REVIEW


Dr. Sutherland explains in his preface that he saw a need for a history of English coinage that lay somewhere between the extremes of the specialist books and periodicals, on the one hand, and the more popular publications, on the other. His own studies, as he admits, have not been primarily in the field his book surveys, and this is reflected in irritating minor errors scattered through both text and plates. Most of these would have been picked up had the manuscript been shown to those specialists whose work he seeks to interpret: the lack of acknowledgements for other than administrative assistance suggests that it was not.

But the book should not be judged on its minor mistakes, though to the extent that they may mislead its readers they are to be regretted. At least they are not compounded by poor proof reading and footnoting. What matters is whether the author has succeeded in his declared aim, which is 'to satisfy more general interests by a narrative form' while taking account of 'all the more important specialist studies which have been made by a succession of admirable scholars and writers in recent years, and to illustrate a wide selection of representative and important coins'.

To take the last objective first, the illustrations (in black and white) can fairly claim to be representative. They are also clear, uncrowded, and interspersed by an attractive selection of enlargements. Casts have been used—surely essential for a book of this kind—and in all there are 773 illustrations on 108 plates, bound together in the centre of the book. Curiously they extend to seventy-one years beyond the limiting date of the title.

The narrative text runs to 185 pages. Of these, modern coinage (i.e. from 1660) takes up a mere fourteen. Because Dr. Sutherland has eschewed the combination of narrative and tabular presentation adopted so successfully by Brooke he has had to incorporate much detail in the main body of the text in order to make his points. At the same time he has chosen to consider the coinage as a whole by reference to successive short periods instead of discussing specific aspects of the coinage against the broader background of a longer time span. At times this results in a compressed patchwork of closely interwoven threads, which reads more like a critical appraisal of recent scholarship than a simple revelation of its perspective.

For the Anglo-Saxon period (which is the main subject of this review), the intensive research carried out since Brooke's day has revolutionized our knowledge, and the task of drawing together into a general survey the threads of many widely scattered publications cannot have been easy. Inevitably the most recent work has not been included, but it is a pity that the latest footnoted reference to this Journal in a book published in 1973 is to _BNJ_ xxxiv (1965). There are papers in later volumes on which this reviewer would have welcomed Dr. Sutherland's critique.

The author divides Anglo-Saxon coinage into early (c. 600–775), middle (c. 775–871), and late (871–1066) phases, with a final section in which he assesses the achievement of the coinage as a whole. In the early phase he is on familiar ground when he discusses the gold coinage, but is hampered in his evaluation of the 'sceatta' series by the fact that S. E. Rigold's paper read to the Society in February 1967 remains unpublished. That paper indicated the regional groupings to be found within the series, and its availability might have caused Dr. Sutherland to place a little less emphasis on the dominance of the Canterbury Mint at the beginning of the middle phase. He does not, for example, accept without reservation that Offa had a mint in East Anglia, although C. E. Blunt has pointed to the continuity of Æthelberht's moneyer Lul and to the use of runic letters in moneyers' names—a feature which continues well into the ninth century.

The author is on dangerous ground when he suggests that the moneyers of Offa's portrait coinage were chosen for their engraving skill. Is it really likely that the dies for a coinage which is 'probably the most splendid of all early medieval coinages in western Europe' were engraved by several different hands? Indeed, if the moneyers themselves were the skilled craftsmen who cut the portrait dies it is astonishing that moneyers such as Eoba and Tbba could have been associated with Offa's final and least imaginative three-line type. It is surely more probable that the engraver...
of the best portrait dies was an exceptionally gifted artist, and that the inspiration fell to a much lower level when he ceased to be available. This might explain why Archbishop Jaenberht's pennies 'lack much of the decorative quality of the royal series'.

Dr. Sutherland has a lingering doubt about the authenticity of the Offa/Pendred gold coin, but if false it is not easy to imagine the circumstances in which it was forged nor why the particular designs and inscriptions were chosen. He is careful not to describe any of the middle and late Anglo-Saxon gold pieces as mancuses and asserts that a mancus was simply a money of account equal to thirty pence. But the evidence of King Eadred's will points quite clearly to the minting of gold mancuses, at least on special occasions, and there is ample documentary evidence for a mancus as a unit of gold weight. If the surviving gold coins are not mancuses it is hard to think of an alternative name for them, since each appears to be within the weight range of three contemporary silver pennies—a predictable level for a minted mancus bearing in mind that contemporary documents point to a ratio of nine or ten to one between gold and silver.

