KING JOHN’S IRISH REX COINAGE REVISITED
PART I: THE DATING OF THE COINAGE

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It is now some forty-five years since Michael Dolley together with Liam O’Sullivan of the National Museum of Ireland set out in a commemorative paper published by the Thomond Archaeological Society ‘to bring new precision to the chronology of the earliest [official] coins to be struck by the English in Ireland’, the so-called DOM and REX coinages put out in the name of John, either as Lord of Ireland or as King of England.¹

Although John had been designated Lord of Ireland by his father, Henry II, in 1177 and, eight years later had been dispatched on an expedition to assert his authority over the country’s colonialist Anglo-Norman barons and its native kings,² it was probably not until the 1190s that any specific coinage was embarked upon for the lordship.³ This was an extensive issue of silver coins, approximately equivalent in weight to a half and a quarter of the English penny⁴ and struck originally at Dublin but later at Waterford and Limerick; ‘halfpennies’ also being produced for a short time at Kilkenny and Carrickfergus. Known as the DOM coinage because of the inclusion of John’s title, dominus Hiberniae (abbreviated in various forms), in the obverse legend of the ‘halfpennies’, it continued to be issued after John’s accession to the throne in 1199 and probably remained in production at Dublin for at least the first five years of the new century.

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¹ Dolley and O’Sullivan 1967, 437.
² Whilst John had been nominated ‘King of Ireland’ in 1177 the title had not received papal sanction at the time. Despite being eventually approved by Urban III in 1185 it was never adopted by John or his successors until 1542 when ironically Henry VIII assumed it to counter papal pretensions and assert his supremacy over the Irish Church.
³ Dolley thought that a rare group of silver halfpennies with a profile head and the legend JOHANNES might have been struck by John at the time of his 1185 expedition. The evidence adduced by Dolley is not sufficiently strong, however, to rebut with complete assurance Derek Allen’s earlier suggestion that these coins should be associated with John de Courcy: Dolley 1966d, 66–7; Allen 1938, 290.
⁴ See p. 124 below.

At some point during the first decade of the thirteenth century the DOM coinage was superseded by a new coinage of pence, halfpence and farthings on the English standard and bearing the king’s regal title. Until 1967 this new REX coinage – the subject of this paper – had, traditionally, and on the basis of a reading of the *Flores Historiarum* of the St. Albans chronicler Roger of Wendover,⁵ been dated as starting c.1210; a connection being made with John’s expedition to Ireland that year and Wendover’s statement that at about that time pennies, half-pennies and farthings had been ordered to be coined of the same standard as that of the coin of England.⁶ In 1964, in his definitive *Earliest Anglo-Irish Coinage*, O’Sullivan had examined both the DOM and the REX issues and had accepted that the REX coinage had been ‘most probably issued under this order of 1210’.³⁷ Three years later, however, in the Thomond paper Dolley and O’Sullivan endeavoured to bring forward the start of the coinage to c.1205, their argument being based on Dolley’s interpretation of a variety of administrative record sources of the time.

Dolley and O’Sullivan were writing their paper – in which Dolley was very much the key partner⁸ – in the full tide of a tendency by scholars to disparage the St Albans narrative history of the period.⁹ Dolley himself, of course, had some reason to distrust Roger of Wendover. Six years earlier he had questioned Wendover’s dating and understanding of Eadgar’s tenth-century reform of the English coinage and, despite the challenges that his conjectures occasioned, he could never be brought to acknowledge the Benedictine monk’s credibility as far as recoinages were concerned.¹⁰ Moreover, at the Queen’s University of Belfast he was influenced by his senior colleague Lewis Warren – at the time the most recent biographer of King John – who, while cognizant of the value of the chronicle sources, was dismissive of much of the all too vivid anecdotal detail of Wendover’s account of John’s reign.¹¹ But though Wendover, prejudiced in the wake of the king’s quarrel with Rome, the Interdict, and royal treatment of the monastic orders, over-larded his cake with crafted fictional tales in the interest of demonising John he was nevertheless an attentive observer based for much of his life in an abbey only twenty or so miles from London with a guesthouse accommodating the comings and goings of influential and informed visitors from all over England and the continent. Thus, while he might not have begun writing his chronicle until after Henry III’s accession,¹² he was in a position to garner reliable, contemporaneous information; and even if one might shrug off many of Wendover’s more shocking flights of fancy as monastic invective or indict him for misusing much of his factual evidence just as he is said to have wasted the property of Belvoir Priory ‘in careless prodigality’ his chronicle should not necessarily be discounted as providing totally untrustworthy testimony for John’s reign.¹³ For our purposes Wendover’s entry, under the annalistic year 1210, reads:

\[ Eodem anno rex Anglorum Johannes, apud Pembroc in Wallia copioso exercitu congregato, profectus est in Hiberniam et ibi applicuit octavo idus Junii; cumque venisset ad Dublinensem civitatem . . . Fecit quoque ibidem constituisse leges et consuetudines Anglicanas, ponens vicecomites aliosque ministros, qui populum regni illius juxta leges Anglicanas judicarent; . . . \]

