

THE HOARD PROVENANCE OF LORD GRANTLEY'S COIN OF ÆLFWALD II OF NORTHUMBRIA: ST CUTHBERT, FALSE MEMORY AND A SEARCH FOR MAJOR GRANTHAM

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THE cumulative evidence of hoards of Northumbrian stycas deposited between the mid 840s and the late 860s is decisive that coins struck earlier than the beginning of the reign of Eanred (regnal dates traditionally given as 808 (or 810)–841) had by then effectively disappeared from circulation. The very large hoard from Hexham, Northumberland, deposited early in the second reign of Æthelred II (regnal dates traditionally given as 841–4 and 844–9, with a brief intermission in 844), contained only a tiny handful of coins predating those of Eanred, all in the name of a king Æthelred and customarily assigned by scholars to the second reign of Æthelred I (790–6).¹ Subsequent hoards, all deposited more or less at the moment when the Northumbrian styca coinage came to an end, at some uncertain point during the reign of Osberht (regnal dates traditionally given as 849–67), have not as yet been shown to have contained any pre-Eanred coins at all.

At the recent sale in London of the first portion of Lord Stewartby's splendid and very carefully selected collection of English coins, Spink, 22 March 2016, lot 63, a coin attributed to Ælfwald II of Northumbria (806–8), was described as follows:

Northumbria, Ælfwald II (806–808), Styca, 0.75g, +FLFVALDVS, small cross, rev. +CVDhEVR, small cross (N.183; S.859), *surface deposits, fine, extremely rare*. PROVENANCE: SNC October 1993, 4274. Ex Lord Grantley.



Fig. 1. Coin of Ælfwald II of Northumbria, Stewartby lot 63 (© Spink & Son)

What is not apparent from this description is that the coin in question (Fig. 1), lot 768 in the second part of the Grantley sale, 27 January 1944, had in fact been the principal subject of, and the primary motivation for, a paper by Lord Grantley published in volume VIII of *BNJ*, under the intriguing title 'Saint Cuthbert's Pennies'.² In this paper Lord Grantley argued that the reverse inscription on the coin in question, which he attributed to Ælfwald I of Northumbria (779–88), should be read as

SCVDhEVRT, i.e. St Cuthbert. The coin, he argued, would thus have been struck by King Ælfwald 'in commemoration of St. Cuthbert', and the existence of this or of subsequent St Cuthbert commemorative issues may, in his view, account for a reference to a past discovery of 'St. Cuthbert's pence' in Nicolson and Burn's *The History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland*.³

¹ Pagan 1974, 185–6, where the present writer notes that of the 944 coins from the Hexham hoard illustrated on the plates of Adamson 1834, just six were of this early grouping in the name of a king Æthelred. It was subsequently pointed out by Booth, 1987, 66, n.29, that one of these six coins, by a moneyer Eadwine, was in reality an imitative coin likely to have been struck at a very much later point in the Northumbrian series, and this has the effect of reducing the number of coins of this early grouping illustrated on Adamson's plates to five, two each by the moneyers Ceolbald and Cuthhard, and one by a moneyer Hnifula. Scholars working on this series have not tended to favour a tentative suggestion by the present writer that these coins might have been issued not in the second reign of Æthelred I (790–6) but in the reign of a subsequent king Æthelred who might have been Eanred's immediate predecessor, and they may well be correct in doing so; but there remains a real dearth of evidence for what was happening in Northumbria, both in terms of history and in terms of coinage, during the second and third decades of the ninth century.

² Grantley 1911.

