

## NUMISMATIC PARALLELS TO KENTISH POLYCHROME BROOCHES

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Most numismatists are now disposed to agree that the fifth and sixth centuries of this era saw, in Britain, the intermittent production of copper coins, often crudely struck and many of them of 'minim' size. Although we have yet to find a deposit of such coins, whether 'radiate' or 'diademed,' which may, without so much as a shadow of doubt, be assigned to the late fifth or to the sixth century, there are various considerations which render the hypothesis of a late dating for certain of these coins extremely probable. I have attempted elsewhere<sup>1</sup> to set forth the general arguments in support of the continuous currency and intermittent production of 'minim' coinage in the fifth and sixth centuries. These arguments are partly numismatic, partly economic, partly archaeological. In one respect, however, there is room for further comment. It might well be expected that coins produced in the fifth or sixth century would show peculiarities of design and style sufficient to mark them off from the earlier productions of the Roman period. 'Surely' (someone might say) 'you can point to some coins which, because they are untouched by the influence of Roman designs, may be assigned to the period A.D. 400-600.'

It is, indeed, frequently possible to point to such coins, and they are a serious hindrance to the complete classification of 'radiate imitations.' There are some instances of a type being so ruthlessly copied as to develop certain characteristics which can be regarded only as an index of late date. But nearly all such instances suggest that this phenomenon might quite

<sup>1</sup> *Coinage and Currency in Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1937), pp. 115 ff.; 'Minimi, Radiate and Diademed: their Place in the Roman and post-Roman Currencies,' in *Proceedings of the Numismatic Congress, 1936*, forthcoming.

easily occur within a surprisingly short period of time. For example, the evolution of the *Pietas Augustor* design in the Whitchurch hoard,<sup>1</sup> and of the *Fel. Temp. Reparatio* design in the second Lydney Hoard,<sup>2</sup> was apparently a swift process, resulting from the intensive imitation of a particular type over a brief but continuous period. This process is paralleled by the much earlier instance of typological evolution offered by the deposit of British coins found at Hengistbury Head;<sup>3</sup> here too the coins formed a series close in time, and the development of design must have been extremely swift. Indeed, if (as the Whitchurch and Lydney hoards suggest) a moneyer had occasion to design a long sequence of dies in a hurry, this sequence seems to have caused a swift evolution of design unparalleled in a looser and more sporadic series; for, in general, the moneyers of the dark ages must constantly have been restrained from experimenting in original design by a conservatism due to the regular discovery of coins bearing orthodox Roman types.

It seems, therefore, that typological evolution in the fifth and sixth centuries was often the result of a forcing process. If so, we must admit that the evolution was generally in a deteriorating scale, if the cases cited above are to be taken as examples; both the *Pietas Augustor* and the *Fel. Temp. Reparatio* designs underwent swift and radical modification which led to a complete transformation of the original types. The former, indeed, ended up in a rather better state than the latter, for it is essentially a pattern design, and pattern can be simplified to a very bare degree without loss of interest or significant form. But in neither case is there the slightest indication of the reverse process, i.e., that gradual elaboration of design and pattern which was responsible for the mutation of the gold stater of the Bellovaci into the mature and elegant coins struck in the hey-day of the British kings.<sup>4</sup> Thus far, therefore, apart from occasional coins, of odd style and with types unrelated to any Roman prototype, we

<sup>1</sup> *Num. Chron.*, 1934, p. 92; 1935, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ditto, *Hengistbury Head*, pp. 65 ff.

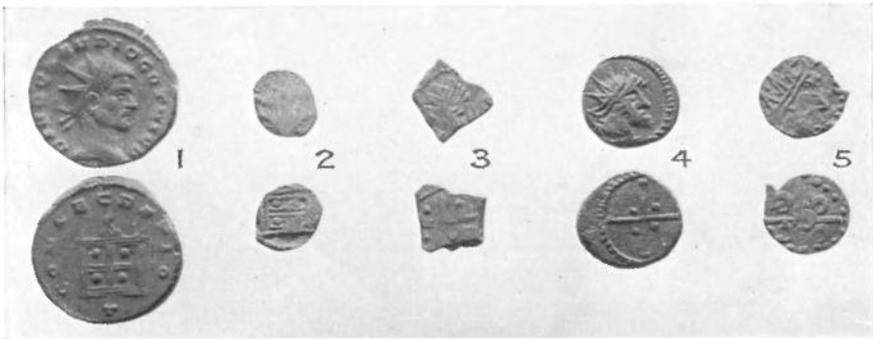
<sup>2</sup> Repts. Research Committee Soc. Antiq., *Lydney*, pp. 116 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Leeds, *Celtic Ornament, etc.*, Fig. 26.

appear to be unable to point to any coin or class of coins bearing a type of a demonstrably late date.

