TWELVE NOTES ON SCEATTA FINDS

D. M. METCALF

1. A sceat of type BII from the Iron-age hill fort of Hunsbury, Northants

Sceattas have been found in or close to a number of iron-age hill forts, and they add to the evidence for the occasional use of these sites in the eighth century. Documents suggest that the military value of the hill forts was exploited by the Anglo-Saxons; and they may also have served herdsmen, especially when they lay on the course of rideways or green roads. Some may even have been inhabited. Two sceattas were found just outside Walbury Camp, Berks., and there are finds from Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leics., Old Sarum, Wilts., and Totternhoe, Beds. The coin published here was found on 12 February 1956 within the ramparts of Hunsbury, a hill fort on the 'Jurassic Way' 2 km south-west of Northampton. It was picked up on the surface, in the northern part of the enclosed area (see Fig. 1), which is about 170 by 130 m., and is defended by a single ditch and bank. Almost all the interior of the hill fort was disturbed by commercial working for ironstone in the 1880s, and for many years previously was under the plough.

In 1853 a crystal ball cut into facets was found with ashes in an urn near Hunsbury Hill. In November 1912 T. J. George, the Curator of the Northampton Museum,

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1 D. M. Metcalf, 'Sceattas found at the iron-age hill fort of Walbury Camp, Berkshire', BNI xlv (1974), pp. 1–12.
2 Excavated recently by Miss Ann Dornier, and to be published.
3 Metcalf, op. cit.
4 ibid.
mentioned in a letter to E. T. Leeds that 'some Saxon pots turned up last week a few hundred yards from Hunsbury, but they are not cinerary urns'. Among the pottery from Hunsbury now in the Museum, Mr. P. D. C. Brown has recognized a typical piece with a string hole through a raised lug at the rim, for which a date in the sixth–eighth centuries is indicated; and Mr. W. R. G. Moore, Archaeological Assistant at the Museum, has noted other pieces that are definitely Anglo-Saxon. There is some evidence, therefore, for occupation in the early Anglo-Saxon period.

The coin, which is now in the writer’s collection, is of type B, and weighs 1.25 gm. (19.4 gr.). The obverse (Pl. I, 1) has a snake border and a double row of dots for the diadem (cf. B I a) but no frontispiece to the diadem. Most of the legend is off the flan, but it ends X A Λ O O, the X being unrecorded in the legend of any other coin of type B. The feature of the reverse which attracts attention is the row of six dots in the early part of the legend. They are more or less on the edge of the flan, and one cannot therefore be certain whether they are the feet of letters, or merely dots, although two or three of them seem to drop down to the level of the field at the outer edge. Thus they appear to be a pseudo-inscription. The dots of the snake border are unusually widely spaced. In this and in other ways (the general outlines of the portrait, and of the bird) the obverse and reverse are closest to B II, 3. The dies are probably by the same hand. Three specimens of B II, 3 are recorded, of which two are from the Southend-on-Sea grave find, and the third is from Domburg. The only coin of type A in the Southend find was somewhat worn, and this has been taken as evidence for the date of phase B II.

B II is, however, in part an omnibus classification, characterized by the cross in front of the bird, but with a few not very closely related coins added in, for want of anywhere else to put them. The scheme thus draws on the assumption that the coins are Kentish, i.e. from the same mint as B I. But B II is virtually absent from the Kentish grave finds, and the group contains a strikingly high proportion of continental provenances. I have suggested elsewhere that it is Frisian, but perhaps B II, 3, which lacks a cross in the reverse field, should now be withdrawn from the category and regarded as just an imitative coin, possibly from north of the Thames.

Chemical analysis of the Hunsbury coin shows that its surface layers are very heavily contaminated with iron (and it is patinated a rusty brown colour). The ratio of silver to copper, leaving aside the iron, suggests silver contents of c. 95 per cent, with small amounts of gold and lead. The alloy thus appears very similar to other coins of type B.

2. An alleged hoard from a ‘Romano-Celtic’ temple site on Lancing Down, Sussex

Cartwright’s *Topography of the Rape of Bramber* records a find on Lancing Down of ‘35 coins of a description not much understood, known among the numismatists by
the name of Sceattæ'. One 'porcupine' sceat and two small Ancient British coins\(^1\) are illustrated in an accompanying engraving, and the text states that 'the three coins represented are some of those above alluded to'. The discovery of Ancient British coins mingled with sceattas in Sussex is not totally improbable; but unfortunately Cartwright's reliability must be impugned. He took his account more or less verbatim from an earlier (and obviously preferable) notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1828,\(^2\) of which the relevant sentences are:

> During last Spring, a Roman pavement was discovered on Lancing Down, near Worthing, by a Mr Medhurst, buried beneath what appeared to be a large tumulus. On removing the earth, a gallery 40 feet square was laid open. In the midst of it is a room 16 feet square, the floor of which is a tessellated pavement in excellent preservation, but without painting or pattern. In the centre of the room were found a quantity of ashes; and among them, says Mr M., '25 pieces of Roman, ancient British, and Saxon coins; on one side of the edifice 12 pieces of silver coin, no two pieces of which were alike'.

The find is thus reduced from thirty-five to twenty-five coins, and another correspondent, writing in the *Gentleman's Magazine* two years later, limits the claim still further. He publishes a plan of the site showing where various finds were made, and gives drawings of several of them. He says (and elsewhere his disparaging tone is even more obvious),

> Mr Medhurst, the discoverer of the pavement, was formerly a turner in Brighton, and still carries on the trade at Lancing... In the centre of the room he found ashes, and twenty five pieces of British and Roman coin.\(^3\)

The find was made on Good Friday, 1828 (not 1823 as sometimes stated). The Editor adds:

> The three coins, or sceattæ, represented in the plate, have been communicated by another Correspondent, but are said to have been found at the same spot.

We have no reason to doubt this statement. Cartwright simply reproduced the drawings of the three coins, together with the rest of the engraving, and, as we have seen, stated that they are some of those originally found among the ashes.

