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REVIEW OF THE YEAR

This has been a quiet year for numismatic events such as publications or discoveries. As a Society we are maintaining our numbers, indeed growing modestly, with 378 ordinary members, now, 9 junior and 143 institutional. As ever, the continuance of the Society rests with the cohesion and purpose of the ordinary members: no conceivable ‘growth’ will hedge us against racing inflation and we may see some falling-off of institutions in the latest manifestation of the great administrative fallacy that everything, or anything, can be improved just by rearrangement. The sometimes absurdly named hybrids of the Local Government ‘reorganization’ hatch out in their incubator already chirping about poverty and cutting down on their libraries. Lose them or not, we, the guardians of the treasure of the Regnum Anglorum and the nomenclatores of its ancient boroughs must shake our heads at the historical and philological insensitivity that destroyed so many immortal corporations and gave us such miscellanies as Gravesham just a millennium after King Edgar’s superb work of public relations. Tell me in another thousand years whether one rowing-boat on the Dee is not more seaworthy than a Torrey Canyon of management-theory!

Insisting that our continuance depends on individuals, I have in mind particularly the officers and Council and thank them once more both in general and in detail—Miss Archibald and the Secretary and the Librarian for my facts and the Director for the well-balanced programme he offers for the coming year. Both he and the Librarian apologize for their absence tonight, one because of the Whips, the other because of the Atlantic. I remind you of this because the services that sustain our Society are not those of gentlemen of leisure, and perhaps never were.

I must recall one sad and one doubly joyful event within our household. Our only loss by death has been Commander Richard Mack, among the best-known and most respected of our senior members. According to his numismatic autobiography his interest went back to his boyhood, but it was only after a distinguished naval career that he applied his retirement to building one of the finest collections of our time and, though a late developer in this too, to achieving the highest standards of numismatic scholarship, culminating in the Sylloge of his own collection. To the wider world he will be memorable for his work on Ancient British coinage, more esoterically for that on the age of Stephen.

The happy event concerns Mr. Blunt, almost the second founder of our Society and the undisputed doyen of Old English numismatic studies. With the generous aid of the old-established dealers this Society was enabled to present him with a Festschrift for his seventieth birthday in a special number of our Journal consisting largely of his own
magisterial work on Æthelstan. In January last the American Numismatic Society awarded him the Archer M. Huntington Medal for 1973, this being the first such award for western medieval studies. In his ever-courteous letter of acceptance Mr. Blunt sought to share the honour with his masters, as it were retrospectively, and rejoiced that numismatists were now accepted by historians. I would prefer to say ‘as historians’, for we have as much claim so to be as any other handlers of limited record material. If medieval numismatics have been long in ‘arriving’, with whom better could they ‘arrive’ than Mr. Blunt?

Our Librarian reports continued intensive use of the Library and reminds me of his unseen and gratuitous service of answering queries, some trying to any common patience. New publications have been few. To mention two that are close to my own interests, there is Mr. Berry’s useful little book, Medieval English Jettons, where the detailed internal classification will be complementary to the statigraphic evidence being collected, and Coins and the Archaeologist, a largely methodological compilation, a ‘British Archaeological Report’, resulting from a two-day seminar in London. I can unreservedly commend Miss Archibald’s contribution, but myself touched on ‘pagan’ Saxon matters in a largely Roman field. Richard Williams is his own publisher for Wales and its Money, from Llandudno. Another small publisher, in Oxford, offers Quinquagesimo Anno, a Festschrift for that engaging polymath, Fr. Arnold Mallinson, again largely of his own work, including, among several numismatic papers, a notable one on Rawlins.

Our own programme has been much preoccupied with discussion of hoards and assemblages, not the least being Mr. Dolley’s vivid reconstruction of the small, varied, and significant handful found last year in Ireland, in the Dunmore Cave. In Messrs. Blunt and Pagan’s work on the Bath hoard of 1755 we experienced that intimate dependence on our fellow scholars of two centuries or more ago that is one of the pleasurable experiences of English antiquarian studies.

This year’s tale of hoards begins with an outstanding and far from self-referent Roman find from Water Newton, Hunts., on Ermine Street: 30 A, c. 330–50, with two pieces of folded silver plate, all within a bronze vessel, itself in a Nene Valley pot. There is also what must be a further parcel of the Aston Rowant ‘sceatta’ hoard.