There is, however, one typological series which (by its possession of a radiate obverse throughout) suggests a long continuation in currency of some, at least, of the radiate coins. Among the many types of the Roman Imperial coinage which were at various times subject to imitation was that which, showing a square Altar, with the legend *CONSECRATIO*, was issued in large numbers to commemorate the death of Claudius Gothicus in A.D. 270. The original varieties of the type were many, but prominent among them is that in which the square face of the Altar is divided, by two intersecting lines, into four panels, each of which encloses a pellet (Plate i A, 1). This variety was often imitated, without at first losing much of the accuracy of the original (Plate i A, 2). But it appears to have undergone a stage of imitation in which the square outline of the altar was lost, the quadripartite design being now bounded by the circular line bordering the type as a whole (Plate i A, 3—Whitchurch hoard); the design is now that of an equal-armed cross dividing a circle into four segments, in each of which lies a pellet (Fig. 1, A). A coin from the Richborough radiate hoard (Plate i A, 4), shows this development in a more finished and stylised form; the chief emphasis is now laid upon the long cross, which (with its slightly knobbed ends) is carefully dissociated from the border of dots, though the four pellets are still used as accessories, closely grouped round the junction of the cross (Fig. 1, B). A later version of this design comes from the north of England (Plate i A, 5—Black Gate Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne). Here the work is very crude, and the cross itself has lost some of its character, for its arms are extended to the border of dots. But the four pellets have had more care bestowed upon them, and have been turned into annulets, while, finally and most important of all, the intersection of the arms of the cross is replaced by a fifth and central annulet (Fig. 1, C).

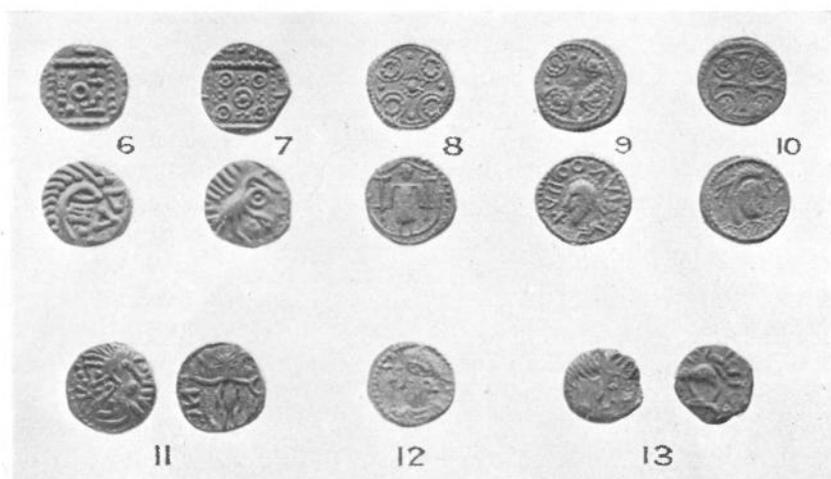
In this last stage the design is, in all its essentials, the same as that which marks an important class of



A



B



Anglo-Saxon brooches.<sup>1</sup> These fine brooches are, as their distribution shows, characteristic of post-Roman culture in Kent; it has been suggested<sup>2</sup> that Faversham was the centre of their production, although, as is indicated by two examples found at Milton (near Abingdon, Berks), they might on occasion travel some

