

# A New Moneyer for the Mint of Aylesbury

Richard Ambrose

The coin below was recently sold at auction in Germany.



Obv. ÆDELREDREXANGLOX around bust left with sceptre in front.

Rev. LEOFSIGEM-OÆGL around CRVX in angles of short cross voided.

1.41g

Kuenker (Osnabrück) eLive Auction 57 lot 395, December 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> 2019 (catalogued erroneously as a coin of the Gloucester mint)

The coin is a silver penny of the Crux type of Aethelred II, conventionally dated to c.991-97.<sup>1</sup> The mint signature ÆGL clearly identifies it as being from the minor Anglo-Saxon mint of Aylesbury.<sup>2</sup>

The most comprehensive study to date of the mint of Aylesbury listed twenty-eight coins struck over a seventy-year period of existence during the late Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>3</sup> These include four Crux pennies, struck by two moneyers: Aelfgar, whose two surviving coins were both of the standard Crux type, and Leofstan, whose two coins were of the rare Transitional Crux issue struck towards the end of the type.<sup>4</sup> This new coin provides evidence of a new moneyer, Leofsig, both for the Crux type at Aylesbury and indeed for the mint in general.

---

<sup>1</sup> This dating follows the so-called 'sexennial theory' of type change during the reigns of Aethelred II and Cnut, developed diffusely by Michael Dolley during his prolific career (e.g. Dolley 1954a, 152-6; Dolley 1954b, 275). The rigidity of the theory has been called into question (e.g. Brand 1984; Stewart 1990, 457-85; SCBI 40, 93-8) but no alternative dating proposal covering the whole period has yet gained widespread acceptance.

<sup>2</sup> Carroll & Parsons 2007, 4-7; the mint-signatures on the previously recorded Crux pennies of Aylesbury are ÆGLS and ÆGLSBY, while two different moneyers in Cnut's Quatrefoil type use the precise form ÆGL found on this new coin.

<sup>3</sup> Clarke & Symons 2007

<sup>4</sup> For the identification and dating of the Transitional Crux issue, see Dolley & Elmore Jones 1955; Dolley 1959; Stewart 1968

Moneyers of the same name are known at more than a dozen mints during the late Anglo-Saxon period. At Gloucester, Ilchester, Ipswich and Northampton, there was a Leofsige who issued coins during the Crux type itself, while at Cambridge and Shrewsbury, men of the same name are known in the subsequent Long Cross type (c.997-1003).<sup>5</sup> Of these, Northampton (34 miles distant) is by far the closest to Aylesbury, and it is suggestive that one of Aylesbury's other Crux moneyers, Leofstan, also had a contemporary namesake at Northampton. Neither Leofsige nor Leofstan issued coins at Northampton after the Crux type, and it is possible that the two men moved to Aylesbury to establish minting operations there.<sup>6</sup>

The weight and style of this new coin suggests that if this relocation did take place, it was relatively late in the type. At 1.41g, it is somewhat heavier than the two standard Crux coins of Aylesbury already recorded for the moneyer Aelfgar (at 1.32g and 1.28g respectively), but still well below the initial weight standard.<sup>7</sup> The obverse style, with its somewhat naturalistic treatment of the hair and the sceptre angled into the base of the bust, is reminiscent of the so-called Small Crux variety, dated towards the end of the Crux type.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever the origin of its moneyers, the Aylesbury mint sprang into existence in the Crux type with no fewer than three of them. As the authors of the earlier corpus of coins of the mint observed, 'it is hard to advance any compelling reason why coins should have been minted in Aylesbury in the Crux issue, especially when the nearby mint of Buckingham scarcely appears to have been overworked at the time.'<sup>9</sup> The discovery of a third moneyer at the inception of this very minor mint makes it still more likely that it was associated with 'the need to strike large amounts of coin very quickly to facilitate the payment of specific *gelds*'.<sup>10</sup>

This article also provides an opportunity to put on record two further coins of the Aylesbury mint that have surfaced since the first corpus was published in 2007. Both are coins of Cnut's Quatrefoil type of the moneyer Aethelwine, one of them from previously unrecorded dies. Along with the Crux penny that is the main subject of this article, they increase the total number of coins known from Aylesbury to thirty-one. They are added below in a format consistent with the first corpus.

