THE ANGLO-SAXON COINS IN THE VATICAN LIBRARY

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THROUGH the great courtesy of Dr. Luigi Michelini Tocci of the Numismatic Cabinet we have been supplied with photographs of all the medieval English coins in the Apostolic Library of the Vatican. In this paper we propose to catalogue and discuss only the twenty-one which are Anglo-Saxon. In a later paper it is hoped to do the same for some twenty Norman coins which are of only less significance, and also briefly to list a further twenty-three Plantagenet and later coins, ending very appropriately with a First Coinage groat of Henry VIII, which are of no particular significance for the numismatist as such. Of the Anglo-Saxon pence here described, five are from the recent excavations beneath the modern St. Peter’s which appear to have established beyond all reasonable doubt that Constantine the Great was at extraordinary pains to site his basilica immediately above the tomb he believed to be that of the Prince of the Apostles. They are of course illustrated in the late Marquis Camillo Serafini’s great catalogue of all the hundreds of coins discovered in those excavations, but the English numismatist may find it convenient to have a more detailed account of them. In the catalogue that follows they are distinguished by the letters SPE. The remaining fifteen coins are without formal hoard provenance, but it seems likely that they are all from finds from the Patrimony of St. Peter if not from Rome itself. These coins, distinguished in our catalogue by the letters BAV, do not appear to have been published before, and such is the importance of several of them that it is hard to find words adequate to express our indebtedness to the Directorate of the Numismatic Cabinet of the Vatican Library for permission to record them for the first time in an English periodical.

KINGDOM OF KENT

Ecgberht (c. 765–c. 780 or later?)

1. Obv. +EGCBERHT. In centre & for Rex.

Rev. Eoba disposed in the angles of a cross, the cross having an annulet at the end of each of the arms which spring from a fifth annulet enclosing a pellet.

Weight 17-8 gr. Die-axis BAV (Pl. XXVI, 1).

This coin would seem to provide an unpublished reverse type as well as a new moneyer for the extremely rare coinage of the Kentish Ecgberht. By a curious coincidence, however, our attention has been drawn recently by Mr. Royle Baldwin to a similar coin in his possession which proves to be from the same pair of dies. Mr. Baldwin's coin, which may be an English find, is somewhat more worn, and weighs 12-9 gr. We are most grateful to him for permission to publish it here.

The types of these new coins correspond very closely to those of the unique coin of the same moneyer which Lord Grantley sought to associate with a certain Heaberht who appears to have shared with Ecgberht the throne of Kent. A comparable reverse type, also by Eoba, is known for Offa, and a recent paper adduced this as evidence in support of Lord Grantley's Heaberht attribution which had been rejected by Howorth and ignored by Brooke in his English Coins. That the types of the Heaberht coin are now shared by Ecgberht is in accordance with the hint of a joint rule afforded by a charter (Birch 196), and the Vatican Library is to be congratulated upon its possession of so fine an example of perhaps the earliest English penny. In this connexion it may be remarked that the vicinity of Rome has produced three other notable rarities of the early Saxon series, the penny of Heaberht already mentioned, the East Anglian penny of Ethelberht found at Tivoli, and the unique gold dinar of Offa.

**Archbishop of Canterbury**

Æthelheard (791-805) with King Coenwulf of Mercia (796-822)

2. Obv. +ÆTHELHEARD pellets in legend. In centre AR.

Rev. +ÆTHELHEARD pellets in legend. In centre R with pellets.

Weight 21 gr. Die-axis BAV (Pl. XXVI, 2).

This coin provides a new obverse type for Archbishop Æthelheard. On all the other coins of this prelate which bear Coenwulf's name the letters AR are transferred to the outer legend and replaced by EP.

**Kingdom of Mercia**

Offa (757-96)

3. Obv. OFF within a dotted rectangle which is divided vertically by

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1 A second specimen of the coin of Offa of this type has recently come to light. Curiously it was acquired in Italy, though not in Rome, and is now in Mr. Blunt's collection.


3 N.C. 1900, pp. 148 ff.; ibid. 1908, pp. 222 ff.
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a long cross. Above are two triangles of pellets, and below \& and ².

Rev. O\(\text{FF}²\) disposed in the angles of a cross fourchée the arms of which spring from an annulet containing a rosette of pellets.