> It is not impossible that Cartwright was acquainted with the 'other Correspondent', and knew from him more about the source of the three coins than he makes clear. More probably, however, he merely conflated the two accounts in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and introduced errors through indifference. In the circumstances one cannot be at all sure that sceattas figured either among the twenty-five coins from the ashes, or among the twelve pieces of silver coin, no two of which were alike. But one may accept the illustrated sceat with little reserve as an eighth-century find from a 'Romano-Celtic' temple site.\(^4\) Several more of the Ancient British coins from Lancing Down were evidently handled by Roach Smith, who was able to send impressions of them to Evans.\(^5\)

The sceat (Fig. 2) is a 'porcupine' of the 'voic' variety, and the drawing of it seems to be quite careful, for it has noted the bar on the obverse making an 'H' within the curve

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1. The latter are discussed by Evans: see below.
of the 'porcupine'—a characteristic detail of the 'voic' coins. As a group they are of high average weight, exceptionally pure silver (97-98 per cent 'silver'), and early date. There need be no doubt that they are English. The irregularities of positioning on the flan suggest that the Lancing Down find may well be one and the same with BMC 64 (NC 1966, pl. xv, 6), an unprovenanced pre-1838 accession, weighing 1.25 gm., but they lack any very individual peculiarities which would allow one to insist on the identity.

3. A 'porcupine' sceat from a woad-ground at Dingley, Northants

The Dingley find has been listed in VCH and elsewhere simply as a sceat, without any description of its type. It was, however, illustrated in 1712 by an admirable line-drawing (Fig. 3) in J. Morton's *Natural History of Northamptonshire*. Morton records that it was found in a woad-ground: woad was widely grown in the county in the seventeenth century, to be used in dyeing wool. Its use in Anglo-Saxon times has inevitably escaped record, except that there are many place-names and field-names, such as Wadcroft, Wadground, and Wadhill, which refer to the growing of woad.

Sceattas with a 'numeral' (XII or XIII) within the curve or spine of the 'porcupine' include two easily recognized stylistic groupings. On one, the standard on the reverse is shown with a double dotted outline, enclosing an annulet and four dots. The other, to which the Dingley find conforms, has two rows of very fine dots outlining the spine, and on the reverse a mixed grill of symbols—T X L \ G X : C, or the like. This second variety is well represented in the Groningen/Lutje Saaksum hoard, and elsewhere among site-finds from the Low Countries. There need be no doubt that it is Frisian; and a date in the first quarter of the eighth century may be suggested. There is a similar coin among the Thanet finds.

4. A 'porcupine' sceat from North Moreton, Oxon.

Searches with a metal detector in a field at the village of North Moreton, near Dorchester, have yielded a considerable number of Roman and medieval coins, jetons,
lead pieces, tokens, and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century coppers. They all come from an area directly to the north of the village, approximately at 562 897 (National Grid ref.). They include one Anglo-Saxon or Frisian piece of the eighth century, a ‘porcupine’ sceat (Pl. I, 2) weighing 1.01 gm., slightly worn but otherwise in good condition. It does not coincide with any of the main varieties A–G of the ‘porcupines’, but is from the same ‘standard’ die as BMC 56 (Pl. I, 3). The ‘porcupine’ side is likewise extremely similar. The British Museum coin, which weighs 1.17 gm., is a pre-1838 accession, which is therefore likely to have been an English find. The symbols on the reverse, V I X A, are accompanied by four bold dots, as seen for example on type 3a.

As there seem to be no close parallels among the finds from the Continent the variety may be English in origin. The weights of the two specimens suggest, however, that it does not belong to the earliest phase of the ‘porcupines’.

5. ‘Wodan/monster’ sceattas from Datchet, Berks., and from the line of Akeman Street at Tackley, Oxon.

Some years ago a girl while playing in the garden found a sceat at Datchet, a village on the left bank of the Thames opposite Old Windsor. More recently it was shown to Mr. G. D. Mileham of the Wimbledon Coin Centre who, realizing its historical interest, encouraged the girl’s father to send it to me for examination. It is of the Frisian type BMC type 31, conventionally described as the ‘Wodan/monster’ type, and is known from some hundreds of specimens from the hoards of Bolsward, Hallum, and Terwispel, and from Low Countries site finds. It won a special esteem in Scandinavia. By contrast, this is only the fourth recorded provenance from England. There was one among the eighteenth-century Isle of Thanet finds, one came from near Hitchin, one is from Tackley, Oxon., from the Evetts collection of local finds, and the Datchet coin makes the fourth.

It was found in a garden not far from the London Road, that is to the east of the village, and between a quarter and half a mile away from the river. Nothing significant is known about Datchet in Anglo-Saxon times, but it was probably a crossing-point of the river.  

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1 I am grateful to Mr. R. Spurling for supplying details of the discovery, and for his willingness to allow me to study the coin, which is in his possession.
2 NC 1966, p. 184.
4 Dr. D. H. Hill’s researches have assembled a complete record of the holdings of major continental museums.
5 Datchet was in Buckinghamshire, but was transferred to Berkshire under Local Government reorganization.
6 I am indebted to Mr. Mileham (formerly known as Mr. Davies) and to Mr. Williams for their ready help.
8 K. Bendixen, ‘The First Merovingian Coin-
10 Illustrated in Camden’s Britannia: see NC 1957 pp. 181–207.
13 And may have been a convenient route to Old Windsor, where there was a royal hall in the time of Edward the Confessor, and perhaps much earlier. The results of important excavations at Old Windsor by Hope-Taylor are awaited. For cropmarks around Datchet, see T. Gates, The Middle Thames Valley. An Archaeological Survey of the River Gravels (Berks. Arch. Committee Publication no. 1), 1975, p. 49.
There are very few sceattas recorded from the area between London and the crest of the Chilterns—the traditional bounds of Middlesex. Even in the eighth century it may still have been heavily wooded with little population. A sceat was, however, found recently in excavations only a few miles away from Datchet, at Wraysbury. It is a coin of the primary series, corresponding most nearly with B II 7, i. There is an unconfirmed find from Brentford, of type B, and a specimen of type 40 (which has the same monster design for its reverse as type 31) from Hemel Hempstead.

