

THE SMALL CRUX ISSUE OF ÆTHELRÆD II

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POSSIBLY the most rewarding of all the new lines of approach, which have recently been followed up in respect of the late Anglo-Saxon coinage, is the systematized study of die-cutting centres and their areas of influence. The preliminary work on the "Quatrefoil" type of Cnut, published by Mr. R. H. M. Dolley in the *Numismatic Circular*,¹ gives some foretaste of the developments which can be expected. In the present note, I wish to make some remarks on the "Small Crux" type of Æthelræd II in general, and to outline what I believe to be the particular characteristics of the dies for this issue, cut respectively at London and Canterbury. It seems to be worth demonstrating that even in so homogeneous and peculiar an issue as the rare "Small Crux" type, separate (and consistent) die-cutting styles can be distinguished.

Coins of this type, identified by Hildebrand² as variety Ca, are by no means common, and apart from London and the Kentish mints, they are very seldom met with in this country. There is no doubt, nevertheless, that the type is English, and not Scandinavian, although the very curious style and light weight at one time were considered suspicious. The great majority of these scarce coins come from the Danegeld hoards, and show the characteristic "pecking" of the surface: specimens are, however, occasionally found without this mutilation, and Mr. Dolley has published evidence of a find in this country.³ Probably other examples would transpire to have been unearthed in England if earlier recorders had differentiated the type. If further demonstration of the English origin of the type is needed, the curious Rochester penny of Sidwine (Fig. 15), discussed below, may be considered as conclusive even in itself that Canterbury, at least, was one centre where "Small Crux" dies were being cut during the course of the regular "Crux" issue, 991-7. In fact, the regularity of the issue and the consistency of "Small Crux" moneyers with those of the main "Crux" coins, leave no doubt that this was an organized and official, if limited, issue subsidiary to Æthelræd's third main type.

With regard to the low weight, no satisfactory explanation has yet been found: actually, the lightness is by no means consistent, either from coin to coin, or from mint to mint, a point which will be elaborated upon below. Clearly the issue is too large and general to be a fraudulent attempt by the moneyers to make large profits by striking light coin, as was done in Norman times: if this had been so, the names of the mint and moneyer would hardly have been so brazenly displayed.

¹ "The Regional Distribution of Dies in the West Country, c. 1017-1023", *Num. Circ.* 1956, pp. 321 and 373.

² *Anglosachsiska Mynt*, 2nd ed. (1881), p. 30.

³ *Brit. Num. Journ.* xxviii, 1955, 83.

Conceivably, the "Small Crux" coins might have been a specially struck light issue to deal with payment by tale: for "Crux", in its normal variety, and "Long Cross", which follows, are the two heaviest of Æthelræd II's types.



The description given by Hildebrand of the variety he labels Ca may be rendered from the Swedish as follows:

Variety a, though similar, is easy to distinguish because the coins are smaller and lighter. Weight 17.3 to 21.6 gr. Seven average 20.2 gr. Coins of this type are occasionally met with that are unusually thick and heavy, e.g. one of Godwine at Ipswich which weighs 28.5 gr., and others 51.7 gr. Frequently we find two pellets amongst the letters in the opposite angles of the reverse.

From this it is clear that Hildebrand separated the variety purely by size and weight, though, from the fact that his illustrated specimen is of Rochester, it has been assumed on occasions that only coins with the features listed below as common to the London and Canterbury dies are real Ca coins; this is certainly not what Hildebrand intended. The coins which he describes as Ca of mints other than London and the Kentish Trio¹ do not show features 3 and 4 below, though they naturally are small and weigh light, and often have unusual lettering. (Figs. 14 and 16 show examples of Lincoln and Cambridge.) It has not been possible for me to see a sufficient number of them to make an adequate survey within this note. They are mentioned, however, where they bear on the London and Canterbury types or on the status of the "Small Crux" type as a whole. At this point it should be stressed that the term "Small Crux" is here used to cover the whole issue of small, lightweight pence of "Crux" type; and that the term "Crux Ca", by which Hildebrand loosely designated all varieties of what are here called "Small Crux", is reserved for the characteristic style of London and Kentish coins.

