

A NEW TYPE AND MONEYER FOR EADBEARHT "PRAEN"

By R. H. M. DOLLEY

THROUGH the kindness of the coin's present owner, Mr. W. Laing of Letchworth, it is possible to record in these pages an unpublished Kentish penny which is of more than ordinary importance for the serious student of what we may call the first penny coinage. The coin in question (Pl. XXV, 9) is without formal provenance, and was found by the present owner in a box of miscellaneous coins and medals which had been purchased locally for a nominal sum. Of the other pieces not one would seem to have been medieval nor even antique, and, the Kentish penny apart, the collection could be described as without significance.

Fewer than a dozen coins of Eadbearht "Praen" have been recorded, and it may be as well to begin this note with a "miniature corpus" of those known to the writer. All have as their obverse type the name of the king written in three lines across the obverse field, and it is perhaps worth remarking that he is styled EADBEARHT REX. There is no ethnic, and the name "Praen" by which he is usually distinguished today is also conspicuous by its absence. In this connexion we may note the evidence for the identification of this rather shadowy pretender of unhappy fate and memory. In the *Chronicle* he is called first "Eadbearht, whose other name was Praen" but later, and perhaps significantly, he is simply "Praen". In Symeon of Durham he is called "Eadbearht", but without mention of the "Praen". In the letter of Pope Leo III he is quite anonymous, but referred to as "an apostate cleric".¹ The suggestion has been made that he was a member of the old Kentish house who had been relegated to a monastery, and it has been argued that "Praen" is a nick-name "Pin", but neither suggestion seems altogether happy.² On the other hand, the coins are valuable evidence for his official style, while their affinities with the late Kentish issues of Offa provide welcome corroboration of the fact that there was a major rising in Kent which was suppressed by Coenwulf.

The miniature corpus that follows is believed to be complete, and it is interesting to note that two of the coins, both in public collections, had never been illustrated, while two more, also in public collections, have been illustrated only by line-engravings. In part this is doubtless due to the fact that the coins of this period are so fragile, but it also emphasizes the urgent need for the new *Sylloge*. It is perhaps significant that no coin of Eadbearht appears to have been known in the

¹ Cf. D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, i, pp. 167-8, 249, and 794. In William of Malmesbury we find "Edilbertus idemque Pren" and "Edbrihtus cognomine Pren", and in Florence of Worcester "Eadberhtus qui et Pren"; cf. Searle, *Anglo-Saxon Bishops, Kings and Nobles*, p. 266.

² Cf. Oman, *The Coinage of England*, p. 23. In this connexion we may note that Florence of Worcester had claimed that Eadbearht was a brother of Æthelberht II of Kent.

seventeenth century, but that four at least had been discovered before the end of the eighteenth century. More than ever before one begins to feel that in the eighteenth century there must have been discovered a major hoard deposited in the first years of the ninth century.

Although Eadbeaht's coins can be arranged under types, it is more convenient here to arrange them under moneyers, and it will be noticed that the names Ethelmod and Ethelnoth are here clearly distinguished. In his classic paper on Offa, the late R. C. Lockett ran them together as "Ethelnod", an unhappy compromise.¹ In *English Coins* G. C. Brooke distinguished them, but until recently no distinction was drawn in the British Museum trays. In fact the names are quite separate, both deuterothemes being exceedingly common throughout the Saxon period. On the coins of Offa, moreover, a clear and quite consistent distinction is invariably made between M and N, and between ▷ and †.

BABBA

1. *Obv.* ..E·AD·|BEARHT|·RE·X·

Rev. A·Y·A|BABBA|·T+·S·

British Museum 1846 (ex Gerrard and found at Hellesdon, Norwich).

20·4 gr., die-axis 90°, *B.M.C.* A/S i, p. 67, no. 2.

This coin appears never to have been illustrated, probably because it has been sheared almost in two. Pending a photographic reproduction in the appropriate part of the *British Museum Sylloge*, the opportunity is taken here of illustrating it from a line-drawing most carefully executed by Mrs. J. S. Strudwick:



2. *Obv.* ..E·A·D·|BEARHT|·REX·

Rev. A·Y·A·|B·A·BBA|·T·S·

A. E. Bagnall collection (ex Ryan 585, ex Grantley 879, ex Evans from the Delgany hoard, cf. J. Evans, *N.C.* 1882, p. 62, no. 2).

17·3 gr. (chipped), die-axis 90°.

The coin is illustrated in the following sale-catalogues, Ryan, pl. i; Grantley, pl. vi.

3. *Obv.* From the same die as the preceding coin.

Rev. From the same die as the preceding coin.

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (ex Trinity College, ex Beaupre Bell [1741]).

18·4 gr., die-axis 90°.

The coin appears to be illustrated and described for the first time in the *Fitzwilliam Sylloge*, no. 429.

¹ *N.C.* 1920, pp. 57-89.

ETHELMOD

4. *Obv.* ..EAD.|BEARHT|..REX
Rev. ..[+].|†E†:EL..|..M:O.D.

British Museum 1893 (Franks Gift ex Middle Temple hoard).

