A NOTE ON THE ANGLO-SAXON
MINT OF READING

By R. H. M. DOLLEY

In the 1932 edition of *English Coins* G. C. Brooke attributed (p. 75) to a mint at Reading certain coins of Æthelræd II (moneyer Æþe(l)stan) and of Edward the Confessor (moneyers Brihtric and Corff). In the 1950 Supplement, however, an entry (p. 255) implies that all the coins concerned had been misattributed, and consequently that Reading was not in fact a mint in the late Saxon period. In this present note it will be argued that the 1932 and the 1950 pronouncements alike stand in need of emendation, and in this connexion it will be convenient to consider not only three apparently unique coins which seem to underlie the 1932 statement, but also two coins which have been attributed, albeit very much less confidently, to Reading within the last decade.

In order of their date of issue the five ‘Reading’ coins may be listed as follows:

(a) Lockett 684 (c). This coin purports to belong to the *Crux* issue of Æthelræd II, and as such should be dated c. 995. The name of the moneyer would appear to be ‘Noae’, an irregular and otherwise unattested monothematic form which is not obviously hypocoristic and which in itself gives every cause for suspicion.

(b) An apparent Last Small Cross penny of Æthelræd II now in the Ashmolean Museum and formerly in the Bodleian Library (cf. Wise, *Catalogus Nummorum*, pl. xvii, 11). Here the presumptive date would be c. 1010. The moneyer is apparently Æþe(l)stan.

(c) Hild. Edw. Conf. 634. The name of the moneyer is given as Brihtric, and the coin belongs to the Trefoil Quadrilateral issue and is to be dated c. 1047.

(d) Hild. Edw. Conf. 635. The name of the moneyer there appears as EORFF which must be for Corff, and the coin is of the same type and date as that of Brihtric already cited.

(e) An apparent Pointed Helmet penny of Edward the Confessor which is described in the report of the great Sedlescombe hoard (*Inventory* 327). The presumptive date of this coin would be c. 1055, and the moneyer is recorded as ‘Lucine’.

Coins (b), (c), and (d) may be presumed to have formed the basis of the original Brooke entry.

Of coin (a) it may be observed that the Lockett catalogue adds a point of interrogation after the attribution, hints at the possibility of Danish origin, and does not illustrate it. There is also a reference to p. 385 of the third volume (1906) of the *British Numismatic Journal*. The attribution to Reading will be found to be that of the then owner, W. C. Wells, and the penny was in fact illustrated as No. 12 on the Exhibits Plate opposite p. 351. Clearly the coin was one known to Brooke, and so his rejection of it must be deemed deliberate.
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and not dismissed as due to oversight. A duplicate was formerly in the Argyll cabinet, and examination of either specimen should be sufficient to convince any serious student of the late Saxon series that we are dealing not with English coins but with a Scandinavian (Hiberno-Norse?) imitation of the cruder sort.

Coin (b) presents problems of quite a different order. To begin with, the very provenance points to its having been discovered in these islands, a supposition that may seem to be corroborated by the absence of 'pecking'. It is here illustrated by enlarged photographs of casts which have been supplied by the kindness of the authorities of the Heberden Coin Room:

Fig. 1.

In the British Museum, incidentally, are some old casts inscribed 'Bodley', and so we can be reasonably certain that it is this particular coin which underlies the Brooke entry of 1932.