The role of the mint of Rochester is one of the major problems of ninth-century coinage. Dr. Sutherland is reluctant to accept the mint's existence before Ceolwulf I, when coins signed Doroobrebia leave no room for doubt. Subsequently he accepts it as a mint of Baldred (though justifiably querying the interpretation of the title *Rex H* as 'king at Hrofesceaster') and Ecgberht, but believes that no coins ofÆthelwulf are known from there. Evidence does, however, exist, both stylistically and in the sequence of moneyers, for the view that a substantial part ofÆthelwulf's coinage, and of his Mercian contemporary Berhtwulf, was struck at Rochester and that the moneyers they undoubtedly shared worked there rather than at Canterbury. To pursue this argument seems to lead to the unexpected conclusion that the mint Burgred shared withÆthelred I and Alfred could also have been at Rochester. This, if tenable, might explain why, when Alfred occupied London, the commemorative issue with the London monogram type of c. 886 than to the early 'lunette' type shared by Burgred and Alfred and found in several hoards deposited during the period of the Viking campaign. The difficulty of a late dating for *BMC* v is that Ceolwulf II otherwise disappears from history after 875 and the documents do not tell us whether he or anyone else exercised royal authority in English Mercia between then and 883. By that time it was being administered by an *ealdorman* namedÆthelred who subsequently married Alfred's daughter. (Incidentally, on what authority does the author state thatÆthelred was Ceolwulf's son?)

Mr. Blunt's study of the St. Edmund memorial coinage of East Anglia appeared too late to be included in the author's survey, but he should surely have recognized the vocative case of the early readings *S(æ)n(e) (neve *Stan(e)l)e* *Eadmundes Rex*. The earlier coinage of Guthrum Æthelstan is unfortunately illustrated by a penny ofÆthelstan of Wessex (no. 129). The casual reader may also be confused by the Northumbrian
Viking coins in the name of Cnut being illustrated with the patriarchal cross uninverted, since this puts the cruciform lettering upside down. Why, too, is one coin illustrated twice (nos. 134 and 139)?

The treatment of the tenth-century Viking coinages is unsatisfactory. The coins of Sitric Comes do not follow the Siefred–Cnut issues but are apparently contemporary with them (they occur in the Cuerdale hoard) and relate to a different mint. Sitric I (‘Caoch’), minting in the 920s, is illustrated by a coin of Sitric II (? Sihtricsson) from the 940s (no. 160), and Michael Dolley’s attribution of the Anlaf/raven coins to Anlaf Guthfrithsson rather than his cousin Anlaf Sihtricsson (‘Quaran’) is ignored. Professor Dolley’s Viking Coins of the Danelaw and Dublin (1965) is inexplicably omitted from the select bibliography.

Dr. Sutherland regrets the lack of a ‘radical understanding’ of Edward the Elder’s coinage, which might as he says enable valuable indications of mintage to emerge. Mr. Blunt’s definitive study of Æthelred II’s reign should now enable some conclusions to be drawn, by extrapolation, about his predecessor’s issues and also those of his successors. Certainly a reassessment of the coinages of Eadmund, Eadred, Eadwig, and Edgar leading up to the reform of c. 973 is badly needed. Building on R. B. K. Stevenson’s paper on the Iona hoard (NC 1951), this would probably link the unique penny of Howel Dda (d. 948) with the last years of his life and not with the payment of tribute to Æthelstan. It would certainly dispute the assertion that Eadwig ‘was coining primarily in the area of the south midlands’; his BMC type ii was undoubtedly minted in that area, but probably in parallel with his other issues, including substantial series in the Danelaw and the northwest without a mint signature. The reassessment would need to examine the hypothesis, put forward by R. H. M. Dolley and D. M. Metcalf in Anglo-Saxon Coins and accepted by Dr. Sutherland, that a series of non-portrait pennies continued at north-western mints at the end of Edgar’s reign in parallel with portrait coins of the ‘reform’ issue. This hypothesis relies considerably on the absence of BMC type ii from the Chester (1950) and Smarmore hoards, but it overlooks the similar absence from the Chester hoard of coins of BMC type iii by the prolific (York?) moneys Fastolf and Herolf. An alternative interpretation is that the Chester hoard ends with coins struck a few years before the reform, and that the reform itself was absolute and uniform throughout the country. Be that as it may, the non-portrait coin illustrated as post-reform (no. 183) is certainly earlier, being of a type well represented in the Chester hoard.

