THE ORIGINS OF THE MINTS OF HERTFORD AND MALDON

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The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records, s.a. 912 in the Parker manuscript, that in that year 'King Edward ordered the northern borough at Hertford to be built, between the Maran, the Beane, and the Lea, and then after that in the summer, between Rogation days and midsummer, King Edward went with some of his forces into Essex to Maldon, and camped there while the borough was being made and constructed at Witham, and a good number of the people who had been under the rule of Danish men submitted to him'.

It comes as no surprise therefore to find the names of both boroughs on coins of his successor, Athelstan, 924–39. All, however, are of the greatest rarity.

What is probably the earliest mint-signed coin of these two boroughs is a unique penny from the Forum hoard, now, with the remainder of that hoard, in the Museo Nazionale at Rome. It combines an obverse of the two-line type (BMC i, North 668) with a reverse of the cross type (BMC v, North 672). The obverses of the two types are generally similar but may be distinguished by the fact that on the two-line type the obverse legend ends REX, whereas on the cross type the REX is followed by some abbreviation of Totius Britanniae (or rarely, at one or two Mercian mints, of Saxorum). The moneyer’s name is Abonel which is followed by the unusual MON TO before the mint-name, HIORTFD.

Of Athelstan’s crowned bust type (BMC viii, North 673) three specimens of Hertford are recorded, two probably from the same dies, the third from the same obverse but a different reverse die. The moneyer again is Abonel, followed by the normal MO. The mint on both dies reads HIORT. A small feature, found on both reverse dies, is a trefoil of pellets in the field at 9 o’clock. It is curious that all three specimens should be in continental collections. Two are from local hoards; the provenance of the third is not known.

Of Maldon there is only known a single coin of Athelstan. It is of the crowned bust type, is by the same moneyer, Abonel, and is from a very similar obverse die (if not actually the same) as his Hertford coins. On the reverse the mint name is MAEL-D. There is nothing between the moneyer’s and the mint names but the trefoil of pellets is again found, this time at the beginning of the reverse legend.

In addition to these five mint-signed coins by Abonel, three specimens are known, all from different dies, of the two-line type which, of course, has no mint signature. On two of these (Forum hoard and Berlin) there is the large, somewhat coarse, lettering that is associated with the north-eastern part of the country, and in the third (Edinburgh) it is still coarse but not so large. This last reads MO; on the others the moneyer’s name alone appears. None of the obverse dies links with the mule.

Abonel is an interesting name and its origin must remain uncertain. It is not recorded on coins of Edward the Elder, but in the form Abenel on coins of Athelstan II of East Anglia. The British Museum Catalogue records the same reading on a coin attributed to

2 The question is discussed in England before the Conquest, ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes, Cambridge, 1971, p. 185.
3 BMC 90; SCBI Cambridge 456; SCBI Oxford 63.
Alfred (*BMC* 190) but the obverse reading suggests that this may rather be of Athelstan II. The same name, in a variety of forms, is found in the St. Edmund Memorial coinage (e.g. *BMC* 117–28). It is not found, however, for Athelstan (of all England) on any mint-signed coins other than those of Hertford and Maldon and it is fairly safe to attribute the unsigned coins of this King to one or other of these mints. If this is correct, it is interesting to find dies of the mint-signed coins emanating, as far as one can judge from style, from London and those of the two-line type from another die-cutting centre, probably further north.

It is recognized that Athelstan's coins with the crowned bust were produced in Wessex and Kent, with London, and in East Anglia. They are not found in Mercia at all; in Northumbria very rarely; and, in very crude form, in a somewhat undefined area probably in the north-eastern part of the country. That they should be found of the Hertford mint need cause no surprise. It is recorded in versions D and E of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 910, that 'King Edward succeeded to London and Oxford and to all the lands which belonged to them' and Hertford would have 'belonged' to London. It is, however, more surprising, and of no little interest, to find Maldon in Essex included in this way.

Under Edmund (939–46) no mint-signed coins are recorded of either Hertford or Maldon—indeed Maldon does not reappear as a mint until the last type of Edgar—but a few coins with the name of Abenel or Abunel are known of the two-line type. The lettering on these is of a style which is associated with the southern part of the country and there is every reason to believe that the coins in question come from either Hertford or Maldon.

Of Eadred (946–55) I have found no coins by Abonel or variants of the name.

With Eadwig (955–9) Abenel again appears, this time on a mint-signed coin of the three-line type (*BMC* ii, North 727) on which the mint name reads HIR. There is, exceptionally, an extra cross in the obverse field, which may be compared with the trefoil of pellets in the reverse field of Athelstan’s crowned bust coins. Brooke when recording this coin in his report on British Museum acquisitions since the *Catalogue* was published described it as ‘Hertford?’ but by the time he published his *English Coins* was prepared to drop the question mark. This must surely be justified: the combination of the mint reading HIR with the moneyer Abenel can hardly point to any other mint than Hertford.