The mint-signature is by no means clearly and indisputably RAID, and it is a curious fact that even if it were, this form in itself should have precluded from the first any attribution to the Berkshire borough in question. One has only to consult the Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names to discover that the early spellings are consistently READ- or RED-, and these OE spellings are of course consonant with the occasional ME—but not OE—form in RAD- (cf. the Edward III pence with reverse legend 'Villa Radingy'). The most superficial survey of the late Saxon coinage, moreover, should be sufficient to establish that English—as opposed to Hiberno-Norse—die-engravers virtually eschewed spellings 'ai' except very occasionally at one or two Danelaw mints when attempting a palatal 'g'. Even on coins of an earlier epoch such spellings are notably rare, and the normal writing of the digraph is 'æ'. It is of course possible in certain circumstances for 'æ' to appear on coins as 'a' (e.g. Athelwold for Æthelwald), but OE 'a' or 'ea'—despite the occasional and very exceptional writing 'æa'—does not become 'æ' on coins before c. 1025, and then only very intermittently and as a quirk confined to the Danelaw. The numismatist, therefore, who would regard RAID as a possible mint-signature
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for Reading under Æthelræd II is asking us to believe not only that the die-engraver employed an irregular writing of ‘e(a)’ but that he cast it in a form that is unprecedentedly archaic. In combination the two improbabilities may be thought to amount to impossibility.

As we have seen, ‘ai’ is a letter-combination that eleventh-century English die-cutters normally are found to avoid, and even on earlier coins it is a quite exceptional writing of ‘æ’. In passing, therefore, we should perhaps consider the possibility that RAID is for RÆD, and that an English mint other than Reading is involved, but a glance at Professor Smith’s English Place-Name Elements establishes that OE raed is almost never found as a place-name element, and certainly not in the case of a site where a mint could conceivably have existed in the eleventh century. It is indeed virtually impossible for us to reconcile RAID with an English mint, and at this juncture it is worth recalling that it is quite a characteristic feature of the legends of Hiberno-Norse imitations of Anglo-Saxon coins that the letter ‘I’ is interjected where it does not belong (e.g. GIODpine for GODpine). Is it possible, we should now ask ourselves, that the RAID coin could be Hiberno-Norse?

With this possibility in mind we should begin by examining again the obverse. The first detail that comes to notice is that the ‘X’ in REX is rendered ‘+’, a characteristic not of English but of Hiberno-Norse epigraphy. This detail is not of course conclusive, but it is at least a pointer. Other non-English characteristics of the legends are the substitution of ‘E’ for the digraph ‘Æ’ and the omission of the bar from ‘D’, features, however, that are quite normal in the case of coins emanating from the Dublin mint. The style of the portrait, too, is not nearly so English as it may seem at first sight, and the divergencies become more and more apparent when an attempt is made to classify the bust according to the principles propounded in Antikvariskt Arkiv 9. There are certain affinities, perhaps, with coins from the Chester area, but on balance the coin must be said to defy classification. If, however, the RAID penny is placed beside Hiberno-Norse coins of the same class, the difficulties all melt away, and any student who has handled in any quantity the Last Small Cross pence of Sihtric—a number of which in fact purport to be of Æthelræd—will have no hesitation in appropriating this mythical penny of ‘Reading’ to the Dublin series.

Why the RAID penny has not been recognized as Irish before now is another problem. At the root of the matter is the fact that very few Hiberno-Norse coins of this critical issue have been illustrated. Roth, for example, in his elaborate survey in the 1909 British Numismatic Journal can find room for only one (op. cit., Pl. I, 1), while Dr. Liam O’Sullivan was precluded from illustrating more than one specimen by the type’s absence from the Irish National Collection at the time that he was preparing his most valuable paper in the Centenary Volume of the Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland. A solitary specimen was engraved for Simon, while Lindsay and Grueber between them cannot muster as much as one. Even the Parsons (1929) and Lockett (1957) sale-catalogues illustrate no more than one example apiece, and here too it is unfortunately the coins which read SIHTRIC and not ÆTHELÆD which are chosen for this purpose, although in point of fact the latter are much the rarer. Recently, however, several have been

Already the RAID coin should be given both on grounds of epigraphy and of style to the Hiberno-Norse series, and there is a little more evidence that the new attribution is the correct one. Generally speaking Hiberno-Norse coins of this class either essay the Dublin mint-signature (cf. coins of the moneyers ‘Ælfelm’, Colbrand, ‘Færemín’, and ‘Ndremin’), or imitate more or less plausibly the legends on the English prototypes. As might be expected, a very high proportion of these prototypes are from mints in the parts of England opposite Ireland (e.g. Chester), and it is with this at the back of our minds that we should consider anew the legend:

\[+\textit{EDESTAN} +\textit{ONR} \text{(or B?)} +\textit{AID}\]

