

employed by the Roman mint to disguise the debasement of the Roman Imperial coinage.²¹ The artificial enrichment would have been necessary in order to produce a coin that would have looked as if it were pure silver. An alloy containing so little silver would have looked very coppery when freshly minted and would have clearly signalled any significant debasement to the coin using population. It is therefore not surprising that such a technique would have been employed by Anglo-Saxon moneyers when silver stocks were low and increases in trade demanded more coin. It is only by removing the 50 microns or so of enriched surface metal that the true composition of a coin so treated can correctly be ascertained.²² Unfortunately, it is only recently that the scale of the use of depletion silvering in coinage production has begun to be fully appreciated, casting doubt on many of the earlier 'non-destructive' X-ray fluorescence analyses. For many years it was thought that it was only surface enrichment caused by natural corrosion processes during burial that affected analysis. This phenomenon can quite easily be overcome by the careful abrasion (euphemistically called 'polishing') of the area to be analysed. However, if such an approach is applied to depletion silvered coins, the analysis so gained will be only of the enriched zone and therefore not representative of the original alloy from which the coin was made. Clearly such data are useless for numismatic or historical research.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR OUTLYING CHURCHES? A PERSPECTIVE ON THE USES OF MONEY IN EIGHTH-CENTURY NORTHUMBRIA

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THROUGH the activities of metal-detectorists, as well as through controlled archaeological excavations, there are now approximately 200 single finds of thrymsas and sceattas from north of the Humber, an impressive total. Many of them have been reported in the Coin Register maintained by the Society and published in this Journal. If one maps all the finds, they reveal rather clearly that, whereas most of the territory of the kingdom of Northumbria was devoid of stray finds of sceattas, or virtually so, there was a quadrilateral in the south-eastern part of the kingdom where a pervasive monetary economy grew up during the eighth century. This quadrilateral was bounded by the estuary of the River Humber, the Vale of Pickering, the North Sea, and an arbitrary line a couple of miles to the west of the River Ouse – roughly speaking, the old East Riding.¹ York lay at the north-western corner of this area, which made up only a smallish fraction of the area of Northumbria. The sharp contrast in the frequency of stray finds may to some extent be because searching by detectorists has been more concentrated in the East Riding area, where success has encouraged persistence, but one can form a judgement by considering the proportions of different categories of coinage that are found by detectorists in other parts of Yorkshire, where sceattas form a negligible fraction of all coin finds. The contrast is so sharp that one may accept it as broadly reliable. The only important exception is Whitby Abbey, where major archaeological excavations in 1920–8 produced a good crop of sceattas. The statistics there obviously reflect the care and intensity of searching, primarily.

Within the find-evidence from north of the Humber, the writer recently happened to notice a previously unremarked curiosity which, if it is judged to be statistically significant, leads us towards some intriguing questions about the monetary affairs of the Northumbrian kingdom in the time of King Eadberht (738–59) and his successors in the later eighth century. This note is intended mainly to alert archaeologists and others to a problem, in order that if they should be fortunate enough to find new evidence they will ensure that the facts are scrupulously recorded in

²¹ L. Cope, 'Surface-silvered ancient coins', in E. Hall and D. Metcalf, op. cit. n. 14, pp. 261–78.

²² K.E.T. Butcher and M.J. Ponting, 'Rome and the East: Production of Roman provincial silver coinage for Caesarea in Cappadocia under Vespasian, AD 69–79', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 14 (1) (1995), 63–77.

¹ Work in progress.

such a way as to be useful. Eadberht made major innovations in the production and use of coinage, presumably at York, which included extending the privilege of minting to the archbishop (his brother), Ecgberht. Sceattas are known in Eadberht's sole name, but also there are specimens with the king's name on one side and that of the archbishop on the other. This dual system may even be earlier in its origin, involving the sceattas of Series J, Types 85 and 37 respectively. There are historical difficulties in that interpretation,² whereas the coins of Eadberht and his brother are perfectly explicit in their legends. Series J will be left on one side in what follows. There is no reason to think that it affects the general argument.