¹⁵ The *Flores* was incorporated in the *Chronica Majora* of Wendover’s successor, Matthew Paris, the source most usually quoted by earlier authorities. For Wendover’s influence on Paris, see Gransden 1974, 359–60.
¹⁶ Simon 1749, 12. Ruding accepted this dating, arguing that the REX coins were ‘probably not of earlier date than his [John’s] eleventh year, 1210; when to quiet that part of his dominions, he went thither in person, with a large army, and established there the execution of English laws’: Ruding 1840, I, 180. Lindsay had the previous year more positively associated the inception of the coinage with 1210: Lindsay 1839, 25.
¹⁷ O’Sullivan 1964, vi.
¹⁸ Among much else in the Thomond monograph it has to be stressed that the historical interpretation of the documentary evidence was essentially Dolley’s, a factor recognized in the course of this paper.
¹⁹ A pattern set by Professor Vivian Galbraith in his crushing David Murray Lecture at the University of Glasgow: Galbraith 1944.
²⁰ Dolley and Metcalf 1961, 136–68; but see Allen 2012, 16 and the references cited therein. See Dolley 1966b, 83, n.6, for a characteristically gratuitous rejection of Wendover’s numismatic reliability.
²² For the date of Wendover’s *Flores* see Galbraith 1944, 16–17 and Gransden 1974, 359.
²³ For Wendover see *ODNB* and the references cited therein.
In the same year John king of the English, having brought together a richly provided army at Pembroke in Wales, set out for Ireland arriving there on 6 June. When he had come to the city of Dublin . . . he had English laws and customs established, appointing sheriffs and other officers to judge the people of that kingdom according to English law; . . .

He then goes on to say:


He had, moreover, appointed there John de Gray, bishop of Norwich, as Justiciar, who had the penny of that land made to the weight of the coin of England and ordered the making of a round halfpenny and farthing. The king also commanded that the use of this money should be general both in England and in Ireland, and that the penny of either realm without distinction should be placed in his treasuries. It was concerning this roundness that the seer Merlin prophesied when he said ‘The shape of commerce shall be split and the half shall be round’ . . .

As Dolley and O’Sullivan recognized it was Wendover’s apparent annalistic melding of the new REX coinage with John’s nine-week expedition to Ireland from June to August 1210 that had confused earlier authorities. They acknowledged, however, that Wendover himself had appreciated that the institution of the new coinage had preceded the king’s brief stay in Dublin; indeed their own translation of the chronicle made this clear. Nevertheless, they were not prepared to admit that Wendover’s explicit association of the coinage with John de Gray – whose justiciarship of Ireland had begun only eighteen months or at most two years before – was historically reliable. Setting aside what they described as Wendover’s ‘circumstantial narrative’ and calling upon the evidence of four contemporary archival sources assembled by Dolley, they concluded that the new coinage had begun not in 1208 or 1209 but at least three years earlier. Their proposition was not implausible in the context of the systematic attention that John paid to his lordship in the years from 1204 onwards in an attempt to implant royal government there. Unhappily, while the sources they used are unimpeachable in themselves there are reasons to hesitate before accepting the inferences that Dolley drew from each of them and one hardly needs to scratch much beneath the surface to be confronted with nagging doubts about the validity of his overall reconstruction.

The four documents, reproduced below in an extended form from the abbreviated enrolled texts in the Public Record Office with an English translation subjoined, are:

1. A Close Roll mandate of about the end of August 1204 (TNA: PRO, C 54/1, m. 18) to Meiler fitz Henry, the then justiciar of the lordship, approving the construction of a fortress (fortalice) at Dublin, one of its purposes being to house the royal treasury. The relevant part of John’s order reads:

15 Guiltier than Wendover, but lacking his likely first-hand knowledge in this instance, were the strictly contemporary and independent _Annals of Dunstable_ that explicitly associated the new coinage with the expedition. _Tunc fecit novam monetam ibidem._ Luard 1866, III, 32. The _Annals_ probably reflected a general understanding of the time.

16 ‘While there [Dublin], too, John had English law and customs established, appointing sheriffs and other officers to judge the people of that kingdom according to English law; _having already set up there John de Gray, Bishop of Norwich, as Justiciar, he [John de Gray] having had the penny of that land made to the weight of the coin of England_ [my italics]:’ Dolley and O’ Sullivan 1967, 475.

17 John de Gray (d. 1214), bishop of Norwich (1200–14), was a loyal supporter of King John and dubbed one of the latter’s ‘evil counsellors’ [consilarii iniquissini] by Wendover. Despite the king’s support Gray’s election as archbishop of Canterbury in 1205 was quashed by the pope and he died before being able to take up the see of Durham to which he was elected in 1214. He was justiciar of Ireland from the autumn or winter of 1208 until 23 July 1213: _ODNB._

18 By curbing the power of the over-mighty feudatories and introducing English judicial and administrative machinery into the lordship – and thereby maximizing the extraction of royal income from Ireland.

19 Printed in Hardy 1833, i, 6, and (a somewhat different version) in Gilbert 1870, 61; calendared in Sweetman and Handcock 1875, i, 35, no. 226.

20 Meiler fitz Henry (d. 1220), one of the earliest Anglo-Norman adventurers in Ireland, was justiciar from c.1198–99 – reappointed in 1200 – until his dismissal c.June 1208. His period as justiciar was marked by constant difficulties with the great barons of Ireland, compounded by John’s scheming and capricious shifts in policy towards individual magnates, all of which led to virtual civil war and fitz Henry’s eventual replacement by John de Gray: _ODNB._
Dolley assumed from the mandate an intention to set up, de novo, ‘a formal Irish treasury in Dublin’ and interpreted this action, coinciding with the reform of the English Short Cross coinage in 1204/05, as a prelude to the striking of a new coinage in Ireland. Yet, however rudimentary they may have been, an exchequer and a treasury, the nerve centres of the lordship, had been maintained in Ireland – and based in Dublin – perhaps as far back as 1185. The point of the mandate was that now, in the increasingly turbulent times of fitz Henry’s justiciarship and John’s growing suspicion of the loyalty of his Anglo-Irish barons, a far stronger citadel was needed in Dublin to protect these essential departments of royal government than could be provided by the primitive motte fortification that had existed since the early days of the Norman occupation. There is no reference to mint or exchange in the mandate and it is difficult to see how it has any bearing on the question of the chronology of the REX coinage.