Type 31 shows a wide range of silver contents. The best examples are over 90 per cent silver, whereas others (including the two in the Cimiez hoard, concealed perhaps c. 737) are very debased, and may contain about 30 per cent silver or even less. Stylistic analysis of the type to establish its chronology is difficult, since the elements in the design are more than usually constant. The Datchet specimen (Pl. I, 4) is very close in style to a specimen known to be over 90 per cent silver, but from its surface appearance one would guess that it was rather more coppery than that. Its weight is 1.081 gm. (16.7 gr.). Nevertheless it is a well-made coin in very fresh condition, and it may have been lost as early as the first quarter of the eighth century. The Tackley find (Pl. I, 5), which has been associated with Akeman Street, is lighter, weighing 0.83 gm. (12.8 gr.). Chemical analysis of the surface indicates 80–84 per cent silver. A date in the second quarter of the century is indicated.

6. A pierced specimen of BMC type 37 from Pyecombe, Sussex

A sceat now in the Brighton Museum, of BMC type 37 (two facing heads/four birds around cross), was reported to have been found at Dale Hill. There is a place of that name near Ticehurst, in the Weald, but the clue to the correct provenance lies in the record that the coin was found on the north-east side of Dale Hill road extension. The borough engineer of Brighton, Mr. F. N. B. Patterson, has kindly confirmed that Dale Hill is the name given to a stretch of the A23 London to Brighton road about a quarter of a mile to the west of the village of Pyecombe, near the crest of the South Downs. The road was reconstructed in the early 1920s; and the coin was acquired in October 1922. On the north-east side of the road the ground rises to the hill fort of Wolstonbury
Hill, about half a mile away. The Ridgeway crosses the line of the road and climbs the hill before turning east towards Ditchling Beacon.  

The coin (Pl. I, 6) falls within the normal limits of style for the issue, and is perhaps closest to SCBI Hunterian, 82.

A second find from the village of Pyecombe is a sceat of BMC type 3a, in the British Museum. There is another eighth-century coin, from roughly half-way between Pyecombe and the coast: a penny of Offa, by the moneyer Ethelwald, was found in a garden in Surrenden Crescent, Brighton, in May 1932. The find-spot is directly to the east of the London Road (from which Surrenden Crescent is a turning) nearly 2½ miles from the coast, and at about 200 feet above sea level. Together, the three finds hint at a route leading from Brighton, where it seems that there may have been a small harbour before the crumbling of the cliffs which gave it protection, up to the Ridgeway.

A sceat reported 'from Brighton' is of more doubtful provenance—and, incidentally, of a peculiar alloy. Mr. W. V. R. (Roy) Baldwin acquired it through an intermediary from 'an old man who had nothing but locally found pieces. All I could get out of the intermediary was that the coins, which I bought in a little home-made cabinet, had been in a family of farmers for generations and each had added a few as found; all the rest were utter rubbish except one bonnie little Anglo-Saxon bit.'

7. The Banbury find of a counterfeit of BMC type 37

Since the Banbury find was published7 the coin (Pl. I, 7) has been acquired by the Ashmolean Museum and has been cleaned. It is now a rusty coppery colour, with a few blackish patches; there is some flaking away of the surface layers. Chemical analysis of the surface of the coin shows it to be very variable. In some places silver makes up as much as 80 per cent of the surface layers (although one would never suspect it from the coin's appearance) and in others as little as 10 per cent. Tin amounts to c. 5 per cent in places. There is a considerable contamination with iron, and pronounced peaks in the spectrum corresponding with gold and lead. Three separate measurements in the vicinity of a flaked area showed substantial amounts of mercury, not present elsewhere on the surface. Mercury has also been found in another base-metal counterfeit of much the same date—a denier of Pepin—produced by the amalgam process.

The finder, Mr. Slack, has been good enough to supply details, in the form of a sketch-map, of the exact spot where he noticed the coin lying in the soil. It was well away from the early built-up area, nearly three-quarters of a mile to the south-west of the old town centre, in some allotments on the north-east side of Springfield Avenue. Before development, the area between the Oxford Road and the Bloxham Road (A41 and A361) was an open space, called Easington Field.

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2 P. V. Hill, 'Uncatalogued Sceattas in the National and other Collections', NC 1953, pp. 92–114, at p. 95.
4 The evidence for Brighton as a port is, inevitably, tenuous. See A. Ballard, 'The Sussex Coast-line', Sussex Archaeological Collections, liii (1909), pp. 5–25.
5 In Domesday Book, Brighton is recorded as paying a rent of 4,000 herrings.
6 O. 61 in Metcalf, Merrick, and Hamblin, op. cit. The coin was found to contain 21–24 per cent silver and 9 per cent zinc. This would be normal in a coin of Eanred of Northumbria, but is highly irregular in a sceat.
Extremely little is known about Banbury in the middle Saxon period, from which the 
sceat remains virtually the only published archaeological find.  

8. A sceat of BMC type 42 found near Wootton Bassett, Wilts.

Between the pages of a letter in the archive of correspondence of Sir John Evans 
there recently came to light a small rectangle of pasteboard, attached to which were 
sealing-wax impressions of the obverse and reverse of a sceat of BMC type 42 (hound 
and tree). Beside them was written, ‘AR 12 grs Marlboro. Mr Quain’. The word 
‘Marlboro’ was crossed out, and above it written, ‘Nr Wootton Bassett’. From a plaster 
impression taken from the sealing-wax, there can be no doubt that it is the same specimen 
as SCBI Mack 353, even though the weight is given there as 14 1/2 gr., and the provenance 
has always been given as ‘near Oxford’, on no less authority than that of Roach Smith.  
In his description of plate xliv of Collectanea Antiqua he says, ‘Figs. 1 to 9, 13 to 14 are 
sceattas, of which fig. 1, found near Marlborough, and fig. 2, found near Oxford, 
are in the cabinet of Lord Londesborough . . .’. Some suspicion must arise whether the 
two coins have not been confused, and whether fig. 1, which is the unique specimen of 
type 62 now in the Ashmolean Museum, ex A. D. Passmore ex Grantley ex Montagu, 
is not the coin found near Oxford, while fig. 2 is from near Marlborough, or more 
precisely near Wootton Bassett.

A coin of type 23a in rather similar style to type 62 was found at Dorchester-on- 
Thames: on both, the monster has been given the curled tail of the hound from type 42.  