- 6a.    *Obv.* +C[...]ANGL•O: (legend starts at 9 o'clock)  
          *Rev.* [...]PINE ONÆ  
          *Obv.* die of London Cm style (Blackburn & Lyon 1986, 244-5)

---

<sup>5</sup> Jonsson & van der Meer 1990, 49-136 and especially 131

<sup>6</sup> A search of the SCBI/ EMC database, auction catalogues and dealer lists has however found no obverse die-duplicate for any of the Aylesbury Crux pennies at the Northampton mint.

<sup>7</sup> Petersson 1969, 107-8 & 183 proposes an initial weight standard in the Crux type of 1.65g, a later modal value of 1.43g and a reduction to 1.32g by the end of the type.

<sup>8</sup> Stewart 1957

<sup>9</sup> Clarke & Symons 2007, 177

<sup>10</sup> Clarke & Symons 2007, 175; for the association of the Crux type with *geld* payments, see Lyon 1976, 197; Brand 1984, 31; though Metcalf 1998, 115-7 looks closely at the metrology of the type and argues against too simplistic an association of the *gelds* with the surge of minting during Crux.

(6a.1) Classical Numismatic Group e-Auction 263 lot 497, August 31<sup>st</sup> 2011; listed as 'Continental find'. 0.41g/ 6.3gr. Cut halfpenny.

7.     *Obv.* +CNVT REX ANGL•ORV (legend starts at 12 o'clock)  
      *Rev.* +ÆD EL•P• NEN EGL•  
      *Obv.* die of Oxford I style (Blackburn & Lyon 1986, 228-30)

(7.3) Warszawskie Centrum Numizmatyczne Auction 64 lot 152, May 14<sup>th</sup> 2016.  
1.13g/17.4gr. Cracked down bust.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blackburn, M. A. S and Lyon, C. S. S., 1986. 'Regional Die-Production in Cnut's Quatrefoil Issue' in M. A. S. Blackburn (ed.) *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History* (Leicester), 223-72
- Brand, J., 1984. 'Periodic Change of Type in the Anglo-Saxon and Norman Periods', BNS Presidential Address, November 1982 (private pamphlet)
- Carroll, J. & Parsons D. N., 2007. *Anglo-Saxon Mint Names I. Axbridge-Hythe* (Nottingham)
- Clarke, W. N. and Symons, D., 2007. 'The Mint of Aylesbury', *BNJ* 77, 173-89
- Dolley, R. H. M., 1954a. 'The Sack of Wilton in 1003 and the Chronology of the Long Cross and Helmet types of Aethelred II', *Nordisk Numismatisk Unions Medlemsblad* 5 (May 1954)
- Dolley, R. H. M., 1954b. 'The 'Jewel Cross' Coinage of Aelfgifu Emma, Harthacnut, and Harold I', *BNJ* 27, 266-75
- Dolley, R. H. M., 1959. 'Some Further Remarks on the Transitional Crux Issue of Aethelraed II', *BNJ* 29, 259-64
- Dolley, R. H. M. and Elmore Jones, F., 1955. 'An Intermediate Small Cross Issue of Aethelraed II and Some Late Varieties of the Crux Type', *BNJ* 28, 75-87
- Jonsson, K. and van der Meer G., 1990. 'Mints and Moneyers c.973-1066' in K. Jonsson (ed.) *Studies in Late Anglo-Saxon Coinage in Memory of Bror Emil Hildebrand* (Stockholm), 49-136
- Lyon, C. S. S., 1976. 'Some Problems in Interpreting Anglo-Saxon Coinage', *Anglo-Saxon England* 5, 173-224
- Lyon, C. S. S. 2016. *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles 68. The Lyon Collection of Anglo-Saxon Coins* (Oxford)
- Metcalf, D. M., 1998. *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Coin Finds c.973-1086*, RNS Special Publications 32 (London)
- Petersson, H. B. A., 1969. *Anglo-Saxon Currency: King Edgar's Reform to the Norman Conquest* (Lund)
- SCBI 68 (Lyon). See Lyon 2016.
- Stewart, B. H. I. H., 1957. 'The Small Crux Issue of Aethelraed II', *BNJ* 28, 509-17
- Stewart, B. H. I. H., 1968. 'Notes on the Intermediate Small Cross and Transitional Crux Types of Ethelred II', *BNJ* 37, 16-24
- Stewart, B. H. I. H., 1990. 'Coinage and Recoinage after Edgar's Reform' in K. Jonsson (ed.) *Studies in Late Anglo-Saxon Coinage in Memory of Bror Emil Hildebrand* (Stockholm), 457-84