Clearly by a form EDESTAN the engraver is attempting the name Æthe(l)stan, and in England in the Last Small Cross type we find a moneyer of this name striking at Bath, Bedford (?), Exeter, Huntingdon, and Lydford. Already, too, it has been demonstrated that the Dublin engraver had copied one coin of Bath of the very moneyer concerned (*Numismatic Circular*, March 1961, p. 60), and a moment’s reflection will show that +HDLSTAN ON BADI and +EDESTAN ON RAID both have been prompted by coins such as Hild. ÆThelræd 51 and 52 with readings +ÆDESTAN ON BAD and +ÆDESTAN ON BADAN. In this connexion it may be remarked that coins of the Bath mint have occurred in a number of Ostmannic hoards, examples that come at once to mind being those from Dungarvan (Inventory — but Bonser 9245), Andreas II (Inventory 9 but to be dated c. 1050 and not ‘Xth century’) and Dunbrody (Inventory 141 but cf. my forthcoming note on the mint of Berkeley). Close inspection of the ‘Reading’ coin, moreover, reveals that the initial ‘R’ of the mint-signature is to say the least dubious, and a detailed study of the epigraphy of the Hiberno-Norse coinage cannot but foster the impression that the engraver was essaying a ‘B’. In other words the mint-signature is BADI and not RAID, and the association not only with Bath but with Hild. ÆThelræd 64, the BADI coin of ‘Edestan’ recently die-linked into the Hiberno-Norse series, may be thought to have been established beyond all reasonable doubt.

A quick check of the more accessible material has failed to produce the die-link between the RAID coin and Dublin which would settle the matter once for all, but it will be surprising if the Scandinavian hoards—or even a new find from Ireland—do not throw up sooner or later a coin from the same obverse die with a certain Dublin reverse, or alternatively a coin from the same reverse with a Sihtric obverse. The weight of the RAID coin, 16·7 grains, not only is an argument against its being English but is completely consistent with the view that the coin is Hiberno-Norse. In *Anglo-Saxon Coins* Miss V. J. Butler has just published some figures for the Last Small Cross type of ÆThelræd II (p. 205) which suggest that even the lower weight-standard was in the region of 20 grains, and in the 1959 *British Numismatic Journal* (p. 281)
it has been shown that 75 per cent. of the Last Small Cross type coins of Dublin weigh between 16 and 20 grains, and 33.3 per cent. between 16 and 17½ grains. Even without the die-link, therefore, the case for attributing the RAID or rather BAID coin to the Hiberno-Norse series is truly formidable, and one cannot but endorse the discretion of the anonymous editors of the 1950 Supplement when they refused to accept the 'Æthesan' coin as evidence for an Anglo-Saxon mint at Reading.

Coin (c) is a case of simple misattribution. As Mr. F. Elmore Jones pointed out to the writer a number of years ago, Brihtric is a Petherton moneyer in the preceding type (cf. Lockett 796), and his suggestion that the penny would be found to read PED1 and not RED1 has been more than vindicated by inspection of the original coin. Both Miss van der Meer and the writer, moreover, have come across quite independently a third coin of the mint and moneyer in one of the unpublished Swedish hoards, but the whole question of the mint of Petherton is one that merits a separate note. Here it is sufficient once again to record that the judgement of the editors of the 1950 Supplement was eminently sound.