20.9 gr., die-axis 180°. Cf. G. C. Brooke, *N.C.* 1923, p. 243; H. A. Grueber, *ibid.* 1894, p. 42.

The coin is illustrated by Brooke in his paper (pl. xi) and in *English Coins*, pl. iii.

5. *Obv.* ..E·A·D..|BEARHT|..RE·X·
Rev. ..[+].|†E†:E E|..M·O·D

R. P. Mack collection (ex Ryan 586, ex Grantley 880. In the latter catalogue it is described as found at Maidstone, but comparison of the Ryan and Rashleigh plates establishes that the true pedigree is ex Ryan 586, ex Grantley 880, ex Rashleigh 81, purchased in Copenhagen, 1869).

16.0 gr. (chipped), die-axis 180°.

The coin is illustrated in the following sale-catalogues, Ryan, pl. i; Rashleigh, pl. ii.

6. *Obv.* ..EAD.|BEARHT|..REX
Rev. ..[+].|†E†:E E|..M·O·D

C. E. Blunt collection (ex Lockett 325, ex Drabble 342, ex Bruun 36, ex Bascom 13, ex Astronomer 78, ex Montagu 285, ex Marsham 50 presumably from the Delgany hoard no. 1 (*vide supra*, Babba, no. 2).

18.5 gr. (chipped), die-axis 270°.

The coin is illustrated in the following sale-catalogues: Lockett, pl. vi; Drabble, pl. xi.

7. *Obv.* ..EAD|BEARHT|..REX
Rev. ..[+].|†E†:E E|..M·O·D

British Museum 1915 (ex Evans collection, ex Rolfe and found near Sandwich.

Cf. Brooke, *N.C.* 1923, p. 243).

18.5 gr., die-axis 90°.

The coin has been illustrated by Brooke in his paper (pl. xi) and by C. E. Blunt, *B.N.J.* 1952, Pl. vii. The reverse legend is cited by Evans in his Delgany paper, p. 71.

8. *Obv.* ..EAD|BEARHT|..REX
Rev. ..[+].|†E†:E E|..M:O·D

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (ex Bodleian Library 1755, ex Ballard Bequest).

18.5 gr. (broken), die-axis 90°.

The coin is illustrated in Ruding (pl. 26) by a careful line-engraving executed under the direction of Taylor Combe.

ETHELNOTH

9. *Obv.* ..E·A·D..|BE·ARHT|..REX
Rev. ..[+].|†E†:E E|..M:O·D

W. Laing collection (the coin under discussion).

20.8 gr. (very slightly chipped), die-axis 180°.

The coin is illustrated on Pl. XXV, 9.

IAENBERHT

10. *Obv.* ..EAD·|BEARHT· REX*Rev.* ·I·AEN·|BER·HT· ÷[+]

÷

British Museum 1802 (ex Tyssen collection).

22.3 gr., die-axis 270°, *B.M.C.* A/S i, p. 67, no. 3.The coin has been illustrated in the *British Museum Catalogue*, pl. xi and in Grueber's *Handbook*, pl. ii.

TIDHEAH

11. *Obv.* ..EAD·|BEARHT· REX*Rev.* ..T·ID..| ⌘—⌘ ·HE·AH

Hunter collection, Glasgow 17.

19.6 gr., die-axis 90°.

The coin is illustrated in Ruding (pl. 3) by a careful line-engraving executed under the direction of Taylor Combe.

In the compilation of a check-list of this kind the writer is obviously indebted to the fortunate possessors of the coins in question, and in particular he would acknowledge the kindness of the private collectors who have allowed their coins to be published in this form. He would also like to take this opportunity once again of expressing his appreciation of the kindness of Mr. C. E. Blunt who placed at his disposal his own very full notes on Eadbearht's coins, and took the liveliest interest in this paper which might well be considered to trespass unpardonably on a field which Mr. Blunt has made peculiarly his own.

That the eleven coins listed above should be from ten different pairs of dies may suggest that Eadbearht coined on a fairly considerable scale, and this confirms the hint given by the historical sources that his "revolt" was no ephemeral insurrection but a broadly based rejection of Mercian domination. Already it will have been noticed that Ethelnoth is a new moneyer for the reign, and the following "break-down" of the Eadbearht coins into "Offa types" makes it clear that Mr. Laing's coin adds a new type for the reign as well. The references are to the late Mr. R. C. Lockett's paper on Offa in the *Numismatic Chronicle* for 1920 and to Brooke's *English Coins*.

As Offa Last Coinage	Brooke, variety (f)	nos. 1, 2, 3 (Babba*†), 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (Ethelmod*†), 10 (Taenberht).
	Lockett, group (e)	
As Offa Last Coinage	Brooke, variety (c)	no. 11 (Tidheah).
	Lockett, group (f)	
As Offa Last Coinage	Brooke, variety (d)	no. 9 (Ethelnoth*).
	Lockett, group (g)	

*A moneyer of Offa.

†A moneyer of Coenwulf.

