

Information Sheet

Numismatic Series No. 5

THE LINCOLN AND STAMFORD MINTS IN THE TENTH AND ELEVENTH CENTURIES

An address given by Mr. Christopher Blunt OBE, FBA, on the occasion of the opening of the Coin Room at the Usher Gallery, Lincoln.

The new Coin Room at the Usher Gallery in Lincoln was opened by the distinguished numismatist Mr. Christopher Blunt, on the 12th March 1976. The Coin Room was constructed to house the collection of Anglo-Saxon and Norman coins with Lincolnshire mint signatures which had been presented to the City of Lincoln by Sir Francis Hill in 1974.

The displays, which are drawn from the coin collections in all the Lincolnshire Museums, illustrate the history of the English coinage over two thousand years. Special emphasis is given to coins and tokens made or found in Lincolnshire.

This is the full text of the address given by Mr. Blunt on that occasion.

"I feel very privileged to be invited to open this Exhibition, so largely centering round the collection of coins of the Lincoln and Stamford Mints, the very handsome gift to the Museum of my old friend Sir Francis Hill. It is the fruit of many years labour and like the collections of a mutual friend of ours, the distinguished Anglo-Saxon historian Sir Frank Stenton who collected for Reading University, it was built up at a particularly fortunate time because there came available through the dispersal of several major cabinets, a quantity of material that had seldom been seen before and is most unlikely to be seen again. Progressively, significant coins find their way into public collections and the practice whenever practicable to keep intact newly discovered hoards restricts the amount of new material available to private collectors. All of which means that, had Sir Francis Hill not had the foresight to make a special study of the local mints and to back that study by his purchases, we would never have seen the display we have today. Beside buying wisely over many years, Sir Francis was fortunate enough, through the good offices of the firm of Baldwins¹ to secure intact the important collection of coins of the Stamford Mint made by Mr. W.C. Wells who died in 1949, and this forms the nucleus of his collection of coins of this mint.

The Lincoln and Stamford collection we see today is contained within a four hundred year period, from the reign of Alfred towards the end of the 9th Century, to the early part of the reign of Edward I about 1280, when the Lincoln mint finally closed down.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Of the time of Alfred, only six coins are known today with the mint name of Lincoln on them, and of these, no less than three, including the unique halfpenny, are in the Hill collection. Lincoln, of course, was not in Alfred's hands. Consequently, it comes as no surprise to find that on three of the coins, although the type copies one used by Alfred, the name of a moneyer replaces that of the English King. Indeed, we may rather express surprise that, on the other three, Alfred's name actually does appear.

The next appearance of the Lincoln mint-name on our coins is on a seemingly small issue — only six are known² — which bears the name of no King, but on the obverse, that of St. Martin. Again, there is a specimen in the Hill collection. Why St. Martin is a question that has puzzled historians: Sir Francis, in his great volume on Medieval Lincoln³ points out that the precedence of St. Mary was clearly established at Lincoln before the Norman Conquest, though a church dedicated to St. Martin did exist. The dating of these coins has been much discussed. It was long felt that they must have been issued prior to the recovery from the Vikings of the Five Boroughs by Edward the Elder about 918, on the grounds that the English King would not have allowed coins to be issued that did not bear his name. Latterly, Mr. Ian Stewart⁴ has put forward numismatic arguments for dating the issue not earlier than the mid-920's and I understand that historians find these acceptable.

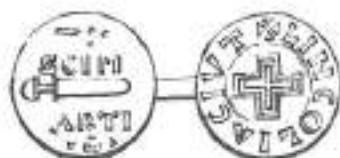


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

After the St. Martin coinage, the name of Lincoln is not found on any coins until a major reform instituted by King Edgar in the 970s, towards the end of his reign. In the meanwhile, coins were identifiable by bearing the name of the moneyer responsible for making them, who could by this means presumably be brought to book if his products were found to be deficient in weight or in fineness — and the penalties in this event were horrific. But some of the more common names were liable to be found more than once at the same time and one of the things that Edgar did in his reform was to require that an abbreviated — though identifiable — form of the mint name should on all the coins be added to that of the moneyer. He also prescribed that the King's head should be put on the side that bore his name and that the design of the coins should be periodically changed and, as far as we can judge, for we have no written evidence of the precise nature of the reform, that for certain purposes — probably such things as payments to the Crown — only the latest issue was acceptable. This must have involved the holders of money — and it is questionable how far down the social scale this went — in periodically changing old coins for new — a process for which a charge was made, so that in effect the procedure was a selective wealth tax, on a small scale, charged on holders of coins. One is reminded of Captain Douglas' economic plans for Alberta in the '20s.