2. A Close Roll writ of 27 May 1205 (TNA: PRO, C 54/2, m. 26) relating to the authorization of a payment for the carriage of four hundred marks ‘de denariis Hiberniae’ from Nottingham to Exeter:

Computate Roberto de Veteri Ponte id quod rationabiliter posuerit in cariagio quadringentarum marcarum de denariis Hiberniae a Notingeham usque Exoniam . . . Teste me ipso apud Merleburgh, xxvij. die Maii.

Account with Robert de Veteri Ponte for what he shall reasonably expend in the carriage of 400 marks of Irish Money from Nottingham to Exeter . . . Witness my hand at Marlborough, 27 May.

This writ of May 1205, first noticed by Richard Sainthill in 1857, is a critical component of Dolley’s thesis. The latter’s belief that the DOM coinage – traditionally assumed to represent only halfpennies and farthings – had come to an end with John’s accession to the throne in 1199 and his supposition that document (I) in 1204 predicated a preliminary to the establishment of a new mint in Dublin led him to conclude that the words de denariis Hiberniae must have referred to the REX coinage.

Liam O’Sullivan, however, had already discussed the writ in his *Earliest Anglo-Irish Coinage*. He had then been of the opinion that its nature and purpose precluded too much weight being put on the words ‘pennies of Ireland’ as evidence of the REX coinage being in existence at that time; rather, he had considered, that ‘the whole phrase’ could not be unreasonably interpreted ‘as a quantitative statement of an amount of money from the King's Irish treasure irrespective of the denomination or of the place of minting’. In fact it was as ‘Irish money’ that Sweetman had translated the phrase in his *Calendar of Documents relating to Ireland* ninety years before, a recognition that the phrase was in effect no more than a purely descriptive one

21 Richardson 1942, 146–7; Richardson and Sayles 1963, 21.
22 The king was still concerned about the defences of Dublin in 1207. Much of the building of the castle took place under the justiciarship of John de Gray but it was to be many years before it was completed: Sweetman and Handcock 1875, I, 47, no. 315; Orpen 1911, II, 307–9.
23 Printed in Hardy 1833, I, 34, with an extended version and translation in Sainthill 1857, 118.
24 Robert de Veteri Ponte (Vieuxpont), a leading northern baron, was sheriff of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire at this time. Custodian of Nottingham castle, a major provincial store for royal treasure and thus a base for the king’s authority in the north of England, he frequently handled substantial sums of money for the king. Wenvopper included Vieuxpont, consistently a loyal supporter of John, in his list of the king’s evil advisers (consiliarii iniquissimi). He had for a time been the gaoler of Prince Arthur at Rouen: Coxe 1841–44, III (1841), 237; Jolliffe 1948, 132; *ODNB*, s.v. Vieuxpont.
26 As indeed had Sainthill’s translator: Sainthill 1857, 118; Sweetman and Handcock 1875, I, 40, no. 262.
Dolley 1972, 6.
The reservation clauses form part of a mandate to the 'archbishops, &c.' of Ireland announcing Fitz Henry's reappointment.

Lydon 1964, 53–4; Jolliffe 1948, 124, 127. The first major payment evidenced was of 400 marks of silver and 200 ounces.

Stewart 1972, 193. See also Stewartby 2009, 61.

But that then the Money of that Country was by the King's Command first minted to the Standard of the

Thompson

Patent Roll, 23 March 1204, printed in Hardy 1835, I, i, 39, and calendared in Sweetman and Handcock 1875, I, 32, no. 208.

Dolley 1972, 1–2.

A departure from the standard operating for the purely insular official coins that had gone before, coins that from an English standpoint might well have referred to a consignment of Irish mintage.

On the other hand it could conceivably be argued that, if the chancery clerk was being precise and really did mean 'Irish pennies', the account might well refer to a consignment of DOM coins. While these small coins, roughly equivalent in weight to a half or quarter of an English penny, have traditionally been regarded as halfpennies and farthings – Dolley somewhat tendentiously concluded that these minor denominations were 'intended to signify the inferior status of the lordship' – an alternative, and now generally accepted, view is that they passed in Ireland as pennies and halfpennies struck for insular consumption on an Irish standard influenced by the debased weight of the native bracteates that had only recently died out.

Such an interpretation is supported by Wendover's comment that the REX pennies were 'to be made to the weight of the coin of England' (\textit{ad pondus numismatis Angliae fecerat fabricari}) thus facilitating their circulation in England as well as Ireland and implying a departure from the standard operating for the purely insular official coins that had gone before, coins that from an English standpoint might well have been regarded as denarii Hiberniae.

Dolley took the view that production of the DOM coinage did not extend beyond John's accession to the throne. His argument was largely based on the king's titulature but since John's status as lord of Ireland was unchanged after 1199 there was no reason – economic or political – summarily to end the striking of what was an accepted and primarily insular coinage.