Of ‘normal’ medieval hoards, the first should properly be in last year’s count. These are:

Tockholes, Hollingshead, Lancs.—59 short-cross, down to type VII, with 2 Scottish.
Middridge, Shilton, Durham—3,072 Edwardian sterlings, down to class XI, with Scottish and continental. Miss Archibald comments that, unlike Whittonstall, it shows no bias towards Durham mintage and may have come up from the south.

There is one Civil War hoard: Normansland Common, Wheathampstead, Herts. (8 A, 24 AR, Edward VI to 1641–3).

Finally, there are the usual late hoards, in order of concealment: (i) Caddington, nr. Luton, Beds., 52 A, Geo. IV—1861; (ii) Waterloo, nr. Seaforth, Lancs., 18 A, 75 AR, Geo. IV—1896; (iii) Chislehurst Common, Kent, 307 AR, Vic.—1917; (iv) Stapelley Hill, Chirbury, Salop. 17 AR, Geo. III—1922; (v) Stourport-on-Severn, Worcs., 4073 AR, 45 cu-ni, Vic.—1950. Whether the record of these will have any statistical utility time alone will tell.
This month an international congress of Sigillographers has met in London. It was mainly concerned with cataloguing and conservation and I played a mere walking-on part but took the opportunity to exhort people to remedy what I have long thought to be a serious omission, the lack of communication in this country between students of coins and of seals. Frankly, sigillography in England has been a 'Cinderella' subject that has preoccupied fine scholars at various times but without the continuity that distinguishes numismatics and with little liaison between the two. It has long been otherwise in France, in Germany, and in Italy, which a century ago had its Periodico di Numismatica e Sfragistica per la Storia d'Italia. In that great institution of intellectual Risorgimento, the London Library, books on seals are stacked with those on coins.

I am here concerned neither with seals as legal instruments nor with coins as economic instruments but with the technical and artistic aspects of both, where the affinity should be self-evident. Both are mass-reproductions in relief for purposes of authentication and they share the strange condition that the die has a perfection and primacy over the end-product, the impression. Their scale is comparable but medieval seals have the advantage in depth and breadth for artistic expression and theirs is the 'dominant art', the source of archetypes, which coins may follow in a more restricted medium. The best matrices begin with a casting in depth, which is seldom used for medieval coin-dies, but both make use of gravels, of rotary tools and, though coin-dies more so, of punches. The study of seals would benefit from the minute application to detail, as of letter-forms, so well practised by numismatists, and the benefit would not be all in one direction.

Beside the similar shape and scale, the similar tools requiring similar conventions, there is the same recurrent contention between official iconography and freer treatment. In pendant, double-sided seals, which the Germans call Münzsiegel, originating as metallic bullae, the very fabric of the impression is similar and, as on coins, the two faces may represent different legal aspects of the whole. Byzantine leaden bullae of the tenth and eleventh centuries, as have been found in the Winchester excavations, closely resemble the large Aes coins of the age on both faces and in Venice the Eastern practice by which coins and seals may be practically identical in design persists for much longer: the seal of the doge P. Gradenigo (1306)\(^1\) is simply the 'Matapan' grosso writ large and the same, with equivalent Renaissance mutations, is true for that of L. Loredano (1501-21).\(^2\) By this time, however, the identity is confined to one face and it is wiser to consider the obverse and reverse of a coin or a pendant seal as separate entities.

Both pendant and applied seals were in use in the Carolingian period, indeed in the later Merovingian, when the crude full-face royal seal-type occurs occasionally as a coin-obverse. On the other hand, surviving Anglo-Saxon land-charters were never, or almost never, sealed until the writ-form was introduced, probably under Cnut. The supposed charters of Offa and Eadgar to St. Denis are patent forgeries, seals and all,\(^3\) but this does not mean that the Anglo-Saxons had no use for seals. One bulla and three matrices for seals en plaquette, all in the British Museum, testify to the contrary and are the sole direct evidence for English seals before the Confessor.\(^4\) All have been, justly,  

