OE *CHRISTDEGN—AN UNSUSPECTED INSTANCE OF EARLY MIDDLE IRISH INFLUENCE ON ENGLISH NAME-GIVING

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There is a small group of English pennies of the common ‘two-line’ type struck for Æthelstan (924–939), Eadmund (939–946), Eadred (946–955) and Eadgar (959–975) where the name of the moneyer (or moneyers) seems in each case to be the exceptional but perfectly acceptable OE *Christdegn†. The specimens known to the writer may be listed as follows:

(1) + ÆDELZTAN R | CRIS- | ++ | TIGN | ↑
(2) + EADMVND RE | CRITZ- | ++ | INMEO | ↑
(3) + EADRED REX O | CRITZ- | ++ | INMEO | ↑
(4) + EADRED RE | CRITZ | ++ | INMEO | ↑
(5) + EADRED REX O | CRITZ | ++ | INMEO | ↑
(6) + EADRED REX O | CRITZ | ++ | INMEO | ↑
(7) + EADRED RE | CRIZT | ++ | INMEO | ↑
(8) + EADGAR RE | + RIS | ++ | TANO | ↑

BMC 101 ex Evans (1962) from the 1862 ‘Ireland’ find of NC 1863, p. 50, no. 18.
C. E. Blunt ex Ryan 769.
C. E. Blunt ex Wills ex Walters (1934) 64.
BM ex 1950 Chester T.T. no. 155.
Copenhagen SCBI 736 ex 1858 Sejrø find.
Leningrad, Hermitage.
Edinburgh SCBI 382 ex 1960 Iona T.T. no. 224.

The eight coins are illustrated on the accompanying plate [Plate II, 1–8], and it will be seen that there is no evidence of die-linking, except that coin 3 could be from the re-cut reverse die of coin 2. Concerning the attribution of the last coin there is possibly some room for doubt—not altogether to be precluded at this stage is the possibility that the coin is to be read FRS | TAN (? for Frithstan) or even +FIS | TAN (? for Winstan, occasional omission of ‘N’ being fairly well-attested on coins of this period). As regards the remaining seven coins, though, those of Æthelstan, Eadmund and Eadred, there does seem to be a quite remarkable consistency where both prototheme and deutotheme of the moneyer’s name are concerned, and particularly to be stressed is the uniform use of ‘i’ as the vowel of both. Unfortunately not one of the pieces has a mint-signature, but on stylistic grounds all may be given with some assurance to a mint or mints in the northern part of England, and the general area of York and Lincoln might seem to be that which is indicated. In this connection it is perhaps relevant that in the last decade of the tenth century there is a Stamford moneyer whose name appears on quite a number of coins as CRISTGIN (for CRISTIN), CRISDEN and CRISTIN (cf. Hildebrand 3457–3460). From BMC Æthelstan 85 (Mondign) and 137 (Mondgn) the interchangeability of ‘i’ and ‘e’ in the deutotheme is especially apparent, and it will be one of the suggestions of this note that an OE personal name *Christdegn, a name which seems to be known only from coins, reflects in all probability an Englishing of the well-attested early Middle Irish Gilla-crist (the modern Scottish Gilchrist).

† An asterisk preceding a name indicates that the normalized form is not independently recorded [Edd.]
To be stressed initially is the quite exceptional rarity of *Christ- as an OE prototheme. Searle in his *Onomasticon*, for example, records only the apparently arbitrarily normalized *Cristhegn and *Cristhin, appealing in each case to the coins of Eadred and of Ethelred II—such names as Christian and Christina, in any case uncompounded, clearly are Continental in their origin as well as being comparatively late (i.e. post 990) in their first appearance. It may seem the more remarkable, too, that the only OE deuterotheme ever to be found compounded with *Christ- should be -thegn, itself an element of some rarity, and especially where coins of the tenth century are concerned. As has already emerged, the first appearance of OE *Christcfegn is on a penny of Ethelstan, which gives a *terminus post quem* of c. 925 for the particular compound, and it is interesting to note that neither *Christ- nor *-christ nor Thegn- occurs on coins prior to this date, while -thegn is confined to Northumbria, an area where Irish influences from the seventh century onwards were pronounced, and even there to the copper coins of one ninth-century king. Admittedly there has been a recent attempt to postulate the existence in southern England of an early ninth-century personal name *Christoba- on no better basis than a penny with the perfectly intelligible reverse legend +0BA—but to date there would seem to have been no serious answer to the claim that the *Christoba hypothesis was founded—and founders—on total ignorance of the most elementary principles alike of OE name-giving and of ninth-century numismatics.