To mitigate the inconvenience to his subjects — or, if one takes a more cynical view, to ensure that they had no excuse for not changing their money — mints and exchanges were widely established over the country. At one time or another in the last hundred years before the Norman Conquest, some ninety places are identified on the coins as having had mints. The bulk of the coins in the Hill collection consequently start from this reform of Edgar's. But although the mint name of neither Lincoln nor Stamford is found on coins between the St. Martin issue in the 920s and the reform of Edgar fifty years later, this was far from being the case in other parts of the country.

In the late 920s King Athelstan, no doubt actuated by the same considerations as was later Edgar, had the name of mint as well as moneyer placed on his coinage and, in all, the name of thirty-five places are so recorded in this reign. This, of course, is of immense value to the economic historian in providing evidence of the burhs that were active enough at this time to warrant having a mint — and under a decree of Athelstan's that has survived, every burh was entitled to one — and the number of moneyers employed gives some indication of their relative importance. Why, after a few years, the practice of putting the mint-name on the coins was generally abandoned we do not know. But such was the case. The significant fact, however, is that for this short period mint-names appeared in so great a quantity.

You may well wonder, in view of this, what was happening at Lincoln and Stamford and it is on this that I want primarily to speak today. It will be remembered that, under Alfred's treaty with the Danish ruler Guthrum, England was divided into two, the area to the east of Watling Street being held by the Danes, that to the west by the English King. That was a sorry day for England; but, since it had at one time looked as if the whole country would be under the Danish

heel, it was a compromise that Alfred may have been not too unhappy to make. That the Danes came and settled in their area is borne out by many surviving place-names. They were on the whole peaceable folk and, once they had ousted the former owners of the land, settled down to farm it.

Alfred's successor on the Wessex throne, Edward the Elder, gradually recovered control of the Danish shires until, by the time his son Athelstan succeeded in 924, he did so to a kingdom that comprised virtually the whole of England, with the exception of Northumbria. In 918 the Danish armies south of the Humber had surrendered to Edward and, after the surrender of Nottingham, all the people settled in Mercia, Danes and Englishmen, submitted to him. Three years after his accession Athelstan recovered Northumbria, this time from the Norse invaders from Ireland, and could then justifiably call himself, as he did on his coins, King of the Whole of Britain.

It was at this point that mint-names began to appear on the coins. But it is clear that what was enforced in the old English territory was not necessarily enforced in the Danish shires. The English King sought to gain allegiance of the Danish settlers, not by force but by making them understand that it was he who could give them the most effective protection against the Norse Vikings from Ireland, who were as much their enemies as they were enemies of the English. In furtherance of his policy, the English King sought to avoid, wherever possible, disturbing the practices of the Danes or their customs.

It is no doubt a reflection of this policy that resulted in a different mint organisation in the Danish shires. These may for our purpose be divided into three areas — first Northumbria, second the area between the Humber and the Wash, and third East Anglia. And in each a different practice was followed. Take first Northumbria. Here mint-signed coins are found in quantity on Athelstan's recovery of the former kingdom. Two things, however, mark it as distinct from the rest of the country. Firstly, that there is a single mint, York of course, to cover the whole area. This compares with the multiplicity of mints in the old English country, as I mentioned. Secondly, that this one mint is controlled by a single moneyer. This again is in complete contrast to other parts. The volume of coinage at this time from York that has survived would, at any other mint, have been the product of many hands. At York there is the one man, Regnald, and he, it is clear, exercised control over his operations by an elaborate system of marks on his dies — for the purpose, it must be assumed, of being able to bring any offender to book.

East Anglia was different in some respects. Here again, however, a single mint, Norwich, covered the entire former kingdom, but there was the usual complement of moneyers: seven for an output seemingly considerably smaller than at York. A peculiarity of the East Anglian coinage is the apparent preference for coins with the King's head on them. At York it is not until nearly the end of Athelstan's reign that this feature is found and in Mercia it never is.