\(^1\) Lecoy, 158, fig. 65.  
\(^2\) Ewald, pl. 27, 2.  
\(^4\) Apart from that of Eadgytha 'regalis aedelpa' (Eadgar's daughter), later used by Wilton Abbey; Archaeologia, xvi (1817), 40 ff. For the others see p. 100.
compared with coin-types and, quite unjustly, regarded as isolated designs derived from existing coins. All positive evidence, throughout history, points in the opposite way, to wit, that the seal-type has the priority and the coin-type is derivative; my contention is that we can use seal-like coin-types to recover something of the lost seals that they imply. The 'Sovereign' penny-type of the Confessor is related to, but certainly a trifle later than, the first 'Sovereign' or 'Majesty' type great seal of England, which is about contemporary with the first of its kind in France, under Henry I, and a little later than the first in the Empire. It was thus long established for royal seals when it served as the obvious archetypetype for the numerous 'Sovereign-type' gold coinages from the late thirteenth century onwards, conspicuously in France but before that in England under Henry III, and well represented there in its later phases. The comparable equestrian coin-type, originally for non-royal issues, such as the 'Riders' of the Low Countries, reflects, in the same way, and in all its evolutions, the long established knightly seal-type, including the 'ducal' face of the English great seal. Here the priority of seals needs no demonstration and instances could be multiplied in several other elaborate medieval seal- and coin-types: it is in the German bracteate coinages, the most seal-like of coins, that design and technique run each other most closely in either medium.

The most widely disseminated and best recorded of early pendant seals are the papal bullae. Whether or not the simple, but not so obvious, two-line legend of many Carolingian and West Saxon aniconic coins is too simple to need such an inspiration, it is highly probable that a bulla lies behind the remarkable reverse of Æthelwulf's last type and Æthelberht's first, with the moneyer's name on the limbs of a cross. Precisely at this juncture, late in 855, Æthelwulf's host the vigorous Benedict III, among other innovations of his brief reign, changed the traditional two-line bulla (occasionally with a monogram) for one that bore his name en croix, as on the English coins that were presumably ordered by Æthelwulf on his return. No other Pope followed this form, but it is possible that the flower-in-circle of his successor is matched by the next, petal-cross, West Saxon type. Of the surviving English seals, the bulla of Coenwulf, perhaps found in Rome, is coin-like without being like any particular coin, nor like a papal bulla. Apart from its Suffolk provenance, the remarkably large matrix of Bishop Æthelwald is usually ascribed to the shadowy last bishop of Dommoc because it bears some resemblance to a late ninth-century coin-type, though there is a later candidate of the same name. Of the two matrices with effigies that of Ælfric, in bronze, has enough resemblance in lettering, hair, and drapery to Æthelred's 'Crux' type, above all others, to support its ascription to his untrustworthy ealdorman of that name; that of Godwine, however, in ivory and converted from that of Godgytha, by the same token, including the form of the S, fits better in an 'arm-and-sceptre' context, and thus would fit the famous Godwine early in his career, or some other of the name, rather than the 'minister' who attests from 980 to 1016. I date by detail rather than by design: such highly placed ministers and bishops did not have their seals modelled on a current penny but ordered them as suitable to their rank according to an established pattern. This would surely have been that of the royal seal duly reduced in size and attribute (and Godwine's is already 45 mm. in diameter). My contention is that, in some cases, the coins are also based on royal seals, and thus, observing the affinity between pennies and non-royal seals, we can envisage, and to some

1 R. L. Poole, Studies in Chronology and History, Oxford, 1934, 97; C. Serafini, Le monete e le piombe del Medaglione Vaticano, 1910, pl. 1.
degree reconstruct, the royal seals that were their common archetypes. Assuredly the West Saxon kings had seals; Æthelstan, brother-in-law of Charles the Simple and of Otto the Great, would have needed one, however limited its internal use, and not least after his new-found dignity as Rex totius Britannie. For the others one cannot be quite so dogmatic, but Æthelstan’s late portrait types, unlike most of their age, cannot be dismissed as rough reminiscences of some late Roman coin-bust. For one thing, they are not rough, and the breadth of shoulder, the crown, and the forward-jutting of the head are un-Roman. On all these points, however, they are reminiscent of seals, whether pendant or applied, of the Emperors or imperial aspirants from Louis the German down to the Ottos, save that these usually carry a spear and shield of which Æthelstan gives no indication. I plead with conviction that they reflect his final seal and suggest, more tentatively, that we may see other seals in his earlier bust, in Edgar’s ‘reform’ type that followed Æthelstan’s precedent, in ‘second-hand’ and ‘Crux’, taken together, and another, possibly, in Æthelred’s ‘long-cross’. ‘Helmet’ returns to Roman models, but the seal that Cnut certainly used on his writs might leave traces in the related obverses from his ‘short-cross’ down to ‘quadrilateral-trefoil’, in which case it had a half-length effigy with prominent arm and sceptre, like a profile version of Otto III’s as Rex.¹

