TWO NOTES ON THE ‘LAST SMALL CROSS’ TYPE OF ÆTHELRAED II

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I. A LATE VARIETY FROM THE LONDON MINT

There is a very rare variety of Æthelraed’s Last Small Cross type which differs from the normal in that the king’s bust, instead of being confined within the inner circle, breaks the circle and extends to the edge of the coin, thereby dividing the inscription. Although the diadem is retained, and the inscription, as is usual with the Last Small Cross type, begins above the head, this modified design in some measure echoes the Long Cross issue, and suggests that the authorities may have been experimenting in search of a new type. That the obverse design could be varied to a minor degree during the currency of a particular issue, provided that the reverse remained standard, is demonstrated by the various transitional varieties at the end of the Crux issue1 one of which, in its portraiture, anticipated the Long Cross type which followed. Indeed, the almost complete absence from the late Anglo-Saxon coinage of ‘mules’ combining a current obverse type with an obsolete reverse type suggests, inter alia, that an issue was recognized primarily by its reverse type and only secondarily by its obverse.

The variety in question is known only of the London mint. Hildebrand designated it Type A var. e, and listed the following examples:

1. **Obv.** ÆDELRAED REX AE
   **Rev.** EADPOLD MO LVNDE
   Hild. 2421. Weight 1-06 gm. (16-3 gr.). (Fig. A, 1)

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2. Obv. +ÆDELÆÐ/D REX A
Rev. +GODRIC MO LVNDE
Hild. 2577. Weight 1-06 gm. (16-3 gr.). (Fig. A, 2)

3. Obv. +ÆDELÆÐ/REX AN
Rev. +LEOFPINE ON LVNDE
Hild. 2743. Weight 1-08 gm. (16-6 gr.). (Fig. A, 3)

There are no specimens in Copenhagen¹ nor does Nordman list any in his catalogue
of Finnish finds,² nor does the British Museum possess one. It seems that there is only
one other published example, which was lot no. 827 in the V. J. E. Ryan sale of 1952 and
is now in the present writer's collection:

4. Obv. +ÆDELÆÐ/D REX A
Rev. +SAEPINE MON LVND
Hild. — Weight 0·90 gm. (13-8 gr.). (Fig. A, 4)

There is no reason to doubt that these coins are of English manufacture. Quite apart
from the epigraphy, which is typical of the London mint late in the Last Small Cross
issue and is not unlike that of the earliest (i.e. heaviest) coins of this mint of the Quatre-
foil issue, the four coins are from different obverse dies and are by different moneyers.
Had they been Scandinavian imitations, die-linking on a considerable scale could have
been expected, not only within the type but also with imitations of other types and even
with barbarous copies. While it is not improbable that reverse die-links with coins of
the normal Last Small Cross type will be found, there are no links with the substantial
group of Scandinavian imitations which have recently been studied³ and it is highly
improbable that any of these coins can be die-linked into the Scandinavian series.

The moneyers themselves are of no assistance in confirming or denying the late dating
of the variety, since Eadwold, Godric, and Leofwine were all active in the Last Small
Cross issue and in the preceding and following issues, and Saewine is an otherwise un-
known London moneyer of Æthelraed and is not known for Cnut either. Metrology,
however, lends its support, because the recorded examples of this variety are among the
lightest of the issue and it is extremely unlikely that they were struck on a weight stan-
dard of more than about 17 gr.

What the standard actually was, cannot be determined with precision. It is by no
means certain that an Anglo Saxon standard fixed the average weight of an individual
penny in grains and basic fractions of a grain (e.g. \(\frac{1}{4}\) or \(\frac{1}{2}\)): indeed, it is more likely to
have specified a convenient number of pence to be minted from a pound of (alloyed)
silver of 5,400 gr.⁴ If, for example, 320 pence were to be coined from one pound, the
average weight would be \(16\frac{2}{3}\) gr. (1-09 gm.) and this is a possible standard for the
variety under consideration: a multiple of 20 or 30 (or even 15) is more likely, bearing
in mind the factors of 5,400, than one of 25 such as 325 pence to a pound, which
represents an average weight of \(16\frac{8}{13}\) gr. (1-08 gm.). Whatever it was, the lowering of the
standard from its original value of 200 pence to a pound, although gradual, was very