In the case of coin (d), however, one suspects that mistranscription was inferred where it did not in fact exist. Suitably enlarged direct photographs of the unique Stockholm coin reveal beyond all shadow of doubt the essential accuracy of Hildebrand's transcription of the reverse legend. The mint-signature READIN is impeccable, and there is absolutely no possibility of misreading. Even though, then, Corff is otherwise known only at London, the attribution of this coin to Reading seems inevitable, and in this case we must not forget that Brooke had had one very real advantage over the 1950 editors in that he had been able to make a fleeting examination of the Systematic Collection at Stockholm, and so could be certain that READIN was the mint-signature and not a semi-erased LYNDEN liable to be misread. It is the opinion of the writer, then, that Hild. Edw. Conf. 635 is an authentic coin of the Reading mint, the only Anglo-Saxon coin struck there which has survived, but not the less genuine for that.

Coin (e) rests entirely on the testimony of two nineteenth-century provincial antiquaries, W. A. Raper and E. H. Willett, the latter admittedly a numismatist of some experience. In their account of the great Sedlescombe hoard, a portion apparently of the bullion reserve of the Hastings mint, they record a Pointed Helmet penny of Edward the Confessor with reverse legend:

+L:VE:INE ON RÆDIN
It is remarkable that the same transcription occurs both on p. 12 and on p. 32 of the 1883 volume of the Sussex Archaeological Collections, and it must surely be inferred that the reading—though not the interpretation—is uncontroversial, i.e. that the legend as recorded is no more than superficially different from that which in fact appears upon the coin. In fact the transposition of a single stroke in the Raper and Willett transcriptions is all that is necessary for the coin to be given with confidence—and infinitely greater plausibility—to a well-attested mint where the moneyer is known. Indeed the reattribution is so obvious that one feels that it must already have been made instinctively by Brooke.

The first feature to be noted is that a numismatic spelling RÆDIN(g) for READING is extremely improbable, and to find a comparable and even then quite exceptional numismatic replacement of ‘ea’ by ‘æ’ before ‘d’ one would have to go back some thirty years to the reign of Cnut. Moreover, as Mr. J. D. A. Thompson has remarked in the Inventory, the combination of letters which occupies the space where the moneyer’s name might be expected to appear cannot be reconciled with the name of any of the Reading moneyers given by Brooke. Clearly, however, the die-engraver was essaying LUFIN, at this period a very frequent misinscription for LYFINE, and Lyfine—thanks to his celebrated gold penny with the types of the preceding issue—is the Warwick moneyer par excellence of Edward the Confessor. The suggestion of this paper, therefore, is that the coin seen by Raper and Willett in fact read:

+_LÆFINE ON PÆRIN

So far the writer has not been able to trace a Lyfine penny of Warwick of this type, but one is cited by Mr. D. F. Allen in the 1948 British Numismatic Journal. Unfortunately details of the legends are not given there, but the plausibility of the present hypothesis can be gauged from the fact that Mr. Allen does record a coin of the immediately preceding issue with reverse legend:

+_LYFINE ON PÆRIN

One has very little hesitation, therefore, in emending the entry on p. 121 of the Inventory from ‘. . . . Reading: uncertain moneyer LÆFINE 1 . . .’ to ‘. . . . Warwick: Lyfine, 1 . . .’ with a consequential alteration on p. 161 of the index. The footnote in this case might perhaps be recast to run something as follows: ‘Misread and misattributed by Raper and Willett to Reading.’

To sum up. There is only one Anglo-Saxon penny which can be given with any degree of confidence to Reading, the unique Trefoil Quadrilateral penny of Edward the Confessor in the Systematic Collection at Stockholm (Hild. Edw. Conf. 635). The Edward the Confessor coins of Brihtric and Lyfine (‘Lucine’) can be shown to be misattributed coins of Petherton and of Warwick respectively. The ‘Æthelræd II’ coins by ‘Edestan’ and ‘Noae’ are Scandinavian imitations, the former certainly hailing from Dublin and the latter perhaps from the same area. Thus, in any future edition of English Coins, the Reading entry in the lists at the end of Chapter VI will have to take the following form:

READING (Readin): Corff (Ed).