

RESEARCHES AND DISCOVERIES.

I.—A MEDIÆVAL COUNTER.

A short time ago, in Godmersham Park, my wife picked up a coin which lay on some loose earth at the mouth of a rabbit's burrow. Doubtless it had been scratched out with the soil as the animal was tunnelling beneath the turf. The coin is in excellent preservation; its diameter is exactly one inch. The obverse has a well-executed representation of the *Agnus Dei*, with the legend MOVTON SVI DE BA in Lombardic characters; while the reverse displays a floriated cross within a quatrefoil, with a cross paty and the word AVE between the cusps.

A French gold coin known as the Mouton, and bearing the figure of the Lamb of God (whence the name), was current in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The mouton issued by Edward III. and Henry V. for use in the English possessions in France is said to have been of the value of five shillings sterling. The bronze *Jetton*, or counter, is an imitation of the Mouton d'or. The use of counters simplified the working of arithmetical sums, especially when Roman figures were in general use. Thus Shakespeare, in his "Winter's Tale" (iv. iii, 38), makes one of his characters say, "Every tod yields pound and odde shilling: fifteen hundred shorne, what comes the wooll too? I cannot do't without compters." [See New Oxford Dictionary.]

In reckoning, the counters were placed vertically one above the other, their powers or value being reckoned from the base upwards, instead of from right to left as in ordinary arithmetic, the number of the counters being equal to the units in the coefficients.

Our find, unlike the French mouton, being only of latten, I came to the conclusion that it was probably a casting counter made in imitation of the Mouton d'or; and this is



A MEDIEVAL COUNTER, Obverse and Reverse, enlarged.
Original one inch in diameter.

Found at Godmersham

confirmed by Mr. J. A. Herbert, of the British Museum, who writes: "The coin, as you suggest, is a French *Jetton*. My colleague Mr. G. F. Hill, Keeper of the Department of Coins, shewed me several examples of the type, but none with exactly the same spelling of the last word in the obverse inscription. In yours it is plainly MOVTON SVI[s] DE BA. The last word was probably originally BERRI. . . . The type is described in F. B. Barnard's 'The Casting Counter & the Counting Board,' Oxford 1916, p. 114."

I sent Mr. Barnard a copy of the photograph with a covering letter, to which he has been so good as to make the following reply:—

"Yes, this is a French *Jetton* dating probably somewhere between 1350 and 1450. Its type was a favourite one on French and Flemish counters of that period. . . . The meaning of the last two letters (on your piece BA) of the obverse legend is still somewhat in doubt. I have discussed a similar piece on p. 114 (No. 16) of my book. . . . I have, however, no example with BA in the obverse legend; BE is far more usual. There is no specimen in the French National Collection either with BA. It is doubtless a blunder for BE, which sometimes appears full as BERRI, and on this last word hangs much argument but no certainty."

With the permission of Lord Masham, the present owner of Godmersham Park, Mrs. Woodruff has presented the counter to the British Museum.

C. EVELEIGH WOODRUFF.

Godmersham, Oct. 11th, 1917.

A proof of the above note, together with a reproduction of the counter itself, was submitted to the Rev. R. S. Mylne, B.C.L., F.S.A., Fellow of Royal Society, Edinburgh, Member of Council of the Royal Numismatic Society, Member of the Archæological Society of France, who says he can add nothing, but there can be no doubt that the BA in the inscription is a mistake for BE; such errors in orthography being by no means uncommon.



1



2



3

Photo George Clinch.

SEAL OF THE VICAR OF RECULVER.

1. Side view.
2. Matrix of seal.
3. Impression in wax.

II.—SEAL OF THE VICAR OF RECVLVER.

BY GEORGE CLINCH, F.G.S., F.S.A. SCOT.

THE discovery of a fourteenth-century seal-matrix at Reculver was brought to my notice in July 1917 by Lieutenant Geoffrey C. Shiers. It had been dug up recently just to the south-east of the ruined church. On examination, after careful cleaning, this seal proved to be of peculiar interest. The material is bronze, and the form, as will be seen from the illustration, severely simple. The grip, or handle, is hexagonal, tapering and curved, having at the top a hole for suspension. The matrix, which is of rounded oval outline, measures one inch by five-sixths of an inch. The engraving is bold and skilful. The character of the head, that of a tonsured priest in high relief, is of pronounced classical type. This is seen particularly in the outline and features of the face and the long coupé neck. In general treatment the head is not unlike that borne on the coins of Julius Cæsar, from which perhaps, or from a Roman gem of that period such as would be found at Reculver, it may very likely have been copied. The tonsure is of large size, and the fringe of hair follows nearly the same line as that of the wreath worn to hide Cæsar's baldness.

The head is surrounded by an inscription, in elegant Lombardic lettering, reading:—

* S' VICARII DE REICVLVRE.

From the inscription it may be assumed that this was the official seal, rather than that of any individual vicar of Reculver. The date, to judge by the lettering, would be early in the fourteenth century.

According to the account of Reculver given by Hasted,* Nicholas de Tyngewyke appears to have been presented to the Rectory by the King in 1310. The presentation was made in opposition to the wishes of the Pope, who had made

* *History of Kent*, folio edition, iii. 639.

another presentation. The papal objection was, however, overcome in favour of Nicholas, who occupied the important office of physician to the King.

In the Register (f. 146^b) of Archbishop Reynolds is entered a grant, under the date of 1325, setting up a peculiar decanal jurisdiction at Reculver. The following transcript is from the printed copy of the deed in J. Duncombe's *History and Antiquities of Reculver*, 1784, p. 140 ("Bibl. Top. Brit.") :—

"Walterus, &c. Dilecto in Christo filio magistro Nicholao de Tyngewico, rectori ecclesie de Racolvre, salm, &c. Ad procedendum, cognoscendum, & firmiter * terminandum quascunque causas & quecunque negocia in parochia de Racolvre predict' cum suis capellis emergent', necnon ad debite corrigend' & puniend' commissa quorumcunque subditorum nostrorum inibi delinquencium, vobis, de cujus circumspectione & industria fidem plenam gerimus, vices nostras commitimus, cum coherisionis canonice potestate, donec eas duxerimus revocandas. In cujus, &c. Dat' apud Lambeth, 5 id' Decemb', 1325."

The fact that this grant gave special privileges to the rector, conferring on him, in fact, the status of a rural dean, and exempting him from other jurisdiction, suggests the probability that the seal was cut at about the date of the grant for use of the vicar of Reculver in the exercise of the functions conferred by the said grant. Possibly there exist among the archives of the Dean and Chapter, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, documents with impressions of this very matrix attached.

Seals of this kind, representing the official rather than the personal authority of a vicar, appear to be of great rarity. Indeed, I have not been able to trace another example; and thanks are due to the fortunate discoverer, Lieutenant Shiers, for permission to reproduce a seal of such special beauty and interest.

* Query, finaliter.