

# A SMALL HOARD OF PENNIES OF ÆTHELRAED II (978–1016), FROM IRELAND

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AMONG the additions to the coin collection of the National Museum of Ireland in 1987 were four Anglo-Saxon coins, apparently a small 'purse' hoard, acquired from Spink and Son. The coins were stated to be from an Irish provenance, but unfortunately it was not possible to tie them down to any specific find-spot. The reluctance of the seller to divulge any further information would suggest that perhaps the coins were found with the aid of a metal detector.

Several hoards of Anglo-Saxon coins have been found in Ireland during the past few years, most of them quite small in size. The little find under consideration here therefore falls into the general pattern, although one must of course allow for the possibility that the coins which have 'surfaced' may represent but a portion of a more substantial hoard. The fact that three of the four pennies are 'Hand' pieces is also of some importance in that such coins do not turn up often in Irish hoards. The vast majority of 'Hand' pennies in the National Museum come from just two finds – the Mullingar hoard of 1841 and the Kildare hoard of 1923 – and the only additions in the past few decades have been two pennies in the Dundalk hoard of 1980, two halves in the north Westmeath hoard of 1985 and a few single finds from the Dublin excavations. In the Museum trays, First Hand issues outnumber those of Second Hand, 5:2; in this small hoard the proportions are reversed. The four recently acquired coins are as follows:

## *First Hand (fragment) probably Derby*

1. *Obv:* – DELRED REXA —. Bust to right.  
*Rev:* – ðVLSTEAN M-O — with a checkmark on either side of hand.  
Wt. 0.84 g Die-axis 90°.

This coin is interesting, although unfortunately incomplete. The spelling of the moneyer's name is quite unusual, as it is normally spelt PVLSTAN or PVLSTAN. The –STEAN ending is not, however, unknown and a moneyer named ALFSTEAN is recorded in Hildebrand, no. 2214.<sup>1</sup> The obverse of the present coin is a die-duplicate of one listed in *SCBI, Copen-*

*hagen*, no. 123.<sup>2</sup> The reverse of the Copenhagen piece shows it to have been struck by Wulstan of Derby. Mark Blackburn (to whom I am indebted for pointing out both the Copenhagen duplicate and the Hildebrand coin referred to above) has noted that the contraction PVL- (in place of PVL- ) is quite frequently found on coins struck in midland and northern mints but hardly at all on coins struck in the south. Thus, although First Hand coins of PVLSTAN were struck in Stamford, Derby and York, the shorter 'northern' spelling is not known for either London or Winchester, the two southern mints which struck First Hand coins in the name of PVLSTAN. The same regional difference in the spelling of this name would appear to hold true also for later issues of Æthelraed II, and mints such as Lewes (Crux), Dover (Long Cross) and Exeter (Helmet) use the longer form. During the reigns of Cnut (1016–35) and Harold I (1035–39), however, the shorter spelling became increasingly common on coins from southern mints.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from the spelling of the moneyer's name, a northern mint is further suggested by the style of the die. The shape of the drapery, the relatively large bust, the treatment of the eye and the position of the arcs which form the 'sky' on the reverse certainly point towards Dolley and Talvio's 'Northern A' style which they recorded at Derby, Lincoln and York.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the missing portion of the coin includes the last few letters of the obverse legend with the abbreviation X, and some of the 'sky' on the reverse. The evidence of the obverse die-link, supported by that of spelling and style, point firmly in favour of a Derby attribution.

## *Second Hand, Chester*

2. *Obv:* + ÆDELRAED REX ANGLORUM X. Bust to right, with sceptre.  
*Rev:* + EADRIE M-O LEGCE. on either side. Wt. 1.67 g Die axis 90°.

This coin is perhaps the most important of the four under discussion here, due to the fact that the Chester mint struck so few Second Hand coins. Jonsson<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bror Emil Hildebrand, *Anglosachsiska Mynt i Svenska Kongliga Mynt* (Stockholm, 1881), p. 102. Other variants of the –STAN ending include –STIN, –STYN, –STAEN, and –SAN. It is also worth noting that the mint-name Stamford, is sometimes spelled STEAN on First Hand coins.

<sup>2</sup> Georg Galster, *SCBI 7 Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, Copenhagen* (London, 1966), no. 123.

<sup>3</sup> Hildebrand, pp. 331–2, 383.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Dolley and Tuukka Talvio, 'The Regional pattern of die-cutting exhibited by the First Hand pennies of Æthelraed II, preserved in the British Museum', *BNJ* 47, (1977), 60–1.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth Jonsson, *Viking-Age Hoards and Late Anglo-Saxon Coins* (Stockholm, 1987), p. 87.



FIG. 1.

records only six specimens by four moneyers, including one (now in Belfast) by Eadric from the Mullingar hoard of 1841,<sup>6</sup> which is interesting since it is the opinion of the writer that the present group may have originated from the same area. Eadric is also known to have struck First Hand and Crux at Chester.

*Second Hand, London*

3. *Obv:* + ÆDEL RÆD REX ANGLOR. Bust to right, with sceptre.

*Rev:* + LEOPINE M-O LVND. Hild 2746. Wt. 1.28 g Die-axis 270°.

The moneyer is well known and Second Hand coins of London are relatively common.

*Crux, Winchester*

4. *Obv:* + ÆDEL RÆD REX ANGLOR. Bust to left, with sceptre.

*Rev:* + ÆLFSIGE M-O PIHT. Hild 4051-2. Wt. 1.57 g Die-axis 90°.

Mrs Yvonne Harvey, who has made a study of the coins of the Winchester mint, notes that while she has previously recorded both the obverse and reverse dies, she has found them in the present combination only once, on a coin from a Swedish hoard.

This is the latest of the four coins. Since the Crux type is conventionally dated c.991-7, a suggested deposition date of c.995 would seem reasonable. One recognises of course, that with only four coins, possibly part of a more substantial find, there is a greater margin of uncertainty than applies in dating larger hoards.

<sup>6</sup> W. A. Seaby, 'Anglo-Saxon hoards and coins found in the north of Ireland', *BNJ* 29 (1959), 53.