The earliest appearance of the prototheme *Christ-, then, occurs in the second quarter of the tenth century, say c. 935, at a period when Hiberno-Norse influences in northern England were at their zenith. Nor is it difficult to demonstrate that these influences extended to the personal names of the moneymen at more than one of the English mints, and in particular of those at Chester and at York. Already under Ethelstan, for example, we find the name MÆLDOMEN at Chester (cf. SCBI Chester 18, 19 & 65), and this must surely represent early Middle Irish *Mael Domnaig (modern Irish Maoldomhnaigh cf. the surnames Moloney and Muldowney), and it is not impossible that traces of the inflexion of the deuterotheme are to be observed on a 'two-line' penny of Edmund (BMC 96 cf. BMC 97) where the name of the moneymen appears as MÆLD | OMEF, though here it is just possible that the terminal vowel is to be read as a contraction of OE myself. Continuing at Chester we find under Eadgar a moneymen with the name MÆLSUBAN (cf. SCBI 93, 94 & 107) which can only be the early Middle Irish and well recorded Mael Suthain ('servant of Suthan'), the same deuterotheme recurring at Chester under Cnut in the name MACSUBAN (cf. Hildebrand 1416, BMC 290 etc.) which is early Middle Irish *Mac Suthain ('son of Suthan'). The same reign and mint likewise have given us coins with what appears to be a genuine monothematic early Middle Irish name TROTAN (cf. SCBI Chester 236 & 237, Hildebrand 1432 & 1433, BMC 294 & 295 etc.). Dinneen in his *Dictionary*, too, remarks (p. 710) that 'giolla replaces maol in the adopted Christian names of Irish Danes (recte Norsemen'), so that we are scarcely surprised to find at Chester under Harold I and Harthacnut coins of a moneymen whose name is rendered variously GILACRIS, GILLACRIS and GILLECRIST (cf. SCBI Chester 267, Hildebrand Harold I 337–340, Harthacnut 76 etc.). It seems impossible that this should not be the early Middle Irish Gillacrist ('follower of Christ'), a particularly well-attested name the sense of which exactly corresponds to that of our OE *Christcircumlocutus. There is some reason to suppose, too, that the *hapax Cille found on a Chester coin of Harold (Hildebrand 332) is for cille, and that this represents a hypocoristic form of the same name.

Before we leave Chester, moreover, mention should be made of certain coins of Eadred and Eadgar, and of a Howel who is perhaps still not quite certainly the Hywel Dda who died
in 949/950 even if Hywel ap Ieuaf (979–985) does seem just a little too late to be a serious competitor for the distinction of being the only Welsh king known to have struck coins. On these pence the moneyer’s name takes the following forms:

**Gilles**

**Gillvs**
(cf. Eadgar, BMC 28 & 157: SCBI Chester I, 91 & 92; Copenhagen I, 774; Edinburgh 600; Hywel—unique coin in British Museum).

