NEW LIGHT ON THE 1843 VIKING-AGE COIN-HOARD FROM DERRYKEIGHAN NEAR DEROVCOCK IN CO. ANTRIM

By R. H. M. DOLLEY

In the 1959 volume of this Journal, Mr. W. A. Seaby has published an account of the 1843 Viking-age coin-hoard from Derrykeighan near Dervock in the north of Co. Antrim, and this account may be thought effectively to supersede Mr. J. D. A. Thompson's Inventory listing of three years earlier. In the course of his paper Mr. Seaby suggested that the find may have included a York penny of Eric Bloodaxe (948, 952–954), not improbably a sadly chipped two-line (948?) penny of the moneyer Ingelgar which is in the Ulster Museum (ex Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society). New evidence more than bears out the validity of what could be in 1959 little more than an inspired guess.

In November 1965 the well-known Dublin numismatist, Mr. F. E. Dixon, wrote to the present writer enclosing rubbings of two coins in his possession, and a sheet of paper inscribed in a late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century hand as follows:

\[\text{recto}\]
For Isabella (vertically)

\[\text{verso}\]

In 1843. June. Some persons
when digging a grave in
the burying ground of
the old Church of Derry:
:Keehan, Dervock, Co.
Antrim discovered two
hundred & sixty Saxon
coins of the following Kings.
Edwig, Edred, Eadgar, Eric,
Athelstan, and Edmund.'

The sheet of paper measures 7.9 by 4.8 inches, and is feint-ruled and watermarked 'STRATHENDRY/PARCHMENT'. Its date appears to be consistent with the handwriting, and the black ink has faded little if at all. Mr. Dixon has reason to think that the initials are those of one of the Stewarts of Dervock. The paper was acquired in Dervock along with a number

of coins, but of these only two appear to be connected with the hoard, a silver penny of Eadred (946–955) by the moneyer Hunred, and a fragment of a Carolingian coin which is discussed in detail below. It was of these coins that Mr. Dixon sent rubbings.

It has not been possible to find a reference to the hoard in the Rev. George Hill’s *An Historical Account of the MacDonnells of Antrim*, the publication of which in 1873 provides a *terminus post quern* for the document reproduced above, and the identity of the McNeill book remains a mystery—was it perhaps a book in the possession of a mutual acquaintance of that name? Nevertheless the quotation must be thought abundantly to vindicate Mr. Seaby’s suggestion that there was at least one coin of Eric in the Derrykeighan find of 1843, and it is perhaps worthwhile remarking that there are on record 13 pennies of Eric of York for which a find spot is known. A summary listing is as follows:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TWO-LINE TYPE</th>
<th>SWORD TYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co. Cork⁴</td>
<td>Ingelgar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derrykeighan²</td>
<td>Ingelgar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killyon Manor³</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lough Lene⁴</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smarmore⁵</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iona⁶</td>
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<tr>
<td>Machrie⁷</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andreas⁸</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas⁹</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetney¹⁰</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome¹¹</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†The coin exists¹² and is in the cabinet of Commander R. P. Mack.¹³

It will be noticed that 6 of the 13 provenances are from Ireland, 2 from Man, and 2 from the Scottish Isles. Only 1 is from England, and there could be no better illustration of the extent to which York remained an integral part of the Hiberno-Norse and Norwegian world even after the expulsion of Eric’s great rival, the wily Anlaf Siithriossen of Dublin.

