SOME NEW MERCIAN COINS

By C. E. BLUNT

AN OFFA-IARENBERHT DIE-LINK

THROUGH the courtesy of Mr. Philips I am allowed to publish here a new and important variety of the coinage of Offa which he was fortunate to acquire in 1958 in Farnham, Surrey, for a modest sum. The coin, which is by the moneyer Ethelnoth, is illustrated (Pl. XV, 12). It belongs to Offa’s middle period, say, 785–91.

Ethelnoth, who is not to be confused with Ethelmod, was a reasonably prolific moneyer in Offa’s last period; I have records of nine surviving specimens; but of the middle period only three were previously known to me, two in the British Museum (B.M.C. 50; the other uncatalogued, from Richborough, 1925), the third in the unsold portion of the Lockett collection. Mr. Philips’s coin differs from these in having the king’s name and title not contained in lunettes and in having a cross placed horizontally above and below the legend. This latter is a feature of the coins of Archbishop Iarenberht and in fact there exists a coin of this archbishop in private hands which is struck from the same die. Regrettably it is not possible to publish an illustration of this here, but the die-identity has been confirmed by more than one authority who has seen a photograph of it.

This is the first time a die-identity between a coin of Offa and one of Iarenberht has been established, and an examination of the other coins of the archbishop of which I have photographs or casts has failed to produce another. Nor have I traced a die-link between any coin of Offa and Iarenberht’s successor Aethilheard. Die duplicates in this early series are, however, comparatively rare, a fact which suggests that the surviving coins represent but a fraction of the original issue and prompts the hope that a major hoard of this period might be expected to produce a crop of new varieties. Mr. Dolley has, however, recently established a die-link between a coin of Offa and one of the Kentish king Eadberht Praen, and these two links provide useful confirmation of the view, now generally accepted, that the bulk of Offa’s coinage was issued not in Mercia but at the Kentish capital, Canterbury.

It will be seen that on Mr. Philips’s coin the moneyer’s name is spelt ‘Ehelnot’ (one can I think properly read the fourth letter as an ‘L’ in spite of its somewhat peculiar form). On all the other specimens of the early period the name is in its normal form ‘Efelnof>’ and this is the form usually found on the coins of the later period. On one or two, however (e.g. B.M.A. 39 and Ryan 619), the second ‘p’ is misplaced so that the name reads ‘Efelnono’. This is presumably only an error, though it is found on more than one die. On the new coin, the final ‘t’, in place of ‘p’, need cause no surprise. It is found, for instance, in B.C.S. 201 (Cott. Aug. II. 26) A.D. 767 in Cuutfert.

1 I am greatly indebted to Professor D. Whitelock for advice and information on the significance of the spelling of this moneyer’s name.
The use of ‘h’ for ‘p’ is, however, not to be expected—at any rate at this time; ‘h’ did not occur singly between vowels. One must surmise that the engraver intended to write ‘th’, which although not found on coins of Ethelnoth would be an acceptable form, and that he omitted the ‘t’. The alternative, to regard the ‘h’ as a malformed ‘p’ seems less likely.

Mr. Philips is to be congratulated on the possession of so important a coin.

**THE MONEYER EAMA ON COINS OF OFFA AND COENWULF**

The last of the three coins of Offa recorded by Sir John Evans in his account of the Delgany hoard\(^1\) is described as follows:

*Obv. +OFFA REX m*

*Rev. mAAM?? EAMA? Between the limbs of a cross.*

The asterisk before the number meant that Evans had not himself examined the coin.

This piece is not otherwise recorded and has never been illustrated and a doubt has consequently remained as to the reverse reading.

Recently Mr. F. Baldwin was kind enough to show me the coin illustrated on Pl. XV, 13, which so closely answers to the one described by Evans as to leave little doubt that it is the same piece. The obverse is typical of the later type of Offa (though I have not traced a die-identity) and the reverse is generally similar to the unique type of Ibba in the British Museum (B.M.A. 42) which, curiously, was also found in Ireland, in this case near Kilkenny.

Evans may have been influenced in his reading of the moneyer’s name by his possession of the coin of Coenwulf discussed below on which this name also appears. Evans bought the Coenwulf in Rome and, as no other specimen is known, it is reasonable to suppose that it is the one in the Borghesi sale which was held in that city in 1880. Evans might therefore have acquired it by the time his article on the Delgany hoard came to be published in 1882, but be that as it may, he was undoubtedly right in his interpretation of the seemingly meaningless mAAM.

On the coin of Coenwulf (Pl. XV, 14), which formed lot 331 in the Drabble sale, the name Eama is even more clear. In this case the initial E is square, unlike the round-backed € on the Offa coin with its extended central limb, a feature found on some early coins of Eoba’s, e.g. B.M.C. 46, B.M.A. 31 and 32, and the M which was Roman has now become the more usual rounded form m.

