

FORTHCOMING EVENT

THE TONY ABRAMSON COLLECTION OF 'DARK AGE' COINAGE, PART III: COLLECTORS' SELECTION

London, Summer 2021

The majority of early Anglo-Saxon coins are elusive; finding them in choice condition is exceptional. Part I of the sale offered over 330 lots, many being among the best specimens of their class. Together with Part II, the full spectrum of Northumbrian coins was offered – a unique event.

However the shillings and early pennies in Part III have suffered the triple indignities of unsophisticated production, heavy circulation and over 1,250 years in more-or-less corrosive soil. The auction recalls Lord Stewartby's 'Academic' cabinet; what coins may lack as trophies, they make up for in their rarity, historical significance and remarkable iconography.

It can be awkward to fit these tiny survivors into the conventional grading system. In the first edition of *Sceatta*

List, Tony Abramson included an essay on pricing, stating that specimens in EF condition were effectively unattainable; 'grade I' (≈VF) prices were given for sceats rated as one of the 'best of class' and 'grade II' (≈F) applied if the sceat could be identified to a specific variety.

All the coins in Part III can be identified by precise variety, many are excellent specimens of that variety and some are highly elusive and unlikely to be offered again for a generation. Others provide the opportunity for dedicated collectors, hopefully inspired by what was offered in Parts I and II, to acquire a gratifying and meaningful cross-section of this much under-rated early coinage. There will certainly be some bargains for entrants to the field.

Shillings

An extreme example of a coin whose appeal is strictly numismatic is the unstruck shilling offered at Lot 582. With greater appeal is Lot 583, a rare example of the Pada type with elongated runes, whereas Lots 589 to 592 give a selection of the coinage of Vanimundus.



Shillings: 'Witmen' (Lot 577), PADA (583) and Vanimundus (589)

Primary Phase

An example of the extremely rare Series A, type 2a is available at Lot 593, and at Lot 598 a Valdoberhtus penny.



Primary phase: Series A1, type 2a (593) and Valdoberhtus (598)

The evolution of Series A into the runic Series C produces a number of unusual varieties. Some fine examples of CZ are at Lots 614-618.



Series CZ (614), Vernus (620) and Saroaldo (626)

Vernus and Saroaldo are well represented with some high quality strikes before a wide selection of Series R devolves into some exceptional R-related types, stretching this East Anglian mintage, with named moneyers, to the end of the Secondary phase.



Varieties of the Series C and R Runic bust (Lots 601, 617, 635, 636, 669)



Saltire and annulet crosses (Lots 678, 688, 699)

Geometric types, including type 70, saltire cross (675-695) and annulet cross (696-706) follow before primary Series B and its associates carries through from Lot 707 to 736. Then comes the successor coinages of Series J (737-753) and G (754-771).



Series BX (708), B (717) and BZ (736)



Unusual varieties of Series J (741) and G (754)

Secondary Phase

The proliferation of types in the more imaginative, less conservative iconography of the later coinage is so wide that the vendor has simply selected some notable pennies to illustrate here.



Insular borrowing: A rare LVNDONIA sceat (203) and a *trompe l'oeil* Celtic cross (790)

English borrowing of the 'porcupine' design is witnessed in Lot 779, an extremely rare combination of a Londonia obverse with a 'porcupine' reverse and, for a really crisp strike of a geometric type, Lot 790 is hard to beat.



Classic busts: rosette (793) and Series L, type 15 (815)

Many fine examples of the classic Anglo-Saxon diademed and draped bust are available. Despite the peripheral chip, the rosette penny at 793 is a beautiful example of this elusive type. Lot 815 is another clear example again combined with a standard bearer reverse. The reverse with foliage replacing one or both crosses is well represented.



Styles of drapery: Saddleback (829) and bejewelled (846)

The varying styles of drapery on this coinage, particularly in the Series K-related material, deserve far more attention. At Lot 829, unusual 'saddleback' drapery is shown and at 846 a bejewelled gown on a figure with triquetra headdress, holding a bud before. On the reverse an animal (panther?) rounds a bush with hanging fruit.



Fledgling variety (858)

A choice of fledgling coins, with their plausible association to Bede's *Life of Cuthbert*, is given at Lots 857-860, before a good selection of Series U and H types. Lots 872-3 are both very rare and some of the Hamwic types exquisite. No less, some of the Series N, M, O, Q, S and V groups which follow.



Exceptional rarities from Series U (872, 873)



Rare 10-boss obverse from Series H, Hamwic (888)



Series O (918), V (928) and S with central rosette (947)

Turning to southern inscribed sceats, a second sceat attributed to Willibrodr is included at Lot 948, with Æthiliræd coins at 952-4 and SEDE at 955-6.



'Willibrodr' (948), Æthiliræd (953) and SEDE (955)

Some rare examples of Series Z, F and W appear before the iconic designs of the Triquetras group (976-9) and Animal Mask types (984-5).



Series Z-related rarities: Aston Rowant type (956) and Maltese cross (957)



Fine examples of Series F (963) and W (971)



Iconic sceats: Triquetras group (977) and Animal Mask (985)



Penny of Offa, moneyer Ecghun, Chick type 168-170.

Part III closes with pennies of Offa and Cynethryth, both by Eoba, and the rare 'Star of David' type.

*NB lot numbers may be subject to change

The Tony Abramson Collection of 'Dark Age' Coinage, Part III: Collectors' Selection will be offered for sale in London during the Summer of 2021. For further information please contact Gregory Edmund, gedmund@spink.com.

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