The unique coin bearing the name of Howael Rex by the moneyer Gillys (Pl., no.1) is first recorded in the sale catalogue of the collection of 'a Nobleman' (who may now be identified as the Marquess of Ailesbury) which was dispersed at Sotheby's 29–30 June 1903. It is described as 'of Eadgar (?)...king's name blundered' and forms, with two coins of Edmund, both of the Mercian two line type with rosettes, lot 1 of the sale. These three are the only Anglo-Saxon coins in the collection.

Major Carlyon-Britton, who acquired the lot, was quick to notice the possibility that it had been wrongly catalogued, and writing in 1905 argued for an attribution to the Welsh king Hywel Dda who died in 949 or 950.\(^1\) He noted that all three coins in the lot were coated with a green deposit which suggested that they had been found together and this seems eminently likely.

How these three isolated coins in a collection which otherwise starts in the English series with the Norman conquest came into the possession of Lord Ailesbury cannot be ascertained. There is some evidence that the collection closed in the eighteenth century; the latest English coins, dating down to 1768, are three gold and one silver of George III and there are no less than ten five-guinea pieces of George II, all in splendid condition, six of them of the same date, 1753. This looks like the 'reserve' of gold that people in the past often used to maintain for emergencies.

Of the Charles II Petition crown, lot 102, the catalogue notes that 'the packet containing this coin was sealed in 1789 and was not opened till a few weeks ago'.\(^2\)

A possible clue to the identity of the founder of the collection may lie in the curious fact that, of the piece that Montagu calls a Roettier pattern farthing of Charles II\(^3\) and of which the sale catalogue says 'hitherto this has been considered the rarest of the "Pattern Farthings" of this type', there were in the Ailesbury cabinet no less than eighty-nine specimens, all dated 1676, (lots 105–118) which led the cataloguer to speculate that they may have been 'specially struck for an ancestor of the present owner for use as counters'. Peck rejects Montagu's idea that these were patterns and writes 'it is much more likely that they were official medalets, struck for sale in considerable numbers, mostly in 1676, thereby utilizing the handsome periwigged portrait of the king, which might otherwise have been left to rust. It is significant that they are unknown in copper'.\(^4\) His comment that those dated 1676 are more common than those dated 1675 is probably no more than a reflection of the number of the former that emerged from Lord Ailesbury's cabinet.
The first Earl of Ailesbury, 1638-85, was one of those responsible for the Restoration of Charles II and held positions at court under that king. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society and Wood is said to have written of him that he 'was a learned person, and otherwise well qualified, was well versed in English history and antiquities, a lover of all such that were professors of those studies, and a curious collector of manuscripts, especially of those which related to England and English antiquities'.

It is not suggested that the Hywel Dda penny necessarily came into the cabinet as early as the seventeenth century, but it looks as if the first earl may have founded a cabinet which was added to spasmodically later.

Carlyon-Britton bases his attribution to Hywel Dda on two distinct criteria. The one, purely numismatic, points to the similarity in style with certain coins of Edmund; the other, historical, argues that he was the most celebrated Welsh king of the name, that he is recorded as having codified the Welsh laws and his attendance at the English court is reflected in a number of charters that he attested and this would have made him familiar with the English coinage.

The attribution has found general acceptance. Brooke, who wrote that it 'is scarcely open to doubt', acquired the coin for the National Collection at the Carlyon-Britton sale in 1917 (lot 993).

Recently, however, not only has the attribution been questioned but doubts raised too as to the authenticity of the coin. Writing in 1976, D.W. Dykes put forward arguments for preferring a later Hywel, one of the six (or eight) vassal kings who are recorded as having rowed King Edgar on the river Dee in his barge in 973. He concludes 'it seems more likely that the Gillys coin, if genuine, was struck at Chester by Eadgar as an honorific presentation to him than as an earlier gift, by a predecessor, to Hywel Dda'.