To pass from iconography to epigraphy, coins and seals provide unique and complementary evidence for the formal titles of rulers and the formal status of towns. It is sometimes argued that the florid phraseology of early charters shows that official titles did not exist until chancery procedure was formalized. The consistent usage on coins and seals, their compass too narrow for rhetoric, refutes this. Though no seal survives to resolve the point, Mr. Blunt has touched on the relations between the coins and the circumscribed group of charters that name Æthelstan as Rex totius Britannie. In the alternation from reign to reign between the bravado of Alfred, Æthelstan, and Edgar and the caution of the others, who felt it to be hubris and stopped at Rex, the long title is generally associated with a full mint-signature until Edgar established the enduring title, Rex Anglorum, and the enduring form of signature, which does not designate the status of the mint-town. This is an unfortunate omission, since we have to wait for centuries before comparable evidence is available from corporate seals. Only Æthelstan goes some way towards fulfilling, in this detail, the Carolingian precedents which, in coinage as in so much else, lie behind the acts of the West Saxon kings. I refer here to the coinage of Charles the Bald, the first unified and administratively consistent many-mint coinage in Europe. It is arguable that its earliest consequence in England is the uniform last coinage of Æthelwulf, with the name arranged as on bulls of Benedict III, but this involved few mints, if indeed more than one, whereas under Æthelstan they were suddenly multiplied. Under the earlier Carolingians they were more numerous than in contemporary England but irregularly distributed and unsure of continuity: Reims alone fairly consistently proclaims herself a civitas, though half a dozen did so on Charlemagne’s temple type. One may compare the irregular scatter of English mints before Æthelstan, where Canterbury is often named as a civitas, York sporadically, London and Lincoln once only. Charles the Bald and Æthelstan, for the first time in their respective realms, set up a systematic over-all mintage in which every coin proclaimed its origin and, though not always in Æthelstan’s case, its municipal status. In

¹ Ewald, pl. 17, 4.
either case it is a considered and mature coinage, the policy that underlies it is documented, yet the precise date is in dispute.

Charles has been treated as a figure of fun or calamity, a parody of his forebears and namesakes. The founder of France, as we know her, deserves better. If he won little gloire in forty years of kingship he was a master of the art of the possible. Canny, on occasion ruthless, able to recover from setbacks with dignity and much more constructive than his half-brothers, from early in his reign, in the face of an emergent baronage, he sought to revive the ‘infrastructure’ of Roman government, centred on the civitates, with the bishops as his intendents. In the long term this policy was a resounding success, a claim staked for civilization and maintained. After 1,200 years more than half of the civitates are still major cities and only one, Thérouanne, is utterly prostrated, while the coinage that mirrors the policy as Æthelstan’s mirrors the borough-strategy of Alfred and Edward, endured for over 200 years ‘immobilized’ by its very utility. From early in his reign on his seal and consistently on his mature coinage, until he finally became Emperor, Charles writes himself conspicuously gratia Dei rex: he did not invent the formula but was the first to abandon rhetorical alternatives for this simple expression of public assurance and humility before God that became the pattern for all European monarchs. Æthelwulf, who may possibly have used the formula before he set out for Rome, visited Charles on his return and, though much the elder of the two, was deeply impressed, bringing home his young bride and fond hopes of such a Benjamin to his own rebellious sons.

Charles’s coinage with GRATIA DÆI REX (the ‘GDR’ issue of M. Lafaurie) has been commonly associated with the Edict of Pithes (864) but it is not the type that the edict describes and the date seems ill fitted to such a comprehensive reform. That Æthelwulf’s last issue did not designate the mint is no argument that the ‘GDR’ coinage had not begun by 856. In fact, the relative quiet of the early 850s seems a far more auspicious moment for crowning a policy and consecrating a title already set forth for a decade. I see no contradiction from the hoards, which are mainly from the Low Countries, and I invite Carolingian specialists to reconsider the possibility. What is certain is that Æthelwulf’s progress would have been less secure and stately had it been made a year or two later.