Save on these two coins the name Eama is not known and the question arises as to whether we have here the name of a new moneyer or a variant form of a name already known. It is tempting to equate Eama with Eaba who first makes his appearance at this very time. But Eaba is rather to be equated with Eaaf, and the substitution of ‘m’ for ‘b’ or ‘f’ is not to be expected.\(^2\)

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2. I am once again indebted to Professor Whitelock for advice on this matter.
Eama occurs as a name in the Liber Eliensis (referring to Edgar’s reign) and Redin suggests\(^1\) that it is a short form of names like Eanbriht where the ‘n’ would become ‘m’ by assimilation to the following ‘b’. In the case of the two coins under discussion it might be a short form of the name Eanmund, a moneyer who, although not otherwise known to have issued for Offa, is found striking the early tribrach type for Coenwulf (e.g. B.M.C. 95), similar to the Eama coin. It seems preferable to accept Eama as the same moneyer as Eanmund rather than to suggest that he is a moneyer otherwise unknown.

A NEW TYPE FOR BEORNWULF OR BERHTWULF OF MERCIA

The fragment illustrated (Pl. XV, 15) can be described as follows:

**Obv. +B - - - VVLFRTX** Small cross with a line in each quarter in an inner circle.

**Rev. +BEON - - - VLF** (the V is over an F). Cross crosslet; no inner circle.

The coin would seem clearly to be Anglo-Saxon of the first half of the ninth century and, if this is so, must be of Beornwulf (823/4–826) or Berhtwulf (839–52), kings of Mercia. The type and moneyer are both unrecorded for either king.

All the few known coins of Beornwulf and all save two of the coins of Berhtwulf have the bust as obverse type. The two exceptions are a coin by the moneyer Tatel in the British Museum (illustrated Brooke, English Coins, pl. viii, 3, and there regarded as perhaps the work of a London craftsman) and one by Éanred (?) (illustrated Hawkins, Silver Coins of England, pl. vi, 85, later Grantley Sale, lot 867). The Tatel coin has comparable lettering to the new coin and the obverse type is not dissimilar. The reverse of the new coin closely resembles certain coins of Wiglaf (828–9 and 830/1–9) (e.g. Brooke, pl. vii, 14 and 15) who was Berhtwulf’s immediate predecessor.

The moneyer’s name appears to be Beornwulf or Beorhtwulf, neither of whom is recorded at this time.

The form of the word REX is curious. The E is not unlike the ☐ that is sometimes found as the abbreviation of Merciorum but in fact more closely resembles the E with an elongated central bar used on certain early types of Offa (e.g. in the moneyer’s name on Brooke, pl. v, 16). If it is intended for an E it is placed sideways and it is possible that by so placing it the engraver sought to give effect to the combined thought of Rex and Merciorum.

Until another specimen is found which will either supply the missing letters of the king’s name or enable the moneyer to be associated with one or other king, a definite attribution is not possible, but Berhtwulf appears the more likely.

ON A NEW TYPE FOR BURGRED

The plentiful coins of Burgred fall into four distinct classes recognizable by minor variations of the reverse type. These are described in the British

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\(^1\) Studies on Uncompounded Personal Names in Old English, Uppsala, 1919.
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*Museum Catalogue* as ‘a’, ‘b’, ‘c’, and ‘d’, and of these ‘b’ is the only one to lay any claims to scarcity. A new variety of the reverse type can now be recorded (Pl. XV, 16). It is by the moneyer Cenred, coins of whom are already known of types ‘a’, ‘c’, and ‘d’. The new type has crook ends to the two horizontal lines that divide the legend, as in types ‘c’ and ‘d’, but differs from both in having as a central ornament at top and bottom an object like a letter Ψ with an elongated leg which divides the top and bottom lines of the legend. This may signify Merciorum, a title that follows the Rex on the obverse on a number of Burgred’s coins, or may be no more than an ornament.

The classification of Burgred’s coins by their reverse types is a simple, but far from satisfactory, one. Although, superficially, the obverses all have a single type, namely a diademed bust facing right and extending to the edge of the coin, the variations within this general type are so great as to leave little doubt that more than one mint was employed. Brooke is wisely guarded on the subject, but the implication of his remark on the coinage of Ceolwulf II that ‘the tradition of Canterbury to provide the coinage of the Mercian Kings as well as the Wessex coinage still remained’ suggests that he may perhaps have regarded the Burgred coins as products of that one mint. The five coins, by the moneyers Beagstan and Tatel (type ‘a’); Dudda and Dudecil (type ‘c’); and Osmund (type ‘d’) are sufficient to indicate how widely the style varies (Pl. XV, 17–21). Tatel, it will be remembered, was the moneyer of the unique coin of Berhtwulf (referred to in the preceding note) which Brooke regards as perhaps the work of a London craftsman.

Coins that have survived in such relatively large numbers are not normally illustrated in sale catalogues and of the 263 in the *British Museum Catalogue* only 7 are illustrated. As the *Sylloge of British Coins* develops and is paralleled, it is to be hoped, by a corresponding record of the national collection, the material will become available from which it should be possible to make a thorough survey of this somewhat neglected coinage.

1 *English Coins*, p. 25.