³ Nicolson and Burn 1777, II, 246. Lord Grantley seems to have been aware of the reference in Nicolson and Burn only from a citation of it in a past volume of the periodical *Archaeologia Aeliana* (strangely misnamed 'Archaeologia Aemiliana' in Grantley's text), and the actual passage in Nicolson and Burn, more explicitly phrased than in Grantley's less than accurate summary, reads as follows: 'when the steeple of this church [St Cuthbert's parish church, Carlisle, Cumberland] was rebuilt in the time of Queen Elizabeth, there was found a large parcel of small silver coins to the quantity of near a Winchester bushel, called St. Cuthbert's pence; such as that bishop and some of his successors bishops of Durham had a privilege to coin; and which were supposed to have been oblations at the building'. The present writer has not found any discussion of this hoard in recent

As to the merits of Lord Grantley's suggestions as regards reign and the reading of the reverse inscription, it is enough to note that the consensus of recent scholarship is that the coin in question should be attributed to the reign of Ælfwald II and that the reverse inscription should most probably be read as CVDhEVRT, i.e. as the name of a moneyer Cuthheard whose name also appears on coins in the names of Kings Æthelred and Eanred, and is the only moneyer as yet recorded for coins of the reign of Eardwulf (796–806).⁴

For present purposes, it is rather more necessary to focus on what Lord Grantley has to say on the coin's provenance, for the coin remains a notable rarity.⁵ On the first page of his paper he states clearly that he acquired it 'among a quantity of ordinary stycas of Eanred and Æthelred II at the sale of the Bateman heirlooms', and provides a reference back to an earlier publication by him of the same coin in the *Numismatic Chronicle*.⁶ As to that, more will be said in what follows, but the explicitness of Lord Grantley's statement suffices to explain that when the coin was sold in 1944, the sale catalogue entry assigned it a 'Bateman Heirlooms' provenance. Moreover, reference to named copies of the 'Bateman Heirlooms' sale catalogue itself, a Sotheby sale of 4–6 May 1893 dispersing the collection formed by William Bateman and Thomas Bateman, father-and-son antiquaries from Youlgreave, Derbyshire, shows 'Grantley' as the buyer of lots 256 and 258 in that sale. Each of these lots contained 62 Northumbrian stycas described in the catalogue as deriving from the substantial 1847 'Ullerskelf' hoard, better known today as the 1847 Bolton Percy hoard, not least because it was apparently discovered in the same field as the equally substantial 1967 Bolton Percy hoard.⁷ Both Bolton Percy hoards were deposited at or near the end point of the Northumbrian styca coinage, and since Lord Grantley is not recorded as having been the buyer of any other styca lots in the sale, it would seem a necessary conclusion that the Ælfwald coin derives from the 1847 hoard. The Ælfwald coin would have been the oldest coin in the hoard, perhaps by quite a distance, but in large hoards of this nature there is always a possibility that an older coin might have survived among the mass of more recent issues.

It is thus more than a little surprising that when Lord Grantley originally published the coin, in his paper 'On the North-Humbrian Coinage of A.D. 758–808', published in the *Numismatic Chronicle* for 1897, he states just as clearly that he acquired 'the fourth coin [a coin of Ælfwald I of Northumbria, which was the fourth coin then known of Ælfwald's quadruped type] at Major Grantham's sale, and also two unique and unpublished silver sceattas, both of which I attribute to Ælfwald I'.⁸ The second of these two latter coins is that with the CVDhEVRT reverse inscription, read by him at that date as +CVDbEV R.

Some confusion seems to have crept into Lord Grantley's text at this point, for he seems to have acquired only two coins attributable to a King Ælfwald at this sale, but the assumption that the reference to the CVDhEVRT coin being from the Grantham sale is not simply a casual error is confirmed by the fact that in a passage later in the paper he refers to the fact that 'the provenance or find spot of this coin has not hitherto been traceable',⁹ a statement wholly incompatible with the coin having derived from one or other of the ex Bolton Percy hoard lots purchased by him at the 'Bateman Heirlooms' sale. He also reports at another point in the 1897 paper on his examination of the coins from the Bolton Percy hoard in the 'Bateman Heirlooms' sale, and states that 'having cleaned all those coins which were too much coated to

numismatic literature, but it seems to him likely on general principles that it would have been a hoard of post-Norman Conquest date, most probably comprising Short Cross pennies of Henry II and his successors, or Long Cross pennies of Henry III, or pennies of Edward I–II.