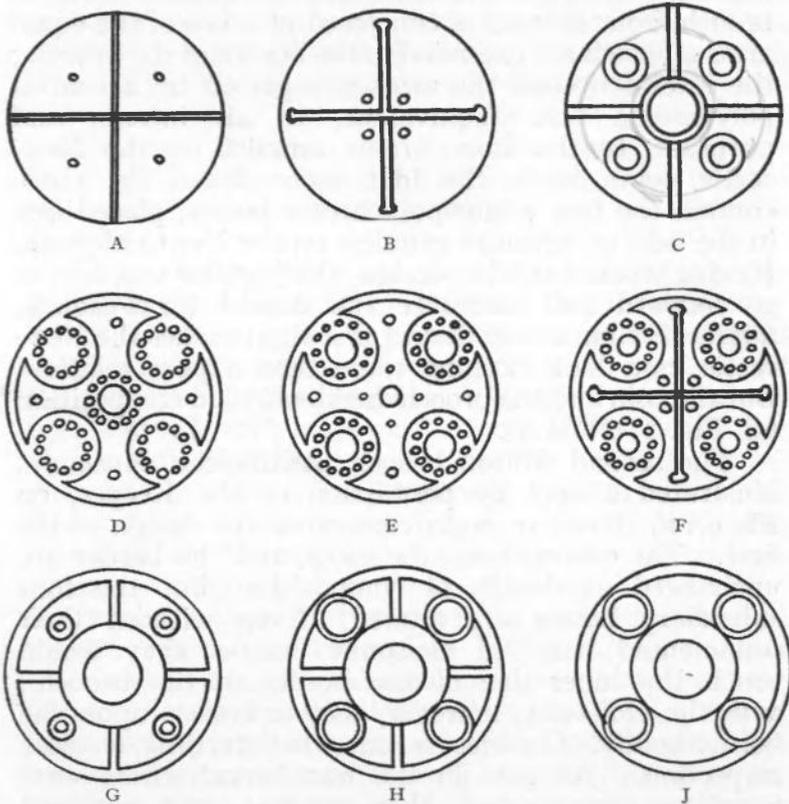


FIG. 1

way from the main area of frequency. It is, indeed, from these two Milton brooches that the essentials of design can best be studied. Hitherto, the attention of critics has been directed chiefly to the variations in

<sup>1</sup> Class III of Leeds, *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology*, Appendix, pp. 118 ff.; see also Kendrick, 'Polychrome Jewellery in Kent,'

in *Antiquity* vii (1933), pp. 429 ff., with Plate iv thereto.

<sup>2</sup> By Leeds, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

the application and the technique of the cloisonné and the filigree, together with general considerations of craftsmanship. But there is much more to be studied than this. The men who made these brooches were concerned, first and foremost, with the design; and the design which most of them adopted is the design shown here in Fig. 1, C. For instance, the British Museum brooch from Milton<sup>1</sup> is composed of a cross, the equal arms of which are extended to the border of the brooch; the intersection of the arms is replaced by a central polychrome boss (equivalent, to all intents and purposes, to the monochrome annulet on the Newcastle coin), while the four segments of the circle contain the four minor polychrome bosses, placed free in the field as were the annulets on the Newcastle coin. Having worked out his design, the jeweller was free to go forward and elaborate the details (in cloisonné, filigree, etc.) in a way that at first sight makes the Newcastle coin look nothing more than a poor relation. But the coin and the brooch are identical in composition (cf. Fig. 1, C and G).

The second Milton brooch (Ashmolean Museum; illustrated above, by permission of the Keeper, on Plate I B) shows an improvement on the design of the first. The central boss, the cross, and the border are unchanged as details of composition, but the four subsidiary bosses are altered. Even without their ornamented band of cloisonné enamel they would touch the inner line of the border of the brooch; *with* the cloisonné, however, they encroach upon the border boldly. The effect is somewhat startling, on close inspection. Whereas in the first brooch there were four large filigree panels, there are now eight, arranged in four pairs; and each pair forms one limb of a curved (or 'Celtic') cross, within which is still inset the original rectilinear cross: finally, the four subsidiary bosses or annulets lie tightly fitted within the curving arms of the new cross. An entirely new cruciform design has been achieved (Fig. 1, H).

Several other brooches incorporate this design, in whole or in part. The effect in the Kingston brooch<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kendrick, *op. cit.*, Plate iv, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Kendrick, *op. cit.*, Plate iv, 1.

is somewhat obscured by the fantastic richness of the cloisonné and filigree designs, and by an intermediate band between border and centre. In each of the two brooches from Faversham<sup>1</sup> the design is still further modified by the separation of the subsidiary bosses from the central one; the result is a thicker cross with shorter arms. The solidity of the 'Celtic' cross is of course enhanced by the omission of the inner rectilinear cross, as in the Sarre (British Museum) brooch (Fig. 1, J), whereas its effect is almost wholly destroyed if the ends of the rectilinear cross are 'stepped,' as in the Sarre (Ashmolean Museum) brooch. The design of this class of brooch in general can be seen to be responsible for such pieces of jewellery as the Stanton cross.<sup>2</sup>