Features common to the "Small Crux" pence of London and Kent (i.e. "Crux Ca" coins) are:

1. Small module of dies and flans; light weight.

¹ But Mr. Dolley has notes of a few rare coins, with all the true "Crux Ca" features, from East Anglia also.

2. Plain, serifless letters.
3. Long, thin sceptre, at inclined angle to bust, cutting the drapery.
4. A curious treatment of the hair, by which the front part is swept back at an angle to the rest.

The combination of all these points, along with the very marked similarity of bust, would lead one to suppose, at first sight, that the issue was struck, at the mints under consideration, from dies all prepared by one hand.

That this, however, is certainly not the case, the enumeration of many small, but significant, differences will I hope show convincingly. It will be well to compare the London and Kent styles point by point, and then to summarize the characteristics of each separately at the end.

The Bust. Despite an over-all similarity, there are many small points of difference. The London engraver almost invariably places a large pellet on the point of the chin, and at the back of the hair, but neither is normally used by the Canterbury engraver. The lines of the London eye (Fig. 3) form almost an isosceles triangle with the base as the line of the forehead, and of the nose in continuation: normally the Kent eye (Fig. 4) is nearly almond-shaped, and, at any rate, the lines tend to be curved. The *drapery* is the readiest of all criteria, being the most consistent, and most pronounced: every "Crux Ca" coin that I have seen since the drapery styles were noticed has conformed in the style appropriate to its London or Kentish mint signature on the reverse. London obverses have normally three (four rarely; also two?) straight lines, radiating from a brooch (pellet) on the king's right shoulder, with lines of drapery parallel, and roughly horizontal, across from the king's left shoulder to the line or fold on the right. Canterbury obverses invariably have all the lines of drapery, some curved, radiating from, and united at, the brooch on the dexter shoulder—a far more realistic depiction. The contrast of the London and Canterbury styles is best seen in Figs. 1 and 2. It should be remarked that, on some London obverses, the transverse lines of drapery do tend to converge somewhat up towards the brooch: but they do not meet in the brooch, nor *curve out* from it, in the Canterbury fashion. The *sceptre* shows no conspicuous variation between the mints, and always, more or less obviously, cuts the dexter edge of the drapery. Three Canterbury dies have a leaf-headed sceptre, and an unusual form apparently appears elsewhere also, notably on two coins from East Anglia in the Igelōsa hoard.

Inscriptions. The form of *initial cross*, and of the letter X, on London coins is *patée*, as if made of four wedges (Fig. 5); on Kentish coins it occasionally appears thus, but more usually is a plain cross, sometimes with an unequally long lower limb (Latin Cross), a disparity which is even reproduced in the X of REX on some dies (Fig. 6). The general form of the *letters* on all "Small Crux" coins is distinctive, being narrow, plain, and serifless. The *digraph* AE in Æthelræd is (as a general rule) on London dies, in the first position, a capital E

with a full-length diagonal (Fig. 7); in the second, E, with a very small wedge, horizontally or diagonally disposed from the top (Fig. 8), which is occasionally omitted or merged and indistinct: on Canterbury dies, first, a full (usually barred) A sharing the upright of the



FIG. 14

FIG. 15

FIG. 16

E (Fig. 9); second, either exactly the same, or as the first Æ on London coins. At both the London and Kentish mints a plain E is sometimes found; and whilst the distinctions noted occur in far more instances than they do not, the letter is obviously not, as such a small and variable a feature, by any means an infallible criterion. A is unbarred on London dies, almost invariably barred on Kentish dies. On a very few coins, only noticed of but not necessarily confined to Canterbury, a reversed M and/or round C are used. Stops of any kind are exceptional: pellets are very occasionally found (sometimes beneath the contraction mark on the reverse, M $\overline{\text{O}}$), and an extraordinary reverse die reads LEOFRIC Δ MONE Δ CAN $\overline{\text{T}}$, with wedge-shaped stops. The contraction of the *ethnic*, where a longer spelling than ANGLO is found, is also a point of difference. Canterbury dies read OR, plainly ligated (Fig. 12), sometimes with a diagonal contractive stroke through the tail of the R (Fig. 13); the London form is O, or O and a crescent combined as a round M, with a tail and contraction mark following disposed saltirewise (Figs. 10 and 11).

