TWO TUDOR NOTES

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A CANTERBURY MINT-MASTER'S INDENTURE OF 1534

The study of English coinage in the reign of Henry VIII is often concentrated on the products of the royal mints in London and the environs of London. Yet, before the reorganisation and devaluation during the last years of that reign, the three ecclesiastical mints of Canterbury, York and Durham, were still playing an interesting if subordinate part in the provision of coin for their immediate areas. That of Canterbury can be illustrated from documents which still survive, including that rarity, a mint-master's indenture¹. The first document is a letter of 17 November 1526 from Warham, the archbishop, to the all-powerful Wolsey archbishop of York. The archbishop, he wrote, had always had a mint in the palace of Canterbury, to the great convenience of the King's subjects in Kent and elsewhere. He wished to order it according to Wolsey's new ordinances, proclaimed on the fifth of November, revaluing the coinage. He did not desire this for his own great profit but for the ease of those in Kent who found a journey to Canterbury more convenient than a journey to the Tower. Therefore he was sending Ewyn Tomson, the keeper of his mint, to learn Wolsey's intention. Tomson, on Wolsey's order, consulted Robert Amadas, one of the three London goldsmiths who were deputies for Lord Mountjoy, then master worker of the Tower mint. The result was satisfactory and all three ecclesiastical mints continued to coin, Canterbury having authority to coin half groats, pence and half-pence.

The terms on which this was done are shown in the indenture of 16 January 1534² which follows this introduction. When compared with that of 1465 for the royal mints³, Canterbury's appears as a miniature of a Tower indenture, with the archbishop in place of the king and the archbishop's treasurer or controller in place of the king's warden, but Warham's remark that he did not do it for his own great profit is borne out by his seigniorage. He received only one penny as compared with the Crown's twopence, though the total of one shilling remained the same, the mint-master receiving lid. instead of the lOd. of the Tower. The system of bringing metal to the mint for coining and of guarantors for the master worker also followed the model of the Tower, but with two significant variants. The time within which the mint-master was bound to deliver coin was twelve months, not eight days, and there was definite provision for the speedy replacement of any guarantor who had died. Kent had more leisure and fewer men of substance than London.

Most interesting of all is the supervision of the trial of the pyx. For the Tower mint, the trial took place before the king's council: at Canterbury, according to the indenture, before the archbishop. Such a removal of all royal control seems unlikely, and the answer may lie in a letter of December 1537 from Cranmer to Cromwell. Cranmer had written to the wardens of the Company of Goldsmiths of London requiring them to view the pyx 'as well for my discharge as to the intent the king's highness may be more substantially served in his coins

¹ Reproduced below. For the convenience of readers the spelling has been modernised.
² Lambeth Palace Library, MS. cartae misc. II/3.
³ BNJ, XXV, 53–57.
The wardens had answered that they would gladly do so if 'they may have commandment from one of the Council besides me [Cranmer], for so in times past they have accomplished my predecessors' request herein and not else as they say'. Cranmer therefore asked Cromwell to sign the order he enclosed 'the master and controller of the mint being now in town and they may thereby have expedition in the matter'.

C. A. Whitton believed that the Act of Supremacy (1534) ended the bishops' privilege of coining. Cranmer's letter of 1537 suggests that it still continued, and a unique entry in the records of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths of London not only brings positive proof but reveals the actual working of the system. On 6 December 1537, by virtue of the letters from the archbishop and Cromwell 'assays were made at Goldsmiths' Hall . . . of the money lately coined in the mint of Canterbury in the time of William Tyllesworthe, the mint master under my lord the Archbishop of Canterbury, for the . . . three years and eight months last past'. Those present included three of the wardens of the Goldsmiths' Company, including Alderman Martin Bowes then one of the master-workers of the Tower mint, three former wardens and a senior liveryman, the Company's assayer, its clerk and its beadle. The archbishop was represented by Richard Nevile and by the controller of his mint, the Crown by the Controller of the Tower mint. The proceedings were not lengthy.

'William Tyllesworthe brought in before the said persons his pyx of the said mint and there in the presence of all the said persons it was opened and therein was found in half groats, pence and half pence to the sum of £4 : Os. : 6d., whereof was taken one pound weight . . . amounting to 4½/- current money and so put into a melting pot. And there, after the ancient custom, was molten and cast into an ingot of which ingot there was made two assays [which] were there found good and lawful sterling according to the standard of England and agreeable with the contents of his indenture. In witness whereof we the said wardens . . . by virtue of the commandments by the said letters to us directed have caused this to be entered within the records of the said hall the day and year above said'.