It is perhaps not without significance that as late as the autumn of 1200 when Meiler fitz Henry was reappointed as justiciar, all Irish pleas touching the mint and the exchange were included among the rights reserved to the crown. While such a caveat might be seen as no

27 O'Sullivan 1964, 14.
28 Stewart 1972, 193. See also Stewartby 2009, 61.
29 Dolley 1972, 6.
30 Lydon 1964, 53–4; Jolliffe 1948, 124, 127. The first major payment evidenced was of 400 marks of silver and 200 ounces of gold \textit{de pecunia nostra Hiberniae}: Liberale Roll, 27 October 1203, printed in Hardy 1844, 70, and calendared in Sweetman and Handcock 1875, I, 29, no. 188. \textit{Pace} Dolley and O'Sullivan 1967, 442, \textit{pecunia} in reference to the silver would have meant specie and not bullion.
32 Dolley 1972, 1–2.
33 Stewartby 2009, 60; cf. also Allen 1942, 78. We do not know when the issue of the latest Irish bracteates came to an end. Such as we have come primarily from two hoards: the Castlelyons (Co. Cork) Hoard (Thompson, 60, no. 160, s.v. 'Fermoy'), deposited about 1140±10; and the Scrabo Hill Hoard (Thompson, 120, no. 326): Lindsay 1839, 135; Allen 1942, 71–85; Dolley 1966b, 86–90. According to Allen 1951, i, the latter hoard would appear to have contained a Class F Henry II 'Cross and Crosslets' penny which could date it to about 1175–80 but Dolley 1966b, 81–4 questioned the association of this coin and two other 'Tealby' pennies with the hoard which he dated (without them) to about 1130±10.
34 It is of interest to note Ware's remark that 'It seems manifest from this Passage, that Money had been before coined in Ireland; but that then the Money of that Country was by the King's Command first minted to the Standard of the English Money': Harris 1764, 208.
35 The reservation clauses form part of a mandate to the 'archbishops, &c.' of Ireland announcing fitz Henry's reappointment. In extended form they read: \textit{Sciatis autem quod retinuimus ad opus nostrum omnia placita Hybernie spectantia ad coronam...}
more than a formulaic protection of the king’s rights it could well suggest that the Dublin mint at least remained operative at this time and, if so, then it must still have been striking DOM coins. Moreover, such hoard evidence as we have, minimal and ill-recorded as it is, posits a life for the DOM coins alongside their REX successors at least as late as the end of the first decade of the thirteenth century. Five hoards exemplify this overlap (I have retained the traditional description of ‘halfpenny’ and ‘farthing’ in listing the DOM coins):36

Arklow, c.1210:
DOM: at least one Dublin farthing; REX: unspecified number of farthings.

Newry (‘Ulidia’), c.1210:37
DOM: 2 halfpence, 10 farthings; REX: 293 coins (including 1 penny (Dublin – Iohan) and 289 pence (Dublin – Roberd), 2 halfpence (Dublin – Roberd), 1 farthing (Dublin – Roberd)).

‘Dr. Petrie’s reconstructed Ulster (?) Hoard’, c.1210:
DOM: 614 (?) halfpence, 17(?) farthings; REX: 312 (?) pence, 30 (?) halfpence, 1 (?) farthing.

‘French Hoard’, c.1215:
DOM: 20 halfpence; REX: 2 pence (Dublin – Roberd).

Corofin, c.1225:
DOM: 1,041 halfpennies, 2 farthings; REX: 1 penny (Dublin – Roberd), 14 halfpence (Dublin – Roberd (13), Willem (1)), 2 farthings (Dublin – Roberd (1), Willem (1)).

There are good reasons why the money referred to in the writ of May 1205 had been sent to Exeter and why it should have been done at that time. Exeter was a forwarding depot for the export of coin for the king’s operations in France38 and the spring of that year witnessed a frenzy of activity as John assembled resources for expeditions to Poitou and Normandy. The latter undertaking never took place but that for Poitou did leave Dartmouth, the main port of embarkation for the county and only thirty miles from Exeter, in the summer. When Dolley was writing there was no record of any example of the DOM coinage ever having been found outside Ireland but in 1986 a small parcel of twenty DOM coins and two REX pennies all apparently of the Dublin mint (the ‘French Hoard’) came on to the market to be acquired by the National Museum of Ireland the following year. The coins were said to have been found in France, possibly part of a larger hoard, but their find spot could not be identified. Not unnaturally the unquestionably vague nature of their alleged provenance coupled with the fact that such coins had rarely if ever been found outside Ireland has led to suspicions that they may emanate from a disguised Irish find. On the other hand, if their source is genuine, the coins – perhaps the purse of an Irish retainer – could well be associated with John’s campaigns to regain his French territories in 1213–14, campaigns which drew substantial sums of money and armed support from Ireland.39 If so, the evidence, anomalous, tangential and slight as it is, could be a further element to cast doubt on the solidity of Dolley’s argument about the

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37 The ‘Newry’ hoard was so designated because it was purchased from a resident of the town in 1858 having been ‘discovered in the north of Ireland’. Dolley, having come to the conclusion that the hoard ‘was almost certainly unearthed to the north of the Mournes’ because of its large element of de Courcy issues, adopted the name ‘Ulidia’ but his redesignation has not generally been favoured over the traditional ‘Newry’.


composition of the barrels of coin sent to Exeter in 1205. Over time other finds of DOM coins may well be unearthed in France.