¹ None is included in the forthcoming second
volume of the Copenhagen Sylloge.
² Anglo-Saxon Coins Found in Finland, Helsingfors,
1921.
³ See C. S. S. Lyon, R. H. M. Dolley, and G. van
der Meer, 'Some Scandinavian Coins in the Names of
Æthelraed, Cnut and Harthacnut attributed by Hilde-
brand to English Mints', BNJ xxx, p. 235.
⁴ Domesday, for example, differentiates in some
cases between the geld payable when the penny was
struck at 20 to the ore and when it was struck at 16
to the ore. There were 15 ore to the pound.
marked, and indicates a heavy overvaluation of the coinage if heavy and light coins of a particular issue were able to circulate freely side by side. In this connexion it may be significant that, from the more prolific mints, the earlier, heavy coins are distinctly scarce in the Scandinavian hoards in relation to the later, lighter coins, not only in the Last Small Cross issue but also in the Quatrefoil issue, when the reverse might have been expected on the basis that minting was generally most intense at the beginning of a new issue: but the development of this subject, important though it is for an understanding of the coinage of the period, is beyond the scope of this note.

If indeed Type A var. e does represent a search for a new type, it may be compared with the unique Last Small Cross coin in Bergen of the London moneyer Eadwerd which replaces the diademed hair by a pointed helmet (anticipating Cnut's type introduced c. 1023). A change of type was in all probability due in 1015, but was not in fact introduced until 1017, due no doubt to the confused state of the country in the months before and after Æthelræd's death. The suggested date for these coins, therefore, is 1015, a few months before the change of type should have been made.

II. A SECOND DIE-LINK BETWEEN THE MINTS OF 'GOTHABURH' AND EXETER

In their paper entitled 'The Mints 'aet Gothabyrig' and 'aet Sith(m)estebyrig' (BNJ xxviii, pp. 270 ff.) Mr. R. H. M. Dolley and Mr. F. Elmore Jones described and illustrated all the known die-combinations of the 'Gothaburh' mint and drew attention to a die-link with Exeter in Cnut's Quatrefoil issue. Examination of the coins of Exeter of Æthelræd II's Last Small Cross issue in the Royal Coin Cabinet in Stockholm has revealed a further die-link between the two mints which underlines the close geographical relationship between them. The obverse die concerned is found associated with no fewer than three reverse dies of Exeter, two of the moneyer God and one of the moneyer Byrhstan, as well as with a 'Gothaburh' die of the moneyer Wulfmær:

**EXETER**

1. +ÆDELRAED REX ANGL:/+GOD ON EAXCESTRE
   Hild. 530. Weight 1-29 gm. (19-9 gr.). (Fig. B, 1)
2. +GOD ON EAXCEASTRE. Hild. 529. Weight 1-20 gm. (18-5 gr.). (Fig. B, 2)
3. +BYRHSTAN ON EAX. Hild. 479. Weight 0-98 gm. (15-1 gr.). (Fig. B, 4)

**'GOTHABURH'**

4. +PVLFMÆR ON GVDA. Hild. 1132. Weight 1-24 gm. (19-1 gr.). (Fig. B, 3)

Examination of the coins suggests that those of God were struck first, then the Wulfmær coin, and finally the Byrhstan. The principal indications are firstly, the progressive rusting of the portion of the obverse die bearing the king's name, in particular the third and fourth letters, and secondly, the development of two tiny rust marks behind the ends of the diadem, just inside the inner circle. The apparent deterioration of the die in the second half of the inscription on Hild. 529 can only be explained by double-striking.

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1 Lyon, Dolley, and van der Meer, op. cit., p. 237, n. 2.
2 Ibid., pp. 235-8.
That the latest use of the die was by the moneyer Byrhtstan is supported by the light weight of Hild. 479. The other three coins were probably struck to a 20-grain standard, but this is most unlikely for the Byrhtstan since all the evidence is that at this period it is unusual for the weight of a coin to deviate by more than two grains from the standard.

Moreover, Hild. 477 and 478 are apparently earlier strikings from the same reverse die as 479 (though from two different obverse dies) and their weights are no more than 1.12 gm. and 1.06 gm. (17.2 and 16.3 gr.) respectively. (Fig. B, 5 and 6).

The conclusion to be drawn from this die-link is, presumably, that an obverse die in use at the Exeter mint was sent out for use at the nearby 'Gothaburh' mint and was subsequently returned to and reused at Exeter. It may perhaps be inferred that the 'Gothaburh' mint was only open for occasional minting as required: this particular occasion was probably during the middle period of the issue, since the initial minting in 1009 was undoubtedly on a 27-grain standard.