The second of the coins of which Mr. Dixon sent rubbings is here illustrated by a direct photograph (enlarged). It is beyond all doubt a *denarius* of Pippin II of Aquitaine (839–858), and the legends may be expanded with confidence:—

```plaintext
+PIPINVS] REX E[Q
+ME] TVL [LO
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¹ J. Lindsay, *A View of the Coinage of the Heptarchy etc.* (Cork, 1842), p. 123 etc.
² R. H. M. Dolley, *SCBI*, BM Hiberno-Norse, p. 32, n. 17 etc.
³ *Op. et pag. cit.*, n. 4 etc.
⁴ *Op. et pag. cit.*, n. 7 etc.
⁵ *Op. et pag. cit.*, n. 10 etc.
⁷ *Op. et pag. cit.*, n. 5 etc.
⁸ *Op. et pag. cit.*, n. 7 etc.
⁹ *Op. et pag. cit.*, n. 8 etc.
¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 34, n. 8 etc.
¹¹ R. H. M. Dolley, ‘The Post Brunanburh Viking Coinage of York’, *NNÁ*, 1957–1958, pp. 34, 56 & 57. The ‘sword’ coin described in this paper as belonging to a hoard from Armagh (pp. 31 & 60) is in fact the coin of two-line type from Derrykeighan.
¹² Pace Dolley, *op. cit.*, p. 60. By the kindness of Commander Mack an electrotype is in the British Museum.
¹³ Commander Mack informs me that he bought it in 1944 'ex Baldwin, ex Grantley 962, ex Rashleigh 153; found Lough Lynn 1844 [sic]'.

Comparable coins already are on record as having occurred in an Irish find, the critical 1871 hoard from Mullaghboden¹, and the problem that confronts the numismatist is whether this coin, purchased at Dervock along with an Eadred penny which seems certainly from the hoard², is in fact from the Derrykeighan find of 1843, and not a stray from Mullaghboden, the subject perhaps of an unrecorded exchange between brother-antiquaries.

A recent paper³ has sought to demonstrate that the Mullaghboden find represents a part of the proceeds of Westfalding raids in Aquitaine terminated in 846 when the Vikings abandoned their base at Noirmoutiers, and as such is a welcome piece of fresh evidence that W. E. D. Allen may well be right that the Westfaldings withdrew from France in order to lend support to their hard-pressed cousins in Ireland⁴. On this telling there may well have been brought to Ireland a considerable quantity of Melle coins of Pippin II of Aquitaine, and in this event one might expect the odd coin to figure in finds from the whole island. That the coin is not cited in any of the printed accounts of the Derrykeighan find does not really constitute a valid objection. Nineteenth-century numismatists often were quite singularly blind to the significance of fragmentary coins, and we have just seen that the chipped coin of Eric passed unremarked in the sources quoted by Mr. Seaby in his definitive account of the hoard. More serious is the objection that the coin is sixty or seventy years older than any other of the pieces on record as having been found at Derrykeighan. Here, however, it is necessary to adduce a printed source brought to my notice a year or two back by my friend Mr. L. N. W. Flanagan of the Ulster Museum, William Reeve’s *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Down, Connor and Dromore* which appeared in 1847. As a sober and reliable historian the future Bishop Reeves is in a class by himself, and on p. 79 of this *magnum opus* there occurs the following:—

‘A few years since, a hoard of silver coins, 280 in number, was found in a field outside the churchyard [of Derrykeighan]. With the exception of a Trajan, they were all Saxon, of Athelstan, Eadmund, Eadred, Eadwig, and Eadgar; the last being the most numerous. A list of the rarest specimens in the collection may be seen in the Numismatic Chronicle [vol. vi (1843/1844)], p. 213.’

¹ R. H. M. Dolley, *SCBI, BM Hiberno-Norse*, p. 19, n. 3 etc.
² Significantly the Derrykeighan hoard contained 4+ coins of this moneyer. The readings of Mr. Dixon’s coin are *obv.* +EADREDREX: and *rev.* + / HYNER / + + + / EDMO / . . .
At first sight the inclusion of a Roman *denarius* of the second or perhaps third century in a tenth-century Viking hoard may seem preposterous. It must be remembered, however, that the owner of the hoard, probably an Irishman since after Killineer (868) Viking influence in Ulster would seem to have been negligible, would have been interested in coins solely as bullion. Almost certainly he was not a user of coin as such. It would have been natural for him to add to his stock of silver any small piece that came his way, and, as it happens, *denarii* of Trajan (98–117) have been found in Antrim in very considerable quantity. They figure very prominently in at least one major hoard, the c. 1830 (?) find from Feigh Mountain which the present writer believes should be equated with the 1827 (?) find from the adjacent Flower Hill, both places being no more than seven or eight miles removed from Derrykeighan. It is being suggested, too, that the occasion of the hoard or hoards may have been the conquest