⁴ Booth, writing in the late 1980s (Booth 1987), left it open whether coins of this moneyer and type should be attributed to Ælfwald I or to Ælfwald II, but the subsequent discovery of coins of Eardwulf by the moneyer Cuthheard, underlining the fact that Cuthheard was active both before and after the reign of Ælfwald II, has inclined scholars generally to the view that these coins properly belong to the reign of Ælfwald II.

⁵ The seven coins of this moneyer and type then known are conveniently listed by Booth 1987, 76–7.

⁶ Grantley 1897; Grantley 1911, 49.

⁷ Pagan 1973, 1.

⁸ Grantley 1897, 4.

⁹ Grantley 1897, 6.

decipher, I came to the conclusion that that part of the hoard presented no remarkable features'.¹⁰

The 'valuable collection of coins and medals, the property of Major E. Grantham', offered in a Sotheby sale of 3–4 February 1897, was an extensive one, containing a good range of English hammered and milled coins of all periods, and a numerous and possibly under-catalogued Roman series. The collection had evidently been put together with some care, but nothing about it was especially remarkable other than Grantham's holdings of Northumbrian coins of the eighth and ninth centuries. Here the catalogue credits Grantham with owning as many as thirteen coins of King Eadberht of Northumbria (737–58) (lots 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9), the largest number of coins of this reign owned by any collector at that date; two coins in the joint names of Eadberht and of his brother Ecgberht, Archbishop of York (lot 6); a coin of Ælfwald I of Northumbria, of quadruped type (lot 10); and 193 Northumbrian stycas of the ninth century offered as six multiple lots (lots 11–16). Of these, named copies of the catalogue record Lord Grantley as having purchased only lot 9 ('Eadberht, Stycae, six others, varied, some indistinct'), lot 10 (the coin of Ælfwald I), and lot 13 ('Aethelred, Stycae, varied types and moneys', numbering 38 in total). Reference to his *Numismatic Chronicle* paper reveals, however, that he had acquired from Grantham's sale a very rare coin in the joint names of King Alchred and Archbishop Ecgberht, in addition to the coins of Ælfwald already mentioned,¹¹ and it may be suspected that the Alchred and Archbishop Ecgberht coin was a 'sleeper' in lot 9.

Since the catalogue of Grantham's coins does not provide the slightest clue to his identity, other than his military rank, it is unsurprising that there is no entry for him in the biographical volume of the late Harry Manville's *Encyclopaedia of British Numismatics*. Additionally, he was not a member of the Numismatic Society of London, or, apparently, of any of the more obvious archaeological or other learned societies. It has nonetheless been possible, with a little difficulty, to put together the salient facts about him.

Edward Grantham, son of a gentleman farmer in Scawby, Lincolnshire, where he was baptized on 20 September 1822, was commissioned as an Ensign in the 98th Regiment of Foot on 5 October 1841, and was to spend his entire military career in the same regiment, rising to the rank of Major on 29 April 1864 and retiring in November 1868.¹² His years of service included spells both in Hong Kong and in India, but the decisive event for his later life seems to have been his second marriage, on 20 January 1857, to Margaret Newton Dixon, one of the daughters of William Frederick Dixon, of Page Hall, Sheffield, Yorkshire. Dixon was one of the managing partners in James Dixon and Sons, one of the dominant firms in the Sheffield plate industry, and it was doubtless the Dixon family connection that led Grantham and his wife to settle on his retirement at The Dale, a substantial early Victorian house in the village of Conisbrough, Yorkshire, between Doncaster and Rotherham.

It is during Grantham's residence here, from a report in the *Mexborough and Swinton Times* for 20 June 1879 on a sale of work in the local parish church, that we learn that 'the greatest attraction was the museum, which consisted of a collection of coins, fossils, butterflies etc being a portion of the collection of Major E. Grantham. The text of this report as posted on the internet is somewhat garbled,¹³ but it referred to Grantham's Roman coins, to gold coins of his of Philip of Macedon and of Alexander the Great, and to his ('replete') collection of British coins.