From the jewellery we may return to coinage, to find that the design and evolution of the 'Celtic' cross on brooches is exactly paralleled on a well-defined series of Anglo-Saxon *sceattas*. The reverse-type of the so-called 'Wolf-Standard' class of *sceattas* has been derived, with much probability, from one or other of two Constantinian types, either the *Virtus Exercit*—VOT XX (standard and captives) type or the *Beata Tranquillitas*—VOTIS XX (altar) type.<sup>3</sup> With the break-up of the original design, we are left with a square containing meaningless letters or strokes; the letter O, from VOT or VOTIS, is generally removed to the centre of the square (Plate ii, 6). After this initial stage of debasement and disruption, the design is stylised and tidied; the central O is given an inner pellet, and is surrounded by four similar but smaller ring-ornaments (Plate ii, 7). At this stage the square outline of the altar is abandoned for a circular one, and a thin line is run round the four outer ring-ornaments (or rosettes, as they have now become) on all sides except that nearest the edge of the coin; this line is extended from rosette to rosette along the circumference of the coin (Plate ii, 8). Miraculously, the curvilinear 'Celtic' cross has been evolved,

<sup>1</sup> Kendrick, *op. cit.*, Plate iv, 2; Plate v.

<sup>3</sup> B.M.Cat., *Anglo-Saxon Coins*, i, Plate 1, b, d.

<sup>2</sup> Leeds, *op. cit.*, Plate xxx, e.

and in this, its simplest form (Fig. 1, D), the design is essentially the same as that of the Sarre (British Museum) brooch (Fig. 1, J).

On the *sceattas*, however, as on the brooches, there is room for variation of design. Rosettes become rosette-annulets, and the 'Celtic' cross is emphasised by the abandonment of the central rosette in favour of a pellet with four outliers (Plate ii, 9; Fig. 1, E). Finally, the pre-occupation of the moneyer with the cruciform design as such is proved by a coin-type (Plate ii, 10) which shows the old rectilinear cross *within* the new curvilinear cross (Fig. 1, F); here, the degree of resemblance to the design of the Milton (Ashmolean Museum) brooch is very remarkable, the only point of difference being that the small flan of the *sceatta* demanded four pellets as a central decoration instead of the annular boss which the designer of the brooch had space to use.

The design of cross and pellets, or cross and annulets (or rosettes), has thus been seen to occur on the late Romano-British series, on Anglo-Saxon jewellery, and on Anglo-Saxon *sceattas*. What is to be inferred from these facts?

It will, of course, be remarked that no evidence has been produced to show that this design was evolved upon a closely-knit series of the late Romano-British coinage, and that the coins numbered 3, 4 and 5 on Plate i A, may well be isolated examples of a die-engraver using a type that is no more than elementary in its symmetry. This would be a just and reasonable criticism. On the other hand, it is not possible to deny the parallelism between the three sets of design, and, so far as the Romano-British coins are concerned, this parallelism is all the more significant because the types of the late imitations of Roman copper coins were based nearly always on the figure-compositions of the earlier issues. This fondness for the older figure-types, though it did not exclude pattern-types, was certainly paramount; it is seen in the use of the *Fel. Temp. Reparatio* type in the 'diademed' hoards from Lydney,<sup>1</sup> Richborough<sup>2</sup> and Bourton-on-the-

<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Journ. Rom. Stud.*, 1932, p. 223.

Water,<sup>1</sup> and even in the occasional choice of a figure-type of Roman derivation for coins in the Anglo-Saxon series proper, as on the gold *thrymsa* shown in Plate ii, 11. Romano-British moneyers were not, in the strict sense, pattern-designers. The imitation of the *Pietas Augustor* type in the Whitchurch hoard<sup>2</sup> is, comparatively speaking, a rare phenomenon. Hence it is remarkable to find genuine pattern-design on coins which, to judge from their obverse-types and their metal, are in the Romano-British tradition: it is all the more remarkable when the pattern-design in question is of a type unknown before the fourth century and exactly paralleled in the dark ages. The parallelism of type once granted, we must concede some kind of proximity in time between the latest of the Romano-British coins and the brooches of the Anglo-Saxon jewellers.

