

NEW MONEYERS IN ÆTHELRED II'S BENEDICTION HAND TYPE

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ÆTHELRED'S coinage of the 980s and 990s has attracted much debate, and the three Hand types in particular have featured in wider discussions on the nature, duration of issues and the general implementation of Edgar's reform of the coinage.¹ The rare Benediction Hand type remains especially poorly understood. It is therefore worthy of note that a large quantity of new material – nearly 450 coins, more than half of which are Hand types, from three Dublin hoards found in 1993 and 1994 – has emerged for this formative period of Late Anglo-Saxon coinage. This will be fully published in the *SCBI* series (Dublin) and analysed in greater detail in due course. The purpose of this note is to draw attention to these as yet unpublished finds and in particular to the substantial Benediction Hand component, which includes seven new moneyers, here published for the first time. Other material has been brought to our attention by Kenneth Jonsson and come to light through reassessment of the Oslo collection for a *SCBI* volume on Norwegian collections; we have also taken the opportunity to re-examine the two Benediction Hand coins Jonsson attributed to an uncertain London moneyer only. A revised table of moneyers in Benediction Hand builds upon the data published in Jonsson 1987a, and provides an updated overview of the type (Table 4).

The Dublin hoards

The three hoards from Dublin (summarized below in Table 1) were unearthed in relatively close geographical proximity, on Castle Street and Werburgh Street (just north and west of Dublin Castle), in rapid succession in 1993 and 1994. The fact that they were also deposited in close succession means that their combined value in numismatic terms far outweighs that of a single isolated find. They are key witnesses to the Dublin economy on the eve of Sihtric's economic reform (*c.*995), and to the vitality of trade and dependence on Anglo-Saxon coins prior to the introduction of the Hiberno-Scandinavian coinage. The deposits are particularly interesting since they contain a range of types that would never occur together in a hoard from England, where the practice of *renovatio monetarum* prevented older types from circulating alongside the current issue.

The two hoards from the north side of 26–9 Castle Street were excavated by Martin Byrne in 1993.² The first, smallest and earliest hoard contained mainly First Hand coins, with a small Second Hand and Benediction Hand element, suggesting that it was assembled immediately before the Crux recoinage in *c.*991, or perhaps *c.*993/4.³ The Castle Street 2 hoard is about three times the size of the first find, and was deposited a few years later (*c.*995), with the Crux type making up nearly half of the deposit. The third hoard, comprising 125 coins all from the reign of Æthelred II, was found at Werburgh Street during excavations directed by Alan Hayden.⁴ Again, Crux coins make up nearly half of this hoard, which was also deposited in about 995. The overall geographical composition of the hoards is roughly similar, with over 60% of the mints represented in each being from the Midlands/South of England. Interestingly, however, it is the presence of mints active in the north-west that emerges as one of the most significant new features revealed through the Benediction Hand element of the new finds.

The coins from the Dublin finds, now preserved in the National Museum of Ireland, were identified by Michael Kenny in the first instance, and were subsequently studied in detail by

Acknowledgements: We are very grateful to Professor Kenneth Jonsson for sharing with us his data on new finds of Benediction Hand type coins. We also thank Mark Blackburn for discussing the Benediction Hand type with us, and for commenting on drafts of this note, and Patrick Wallace and Michael Kenny of the National Museum of Ireland for facilitating work on the Dublin material.

¹ For a summary, see Blackburn 1991, 158–62.

² Simpson 2000, 32.

³ On the revised dating of Crux proposed by Jonsson, see Jonsson 1987b, 191.

⁴ Hayden 2002, 53–4.

TABLE 1. Composition of the Castle Street and Werburgh Street hoards.

<i>Castle Street 1 (c.991 or c.993/4)</i>		<i>Castle Street 2 (c.995)</i>		<i>Werburgh Street (c.995)</i>	
<i>Edgar: Reform Small Cross</i>	5	<i>Edgar: Reform Small Cross</i>	6		
<i>Edward the Martyr: Small Cross</i>	1	<i>Edward the Martyr: Small Cross</i>	5		
<i>Æthelred II:</i>		<i>Æthelred II:</i>		<i>Æthelred II:</i>	
		First Hand/First Small Cross	1		
		First Small Cross	1	First Small Cross	2
		First Small Cross? Cut ¼	1		
First Hand	54	First Hand	75	First Hand	39
				Second Hand/First Hand	1
Second Hand	16	Second Hand	13	Second Hand	15
				?Second Hand/ Benediction Hand	1
Benediction Hand	3	Benediction Hand	19	Benediction Hand	7
		Second Hand/Crux	3	Second Hand/Crux	1
		Benediction Hand/Crux	1	Benediction Hand/ Crux	2
		Crux	117	Crux	57
Total:	79	Total:	242	Total:	125

