception of those mentioned [no. 10 only] as having been taken from impression in sealing-wax. I drew each coin, as it came into my possession, or, was kindly lent me by my friends, without attempting to arrange them according to their dates.

Harriet S. Bockett.
Oct. 1848.

The drawings that follow are beautifully executed in pen-and-ink and their observation of detail and the artist’s knowledge, as revealed by the number of correct identifications, inspire confidence in their reliability. Only occasionally the inscriptions, as recorded, seem to diverge from those that might be expected.

To have drawn the coins once required the utmost patience. What is more remarkable is that nearly all the coins in this second part of the manuscript were drawn again with the same amount of care in another manuscript. This second manuscript was bought a few years ago in a Brighton book-shop by Mr. J. D. A. Thompson and remains in his possession. It is a catalogue of "Ancient British and Saxon Coins in the Collection of Mrs. F. H. Buckeridge by Harriet S. Bockett. M.dccc.xlix". The contents of the two manuscripts are practically the same but the catalogue is without Mackerell’s drawings and his dissertations on coins and, in the list of actual specimens, nos. 5a and 5b are included and nos. 1–3, 5–8, and 16–17 are omitted. The catalogue bears a Reading bookseller’s stamp, and Reading is likely to have been
Harriet Bockett’s home for this reason and because it and places nearby are referred to with particular frequency. Mrs. Buckeridge, wife of the vicar of Little Bedwyn, Wilts., 1843–62, was “my sister Buckeridge”, and this explains the connexion between the two women.

THE ST. MARY’S, READING, HOARD, 1839

This and the manuscript in Mr. Thompson’s possession are our only record of a hoard, unpublished prior to Mr. Thompson’s Inventory of British Coin Hoards, found at St. Mary’s, Reading, in 1839.

Of the coins illustrated above (nos. 1–8) Miss Bockett writes:

These coins with several more were found in a coffin, in the churchyard of St. Mary Reading on the South side, May, 1839. When taken from the coffin they were all adhered together and in separating them many unfortunately were broken.

The first five belong to Burgred King of Mercia, A.D. 852–874.

The two next are Æthelbearht’s, King of Kent and of West Saxony, A.D. 856 to 866. The last must belong to Eadmund, King of the East Angles, commonly called St. Eadmund, A.D. 855 to 870.

Besides these there was one of Æthelred so much broken I could not draw it. But by placing the fragments together, I could see the legend to be Æthelred Rex. The reverse was like the coins of Burgred.

Mr. Thompson’s manuscript adds that the coffin was “supposed to have been that of a Saxon Lady”. It also contains drawings of two
more coins of Burgred: B.M.C. "a" (moneyer Heawulf), and B.M.C. "d" (moneyer Wulfeard). (Nos. 5a and 5b.)

The composition of the hoard (so far as recorded) is therefore as follows:

King of Mercia—Burgred 7
King of East Anglia—Eadmund 1
Kings of Wessex—Æthelbearht 2
Æthelred I 1

Æthelred I reigned from 866 to 871 so that the coins could not have been deposited before 866. Mr. J. D. A. Thompson dates the hoard to c. 875 and if he is right it was formed after the Danish raid of 871 which resulted in the temporary capture of Reading. Mr. R. H. M. Dolley, however, points out that the find as reported contains no coins of the "reform" coinage of c. 873. If in fact it contains no coins of Alfred either, he sees no good reason for rejecting a date of deposit as early as c. 870. It is worth remarking that the reform of c. 873 was accompanied by a thorough "call-in" of the old coinage—no coins of the types then called in occur in the great Cuerdale hoard. Mr. Dolley further remarks that the new principles of dating arrived at on the basis of the Swedish hoards generally suggest slightly earlier dates than those hitherto regarded as probable.

The Danish raid of 871 evoked the first documentary reference to the town of Reading and the discovery of the coffin suggests that St. Mary's Churchyard was already a hallowed site in the ninth century.

OTHER ANGLO-SAXON COINS

The coins that follow are, for the reason given by Miss Bockett, not in any order.

KENT
  Cuthred (798–807) Brooke 2 = B.M.C. 1st series.
  9. +CVDRED REX CANT Bust dividing legend.
     Rev. +EABA YONETA (Eaba) Cross and wedges.
     "The coin was in fine preservation, it was in the collection of my sister Buckeridge and was sent from Salisbury."