**Gilvs**

**Gyllis**
(cf. Eadgar, SCBI Edinburgh 632; Hildebrand 16 (Hereford)).

That the first three or four letters of this name represent the early Middle Irish Gilla (modern Irish Giolla) is surely beyond doubt, but there do seem to be grave objections to the prevalent if formally unvoiced assumption that we are dealing with a monothematic name with an ending -es, -is, -us or -ys. Indicative of such construction are, for example, the forms which appear in J. J. North’s *English Hammered Coinage* where the OE genitival inflexion -es, occasionally found on coins of the tenth century, is fairly consistently recognized. For example, a spelling Othelrices is quite properly normalized Othelric. The obvious hypothesis would be that Gilles, Gillvs, Gilvs and Gyllis represent attempts at Latinization, but against this can be objected (a) that the earliest forms include one in -es, while the -us ending is by no means unequivocal and could as well be read -ys (cf. here especially the form -is), and (b) that there is no evidence of Latinization of personal names on coins from this part of the country at this period. Also to be noted is the quite exceptional consistency of the spellings in vowel + s, and the total absence, hitherto at least, of the forms Gill or Gille which one would have thought underlaid Gilles if the latter were really in the possessive case. To a genitival form, too, a particular objection is afforded by the occurrence of the spelling Gullis (Gyllis) on the ‘reform’ coin of Eadgar from the Hereford mint. It is the claim of this note that the spellings Gilles, Gillvs, Gilvs and Gyllis essay the nominative case of yet another dithematic early Middle Irish name, and that this is Gilla Ísú (‘follower of Jesus’, cf. Dinneen’s citation (p. 536) of the Modern Irish Giolla Íosa).

From the above it may be thought undeniable that there was quite marked Hiberno-Norse influence where the moneyers’ names on the tenth- and eleventh-century coins of Chester are concerned, and it may be that this influence is even more pronounced than might appear at first sight. There is for example an intriguing group of coins from the middle of the tenth century and from the Chester area where the moneyer’s name appears to be a hypocorism followed by the diminutive suffix -uc. We may instance:

**Winvc**

**Ingvc(es)**
(cf. Eadred, BMC 62; SCBI Edinburgh 278).

**Teothvc**

It would seem to have been recognized for some time that the second element in these names corresponds to the OE diminutive suffix -oc, -uc, but it is suggested now that the consistency of the spelling -uc is remarkable, and no less the circumstance that in each case the protomtheme is most easily explained as a hypocorism, Win, for example, representing a name compounded with winc- or less probably -wine, Ing being presumably for Ingelric, a moneyer attested in the area at the material time, and Teoth reflecting some name Theod-, though perhaps we should not entirely ignore the possibility of the ON monothematic name Tiot.
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which does occur at Chester under Æthelstan, OE -oc, -uc, Middle Welsh -awc, and early Middle Irish -óc seem all to go back to the same Britannic and ultimately Primitive Germanic hypocoristic suffix, and formally it does not seem possible to decide which has been responsible for these forms in -uc, and especially when Chester was so obviously susceptible to influences from Wales as well as from across the Irish Sea. On the other hand, it should be stressed that these incontrovertible forms in -uc are not found until the period when Hiberno-Norse influence was beginning to make itself felt, and then occur only at one point on the border with Wales. Had -uc been directly influenced by Middle Welsh -awc, one might have expected -uc names also to occur on coins struck at the Severn mints and in Devon, but it is a curious fact that the only other coins known to the writer where there is a possibility of this formation are from north-eastern England. They are the not all that common ‘two-line’ coins of Edward the Elder and Æthelstan by a moneyer Landuc (‘Landac’) exemplified by Vatican hoard 294 (Edward) and BMC 115 and SCBI Copenhagen 713 (Æthelstan). If it is LANDVC, this is presumably a hypocorism of a name in Land- or -land with the -uc suffix, and it is interesting that the style of the coins points to the other area in England where in the tenth century Hiberno-Norse influence is attested, but unfortunately LANDVC is not certain, while it might even be thought that the form occurs too early for this explanation to be really plausible.

The other apparent instance of -uc is of eleventh-century date and occurs at Lincoln as the deuterotheme of the prima facie obscene sobriquet of that undoubted Irishman ‘Matathan’ (= early Middle Irish Matudán, cf. Hildebrand Cnut 1658, 1664 & 1665), but again one cannot be certain of the etymology, though certainly OE -oc, -uc would seem to be what the die-cutter understood.

In north-eastern England Hiberno-Norse influence is seen at its most obvious at York. The mint-signed coins struck after c. 973 are well-known and evidence the following names which seem certainly to be of early Middle Irish origin, Beolan, ‘Cielog’ (= Cellach), Crinan, Crucan (sometimes seeming to be written ‘Grurn’ for ‘Crukn’), ‘Dufacan’ (= Dubucan), and Eltan. Mistrustful, too, of OE weak genitives at a period when the strong genitive is conspicuous by its absence from the coins, the writer would probably add to that list Oban for all that OE Oba is securely attested more than two centuries earlier (and we may adduce at this point an Eadred penny of Oban of north-western style in the University Coin Cabinet at Oslo), while Dáhfin(x) might well seem another strong candidate. In the context, too, names such as Ira, Ire and Oustman, Ustman may be thought to take on a new significance. However, the half-dozen names that are incontrovertibly Middle Irish are more than sufficient in themselves to demonstrate that there was still in the eleventh century an element in the population of York which had its ethnic origin among the Gall-Gaels of Dublin who crossed into north-eastern England early in the tenth century.

