

AN APPARENTLY UNRECORDED CLASS OF HIBERNO-NORSE IMITATION OF THE COINAGE OF ÆTHELRÆD II

By R. H. M. DOLLEY

DEMONSTRABLY contemporary Irish imitations of English pennies of Æthelræd II are known which have for their models coins of his last four substantive issues, Crux, Long Cross, Helmet, and Last Small Cross (Hild. C, D, E, and A: Brooke 3, 5, 4, and 1, &c.). Independently of their types these Hiberno-Norse imitations can be divided into four basic classes:

- (a) Pennies with the name of Sihtric and the Dublin mint-signature.
- (b) Pennies combining the name of Sihtric and an 'English' mint-signature.
- (c) Pennies with the name of 'Æthelræd II' but the Dublin mint-signature.
- (d) Pennies with the name of 'Æthelræd II' and still preserving an 'English' mint-signature.

Coins of classes (a) and (c) are relatively common, of classes (b) and (d) comparatively rare, though in the case of (d) the paucity is to some extent exaggerated by the circumstance that even today many of the coins are not recognized as Irish.

Thanks to the Scandinavian—but not the Irish—coin-hoards the commonest of the contemporary imitations are those of Long Cross, and pennies of all four of the classes distinguished above will be found recorded in the pages of Hildebrand. Much less common are the Hiberno-Norse pennies which imitate Crux and Last Small Cross, the former predominantly from the Clondalkin hoard from the outskirts of Dublin and the latter deriving in the main from Scandinavian hoards. With rather more difficulty it is again possible to muster examples of all four of our classes, though in doing so it will be necessary to go beyond the trays of the Systematic Collection at Stockholm. Notably rare, on the other hand, are the contemporary Irish imitations of Æthelræd's Helmet issue, and in the 1881 edition of *Anglosachsiska Mynt* there are listed no more than one specimen of our class (a) and four of our class (c). The purpose of this note, however, is to suggest that there lurk in the pages of *Anglosachsiska Mynt* no fewer than six specimens of our class (d), a very blundered coin which Hildebrand gave rather improbably to Lymne, a very close copy of a penny of Lydford, and, finally, four coins, all from the same obverse die, which purport to have been struck at York.

To take first the coin of 'Lymne' (Hild. Ethelred 1608), the degree of blundering in the reverse legend is sufficient to establish a non-English origin, and the piece was in fact excluded from the English canon by Miss van der Meer in the course of her recent survey of *Anglosachsiska Mynt*.¹ Incidentally, I myself am not satisfied that the engraver was even essaying the Lymne mint-signature, and for the present, at least, I am reluctant to add Lymne to

¹ G. van der Meer, 'Some Corrections to and Comments on B. E. Hildebrand's Catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon Coins in the Swedish Royal Coin Cabinet', *Anglo-Saxon Coins* (ed. R. H. M. Dolley), London, 1961, pp. 169-87. On p. 174 the coin in question is condemned as 'not English'.

the list of English mints which have provided prototypes for the Hiberno-Norse series. There is, however, a world of difference between condemning a coin as 'not English' and giving it with confidence to another series, but it is hoped that the following text-block (Fig. 1) will be found convincing. The



FIG. 1.

coin at the left is the 'Lymne' coin, and to the right are two coins of our class (c) with the Dublin mint-signature.¹ It will be seen that the style of all three pieces is identical, and I would further draw attention to details of the epigraphy, for example the use of Ð for D, the bar in each case taking the form of a wedge. There is, too, an obvious connexion between the first element of the reverse legend and that of the commonest of Sihtric's Long Cross pennies,



FIG. 2.

those of the moneyer 'Færemin'. Indeed, it could be argued that Hild. 1608 belongs not to our class (d) but to class (c), but here it need only be said that it is unquestionably Irish.

The second of the coins under discussion, the penny of 'Lydford' (Hild. Ethelred 3040), is of an altogether different order. As must appear from the illustration (Fig. 2) the reverse is not at all blundered, and there are undoubted

¹ Hild. Ethelred 376 and 383—once again English and Irish students of the series are indebted to the authorities of the Royal Coin Cabinet at Stockholm for the enlarged direct photographs which illustrate this note.

pennies struck at Lydford for Æthelræd II which are of this type, are by the same moneyer, and employ the same form of copulative and the same mint-signature (e.g. Hild. 3039 and 3041). Nevertheless, a scrutiny of the obverse legend alone is sufficient to give the coin to the Hiberno-Norse series. In the first place, although this was not noted by Hildebrand, the final letter of the king's name is rendered not as D but as Ð in the Irish manner. In the second place the X of REX is rendered by a repetition of the initial cross—a well-attested Irish trait though in this type it is necessary to distinguish the elaborately serifed form of the letter found on the Hiberno-Norse coins from a plainer form composed essentially of four wedges which is found on a number of coins which appear to be struck from dies engraved at Winchester.¹ Finally, and perhaps decisive in itself, there is the replacement of the GL element of the ethnic by M, a blundering as prevalent at Dublin as it is without precedent in the English series.



FIG. 3.

The remaining four coins (Hild. 671, 672, 674, and 676) all purport to have been struck at York, and on the form of the mint-signature of the first two—EO—and of the third—EOF—cannot well be faulted. The mint-signature of the fourth—EOF1—does, however, give some ground for suspicion, even though it cannot be pretended that it is in itself decisive. On all four coins, and not as Hildebrand suggests only on the first, third, and fourth, there is behind the king's head a small cross pattée, a feature which is very Irish, though it is found on a few coins of Lincoln which seem indubitably English. All four coins are in fact from the same obverse die, and here it is perhaps necessary only to illustrate Hild. 674 (Fig. 3). Incidentally, it is not without significance that none of the four reverse dies is found in combination with other obverses, and it should perhaps be added that the obverse die illustrated is particularly conspicuous when placed beside the run of the coins of York of this type, the great mint of northern England in the main using locally cut dies of a very distinctive type.² Characteristically Irish features of this obverse die include the use of Ð for D and of ✠ for X, while the treatment of the peak

¹ It is hoped to publish in Stockholm in the course of the next year or so a short monograph subjecting the Helmet type of Æthelræd II to the same stylistic analysis as that employed in recent studies of the Last Small Cross issue of Æthelræd II and of the Pointed Helmet issue of Cnut.

² Characteristic of the majority of these York dies is the omission of the peak from the king's helmet and the rendering of the details of the crown by engraved lines instead of cuneiform punches. For some reason a few of these dies found their way into southern England, and I have notes of their use at Bath and at Oxford as well as at Lincoln.

of the king's helmet can be very closely paralleled on the Dublin pieces already cited.

This note, then, has drawn attention to a class of Hiberno-Norse penny, the variety of Helmet issue preserving both the name of the English king and an English mint-signature, that finds no place in Roth's comprehensive if ill-digested survey of the Hiberno-Norse coinage published almost exactly half a century ago. To the best of my knowledge, too, this variety has not been distinguished by later students of the series, and it is not unsatisfactory that this note should suggest that Helmet was struck at Dublin on a slightly less exiguous scale than has been supposed. Even so, the Hiberno-Norse penny of Helmet type remains a rarity, and we may suppose that it was the comparatively low weight of the prototype which proved so inimical to its imitation among the Ostmen.