Finally, we come to the area of most concern to us today, that is between Humber and Wash. Here we have no mint-signed coins in the period between the St. Martin coinage and Edgar's reform. But we do have a substantial coinage of a type current in other parts of the country but of a quite distinctive style. Moreover, the names of the moneyers who produced it are not found on mint-signed coins. It becomes apparent that this group of coins must have come from some area in which mint-signed coins were not produced and one's mind turns immediately to the area between Humber and Wash — for which it is reasonable to be seeking a coinage.

That this is a correct surmise is very satisfactorily confirmed by coins of the same style, and in one or two cases actually by the same moneyers, being found in the name of the Norse King Anlaf who successfully invaded Northumbria in 939 and extended his conquests to the Five Boroughs for the two years 940 to 942. These Norse coins have until recently always been regarded as products of the Viking mint at York — but a recent study — as yet unpublished — has suggested that this little group of Norse coins, and only seven have survived — is more likely to have come from two mints south of the Humber — probably Lincoln and Stamford — an attribution to which some slight support is given by the fact that, on one coin, Anlaf's name is followed by the letters REST. One suggestion was that this should be extended to *Restauratus*⁵ on the grounds that Anlaf had occupied the Northumbrian throne for a short time before Athelstan's recovery of the kingdom. But this was never felt to be an entirely satisfactory explanation. On some of Anlaf's coins his name is followed by the title REX and the letters EBR — which can only stand for EBORACUM, King at York. On the analogy of this, the sug-

gestion has recently been made that the REST on these other Anlaf coins denotes King at Stamford. It is a novel idea and one that one would hesitate to accept without some supporting evidence. However, the style of the coins has already associated them with the area south of the Humber and I feel that the possible connection with Stamford of this and the three associated coins is something that should not be ignored. The remaining three coins in this small Viking group have features that distinguish them from the other four and may, I think, reasonably be associated with a mint at Lincoln.

There are, however, two further distinct groups of coins of Athelstan which have as features that the moneyers who struck them did not strike mint-signed coins and that the names of some are found on Viking coins of the period. These coins are characterized (exceptionally) by crudely drawn portraits of the King. It has been suggested that these too come from a mint, or mints, south of the Humber.

There is more work to be done on this but its result should be, by a study of the names found on these groups of the time of Athelstan and his successor Edmund, and by comparison with those that are found at the time of Edgar's reform, to bridge the gap between the two and to build up a fairly convincing picture of the activity (or otherwise) of the mints of Lincoln and Stamford in this period when mint-signed coins are absent. Wells made a start on this in a major study of the Stamford⁶ mint that he published in the 1930s and early 40s but he failed to take sufficient account of style and a number of the coins that he attributed to Stamford are, palpably, from other parts of the country.

The name of Stamford is first found on the coins at the time of the Edgar reform of the 970s. Somewhat surprisingly, the names of no less than seven moneyers of Stamford are found on this issue, a number that compares with four at Lincoln and in fact puts Stamford among the first mints of the country, ranking in number of moneyers only after York, Winchester and Northampton, and alongside London. In the three years' reign of the martyr King Edward that followed, this curious position is further emphasised — with fourteen moneyers recorded from Stamford compared with ten at Lincoln — a number that places Stamford second only to York, which has fifteen names in this reign.