Another specimen of type 42 was found recently about twenty-five miles away from 
Wootton Bassett, at Walbury Camp, near Newbury, and there are others from 
Southampton and Reculver, and an imitative coin from Domburg.  

9. A sceat of BMC type 47 from Houghton Regis, Beds.: the east Saxon sphinx

The district in Greater Mercia that has yielded more eighth-century coins than any 
other lies immediately to the north and west of Dunstable. The Watling Street route 
cuts through the Chilterns there, and intersects the Icknield Way.  
Various sceattas have been found near by, in particular a mile or so north of the intersection in the village of Houghton Regis, and also two or three miles away to the west, at Totternhoe (see Fig. 4). Houghton Regis was a royal estate in the late Saxon period, and may have been much earlier, for the Domesday Book records the commuted payment of an 
archaic render, and includes for example hound-money.  

One of the coins from Houghton Regis was discovered in the spring of 1938 by Mr. L. J. Blow, on a new building site. He picked it up on a spoil heap when workmen 
were digging footings for a house in Easthill Road (Grid Ref. 0225 2445). The site 
yielded several scraps of Romano-British ware, a few sherds of St. Neots ware, and 
medieval pottery in the near vicinity. But there was no pottery on the spoil heaps when

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VCH Oxon., vol. x, 1972, pp. 1–125; P. J. Fasham, 
The Archaeological Implications of Redevelopment in Banbury', Cake and Cockhorse, v (1972), 49–56; 
id., 'Excavations in Banbury, 1972: First Report', 


3 Here too there has been a confusion of provenances: see the correction in Oxoniensia, xxxvii 

4 BNJ xiv (1974), pp. 1–12. For a survey of type 42, 
see D. M. Metcalf and D. R. Walker, “The “Wolf” 

5 D. M. Metcalf, ‘Monetary Affairs in Mercia in 
the Time of Æthelbald (716–57),’ Mercian Studies, 
Leicester, 1977 (in press).

Mr. Blow picked up the coin. The coin was of *BMC* type 47, which has as its obverse type a so-called 'female centaur', more correctly identified by Mr. Rigold as a sphinx. The find was published, but without illustration; and it was shown in the British Museum, where Derek Allen examined it. In December 1941 Allen wrote to Sutherland from the Ministry of War Transport, in Berkeley Square,

I enclose some ‘disjecta membra’ from my numismatic days. I have collected them in the order they came to hand amongst the various miscellaneous collections of paper which I have salvaged from the past.

The attached list of sceatta finds, which was incorporated into Sutherland’s article of 1942, notes that the coin was very fine, from ‘new dies to us’ (i.e. the British Museum), and weighed 0.67 gm.²

Until recently, the coin was erroneously believed to have been stolen from the Letchworth Museum. It is, however, safely in the hands of the original finder, who has kindly supplied a photograph (Pl. I, 8) which shows that the style is closely similar to that of other specimens in the series, such as *BMC* 189 (Pl. I, 9).

The interest of the ‘sphinx’ type appears when it is placed in its context of monetary history. At a date around 730Æthelbald of Mercia issued a coinage in good silver showing a bird pecking a berry from the branch of a vine. This ‘bird and branch’ coinage (a specimen of which was found in a garden in All Saints Road, Houghton Regis, in 1973, within 1,300 feet of the 1938 find) was struck at several mints, and the

1 I am indebted to Mr. Blow, and particularly to the kind help of Mr. C. L. Matthews, the Dunstable archaeologist, for details of the circumstances of finding. I must also thank Mr. G. R. Burleigh, of the Letchworth Museum, where the coin was formerly on loan, for searching through the records.

2 In discussion.


Allen's letter is in Heberden Coin Room archives, Arch. Ash. 47.

4 Mr. Blow was good enough to establish the exact position. The find was recorded in *Seaby's Coin and Medal Bulletin*, 1973, p. 441, and the type identified in Metcalf, op. cit. (*Mercian Studies*), with the help of Mr. R. Hagen of the Luton Museum, who supplied an illustration. The coin was illustrated by enlarged photographs in the *Luton Evening Post*, 17 Sept. 1973 (obv.) and the *Dunstable Gazette*, 2 Nov. 1973 (rev.).
design was linked with different obverses. In Mercia the obverse showed a standing figure of the king, but at Southampton this was replaced by a scutiform (so-called ‘Celtic cross’) design. It has been suggested elsewhere that the depiction of the Mercian king on coins struck at Southampton would have been unacceptable, and that a politically more neutral design was substituted for that reason.

Later in his reign, when the sceatta currency had already suffered severe debasement, Æthelbald seems to have taken part in another joint coinage. The common motif was a whorl or circular pattern of either three or four wolf-heads with gaping jaws and fangs. The ‘wolf-whorl’ reverse is found coupled with three different obverses. One was, again, the standing figure of the king holding two long crosses. This was no doubt the Mercian version, and has been found at Temple Guiting, Glos., and (a crude copy) at Malton, Cambs. It contains only 30–35 per cent silver. A second obverse uses the scutiform design again. Provenances show that it belongs to the Southampton area. The third, with which we are concerned here, replaces the figure of king Æthelbald with a most curious picture of a standing sphinx. Provenances indicate an easterly origin for the coins of this third type. On general grounds, and leaving aside the evidence of the iconography, London or Essex would be possible. The kingdom of East Anglia, in particular Suffolk, would seem less likely, for it had its own coin-type (R2), easily recognizable and, by the 730s, somewhat out of the main stream.

In the second quarter of the eighth century, the coinage was understood to be a royal prerogative just as clearly as it was in the time of Offa, although control over counterfeiting could not be so firmly exercised. A political context should therefore be sought for the ‘sphinx’ sceattas, and a case can be made out for attributing them to the kingdom of Essex. The standing figure of Æthelbald on the ‘wolf-whorl’ coins was replaced by a local symbol, thus asserting East Saxon separateness from Mercia. (The East Saxon royal house was the one dynasty which traced its descent not from Wodan but from Seaxneat.)