Weight 17.4 gr. Die-axis \(\downarrow\) BAV (Pl. XXVI, 3).

This is an early penny of Offa. There are four comparable coins, B.M.C. 45, a similar coin at Copenhagen, B.M.C. 46, and one at Leningrad (Reichel 56). In each case the moneyer is the same. Full details of the Leningrad coin are not available, but the Vatican coin is from different dies from those in the English and Danish National Collections. It is also a minor new variant as regards the forked ends of the cross on the reverse.

4. Obv. +O\(\text{FF}/\text{AR}/\text{EX}\) Type as B.M.C. 43 but a different die.

Rev. ADB\(\text{ERH}\) in two lines within a dotted rectangle divided horizontally by a line with forked ends. Above there is a small cross patee flanked by trefoils of pellets, below the letter ² likewise flanked by trefoils of pellets.

Weight 16.4 gr. Die-axis \(\uparrow\) BAV (Pl. XXVI, 4).

The obverse of this coin approximates, as we have seen, to that of B.M.C. 43, a critical coin which has been attributed to Bishop Eadberht of London (772/82–787/9), on the grounds that it, and three other coins (B.M.C. 41 and 42 and Lockett 362), appear to end the reverse legend with a monogram for \(\text{EP}\). On the Vatican coin the monogram is reversed and a parallel to this can be found on coins of Archbishop Æthelheard where the \(\text{EP}\) of AR\(\text{EP}\) is found in the field both normally (e.g. Grantley 893) and reversed (e.g. B.M. Acq. 193). The form, however, is quite different from the monogram on the coins of Eadberht. Leaving aside the thrymsas in the Crondall hoard, which have been associated very dubiously with Mellitus and more plausibly with Erconwald, the only other coins which have been even tentatively attributed to the Bishop of London are certain rare sceattas with the name of London and types of possible religious significance (e.g. Brooke, Pl. II. 1) which shows a standing figure holding two
If this attribution were correct it might lend support to an issue of pennies by the bishop under Offa. We feel, however, considerable doubt in accepting it because it would provide our sole instance of a Bishop of London enjoying coinage rights in respect of the penny, and this despite the fact that there were to be over the next few centuries more auspicious occasions for such episcopal coinage, and especially if there had been a precedent which could be pleaded. Incidentally a point that seems worth making is that we have never seen a coin where the monogram has a properly formed P. Basically it is in our opinion an ℃ with the possible addition of an €.

While on the subject of ecclesiastical attributions in the early penny series, we may perhaps digress to consider a small group of coins of the same date which have exercised the ingenuity of more than one authority. Our excuse must be that we are inclined to interpret the enigmatic reverse legend as the name of a moneyer Heaberht, and Howorth gave reasons for considering Heaberht and Eadberht as forms of the same name—though we hasten to add that we are by no means convinced that those arguments are valid, still less that the coins in question are to be attributed to the moneyer of coin (4) above. Three coins of this group are known, B.M.C. 51, another from different dies in the first Lockett Sale (lot 358), and a third, said to have been found near Hitchin in 1911, which appears to be the coin now in the possession of Mr. Fred Baldwin. Keary read the British Museum coin “Heagr or Hearer”, and was clearly unhappy. Lockett suggested very tentatively that one might see in it the name of Higberht who occupied the see of Lichfield during its short-lived elevation to archiepiscopal status. Brooke discreetly ignores the group in his English Coins but in an unpublished manuscript left uncompleted at his tragically early death makes the following very pertinent comments on the British Museum coin: “Moneyer uncertain; the name has been read Heagr, which is hardly a possible form. Heagberht, the bishop of Lichfield, who was raised to metropolitan rank in 789, has been suggested, but the absence of a title makes it unlikely that it is the name of a bishop.” In the absence of further specimens—a fourth coin (ex Montagu, lot 219) was passed at the Astronomer Sale (lot 90) and so was presumably adjudged false—a solution of the riddle of these coins will probably never be found. We believe, however, that an interpretation of the reverse legend HEA(G)BERHT is plausible in the case of the three coins cited, and regard as extremely well founded Brooke’s scepticism concerning any association of either piece with the ephemeral Primacy of the Mercian bishop of that name.

5. Obv. OFFAR bust facing right with a cross behind.
   Rev. -j-lBBΑ otherwise as B.M.C. 21.

Weight 18-8 gr. Die-axis ← BAV (Pl. XXVI, 5).