The records do not show what happened in the interval between this trial of the pyx and the royal reorganisation in 1544/5 of the English mints when Tyllesworthe became under-treasurer of the Canterbury mint. That reorganisation lies outside the scope of this article, but it would seem that a study of the Canterbury coins in the years 1534–1545 might bring interesting results.

This indenture made the 16th day of January the 25th year of the reign of King Henry the VIIIth [1534] Between the right reverend father in God Thomas [Cranmer], archbishop of Canterbury, primate of all England and of the Apostolic See legate, on the one part, and William Tillesworth of London, goldsmith, on that other part, witnesseth that the said lord archbishop has made, ordained and established by these presents the said William master and worker of his moneys of silver within his mint in the city of Canterbury, to have, hold and occupy by himself or his sufficient deputy or deputies according to the form of the indenture which William has undertaken before the said lord archbishop to make the same moneys under the manner and form that followeth, that is to say to make three manner of moneys of silver that is to wit one piece of them running for 2d. which shall be called the half groat. And there shall be 270 such pieces in the lb. weight of the weight of troy. And the second piece running for 1d which shall be called a sterling. And there shall be 540 such pieces in the lb. weight aforesaid. And the third money shall be called a 'halpeny' which shall be worth half the sterling. And there shall be 1080 such pieces in the lb. weight aforesaid. And all the said moneys of silver so made shall be of the assay of a standard of the old sterling that is to say in every lb. weight of silver of these moneys shall be 11 ounces and 2 penny

1 Public Record Office, S.P. Henry VIII 1/126, p. 222.
2 BNJ, XXVI, 58.
3 The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths of London, Wardens' accounts and Court minutes, F. p. 88.
weights of fine silver and 18 penny weight of alloy, every penny weight containing 24 grains. And every lb. weight of troy of the moneys of silver aforesaid shall hold in number and be in value 45s. sterling of weights of fine silver and 18 penny weight of alloy, every penny weight containing 24 grains. And every shall be called remedy for the master such money to be delivered for good. But if the default be found master within 20 days next ensuing the decease of the said `borrowes' or any of them shall cause other receive in manner and form above-said while he shall be in the said offices the said master hath found him towards the said archbishop well and convenable the said master hath made bodily oath afore the next ensuing tho delivery thereof tho merchants always to stand to the charge of the waste of melting thither, so that the merchants or their attorneys showing the said bills may be repaid within 12 months be holden upon tho receipt of silver to deliver bills to the merchants of the sums that they have brought master shall make fine and ransom to the said archbishop at his will. And the said master or his deputy that one or in that other and b}' force of the remedies beforesaid that the said goodness be entered of record whereof the assays shall be made of that that shall be found within tho said box after the most just manner as is aforesaid as for any deliverance of all the whole sum a portion of the same coins of silver shall be taken and put in a box that is to say of every 10 lbs. weight two penny weights of the said silver whereof the assays shall be made. Of which moneys so put in the said box to make the assays as is aforesaid the said master shall be allowed by the said lord archbishop in the account of the said master to the same lord archbishop to be made. And when the said pieces of silver be put in the said box they shall be sealed in the same with the seal of the treasurer or comptroller or of such other as the said archbishop shall depute for the time. And the same box sealed shall remain in the keeping of the said master or his deputy. And upon reasonable warning it shall be opened before the said archbishop. At the opening whereof the assays shall be made of that that shall be found within the said box after the most just manner as can be thought to be made by fire to the intent that if the said moneys of silver be found and proved good and [ ? covenable] after the assays aforesaid the said master to be quit and excused against the said archbishop unto that time. And if the said moneys of silver by the said assays which shall be made thus be found in weight or in alloy or in that one or in that other more feeble than the right standard be more or less as to the said remedies and more over that the same default be entered and recorded and the said master charged to make agreement with the said archbishop saving alway that in case by the said assays the said moneys of silver be found at any time passing the standard in goodness in weight or in alloy or in that one or in that other and by force of the remedies beforesaid that the said goodness be entered of record and hold place to the said master in the charge which he shall have when any default shall be found in the said moneys by the assays above said. And if it happen that the said moneys of silver upon any of the said just assays as shall be made of the above-said box in the manner afore rehearsed be it by weight or in alloy any default be found passing the remedy ordained for the said master as is above-said, the said master shall make fine and ransom to the said archbishop at his will. And the said master or his deputy be holden upon the receipt of silver to deliver bills to the merchants of the sums that they have brought thither, so that the merchants or their attorneys showing the said bills may be repaid within 12 months next ensuing the delivery thereof the merchants always to stand to the charge of the waste of melting of such silver as he bringeth to make it according to the right standard as is above-said. And for the covenants above-said to be holden and performed on the part of the said master and that he shall bear him towards the said archbishop well and convenable the said master hath made bodily oath afore the said archbishop and bindeth him, his heirs and executors to the same archbishop by these presents. And for more surety to make gre to the merchants of that that to them belongeth of silver which he shall receive in manner and form above-said while he shall be in the said offices the said master hath found four `borrowes' to the said archbishop which hath bound them to the said archbishop in 400 marks sterling that he shall make gre to the merchants as is above-said that is to say each of them in one hundred marks. And also the said master granteth himself to be bound by his writing obligatory to the said lord archbishop in the sum of one hundred marks for the surety of the performance of all the covenants and grants on his part as is above-said to be observed and performed. And if that the said `borrowes' or any of them hereafter during the time that the said master shall continue his said office fortune to decease then the said master within 20 days next ensuing the decease of the said `borrowes' or any of them shall cause other
THE ENGLISH ROYAL MINT AT CALAIS

