

SOME 'NORTHERN' VARIANTS, ETC. OF THE 'CRUX' ISSUE OF ÆTHELRÆD II

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ON Plate IV of vol. xxviii (1955) of this *Journal* there appears as no. 26 an apparently Intermediate Small Cross/Crux mule by the York moneyer Oscet(e)l. The coin was included because the obverse die was of patently English work, but it must be confessed that even at that time neither of the authors was particularly happy about the reverse. In 1955, however, much less was known about the imitation of English coins in Ireland and in Scandinavia, and the authors were then reluctant to exclude from the English series any pieces that could be considered doubtful. Now the position is very different, a commentary, we would suggest, on the importance of the work being done by the Anglo-Irish team in Stockholm under the auspices of the Swedish Humanistic Fund, and the time is perhaps ripe for a reassessment of this and other 'mules' in the light of new understanding of both the English and the Scandinavian coinages.

The first point to bear in mind is that Intermediate Small Cross/Crux mules struck in England undoubtedly do exist. Predominantly they are from mints in southern England, but in the National Museum of Antiquities at Edinburgh we have noted a superb example from the Inch Kenneth hoard (*Inventory* 196 but cf. *B.N.J.* xxviii, i (1955), pp. 50 and 51 and documented run of coins in N.M.A.) by the Stamford moneyer Swertgar which establishes that the odd die could and did reach northern England. A second point to be borne in mind is that there are a large number of York coins from the period c. 995–c. 1000 to which the English numismatist has been known to apply the expressive if not very elegant term 'funnies'. Broadly these fall into three main classes where the 'Oscetel' group of coins is concerned:

- (a) Coarse versions of the Crux type proper (Hild. 809 and 809 var.)
- (b) Apparent Crux/Intermediate Small Cross mules—something never found in southern England (Hild. 609, 628, 805, 806, 807, 808)
- (c) Mules where one die seems English and the other Scandinavian (Hild. 610 var., 773, 774, 804, 813, and 813 var.)

Already in 1954 preliminary work on the Igelösa hoard from Skåne had established that a large number of these coins had Lund as their presumptive mint of origin, and accordingly it seemed desirable to approach the problem from an entirely new angle. This has been supplied by their consideration in the light of the Danish Yholm hoard deposited a few years earlier, a find singularly uncontaminated by the class of Scandinavian imitation with which we are here concerned. It contains two coins which in our opinion are undoubtedly of English origin and struck at the York mint from dies of official work. They appear on the accompanying Plate (Pl. XVIII) as nos. 610¹ and 804 var.—we have found it a great convenience to retain the Hildebrand numeration—and are respectively a quite new variety of the Intermediate Small Cross type and an Intermediate Small Cross/Crux mule. The moneyers are in the one case Arncytel and in the other Oscetl, and in both instances the

¹ For convenience the Stockholm die-duplicate Hild. 610 is the actual specimen illustrated.

mint is indubitably York. What is new about the Intermediate Small Cross coin is its inclusion of a sceptre, but in all other respects it is a normal obverse of the class even down to the minutiae of its epigraphy.

Accepting these two coins as English, and we feel that we have no option but to do so inasmuch as the workmanship is impeccable and one hoard-provenance at once Danish and very early, we must now consider their relationship to the 'Oscetel' group as a whole. The pattern of die-linking that emerges is astonishing, and is far too complicated to be set out in words. The first steps, however, may briefly be indicated as follows. The obverse of the Arncytel coin also occurs as a mule with a barbarous Crux reverse with meaningless legend, while the reverse is muled with an irregular Crux obverse which is heavily die-linked into a whole group of barbarous Oscetel reverses of both Crux and Small Cross type. Likewise the obverse of the Oscetel coin is found with a particularly barbarous Crux reverse purporting to be of the same moneyer, while the reverse is found with two barbarous Crux obverses which lead off into precisely the group of Oscetel Crux and Small Cross reverses as the Arncytel coin already mentioned. On the Plate (PI. XVIII) there in fact appear five obverse and twelve reverse dies used in no fewer than nineteen combinations. It is our submission that two obverse and three reverse dies only are English, and that of the combinations likewise no more than two represent English dies used on English soil.

