The Coinage of Ancient Britain, by R. P. Mack.

The first edition of this book (1953) marked a great advance in the study of Celtic numismatics, providing as it did an easy system of reference and a full coverage of illustration. Mack numbers have come to stay. But inevitably there were gaps of omission here and there, quite apart from new varieties subsequently discovered in surprising numbers. These gaps have now been made good in a second edition with additional numbers (so that the original numbers have not been altered except in the case of one or two duplicates), and the book is greatly expanded. The distribution maps have been redrawn much more tastefully and corresponding lists of find-spots have been added, though not in the detail given by D. F. Allen in his Origins. Account has been taken of Allen's work of classification, in that the older inaccurate names of the continental coinages (Bellovaci, Morini, etc.) though still usefully quoted, have yielded pride of place to Allen's classes (Gallo-Belgic A, E, etc.). It is all the more odd to find that this process of conflation stops short of the British uninscribed series. It would be useful to have these equations not only for completeness and for neatness' sake (British O is neater as a name than Geometric Quarter-staters struck in Britain) but for ease of cross-reference (the multiplicity of rather woolly traditional terminology is one of the obstacles to clear thought and logical arrangement in this subject). But it is also required because some of the old names are misleading, e.g. Uninscribed Regni quarter-staters. Here Regni is a solecism for Regnenses, a people who themselves only appear in the Flavian period when Cogidubnus' regnum was converted into a civitas. The uninscribed quarter-staters belong to an altogether earlier horizon, and if a tribal name has to be provided they are Atrebatic.

This edition will be warmly welcomed by students. Its possession, indeed, is a necessity since it is so much fuller than the first. Our only regret must be that the original blocks appear to have been lost and replaced with photographic copies. This has resulted in darker illustrations considerably less clear than the originals. References and acknowledgements are given to the more detailed studies of D. F. Allen in the preface, where, however, it would have been useful to record for the benefit of students that the 'Bagendon Report' was edited by Mrs. E. M. Clifford under the title Bagendon, A Belgic Oppidum, and published by Heffer, Cambridge, 1961 and that Allen's Origin of Coinage in Britain was published in Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain, a work edited by this reviewer and published as Occasional Paper No. 11 of the London University Institute of Archaeology, 1961. The book with these added references provides a complete introduction to the Celtic coinage of Britain save in its technological aspects. Further advances require the production of corpora (as in the Sylloge series), for it is only from a study of a number of examples of any issue that the complete die can be made out; and it would clearly be unreasonable in a work of this overall character to look for multiple illustrations of each type. The present reviewer is in course of compiling a card-index with photographs of all known specimens with details of weight, specific gravity and find-spot; and this index, incomplete but growing, can be consulted at the Institute of Archaeology.

S. S. F.


The Royal Collection at Copenhagen has long been known as one of the primary sources for the Anglo-Saxon numismatist, but its contents have never received the attention they deserve. The publication of the first of a six-volume series, under the auspices of the Sylloge committee, which will eventually include the whole Copenhagen Anglo-Saxon collection, is a major event; for the union of the collections of C. J. Thomsen (1788-1865) and L. E. Bruun (1852-1923), two of the most distinguished and scientific collectors of their day, with that accumulated in Denmark from the 17th century onwards, has produced an unequalled range, both in breadth and in depth, of the coinage of the Viking settlements in England, a series more admired for its variety and abused for...
its unintelligibility than any other. There are other things that should be noted; important coins of Coenwulf (58) and Ecgbeorht (654), an unique coin of Aethelstan from the York mint by a monayer who is not the ubiquitous Regnald (683), another Aethelstan from the SMRIE mint (763), and a most handsome Eadwig of the Exeter mint of BMC type v (both the obverse and reverse of circumscription type). There seem, too, to be two major parcels from unpublished hoards: eleven coins of Burgred from the Serrure sale (Paris, 1857), and thirty-four coins bought from William Webster, the London dealer, in 1856, chiefly Eadred and pre-reform Eadgar. Nor should a long run of coins of all periods and all degrees of quality purchased for Copenhagen at the Montagu sale in 1895 pass unmentioned here.

The chief glory of this first volume is the Viking coinage; the collection boasts, for example, sixteen coins of the Anlafs, six of Eric Bloodaxe, two St. Martin pennies, one Sihtric Caoch, and a Regnald Guthfrithsson. One can see, for the first time in the Sylloge series, the whole sweep from ‘Halfpence’”s murky 9th century halfpenny to the ‘sword’ coins of Eric Bloodaxe, harking back to glories that no longer animated the York mint in 952; and, because there are no gaps except those which in fact English occupation created, the slow process by which the Danes of York and their coinage were assimilated into the general structure of England becomes apparent.