The discovery of two sphinxes in Colchester is a pointer. A fine statue of the Theban sphinx, 25 inches high, was found while digging the foundations of the hospital in 1821; and a bronze statuette of a sphinx, about 1½ inches high, had been found in 1820, within a few yards of the stone figure. Both were presumably Roman in date, but the evidence of the sceattas suggests that sphinxes were somehow associated in the eighth-century mind with Cunobelin, greatest of the British kings, and founder of Camulodunum. These and other mythical creatures were represented, along with the royal name (CVNO) and the name of the city (CAMV), on his coins. The impressive Roman walls of Colchester were a standing reminder to the Anglo-Saxons of the glories

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3 BMC type 23e.
4 Metcalf, Merrick, and Hamblin, op. cit., p. 46.
5 BMC type 48. The only find of this scarce type so far published is from Southampton; see P. V. Addyman and D. H. Hill, ‘Saxon Southampton: A Review of the Evidence, Part I’, Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club, xxv (1968), pp. 61–93, at p. 90. The Ashmolean Museum recently acquired a specimen of the same type from the Hugh Shortt collection, believed to have been found in south Hampshire.
6 For a list of provenances, see note 10 (pp. 13–15 below).
8 M. R. Hull, Roman Colchester, 1958, p. 253 and pl. 38; the bronze statuette is engraved in E. W. A. Hay, A Letter to the Committee of the Essex and Colchester General Hospital, Colchester, 1821.
of the past; and, in short, the East Saxon king chose to recall those glories as a response to the pressures of Mercian hegemony in southern England. Archaeology recognizes two versions of the sphinx—the Egyptian, and the Theban. The sphinx of the sceattas conforms to neither. It is unambiguously female, and winged, but its body and long legs seem to be those of a horse or centaur. Happily, one can point to what seems to be the origin of the coin design, in a silver coin of Cunobelin now in the Colchester Museum. It weighs about the same as a sceat (1.12 gm.), and shows a (male) centaur carrying a branch, but it has been misinterpreted in the process of copying by an eighth-century artist who was, one can only suppose, aware in general terms of sphinxes and their local significance. It is easy to see from the enlarged photograph (PL I, 10) how the two dots on the coin representing the nipples on the centaur’s bare chest have been misunderstood as breasts; and the leafy branch has become a wing, and has been duplicated. We are, then, in the unusual position of being able to suggest that a coin of the same type as that in the Colchester Museum was accidentally brought to light in the eighth century, and that it was used as a model for the design of a new coinage. Thus the East Saxon sphinx derived its equine characteristics. The borrowing seems to imply that the king or his advisers knew enough about Cunobelin to associate him with Colchester.

As a parallel, an Ancient British silver coin of Epillus was discovered with sceattas in the Birchington grave-find, and Rigold commented that its design might even have influenced that of Primary Series A. Again, a very exact prototype for the wolf-torc sceattas has been noticed, in a continental Celtic coin. Evans suggested that a sceatta type in the Cambridge hoard might have been inspired by the silver coins of the Iceni; but one should be careful not to build too much on general similarities, where two designs may both have been drawn from a common stock of iconographical motifs.

Perhaps the most curious aspect of the East Saxon sphinx is that its head, turned to look behind, is the head of a king, wearing a cynehelm, exactly reproducing that in the standing figure of Æthelbald on the Mercian coins.

A dozen specimens of the 'sphinx' coinage are known at the present day, but only five have geographical provenances attaching to them. Two of these, appropriately enough for an east coast coinage, are from the Netherlands: one in The Hague cabinet.

1 The earlier Anglo-Saxons would no doubt also have been very impressed by the Lexden Dykes, which mark off a defensible fortress site between the Colne and Roman Rivers. See C. F. C. Hawkes and M. R. Hull, Camulodunum, First Report on the Excavations at Colchester, 1930-1938, 1947; Hull, Roman Colchester; P. Crummy, Colchester. Recent Excavations and Research, 1974.

2 Found in Clarke’s Meadow, 1936. I must thank Mr. D. T.-D. Clarke, Curator of the Colchester and Essex Museum, for allowing me to reproduce the coin, and Mr. R. L. Wilkins and Mr. Roger Goodburn, of the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford, for the photograph.


4 Rigold, op. cit., 1960-1.

5 H. Birkhan, ‘Pfennig’, Numismatische Zeitschrift, lxxxi (1971), pp. 59–65.—‘Above all, the correspondence with the Rolltier type goes so far into detail (bristly hair on the back, dotted belly, the creature’s ears, the tip of the tail curved outward) that one certainly cannot think of coincidence.’

6 J. Evans, ‘On a Small Hoard of Saxon Sceattas found near Cambridge’, NC xiv (1894), pp. 1–11.

7 This stock of familiar ‘pictorial ideas’, common to much of the Germanic and Scandinavian world, and often with roots deep in the past, is described most comprehensively in E. Salin, La civilisation mérovingienne d’après les sépultures, les textes, et le laboratoire, vol. iv, 1959.

is a presumed Low Countries find, while another in the same collection came from the Rhine near Hilversum. Two specimens were found in London and were published by Roach Smith. Both are inferior in style, one markedly so, and probably both are contemporary copies. London was an East Saxon city until within two decades of the date of the ‘sphinx’ coins (c. 745–50?), and its population no doubt retained much of its earlier character and connections after submitting to Mercian rule. The third English find is the coin from Houghton Regis.

The style of the main series is regular and easily recognizable (Pl. I, 8–9), and the four specimens in the British Museum’s trays look very debased. Lockett 265, however, which adds a rosette at the centre of the wolf-whorl (Pl. I, 11), and omits the four chain-like tongues, is of reasonably good silver (c. 80–85 per cent), and thus presents a problem of interpretation. It contains minor amounts of gold and lead, and a significant amount of tin (c. 3–5 per cent). The surface is contaminated with iron and copper. The die-cutter has hardly understood the regular treatment of the sphinx, and has replaced the king’s head with a bare facing head, with spiky hair standing out on both sides. The sphinx’s right breast has apparently become the head of a horse, and the design seems to have been understood as an angel flying, behind a horse. However that may be, it is unexpected to find a derivative coin of much better alloy than the prototype. It may therefore belong to a late restoration of the sceatta coinage, on an improved silver standard. There was another specimen, in worn condition, also in the Lockett collection. The Southampton ‘wolf-whorl’ type also occurs in good alloy.

