

An Account of a Saxon Coin of Ecgfrith, King of Northumberland, presented to the Society by the Rev. JOHN HODGSON, Secretary.

See Plate VI. Fig. H.

ECGFRITH began to reign in 670. He succeeded his father, Oswy, in the kingdom of Bernicia, and the people of Deira revolting against their Sovereign, Alfred bestowed the crown of their country on Ecgfrith, who thus obtained the sovereignty of all Northumberland. He was a warlike prince; severely chastised the Picts and Mercians for invading his dominions; in 684 sent an army to conquer Ireland; but after sacriliciously destroying the monasteries there, returned home, beaten, disgraced, and ruined. His attempts to enlarge his dominions, amongst the Picts, were equally unsuccessful: they drew him into defiles amongst their hills and mosses, surrounded him, and, in an effort to save himself by cutting a passage through their ranks, slew him at Dumbarton on the 25th of May, 685.

An inscription in the Wall of the Church of Jarrow says, that that edifice was dedicated to St. Paul on the 8th of the Kalends of May, in the 15th year of this Monarch. Monkwearmouth Monastery, the elder sister of Jarrow, was founded in 669; and Ecgfrith endowed them both.

Wilfrid, Archbishop of York, founder of Hexham Church, and a man of great activity of mind, and notoriety in church history, was peculiarly obnoxious to this Sovereign, who deposed him, and deprived him of his dignities during the greater part of his reign.

Benedict Biscop, the founder of Jarrow and Monkwearmouth, according to Bede, was his favourite minister.

This coin, in being of copper, neatly minted, and bearing the name of its Sovereign, has the usual character of Saxo-Northumbrian coins;

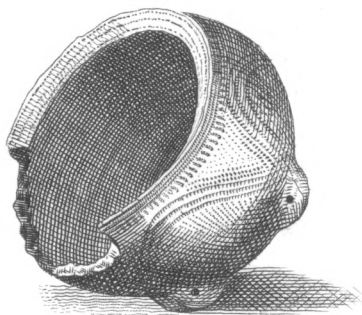
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PETRA FLAVI CARANTINI

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but it differs from them in having a device and motto on its reverse, instead of the moneyer's name.

The reverse, I suppose to be a cross, surrounded by a glory, and the motto LUX. How this device is applicable to Ecgfrith's character, is not easy to be perceived. But it clearly enough points out the glorious light which the religion of the cross is calculated to throw upon the world. It was probably intended as a compliment to Ecgfrith about the commencement of his reign, when the christian religion was in a flourishing and popular state.

Ecgfrith's name has been usually written Ecgfrid, by modern authors. The line of the inscription at Jarrow which mentions him is:— ANNO XV EGFRIDI REG. The Venerable Bede writes Ecgfridus; and Alfred, in his translation of Bede's history, has *Ecƿfrīð*, *Ecƿfrīþe*, and *Ecƿreþ*; and on this coin it is ECGFRID.

This coin, with a few others, was discovered in Heworth chapel yard, in a small earthen vessel, which I intend presenting to this Society, after I have gratified a few of my friends with inspecting it. All the coins, as far as I have cleared them of rust, are of the same King, and from the same die.

They were found in a part of the chapel yard, which had never been employed as burial ground; and, I think, that the claim of this chapel, to be nearly contemporary with Jarrow, is, by this discovery, pretty strongly established.

Of the rarity of the coin, I think I may safely remark, that none other of the same monarch, or of several of his successors, have hitherto been found. Indeed, according to Pinkerton, it is upwards of 150 years earlier than any other Saxo-Northumbrian coin known to be in existence.

JOHN HODGSON.