1 N.C. 1920, p. 69.
This coin varies only very slightly from a number of known examples, the principal distinction being that no attempt is made to carry on the obverse legend behind the royal bust, a cross being substituted.

**Temp. Coenwulf (796–822) c. 800?**

6. *Obv.* An apparently meaningless string of letters, some retrograde, surrounding an inverted Μ.

*Rev.* The letters ΛΕΜ (?) disposed in the angles of a triple tribrach.

Weight 15-9 gr. Die-axis → BAV (Pl. XXVI, 6).

This coin has all the marks of a contemporary forgery, and as such is included here because the types correspond most nearly to those of Coenwulf. We are not inclined to attribute any religious significance to the possible interpretation of the reverse legend A V E. The triple tribrach is also found on coins of Cuthred, and a tribrach also occurs on some of the coins of Archbishop Æthelheard. For these and other reasons, tribrach coins of Coenwulf are to be associated with the Canterbury mint and dated early rather than late in his reign. A very similar coin is described in the *Proceedings of the Numismatic Chronicle* for 1865 (p. 7).

**Kingdom of Wessex**

**Ecgberht (802–39)**

7. *Obv.* +ECGBEURHT REX in centre cross potent.

*Rev.* +BEAKTVND ΜONETΑ in centre cross potent.

Weight 20-8 gr. Die-axis ↙ SPE (Pl. XXVI, 7).

This coin from the excavations is similar to a number of specimens found in the Middle Temple Hoard (cf. *B.M. Acqns.* 387–90). The mint is almost certainly Canterbury, and the coin is perhaps to be dated quite late in Ecgberht’s reign.

**Æthelwulf (839–58)**

8. *Obv.* +EBEL+VVLF+REX in centre DORIBI.

*Rev.* +BIARNNOΘMONETΑ in centre monogram of CANTIA.

Weight 19-3 gr. Die-axis → SPE (Pl. XXVI, 8).

This coin from the excavations approximates to a number of known coins (cf. *B.M.C.* 1). Incidentally Keary’s reading of the moneyer’s name as Biarnnoth is to be preferred to Brooke’s Biarnmod. The mint is certainly Canterbury, and the coin is probably to be dated after rather than before c. 850.

1 We are unable to accept Brooke’s attribution of his Type 14 to Rochester, which at this period seems to have been a “one-moneyer” mint and to have issued in consequence coins without the name of a personal guarantor.
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Edward the Elder (899–924)

"Two-line" type (B.M.C. ii = Brooke 13)

9. Obv. +EADVVEARO REX
   Rev. *EICMVN|+++|DMON|*

Weight 20.7 gr. Die-axis ∨ BAV (Pl. XXVI, 9).

An Eicmund is a Canterbury moneyer for Archbishop Plegmund and the style of this coin and of other comparable pieces (e.g. B.M.C. 42) is consistent with their having been struck at that mint. The size of the flan of the Vatican specimen suggests a date not earlier than the middle of the reign.

10. Obv. -EADVVEARO REX.
    Rev. *TILAM|+++|ONETA|*

Weight 18.2 gr. Die-axis ∨ BAV (Pl. XXVI, 10).

Tila was a prolific moneyer of Edward the Elder but has still to be known from a mint-signed coin of Æthelstan. Three of his coins occurred in the recent Tywardreath hoard, and in that publication the suggestion has been made that he may have been a Wessex moneyer.¹

KINGDOM OF ENGLAND

Eadmund (939–46)

"Two-line" type (B.M.C. i = Brooke 1)

11. Obv. +E-ADOVND REX EB
    Rev. *IN|EL|+++|A|RM|0|*

Weight 21 gr. Die-axis ∨ BAV (Pl. XXVI, 11).

Ingelgar was a York moneyer of Anlaf Sihtricsson and of Eric Bloodaxe, and the form of the obverse legend confirms that this is a York coin. It was probably struck after Eadmund's reconquest of York in 945. For similar coins cf. B.M.C. 85, 86, &c.

Eadred (945–55)

"Two-line" type (B.M.C. i = Brooke 1)

12. Obv. +EADRED REX M last letter (or ornament) not quite clear.
    Rev. *HVNR|+++|EDMÖ|*

Weight 21.2 gr. Die-axis ↓ BAV (Pl. XXVI, 12).