CRVX. The disposition of these letters differs in that on London dies the axis of the C and R is 90°, whilst on Canterbury cut dies the axis of C is 45°, and of R 135°. The letters V and X, of course, are disposed, by physical necessity, the same way on virtually all "Small Crux" and all "Crux" coins, at 225° and at 270°. This assumes the C to be in the first legendary (second heraldic) quarter; occasionally¹ the C is in the first heraldic quarter (e.g. Hildebrand, pl. 3, var. Ca),

¹ Mr. Dolley records only two specimens from Igelösa: Canterbury, Wulfwig, cf. Hild. 250; Rochester, Edsige, cf. Hild. 3283 (illustrated); a die-duplicate of the former is in my collection.

or in the third quarter.¹ The essence of the London rule of C and R at right angles to the cross, and the Canterbury rule of C and R diagonally, is not, however, affected.

Here it is worth remarking upon the Rochester penny of Sidwine,



FIG. 17

FIG. 18

Fig. 15. This is, in all respects other than in the sceptre, a very fine and characteristic penny of the normal "Crux" issue. It will at once be seen that the sceptre is long and thin, surmounted by three neat pellets, precisely as on "Small Crux" coins; what is more, it is inclined at an angle and cuts the fold of drapery in typically "Small Crux" fashion. The normal "Crux" sceptre is vertical; very short and stubby; never cuts the drapery; and is surmounted, rather loosely, by three large pellets. This penny of Sidwine stands out immediately from "Crux" pence at Rochester and other mints. It seems to have been engraved by someone who had in mind the "Crux Ca" type, and is added confirmation both of the English origin of the type, and of its position within the main "Crux" emission.

There is one further peculiarity worthy of remark, viz. the two pellets, in the C and X quarters of the reverse, confined to, I think, and almost invariable on London reverses of the "Small Crux" type. In the *British Museum Catalogue*, No. 213 appears to be the only one of the type, and has the pellets. Hildebrand, in his later edition, gives 28 London pence of his type Ca, but does not mention any pellets; seven of these are certainly the same as the seven London Ca coins listed in his 1846 edition, all of which have a footnote indicating the two pellets. So presumably, although Hildebrand omits all mention, most of the others in the later edition, or all of them, have the pellets. All the London moneyers listed by H. A. Parsons² as issuing "Crux" type coins with two pellets in the reverse field are to be found in Hildebrand as moneyers of type Ca. The conclusion, I think, is that the two pellets are a deliberate part of the reverse design of London "Crux Ca" dies. From all evidence, it seems that the two extra pellets are invariable on real "Crux Ca" London reverses: the style of reverse and lettering suggest that one coin, reading DRHPOLDM-OLVN (? = Hild. 2308), is a mule, obverse "Crux Ca", reverse normal "Crux". This coin (Fig. 19) is the only example so far noticed linking the "Small Crux" with the regular issue.

¹ Mr. C. S. S. Lyon has one, LEOFSTANM-OC/ENT.

² In "Symbols and Double Names on Late Saxon Coins", *Brit. Num. Journ.* xiii (1917) 1.

In summary, the features of the London (Fig. 17) and Canterbury (Fig. 18) cut dies are as follows:

London. Triangular eye; pellets on chin and at back of hair; parallel folds of drapery across body; diphthong AE and ORVM contraction as illustrated in Figs. 7, 8, 10, and 11; wedge-formed cross patée; pellets in C and X quarters of reverse; C and R at right angles to cross.

Canterbury. Almond-shaped eye; usually no pellet on chin or hair; radiating and curved folds of drapery; sometimes barred A, or reversed M; diphthong AE and ORVM contraction as in Figs. 9, 12, and 13; no pellets in quarters of reverse; C and R diagonally.