Of great interest also is the up-to-date list of hoards and single finds of Anglo-Saxon coins in Denmark (with a distribution map), which Dr. Galster has provided. All the Anglo-Saxon coins from the Terslev (1911) and Sejrâ (1858) finds can be found illustrated in the body of the book. Those who are perplexed by conversion from grammes to pounds will find a reprint of the relevant section of the British Museum’s admirable handbook, and those who are interested in the history of numismatics will read Dr. Galster’s review of the progress of Anglo-Saxon studies in Denmark with attention, if ever so noting the care successive keepers of the Copenhagen collection have given to the study of hoards. There are places, it must be said, where Dr. Galster has not made use of recent English research, notably in his treatment of the Northumbrian styca coinage; and the arrangement of the coins of Eadgar is not calculated for the reader’s convenience. Fortunately none of these seriously affect this volume, but one hopes that in future volumes the order of the coins will be brought into line with modern practice, without which serious difficulties can be foreseen.

H. E. P.
In unavoidably drawing attention to this imbalance Mr. North may persuade numismatists to correct it, in part at least, before his book reaches its second edition. The advances made in recent years in the study of Norman and Plantagenet coins do not immediately attract the reader's attention in the spectacular way of those in the earlier section of the book but a study of the tables reveals how much work has been done in this series also and how well Mr. North has succeeded in collating it.

Throughout the book particular care has been taken with the rendering of the legends, special type being used, for example, for the Runic inscriptions on the sceattas and to illustrate the different letter forms found on the coins of Alfred. In view of this attempt to reproduce as exactly as possible what appears on the coins one must regret the author's decision not to use ð and ð and to substitute ù for v. Even he however seems to have found this latter a little unnatural, for on p. 46 he mentions 'vvd' and on p. 60 'cenvvl' and 'coenvvl' both appear. It is claimed that the obverse legend is given for nearly all the coins listed but unfortunately this is often only one of a number of known readings and despite the restrictions of space one would like to have seen more variants included or at least to have had some indication that such exist. This seems especially necessary when the coin chosen to illustrate a particular type has a different reading from the coin given the same number in the text, e.g. sceatta No. 155. Cynethrith No. 339 reads '. . . REGINA' in the text and '. . . REGIIN' on the plate. At least if one is expected to assume abbreviation one may hope to have the fullest reading given. There is no indication in the text that the ethnic ever appears in the legends on coins of Cenhwulf II. No. 429 reads 'CIOLWLF REX' in the text and the variant 'COIOLWLF REX x' on the plate.

One of the book's principal merits is its clear exposition of the latest theories concerning the classification of individual types. Not only are obverses and reverses fully described but notes with drawings of variant types and busts are often given, no less than three groups of Aethelred II, Hand, Crux and Small Cross, being considered in this way. The Norman and Plantagenet series are rather less handsomely treated where additional drawings are concerned and one must rely more heavily on the plates. Generous illustration is given however to the different busts of the Tealby coins and to the letter forms which are now recognised to be the principal criteria for the classification of the Short Cross series. Among his accurate descriptions of reverse types the author's apparent unfamiliarity with the Roman and Byzantine prototypes of some coins stands out. The derivation of the 'man with crosses' sceatta is confused and surely it is because the die maker did NOT copy the original each time that the evolution of types took place. One of the building types of Edward the Elder is based on what is here wrongly called the 'Providentiae Augusti' type. The legend on the original coin reads 'PROVIDENTIAE AVGV' but if an expansion is required then it must be 'Providentiae Augustorum'. The head on the Pendred gold piece is described as diadem when it is in fact laureate as one would expect from its evident derivation from a first century original.

Mules seem to have had less attention than they deserve especially in a case such as the Intermediate Small Cross/Crux type where the mule is in fact more common than the substantive type of the obverse. Other variants which might have been mentioned are the fleur-de-lys and spear-ended sceptres on the Trefoil-Quadrilateral type of Edward the Confessor.

The information contained in the tables from Aethelred II onwards will be of value to all interested in the series and are an advance on Brooke in that they show the types known and not known for each mint. Into these lists has gone much patient work not only in incorporating from scattered sources the new mints and moneyers now known for each type but also in the careful relisting of those coins whose attribution has been changed since the publication of the standard works. One is impressed by their accuracy and by the fact that they include finds which must have been made only a very short time before the book went to press, e.g. the new mint of Cardiff for Henry I on the evidence of a coin from the Llantrithyd excavation. One omission is Paien of Northampton who struck in several classes for Henry I, and in certain cases the spelling given of moneyers' names is incorrect, e.g. 'Soffarth' for 'S Utfarth' on p. 143, 'Aeldoulf' for 'Aeldosulf' on p. 144 and 'Cristet' for 'Cristett' on p. 146. The use of the ligatured Æ is inconsistent, e.g. on p. 143 'Aelfget' but 'Aelmor'. One suspects that these are printer's errors. Having been given so much one hesitates to ask more of the author but again one must regret his decision not to draw up tables showing in exactly which classes and mints coins are known for each moneyer since this is precisely the information which is often required. Not given it here the reader must still rely on the now outdated and out of print standard works. Such tables would certainly have represented only the state of knowledge in 1963 but is this not true of the whole book? One appreciates the burden that
this project would have imposed but the inclusion of such tables would have increased greatly the value of the book.