On the coinage of Edgar (King of Mercia 957, King of All England 959–75) the name of Abenel is found on a unique coin of Hertford, of the crowned bust type (*BMC* v, North 751). The mint name in this case reads HIRT. This moneyer's name is not recorded on any other coin of Edgar's and in view of the fresh names which now appear, it would seem that Abenel's term of office, which may have lasted something like 30 years, finally came to an end.

In the 1894 Douglas hoard was a Hertford penny of Edgar of the crowned bust type but varying from the norm in having the bust contained in the inner circle (*BMC* —, North 751/1). The variant was noted by Grueber in the text of his report on the hoard, but was in some measure obscured by the references he cites, both of which are to coins of the normal crowned bust type. It was left to Mr. Dolley and Dr. Metcalf to bring the variety fully to notice and to illustrate it. The mint name is clearly HIRTOR preceded by

1 Whitelock, op. cit., p. 62.  
2 *NC* 1925, p. 364.  
4 *NC* 1913, p. 9, no. 27.  
MO]NETA. The coin is a large fragment and the first two letters of Moneta are missing as are the last one, two, or possibly three letters of the moneyer's name which begins HA. Grueber completes it as Hanna (for Manna) and it is likely that something of this kind is reasonable and in particular that the initial H can be interpreted as M. No comparable name is found on other coins that might be associated, though Manne is recorded on a crowned bust coin without mint-name but probably of East Anglian origin.¹

FIG. 1 (enlarged).

Until recently the only other specimen of this variety was thought to be in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow, from the Coats collection, a coin of the moneyer Byrnferth without mint-signature,² but recently a third has turned up (possibly none the less from an old find³) which, interestingly, may, like the Douglas specimen, be attributed to Hertford. Again it is a fragment but in this case the moneyer's name, Wulfmær, appears in full and it is the mint name that has suffered to the extent of losing all but the final letter R. The coin may, however, confidently be accepted as of Hertford. The only other occurrence of the name Wulfmær on a mint-signed coin in this reign is on one of Hertford of the diademed bust type (BMC vi, North 752). The name does, however, occur on a single coin of the crowned bust type, without mint signature⁴ but with an extra cross in the reverse field. This too may well be a Hertford coin.

This variant of the crowned bust type deserves some attention. It has several curious features: the King's title is REX ANGLORVM, a common enough reading on his cross type (BMC iii, North 749) but not found on the normal crowned bust coins which end REX. As is the case in the somewhat comparable issue of Athelstan (BMC ix, North 675) it is the extra space resulting from the bust not breaking the inner circle that makes the longer reading possible. The letter G, which occurs twice in the obverse legend, is of the rounded form as opposed to the square form which otherwise seems invariable on Edgar's coinage. It has been noted that two of the three surviving specimens of this type are from

² SCBI Glasgow, 711.
³ The coin was acquired from the old-established firm of A. H. Baldwin & Sons Ltd. It came to light in the course of their move to new premises and had clearly been in their possession a number of years. It corresponds to one recorded in the Huxtable sale of 1859.
⁴ Chester (1950) hoard, op. cit., p. 159, no. 510.
the Hertford mint and that the third, by Byrnferth, has no mint signature. This moneyer is found on a Bath coin of Edgar's cross type.\(^1\) He also issued one of those rare variants of the two-line type that have a cross above and below the moneyer's name as opposed to the more usual trefoil of pellets (BMC ib, North 743), a type that is essentially southern in style.\(^2\) But what is most significant is that he struck a coin of the crowned bust type, without mint signature,\(^3\) on which the bust is very similar in style to the coins of Wulfmær of the same type, referred to above. Whether or not they are from the same mint must be doubtful, but both are clearly from the same die-cutting centre, presumably London.

The position of this variant in Edgar's coinage is an interesting question. One would like to see it as an experimental issue of the crowned bust type, abandoned shortly after its introduction perhaps because the King's bust was too crowded when placed entirely within the inner circle. But, since Abenel struck the normal crowned bust type, this would involve Hertford having had two, if not three, moneyers, operating at the same time—Abenel, Ma-, and Wulfmær. Up to this time everything suggests that Hertford was a one-moneyer mint and, indeed, no more than one name, Wulfmær, is found on the last type of Edgar and in the coinage of Edward the Martyr.

The existence of the coin by the moneyer Ma- suggests, however, that two moneyers must have been working concurrently at Hertford in the latter part of Edgar's reign, no matter where one places the variant issue: if placed at the beginning of the series, it means that he, Abenel, and Wulfmær were operating together; if at the end that he and Wulfmær were, for Wulfmær struck a coin of the normal crowned bust type (which on this assumption preceded the variant) and he goes on into the next reign.

Metcalf and Dolley argued that the use of the title *Rex Anglorum* pointed to the variants being a transitional issue prior to the reform that they date to 973.\(^4\) The reform type coins bear the title *Rex Anglor.* But this argument in itself is insufficient, since, as has been pointed out, the full *Rex Anglorum* title is commonplace in Edgar's southern issues of the earlier cross type.

That the number of moneyers at the Hertford mint had increased beyond one in Æthelred II's reign is clearly demonstrated by ten coins listed in Hildebrand's *Catalogue* of the Stockholm collection where at least six names are given in his *Crux* type. This is not evidence that the number was necessarily increased earlier, but may be significant.