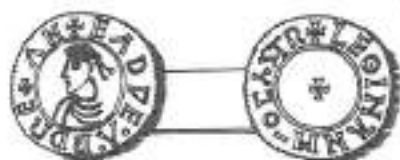


Fig. 6

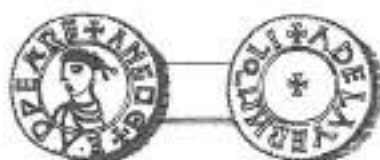


Fig. 7

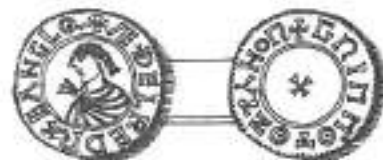


Fig. 8

Prima facie this would appear to reflect the fact that Stamford was one of the leading commercial centres of the Kingdom. But a cautionary note on the distorting effect of hoards must here be entered. For a number of years now, numismatists have believed there must, sometime in the 18th century, have been discovered a major hoard in the north-east Midlands to account for this preponderance of coins of Stamford and for relatively large number of coins that have survived of the mints of Lincoln and Northampton. But nothing positive could be found until, only a few months ago, two students independently came upon evidence that has established that there was found in 1749, a major hoard of coins of this period at Oakham in Rutlandshire⁷. I cannot go into all the evidence here: suffice it to say that there is an entry, fortunately accompanied by a drawing, in the minute books of the Spalding Gentlemen's Society for 17th August, 1749, recording the exhibition at that meeting of a penny of Edward the Martyr of the Stamford mint and of a farthing — this would be a quartered penny, the round farthing did not come in till much later — 'found (and here I quote) with many others in a pot at or near Oakham in Rutlandshire'. Almost simultaneously with the discovery of this entry, another reference was found dated 1780 referring to '200 or 300 coins of Edgar, Edward's son and Aethelred having been found together near Oakham, Rutlandshire all in fine preservation. Of a great variety of mints and minters.'

What is odd is that numismatists have long known of a hoard of Anglo-Saxon coins from Oakham in the 18th century, and had quite a lot of information about it. They knew, for instance, that it had been found by a miller on a path leading to his mill and that, as it was wet, a number of the coins stuck to his boots. But the actual composition was tantalisingly vague and

it had been thought that it was lost a century earlier. We can, I think, now say with confidence that we know the source of the relatively large number of surviving coins of these three mints and the reason why Stamford is disproportionately represented in our cabinets today.

The connection between the Lincoln and Stamford mints is demonstrated by several moneyers of the same name operating at both, and even more by the discovery of two coins of Aethelred's last type struck from the same obverse die but the one having on the reverse the Lincoln mint signature by a moneyer Cytlern, the other bearing the Stamford signature by a moneyer Aeswig⁸. The exchange of dies between these two mints is readily understandable. What is more puzzling is to find, in this very same type, an obverse die being used with reverse dies that bear the mint-names of Stamford and London respectively⁹.

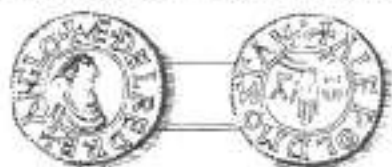


Fig. 9



Fig. 10

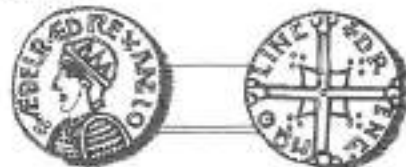


Fig. 11

An area in which further research could usefully be carried out is the relationship of the coinage of the Abbot of Peterborough to the mint at Stamford. He is recorded as having at one time the right of a moneyer at the royal mint at Stamford and at other times he appears to have struck at Medeshamstede itself. It is as recently as 1954 that Professor Dolley identified the first coin to bear the latter mint-name — a late penny of Aethelred II from a hoard found on the Island of Gothland¹⁰.

Further study of the coins of the Lincoln mint will be greatly facilitated by the monumental work of Mr. Henry Mossop on this single mint, published in 1970¹¹. The extent of this can be gauged when it is seen that over 3,000 coins of this one mint are illustrated, each with a reference to the collection in which it lies, that weights are given throughout and that every specimen that has been located — and there are often several for one illustration — has been recorded. It is therefore a mine of information for future study. But its publication will not, I hope, inhibit publication of the Hill collection. The very extent of Mr. Mossop's work precludes him from giving information such as the provenances of the Hill coins, important information which in publication of an individual collection can always be given.



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

Few provincial museums have scholarly collections of this kind of their local mints. Gloucester is one, with a collection of coins of the County, well founded on a bequest by Mr. Barnett in 1935, and since added to by judicious purchases. Chester is another — here the opportunity was taken in 1952 to buy the collection that Dr. Willoughby Gardner had built up over the previous 70 years. In both cases the collections have been published in the British Academy series called the *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* and I know the Academy would gladly include in their series a volume on the Hill collection, complemented it may be by other material in this, and possibly neighbouring, museums. There is, too, a security aspect to be considered. It is apparent that a thief would find much greater difficulty in disposing of a collection of which a fully illustrated record was on every dealer's shelves.

It would be a matter for negotiation, if such a publication were undertaken, how the cost would be borne, but I would expect the Academy to be prepared to shoulder a substantial part, so far as the Stamford material is concerned, and certainly to undertake the task of editing the entire manuscript before publication. Mr. Gunstone, who has already undertaken two volumes in this series, knows the procedure and I greatly hope that it will be found possible, in due course, for the work to be undertaken¹².