This coin, though uncommon, is known to-day from some dozen specimens. It is not possible to identify which this is.

WESSEX
  Ecgberht (802–39) Brooke 17 = B.M.C. xx.
  10. +ECGBEORHT REX Rev. +EANPALD MONETA (Eanwald—Winchester).
     "The impression of this coin in sealing-wax was given me, and came from Salisbury."
This is one of the rarer types of Ecgberht of which probably only two specimens (both by this moneyer) and a fragment (by the moneyer Ifa) were known to exist. One of the Eanwald coins was from the Middle Temple hoard (found about 1894) and so cannot be the one here illustrated. The other is illustrated in B.M.C. ii. 5, and differs in one or two material respects from this coin which may, therefore, be taken to be a specimen hitherto unrecorded.

**Wessex**

Æthelstan (925–39) Brooke 5 = B.M.C. v.

11. þÆDELSTAN REX TO BRIT Rev. þREGNALD MO EFORPIC (Regnald—York).

12. þÆDELSTAN REX TOT BRIT Rev. þIOHAN MO EISSAN EIVI (Johan—Chichester).

Provenance not stated. This would appear to be the coin in the Lockett collection, ex Carlyon-Britton sale, 379.

The rest of the Anglo-Saxon coins drawn are of no special significance and can be summarized as follows (in the order in which they appear).

**Pennies**

1-3. Alfred. B.M.C. xiv. From the Cuerdale hoard.

4-9. St. Edmund Memorial Coinage. Two identified as from Cuerdale.


11. Æthilbearht of Wessex.

12-13. Æthelred II.


15. ,, xvi. Boga, Dover.


17. ,, i. Ælfseg, Gloucester.


19. ,, vii. Leofwine, Sandwich.


**Stycas**

1-6. Eanred.

7-13. Æthelred II.

“Some [although which ones are unspecified] were found in Ripon while digging, and others were taken out of an old drain at York.”

14. Uncertain (legends blundered).

“This styca was dug up in a cottage garden in the City of Ripon.”

15. Osberht.

16-17. Wigmund.

**Miscellaneous Coins**

Several pages later in the volume contain drawings of miscellaneous coins most of which are without interest. An Edinburgh groat of David II, 1329–71, however, deserves mention. It “was found in a
bog in Ireland near Tullamore, King’s County. In the same find were some London and York groats of Edward the third, all as black as the soil they were found in, but most of them in good preservation.” Mr. Thompson does not list in his Inventory a hoard found at this place.

**Ancient British Coins**

Finally there are drawings of a number of Ancient British coins. With one exception the types are well known, but a number of provenances add value to the drawings:

1. The Regni and Atrebates. Gold Stater.
   “It was found in the neighbourhood of Reading, and was in good preservation.”

   “It was found near Abingdon.”

   Weight: 84 gr. Evans VI–11 = Mack 156.
   “found at Dorchester, Oxon... In beautiful preservation.”

   Weight: 20 gr. Evans F–11 = Mack 89.
   “dug up at Lewes, Sussex, with several more.”
   [“turned up by the plough, near Lewes”—Catalogue.]

   Weight: 152 gr. +[152½ gr.—Catalogue].
   Rev. Square between P and O. Cf. B.M.C. 68. 450–400 B.C.
   “Supposed to be British from its rude workmanship, it is cast, and the rough marks of the mould are not removed.” This information and the insufficient weight suggest that the specimen was a nineteenth-century forgery.
   Provenance unstated.

   Obv. Horse galloping left, annulet enclosing pellet in front, a curved object behind and an X below.
   Rev. An unintelligible design: “some animal, a pig, dog, or a stag, and among other things, not to be described, I think are the letters, C.A.V”.
   Not in Evans or Mack.
   “It came from Sonning near Reading, but I could not learn if it was found in the neighbourhood.”

7. As no. 1. Weight: 91 gr.
   This and the following four coins were from the hoard found in Whaddon Chase, Bucks., Feb. 1849.


    Weight: 91 gr. Evans C–8 = Mack 133.

11. As no. 8. Weight: 88½ gr.
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