Bill Lean and Stewart Lyon. We are much indebted to these experts, whose fundamental and meticulous groundwork, including extensive die-linking, forms the basis for this and any future work on the new finds. There is clearly much more information to be gleaned, but this awaits full publication of the material and the opportunity for more comprehensive analyses of mints, weights and die-linking. In the interim, we wish to draw attention to the new moneyers these hoards have provided for the Benediction Hand type.

New information on Benediction Hand coins

When Kenneth Jonsson catalogued the Benediction Hand coins in the 1980s,⁵ 138 specimens were known, struck by fifty-one moneyers at twenty-two mints, and a further two Second Hand/Benediction Hand mules (see Table 4, column A, adapting Jonsson 1987a, 101–3). Although he did not list them, Jonsson noted that there are also a number of mules with Crux (including *SCBI* Copenhagen nos 989 and 1016 and *SCBI* West Country no. 460); three further examples are present in two of the Dublin hoards. Jonsson has since noted only eight additional Benediction Hand coins, all of previously recorded moneyers, which have appeared at auction or derive from Swedish and Polish finds (see Table 2).⁶ Re-examination of the Copenhagen Benediction Hand fragment (*SCBI* Copenhagen no. 1694), previously attributed to an uncertain London moneyer, suggested that this may be a coin of Eadmund. These additions and emendations to Jonsson 1987a are given in column B of Table 4.

The surprisingly low number of moneyers noted by Jonsson 1987a contributed to arguments in favour of the very limited nature and scale of Benediction Hand. However, we must now factor in the important evidence for new moneyers that has emerged from the three Dublin hoards. In total, these include twenty-nine new specimens of the Benediction Hand type, and four Benediction Hand mules, and add seven new moneyers to the corpus (Table 4, column C): Eadric and Æthelmod (Chester), Asketil and Eadwine (London), Leofsig (Northampton) and Brungar and Wynsig (Shrewsbury). All of the moneyers are previously known at these mints for other types during Æthelred's reign, as summarised in Table 3. All were also active prior to striking Benediction Hand, except for Brungar and Wynsig, who appear for the first time in this type.

Two coins in Oslo from the Norwegian Bore hoard (Bore s., Klepp pgd., found before 8 July 1848, *ipq* 997) have also been identified as struck by one of the new moneyers known

⁵ Jonsson 1987a, 99–103.

⁶ Jonsson, *pers. comm.*; we are very grateful to Professor Jonsson for sharing this information with us and allowing the details to be included in this note.

TABLE 2. New additions to Jonsson 1987a.

Canterbury

Eadweald – 1 (Swedish hoard: Riddare, Hejnum par., Gotland)

Leofstan – 2 (private collection)

Lewes

Leofwine – 1 (Baldwin sale no. 50, 24 April 2007, lot 206)

Norwich

Leofing – 1 (private collection)

Southampton

Isegl – 1 (Polish auction, from a Polish hoard?)

Winchester

Ælfsige – 1 (Polish Museum, ex Quilitz hoard, preserved or lost in World War II?)

Uncertain Mint

[?]d – 1 (Cottbus Museum, ex Polish hoard)

TABLE 3. Types struck in the reign of Æthelred II by the newly recorded Benediction Hand moneyers.

	<i>First Small Cross</i>	<i>First Hand</i>	<i>Second Hand</i>	<i>Benediction Hand</i>	<i>Crux</i>	<i>Intermediate Small Cross</i>	<i>Long Cross</i>	<i>Helmet</i>	<i>Agnus Dei</i>	<i>Last Small Cross</i>
Eadric (Chester)	–	X	–	X	X	–	X	–	–	–
Æthelmod (Chester)	–	X	–	X	X	–	–	–	–	–
Eadwine (London)	X	–	X	X	X	–	X	X	–	X
Asketill (London)	–	X	X	X	X	–	–	–	–	–
Leofsige (Northampton)	–	X	–	X	X	–	–	–	–	–
Brungar (Shrewsbury?)	–	–	–	X	–	–	X	–	–	–
Wynsige (Shrewsbury)	–	–	–	X	X	–	X	–	–	X

from one of the Dublin hoards, *Oscytel* (normalised as *Asketill*) of London.⁷ The recent conservation of the *Bore* hoard with funding from the *Revita Project* of the Museum of Cultural History, Oslo, has greatly improved the legibility of the coins, allowing the reattribution of a coin previously attributed to an uncertain moneyer,⁸ and the new attribution of a fragment previously recorded only as of the *Hand* type.⁹ Full descriptions of the twelve *Benediction Hand* coins and the *Second Hand/Benediction Hand* mule struck by these new moneyers are given in the Appendix. The coins are illustrated on **Pl. 3**.