In an expanded version of this paper, published in 1977, Dykes no longer suggests that the coin might not be genuine but says that it is struck from rusted dies and suggests 'that the ruler's name on the obverse die might have been reworked from a different original. It could well be, therefore, that the original dies of the Hywel coin were normal Gillys productions for Eadred, that they were discarded for some reason and that at a subsequent date were brought into use with a re-worked obverse to honour either Hywel or an identically named successor'. While leaving the matter rather more open than in his first paper, he still appears slightly to prefer an attribution to the Hywel of Edgar's day to the earlier Hywel Dda.

The first point must be to consider whether the coin is genuine, and here the discussion on the origins of the Ailesbury cabinet has its relevance. If not genuine, it could be either a contemporary or a modern forgery. If it is right to regard the Ailesbury cabinet as having closed in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the possibility of a modern (i.e. eighteenth-century) forgery may be rejected. A good deal is now known about the work of eighteenth-century forgers in the English series, the most notorious (and competent) of whom was John White. One of his specialities was altering the legends on common coins to make them into rarities. So he is an obvious candidate if in fact the name on the obverse has been altered. But, though the dies may be a little rusty, I can see no evidence of a change having been made in the royal name. The circumstances in which the coin first came to knowledge are in its favour. The three coins in the lot seem, as Carlyon-Britton suggested, likely to have come from a common source and bear all the signs of being from the same tenth-century hoard. Had the coin been a forgery of White (or any contem-
pory of his) it would be expected that the forger would seek to sell it for what he had made it purport to be and to get a good price from a serious collector in the series. The company it keeps in the Ailesbury cabinet does not support this.

These circumstances would not, however, preclude its being a contemporary forgery. But contemporary forgeries are usually of light weight or base metal, or both. This coin is of good weight, 23.3 grains, and of good metal, ninety-one per cent silver (see below).

Dykes's ground for questioning Carlyon-Britton's attribution to Hywel Dda turn largely on the latter's reliance on certain historical points which Dykes feels can be called in question, such as just how he codified the Welsh laws which contained passages suggesting familiarity with coinage and that he 'has been represented as an admirer of Anglo-Saxon civilisation and a sub-regulus frequently attendant at the Wessex court of Athelstan who might well have had a coin struck in his honour'. Dykes points out 'that the earliest recension of the *Laws of Hywel Dda* that has come down to us is to be dated at least two hundred years after his death and it is open to considerable doubt which elements in his *Laws* date from his time: there is furthermore no evidence that the reckonings in money values contained in the *Laws...are tenth century in origin*. On the other point mentioned above, Dykes wrote in the first version of his paper that 'Hywel Dda, too, is now considered to be less pro-Wessex than has been formerly thought: he is seen as more of a political opportunist perhaps less likely to commend himself as favourite of the English court, and thus meriting the striking of a commemorative coin'.

Without in any way wishing to call in question Dykes's interpretation of the historical evidence, on which the writer is not qualified to pass judgement, the numismatic grounds for an attribution to Hywel Dda may perhaps be restated:-

1. The Hywel coin has, as Carlyon-Britton noted, affinities with coins of Edmund (939-46) (E.g. Pl.,no.2) and this would accord with such dates as we know for Hywel Dda who died in 949 or 950. No less close affinities can now be seen with a coin of Eadred (946-55) from the Chester (1950) hoard, no.175, (Pl.,no.3) and this is actually by Gillys, the moneyer of the Hywel coin. He is not recorded as having worked for Edmund and it seems best, on the evidence at present available, to regard the Hywel coin as having been produced during Eadred's reign. This is slightly later than the date for which Carlyon-Britton argued, namely 'in Edmund's reign soon after his accession', but it must be remembered that he had not then the evidence of the Eadred piece from the Chester hoard.