Much more work remains to be done before the coins of this prolific moneyer (cf. B.M.C. 50–55) can be given with confidence to a particular mint. The style, however, is clearly north-eastern, and the mint may well be Lincoln or even York.

¹ N.C. 1955, pp. 5-9.
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"Portrait" type (B.M.C. v = Brooke 3)

13. Obv. +EADRED R crowned bust to right.
    Rev. +HILDVLF MONETA

Weight 18.2 gr. Die-axis ⊥ BAV (Pl. XXVI, 13).

This coin supplies a new moneyer for the type, and probably a new moneyer for the reign, as the coins of B.M.C. type i (e.g. Chester T. T. nos. 188-9 and B.N.J., vol. xxi, p. 37) are of "north-western" style whereas a prosopographical study of the moneyers of the portrait coins suggests very strongly that they were all struck to the east of Watling Street—the Exeter attributions of some of them being in our opinion ill founded. Another coin by this moneyer, of the two-line type, and seemingly of north-eastern origin, appears to read on the obverse ANELF RE+M.

Eadgar (959-75)

"Circular" type (B.M.C. iii = Brooke 4)

14. Obv. +EADGAR RE+ ANGLORV small cross patee with a second cross in the field.
    Rev. +SELEPOL-D MONETAX small cross patee.

Weight 23.9 gr. Die-axis ⊥ BAV (Pl. XXVI, 14).

Again this coin appears to provide a new moneyer for the type. Hitherto Selewold has been known for the reign by late post-reform coins (B.M.C. type vi), apparently unpublished, in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, and at Stockholm. On these coins the mint-signature is Oxford, and inasmuch as the name Selewold is an uncommon one and the style of the Vatican coin is not inconsistent there must be a very strong presumption that this piece too is to be attributed to the Oxford mint.

Cnut (1016-35)

"Quatrefoil" type (B.M.C. viii = Hild. E = Brooke 2) September 1017–September 1023?

15. Obv. +ENVMT REX ANELOP
    Rev. +OS|VLF|ONL|VND

Weight 19.9 gr. Die-axis ← BAV (Pl. XXVI, 15).

Osulf was a prolific London moneyer in this type, and the coin appears to correspond exactly to Hild. 2681.

"Short Cross" type (B.M.C. xvi = Hild. H = Brooke 4) September 1029–September 1035?

16. Obv. +ENV TREX
Ælfwine was a prolific London moneyer, and this coin, from the St. Peter's excavations, appears to correspond exactly to Hild. 1976.

17. Obv. +CNV TRELX

Rev. +B1WNCAR ON LV:

Weight 16-9 gr. Die-axis ↑ BAV (Pl. XXVI, 17).

Brungar was a prolific London moneyer, and this coin appears to correspond exactly to Hild. 2086.

Harold I (1035-40)

"Jewel Cross" type (B.M.C. i = Hild. A = Brooke 1) Winter 1035/6–September 1037?

18. Obv. +HAR OLD (retrograde and bust faces right).

Rev. +LEFPINE O LINCOL

Weight 14-2 gr. Die-axis ↓ SPE (Pl. XXVI, 18).

Without doubt this is the most important of all the five Anglo-Saxon coins found in the course of the recent excavations beneath St. Peter's. Hildebrand lists no coin of this type and king with right-facing bust, and it would be tempting to see in this coin a protest against the relegation to Harthacnut of the right-facing portrait (cf. B.N.J., vol. xxvii, pp. 266–75). However, the temptation is one that is firmly to be resisted, inasmuch as the retrograde legend makes it clear that the "mirror" portrait was due purely to an aberration on the part of the die-cutter. These errors are surprisingly rare in the late Saxon series—and especially when Scandinavian imitations are rigorously excluded—but there is a curious crop in the course of Harold's second or "Fleur-de-Lis" type (B.M.C. v = Hild. B = Brooke 2). Hildebrand records "mirror" obverses of three moneyers of York, Othin, Ucede, and Witherwine, and retrograde reverses of Brihtmaer and Brungar at London, of Leofwine at Northampton, and of Lifinc at Oxford. This consideration, and the fact that Leofwine seems a much more prolific moneyer in "Fleur-de-Lis" than in "Jewel Cross", may suggest that the Vatican coin is to be dated to the very end of the latter type.