It is noteworthy that Arncytel is known at York from only two coins of faultless English style, a solitary Crux coin (Hild. 611) and the Intermediate Small Cross coin already mentioned. The presumption is, therefore, that he began striking very late in the Crux issue, and soon desisted. With Oscet(e)l the position is more complicated. An Ascytel or Aschetel—the same name—is known at York in First Small Cross and First Hand, and also from a single die of English work in Crux (Hild. 632) which most significantly does not mule into the Oscetel chain already described. Also to be taken into account is a barbarous Crux/Small Cross mule which does mule into the chain and which reads Ascelt (Hild. 628). All the Crux and Small Cross Oscetel coins which are recorded by Hildebrand are heavily die-linked, and so must all be considered Scandinavian, as must his two quite barbarous Long Cross coins, but there remains the unique coin (Hild. 804 var.) in Copenhagen which is from the Yholm hoard and which just cannot be faulted on grounds of style. For what it is worth, our interpretation of the evidence is that a moneyer Ascytel or Ascytel was working at York until *c.* 980, i.e. long enough to have struck a number of First Hand coins. Some fifteen years later, at the very end of the Crux issue, a namesake was issued with a pair of Crux reverse dies, one reading Ascytel and one Oscetel (clearly the Scandinavian name was giving the London die-engraver trouble), an Intermediate Small Cross obverse die and a Crux obverse die. Almost immediately he decamped, and it is interesting to list the dies which he took with him:

OBVERSES

Intermediate Small Cross

1. Hild. 804, &c.
2. Hild. 610, &c.

REVERSES

(a) Intermediate Small Cross

3. Hild. 610, &c. (Arncytel)

(b) Crux

4. Hild. 774, &c. (Oban)

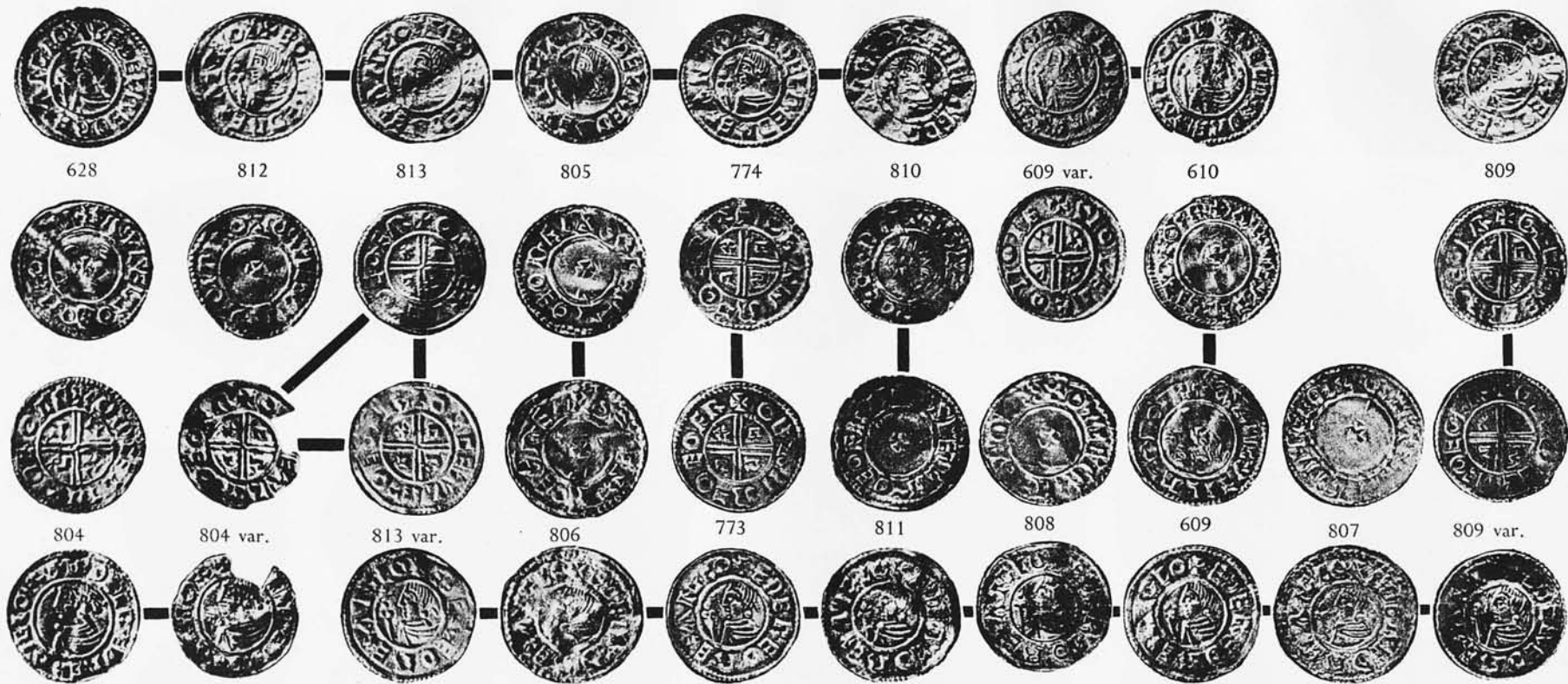
5. Hild. 813, &c. (Oscet(e)l)