3. A Patent Roll entry of 9 November 1207 (TNA: PRO, C 66/7, m. 4\(^{40}\)) registering the king’s prohibition of the commercial use of any money other than his own Irish coin in the Lordship:

> Rex omnibus etc. totius Hiberniae etc. Bene scitis quod … Prohibemus etiam super foris facturam vite et membrorum quod nullus vendat vel emat per aliam monetam quam per moneta nostram Hiberniae, quoniam eam per totum regnum currere volumus et non aliam. Teste me ipso apud Wudestok ix die Novembri.

The king etc. to everyone of the whole of Ireland etc. Know well that … We also prohibit on pain of forfeiture of life and limb the selling or buying by means of any money other than our money of Ireland since we wish it and no other to circulate throughout our whole kingdom. Witness my hand at Woodstock, 9 November.

Dolley read into this proclamation evidence of a final demonetization of the DOM coinage and its supersedion by a REX coinage that – on his interpretation of document 2 – must now have been in circulation for at least two years. To Lord Stewartby,\(^{41}\) on the other hand, it seemed more natural to construe the words *monetam nostram Hiberniae … et non aliam* as referring not to the REX coinage but rather to the insular DOM coinage and to a curbing of the country’s competitive irregular issues. It is important to recognize that John’s proclamation was part of a process to extend English laws and customs to ‘everyone of the whole of Ireland’ (*omnibus totius Hiberniae*), not only to the island’s Anglo-Norman fiefs and towns but, somewhat optimistically, to the native kingdoms too. The final clause should therefore be read as an attempted embargo across the whole land of Ireland (*per totum regnum*\(^{42}\)) of such native bracteates as might still be surviving, any circulating foreign coin,\(^{43}\) and particularly the issues of John de Courcy who had been supplanted as lord of Ulster in 1205 but whose coins, from the little we know from the sparse hoard evidence available to us, Arklow, Corofin and Newry,\(^{44}\) must still have been circulating in parts of Ireland until as late as 1210.

4. A Charter of 28 March 1208 (TNA: PRO, C 53/8, m. 2\(^{45}\)) confirming the grant of Leinster to William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, but reserving the mint among the crown’s regalian rights. (This particular reservation [the square-bracketed words below] is not included in the officially enrolled document but is to be found in an eighteenth-century transcript of the Charter taken from a Tudor register of the muniments of the diocese of Dublin: Archbishop Alen’s Register (*Liber Niger Alani*), A2, 455–56: RCB (Church of Ireland) Library, Ms D6/4. There is nothing untoward in the omission since the officially enrolled copies were taken from drafts and did not necessarily reflect what was finally engrossed and sent to the recipient.):

> ... Sciatis nos, ad peticionem Willelmi Mariscalli comitis Penbrocie, concessisse et presenti carta nostra confirmasse, eidem Willelmo terram suam de Lagenia cum omnibus pertinenciis suis, habendam et tenendam sibi et hereditibus suis per servitium c. militum, iure hereditario, in perpetuum, cum omnibus libertatibus et libris consuetudinibus, [Salvis nobis et hereditibus nostris civitate Dublilne et duobus cantredis si adiacentibus, et moneta et secta comitatus Dublilne sicut prius fieri consueverit;] salvis [etiam] nobis et hereditibus nostris placitis corone nostre, scilicet, de thesauro, raptu, forestal\(^{46}\) et combustione ... Know ye that at the request of William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, by the present confirmatory charter we have granted the said William his land of Leinster with all its appurtenances, to have and to hold to himself and his heirs of us and our heirs by the service of 100 knights in hereditary right for ever, with all liberties and free customs, [saving to us and our heirs the city of Dublin and two adjoining cantreds, and the mint and suit of the county of Dublin, as formerly accustomed]; saving [also] to us and our heirs the pleas of our crown, namely treasure-trove, rape, violent robbery\(^{46}\) and arson ...
This charter – and a charter a month later conveying the fief of Meath to Walter de Lacy – has to be seen in the context of John’s clampdown on his over-mighty Anglo-Irish feudatories and his assertion of royal authority promulgated in 1207 (document 3) and reaching its apoee in a council held in Dublin in 1210. In the Leinster charter, with its reservation of the mint (moneta) among the crown’s regalian rights, John was moreover seeking to curb any aspirations William Marshal might have, at the heart of the lordship, to emulate the pretensions of the like of John de Courcy.

In its protection of the crown’s interests it should not necessarily be assumed that the reservation implied, as Dolley thought, the existence of an operational mint at Dublin let alone one striking a REX coinage. By now the DOM coinage had presumably run its course and the mint was probably dormant. The most one can reasonably suppose is that the king already might have had in mind its re-establishment for the production of a new regal coinage as visible proof of his drive to assert his regality over his lordship. It was, after all, in the early weeks of 1208 that John, sufficiently worried about the worsening baronial relations in Ireland, in a state of virtual civil war since the beginning of the century, began to make preparations for a major personal descent upon his lordship although in the event his prior need to secure the Welsh marches and the Scottish borderland obliged him to put it off for another two years.

Sometime in 1208, probably in the summer, Meiler fitz Henry, tactless, turbulent and lacking personal authority over the Anglo-Irish baronage, was superseded as justiciar, John replacing him with John de Gray, bishop of Norwich, in the autumn or early winter. The appointment of Gray, an accomplished administrator and faithful servant of the crown, signalled a strategic break from the practice of selecting the chief governor from among the Anglo-Irish feudatories. Gray, ‘wise, stout and upright’ with ‘no personal axe to grind in Ireland’ and almost the only man John consistently trusted, was to provide the lordship with what John wanted: a decisive, vigorous and capable administration.

