ON AN ALLEGED PENNY OF LUDICA, KING OF MERCIA 825–7

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In a paper entitled ‘The Coinage of Southern England, 796–840’, the few surviving coins of Ludica, king of Mercia 825–7, were listed. These consisted of three pennies, and a fragment the attribution of which was somewhat doubtful. Unknown to the writers there was lying in the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum a coin, closely resembling the variety in the nearby Hunterian Museum, which latter is the one frequently illustrated from the time of Speed onwards.

The enlarged photograph shown above, which was supplied by courtesy of the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum and is taken from the original makes detailed description of the type unnecessary. The weight is 22.8 gr.

Though closely resembling the Hunter specimen, the new coin is not from the same dies. Naturally the unexpected discovery of so great a rarity in a museum that has a relatively modest coin collection raises the question of authenticity. Mr. J. G. Scott, Curator of the Department of Archaeology, Ethnography and History, has most kindly made extensive enquiries on our behalf to try and establish how it came to the Museum.

The coins in their collection came to them, as far as he can trace, from the Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College which has now become the University of Strathclyde. The Technical College was in turn the successor to Anderson’s University, set up by Professor John Anderson of Glasgow University as an experiment in what we would now call extramural education. From c.1760 onwards Professor Anderson seems to have begun to amass...
a teaching collection which eventually grew into the Andersonian Museum, probably in its own building from c.1798. Through the kindness of Mr. Geo. P. Richardson, Registrar of the University of Strathclyde, Mr. Scott was able to examine a photo-copy of the manuscript Catalogue of Coins in Anderson's Museum in 1875. The only coins in this list likely to be pre-conquest are described as 'Ancient Irish', 'St. Edmund' and 'Canute', one of each. It seems clear therefore that the coin of Ludica was not then in the cabinet: its identification could have presented no problem since it is described in the first edition of Hawkins' *Silver Coins*, the standard work of reference at the time, and the reader is there referred to the illustration of the Hunter specimen in Ruding's *Annals*. What seemed, therefore, a promising possibility of taking the new coin back to the 18th century failed.

Coins allegedly of Ludica were not infrequent in 18th and early 19th century sales. Mrs. Martin of the British Museum has kindly supplied us with the following references:

1773 West sale, type not mentioned. To Wilson, with two coins of Coenwulf for £8.8.0.
1773 Collector lately deceased. To Thane, with coins of Ethelred(1) and Edward the Confessor (2). £3.17.0. (Thane was the son-in-law of Snelling and, like him, a dealer. No coin of Ludica was in his sale in 1819).
1779 Gerard sale, type not mentioned. To Hill for 11/-.
1791 King sale, type not mentioned. To Hodsdol for £1.2.0. Hodsdol's collection was bought by Tyssen in 1794, but the Ludica is not now in the Anglo-Saxon portion bought by the British Museum which suggests that it is false, as indeed does the price made.
1826 Thorpe and others sale. Type as the Hunter coin. Bought for 'money' for 10/-—. The Wiglaf in the next lot was bought for £12 by Rich and is the specimen now in the British Museum (BMC 117) which is considered to be a cast of Lockett 389. The price of the Ludica suggests that it too is false, and unlike the Wiglaf was thought to be so at the time.

This line of enquiry seems equally abortive. One is therefore driven to judge the coin on its merits alone. It has been badly cleaned and consequently makes an unfavourable first impression but the same applies to its neighbours in the case, especially a Coenwulf of East Anglian type by the moneyer Lul, so that no doubt all were similarly treated at some time in the past. It certainly is not cast and gives the impression of having been struck, though the possibility of engraving cannot entirely be ruled out. Neither die is the same as the Hunter coin and the reverse die is not the same as any that Werbald used on his coinage in the name of Beornwulf. In the legends the points against the coin are the use of a G in place of a c in the king's name and, on the reverse, the blundering of the letter B in the moneyer's name. The curious placing of the letters MO in MONE corresponds closely with their placing on the Hunter coin and might be a cause of suspicion were it not that this seems an idiosyncrasy of this moneyer, cf. the Beornwulf coin of his in the British Museum (BMC, pl. IX, 13). The blundering of the B is however more serious. If the coin is a forgery, it must be copying the Hunter specimen. Now it is just at this point that the latter exhibits a lack of definition which could lead astray the too blind copyist. The illustration in the Glasgow *Sylloge* volume, no. 354, brings this out clearly and an imitator might well be at a loss to know exactly what the original was intended to be. The inner circle on the obverse is linear, whereas on the Hunter coin it is dotted. But what must be most significant is the form of the letters. The dies for Ludica's coinage show evidence that they were engraved and not punch-stamped. Careful examination of certain of the letters on the new coin shows what appear to be attempts to reproduce a punch-made die. The ES in REX and MONE are all made up of a distinct vertical element and three generally wedge-shaped horizontals, in one or two cases detached
from the vertical as is so often the case with punch-made dies. Similarly the R in REX appears to be made up of three separate elements as it would be with a punch-made die. Compare these letters with those on the Hunter coin and the differences will be immediately apparent.

This we believe to be the decisive evidence that this coin, of which, when we had once got over its unattractive appearance, we were beginning to have high hopes, is in fact a modern—i.e. probably 19th cent.—fabrication. We reach this conclusion with the greatest regret, because nothing would have given us greater pleasure than to be able to add a further specimen to the short list of coins of Ludica and to be able to assure Mr. Scott, who has been to so much trouble on our behalf, that he had in his care a treasure fit to rival the specimen on the hill at the nearby university.

Mr. Ian Stewart, who had also seen the coin and wondered like us whether it might not be genuine, has now examined the enlarged photograph and shares our view in this matter.