If the ‘sphinx’ type is attributable to the kingdom of Essex, it is natural to ask whether any other, earlier sceatta types might have a similar origin. This question needs to be examined in the context of the sceattas attributed to the kingdom of East Anglia. At least one other coinage of Cunobelin was deliberately and carefully imitated: type 66 is copied from Mack 223. From Colchester itself, there is a pale gold triens of c. 675, found in a garden in the town. It is of the ‘Varimundus’ type, one of the two series which bridge the transition from pale gold to pure silver. The other bears the name Padu in runes. About a dozen specimens of the ‘Varimundus’ coinage are known, but only this one has an exact provenance in England. Rigold has established that the reverse design is imitated from a Merovingian coin with the same unusual form of cross and the letters CA in the angles, by a moneyer Vvarimundus working at a minor and uncertain Austrasian mint named as MALGO MAT[I]RIACO. The letters CA were borrowed in the third quarter of the seventh century by various minor mints from the coinage of Chalon-sur-Saône (Cabilonnum), perhaps in the hope of attracting a share of the commercial esteem which they enjoyed. Rigold spoke of the ‘now meaning-

1 Acc. nos. 17070 and 1970/338 respectively.
2 On tin, see D. M. Metcalf and D. R. Walker, “Tin as a Minor Constituent in Two Sceattas from the Shakenoak Excavations”, NC 1976, pp. 228 f. A programme of measurement of tin in sceattas is in progress, using the Isisprobe with a 241Am source, and measuring the Kα and β lines.
3 Illustrated in the British Numismatic Society’s set of negatives. Lockett 265 is now in the writer’s collection, ex Hersh.
4 Unpublished analysis of a coin in the Ashmolean Museum, ex Shortt.
5 The standard reference on the East Anglian coinage is Rigold, op. cit. (1960–1).
8 But note that Lafaurie has pointed out that Chalon is not among the mints with a long-distance distribution of their coins.—J. Lafaurie, ‘Les routes commerciales indiquees par les tresors et trouvailles monétaires mérovingiens’, Moneta e Scambi (Settentrione di studio vol viii) Spoleto, 1961, pp. 231–78 at p. 268.
less C A' on the English coins.\footnote{Rigold, op. cit. (1966).} The Colchester find, however, suggests another explanation. It may be that the totally unimportant Merovingian prototype, an example of which had chanced to find its way to Essex, was selected precisely because it included in its design the letters C A, that is, the initial letters of \textit{Camulodunum}.

Most of the early English sceattas have hitherto been interpreted, more or less explicitly, as being Kentish and East Anglian:\footnote{D. M. Metcalf, 'Monetary Expansion and Recession: Interpreting the Distribution-patters of Seventh- and Eighth-century Coins', \textit{Coins and the Archaeologist}, ed. J. Casey and R. Reece, 1974, pp. 206-23. This view of events tends to turn a blind eye on the 'porcupine' sceattas, some of which are undoubtedly early in date. There is a considerable total of finds from Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria, many of which belong to the 'second wave' of 'porcupines'—but some at least seem likely to be contemporary with Types A, B, and R1 in Kent and East Anglia.} the minting of silver coinage began, in the last quarter of the seventh century, in the wealthy but geographically very restricted region of east Kent, and secondarily in south-east Suffolk (at Ipswich or nearby), and it spread further afield very little during the first quarter of the eighth century. \textit{Pada} is Kentish, as is clearly shown by provenances, but the '\textit{Variummundus}' series, taking the same evidence in its negative sense, is not Kentish. It seems to belong north of the Thames, and is probably from 'Kent's poor neighbour',\footnote{S. E. Rigold, 'The "Double Minsters" of Kent and their Analogies', \textit{JBAAn} xxxi (1968), pp. 27-37.} Essex. Ipswich may have begun to eclipse Colchester as a trading centre at about this time.

10. A sceat of King \textit{Aelfwald} of East Anglia, found at \textit{Normanby}, near Scunthorpe, Lincs.

The Mack collection contained a sceat found by a farmer on his land at \textit{Normanby}, near Scunthorpe, in 1970.\footnote{SCBI Mack 341.} A second find from the same village was sold at auction in 1976.\footnote{Glendining, 20 July 1976, lot 510.} It is the fifth sceat recorded from the kingdom of \textit{Lindsey}—which, although its ancient dynasty continued to rule, had sunk to the status of a mere province of Greater Mercia.\footnote{There are six, if one counts a Northumbrian sceat of \textit{Eaherht} from \textit{Castor}: but it probably belongs to a slightly later phase of the currency. See J. B. Whitwell in \textit{Lincolnshire History and Archaeology}, ii (1967), pp. 46 f.} Of the five coins, two were found at Winteringham, at a crossing-point of the Humber, two are from \textit{Normanby}, and one is from Crosby (see Fig. 5). They form a rather isolated group of finds in north-west Lincolnshire. One wonders whether both the Winteringham and Normanby finds may not be coins concealed or lost near the Mercian frontier (in the same way as there is a concentration of finds near Dunstable). The fen-lands of the Isle of Axholme were a natural obstacle, and the Trent had to be crossed by ferry. But there was an ancient

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Fig5.png}
\caption{North-west Lincolnshire. High ground is shaded. The Crosby find is from near Old Park Farm. (Ermine Street and Middle Street after Dudley.)}
\end{figure}
trackway from the Ancholme valley to Burton-by-Stather, by way of the ‘Long Hedge’ near Normanby; it continued beyond the Trent, from Garthorpe to Crowle.1

The 1976 find from Normanby (Pl. I, 12) is an East Anglian sceat, belonging fairly late in series R2. It weighs 1·04 gm./16·0 gr. Although it was described as copper, and has a dark olive-green patina (suggestive of the presence of tin), chemical analysis has shown that the silver contents are as high as 75 per cent on the face of the coin. A measurement on a cleaned portion of the edge showed silver closer to 50 per cent. In addition, the coin contains c. 5-8 per cent tin, and c. 1 per cent gold.2 This is in line with comparable coins previously analysed.3 A very similar coin found at Ipswich in 1966 (Fig. 6) was described as ‘bronze’: one may suspect that it too contained a good deal of silver.4

Similar coins have been recorded from Caister by Yarmouth (two separate finds), Caistor by Norwich (two finds), Ipswich (three finds), and Woodbridge; and there is an outlier from Dunstable (and another, rather earlier, coin from Houghton Regis).5 The Normanby coin comes from even further afield, but its style associates it firmly with the main series. It might have been carried north to the Mercian frontier by a traveller on his way, for example, to York.

