

To conclude, the blundered inscriptions on both sides of the coin make a definitive interpretation problematic. Both the appearance of a comparatively high silver content and the style of the designs suggest a late eighth-century date. While an attribution to Æthelwald Moll is conceivable, based on one reading of the inscription, a more likely explanation is that the coin should be attributed to the second reign of Æthelred I (790–6), muling a slightly blundered obverse of Æthelred I with a considerably more blundered contemporary reverse derived from an obverse inscription of Ælfwald I

A NORTHUMBRIAN 'STYCA' FROM WILTSHIRE: THE PROBLEM WITH SOUTHERN PROVENANCES OF 'STYCAS'

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IN 1914 the Revd A.T. Richardson, vicar of Keevil in Wiltshire, compiled a typewritten quarto volume, 294 pages in length, entitled *Annals of Keevil and Bulkington*.

One copy was deposited in the library of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society at Devizes and was reviewed in the *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*.¹ On pages 8 and 9 some sixty coins are listed which had been 'found by Mr W. Ghey, mostly in 'Henleys.' (William Ghey farmed at Wick Leaze in Keevil, which included a field know as 'Henleys'.) The coins, which had been identified and listed by G.F. Hill from the British Museum, comprise: one Ancient British silver coin of the Dobunni (type C in Allen's classification of Dobunnic coins and incorrectly described as having been found at the nearby town of Trowbridge);² fifty-two Roman coins; one Saxon coin which is the subject of this note; and six Nuremberg jetons. The Saxon coin is particularly unusual as a find from South-West England. It is a Northumbrian 'styca' of Wigmund, Archbishop of York from 837 to 854, by the moneyer Hunlaf. The legends are transcribed without precision in the list as 'Obv. VIGMUND. Rev. HUNLAF'. Both the Dobunnic silver coin and the 'styca' were donated by Mr Ghey to the British Museum: the latter has the accession number 1914.7.11.2, but cannot now be identified in the collection. The Museum's accession register records the find spot as 'near Trowbridge', which is the nearest town, and transcribes the legends as +VIGMVND and +HVILAF.

Even though the coins listed were said to have been found 'mostly in Henleys', inferring that one or some had not been found in that field, there is every reason to accept the 'styca' as a genuine local find, whether made at that precise findspot or not. The coin is thus important as an extremely uncommon provenanced Northumbrian coin from Southern Britain, not previously noticed in numismatic literature.

There are a number of records of finds of Northumbrian 'stycas' from Southern England. Two small hoards of 'stycas' are said to have been found respectively at Bath (*Inventory* –) and London (*Inventory* 243),³ but both have been argued to be spurious by Michael Dolley.⁴ Blackburn and Pagan, it may be noted, retain the latter find in their listing of coin hoards from the British Isles.⁵ These purported hoards, together with individual finds made at Trewiddle and Brighton in Southern England, have been dismissed by Elizabeth Pirie.⁶ However, the recent discovery of a hoard of 'stycas' in London,⁷ of a 'styca' of Redwulf on the Thames foreshore at Lambeth,⁸ and, perhaps of lesser relevance, of a Viking weight, embellished with a 'styca' probably of Eanred which was found at Faversham in Kent⁹ show, together with the evidence of the find from Keevil, that recorded finds from the extreme south of England should not lightly be dismissed.

¹ *Wilt. Arch. and Nat. Hist. Magazine* 39 (1915–17), 100–2.

² D.F. Allen, 'The Origins of Coinage in Britain: a Re-appraisal', in *Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain*, edited by S.S. Frere (= University of London Occasional Paper 11) (London, 1960), 97–308, at p. 249.

³ J.D.A. Thompson, *Inventory of British Coin Hoards A.D. 600–1500*, (Royal Numismatic Society, London, 1956).

⁴ R.H.M. Dolley, 'A Spurious Hoard of Northumbrian Copper Coins from Bath', *NC* 7th. series, vol. 5 (1965), 197–200; R.H.M. Dolley, 'Coin Hoards from the London Area as Evidence for the Pre-eminence of London in the Later Saxon Period', *Trans. London and Middlesex Arch. Soc.* 20 (1960), 37–50, at p. 38.