There is a very comparable type with a corresponding variant in the reign of Athelstan (BMC viii and ix). Here the evidence of the moneyer's name fails to support the idea of an early experimental issue.

On balance it seems best to accept that in both cases the variant occurred late in the type. This would have the advantage in the case of the Edgar coins of reducing from three to two the number of moneyers operating at the same time at Hertford, a figure that would seem more acceptable.

Wulfmær continues at Hertford in Edgar's last type and in the reign of Edward the Martyr, though in each case only a single surviving specimen appears to be recorded.

With the last (Reform) type of Edgar the name of Maldon as a mint reappears on the coins. Only two specimens are recorded, both by a moneyer Byrhtefrd (= Byrhtferth), a name that does not appear again on Maldon coins.

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1 BM, presented by L. A. Lawrence, 1927.  
2 BM ex Chester (1950) hoard, no. 384 (ill.).  
3 BM ex Chester (1950) hoard, no. 503 (ill.).  
4 Anglo-Saxon Coins, p. 160.
Until recently there appeared to be a gap in the Hertford coinage at the beginning of Æthelred II's reign: the earliest known type was CRVX. Miss van der Meer has, however, now discovered and published a coin in the Berlin cabinet of the First hand type by the same moneyer, Wulfmair.¹ Mr. Dolley has reviewed the Hertford coinage of this reign and his paper² provides the logical continuation to this note on the origins of the mint. It would be useful if a corresponding note on the later history of the Maldon mint could be written, not least because of the confusion that in the past has arisen with the coins of Malmesbury.

There is appended to this short note a corpus of the coins which may reasonably be attributed to the mints of Hertford and Maldon from the time of Athelstan to the reign of Edward the Martyr.

I am indebted to Professor Whitelock, Miss Archibald, Mr. Dolley, Mr. Doubleday, and Mr. Elmore Jones for advice and help on various points that have arisen in preparing this note and this I gratefully acknowledge.

### CORPUS OF COINS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE HERTFORD AND MALDON MINTS, ATHELSTAN TO EDWARD THE MARTYR

#### Hertford

**ATHELSTAN (924–39)**

**With mint-name**

_BMC_ i/v mule (North —).

1. Abonel. XABONEL MONTO HIORTFD. Forum hoard 211.  
   _BMC_ viii (North 673).

2. Abonel  
   (a) ABONEL MO HIORT three pellets in field. 22.5 gr. _SCBI_ Copenhagen 694.  
   (b) Same reverse and probably same obverse die. Forum hoard 211.  
   (c) Probably same obverse die; reverse differs but generally similar. 21.4 gr. Berlin.

**Without mint-name**

_BMC_ i (North 668).

3. Abonel  
   (a) ABOH /EL MO No mark top or bottom of reverse. Large lettering. 19.9 gr. _SCBI_ Edinburgh 118.  
   (b) ABO/NEL Trefoil of pellets top and bottom. Large lettering. 23.6 gr. Berlin.  
   (c) ABO/NEL Trefoil of pellets top and bottom. Large lettering. Forum hoard 85.  
   All three are from different dies. These may be of Maldon.

#### EDMUND (939–46)

**Without mint-name**

_BMC_ i (North 688).

5. Abenel  
   (a) Forum hoard 286.  
   (b) K. A. Jacobs.  
   These may be of Maldon.

² *BNJ* xxix (1958–9), pp. 54–8.
EADRED (946–55)
None recorded.

EADWIG (955–9)
*With mint-name*
  *BMC* ii (North 727).

EDGAR (King of Mercia 957, of All England 959–75)
*With mint-name*
  *BMC* v (North 751).
7. Abenel. MON HIRT. 22·8 gr. *BM* ex Chester hoard 493 (ill.).
  *BMC* v (Var. with bust contained in inner circle; round ø) (North 751/1).
  *BMC* vi (North 752).
10. Wulfmær. HERTF. Ready sale (1920) 107 (not ill.); later Glendining 17 July 1957, 219 (not ill. but seen by Mr. Dolley, *BNJ* xxix, p. 57).

*Without mint-name*
  *BMC* v (North 750).
11. Wulfmær. Extra cross in reverse field. 23·0 gr. *BM* ex Chester hoard 510 (ill.).

EDWARD THE MARTYR (975–8)
  *BMC* i (North 763).
12. Wulfmær. HERT. 20·6 gr. *BMC* 10 (not ill.).

MALDON

(All with mint-name)

AHELSTAN (924–39)
  *BMC* viii (North 673).
1. Abonel. +ABONEL MÆL-D. Trefoil of pellets before initial letter. Obverse die very similar to Hertford no. 2. Forum hoard 245.

EDGAR (King of Mercia 957, of All England 959–75)
  *BMC* vi (North 752).
2. Byrhtefrd (a) Oslo. From the Fiskå farm hoard in the parish of Vanylven in Møre and Romsdal county. *NNÅ* 1952 (not ill.).
  (b) MÆL. Stockholm, Hild. 29 (there attributed to Malmesbury).