In 1363 Edward III established in Calais a royal mint with instructions to coin both gold and silver. For master worker he engaged Henry de Brusele (Brisele), a former master worker of the mint in the Tower of London, and the working arrangements and oversight of the new mint were closely tied to both Westminster and the Tower. The cutter of the irons, appointed by the King’s council, was required to work as needed either at the Tower or at Calais and coin had to be sent to Westminster for periodical assay. From sometime in the reign of Richard II onwards, the offices of master worker at the Tower and at Calais were held by the same man, usually with a deputy at Calais. There the mint was regarded as a necessary counterpart to the staple in helping to ensure that the proceeds of English sales were turned into English coin and returned to this country in order to maintain that stock of money which was thought by both King and Commons to be essential to English prosperity. In fact, in face of the rise first of Bruges and then of Antwerp, the decline of the King’s rule in France and the absence of evidence to show that the mint at Calais remained active, it has been suggested that the office of master worker at Calais had, by Tudor times, become a sinecure.

This view is challenged by the evidence available in the papers of Lord Lisle, Henry VIII’s deputy as resident governor of Calais. Imprisoned in the Tower in May 1540 on suspicion of treason, he was released in 1542 only to die in March of that year with his papers still in the crown’s hands. Amongst them were the letters of John Husse, his London agent. Half a dozen of these letters show that the long established system may once more have been functioning. ‘I have been with the master of the mint for your acquittance for the coining irons’ Hussee wrote on 15 October 1539. ‘He says I shall have it but he has not yet delivered it’. On the 22nd he wrote that he had still not received it. Nor had he on the 25th ‘although I have vigilantly called for the same as God best knoweth’. On the 9th November he was still trying, and reproaching Lisle with ‘It was not well done of your lordship to deliver the same without some bill or knowledge’. Despairing of getting it from the house of Bowes, the master worker, in Lombard St., he added ‘I must now go to the Tower when all the officers be together and then they promise I shall have it. I pray God send me little to do with them’. Fifteen days later he wrote in triumph, beginning his letter with the good news, ‘I have now got the acquittance for the coining irons which are [?damned?] and defaced’.

For some two hundred years the irons had been delivered by the wardens of the Tower mint by indenture. They were so delivered to the provincial mints at Canterbury, York and Durham during Henry VIII’s reign. They had presumably been so delivered to Lisle...

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1 P[ublic] R[ecord] O[ffice], copy indenture of de Brusele E. 101/306/1 mb. 2.
2 P.R.O. S.P. Henry VIII, 3/4 and 5.
in Calais. He had omitted to get a receipt when returning some of them. Until that receipt was secured he was responsible for them and for any use that might be made of them. His trusted London agent would hardly have spent the time and energy shown in this correspondence had the irons been the utensils of a non-existent Calais mint, and Lisle lived in Calais and had no connection with the London mint. The evidence that the Calais mint was again in use in 1539 is surely well worth fuller examination.