of Galloway by Q. Lollius Urbicus between 140 and 142, and if silver coin was being brought across the North Channel at that period there is no reason to suppose that the entirety was concealed on Feigh Mountain. Another hoard of the same description, or even a stray-find, could well be the source of the Derrykeighan *denarius*, and while the present writer would be reluctant entirely to preclude the possibility that the coin became confused with the hoard proper only when the latter was discovered, the greater probability must be that Reeves is right when he states that a coin of Trajan was present in the 1843 hoard from Derrykeighan. We should not forget in this connection that from Scandinavia there are well-authenticated instances of Roman *denarii* occurring in Viking hoards, the only controversy in this case being whether the coins are genuine products of Roman mints or, as seems more likely perhaps, imitations of almost contemporary date produced in the Baltic area.

The greater probability, then, is that the original owner of the Derrykeighan hoard may have been something of a magpie where silver coins were concerned, and if he added to his store a *denarius* of Trajan he is unlikely to have eschewed a coin of Pippin II. The latter coin, however, with its essentially ‘mediaeval’ fabric and types, once broken was unlikely to catch the eye of a nineteenth-century antiquary, and so we need not be surprised that it was not remarked by Lindsay or Reeves, or by the still unidentified author of the passage quoted by ‘S. F. S.’ in the second paragraph of this paper. We have seen that there is some reason to think that in 846 the Westfaldings returned to Norway by way of Ireland, and that *denarii* of Pippin II figured prominently in their loot from Aquitaine. On the other hand there is no evidence whatever to connect the Stewarts of Dervock with Shearman, and the coins from Mullaghboden retained by him are now accounted for, being in the Museum at Clongowes Wood College in Co. Kildare. On balance, then, a Derrykeighan provenance for the Pippin fragment seems very plausible, and it is pleasant to record that Mr. Dixon on hearing of the coin’s great interest for the Ulster Museum at once presented it to that institution.

A recent paper has listed a total of 26 hoards with Carolingian coins from Great Britain and Ireland, 14 from England, 6 from Scotland, 4 from Ireland and 1 apiece from Man and

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1 Trajan Decius (249–251), who, however, struck no *denarius*, only *antoniniani*.
3 Op. et pag. cit., no. 3. The problem of the identity of the two finds will be discussed by me in a forthcoming reassessment of Roman coins found in Ireland in connection both with some recent finds at Newgrange and the controversy over the date of (St.) Patrick.
6 Included as well in the gift is the all-critical sheet of paper initialled ‘S.F.S. transcribed above.
from Wales\textsuperscript{1}. It is a measure of the intensity of work in these islands on coins of the Viking period that already there should be two additions to be made to that list, the Derrykeighan find discussed above which should be inserted as no. 19a on p. 83 of the paper cited, and the Tiree hoard from the Hebrides\textsuperscript{2} to be inserted as no 20a on the same page, now that the Edinburgh \textit{Sylloge} has suggested that the Tiree provenance attaches to certain debased \textit{deniers} from Normandy which have lain without tickets in that collection. What is encouraging is that these two additions to the list reinforce and do not detract from a pattern already observed, this being a very pronounced tendency for Carolingian coins to occur in finds from outside the limits of effective English rule.

A feature that may be remarked in the context of this fifth occurrence of Carolingian coins in an Irish hoard is the fact that of 21 coins described no fewer than 8 should be from the mint of Melle. Of these 6 certainly would appear to belong to the period when the Vikings of Noirmoutiers were pillaging the whole of Aquitaine, and the present writer even wonders if the 1963 paper was not just a little too confident that the coins in the 1843 find from Lough Lene in Co. Westmeath belonged to the tenth century. Again there would be corroboration of W. E. D. Allen's hypothesis that the Westfaldings from Aquitaine withdrew north-westwards instead of up the English Channel, but the point is one that need not be laboured further. Granted that Melle was one of the more prolific of Carolingian mints, the incidence of coins of Melle in Irish finds both requires and receives explanation from the main streams of Irish history.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1] Dolley \& Morrison, \textit{op. cit.}, cf. p. 35 n. 5 \textit{supra}.
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