2. Though Gillys also worked for Edgar, the coins he produced for that king are stylistically quite different. (Pl.,nos.4-6)

3. A metal test carried out by Mr M.R.Cowell of the British Museum laboratory, for details of which I am much indebted to Miss Archibald and to him, indicates that the Hywel coin contained ninety-one per cent pure silver. The analyses carried out on a number of coins of this period in the National Museum of Antiquities at Edinburgh show that such a high proportion of silver is more likely to occur on a coin produced in the 950s than late in the reign of Edgar. If the Hywel coin is to be dated c.973, the contemporary Mercian coins would be of *BMC* type ii, the examples of which in the Edinburgh test, with one exception, fall well below the ninety per cent mark.  

To these may be added two other points:
4. Charters demonstrate that, as Carlyon-Britton said, Hywel Dda frequently attended the English court and so would have been well-known there. He attested charters from 928 to 949;¹⁴ in one dated 949¹⁵ which, though its authenticity has at times been questioned, seems now to find general acceptance,¹⁶ as Rex. On the sixteen charters that Birch records him as having attested (a few of which are, as usual, open to question) he appears as Subregulus on eleven, which can be dated 928-37; as Undercyning on one dated 934; as Regulus on three dated 937-49; and as Rex on the charter mentioned above.

5. On the negative side, nothing appears to be known of the later Hywel of Edgar's time beyond the passing reference to him in the rowing incident.

Dr Dumville makes two further points:

1. The spelling on the coin (Howael) is an attempt (a fair one) to render in Old English orthography the sound of the Old Welsh name. It owes nothing to Old Welsh orthography. Hywel's own secretaries would almost certainly have spelt his name Higuel. The total context of the coin is therefore English, whatever exactly that means.

2. Howael was not the only possible O.E. rendering of Hywel. In cartulary-documents we find the forms Huwal/Huwol (BCS 675, 697, 705) which we have no particular reason to discredit. Eowel is found in BCS 812, another cartulary-text, and there is no reason to reject this spelling either. All surviving originals (BCS 677,702, and [a tracing of a lost original] 882) give the spelling as on the coin, however.

The three certain charters of Eadred's reign (BCS 815, 882, 883), from different archives, are unvarying in their spelling Howael. Æthelstan's charters show the variety indicated above. There is no certain example from Edmund's reign, but if the witness-list of BCS 812 (dated 943x947) belongs there, the spelling Eowel seems to have been used.

On this evidence, especially taken in conjunction with the numismatic evidence, it would certainly be safest to assign the coin to Eadred's reign. The coincidence of the simple designation rex, unique in Anglo-Saxon charters for Hywel, in BCS 882/S550 of A.D.949 (? from the Evesham archive) with the coin is striking.

The purpose of Hywel's coin remains in doubt. It can hardly have been part of a serious attempt to produce a Welsh currency or more than one specimen would surely have survived. Dykes's suggestion that it was struck as an 'honorific presentation' certainly seems to be the most acceptable solution.

NOTES


2. It is possible that there was a second Petition crown in this collection. My old friend, Mr Shirley-Fox, who was a neighbour of Lord Ailesbury's, told me in the 1920s that the latter had shown him a single coin (perhaps in a case and so not in the cabinet with the rest) which proved to be a Petition crown and which he sold for Lord Ailesbury to Spinks.
THE PENNY OF HYWEL DDA

5. DNB under Robert Bruce, second Earl of Elgin and first Earl of Ailesbury.
6. Dr D. N. Dumville, who has most kindly read my paper and provided a number of valuable points, tells me that this view is not now held, and refers (inter alia) to J. G. Edwards, Hywel Dda and the Welsh Lawbooks (Bangor, 1929) reprinted in Celtic Law Papers edited by Dafydd Jenkins (Brussels, 1973), pp. 135–60.
11. Typical examples are SCBI Glasgow 958, 1014 and 1026 where in two cases the York name EOFE has been altered to make Rochester, ROFE; in the third, York, EOFR, has been altered to make DOFR, Dover.

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Hywel Dda. Moneyer Gillys. BM
2. Edmund. Similar type. Moneyer Frard. BM