

Seeking the Provenance of an Unusual Hiberno-Scandinavian Coin

Robert Page

Hopefully a reader may be able to assist with the quest to discover where the interesting coin illustrated below came from. The earliest appearance of the coin that the author is aware of is the 2001 Spink auction containing coins of the Chown collection¹, and it is hoped that any reader with earlier auction catalogues containing Hiberno-Scandinavian coins may be able to locate it.

The possibility of establishing a hoard provenance could be significant for the understanding of the Irish Sea area coins. According to Bornholdt Collins², Hiberno-Scandinavian Dublin was not the only community in the Irish Sea area that could sustain a mint; coins from a mint on the Isle of Man have been known since the work by Dolley in the 1960s and 70s, and nowadays it is recognised that one or more additional mints may have existed in the Irish Sea area during the early 11th century.



Obverse: +INIHRER+DIEDN



Reverse: +FIE REME NMO DINI

At first sight the coin may appear to be a Phase II coin of Sihtric from the Dublin mint, however in addition to the somewhat unusual obverse bust style the coin has some indications that it is not a Dublin issue, but from elsewhere in the Irish Sea area. It should be noted, however, that there is a huge range and variety in the Phase II Dublin coinage, and the assignment of this coin to a non-Dublin mint can only be regarded as tentative. There is no exact match with the Isle of Man coins detailed in the recently published sylloge volume by Kristin Bornholdt Collins, though there are some similarities with a few coins identified by her as imitations from an unknown Irish Sea area mint, particularly SCBI 73², coins #963 and #964, both from the Glenfaba hoard.

¹ 'Viking' Collection [J.F. Chown], Spink Auction 150, 14 March 2001, lot 1100

² Kristin Bornholdt Collins, 2024, Manx Museum, Douglas, Isle of Man: Anglo-Saxon, Hiberno-Scandinavian, Hiberno-Manx and Other Coins and Currencies (to c. 1275) - Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles 73, Oxford University Press.

The coin was most recently sold at a Noonans auction on 04/04/23, lot 600³, where it was described as:

Hiberno-Scandinavian Period, Phase II, Sihtric, Penny, Dublin, Færemin, in imitation of Long Cross coinage, in the name of Sihtric, crude draped bust left, cross potent behind neck, INHIRC R+ DIEDN, rev. FIEREMEN MO DINI, long voided cross, pellets in angles, 1.05g/1h (cf. SCBI BM 70ff; cf. SCBI Copenhagen 76; cf. SCBI Ulster 66ff; cf. Roth 44 for portrait; S 6125; DF 23). Edge a little irregular and with a central stress mark, very odd style, very fine £300-£360

Besides slightly incorrectly giving the weight as 1.05 rather than 1.06 gm, Noonans also misspelt the obverse legend which clearly readsRER rather than ...RC R. The correct spelling is important as this is one of the features which suggests a link to some of the non-Dublin Irish Sea area coins such as in SCBI 73, coin #964. Other features which are indicative of a non-Dublin coin are the style of the terminations of the long cross on the reverse, with the large gumdrop-like florets with a pellet in each, and the spindly form of the cross located behind the neck on the obverse.

The Roth coin, #44 in his 1909 BNJ paper⁴, referred to in Noonan's description has a somewhat similar bust style but different ornamentation behind the neck, and has very different legends; I don't consider it a match.

Noonans gave the provenance as:

'Viking' Collection [J.F. Chown], Spink Auction 150, 14 March 2001, lot 1100; SNC February 2008 (IH0168); 'Good Money' Collection, Noonans Auction 259, 27 September 2022, lot 528

In the auction catalogue for the Chown coins, lot # 1100 is the relevant one; the coin description includes "appears base, perhaps imitative". Regrettably, no information on provenance is given. The challenge now is to trace the history of this coin back through earlier auction catalogues, hopefully leading to a determination of the provenance of the coin.

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³ Noonans 2023 website link to the lot ([Link](#))

⁴ B. Roth, 'The coins of the Danish Kings of Ireland' BNJ vol. 6 (1909), 55-146, 10 pls. ([Link](#))