Dolley is caustically dismissive of Wendover’s description of Gray’s Irish policies as being ‘demonstrably false’, taking as an example the chronicler’s statement that the king had appointed sheriffs during his 1210 visit. There was good reason, he contended, to think that ‘shrievalty was introduced into Ireland as early as the reign of Henry II’. Moreover, ‘it was ‘unfortunate for Roger’s reputation that there should be mention of an Irish sheriff in the 1205 Close Roll’. Unhappily, the only sheriff referred to in that Close Roll is Robert de Veteri Ponte who was at the time sheriff of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and had no Irish connections. And while it is likely that a shrievalty had been established in Dublin by the 1190s a more extensive introduction of English administrative institutions was a long-drawn-out process; even by 1212 formal sheriffsdoms existed only in Dublin, Waterford and Munster although by then the de Lacys’ Ulster and Meath – both forfeit to the crown since 1210 – also had royal officers collecting the king’s debts and administering the king’s justice.

As later royal documents recalled, whatever had gone before, it was at the time of John’s visit – and much to the credit of John de Gray – that formal steps were taken ‘with the common consent of all men in Ireland’ to establish throughout the lordship and its franchises a firm basis of English law.

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47 The mint was not included among the regalian reservations in Lacy’s Meath charter as enrolled.
48 It will be remembered (p. 124 above) that a similar protective measure had been included in the terms of Meiler fitz Henry’s reappointment as justiciar in 1200. De Courcy had been justiciar between 1185 and c.1192 and again during John’s forfeiture of the lordship during 1194–95, both periods when he would have been striking his own coins: Richardson and Sayles 1963, 74.
50 The arrangements over the justiciarship in 1208 are unclear. There is no record of fitz Henry as justiciar after June and he appears to have been temporarily replaced by Walter de Lacy, lord of Meath, for a few months. The Annals of Dunstable (Luard 1866, III, 30) imply that John de Gray was sent to Ireland in October but the earliest notice we have of his presence there as justiciar is 2 January 1209 (Richardson and Sayles 1963, 75).
51 Not to be resumed until the appointment of Geoffrey de Marisco in 1215: Richardson and Sayles 1963, 76.
52 Speed 1623, 572; Carpenter 2004, 281; Otway-Ruthven 1993, 79. According to Orpen the appointment of Gray ‘to the chief office in Ireland … was the best thing John did for Ireland at this time’: Orpen 1911, II, 277.
53 Dolley and O’Sullivan 1967, 444.
54 Richardson 1942, 149.
55 Orpen 1911, II, 277.
and legal institutions and a government competent of generating sufficient revenue to meet the crown’s wider needs.

It is in this context that the REX coinage must be understood. There can be little doubt that, as Wendover maintained, Gray was responsible – no doubt at the behest of a king who took a personal and energetic interest in the royal administration – for launching the new coinage. And while 1210 cannot be sustained as a starting date it seems reasonable to assume that this must have been towards the beginning of Gray’s justiciarship, that is at the end of 1208 or beginning of 1209.

The hoard evidence, such as it is, is not of any real help in establishing any absolute chronology of the REX coinage – neither Newry (that included 1 Johan, 289 Roberd pence and (almost certainly) ended with English Short Cross Class V pence (1205–c.1210)) nor conceivably Sudbourne (that included unidentified REX pence and probably ended with English Short Cross Class Vc (c.1207–c.1210)), which might have given some clue to its inception, were recorded in sufficient detail to be of any assistance – but it is not in conflict with a beginning in 1208/09. Dolley’s reiterated insistence that a deposition date of c.1210 for the Newry, Arklow, Sudbourne and ‘Dr Petrie’s’ hoards predicated a coinage start of 1204/05 cannot be sustained on the totality of the evidence available. No hoard containing REX coins can be realistically dated earlier than 1210 and if the Robert of Bedford who was fined in 1211 for giving up the office of custos cuneorum in the Dublin mint can be associated, as Dolley suggested, with the moneyer Roberd who gave way to a Willem late in the coinage then a three year or so span from 1208/09 to 1211/12 might not be thought unreasonable for the issue; such a period would be in accord with the episodic nature of medieval recoinages.

One factor that conditioned Dolley’s approach was his understanding that it was ‘the view of qualified English and Irish historians . . . that the inception of the REX coinage at Dublin ought to coincide with John’s great 1204/1205 coinage in England’. But there is no evidence that the two occurrences were connected and it may be worth bearing in mind that later thirteenth-century Irish recoinages never coincided with their English counterparts but took place only after an interval, that of Henry III after four years and that of Edward I after a year. There is one further point that should be borne in mind. L.A. Lawrence in his fundamental study of the English Short Cross coinage noted that the X on the REX coins was formed of four wedges like that used on the English Class Vc. Although, as Dolley pointed out, the letter-form is not comparable in all instances there is sufficient resemblance in this and other features to suggest that the two coinages were broadly contemporaneous. Lawrence, acting on the traditional dating of 1210 for the inception of the REX coins, assumed that English Class Vc was in issue at that time. Martin Allen, however, on evidence not available to Lawrence, has shown beyond all reasonable doubt that Class Vc began c.1207 ending with the introduction of Class VI c.1210. Thus, holding to Lawrence’s thesis but inverting his argument and

