

797/8–805 London's output declined even further so that it became merely a fraction of that of Canterbury. East Anglia too came to eclipse London in productivity by the second half of Coenwulf's reign.

The new finds of coins from the period 796–805 discussed here also highlight the distance there could sometimes be between kings and moneyers. The apparently apolitical use of the Tribach type in Kent and East Anglia reinforces the impression that those who designed and cut dies were not always particularly concerned by the political significance of what they were producing, and presumably received quite scant and sporadic instruction on design from the ruling authorities. The focus instead may have been on conforming to established standards of weight and fineness as well as appearance, and also on proper recognition of royal authority on coinage – though this normally did not go much further than including the appropriate king's name. For these reasons, the coins of this period are doubly valuable for providing a unique insight into not only high politics and the unfolding of historical events, but also into the more obscure workings of moneyers and die-cutters.

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BURGRED 'LUNETTE' TYPE E RECONSIDERED

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IN December 2003, metal detectorists Mark Ainsley and Geoff Bambrook uncovered a small Viking hoard on a riverine site in North Yorkshire. This is a multi-period productive site, showing evidence of occupation/use from prehistory to the post-medieval period, but with a particular concentration of activity from the eighth to tenth centuries. The site has been investigated by the York Archaeological Trust (YAT), and forms the subject of a joint research project between YAT and the British Museum. This includes YAT's fieldwork, the hoard and other Treasure finds from the site, and a group of over 800 single finds from the site, uncovered over a period of several years, of which the majority are Anglo-Saxon or Viking. The Viking element of the finds assemblage has marked similarities with the assemblage from the Viking site at Torksey,¹ and is apparently of similar date, beginning with the take-over of an existing Anglo-Saxon site in the mid 870s, and remaining active into the early tenth century. A preliminary note on the hoard, which has been acquired by the British

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¹ Blackburn 2002.

Museum, has already been published in the *Treasure Annual Report*,² and a full report on the project is currently in preparation. The scope of the current note is therefore limited to a specific point of numismatic interest.

The core of the hoard (which was found together with a number of non-precious metal objects of Anglo-Saxon and Viking manufacture) was a group of precious metal items. This included a late Saxon gold stud with blue glass cabochon; one silver ingot; four ingot droplets (only two of which contain more than 10% silver), six pieces of hack-silver and ten coins.

Of the coins, one is a fragment of an Islamic silver dirham of the Umayyad dynasty (AH 41–132/ AD 661–750), of the reformed coinage (AH 79–132/ AD 690–749).³ Fragmentary Islamic coins are typical within Viking hoards of the late ninth and early tenth centuries from Britain, as well as from productive sites linked with Viking activity.⁴ These coins are often in fragmentary condition and should be regarded as hacksilver rather than as coins *per se*.

The remaining nine coins are all of the Lunette type, issued jointly as part of a monetary and political alliance between Mercia and Wessex during the reign of Burgred of Mercia (852–74).⁵ This type circulated freely in both kingdoms, and therefore across most of England south of the Humber (apart from East Anglia), although the Northumbrian system prior to its collapse in 867 was completely separate from that south of the Humber. Seven of the coins are in the name of Burgred, with two in the name of Alfred of Wessex (871–99).

The classification of the majority of these coins is straightforward:

Alfred, type A, moneyer Heremod

Alfred, type B, moneyer Cuthulf

Burgred, type A, moneyers Cenred, Cynehelm, Dudwine, Eadulf.

However, three of the coins (moneyers Beagstan, Beornheah and Tata) do not fit the main existing classification of the Lunettes type. This contains four main sub-types, classified by reverse designs, labelled A–D. Christopher Blunt identified a fifth sub-type, which has been labelled as E, but this is so rare that Hugh Pagan argued in his 1965 survey that it should perhaps be regarded as a variant rather than a separate sub-type, since it is similar to the reverse design of sub-type D, which contains a number of varieties.⁶

The three new coins all share a single reverse design, with strong similarities to Blunt's sub-type E. Like sub-type D, the three lines of the reverse inscription are divided by two horizontal lines with a crook at each end. On sub-type E, the top and bottom lines of the inscription are divided by a shape which may perhaps represent an elongated version of the uncial M common on Mercian coins of the eighth and ninth centuries, or perhaps simply another ornamental divider. The new design is very similar, but the 'M' shape is divided, with two uprights rather than one, suggesting more an ornamental divider than an M.