⁵ M.A.S. Blackburn and H.E. Pagan, 'A Revised Check-List of Coin Hoards from the British Isles, c. 500–1100', in *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History: Essays in Memory of Michael Dolley*, edited by M.A.S. Blackburn (Leicester, 1986), 291–313, at p. 293, no. 28.

⁶ Elizabeth J.E. Pirie, 'Finds of "sceattas" and "stycas" of Northumbria', in M.A.S. Blackburn (editor), as in n. 5, 69–90, at p. 85.

⁷ Gareth Williams, *pers. comm.*

⁸ *BNJ* 65 (1995), 239, no. 115.

⁹ G. Williams, 'Anglo-Saxon and Viking Coin Weights', *BNJ* 69 (1999), 19–36.

In this respect it is worth revisiting the Bath hoard, not least as that city lies only twelve miles from Keevil. The argument that the Bath hoard was a false one may be questioned on at least two counts. First, while it is accepted that the twenty-five 'stycas' were from a hoard, it is not possible to show convincingly which other known hoard from the north of England they are likely to have belonged to originally, the suggestion being made that they might derive from 'the sizeable but ill-recorded Kirkoswald hoard of 1808 (*Inventory* 225)'¹⁰ in effect by a process of elimination. Secondly, it may be noted that at least one other Anglo-Saxon object is said to have been discovered at the same time on the site of the White Hart Hotel. This is a fragment of a cross-shaft with carved interlaced design.¹¹

However, a group of six 'gun money' coins was also found at the same time as the 'styca' hoard, and the improbable coincidence that there should have been found here two hoards or groups of coins, both of which originated a considerable distance from Bath, means that it is stretching credulity too far to see either or both of them as genuine finds from the city, even though, *pace* general belief, individual finds of 'gun money' are not infrequently made in at least the west of England. Until more conclusive evidence is discovered about their provenance, it is safer to disregard the purported Bath find. The 'styca' of Wigmund from Keevil remains then the only apparently genuine record to date of the finding of a Northumbrian 'styca' in Wessex.

AN EDGAR REFORM PENNY OF AXBRIDGE

STEWART LYON AND MICHAEL SHARP

COINS of the Anglo-Saxon burh of Axbridge in north-west Somerset are extremely rare: Elmore Jones¹ recorded only nineteen, two of which are of Æthelred's *Long Cross* type, followed by eleven of Cnut and six of Harthacnut. It was therefore with no little excitement that we recently became aware of a coin of Edgar's *Reform* type that had apparently been found near Winchester by a metal detectorist. Slightly chipped, with die axis 180°, it reads ÆLFSIG M-O AXAN and weighs 1.64 g (25.2 grains) (Fig. 1). There is a flaw or gouge in the obverse die at 12 o'clock, which obliterates the E of the king's name. It appears incuse on the reverse of the coin, removing the front of the letter M.

Although AXA and AXAN are found on coins of Æthelred and Cnut as abbreviations of the name recorded in the early tenth-century Burghal Hidage as *Axanbryge* the thought crossed our minds that in this case we could perhaps have a misspelt reading of Exeter, for although the usual four-letter abbreviation of that city in Æthelred's reign is EAXE the form EXAN is found in Edgar's *Reform* issue (e.g. Hildebrand 6) and occasionally in Æthelred's *First Hand* type (e.g. Hildebrand 464). However, no moneyer named Ælfsige is known at Exeter, but in *First Hand* the name occurs at the Somerset town of Ilchester (e.g. Hildebrand 1014–15), which reinforces an attribution to Axbridge.

Axbridge is only two or three miles from Cheddar, the site of a palace of the Anglo-Saxon kings. Although it was only a small *burh*, its moneyer is likely to have been required from time to time to coin silver for the king when he was at Cheddar. Its participation in Edgar's reform of the coinage c.973 is satisfying to have established. Perhaps one day a coin of the pre-reform Circumscription Cross type will turn up to show that a moneyer operated at Axbridge before then.



Fig. 1.

¹⁰ J.D.A. Thompson, as in n. 3.

¹¹ B. Cunliffe, *Excavations in Bath, 1950–1975* (= Committee for Rescue Archaeology in Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset Excavation Report 1), Bristol (1979), p. 140.

¹ F. Elmore Jones, 'The Mint of Axbridge', *BNJ* 30, 1 (1960), 61–9 and pl. VI.