I have spoken chiefly about the Hill collection because this is what makes the Lincoln Museum cabinet of primary importance. But there is much other material of great value in the display. A nice run of Roman coins reflecting the importance of Lindum, a representative display of later English coins including one or two specimens of outstanding quality, selections from some important hoards found in the neighbourhood — notably a parcel from a great 12th century hoard found a few years ago in Lincoln itself. In one way or another, there should be something of interest for everyone in the exhibition that the museum has mounted.

In conclusion, it only remains for me to say what a pleasure it has been for me to see this superb collection displayed in a way that will enable it to be enjoyed by everyone — and finally to declare the exhibition open”.

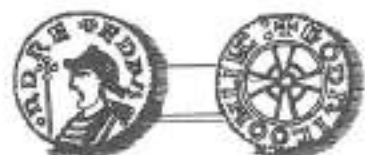


Fig. 15



Fig. 16

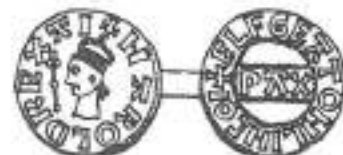


Fig. 17

ILLUSTRATIONS

The illustrations are of coins from the Lincolnshire mints of Caistor, Lincoln and Stamford. They have been selected by Antony Gunstone from early printed engravings and ink drawings recorded in the Lincolnshire Museums archives. Several are local finds and are published here for the first time. These early illustrations often contain slight errors and inconsistencies in the rendering of the inscriptions. The readings have been corrected in these notes. The present location of the coin is given where known.

- 1 Viking coinage in imitation of Alfred of Wessex. Moneyer's name on the obverse ERCENER and the Lincoln mint signature LINCOLLA on the reverse in monogram. Ruding¹³ pl.15.9. British Museum (*BMC*¹⁴ 82).
- 2 Viking coinage in imitation of Wessex. Moneyer's name ERIFER and the mint signature LINCOLA (?) in monogram. Drawn by Mrs. J. Jackson. Lincolnshire Museums collection (*SCB/* Lincolnshire 4). From the Hill, Lockett and Carlyon-Britton collections and probably found in a hoard at Stamford in 1902.
- 3 Viking coinage in imitation of Alfred of Wessex. Moneyer's name in monogram HERBERT? and the mint signature LINICOLLA. C. Oman *The Coinage of England*, (Oxford, 1931), pl. VIII.2. From the Cuerdale, Lancs, hoard, 1840 and now in the British Museum (*BMC* 83).
- 4 St. Martin coinage. Mint signature on reverse LINCOLIA CIVIT. This coin was in the Earl of Pembroke's collection when drawn in 1740 and published by Maurice Johnson 'A Dissertation on the Mint at Lincoln.... read at the Gentlemen's Society at Spalding on... August 28th 1740 and September 11th following.' in (J. Nichols) *An Account of the Gentlemen's Society at Spalding* London, 1784, pp. 56-67, pl. Norweb collection, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. (*SCB/* Norweb¹⁵ 129).
- 5 Edgar. Reform type (post 973). Stamford mint. Wulfgar moneyer. S. Sharp 'The Stamford Mint — Supplement' in *Numismatic Chronicle* 1880, p.211, pl. xi.1. Present location unknown.
- 6 Edward the Martyr. Small cross type (975-8). Caistor mint, Leofman moneyer. Ruding pl. 21.2. Discussed by R.H.M. Dolley in *BNJ* XXVIII, 1955-7, pp. 88-92 and Ian Stewart *NC* 1979 pp. 219-220. Hunterian Museum, Glasgow (*SCB/* Hunterian 736).
- 7 Edward the Martyr. As previous. Lincoln mint, Adelaver moneyer. Ruding pl. 21.6. Hunterian Museum, Glasgow (*SCB/* Hunterian 743).
- 8 Aethelred II. First small cross type (978-9). Stamford mint, Grim moneyer. Ruding pl. 22.5. Hunterian Museum, Glasgow (*SCB/* Hunterian 777).
- 9 Aethelred II. First hand type (979-85). Stamford mint, Alfwold moneyer. Ruding pl. 22.11. Hunterian Museum, Glasgow (*SCB/* Hunterian 804).
- 10 Aethelred II. Long cross type (997-1003). Lincoln mint, Dreng moneyer. Formerly in the collection of Mr. E.J. Willson of Lincoln, present location unknown. Found in Lincoln. Described and illustrated in the additional notes and plate to a manuscript transcription of Maurice Johnson 'A Dissertation on the Mint at Lincoln....' (see fig. 4 above for the printed version) in the Lincolnshire Archives Office (F.L. Misc. 1/1/1).
- 11 Aethelred II. Helmet type (1003-9). Lincoln mint, Dreng moneyer. Ruding pl. 22.1. Hunterian Museum, Glasgow (*SCB/* Hunterian 873).
- 12 Cnut. Quatrefoil type (1017-23). Lincoln mint, Leofinc moneyer. Described and illustrated in a manuscript in the E.J. Willson collection in the library of Society of Antiquaries of London (Ms. 786, vol. 13). 'Found more than 20 years ago (i.e. before 1803) in sinking a well near the lock at Lincoln'. Belonged to Mr. Scott, then to Mr. John Brotherton of Lincoln (d.1831), and then in the collection of Mr. Thomas James who drew it. Present location unknown.
- 13 Cnut. Short cross type (1029-35). Stamford mint, Morulf moneyer. Ruding pl. 22.1. Hunterian Museum, Glasgow (*SCB/* Hunterian 948).
- 14 Harold I. Jewel cross type (1035-6). Stamford mint, Lefric. S. Sharp 'The Stamford Mint in *Numismatic Chronicle* 1869 p.348 and S. Sharp.