This reverse design is known, to the best of my knowledge, from only one other example, in the name of the moneyer Eadnoth, which was acquired by the British Museum in 1969. With only four examples, should this be considered as a distinct sub-type, or as a variant of sub-type E, or should both this design and sub-type E indeed be regarded as varieties of sub-type D?

There are a number of reasons for regarding the new variety as entirely separate from sub-type D. The fact that it survives in the names of four different moneyers indicates that it was

² Ager and Williams 2004.

³ I am grateful to my colleague Dr Vesta Curtis for this identification.

⁴ Lowick 1976; Brooks and Graham-Campbell 1986 (reprinted in Brooks 2000); Graham-Campbell 2001; Blackburn 2002; Naismith 2005. See also Williams 2008 (this volume), and Williams forthcoming.

⁵ Pagan 1965; Keynes 1998; Lyons and MacKay 2007; Lyons and MacKay 2008 (this volume).

⁶ Blunt 1958–9; Pagan 1965, 26. This classification by reverse type alone is unsatisfactory. Pagan discusses a wide variety of bust types and provides a partial descriptive classification, and Lyons and MacKay argue elsewhere in this volume for the need for a more comprehensive classification incorporating both obverse and reverse designs. Such a re-classification goes well beyond the scope of the current paper, and my interpretation is thus set within the current reverse-based classification framework.

produced on a significant scale, and it is notable that two of the four (Beornheah and Eadnoth) are only otherwise recorded in sub-type A, while Beagstan also issued in sub-type B (known from a single example), and while Tata alone issued coins of sub-types C and D as well as A. Tata also issued in types A, B and C for Alfred. Pagan's dating of the main sub-types of Burgred places C as the earliest sub-type, followed by D, followed by A, although he notes that there are exceptions.⁷ On this dating, the overlap of moneys with sub-type A suggests that the new variety is also a late issue. Although the main typology is based on the reverse designs, it is also notable that the new coins have very similar busts to coins of sub-type A, although there is some variety in the drapery even within these few examples. This bust is also found on coins of sub-type D, but these represent very much a minority, with other bust types rather better represented.⁸ These associations with sub-type A rather than D are also consistent with the fact that the other Lunette issues in the hoard were of Burgred sub-type A, and Alfred, all of which point towards the latter part of Burgred's reign. In addition, it should be noted that while none of the new variety or existing type E coins have been fully analysed, all have a dark colour, and several have traces of green corrosion, and the overall impression is of a very base issue with a heavy copper content, which would again point towards the latter part of the series.

Furthermore, the most plausible dating for the Viking occupation of the site is in the period following Burgred's death. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that the Viking *micel here* over-wintered at Torksey in 872–3 and Repton in 873–4, and then divided in 874, with one part of the *micel here* going to Northumbria and the other to East Anglia. In 875, the Vikings under Halfdan divided up Northumbria and settled.⁹ Although the Vikings had earlier occupied Northumbria in 866 and 869, this pre-dates the Alfred coins in the hoard, while the scale of the Viking occupation of the site suggested by the single finds indicates that the hoard is unlikely to be entirely independent of the activities of the *micel here*.

Given that Burgred was forced to abdicate abruptly in 874,¹⁰ it is possible that the new variety should be seen as a substantive sub-type introduced at the very end of his reign, and then abandoned almost immediately as a result of his abdication and the temporary collapse of Mercian royal authority.¹¹ This would be consistent both with the striking of the variety by multiple moneys, and also its rarity, and would also fit with the likely dating of the hoard. Irrespective of the precise dating, there seems to be little doubt that this variety represents a substantive sub-type, distinct from both D and A.