56 Promulgated at a council held by John in Dublin in 1210 and confirmed in a charter (no longer extant) ‘which the magnates of Ireland swore to obey’: Richardson and Sayles 1952, 12. For the later allusions to these events see loc. cit., especially n.11 and the references therein.
57 The raison d’être for the sterling basis of the REX coinage was to facilitate its acceptance in the English treasury and thus accommodate John’s requirements outside the lordship. This is exemplified by the number of thirteenth-century English and continental hoards containing REX pennies and indeed the existence of German imitations: Dolley and O’Sullivan 1967, 476–7 and the references therein; Dolley 1965, 213–18.
58 Ware states that John ‘reformed the Coin, and made it uniform, (some say it was Gray his Deputy)’: Ware 1705, 43.
59 See Appendix below and the references cited therein.
60 For Sudbourne see Thompson, 130, no. 344; Andrew 1903–04, 44–5; Dolley 1958–59, 307–11. According to Andrew Sudbourne contained ‘Irish pennies of King John’ but he was no more specific than this.
61 This thesis – almost a mantra – seems to have been based on Dolley’s view that ‘the homogeneity of the REX coinage’ suggested that its duration ‘did not amount to much more than a period of five years’ which conveniently tied in with his interpretation of the documents he cited: Dolley and O’Sullivan 1967, 465.
62 Davies and Quinn 1941, 14 and 15. Dolley, not implausibly in the light of the time-scale, identified Robert of Bedford with the clericus of the same name who failed in his efforts to succeed to the see of Glendalough in 1212 but was subsequently elected bishop of Lismore in 1218.
63 A period of no more than three or four years was usual for an Irish recoinage in the thirteenth century instanced by those of 1251–54 and c.1280–84, and the ‘Olof’ revival of the coinage in 1276–79.
64 Dolley and O’Sullivan 1967, 445. Dolley does not tell us who these ‘qualified historians’ were.
65 A point also made to me in a personal note by Lord Stewartby.
dating the Irish by the English coins, one has cogent numismatic evidence for associating the REX coinage to the start of John de Gray’s justiciarship and vindicating Wendover’s account.66

The REX coinage, struck to the sterling standard and seemingly in accordance with English mint practice, is known from three mints: Dublin, the most prolific, Limerick, and Waterford, the rarest – all centres involved in the issue of John’s earlier DOM series.67 Pennies and half-pennies are known for all three mints, with farthings, on present evidence, for Dublin and Limerick only. Three or possibly four moneyers, Iohan, Roberd, Willem and Wilelm P, are named as moneyers on the Dublin pennies, and Roberd and Willem on the halfpence and farthings.68 At Limerick the moneyers are Willem and Wace, names which Dolley conjectured might have represented the same man, the William Wace who was later dean of Waterford and subsequently bishop of the see from 1223 to 1225. Interestingly, the only moneyer at Waterford was again a Willem and it is not inconceivable that all the Willems, striking small quantities of coins late in the series, were the same person.

If Dolley was right in his surmise about the Limerick Willem’s later episcopal career and similarly that of Roberd (very likely bishop of Lismore, 1218–23) – and there is no evidence to gainsay his conjecture – then these moneyers would have been clerici, probably members of John de Gray’s own household experienced in secular administration, and tasked directly by the justiciar to exercise a supervisory role over the actual striking of the coins. We know nothing about the organization of the Irish mints but the employment of churchmen in thirteenth-century mint administration elsewhere, though unusual, was not unknown.69 The febrile atmosphere in which Gray took over the Irish justiciarship and the circumstances surrounding his establishment of the new mints would have required a considerable degree of personal control and one most effectively exercised through close colleagues of well-tried integrity, skilled in administrative matters, lay as well as ecclesiastical.

With the exception of Roberd’s halfpence, all the fractions are very rare. It is of interest, too, that none are known to have been found outside Ireland which, despite their paucity today, suggests that, in contrast to the pennies’ intended use on both sides of the Irish Sea, they were designed for insular consumption only, conforming to the accepted Irish currency standard of half the English penny.

The earliest of the Dublin coins to judge by the evidence of the Newry hoard and die use are the very few Iohan specimens.70 Their superior workmanship and rarity cause one to wonder whether their dies could have been intended as prototypes in the name of John de Gray rather than for the use of any practising moneyer of that name and perhaps brought over from London by the justiciar to launch the Dublin mint.71 Roberd, who must quickly have taken over from Iohan (if he was a moneyer), was responsible for the great bulk of the Dublin pennies and operated for most of the mint’s life, giving way to Willem and Wilelm P (probably the same man) for perhaps no more than its final months.72 As far as Limerick and Waterford are concerned, Dolley concluded from the evidence of their halfpence that these mints began their operation late in the coinage, Limerick c.1209–10 and Waterford c.1210, a hypothesis supported by the absence of their coins from the Newry hoard and one that is not historically implausible.