Preliminary observations and conclusion

The Dublin hoards are remarkable for providing a wealth of material revealing the active circulation of Anglo-Saxon coins in Dublin in the early 990s, immediately prior to the introduction of the Dublin coinage. More specifically, the twenty-nine *Benediction Hand* coins, together with the four additional mules, significantly broaden our knowledge of the type, with the identification of seven new moneyers, an increase of more than 10%, from a sample of three hoards. In 1987 Jonsson noted the then apparent southern character of *Benediction*

⁷ On the *Bore* hoard see Skaare 1976, 147–8 no. 79, and Holst 1952.

⁸ Jonsson 1987a, 102.

⁹ Holst 1952, no. 4.

Hand, and identified three mints that were especially active in the type: Canterbury, London and Rochester. One might therefore have expected any new moneyers to be primarily from these most active mints, but this is true of only two of the seven new moneyers, Asketill and Eadwine of London. This is one indication that the earlier view of the type was incomplete. Jonsson also observed that, relatively speaking, Chester, even with only three coins known, was well represented in Benediction Hand when compared with the Second Hand type, of which only five or six coins were known.¹⁰ An additional coin of Second Hand from Chester has since come to light from a small find from Bishop's Lough, Co. Westmeath,¹¹ while the Dublin hoards add only one further example. The contrast observed by Jonsson therefore emerges as even more remarkable today, with the addition of thirteen new Benediction Hand coins from Chester and one Second Hand/Benediction Hand mule. The two new moneyers from Shrewsbury also suggest an emphasis on north-western mints that was not apparent in the earlier picture of Benediction Hand, and also suggests that information previously was not only incomplete but regionally-biased. It is striking that there can be such a dramatic shift in our geographical understanding of the type without additions to the range of mints involved. The Dublin hoards thus fill a major gap in our knowledge of the type.

The type proper continues to be absent from north-eastern mints such as Lincoln and York, a situation that the combined evidence of the three new hoards suggests is real rather than perceived due to a bias in the finds. Despite its overall tendency towards coins from the Midlands/South, the Werburgh Street hoard appears to provide a unique perspective on the situation in north-eastern England, with coins of York and Lincoln comprising almost 40% of the Crux element. (By contrast, these mints make up less than 10% of the Crux component in the Castle Street 2 hoard, where Winchester and London, followed by Chester, are the dominant mints for Crux.) Interesting, then, are two Benediction Hand/Crux mules (die-duplicates) struck by Sunulfr at York from the Werburgh Street hoard, which indicate that, at the very least, a Benediction Hand obverse die was available there briefly. As Jonsson indicates, there are also other mules with Crux that draw the north-eastern mints into the wider Benediction Hand picture, but only at a late stage; clearly these require closer attention in future work.¹²

While these observations may raise more questions than they answer, the cumulative evidence does seem to suggest that Benediction Hand was a larger coinage than has sometimes been argued and should perhaps now be seen as a substantive type, albeit a short-lived one. This has implications for the wider picture of the coinage in Æthelred II's early years; the 'experimental stage' of the concept of *renovatio monetae* was perhaps a more complex and better-developed phase of the coinage than previously thought.¹³ While some have questioned the success of Æthelred's earliest attempts at recoinage, or argued that Benediction Hand, and its similarly elusive predecessor, Second Hand, were essentially sub-types of what should more broadly be termed as the Hand type, the new material suggests that Benediction Hand holds a place of its own in Æthelred's effort to initiate a regular cycle of revenue-producing recoinages.

¹⁰ Jonsson 1987a, 87 and 99.

¹¹ Kenny 1987.

¹² Jonsson 1987a, 99; a number of these mules, and Benediction Hand type variants from Rochester and Guildford, are discussed in Dolley and Elmore Jones 1961.

¹³ Stewart 1992, 51.