The Granthams' period of residence at Conisbrough seems only to have lasted from 1869 to 1880, when they moved to Cheltenham, Grantham's wife dying there in 1885, and Grantham himself living on until 1908, latterly in Bruton, Somerset, but it seems overwhelmingly likely

¹⁰ Grantley 1897, 8.

¹¹ Grantley 1897, 2.

¹² The information provided here about Grantham's military career has been extracted from *Army Lists* of the period. The place and date of his baptism has been supplied from the <www.lincolnshire-wolds.org> website, and the date of his second marriage and the identity of his second wife's father from the *Sheffield Independent* newspaper, issue for 24 Jan. 1857. Other information provided about him here and below derives from censuses and other reliable contemporary sources.

¹³ <<http://conisbroughanddenabyhistory.org.uk/>>.

that it was during the Conisbrough period that Grantham put together his collection of Northumbrian coins.¹⁴

At this point it is necessary to return to what Lord Grantley has to say about the coin probably of Ælfwald II in his *Numismatic Chronicle* paper. In the course of arguments seeking to attribute it to Ælfwald I, he remarks that ‘there is an undeniably ancient look about it which reminds one of the early North-Humbrian coins, and, indeed, on examining the mass of stycas of Eanred and Aethelred II, amongst which it lay, I at once singled it out from all the others as of older type’.¹⁵ This phraseology mirrors that of his remark in his *BNJ* paper of 1911 that the coin was acquired by him ‘among a quantity of ordinary stycas of Eanred and Aethelred II’ in the ‘Bateman Heirlooms’ sale,¹⁶ but, as has been seen, a ‘Bateman Heirlooms’ provenance for the coin is not feasible, and one can only assume that his remark of 1911 is based on a false memory.

What must actually have happened is that at the 1897 Grantham sale Lord Grantley had a careful look at all six of the multiple lots of ninth-century Northumbrian stycas, accounting for his reference to the ‘mass of stycas of Eanred and Aethelred II’, but only purchased lot 13, the multiple lot in which the coin of Ælfwald would have been hiding. It is relevant in this context that Lord Grantley states in the *Numismatic Chronicle* paper that ‘it is probable that it [the coin of Ælfwald] was found with copper stycas, as it will be observed that some portions of copper-like metal still adhere to the front portion of the legend on the reverse’,¹⁷ and it is a reasonable conjecture that the bulk, if not indeed all, of the 193 stycas in Grantham’s collection did indeed represent a parcel from a hoard.

If so, it was a hoard likely to have been deposited at or towards the end point of the styca series, for one of the lots in the Grantham sale includes coins of Osberht. The only hoard of this character known to have been discovered during the 1870s was a shadowy hoard found in York in 1879,¹⁸ but parcels from older hoards might easily have been available for Grantham to acquire. Whatever the hoard was, the fact that the coin of Ælfwald will have derived from it will be of some consequence, for it is a pointer to the correctness of the attribution of the coin to Ælfwald II (806–8), as it is very much less likely that a coin of Ælfwald I (779–88) would have lingered in circulation as late as the 850s or 860s.

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¹⁴ Grantham’s death, as of Whaddon House, Bruton, Somerset, on 1 June 1908, was reported in the *Cheltenham Looker-On* newspaper, issue for 6 June 1908.

¹⁵ Grantley 1897, 5.

¹⁶ Grantley 1911, 49.

¹⁷ These ‘portions of copper-like metal’ are doubtless the ‘surface deposits’ noted by the cataloguer of the Stewartby sale as being present on the coin.

¹⁸ The hoard in question was one said to have contained 400 coins that was discovered in 1879 during building works related to the construction of York’s Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition Building (now the City Art Gallery). Some or all of the coins from it were presented to the York Philosophical Society, but their exact identity was not recorded and they cannot now be located in the Yorkshire Museum coin collection.