The tale of over eighty mints in this coinage is impressively simple: most of them seem to have been assembled at a stroke, the remainder by the 870s. Charles’s successors added but one or two. About half are civitates, representing practically every see in Francia proper. The next most numerous category is castra or castella, other sites fortified since Roman days and often those so designated on Merovingian issues: these are mainly in a belt south of Paris, from the Loire to nearer Burgundy. Then there are the privileged religious houses, where MON may denote monasterium, and the royal establishments, palacia and fisci. The great contrast with the Merovingian order is the rarity of the presumably unfortified vicus, which survives only in the Low Countries together with the occasional (inland) portus, in a less romanized milieu which recalls the use of port in the Grateley decree. Villa and curtis occur once only. Where possible the arrangement is that of the carefully preserved Notitia Galliarum, with an emphasis on fortified sites. The subsisting civitates can be assumed to have had Roman walls as well as episcopal sees. Where the notitia was deficient or obsolete the notion of fortification is not explicit, but the typical Low-country vicus or portus is in a position of strength on a river,
as Dinant, Namur, or Maastricht, and we are reminded of the situation in England, where *port* and *burh*, though conceptually distinct, in fact refer to the same places. Those named on Æthelstan's coins, by virtue of his decree and of much other evidence, can be assumed to be both, and, if not otherwise designated, each one might have qualified as *vicus* or *portus* across the water. The special interest lies in those which Æthelstan classes either as *civitas* or as *urbs*, a term unknown on Carolingian coins. Canterbury, London, Rochester, Winchester, and York were *civitates* by every test, ancient tribal capitals or the equivalent, with Roman walls and a bishop. Others, Bath, Chichester, Exeter, Leicester, were not then bishoprics but qualify by virtue of their walls and perhaps their known history as tribal capitals. They looked worthy of sees and ultimately achieved them but probably enjoyed no special status save the title. This usage, a ‘city by aspect’, survives until Domesday Book, when several places are so called, including Colchester, which has never had a see. In the case of Chester the *ceastre* termination may make the addition of the Latin equivalent unnecessary, but Gloucester is equally qualified and apparently shows neither on the coins. *Urbs* is represented by Oxford, Lewes, one of the Hamtoms, and the mysterious ‘Darent’, possibly Totnes. A reasonable suggestion is that it means an extensive, more or less quadrilateral walled borough, not Roman but following Roman patterns, yet Wareham, an obvious parallel instance, is not called *urbs*. Though the word plays little part in medieval constitutional law it has Roman overtones and, rather curiously, occurs as the equivalent of *civitas* in the mid eleventh century at Boulogne and Angers and in the twelfth at Bourges and Sens. It also occurs at Bremen in the same sense, for this is one of the rare examples of the legitimate extension of the Carolingian usage to new sees beyond the bounds of the old Roman Empire, as at Würzburg or at Prague. Within these bounds, and particularly in France, the title was nearly always restricted to the ancient *civitates* and, in the vernacular, to the innermost *Fluchtburg*, the *Cité*.

It is not until the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that coins and seals again make a significant contribution to questions of urban status. By that time local practice has much diverged. In the British Isles anything that is not a *civitas* becomes a *villa*, which seals show to be practically interchangeable with *burgus* yet conceptually different: *villa et burgus* is a common phrase, the denotation of both is urban but *urbs* never occurs. Even so, under Edward I and Alexander III and their successors the usage is slightly anomalous: *civitas* usually means an episcopal see and *vice versa*, but not always. London, Canterbury, Exeter, Lincoln and York were both Roman and sees; Durham was a bishopric but not Roman. Yet Chester, which no longer gave part of a title to the Mercian diocesan, remained a *civitas* and Coventry, which had taken its place in the title, is still a *villa* under Edward IV.¹ All the Irish sees that mint are *civitates* and so is St. Andrews, but not Aberdeen:² none, of course, were Roman. In the sixteenth century *oppidum*, eminently suitable for a hill-fort like Edinburgh, occurs on Scottish coins and seals. This may be antiquarianism but the word had long been used on Dutch and German seals to imply a rank just below *civitas*.

In Germany and to some degree the Low Countries the title of *civitas* becomes cheapened so that quite small towns promote themselves to ‘cities’. A typical instance is Lemgo in Lippe, so named on its ‘short-cross’ imitation sterlings, but the process had begun in

¹ But it is a city on the seventeenth-century tokens.
² This, of course, is New Aberdeen, the see was at Old Aberdeen.