REVIEWS


Recently renewed interest in Anglo-Saxon coinage has only emphasized the remarkable and lasting value of the work of the Swedish scholar Bror Emil Hildebrand; his catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon coins from Swedish hoards in the Stockholm Museum, published first in 1846, and revised and extended in 1881, remains today the standard work of reference on the coins of Æthelræd II and Cnut. It is thus fitting that the anniversary in 1956, 150 years from Hildebrand’s birth and 75 from the publication of the second edition of Anglosachsiska Mynt, should have been marked by some memorial to the co-operation of Swedish and English numismatists in this field of common interest. This has taken the appropriate form of a monograph on some of the coins of Æthelræd II by Mr. R. H. M. Dolley, written in English, but published in Sweden as no. 9 of the Antikvariskt Arkiv series.

Perhaps the two most far-reaching developments in the study of later Anglo-Saxon coinage have been, firstly, the recognition of a regular change of type, originally every six years, and afterwards every three; and, secondly, the valid differentiation of regional die-cutting styles. So far as the attribution of coins of Æthelræd II in particular is concerned, chronologically it owes accuracy in every case to the first of these theorems, and geographically in many cases to the second. For only five years ago, eccentric die-cutting styles, such as the East Anglian in the “First Hand” type or the Kentish in “Last Small Cross”, seemed, if they were noticed at all, to be isolated and temporary deviations from a unified system of central die-distribution parallel to the independent local style at Stamford, Lincoln, and York in type IV of William I; and but three years ago it was only with diffidence put forward that the “Hand” type might comprise two separate issues and the “First Small Cross” type be confined to the very beginning of Æthelræd’s reign. Mr. Dolley, not the sole author of these new ideas, is at least their most vigorous exponent; and though, with intellectual honesty, he still treats them as hypotheses rather than facts, it is fair to say that those who have done any research in the same field have found that all new evidence, rapidly accumulating, tends to corroborate and expand them.

Mr. Dolley devotes his paper to a study of Hildebrand’s “Typ A”, distinguished by the reverse type of a small cross. The classification by reverse type embodies much more than convenience: modern research (did Hildebrand deliberately anticipate this?) suggests that the reverse type was the operative one, and mule coins, therefore, almost invariably have the later, or current reverse. In this way, the “Intermediate Small Cross/Crux” mules of Winchester must be, as
Mr. Dolley proposes, an issue using up withdrawn obverses in combination with the regular type of “Crux” reverse: consequently, this time unlike Mr. Dolley, I do not find the existence of an “Agnus Dei/ Last Small Cross” mule “surprising since fewer than a dozen examples of the true coin are known”, but, as with the “Intermediate Small Cross” mules, merely an example of an obverse of withdrawn type combined with a current reverse: for, when a type was withdrawn after a very short time, the proportion of mule coins was likely to be greater. Can mules have been illegal? It must surely be very much open to doubt whether the evidence of the 1070’s is valid for the reign of Æthelraed II.

Of the true coins of “Small Cross” type, Mr. Dolley draws attention to useful criteria for separating the three main emissions: the “First Small Cross”, established as an overlap from Edgar and Edward the Martyr by W. C. Wells; the “Intermediate”, lately discovered by Mr. F. Elmore Jones and himself; and the “Last Small Cross”, largest and longest of the three issues, which was in currency during the last six years of the reign. The remainder of the paper is occupied in establishing and delineating the system of decentralized die-distribution at the end of Æthelraed’s reign: nine styles of portrait are distinguished, and each given a geographical label according to the area where it is mostly found. A table, based on the coins listed by Hildebrand, shows the relative frequency of various styles at the different mints. Some are unequivocal: 286 “London” style coins, out of 411, were actually struck at the capital, whilst only three other mints, Dover, Thetford, and Lewes, claim more than 10 of this style; and of 57 “South-eastern” style coins, all are accounted for by the Kentish mints (32), London (12), and Lewes (8), except for 5 at Lincoln.