The preceding table throws into relief the close connexion between the latest issues of Offa and the coinage of Eadbearht, a connexion that has often been noticed before, but until the appearance of Mr. Laing's coin arguments based on style, prosopography, and metrology lacked the final corroboration of their validity that could be supplied only by a die-link. This was despite the fact that Babba had been quite a prolific moneyer of Offa, while even the less-productive Ethelmod had struck the very type that he was to pour out in such apparent profusion for the Kentish rebel. For the serious student, then, the primary importance of the new penny of Ethelnoth is not that it provides a new type and moneyer for the reign but that it has proved to be from a reverse die which had been used with an Offa obverse. Comparison with a penny of Offa (Pl. XXV, 8) in the National Collection (Barnett Bequest 299, ex Bruun 20, ex Sotheby, June 1903, 327) establishes that the reverse die of the Eadbearht coin is a recut version of that employed to strike the Offa.

As Mr. Blunt has demonstrated so conclusively in the last number of the *Journal*, die identities in the early penny series are notably rare, and more often than not they are to be associated with modern forgery. We are bound therefore to examine with special care both the new Eadbearht and the Offa, but fortunately there is no reason whatever to suspect that either is the work of a fabricator.¹ Both coins have been handled by more than one expert, and the possibility that one or both could be cast has never even occurred to the handler. That one is cast from the other seems absolutely precluded by the inconsistent damages, not to mention the minor discrepancies due to recutting which are also a most welcome guarantee that the Eadbearht is not cast from a finer specimen (now lost) of the Offa. Indeed, if any piece in the early Saxon series is struck it is the Eadbearht which secures instinctive acceptance despite a very natural and proper first reaction, shared by the owner, that the discovery of such a coin in such circumstances was "too good to be true". In this connexion it may be remarked that the present writer believes he has found another die-link between an impeccable Coenwulf (B.M. Acq. 93) and a no less impeccable Ceolwulf now in the British Museum (Lockett 391). (Pl. XXV, 10, 11.)

The possibility remains that the two coins could both be struck forgeries, but this scarcely seems feasible when we recall that the Offa, the less valuable of the two, appeared in the sale-room at the beginning of this century, while the Eadbearht has only recently found its way, quite by chance and for a purely nominal sum, to an owner sensible of its rarity. The style of the two coins is impeccable, and it seems improbable, to say the least, that a forger who had produced so brilliant a version of an Offa obverse could have had the restraint not to utter further examples, not to mention the temptation to employ it in another combination. Careful scrutiny of the Offa die,

¹ Mr. Laing has very kindly obtained for me a note of the density of his coin. The figure of 10.5741 approximates closely to what we might expect of a silver coin of the period.

moreover, establishes that it had received considerable wear before the Barnett coin was struck, and that it was on this account that it had to be recut before it was used for the Eadbearht. It is hard to believe that a nineteenth-century forger would have sat wearing out one of his products—and destroying all but the last of the coins so produced—and then put a lot more trouble into recutting what he had wantonly spoiled. Incidentally one might have expected him to produce the rarity first, and then to alter the die, whereas there is no room for doubt but that the actual order of striking was that which history would lead us to expect, namely that the Offa was struck before the Eadbearht. Nor is it unfair to suggest that a forger of the calibre that we have to envisage could have produced a far more spectacular and just as convincing rarity if he had chosen a type of Coenwulf instead of merely adding a third to the Offa types employed by Eadbearht's moneyers.¹

It is perhaps worthy of remark in passing that not one of Eadbearht's moneyers would appear to have struck for Cuthred, but the obvious inference is certainly to be rejected. While certain moneyers such as Iaenberht and Tidheah do appear to have been Eadbearht's creatures—they have yet to be found striking for another ruler—Babba and Ethelmod on the other hand seem to have been successful in compounding any technical treason, for they both strike for Coenwulf coins of the tribrach issue which cannot well have been introduced before c. 800. Probably all that may legitimately be inferred from the failure of Eadbearht's moneyers to strike for Cuthred is that a certain period elapsed between the downfall of the former and the latter's being in a position to strike a permissive coinage. Numismatists have recognized this interregnum, and an attempt has been made to fill it by intercalating the mysterious Eadwald.² The present writer, however, is convinced on stylistic grounds that Eadwald's coins were not struck at Canterbury, and the Richborough provenance of one of Eadwald's coins seems indeed a slender argument on which to base a Kentish dominion. Of the eleven coins of Eadbearht known to the present writer, three only have an unequivocal English find-spot, and two are from north of the Thames. If, too, we assume that Eadwald was a contemporary of Eadbearht, there might be a very cogent—and obvious—reason why the two kings should have been in close touch one with the other, and in this context the Norwich provenance of one of the coins of Eadbearht could prove as significant as the Richborough provenance of the Eadwald.

¹ The Letchworth provenance is perhaps in favour of the authenticity of the new Eadbearht. Mr. C. E. Blunt has kindly informed me that the Letchworth Museum has photographs of two other coins of the same period; one of Offa, found near Hitchin in 1911, the other of Ecgbearht found at Codicote, near Welwyn, on 16 Jan. 1926.

² Cf. Brooke, *English Coins*, p. 16.