The joint issues account for about twenty-two per cent of all the single finds from Eadberht's reign, or roughly one in five, among a total of 113, which come from some twenty-five different localities north of the Humber. Of the 113, the majority come essentially from the East Riding, as explained above. The region was heavily monetized from c.700 onwards, i.e. a generation before Eadberht's reforms. Its money economy was driven by maritime trade reaching the Humber estuary. Initially, monetary exchanges mostly took place at sites not too far from navigable water, e.g. the productive site in or somewhere near the parish of South Newbald, York, as a tidal river-port, attracted a colony of Frisian merchants, who seem to have been settled in the southern suburbium of Fisherwick, where porcupine sceattas have been excavated. Further afield, and outside the east Yorkshire quadrilateral, there are plenty of coins from the reign of Eadberht and his successors from the monastic site of Whitby, already mentioned,³ and similarly from excavations at Whithorn,⁴ on the coast of southern Scotland. There are other scattered examples recorded from Malham,⁵ Settle,⁶ Guisborough,⁷ Hutton Rudby,⁸ Hartlepool,⁹ Jarrow (3),¹⁰ Holy Island,¹¹ and Aberlady.¹² Most of these localities are on or near the east coast, and the coins are likely to have arrived by sea (as will many of those from Whitby). The finds from Guisborough, Hartlepool, and Settle are joint issues with Archbishop Ecgberht. Three out of nine is in no way remarkable when measured against an expectation, derived from the over-all proportion, of twenty-two per cent. It could easily be nothing more than a statistical quirk, given that one coin (e.g. two out of eight) could remove the anomaly. One's curiosity is aroused, however, by the contexts of the finds. The Guisborough specimen comes from excavations at the priory, and the Hartlepool find is from just north of the parish church of St Hilda. Again, two swallows do not make a summer.

But if the enquiry is extended in time, the evidence begins to accumulate. From an earlier period, there is a gold coin from Skipton parish church.¹³ And from the later part of the ninth century, examples come thick and fast. A joint issue of Ecgberht with Eadberht's successor, Alchred, is on record from Richmond, from the Hospital of St Nicholas.¹⁴ One of King Æthelred I jointly

² D.M. Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford* (Royal Numismatic Society Special Publication 27), 3 vols (London, 1993–4), pp. 343 f.

³ There are thirteen coins of Eadberht, of which four are joint issues, and twelve later eighth-century coins, of which one is a joint issue: par for the course. There are also finds from elsewhere in Whitby. See R.J. Cramp, 'Analysis of the finds register and location plan of Whitby Abbey', in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, edited by D.M. Wilson (1976), pp. 453–7. For the site generally, see P. Rahtz, 'Anglo-Saxon and later Whitby', in *Yorkshire Monasticism*, edited by L.R. Hoey (British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions, 15) (Leeds, 1995), pp. 1–11.

⁴ Excavations of 'a monasterium with urban functions' yielded *inter alia* six coins of Eadberht, of which one was a joint issue, and six of Alchred or Æthelred I, of which again one was a joint issue. P. Hill, *Whithorn and St Ninians* (1997).

⁵ E.J.E. Pirie, 'Finds of "sceattas" and "stycas" of Northumbria', in *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History. Essays in Memory of Michael Dolley*, edited by M.A.S. Blackburn (Leicester, 1986), pp. 67–90, at p. 74, no. 20.

⁶ Pirie, as in n. 5, no. 21. From Attermire cave in the mid or late nineteenth century.

⁷ J. Booth, *Northern Museums: Ancient British, Anglo-Saxon, Norman and Plantagenet Coins to 1279 (SCBI 48)* (London, 1997) (hereafter *SCBI Northern*), no. 192.

⁸ 'Coin Register 1997', *BNJ* 67 (1997), 125–47, no. 86.

⁹ From excavations at Church Close (to the north of St Hilda's church, on Hartlepool Headland). *SCBI Northern*, as in n. 7, 190.

¹⁰ Two from excavation of the upper make-up of the S bank (NZ 339 652) in 1976. *SCBI Northern*, as in n. 7, 178 and 183. Also one from the churchyard (in the same general locality). *BMC* Alchred 13.

¹¹ From the priory: Pirie as in n. 5, no. 25. Also 'Coin Register 1987', *BNJ* 57 (1987), 122–52, no. 97, excavated in 1977.