Other styles, however, present some problems. The “Western” style is a geographical certainty: there are, admittedly, 6 examples of it at London, but otherwise all the mints are in the west. But, Mr. Dolley asks, where were the dies cut? Chester (29) is easily the largest single issuer of the style, but all the other mints are far to the south, as Oxford (8) and Gloucester (9). And why, then, does Worcester, geographically in the heart of the “Western” group, only get dies of “Southern B” style, which Mr. Dolley feels is centred on Winchester? “Southern B”, in fact, seems to me to be the least definitive of his groupings: of 100 examples, 26 do come from Winchester, but why is it found pluraly at Lincoln (14), Thetford (12), Leicester, Huntingdon, Derby, and Warwick? There is something consistently curious about Lincoln, the prominent outlier of both the “South-eastern” and “Southern B” styles. Has imitation anything to do with this? Mr. Dolley himself realizes the difficulties involved by the copying of busts within the official issue: but, as in other series, for instance thirteenth and fourteenth century imitations of Edwardian pence, there are many coins of good style which may be unofficial, or not even English at all.
So far Mr. Dolley deals with numismatic fact, of which, even if we question the exact interpretation, we cannot deny the essential accuracy: beyond this, he offers some interesting explanations, not proven, but stimulating, as to how die-distribution may have been organized, and suggests the historical context of the reform. Some connexion between the regional styles and the traditional ealdormanries does seem apparent; and a deliberate decentralization of the coinage would not be out of place in association with Æthelræd’s vigorous defensive measures of 1008–9. Anyway, the numismatist has presented his evidence: it is for the historian to integrate and assess it. And, after all, Mr. Dolley’s paper represents only a provisional stage in the development of quite a new method of numismatic research. Just how revolutionary was Æthelræd’s monetary reform will only be seen when further study has elucidated the position earlier in his reign; and how long lasting, only when more work has revealed the picture of the coinage of Cnut and Edward the Confessor. By the Conquest, die-cutting was centralized, but we have little idea of the process by which this was achieved after Æthelræd: working backwards, there are irregularities, for instance, in the “sovereign” type of Edward—which, being a considerable challenge to any engraver, is more likely to present individual characteristics than other, straightforward designs.

Lastly, to return to the sexennial type change: it may not be impertinent to consider in what relationship (if any) this stands to the distribution of dies. There is reason to suppose, from the predominance of a single type in hoards (cf. Shaftesbury), that the old type was quite soon demonetized; in which case, most of the coins of the new type would have been struck towards the beginning, perhaps in the first year, of its six years’ currency. Were all nine die-cutting styles being produced at the start of the “Last Small Cross” type? From Mr. Dolley’s table it seems that this may well not have been so. For some styles merely reduplicate part of the spheres of others: e.g. “South-eastern” and “Eastern” cover mints, all of which were served by “London” dies as well; and all the mints of “Northern B” use “Northern A” on a larger scale, except Thetford, which is otherwise dominated by the “London” and “Eastern” styles. If there is a chronological factor involved, two possibilities emerge: either all nine styles launched the coinage, and were later reduced, more engravers having been required to deal with the large issues at the beginning of the six-year period; or perhaps the original issue of dies was regulated from the main centres only, but later, when the demand for dies would be sporadic and inconsistent, country mints may have been able to get new supplies to order from lesser regional centres. For example, in the former case, “Eastern” dies might have supplied East Anglia and “South-eastern” Kent at the beginning of the type, but, when the first heavy bout of recoinage was over, London could then cover a smaller demand for dies from a larger area; alternatively, central authority at London, after getting the type under way, might have
left the East Anglian and Kentish mints thereafter to apply for their dies from more convenient local centres (Norwich or Thetford, and Canterbury). These are only conjectures, based on Mr. Dolley's statement of the evidence: but they are perhaps the sort of questions to which we may hope that answers will be forthcoming from his further researches.