A valuation list is included and comparative degrees of rarity are given but since these are only for types and do not normally take account of mints or moneyers within them their usefulness is limited.

The quality of reproduction in the sixteen collotype plates is excellent and although one may wonder why certain coins in poor condition were included (e.g. the William II Cross-voided type of Colchester) the choice on the whole is admirable, having included one or more coins of each of the types and mints working during the period. Although it is difficult to see why the same numbers were not used to distinguish the coins in the plates and in the text the index to the plates is helpfully interleaved with the appropriate illustrations, so that the location of each coin in the lists may be read off at a glance. It is a pity that in six cases the page references are incorrect. Nos. 465 and 467 are on p. 71, not p. 72.

802 (Dover) is on p. 121, not p. 128
949 and 950 are on p. 160, not p. 159
961 is on p. 162, not p. 163.

There is no way of telling from the text which coins are illustrated and in a second edition an asterisk might be inserted to mark these.

The mints of the period are located on three excellent maps. A fourth showing the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms c. 775 does not match them in either appearance or accuracy. At its scale York is some miles east of the Ouse and the Watling Street takes an unusual course through the centre of Tamworth terminating in the vicinity of Shrewsbury.

The book closes with a detailed bibliography and a series of appendices including illustrations of alphabetic forms, tables of average weights and, most notably, a fully documented section on the history of each of the mints striking coins during the period.

The value of the book to the student and collector is immediately obvious but it will also be of great service to the archaeologist and to the museum curator trying to identify coins with few reference books and an inadequate collection of comparative material. In his preface and footnotes the author acknowledges the help given to him by many specialists and it in no way detracts from Mr. North’s own major achievement to say that this book owes much to their generous collaboration.

M. M. A.


A definitive catalogue of all British Colonial and Commonwealth coins has long been overdue; not since Atkins’ work in the later years of the last century has any real attempt been made to provide a complete catalogue of the coins and tokens of all our overseas territories. The task has been attempted in part, and only in part, in the intervening years by others to whom much credit is due: some of them have produced type-catalogues, some detailed works on particular territories, others have produced general narratives and yet others have turned their attention to compiling lists with valuations for every condition of each coin listed.

Capt. Pridmore is tackling the job in the grand manner. The two volumes that have so far appeared give a brief numismatic history of each territory in turn followed by a detailed description of each coin. Patterns and proofs are included in profusion, and in the wide ‘remarks’ column of every page is ample evidence of the care and attention to detail that is so necessary and which raises this work to a level that proclaims it as the standard work on the subject for a very long time to come.

Each coin type is illustrated but, alas, some of the photographs could have been better reproduced. However, even in those that are below the average standard there is sufficient clarity to prevent mis-identification, particularly when read in conjunction with the descriptions.

Those conversant with Pridmore’s articles in the Numismatic Circular and elsewhere must be aware that he presents his evidence for attribution of a coin to a particular territory or period in such a manner that the reader is left beyond all doubt that the last word has been said on the matter: in the volumes under review his style is clear and factual, and whenever he expresses an opinion about the attribution or genuineness of a coin one can be sure that much evidence has been sifted before the opinion is given.

Comments in these two volumes about attractiveness of design are hard to find. No mention is made of the generally acknowledged fineness of the designs of the Hong Kong pattern dollars—which accord the reader a rare numismatic treat by being all in one volume for once. Instead the cryptic but true comment passed on the Palestine coinage that ‘as a series the coins are dull and lack any
artistic merit' is about the sum total of the author's opinions on design.

Where known, the catalogue lists the number of coins struck. This is not always a valid indication of rarity: for example, fourteen million Straits Settlements dollars were struck during 1920-21 but were until recently quite difficult to obtain. However, until standard definitions of the various degrees of rarity are evolved, the striking quantity is perhaps the most factual criterion, particularly where it is stated that additional evidence is known that certain strikings were only issued in part or were quickly recalled.

Those interested in the minutiae of die varieties need not be disappointed; collectors of Guernsey coins have all the 'leaf and berry' varieties given in full. On the other hand the relative positions of the obverse and reverse dies has not been given for any piece because it is said to be of no real importance on modern coinages. It is well known that 'ghosting' is caused by the uneven spread of metal under the press when striking those coins in which the two sides have been designed with little or no co-ordination. In this connection the relative position of the dies can produce a quite unacceptable result if one is inverted, thereby causing uneven metal flow and giving rise to the shadow of the design of one side appearing on the other.

The volume on Europe omits the Anglo-Hanoverian coinage which sadly lacks a complete illustrated catalogue; for this series one must still fall back on Atkins. Volume II omits the coinage of India which is sufficiently large a subject to warrant a volume of its own, that is understood to be 'in active preparation', as is that covering the West Indies.

One has the feeling that the present work is, by its very completeness, the final word on the coinage of many of our overseas territories, for the wind of independence is in the air and one by one the chapters of our colonial numismatic history are being closed for all time.

A. G. S.