It will be noticed at once, and is we feel a tribute to late Saxon mint-practice, that Oscetel did not abscond with any of the current (i.e. Crux) obverse dies, and that to muster as many as three reverse dies he had to help himself to those of his colleagues. What exactly happened we do not know, but it is perhaps significant that Arncytel, to judge from his name a pure-blooded Scandinavian (a Dane?), did not strike in the next type, while Oban, by the same token a Hiberno-Norseman, seems to have satisfied the authorities that he was not an accomplice since he strikes at York throughout the rest of Æthelræd's reign. Arrived in Scandinavia, Oscetel set up in business at Lund—the Igelösa hoard contains more than forty coins from one pair of dies—but his subsequent career concerns the Scandinavian and not the English numismatist. Suffice it here to say that he eked out his English dies with Scandinavian copies, and that the resulting 'mules' have provided the students of both series with some of their most intractable problems. Absolute finality cannot be claimed, but we do feel that the above note has indicated the lines along which progress has still to be made. At the same time we would draw attention once more to our proposition of an entirely new variant of the Intermediate Small Cross type, and it is here illustrated from the Stockholm specimen by a greatly enlarged photograph:



Acceptance of the coin as English, incidentally, means that we now have nine mints for the type, and the inclusion of York in the canon must suggest that the distribution of the dies was less regional than was originally postulated. Once again, too, we must conclude a paper with an expression of our deep indebtedness to our colleagues who have supplied us so generously with direct

photographs. The plate that accompanies this note is composed entirely of these indispensable aids to comprehension. One of the specimens illustrated is in Copenhagen (610 and 804 var.), and for photographs of this we are indebted to Overinspektør Otto Mørkholm. One of the coins is in Mr. C. S. S. Lyon's collection (813 var.), and we are under a heavy obligation to him for photographing not only this but also the remaining seventeen coins which are in the Stockholm Cabinet and made available through the good offices of første antikvarie fil. dr. N. L. Rasmusson. To Mr. Lyon, too, and to Miss G. van der Meer and to antikvarie L. O. Lagerqvist we are grateful for much assistance in the scrutiny of the material, a task where the student stands particularly in need of objective corroboration of each individual link in the chain of die-identities on the validity of which a paper of this kind is utterly dependent.



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