The moneyers given by Hildebrand for London and the Kentish mints are:

London: Ælfget (2052, 3); Ælfstan (2092); Ælfwine (2124); Brhwold (? = Brihtwold) (2234, 2308); Eadmund (2340); Edsige (2463); Edwine (2486, 7); God (2521, 2, 3, 4); Godric (2583, 4); Godwine (2624); Heawulf (2653, 4, 5); Leofwine (2750); Lifinc (2785, 6); Oda (2844); Oswulf (2870, 82); Sidwine (2909); Sweting (2921).

Canterbury: Eadwold (148, 9, 57); Godwine (178)? = Goldwine (135); Leofric (200, 1, 2, 3, 4); Leofstan (212, 21, 2); Leofwold (229); Lifinc (234, 5); Wulfwig (250).

Dover: Leofwine (419, 20); Wulfstan (428, 30, 1).

Rochester: Brihtmær (3270, 1); Eadsige (3275, 83); Sidwine (3309).

In addition to these, Leofric and Byrnmær of London were represented in the Igelösa hoard, and I have one of the latter moneyer; a Dover penny of Cenric was also found at Igelösa. It is to be expected that these lists of moneyers will be somewhat expanded in the future, now that the type is more generally recognized.

The status of the "Small Crux" type is very problematical. From what has already been written here several facts emerge. The type is rare and probably short-lived; it is undoubtedly English. So much is certain. We do not know its exact position in the series, since mules with earlier or later types are not recorded. However, Mr. Dolley informs me that in the Glemminge Hoard from Skâne "Crux" is the latest type represented, but, of the 196 specimens of the type, none are "Small Crux". Since the late varieties of "Crux", such as those with the diadem or other affinities with the "Long Cross" type, and the "Intermediate Small Cross" coins, either as the pure type or as mules with "Crux", are all absent from the hoard, it is apparent that the hoard was deposited before these varieties, and before "Small Crux" coins could have found their way into it. So as a tentative date for the "Small Crux" type, we might suggest the last two years of the "Crux" period, c. 995-7. The close affinity of the "Crux Ca" bust

with that on the late "Crux" variety¹ with curly hair and no sceptre reinforces arguments for the late issue of "Small Crux".²

Purely from the moneyers' names on "Small Crux" and other types of Æthelræd II it is difficult to draw any positive conclusions in this direction. Sufficient of the "Small Crux" moneyers coin normal "Crux", and the types before and after, "Hand" and "Long Cross", to confirm that "Small Crux" was a limited subsidiary issue to "Crux"; and apparently, since some quite common moneyers (e.g. Leofstan at London) strike the main "Crux" issue, and others before and after, but seem not to have left any extant "Small Crux" coins, possibly for a time "Crux" and "Small Crux" may have been struck concurrently. Whether this is the accepted solution, or whether we prefer to consider "Small Crux" as a separate issue (*chronologically*) the problems it presents are equally formidable.

If "Small Crux" and "Crux" were being struck simultaneously, it must have caused intolerable difficulties to have two very mistakable issues of slightly different weights, not only in the keeping of mint accounts, but in everyday transactions. This the more so, since there seems to be a progressive scale of weights, normal "Crux" being the heaviest at about 24 gr. or so, and provincial "Small Crux" being the lightest at about 18-19 gr., but the Igelösa hoard appears to indicate that London "Small Crux" consistently achieve a rather better weight, at least 21 gr. in many cases, and sometimes more—an impression confirmed by my own and other specimens.

Even if "Small Crux" was struck in an interval of the main "Crux" issue at London, the Kentish mints and some other towns, there is no reason to suppose that other important mints, such as Winchester, Thetford, Worcester, Norwich, Salisbury, or Stamford, would have interrupted their "Crux" issue. Lincoln, the other outstanding mint not credited with Ca coins by Hildebrand, is, however, now represented for the "Small Crux" type by pennies of the moneyer Colgrim in the Igelösa hoard and in my collection.