Beolan and Cellach are first evidenced at York between 975 and 978, Crinan and Crucan both c. 1025, Dubucán c. 1035, and Eltan c. 1045. An attempt will now be made to demonstrate that there are at least two early Middle Irish names to be found on coins associated with north-eastern England and struck already in the third quarter of the tenth century. For the evidence it is not necessary to go beyond the pages of the Edinburgh fascicle of the new Sylloge, the coins concerned being amply represented there though common enough in other collections, and especially in the British Museum where the want of Sylloge coverage is becoming increasingly a hindrance to early consolidation of the advances made in the last few years. The first moneyer with whom we are concerned is MACVS (SCBI Edinburgh 473–475—2 reverse dies), a ‘two-line’ moneyer of Eadgar, and this must surely be early
Middle Irish Mac(e)us, the name incidentally of one of the sons of the last Hiberno-Norse king of York, the slayer, too, of Eric Bloodaxe. More controversial are the coins of our second moneyer (SCBI Edinburgh 476-494—17 whole coins from 13 obverse and 14 reverse dies + 2 fragments) which hitherto have tended to be associated with OE Manna, a well-attested variant of OE Man(n). Indeed the writer's own very first note on an Anglo-Saxon numismatic topic included a suggestion that what is clearly the archetypal spelling MANAN would be better explained as an OE weak genitive rather than as a too consistent blundering of the nominative Manna. Increasing familiarity with the series now compels him to reject this hypothesis as too ingenious. For one thing, no other 'two-line' penny of Eadgar associated with this particular school of die-cutting essays a genitive, and it is not easy to understand why Manna should have been any easier to engrave than MANAN. For another, the nominative form of the name is never once found on a coin of this date and from this area, though elsewhere in England and over most of the century there are coins in plenty to evidence forms Man, Mann, Manna and even Mannes. It is the suggestion of this note, then, that the Eadgar 'two-line' pennies with reverse legends postulating a name MANAN should be taken at their face-value, and that we should go beyond OE Manna for its explanation. In itself the -an suffix has an Irish flavour (cf. the names Beolan, Crinan, Crucan, Dubucán and Eltan already cited), and the writer's present inclination is once more to look to the land of the legendary Manannán mac Lir.

Neither Macus nor Manan would seem to be known outside the 'two-line' type of Eadgar. The 'two-line' Mann who strikes for Eadwig (cf. BMC 31) and the 'two-line' Manna under Eadred (SCBI Edinburgh 251, cf. BMC 67) virtually flaunt duplication of the second consonant, and the die-linking observed in the case of SCBI Edinburgh 252 ('Manne') may be thought an argument that there were about the middle of the tenth century two moneyers Mann and Manna in north-eastern England. SCBI Fitzwilliam 597 and Edinburgh 298 suggest another Manna at work in East Anglia. From SCBI Copenhagen 746 and 747 (Eadred) and 809 (Eadgar, cf. BMC 145) we must accept yet another Mann at work in the Chester area, but to be stressed is the relative paucity of all these coins of Mann and Manna when set beside the Eadgar coins of Manan. Of the latter moneyer there were in the Tetney hoard no fewer than 22 specimens, and in the Iona hoard, as we have seen a total of 19. Slightly to complicate the position is the fact that in the 'reform' type at the end of the reign of Eadgar there are York pennies of Man (SCBI Hunter 732) and Manna (BMC 12) which are interesting because they suggest that Man(n) and Manna could be strong and weak forms respectively of the name of one individual, but this is not to say that the slightly earlier Manan was one and the same person. On the Tetney evidence he hailed from further to the south, and it is truly remarkable how little continuity there is between the 22 York moneyers who are known for the period c. 973-978 and those striking without mint-signature during the earlier part of Eadgar's reign. Not one of them is known in the 'two-line' type—unless, that is one persists in regarding MANAN as a consistent blundering of genitiveval MAN(N)AN—and only Fastolf in the 'circumscription' type.