Numismatic Chronicle 1880 pl. xi.ii. Then in S. Sharp collection, present location unknown.

- 15 Edward the Confessor. Expanding cross type (1050-53). Lincoln mint, Godric moneyer. Ruding pl. 24.3. Hunterian Museum, Glasgow (*SCB*/Hunter 1046).
- 16 Edward the Confessor. Pointed helmet type (1053-6). Lincoln mint, Othgrim moneyer. Same source as 10 above but with no information as to the coin's owner or find spot. Present location unknown.

Footnotes

- 1 A.H. Baldwin & Sons., Adelphi Terrace, London.
- 2 A seventh specimen has since been found.
- 3 (James William) Francis Hill *Medieval Lincoln*, (Cambridge, 1948), p.142.
- 4 B.H.I.H. Stewart 'The St. Martin Coins of Lincoln' in *British Numismatic Journal* (= *BNJ*) xxxvi, 1967, pp. 46-54.
- 5 *BNJ* xl, 1971, pp. 3-4.
- 6 *BNJ* xxii, 1934-7, pp. 36-77; xxiii, 1938-41, pp. 7-28; xxiv, 1941-4, pp. 69-109, 145-174.
- 7 (Now published) C.E. Blunt and C.S.S. Lyon 'The Oakham hoard of 1749 deposited c.980' in *Numismatic Chronicle* 1979, pp. 111-21.
- 8 *BNJ* xxxvi, 1967, p.78, pl. ix.43 and 44.
- 9 Stewart Lyon 'Historical Problems of Anglo-Saxon Coinage — (4) the Viking Age' in *BNJ* xxxix, 1970, p.202.
- 10 R.H.M. Dolley 'A New Anglo-Saxon Mint — Medeshamstede' in *BNJ* xxvii, 1952-4, pp. 263-5.
- 11 H.R. Mossop *The Lincoln Mint c.890-1279* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1970)
- 12 (Now published) Antony Gunstone *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles: Lincolnshire Collections*, (London, 1981). (= *SCBI* Lincolnshire).
- 13 Revd. R. Ruding, *Annals of the Coinage of Britain and its Dependencies etc*, third edition, 3 vols., (London, 1840) (= Ruding).
- 14 C.F. Keary and H.A. Grueber *A Catalogue of English Coins in The British Museum. The Anglo-Saxon Series*. 2 vols., (London, 1887-93) (= *BMC*).
- 15 C.E. Blunt, F. Elmore Jones and R.P. Mack *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles. Mrs. Emery May Norweb* (London 1971).
- 16 Anne S. Robertson *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles. Hunterian and Coats Collections, University of Glasgow* (London 1961).

Text written by C E Blunt.

Illustrations selected by Antony Gunstone.