APPENDIX. NEW MONEYERS IN BENEDICTION HAND: LIST OF COINS

Benediction Hand type

Chester, Eadric

(previously recorded at Chester for First Hand, Crux and Long Cross)

1. 1.63 g, 270°, 0/0 pecks
Obv. +ÆÐELR DREXANGLØX
Rev. +ÆÆDRICM-OLEGE
 Reverse is double-struck. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, ex Castle Street 2 hoard, 1993. Same obverse die as seven coins struck by a known moneyer (Ælfstan/Chester) from the Castle Street 2 hoard; same reverse die as no. 2.
2. 1.55 g, 180°, 0/0 pecks
Obv. +ÆÐELR/EDREXANGLØX
Rev. +ÆÆDRICM-OLEGE
 National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, ex Castle Street 2 hoard, 1993. Same obverse die as nos 3, 4 and 5, and another struck by a known moneyer (Wulflaf/Chester) from the Castle Street 2 hoard; same reverse die as no. 1.

Chester, Æthelmod

(previously recorded at Chester for First Hand and Crux)

3. 1.61 g, 180°, 0/0 pecks
Obv. +ÆÐELR/EDREXANGLØX
Rev. +ELEMODM-OLEGE
 Chipped. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, ex Castle Street 1 hoard, 1993. Same dies as nos 4 and 5; same obverse die as no. 2 and another struck by a known moneyer (Wulflaf/Chester) from the Castle Street 2 hoard.
4. 1.72 g, 90°, 0/0 pecks
 National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, ex Castle Street 2 hoard, 1993. Same dies as nos 3 and 5; same obverse die as no. 2 and another struck by a known moneyer (Wulflaf/Chester) from the Castle Street 2 hoard.
5. 1.53 g, 180°, 0/0 pecks
 National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, ex Castle Street 2 hoard, 1993. Same dies as nos 3 and 4; same obverse die as no. 2 and another struck by a known moneyer (Wulflaf/Chester) from the Castle Street 2 hoard.

London, Eadwine

(previously recorded at London for Small Cross, Second Hand, a Second Hand/Crux mule, Crux, Long Cross, Helmet and Last Small Cross)

6. 1.48 g, 90°, 0/0 pecks
Obv. +ÆÐELR/EDREXANGLØX
Rev. +EEDFINEM-OLVN
 Slightly bent. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, ex Werburgh Street hoard, 1994.

London, Asketill

(previously recorded at London for First Hand, Second Hand and Crux)

7. 1.49 g, 0°, 0/0 pecks
Obv. +ÆÐELR/EDREXANGLØX
Rev. +OSL[E]TELM-OLVND
 Bent. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, ex Werburgh Street hoard, 1994. Probably same dies as no. 8.
8. 1.19 g (1.13 g after conservation), 0°, 0/0 pecks
Obv. +ÆÐELR/Æ[]X
Rev. +O[]ELM[]OLVND
 Fragment, slightly bent. Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, ex Bore hoard, before 8 July 1848. Holst 1952, no. 3 (as London, uncertain moneyer). Probably same dies as no. 7.
9. 0.52 g (0.52 g after conservation), 270°, 3+1+? pecks
Obv. []ÆÐELR[]
Rev. +OSL[]O
 Fragment, slightly bent; scratches on *obv.* and *rev.*, possibly caused in cleaning. Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, ex Bore hoard, before 8 July 1848. Holst 1952, no. 4 (as BI-3, uncertain mint and moneyer).

Northampton, Leofsig

(previously recorded at Northampton for First Hand and Crux)

10. 1.46 g, 180°, 0/0 pecks

Obv. †/E-ÐELR/EDREXANLOX*Rev.* †LEFSIGEM-OHAMT

Slightly bent. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, ex Castle Street 2 hoard, 1993.

Shrewsbury? Brungar

(previously recorded at Shrewsbury for Long Cross)

11. 0.75 g, 270°, 0/0 pecks

Obv. †/E[]ANLOX*Rev.* []RVNGARM[]

Fragment, bent. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, ex Werburgh Street hoard, 1994.

Shrewsbury, Wynsig

(previously recorded at Shrewsbury for Crux, Long Cross and Last Small Cross)

12. 1.29 g, 340°, 0/0 pecks

Obv. †/E-ÐELR/EDREXA[]LOX*Rev.* †FI[]IGEM-OSSROB

Chipped. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, ex Werburgh Street hoard, 1994.

Second Hand/Benediction Hand Mule*Chester, Æthelmod*

13. 1.30 g, 270°, 0/0 pecks

Obv. †/E-ÐELR|EDR|EXANGO*Rev.* †ELEMODM-OLEG[]

Chipped. National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, Werburgh Street hoard, 1994.

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