The type is certainly East Anglian, and, given its alloy, the Normanby find, like most of R2, falls squarely into the reign of Æthelbald’s contemporary, king Ælfwald (c. 713–49), the last of the Wuffingas. It is equally safe to attribute the earlier sceattas of good silver, type R1, to the long reign of Ælfwald’s father Aldwulf (663/4–713), although slightly debased specimens of R1 may already be from the time of Ælfwald.

The stray finds from Ipswich are, in one sense, weightier evidence than excavation coins, and the concentration on Ipswich is in line with the archaeological evidence. Ipswich ware, and in particular the finds from the Carr Street kiln sites, demonstrate connections with the lower Rhinelands and Frisia, and point to the primacy of Ipswich in the early commerce of East Anglia. The pottery has been said to show that Ipswich must have been an important trading centre as early as the late seventh or early eighth century. It does not seem to have been until well into the eighth or early ninth century that a settlement was established at Norwich. The inland trading centres, such as Thetford, were not established until much later.6

This assessment requires to be modified in the light of recent excavations at Thetford, which have yielded important middle Saxon material,7 including the only provenanced

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2 Tin percentages are approximate, as matrix effects are considerable, and exactly suitable standards were not available.
3 e.g. O. 74, Ca. 10, and O. 75 in Metcalf, Merrick, and Hamblin, op. cit. Cf. the remarks on O. 80.
5 Rigold, op. cit. (1960–1), pp. 51 f.
find of type R2 with the runic inscription *Wigrœd*. Rigold suggested in 1967 that type R2 should be attributed to Ipswich; for the main stylistic series reading *Æpa* or variants, there need be very little doubt that this is correct, or at any rate that the coins were struck within the immediate region of Ipswich. *Æpa* is generally assumed to be a hypocoristic personal name. It dominated the East Anglian coinage, of types R1 and R2, for so long however (four decades?) that one may speculate whether it could not refer to Ipswich. *Gipeswic* is first attested in the late tenth century, and its etymology is conjectural.

11. A ‘porcupine’ derivative from Sullington, Sussex

There are not many sceattas from Sussex, and several of them are coastal finds from west Sussex—from Selsey, West Wittering, and Chichester. The Pyecombe finds, from near the Ridgeway, and the Lancing Down find have been discussed above. A monograph on the geology and fossils of Sussex, published in 1850, is an unexpected source of additional information; but the author took the opportunity to record and illustrate various stray finds of coins that had come to his notice. One is a sceat found at Sullington, a hamlet in the foothills of the Downs, a few miles west of Steyning. Immediately to the south of Sullington, the Ridgeway runs along the crest of the Downs, over Kithurst Hill, Sullington Hill, and Highden Hill, to Chanctonbury Ring. The precise find-spot of the coin in relation to the Ridgeway is unfortunately not recorded.

Dixon’s drawing allows one to see that the sceat is, without doubt, a coin now in the British Museum, and published by Hill as a new specimen of *BMC* type 4. It was presented by T. Cannon Brookes in 1947, along with a sceat of Primary Series A. Nothing is known of its history between 1850 and 1947.

The style of the Sullington sceat (Pl. I, 13) is altogether unusual, and among hundreds of ‘porcupines’ no close parallels can be offered for either the obverse or the reverse, except *SCBI Mack* 330 (Pl. I, 14), which includes some of the same curious elements in its design, and may be from the same workshop. Although both these coins may be loosely described as ‘porcupine’ derivatives, they are reminiscent also of the diadem and spiky hair from a bust belonging to some other type. The closest models are the stylistically debased examples of type 3a, such as Lockett 214c, and (with the head facing the other way) the Maastricht type. Both these, however, are of a low-silver alloy—and the late specimens of type 3a contain substantial amounts of tin—whereas

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1. Other than the Cambridge hoard.
2. In a lecture to the Society in February 1967.
4. Ekwall, p. 266, suggesting a Scandinavian analogy.
8. One may note, however, that there are other Anglo-Saxon finds from Cissbury Ring: Stoke Down (Goosehill Camp); and just below the turf on the south side of Harting Beacon. The so-called Sullington hoard of 1866 is in all probability illusory; see *SCBI* *Hiberno-Norse*, pp. 43, 53. The coins were found at Upper Chancton Farm, 1½ miles NNW of Chanctonbury Ring, and in the parish of Washington. Possibly some coins were acquired by the then owners of Sullington Manor Farm, and the story attaching to them became confused over the generations.
9. *SCBI* *Mack*, pp. 43, 53. The coin weighs 1.09 gm. (16.8 gr.).
the 'porcupines' in general, including the Sullington find so far as one can judge by eye, are of good alloy. If the Sullington coin copies type 3a, the implication would be that the 'porcupine' type was revived, in an eclectic version, and on a restored alloy standard, at a date probably after 750. The provenance helps a little, as a West Sussex origin has been provisionally suggested for type 3a. The difficulties that would arise if one attempted to assign the Sullington variety to the primary phase of the sceattas are, first, that the number of types current at that date was restricted, and included no obvious prototypes; and secondly, that the weight (1.09 gm.) is low for an early 'porcupine'.

If the suggested interpretation is correct, it means that after the recession of the 750s, when good silver coinage began to be available again in England, and at about the same time that Heahberht and Ecgberht began to strike pennies, a brief attempt was made in Sussex to revive the traditional currency of sceattas. Politically this would have been possible in the time of king Osmund, up to c. 770. A few years later, Offa reduced the kings of the South Saxons to the status of dux, and it is very doubtful whether he would have allowed them to strike coinage thereafter. Offa's pennies have been found in Sussex, at Brighton, Eastbourne, and Bededingham.