Meanwhile, we must be grateful to the author, and particularly to his Swedish colleagues, for an interim report of such interest and clarity. "Tauton" on p. 27 and an unclosed parenthesis on p. 30 were the only misprints noticed in forty pages, an achievement of which any British printer might be proud. Twenty excellent enlarged photographs and three explicit distribution maps add greatly to the value of the text. In places, the writer's choice of word or phrase is a little unfortunate: certain dies, alas, are "conspicuous by their absence", the word "non-numismatist" baffles when applied to so acute a student of coins as Mr. R. B. K. Stevenson, and, true though it is, "exploratory" would have been a happier epithet of a scholar for his own essay than "pioneer". Nevertheless the paper is remarkably readable for an analytical study of its kind, and Mr. Dolley is to be congratulated not only on this significant and original contribution to Anglo-Saxon numismatics, but also for making the intricate technicalities of his subject so readily intelligible.

B. H. I. H. S.


In this Swedish paper, describing and discussing a large hoard from Gotland discovered in 1952 and apparently deposited c. 1046–9, there are listed 213 English and Irish coins. Illustrated on the plates are nine which are not recorded in Hildebrand.

A Handbook of the Coinage of the Byzantine Empire. By (the late) HUGH GOODACRE, F.R.N.S. Spink & Son Ltd., 1957. Pp. xi+361. £5. 5s.

The articles on which this book is based originally appeared in the Numismatic Circular, and were reissued, with illustrations, in three parts—Arcadius to Leontius I (1928); Anastasius to Michael VI (1931); and Isaac I to Constantine XI (1933). These have now been reprinted, by the offset-litho process, in one strongly bound volume, the advance of scholarship being marked by certain deletions in the text and 8 pages of additions and corrections by the present editors (R. A. G. Carson, J. P. C. Kent, A. Vegleri, P. D. Whitting, and G. Zacros). Goodacre intended this work, "less ambitious and less erudite" than Wroth's B.M.C., as a popular introduction to the noble series which
was his chief numismatic interest. There are introductory sections concerning metrology, mints, and legends: the last are transliterated and expanded into normal Greek type, and translated: a most useful feature for the collector who is neither a specialist on the series nor a classicist. The lists of coins are prefaced by “profiles” of each ruler, couched in the deeply Victorian style traditional to such matter. The three sections are each closed by indexes of legends and subjects.

The editors make it plain that the method of reprinting allowed for few alterations, and the task of criticism must therefore fall into two parts, regarding the original work, and regarding the reproduction. It should be understood that the book was directed to the novice and non-specialist; and within this limit, it continues to do its work well: although at a price not to be afforded by many private persons. (The original three parts sold together for 23s.) Mattingly said of pt. 2 that the treatment of mints was inadequate (Num. Chron. 1931, p. 72) and to this might be added mention of the extremely cursory treatment meted out to the bronze coins, upon which so much of the study of the Byzantine series as a whole must depend, and which after all are both the commonest and in many cases the most difficult to identify correctly. The arrangement of the coins is rather after the pattern of Sabatier (particularly by the inclusion of the pre-Anastasius coins) and at this date may be thought less useful for the identification of specimens than that adopted in the B.M.C.

Among the additions and corrections made in the reprint, the most interesting is the identification of the coins of Leontius II (695–8). Laffranchi, in 1940, was the first to realize that the so-called “portrait-bust” coins of Leo III were in reality of Leontius, who apparently ruled under the official name of Leo.

The only criticism to be made of the production of this book concerns the quality of the illustrations, which is very poor: in many cases they would give the novice little or no idea of the appearance of a coin, although the original choice of actual specimens, rather than casts, was evidently made with that advantage in mind. Here the heightened contrast, inevitable with the lithographic method of reproduction used, is to blame. It is beyond the scope of a review to suggest whether the various criticisms made should not have been allowed to combine in a decision to prepare an entirely new work on the subject, which could surely be done, even nowadays, for five guineas.

There are a few minor misprints, of which “preceed” on p. ix is an example.

GEORGE C. BOON