As regards the pattern of "Small Crux" mints, they cover most of the main areas, though only London and the Kentish mints made strong contributions. The notable absence of Winchester from the list brings to mind the mutually exclusive tendency of "Small Crux" and the "Intermediate Small Cross" group of coins. The latter, including the late varieties of "Crux"³ distinguished by Mr. Dolley and Mr. F. Elmore Jones, have predominantly a Wessex origin, a weak area for "Small Crux". Conversely, the great rarity at London and complete absence in Kent of the "Intermediate Small Cross" and the associated late "Crux" varieties is to be noted. What this means is not clear, but it does suggest that the two groups of coins may have been to some extent complementary, even perhaps

¹ *Brit. Num. Journ.*, vol. xxviii, pl. iv, nos. 27-30, and Fig. 4 on p. 79.

² Mr. Dolley will be developing this point in a forthcoming paper.

³ "An Intermediate Small Cross Issue of Æthelræd II and some Late Varieties of the Crux Type", *Brit. Num. Journ.*, vol. xxviii, p. 75.

contemporaneous. This would allow the possibility that while the Wessex mints were issuing their late varieties of "Crux", and the "Intermediate Short Cross" type, London and Kent may have been occupied in the interval, between the main "Crux" type and the



FIG. 19

FIG. 20

main "Long Cross" type, with the issue of "Crux Ca". A notable fact, of which the meaning is not clear, is that, whilst Canterbury supplied her dependent mints, Rochester and Dover, with "Crux Ca" dies as in the ordinary course, mints which normally received supplies of dies from London do not appear to have been issued with "Crux Ca" dies.

At least three separate Canterbury obverse dies have the sceptre-head decorated with three leaves: one of Godwine (with reversed *W*'s) was found at Igelösa; one of Leofric (noted above with reference to its wedge-shaped stops and curious reverse inscription) was found at Hemse, Gotland; another similar is at Stockholm; and a penny of Godwine, with normal reverse inscription, is in my collection (Fig. 20). One or two other coins have an irregular sceptre-head: a London coin of Edsige came from Halsarve, Gotland; and Igelösa also produced pennies of Ælfric at Huntingdon and of Hunstan at Cambridge. Coins with the leaf-headed or other unusual sceptres are thus extremely rare, as their infinitesimal incidence in the Swedish hoards demonstrates. Their significance, if any, is difficult to assess.

What prompted such an emission is again purely a matter for speculation. It can only be supposed that the issue was intended to deal with some situation for which lighter coin would prove profitable or at least acceptable. In any transaction dependent on weight, such as Danegeld most probably was, there would be no advantage in striking lighter coins: in fact, apart from the confusion caused by two—or more—standards, there would be the added labour involved in striking a greater quantity of lighter coins. Indeed, it is noticeable that the two types, "Crux" and "Long Cross", current during the most extortionate period of Danegeld, are, with the exception of some pence after the change in standard under Edward the Confessor, consistently the heaviest of the main types of the late Anglo-Saxon coinage. Further, even in Hildebrand only one in ten of the "Crux" coins is of the "Small Crux" variety; and Igelösa and other Scandinavian hoards suggest that "Small Crux" coins may not have comprised much more than 5 per cent. of all "Crux" pence; so that, in practice, the type appeared in Danegeld incidentally rather

than deliberately. The requirement for "Small Crux" is thus resolved: either into some form of tribute, or tax, levied in pence *by tale*, for which lighter coins would suffice; or into the need for more, even if lighter, money within the realm, whilst so much was being bled out in Dane-geld. Coined money was always at a premium over bullion, and no doubt the English had to be content with what they could get.¹

¹ It had been Mr. Dolley's intention to append to this paper a discussion of the Ca coins in the Igelosa hoard which he has been able to re-examine in the light of an early draft of this paper. Unfortunately his note will require illustrations for which there is no space available in this number of the *Journal*, and will have to be held over. We have discussed, however, a number of aspects of the problem, and Mr. Dolley has been able to lend me his complete set of photographs of all the true Ca coins in the hoard.