Whether it is distinct from Blunt's sub-type E is less clear. This sub-type is known from two examples, in the names of the moneys Cenred and Ecgulf.¹² Cenred issued in sub-types A and D, and Ecgulf in A, while the bust on the Cenred coin is again similar to both sub-type A and the new variety. Stylistically, all of the coins are very similar, and all can be linked with a London die-cutting style shared by both Burgred and Alfred.¹³ The difference between the reverse design of sub-type E and the new variety is also minimal. If the element between the letters of the moneys' name is seen as a decorative divider, rather than a stylised Mercian M, then the difference is even less significant, and with both varieties so rare in comparison to sub-types A–D, it seems more reasonable on current evidence to see the two as varieties of the same sub-type rather than as distinct sub-types, although that is something which might change in the light of further discoveries. For now, however, I propose to label the existing sub-type E as Ei, and the new variety as Eii.

⁷ Pagan 1965. Lyons and MacKay argue elsewhere in this volume that the division into sub-types is more geographical than chronological, but since the two articles have been prepared at the same time, and I have not been able to consider their arguments fully, it seems more appropriate to accept the established position, with the caveat that this may need to be revised, rather than to follow uncritically a new interpretation which has not yet been widely accepted.

⁸ For discussion of the bust varieties, see Pagan 1965, *passim*.

⁹ *ASC*, sub 873[872], 874[873] and 876[875] (MSS. A and E).

¹⁰ *ASC*, sub 874[873] (MSS. A and E).

¹¹ This was fairly quickly revived, at least in part, again in alliance with Wessex, but with a clear break in the coinage: Keynes 1998; Blackburn 1998; Blackburn and Keynes 1998; Blackburn 2003.

¹² Blunt 1958–9, 10–11; *SCBI* 17 (*Midlands*), no. 94. The Ecgulf coin, in Nottingham Museum, is represented in the *Sylloge* by a reverse drawing only.

¹³ See Lyons and MacKay 2008, this volume.

Accepting the two varieties as a single sub-type, the question remains as to where it should be placed in the series. There are no coins close in style in either the Gravesend hoard (deposited *c.*871) or in the St Albans hoard (deposited *c.*873/874?). The new type is also absent from the Croydon hoard of *c.*871–2.¹⁴ This would suggest that sub-type E is either too early to be included in Gravesend and Croydon, placing it between the end of D and the beginning of the main group of A, or that it was issued after the St Albans hoard, and therefore towards the very end of Burgred's reign. The arguments for placing it at the end of the reign have already been mentioned, and the rarity of the issue combined with the variety of dies and moneys provides a convincing picture of a substantive sub-type which was quickly aborted, which seems more likely to fit the later dating.

However, all of the coins of sub-type E are struck on wide flans, while the latest coins of Burgred otherwise seem to have been struck on rather smaller flans (e.g. *SCBI* (*South-Eastern Museums*) 659, 662, 670, 677 from the St Albans hoard). The larger flan size is more consistent with an earlier dating, and would have required a move back to a larger flan size right at the end of the reign if the later dating is preferred.¹⁵ Nevertheless, an earlier dating on the basis of size does not account so readily for the rarity of the type, still less for the absence of the type from hoards and site finds of the early 870s. The evidence is thus ambiguous. There can be no doubt that the type is relatively late in Burgred's reign, but dates of *c.*870 and 874 are both feasible, depending on which element of the evidence one sees as the most important. My own preference remains on balance for the later interpretation, but in the absence of further evidence this remains uncertain.