¹² Information supplied by Dr J.D. Bateson. Thirteen coins have been recovered by a detectorist and acquired by the National Museums of Scotland. Details will be published by N. Holmes in 'The Evidence of Finds for the Circulation and Use of Coins in Medieval Scotland', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* (forthcoming).

¹³ Casual find of a continental tremissis in the northern graveyard of Holy Trinity church. *SCBI Northern*, as in n. 7, 1920.

¹⁴ *Gentleman's Magazine* (1832), 304 and 601.

with Archbishop Eanbald comes from Carlisle (excavations at the cathedral).¹⁵ There is another of the same type from Jarrow.¹⁶ Coins of Archbishop Eanbald alone (a later development) come from Jarrow (again)¹⁷ and also from Coldingham churchyard.¹⁸ This later batch makes up a high proportion of the outliers from the late ninth century – the bulk of the finds being, as before, from the East Riding and from Whitby. Of course, one often cannot prove that a medieval church stood on what was already a church site in the eighth century. But it seems that there is a phenomenon worth thinking about.

Stray finds as such in a churchyard or on an ecclesiastical site do not necessarily imply that the church was institutionally involved in the use of coinage. A churchyard may have been a convenient social meeting-place, with some buying and selling thrown in. Likewise there is currently no evidence that coin finds are in any way associated with burial practices in eighth-century Northumbria.¹⁹

One should mention the possibility that the archbishops' coins were of less pure silver than the royal coins, or were thought to be so;²⁰ but even if true it probably does not affect the issue (since, e.g. there is apparently no question of inferior coins being used as grave-goods). If coins had been circulating in the ordinary way at these outlying sites, the expectation would be that the proportion of archbishops' coins would be no different statistically from the over-all pattern, subject only to margins of statistical variation which can distort a small sample. If archbishops' coins really do exceed expectation, which should be considered as an interesting hypothesis rather than an established fact while the numbers remain so small, that could have arisen either because people using coins locally sifted through what was in their purses and chose to give or pay archbishops' coins rather than royal coins to the church or to the priest; or because the money had come directly from the archbishop, presumably as some sort of support or subvention. (Again, it would have been perfectly possible for him to send whatever sort of money came to hand.) Neither option is particularly appealing, but the former is less so. In either case the pattern of losses would seem to imply that once such coins had reached the vicinity of the church, they tended to stay there, i.e. monetary circulation was sluggish or very restricted. That fits in well enough with the broader pattern that has been described. But it is always difficult to know whether a zero level of stray finds in a region should be assumed to imply a zero level of monetary use – or merely a very much lower level than in the obviously monetized regions nearby.

It will be prudent to reserve judgement, but it is certainly desirable to air the hypothesis, if only because the exact details of the context of any new find may have a bearing on the historical interpretation of the pattern as a whole.

A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY HOARD FROM LLANDDONA, ANGLESEY

EDWARD BESLY

ON 18 June 1999 Mr Graham Williams deposited a group of 205 silver coins at the National Museum & Gallery in Cardiff. The coins had been found with the aid of a metal detector on a beach above low water mark near Llanddona at the eastern end of Red Wharf Bay, on the Isle of Anglesey. As a result of further searching two more batches, totalling 106 coins, were received in September 1999 and January 2000. The coins were declared treasure at an inquest in Caernarfon on 12 September 2000 and have been acquired by Oriel Ynys Môn, Llangefni.

There is no doubt that the coins form a single deposit, scattered in the beach within an area of around fifty square metres. On one coin, a concretion preserved evidence of a fine plain weave

¹⁵ *SCBI Northern*, as in n. 7, 207.

¹⁶ *SCBI Northern*, as in n. 7, 208.

¹⁷ Pirie, as in n. 5, no. 81.

¹⁸ Pirie, as in n. 5, no. 91.

¹⁹ D.M. Hadley, 'Burial practices in the northern Danelaw, c.650–1100', *Northern History* 36 (2000), 199–216. Churchyard burials occurred from the eighth century onwards.

²⁰ Cf. *Thrymsas and Sceattas*, as in n. 2, nos 464 and 468; chemical analyses at pp. 678 f.