Edward the Confessor (1042-66)

"Long Cross" type (B.M.C. ii = Hild. B = Brooke 3) September 1048–September 1050?

19. Obv. +EDPE RDRE

Rev. +GODRIE ON LINE

Weight 10-3 gr. Die-axis ↓ SPE (Pl. XXVI, 19).
Godric was a prolific Lincoln moneyer at this period, and the Vatican coin, though apparently from different dies, approximates closely to such pieces as Hild. 329 and B.M.C. 675.

“Hammer Cross” type (B.M.C. xi = Hild. G = Brooke 8) September 1059—September 1062?

20. Obv. +EADFAR RDR.E
Rev. +EADF1 •• ON HER.EF
Weight 20·2 gr. Die-axis ← BAV (PI. XXVI, 20).

Eadwig is a known Hereford moneyer in this type, and the clear reading on this coin provides fresh evidence that Keary was mistaken in assigning B.M.C. 548 to his far more prolific colleague Earnwig.

Harold II (1066)

“Pax” type (B.M.C. i = Hild. A = Brooke 1) January (or March ?)—October 1066

21. Obv. +HAROLDREXAG
Rev. +IEGLFINCONGIF
Weight 20·3 gr. Die-axis ← BAV (PI. XXVI, 21).

Ægelwine is well known as the Ilchester moneyer in this type, and the Vatican coin appears to correspond exactly to B.M.C. 29.

From the foregoing it will have been gathered that no fewer than seven of the coins in the Vatican collections can be described as unpublished, while a number of the others are not without interest for the Anglo-Saxon specialist. In this connexion it should perhaps be remarked that two further coins published by Serafini have been omitted as we do not regard them as English, an alleged sceatta (op. cit., p. 242, no. 380) which we believe to be Merovingian, and a Scandinavian penny, apparently struck at Lund for Magnus the Good (op. cit., p. 242, no. 381). This proportion of unpublished pieces is very high indeed, and encourages the hope that new finds, at least those from the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, may contain much to engage the interest of the specialist. Quite clearly this is not the place to attempt to discuss the pattern of the Anglo-Saxon coins found in Rome, but it may be remarked that the Vatican coins correspond generally to the three main groupings that seem characteristic of finds already recorded. In the first half of the nineteenth century there appears to have been at least one major find of coins of Offa and his immediate successors and of their contemporaries,1 and this may have

been the source not only of the Vatican coins above but also of that unlooked-for parcel of early Saxon pence in the 1879 Borghesi sale (lots 1362–9). However, more than one provenance has since been recorded, for example that of the penny of Æthilberht from Tivoli, and it seems likely that coins of the period c. 775–825 have been found on more than one occasion and in more than one place. In contrast there are very few pieces from the period c. 825–90 to which a Roman provenance attaches, and this seems a little curious when we reflect on the extent of Anglo-Saxon intercourse with the Papacy in the period which culminated in Alfred’s formal institution of the Romescot.

It is of course the Romescot which underlies the three great hoards from the first half of the tenth century, one from the Vatican itself, one from the Forum, and the third with unknown find-spot of which some account was given in the last number of the Journal. After c. 950 there is a strange interruption in the pattern of the finds, and it is only for the period after c. 1025 that excavations beneath the basilicas both of St. Peter and of St. Paul have brought to light considerable numbers of late Saxon pence. As far as the documentary evidence is concerned, there is no reason to suppose that Eadgar, for example, was any less scrupulous than his predecessors in the honour paid to the Prince of the Apostles by the English people and their king, and even under Æthelraed II Archbishops of Canterbury continued to journey to Rome to receive the pallium. While, then, the flow of Anglo-Saxon coins to Rome must surely have fluctuated to some extent over the centuries—and the Chronicle itself records a year in which it proved impossible to send the usual “alms”—there is a strong probability that the paucity of coins of certain periods found in Rome is to be explained not by any protracted interruption of the flow but by changes in the circumstances prevailing in the Holy City itself. For example, the great hoards of the early tenth century should perhaps be connected with the progressive anarchy that culminated in the scandal of John XII, and their cessation with the more settled times consequent on the Ottonian intervention. The question, however, is an intricate one, and it is impossible to do justice to it here, especially as a distinction must be drawn between coins from hoards, casual finds, and the coins associated with the actual Confessions.

3 e.g. s.a. 889.