One last point of interest concerning the three examples of Eii from the North Yorkshire hoard, although unrelated to typology, is that each has been centrally pierced, although the other coins in the hoard have not. The most likely explanation in my opinion is that this was in preparation for use as insets in lead coin-weights of a type common in the late ninth century.¹⁶ These coin-weights include a type where the coins are secured to the lead with pins, and the sort of piercing present in these three coins would be appropriate for use in this way. Analysis by my colleague Sue La Niece established that there were no traces of lead on the surface of the coins which would indicate that they had been so secured, and the presence of lead weights both with the hoard and amongst the stray finds indicates that lead might have been expected to survive if it was present. However, the weight assemblage does include lead weights with insets, and the finds generally indicate that metal working took place on the site,



Fig. 1. Coins of Burgred, sub-type E.

a–c) The three new types from the North Yorkshire hoard, sub-type Eii (Beagstan, Beornheah, Tata)

d) Coin of the same type, findspot unrecorded (Eadnoth)

e) Penny of sub-type Ei, findspot unrecorded (Cenred)

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¹⁴ Brooks and Graham-Campbell 1986.

¹⁵ I am grateful to Hugh Pagan for raising the question of the hoard comparisons and the flan size of the coins.

¹⁶ Archibald 1998; Williams 1999.

so it is perfectly possible that these coins had been prepared for use in weights, but had not yet been used. It is also possible that the coins had been pierced for suspension as ornaments, although single or double piercing towards one edge would be more typical for this.¹⁷ Given the base appearance of all of the sub-type E coins, it is also conceivable that they were marked so dramatically to indicate that their silver content was unsatisfactory, although if that were the case it is surprising that they were then hoarded with other more satisfactory coins. The finders have suggested an alternative possibility that the central piercings represent a symbolic 'killing' of the coins, reflecting the defeat of Burgred and the take-over of Mercia. This would be difficult to substantiate on the basis of the coins alone, and has no parallel elsewhere, and seems to me to be considerably less likely than the other possibilities suggested above.

CORPUS OF TYPE E

Ei

1. Moneyer: Cenred
 Obv: †BVRGREDRE
 Rev: M|ON / CENRED / ET|A
 Weight: 1.13 g
 Diameter: 22 mm
 Die axis: 0°
 Provenance: C.E. Blunt (pres.)
 Location: British Museum, BM 1962, 11–18, 1

2. Moneyer: Ecgulf
 Obv: Unrecorded
 Rev: M|ON / ECCVLV / ET|A
 Weight: Unrecorded
 Diameter: Unrecorded
 Die axis: Unrecorded
 Provenance: Excavated at Stoke Bardolph, Notts., 1955.
 Location: Nottingham Museum, *SCBI* 17, no. 94
 Comments: Badly chipped around edges and so fragile that it was embedded in a perspex disc to prevent further deterioration.

Eii

3. Moneyer: Beagstan
 Obv: BVRGREDRE
 Rev: NM|ON / BEA[G]ZTA / ET|A (NM ligated)
 Weight: 0.85 g
 Diameter: 23 mm
 Die axis: 0°
 Provenance: 2004 hoard from North Yorkshire productive site.
 Location: British Museum, 2008, 4199, 7
 Comments: Pierced with large hole centrally. Green corrosion clearly visible.

4. Moneyer: Beornheah
 Obv: BVRGREDREX
 Rev: HM|ON / BER_EA / ET|A (HM ligated)
 Weight: 1.37 g
 Diameter: 22.5 mm
 Die axis: 180°
 Provenance: 2004 hoard from North Yorkshire productive site.
 Location: British Museum, 2008, 4199, 8
 Comments: Pierced with large hole centrally. Green corrosion clearly visible.

¹⁷ Archibald 1998, 15. On piercing for jewellery, see also Moorhead 2006, 99–110.

5. Moneyer: Eadnoth

Obv: BVRGR[E]DRE

Rev: M|ON/ EADNOÐ/ ET|A

Weight: 1.08 g

Diameter: 21 mm

Die axis: 270°

Provenance: Findspot unrecorded. Ex Mrs Baker.

Location: British Museum, 1969, 5–6, 1

Comments: Chipped and cracked, signs of green corrosion.

6. Moneyer: Tata

Obv: †BVRGREDRE

Rev: M|ON / TATA / ET|A

Weight: 1.26 g

Diameter: 22 mm

Die axis: 180°

Provenance: 2004 hoard from North Yorkshire productive site.

Location: British Museum, 2008, 4199, 9

Comments: Pierced with large hole centrally. Green corrosion clearly visible.

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