At this point we encounter a notorious difficulty. The date of the relevant brooches is itself a subject which still keenly exercises the experts in Anglo-Saxon archaeology. On the one hand, it has recently been urged<sup>3</sup> that these brooches represent the fine florescence of native Kentish art, now successfully emancipated from stifling Roman conventions and not yet tinged by the degeneracy of the art of the Jutish influx, as seen in the brooches of the 'chip-carving' style. If we take this view, we shall necessarily assign the great cloisonné-and-filigree brooches which we have been examining to the end of the fifth century and the early years of the sixth, and we shall then find room for the 'chip-carving' style, which lacks cloison and filigree, during the rest of the sixth century and in the seventh. On the other hand, the more orthodox view holds that the exact reverse of this order took place,<sup>4</sup>—that the cloisonné-and-filigree brooches developed out of the 'chip-carving' style, and that they were being produced in Kent (and mainly at Faversham) scarcely before the beginning of the seventh century. Archaeological evidence does little to solve the problem. It is

<sup>1</sup> *Trans. Bristol and Glos. Arch. Soc.*, 1934, pp. 133 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> By Kendrick, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Leeds, *op. cit.*

true that the Sarre (British Museum) brooch was found with a number of coin-pendants of seventh-century date, and that it was probably worn in the seventh century; but it is argued, and not unfairly, that jewellery of really fine quality might well be treasured and preserved for a century or more.<sup>1</sup> To some extent the two styles, 'chip-carving' and cloisonné-filigree, were contemporary and overlapped, as finds have shown,<sup>2</sup> but at which end they overlapped archaeology has not yet shown. Clearly, a parallelism in design and date between a few Romano-British coins and the group of Anglo-Saxon brooches is of little significance unless the latter can be dated.

Here again reference must be made to the *sceattas*, for the parallelism between these and the brooches is also undeniably close. The men who cut the dies for the *sceattas* must certainly have seen some of the brooches: we should do well to remember Baldwin Brown's wise observation<sup>3</sup> that, in the period under discussion, the moneyer's art was also that of the goldsmith or silversmith. It was Baldwin Brown who first called attention to a remarkable *sceatta*-type<sup>4</sup> which has quite unmistakable affinities with Kentish step-cloisonné jewellery. That there is a connection between *sceattas* and brooches is not to be doubted; if, therefore, we could but date the relevant *sceattas*, we might also attempt an approximate dating for the brooches, perhaps rather earlier than that of the coins.

Unfortunately, the chronology of the *sceattas* is itself a matter of doubt and obscurity. The coins are rare, and seldom found in hoards in England, and thus material for comparative study is scarce; moreover, only a very small proportion of *sceattas* is inscribed. Nevertheless, it is possible to fix certain fairly clean limits for the duration of the series as a whole. It is generally conceded to-day that the silver *sceatta* currency was preceded in Britain by a gold currency. This at first consisted of *trientes* (or *tremisses*, both terms signifying

<sup>1</sup> Kendrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 430, 438.

<sup>2</sup> Kendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

<sup>3</sup> *Arts in Early England*, iii, p. 71 f.

<sup>4</sup> B.M.Cat., *Anglo-Saxon Coins*, i, Plate iv, 19.

one-third of a *solidus*) of Byzantine or Merovingian origin, which entered Britain sporadically, and which are still found in Britain from time to time ; such coins belong mainly to the period *circa* A.D. 550-600. Towards the end of this period, it is thought that production of gold coins, on the model of current Merovingian types, was begun on a limited scale in Britain ; the grounds for this belief are drawn from the famous Crondall hoard,<sup>1</sup> which included, besides two Anglo-Saxon jewelled ornaments and chains, one hundred gold coins of triental size—mostly Merovingian, but some (plainly copied from Merovingian types) bearing the legend LONDVNIV.<sup>2</sup> This hoard can probably be dated shortly after A.D. 600 from its inclusion of a coin of Phocas (A.D. 602-10), together with another coin bearing the name ABBO ; this latter may well have been an imitation of those produced by a Frankish moneyer of that name who was working at Châlons and Limoges at the turn of the century. Other indications of the emission of gold in Britain at this time are the coin attributable to the Frankish Queen Bertha's chaplain, Bishop Liudard, found in the St. Martin's (Canterbury) hoard ;<sup>3</sup> the *triens* bearing the mint-name of Canterbury (*Dorovernis Civitas*) in Paris ; and the *trientes* marked WVNÆTON—a name which may or may not suggest the working of an early episcopal mint at Winchester.