67 There seems to be no continuity in personnel between the two coinages except possibly in the unlikely instances of Robert and William at Dublin: Dolley and O’Sullivan 1967, 466.
68 Lindsay mentions a moneyer named Alexander on Dublin pennies (ALEXANDER ON DIVE) but no coins of this moneyer are known: Lindsay 1839, 25 and 76. Cf. O’Sullivan 1964, 15.
69 See the list of officials at the sixteen royal mints opened for the recoinage in 1248–49: BL: Hargrave MS 313, fols. 97–97v, reproduced in Ellis 1859, 318–25 (Appendix III) – where the wrong folio number is given – and Johnson 1956, 100–6 (Appendix II); Stewartby 2001, 294–5.
70 A specimen of each of the two known Iohan obverses is coupled with a Roberd reverse: Dolley and O’Sullivan 1967, 466–7. See also p. 125 above.
71 It could well be that John de Gray acted in the capacity of a nominal moneyer himself at this stage as seems to have been the case in Chichester with Simon [FitzRobert], bishop of the diocese, only a year or two earlier: Stewartby 2001, 294–5.
72 Hoard evidence and changes in the design of the crown on halfpence suggest that the replacement of Roberd took place very late and with a minimal overlap. Willem’s coins are very rare as are those of Wilelm P.
John’s REX coinage, with the king’s head and crown surprisingly realistically engraved for the period, is arguably the most attractive of the denier coinages of the central middle ages. Its style and iconography, sharply distinctive from what had gone before in the lordship and from the crude contemporary type immobilisé coinage of England, leads one to think that it must have been intended to convey a powerful political message. To bring home to feudatory and Irish kinglet alike, through the use of the royal title73 and of its cosmic reverse types thought by some to be symbolic of Plantagenet majesty,74 the reality of John’s determination to assert his personal authority over the ‘whole land of Ireland’; ‘to be King in Ireland as in England’.75 Such an interpretation would be wholly consistent with an introduction of the coinage c.1208, the year of John de Gray’s appointment as justiciar and of the initial stages of planning for John’s proposed expedition to Ireland, eventually undertaken in 1210.76 On this basis, a straightforward interpretation of the documentary and hoard evidence available to us would seem to leave little room to doubt Roger of Wendover’s testimony or to question a time-span of three or at the most four years before its completion in 1211–12.

It would be wrong of me, in concluding this paper, not to stress that my interest in medieval Anglo-Irish coinage owes a great deal to Michael Dolley’s personal encouragement and infectious enthusiasm; an enthusiasm that always and inevitably opened up avenues of thought that one had never contemplated. But, great numismatist that he undoubtedly was – and this is clearly demonstrated in the Thomond monograph – it does seem to me that in his anxiety to question the reliability of Wendover’s near contemporary testimony, testimony not unlikely based on conversations with John de Gray’s entourage if not with the bishop himself, he was led to read far more into the available archival record than it can reasonably bear.

APPENDIX.
HOARD EVIDENCE FOR KING JOHN’S ANGLO-IRISH COINAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hoard</th>
<th>Irish DOM</th>
<th>Irregular</th>
<th>Irish REX</th>
<th>English Short Cross</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Continental</th>
<th>Date of deposit</th>
<th>Select bibliography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arklow, Co. Wicklow, 1834</td>
<td>1+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>c.1210</td>
<td>Thompson –; Dolley 1966f, 133–4.</td>
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</table>

73 Although John never formally assumed the title Rex in respect of the lordship. But see n.42 above. The use of the royal title, of course, also facilitated the circulation of the coinage in England as well as Ireland.
74 See Dykes forthcoming.
75 Curtis 1938, 102.
76 John’s massive expedition, delayed because of problems in Wales and with Scotland, comprised 700 ships, over 1,000 foot soldiers (including Flemish mercenaries) and more than 800 knights to whom he paid £1,433 13s. 6d. from the treasury even before setting out from Pembroke. In Ireland the army – probably the largest ever seen in the country – was augmented with troops provided by Gray, William Marshal and some of the Irish kings, all requiring even more financial support as, of course, did the nine-week campaign itself: Carpenter 2004, 280; Orpen 1911, II, 243–4; Warren 1997, 196.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hoard</th>
<th>Irish DOM</th>
<th>Irregular Irish REX</th>
<th>English Short Cross</th>
<th>Scottish</th>
<th>Continental</th>
<th>Date of deposit</th>
<th>Select bibliography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower Normandy, before 1905</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>c.1211</td>
<td>Dolley 1966c, 30.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockland, Devon, 1885</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>c.1215</td>
<td>Thompson –; Dolley 1967, 194; Allen 2012, no. 204.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifton, Lancashire, 1947</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>c.1225</td>
<td>Thompson –; Carson 1947, 80–2; Allen 2012, no. 215.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hickleton, South Yorkshire, 1946</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>c.1230</td>
<td>Thompson no. 89; Dolley 1958–59, 315–16; Allen 2012, no. 218.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Poiré-sur-Velluire, Vendée, France, c.1895</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1,598+</td>
<td>c.1230</td>
<td>Dolley 1966c, 30.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eccles, Greater Manchester, 1864</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>5,715</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>7+</td>
<td>c.1230</td>
<td>Thompson no. 152; Dolley 1958–59, 316; Stewart 1980; Stewartby 1993; Allen 2012, no. 217.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballykeigle, Co. Down, 1840</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>475+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>c.1240</td>
<td>Thompson –; Seaby 1955, 164.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montpellier, Hérault, France, 1934</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>c.1240</td>
<td>Dolley 1966c, 31.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co. Dublin, 1853</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>c.1245</td>
<td>Thompson no. 135; Dolley 1958–59, 320.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoard</td>
<td>Irish DOM</td>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>Irish REX</td>
<td>English Short Cross</td>
<td>Scottish</td>
<td>Continental</td>
<td>Date of deposit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flensburg, Schleswig–Holstein, Germany, 1892</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>c.10,000</td>
<td>c.1258</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brussels, Belgium, 1908</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>c.80,000</td>
<td>c.1,750</td>
<td>c.70,000</td>
<td>c.1267</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoneyford, Co. Antrim, c.1915</td>
<td>1?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>c.1270</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim, 1856</td>
<td>1?</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>After 1280</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

* Together with 1,600+ Dublin pennies of Henry III.

**REFERENCES**