The author broadly accepts Professor Dolley’s theory of the sexennial duration of post-reform issues, requiring as it does that Æthelred II’s two main ‘hand’ types must be viewed as separate substantive issues. Although not favoured by this reviewer, H. B. A. Petersson’s septennial alternative, put forward in 1969, should at least have been mentioned: his Anglo-Saxon Currency is listed in the bibliography. In other periods there are less significant problems that Dr. Sutherland regards as ‘not yet fully resolved’ and it is a pity that he did not adopt that formula here. He appears, too, to count the ‘Agnus Dei’ type as substantive, although the fact that it is known only from a handful of specimens struck at outlying mints is a clear indication that, like the ‘intermediate small cross’ type, it was withdrawn before its issue could be fully implemented. Thus there were at most six substantive changes of type in Æthelred’s reign, and only five if Petersson is right about the ‘hand’ types being part of a single issue.

In discussing Harold and Harthacnut Dr. Sutherland over-simplifies when he says that the portrait on ‘jewel cross’ coins faced left for Harold and right for Harthacnut. As if to prove the point he illustrates as of Harold a coin of Harthacnut with left-facing portrait (no. 196), and compounds this error by describing as of Exeter a right-facing portrait coin reading ANXAP (= Axbridge, no. 197). Moreover, it is now generally agreed that the name Cnut on ‘arm-and-sceptre’ coins, and perhaps on ‘jewel cross’ as well, is not so much a posthumous usage as a substitution of the shorter name for the longer. There is, too, a misreading ‘Aethelstan’ for ‘Æthelred’ in the heading on page 36, and the ‘Derby’ coin of Edward the Confessor (no. 202) is in fact by the Dover moneyer Cinstan.

One result of the strict chronological treatment of the Anglo-Saxon material is that inadequate and uneven attention is paid to the variations in the weight of the penny. From an original level of about 20 grains early in the sceatta series the standard fell away, before rising to about 21 grains towards the end of Offa’s reign and remaining broadly at that level until Alfred’s capture of London. Then in southern England (but not in the Danelaw) it rose to about 25 grains, where it was well maintained until Æthelstan’s death. But by the time of Edgar’s reform weights
of 20 grains in the south, and 16 grains or less in the Danelaw, were commonplace. It is therefore incorrect to say, as Dr. Sutherland does, that the weight of the pence at the beginning of the ninth century agreed with that of Carolingian deniers (which, after Charlemagne's reform, were struck on very variable standards with a maximum of about 27 grains), and an oversimplification to aver that Edgar's surviving pre-reform coinage shows no sign of short weight in general.

Edgar's reform undoubtedly led to a rapid increase in the number of mints at work, but this was scarcely its 'essence': that surely lay in the imposition of a uniform design, coupled with a much higher initial weight standard which for most of the issues up to the end of the reign of Æthelred II was, at about 27 grains, comparable with the old Carolingian maximum. The initial standard was never maintained throughout the duration of an issue (except occasionally at the Winchester mint), though whether this was implicit in Edgar's reform or was due to the force of circumstances is not clear. By the end of Æthelred II's reign it was undoubtedly the latter, and from an initial standard of 27 grains at the beginning of his last issue it is a far cry to the Somerset coins at the end of Cnut's first issue, some thirteen years later, which were demonstrably struck to a standard no more than half that weight. In subsequent issues the variations are less pronounced, because the opening standard during the heregeld period was reduced to about 18 grains, but they still occur. Following Dolley and Metcalf, Dr. Sutherland links the 'very slight' (?) changes in weight to 'that process of devaluation which, encouraging exports, attracting foreign currency, but limiting imports, is familiar in our own day'. Is this really a satisfactory explanation for a process which was not continuous but cyclical, being repeated within the span of every new issue? May it not be, for example, that the light initial standards of all the issues throughout the duration of the heregeld were due to its steady drain on the supply of silver, for during Edward the Confessor's reign there was a sudden reversion to 27 grains in the middle of an issue, at a time which may well have coincided with the abolition of the levy? Dr. Sutherland makes no mention of this major change.