From the foregoing it should have emerged that the Hiberno-Norse assault on northern England in the first half of the tenth century left its mark upon personal names of moneyers for something like a century after the final expulsion of the house of Ivar. What should be stressed, though, is that this note does not pretend to have done more than skim the surface of the available evidence. For example, there are several other names which are not obviously OE or ON and could conceivably be early Middle Irish—one might mention apparent LENNA
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(cf. BMC Eadgar 119 & 120) which could so easily represent Lennán—with the intriguing possibility that this could be an Irishing of a Leof- name such as Leofman or Leofinc—and manec (cf. BMC Eadred 66) in which it is tempting to see early Middle Irish Mance(h)án. Certainty, however, must wait on an urgently needed review of the whole of the evidence concerning the possibility of disappearance of final ‘n’ before ‘m’ from the reverse legends of ‘two-line’ pence of the tenth century. That ‘n’ could on occasion drop out of ‘circumscription’ legends has long been appreciated, and if grid (cf. SCBI Edinburgh 414-422) is grind (cf. SCBI Hunter 744 etc.), it would seem that this loss of ‘n’ could be carried back and over into the ‘two-line’ type. Against this it could be objected that the already remarked insistence on final ‘n’ in the case of the coins of MANAN provides an argument to the contrary, but here it could be countered that we do not know precisely the early Middle Irish name which underlies the spelling. If MANAN were for Manan(n), for example, the retention of the second ‘n’ would be quite understandable in itself, while in the case of postulated *Manan(n) without the diminutive suffix -án, sufficient explanation of the insistence on the form MANAN would be desire to avoid all possibility of confusion with OE Manna.

It is against this background, then, that we should re-examine the possibility that OE *Christēgn is no more than an Englishing of early Middle Irish Gilla Crist. The name first occurs shortly before c. 940 and is then found on one series of coins which perhaps extend as late as c. 960. Shortly after 990 it recurs at Stamford, and again it is confined to one series of coins, the terminus ante quem of the latest being at most 1003. Two individuals only would seem to be involved, and it is possible that we are dealing with homonymous father and son—or more probably grandfather and grandson—and in this connection it could be significant that the style of the earlier series is by no means inconsistent with these coins too having been struck somewhere in the lower valley of the Welland. The above two individuals apart, the name *Christēgn is one that seems entirely unknown to English prosopography. Clearly the innovation was one that did not commend itself to Englishmen generally, and this must favour the hypothesis that the name-formation, though formally impeccable, was in fact an alien one. As we have seen, early Middle Irish Gilla Crist provides a perfect analogy, and there is a body of evidence that early Middle Irish influences were being felt in English nomenclature at least as early as the middle of the tenth century. This phenomenon must stem from the great Hiberno-Norse onslaught on northern England which quickly led to Regnald establishing in 919 an intermittent Dublin dynasty in Northumbria. Doubtless it was from his followers that such late tenth- and early eleventh-century York and Lincoln moneyers as Beolan, Cellach, Crinan, Cruccan, Dubućan, Eltan and Matudan traced their descent, and it is interesting that in north-eastern England the purely Irish names begin under Eadgar, roughly a generation after the initial conquests. In contrast, the terminus ante quem for the earliest coin of *Christēgn is 930, and this does not really allow enough time for the name to be given to a child born after his Dublin father’s decision to settle permanently in England. Much more likely, then, would seem the hypothesis that our earlier *Christēgn was in fact a Hiberno-Norseman who had borne the name of Gilla Crist since his baptism. The assimilation to English ways implied by the mutation accords well with the fact that Hiberno-Norsemen seem to have been very much in a minority south of the Humber, and also with the circumstance that the Hiberno-Norsemen who swept into Northumbria in 919 were dominated by militant pagans, so that Christians among them might well have felt there was an added inducement to throw in their lot with the new Englishry further to the south.
PLATE II

THE WILLES PARCEL OF LATE X\textsuperscript{C} PENCE