It might, of course, be objected that there is no irrefutable evidence that the gold triental coins (called *thrymsas*, a corruption from *tremissis*) preceded the silver *sceattas*. But various facts tend to show that this was the true sequence. Brooke pointed out<sup>4</sup> that the Bais (Ille-et-Vilaine) hoard from France contained only a sprinkling of silver among its gold, and also drew attention to the fact that certain *sceattas* of earlier style contain some gold in their composition ; moreover, certain *sceatta*-types seem to be derived from Merovingian gold, and, finally, the *sceattas* continued until their logical displacement by Offa's new penny in

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, i, pp. xiii ff. ; *Num. Chron.*, 1870, pp. 164 ff. ; Baldwin Brown, *op. cit.*, iii, pp. 69 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The hoard also contained three blank gold flans.

<sup>3</sup> Brooke, *English Coins*, p. 2 f.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*, p. 5.

the second half of the eighth century, long after the period to which the *thrymsas* can be assigned. The *thymrsa* currency was almost certainly a brief one; its types never developed any permanence, and, for reasons which are not yet recognised, it was superseded by the silver *sceattas*.

The available evidence therefore suggests the seventh and eighth centuries as the period in which *sceattas* were produced in Britain. Among the *sceattas* previously examined was one (Plate ii, 9; Fig. 1, E) bearing the London mint-name; two others, though unsigned, are of the same style and fabric (Fig. 1, D, F). As the Crondall hoard indicates the early operation of an Anglo-Saxon mint at London, we should perhaps be justified in assigning these *sceattas* to the period A.D. 600-650, though they may well be later. But it does not seem possible that they were earlier, i.e., before A.D. 600.

We may safely assume that the coins would imitate the brooches, if imitation did take place, rather than that the case was *vice versa*. If so, it follows that the brooches were most fashionable and most admired at the end of the sixth century; and they were, obviously, most fashionable and most admired when their production was a novelty. The evidence of the coins thus supports the later, and orthodox, dating for the Kentish cloisonné brooches. This dating, in turn, brings us back to the consideration of the 'cross-and-pellets' coins in the Romano-British series. On the present theory these, or at least the most developed of them (Fig. 1, C), must also be placed at the end of the sixth century. The question at once arises of the possibility that copper coins were produced (however sporadically) contemporaneously with *thrymsas* and *sceattas*. Were some few copper coins struck for irregular inclusion in the Anglo-Saxon series? Apart from the one remarkable parallelism suggested in this paper, there is another instance which may be cited. A striking coin from a recently-excavated site, of late date, near East Driffield, Yorkshire, shows a *Fel. Temp. Reparatio* (fallen horseman) reverse with an obverse which seems to possess close affinities with those

of certain *sceattas*.<sup>1</sup> The head (Plate ii, 13) is placed well to the side of the flan, and in front of it there rises a perpendicular staff or rod surmounted by some uncertain object; this, together with the general treatment of the head, makes an interesting comparison with some *sceattas* (see Plate ii, 10, 12; also B.M. Cat., *Anglo-Saxon Coins*, i, Plate iii, Nos. 28-29). And if difficulty is felt in the association of a Roman with a non-Roman type, it is enough, by way of answer, to point again to the *thrymsa* shown on Plate ii, 11; this coin shows an obverse type far removed from any prototype, Roman or otherwise, whereas the reverse is manifestly derived from some such Roman figure-type of the third century as *Pax* or *Sol Invictus*. Even though the evidence for an early Anglo-Saxon currency in copper is slight, it would surely be unwise to deny it altogether, with two such coins as those from Newcastle and Driffield in existence: there may well be more examples, were we but trained enough to recognise them.

No argument involving chronology, numismatic or archaeological, in the three centuries after the Roman evacuation of Britain can at present be expected to achieve any great measure of exactness; all estimates must be tentative, all theories tolerant and tolerated. The case presented above attempts only to bring three hitherto independent problems into some sort of relationship, in the hope that, by a joint consideration of them all, each problem may come a little nearer to solution.

<sup>1</sup> A. L. Congreve, 'A Roman and 1935-6,' in *Hull Museum Publications*, Saxon site at Elmswell, East Yorks., No. 193 (1937), p. 27.