By the Norman Conquest the weight standards of new issues were varying between 18 and 21 grains. Dr. Sutherland states that 'the weight and fineness of the silver pennies were to remain unchanged', but William I's eventual achievement was to stabilise the weight (at about 21½ grains, not 22½) and to abolish the variations within a type. This created a strong (?) = sterling) currency in which five pennies weighed much the same as four 'reform' pence of full weight, perhaps explaining the 25 per cent Domesday surcharge when payments due in silver by weight were made in pence by tale. On the other hand, the 'great change' which centralized in London the cutting and issuing of dies was not instituted by William: this process seems to have begun towards the end of Cnut's reign and to have been largely completed by the accession of Edward the Confessor.

Dr. Sutherland has some curious ideas on the economic significance of the frequent changes of type in the late Anglo-Saxon period. It may well be true that each new issue demonetized the last, but only in the sense that obsolete coins would have been valued simply as bullion or, perhaps, accepted at a discount such as Domesday's 20 pence in the ora (i.e. 20 for 16). This would have led to a steady but by no means complete reminting of old coins in order to maintain an adequate supply of current coin, and the average age of coins hoarded would thereby have been kept down, though probably more by accident than design. It is hard to see why this would have kept 'a maximum of coinage in circulation' for the age of the coins can have had little bearing on the wealth available for hoarding and therefore on the volume of coin withdrawn from circulation.

Much work remains to be done before we can reliably estimate the relative output of coin from one issue to another, but a detailed study of the Lincoln mint, published in 1970, has shown that this is by no means an impossible task. The results are at variance with Dr. Sutherland's assertion that 'there is no reason to suppose that the dies from which surviving coins were produced represent any more than a probably minor proportion of the original number'. For many of the issues of the Lincoln Mint it can be shown statistically that we probably know the dies that struck the greater part of the coinage, and there is no reason to think that this conclusion will not be borne out when other major mints are studied in the same depth. The pattern that eventually

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1 Measured against such a standard, the weights of many pre-reform pence suggest that Roger of Wendover's statement that a penny scarcely weighed a halfpenny in the scales is based on an early source now lost to us, though he was wrong to assume that clipping was the explanation.
emerges will be of profound importance in assessing the need for coin at different times in the late tenth and eleventh centuries.

Such a study is, of course, only useful if a substantial volume of coinage has survived. After the Conquest hoards are fewer, and valid conclusions can only be drawn from issues such as the 'paxs' type of William I and the 'Watford' type of Stephen. The fact that many of the smaller mints are only known for certain types during this period does not mean that they did not strike the missing types. It is therefore disappointing to find a numismatist of Dr. Sutherland's experience asserting that 'the legal obligation upon mintmasters in the boroughs to obtain new dies when designs were officially changed . . . would not, of course, have affected comparatively small mints with no more than intermittent need for coinage: the coinage now extant shows that by no means all mints were coining throughout the reign.'

Anglo-Saxon mint-names have an appendix to themselves. It claims to include 'the names of those Anglo-Saxon mints which were most continuous in operation, or most prolific, or both'. Why, then, does it include Aylesbury if not Buckingham; Bedwyn if not Warminster; Hythe if not Bridport; Langport if neither Axbridge nor Bruton; Southampton if not Northampton; Totnes if not Barnstaple? Why is 'Axsar' (recte Axsap) shown as a reading for Exeter rather than Axbridge? What evidence is there that Rhuddlan was an Anglo-Saxon mint? There are also some strange forms which are purported to be the full Anglo-Saxon equivalent of a modern spelling but are at variance with anything given in Ekwall.

The key to the plates of Anglo-Saxon coins contains a number of errors not already mentioned. No. 70 is probably of Canterbury; no. 86 is probably of Rochester and no. 88 may well be; no. 105 is of Archbishop Wulfhere; no. 117 has a Gloucester mint-signature; nos. 133 and 134 are of Cnut; no. 169 is probably not of Norwich.

This reviewer is not competent to judge whether the remaining three-quarters of the book are less open to criticism. It may be said, however, that the task the author set himself was formidable enough had he been prepared to submit the text to detailed scrutiny and comment before it was finalized, and it is hard to avoid a feeling of intense disappointment that he apparently did not do so. Here was a distinguished numismatist presented with an outstanding opportunity to produce a reliable, readable, and up-to-date standard work, but if the Anglo-Saxon and Norman sections are any guide it has been missed on the first and vital count.

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