One wonders whether any other 'porcupines' might belong very late in the sceatta series. The Aethiliraed variety is one obvious candidate, and the coin with S E D E in the angles of a cross and annulets is another. One AEthilrised coin has been found to contain c. 1–2 per cent tin, an amount which would be unusual in an English 'porcupine' of the primary phase.

12. A sceat resembling the earliest pennies, from Norfolk

A unique sceat in the Bibliothèque Nationale, published by Blunt in 1952, has as its reverse type a cross with four annulets attached to the arms (Pl. I, 17), a design matched fairly closely on the unique penny of Heahberht, and on early pennies of Offa also by the moneyer Eoba. The resemblance prompted some reflections on the transition from the currency of sceattas to that of pennies.

A second example of the sceat came to light in 1976. It was acquired in its uncleaned state from a shop in Norwich, and passed through the hands of two other persons, the second of whom cleaned it, before it came into the writer's possession. There is some reason to suspect that it is a Norfolk find, and it may have been brought to light by the use of a metal detector.

The reverse is closely similar in style and content to the Paris coin, and is even weakly struck in the same way (Pl. I, 16), but the obverse is different. It shows a diademed (rather than a radiate) head right, in gross style, and with curiously ribbed drapery at the neck. The ribbing does not show as clearly as it should in the photograph: see Fig. 7. It is not altogether clear from the coin whether the nose is very large, or whether (more probably) there is a die-flaw obliterating a small cross in front of the

1 For analyses of numerous 'porcupines', see Metcalf and Hamblin, op. cit.
2 Oxoniensia, xxxvii (1972), p. 65.
3 Metcalf, 'Monetary Expansion and Recession'.
5 Results from the programme of analysis for tin mentioned above.
The weight is 0.94 gm. (14.6 gr.); that of the Paris specimen is 1.32 gm. (20.4 gr.).

The metal contents would be difficult to judge from the outward appearance of the cleaned coin, which was thought to be made of copper by the original vendor. The fabric is probably quite deeply corroded. The edge of the coin was abraded sufficiently to reveal bright metal, where chemical analysis consistently shows c. 83–85 per cent silver, plus c. 5 per cent tin. The Paris specimen has the appearance of reasonably good silver.

There are two cardinal questions: are these coins English or continental?—and what is their date? Unfortunately there are no clear-cut answers to either question. Many of the arguments are typological, and these are notoriously difficult. The Norfolk provenance, which seems reliable enough, points to an East Anglian origin, and there are other examples of the cross-and-annulets design among the R2 derivatives, which are almost certainly East Anglian. Both the finds recorded from Burgh Castle are of this category: they hint at a more northerly distribution pattern than that for the main R2 series.

There should be general agreement that the type does not belong to the primary phase of the English sceatta series, in spite of its high silver content; one would guess that it is very late. Again, the tin contents are indicative. On the other hand, the parallel with the earliest pennies is not exact: they have five not four annulets. A much closer parallel occurs in the Morel-Fatio collection (with a presumed provenance from the Cimiez hoard), on a Merovingian type where the annulets are dotted, and where there are groups of dots in the angles (Pl. I, 15). Should one detect copying, and if so in which direction?

The least ambiguous evidence the two sceattas offer is that their weights are very different, and that two very different obverses are used with the same reverse design. This suggests a small issue, lacking in uniformity. The Paris obverse, showing a radiate head, is reminiscent of the early sceattas of types A and R1, and it may be deliberately intended to recall or to imitate them. If that is correct, it is a restoration coinage, of the kind that has been postulated in connection with certain other East Anglian issues, with the ‘sphinx’ type, and with the Sullington and Ethelivaed ‘porcupines’. The obverse of the Norwich coin looks back, apparently, to another early type, of good silver—the Merovingian BMC type 11, which has a similar profile, and related drapery (see Fig. 7).

Little is known about the political history of the East Anglian kingdom in the decades following the death of Ælfwald in 749, when Hun, Beonna, and Alberht divided the kingdom between them. This fragmentation allows one at least to envisage the

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1 See p. 14, note 2 above.
2 I am indebted to M. Dhenin, of the Cabinet des Médailles, who weighed the coin and kindly gave his impression of its alloy: ‘L’aspect est celui de l’argent, comparable à de nombreux sceatta au porc-épic’. M. Lafaurie expressed the view that the alloy was not very good. Taking this into account, and with all reserve, M. Dhenin guessed at a figure of 75 per cent silver.
4 See the comment on Ca. 8 and Ca. 9 in Metcalf, Merrick, and Hamblin, op. cit., p. 30.
5 Whitelock, English Historical Documents, p. 240.
possibility of a mint in Norfolk. Beonna's coins, which are on a restored alloy standard, evidently belong to Suffolk, and presumably the Ipswich district.

Finally, one may attempt to place in context the dating of the two cross-and-annulets sceattas and their relationship to the earliest Kentish pennies. They may be contemporary, and can at most be a decade or so earlier. Both were intended to restore higher standards, after the severe debasement of the 740s. Similar attempts were made elsewhere in the Heptarchy at much the same time, in particular by the Northumbrian kings. When the various new coinages were introduced, there were plenty of people alive who remembered the various Heptarchic coinages of a generation before; and the course of future developments was, naturally, unforeseeable. In the event, the interplay of Mercian political ambitions with a slow monetary recovery in England, and the visible success of the Carolingian coinage, meant that the Kentish pennies were destined to sweep the board, in southern England.

The gap between the sceatta and penny currency, about which a certain amount has been written but which has proved intractable to date, may on the contrary have been a brief overlap of coinages in different parts of the country. If there was a natural break in monetary circulation, it is more likely to have come between the very debased sceattas and those on a restored standard.

1 Metcalf, Merrick, and Hamblin, op. cit., pp. 39f.
3 J. P. C. Kent, 'From Roman Britain to Saxon England', in *Anglo-Saxon Coins* (ed. R. H. M. Dolley), pp. 1-22, suggests that 'it is difficult to protract the [sceatta] coinage beyond 750, if so late a date is possible, and just as a large gap looms between the Roman and the Anglo-Saxon coinage, so a shorter one seems to intervene between “sceatta” and penny'. Cf. Metcalf, 'Monetary Expansion and Recession', at pp. 210f.