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Reviews

Medieval Anglo Irish Coins by Michael Dolley. B. A. Seaby Ltd., in conjunction with The Institute for Irish Studies at the Queen's University of Belfast, London 1972. pp. 90. £3.00

Mr Dolley, formerly of the Coins and Medals Department of the British Museum and now Reader in History at the Queen's University of Belfast, has established a well-deserved reputation in the field of medieval coinage. His work on coinage in the Anglo-Saxon and early Norman period of English history, for example, has been very well received by historians of that period. In recent years Mr Dolley has turned his attention to coinage relating to Ireland, that is to say to coinage, particularly medieval coinage, either struck in or circulating in Ireland. Following his study of Hiberno-Norse coins, in which he followed through the work of Dr William O'Sullivan, formerly of the National Museum of Ireland, Mr Dolley has produced two further works on coinage which are of profound importance for the history of the medieval lordship of Ireland and the crucial century or so after the ending of that lordship, the establishment of the Kingdom of Ireland and, in all essentials, the complete English conquest of this country.

Both of these works, his 'Anglo-Irish Monetary Policies, 1172-1637' (*Historical Studies* VII, J. C. Beckett (ed.), London, 1969) and the present volume might profitably be read in conjunction with each other. In the former, Mr Dolley set out his thesis regarding monetary policies in greater detail than he does in the latter. The present work, however, it should be emphasised, has its own intrinsic value. It makes the earlier work more readily available, and in a form which makes it attractive to both the historian and numismatist alike. The volume is copiously illustrated — in addition to numerous illustrations of coins interspersed in the text, it contains four full page colour plates depicting selected coins dating from the lordship of Prince John in 1185 to the reign of Queen Elizabeth — and contains seven maps, one setting out the location of Anglo-Irish mints from *c.*1185-*c.*1552 and five indicating the location of hoards of coins dating from *c.*1185 to 1603, discovered in Ireland, three appendices dealing with the circulation of foreign coinage in Ireland *c.*1150-*c.*1600, medieval Irish coin-hoards and the operation of the law of treasure trove in both Northern Ireland and the Republic, and a full index and bibliography. The text strikes a fair balance between description of coins and analysis of the policies which inspired their minting, and the volume as a whole is presented in a very pleasing format. It is, therefore, more than a catalogue of coins and coin hoards, although it serves that basic purpose very well and will long continue to be the standard work of reference on the subject. The work succeeds very well in achieving the purpose set out for it by its author, "an attempt to give an illustrated, narrative account of the coinage of Ireland over the period of almost four and a half centuries which elapsed between the arrival of Strongbow's Anglo-Normans. . . . and the Flight of the Earls in 1607". That alone is a major contribution to our knowledge of the subject. In fact, the author goes further and provides us also with the substance, at least, of his earlier analysis of Anglo-Irish monetary policies. Therefore, apart from its numismatic interest, the book is also of considerable importance to the historian interested in economic developments in medieval Ireland. It is from the latter angle, particularly, that the present reviewer has approached the book, and here it should be said that some of Mr Dolley's conclusions, set out at greater length in his earlier work and now incorporated into the present volume, cause certain misgivings.

The Irish coinage of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Mr Dolley argues, was minted essentially for the convenience and use of the English Crown. Thus, for example, in his discussion of coinage struck in King John's reign — when the king experienced acute financial need because of the war being waged against the French king to recover the Duchy of Normandy — he observes that "there occurred in England a drastic overhaul of the currency, and one of the concomitants of this was a decision to strike in Dublin an entirely new coinage the major denomination of which would be acceptable internationally, while all three denominations would be to the English standard. Pennies, halfpence and farthings were minted, and the pennies were of precisely the same weight and fineness as their English counterparts. . . . the intention being that they should be legal tender both sides of the Irish Sea. In this connection it is significant surely that the pennies are on record as having occurred in a wide range of thirteenth century coin-hoards from Great Britain and the Continent as well as from Ireland". Accordingly, Mr Dolley sees the minting of

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coinage in Ireland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as being essentially due to royal determination to exploit Irish bullion resources to the full. In addition, he sees this as part of a general process of exploitation of the Irish colony by the English Monarchy. Thus, for example, the Fulbourne brothers in the early 1280s are described as "bleeding white the colony's economy in the interest yet again of England's French ambitions . . ." as a reward for which they were promoted to the sees of Tuam and Waterford, a situation which, the author comments "reflects little credit on English attitudes towards the Anglo-Irish Church". (In fact, however, the appointment of civil servants to the episcopate was even more common in this period in England than it was in Ireland. Nor was this necessarily a question of the Crown foisting its officials on individual dioceses, since diocesan chapters could well take the view that it would be of benefit to them to have as their bishop a man with governmental contacts and experience).

Mr Dolley's thesis regarding exploitation needs to be set in some perspective. Undoubtedly the colony in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries was a major source of supply of money, provisions and material for the king's wars in Scotland and France. In this respect it was to some extent, at least, denuded of its resources. But English resources were also raided to sustain the king's wars abroad. There was, therefore, nothing distinctive about royal exploitation of the Irish colony. There was, however, a fundamental difference between conditions in England and those obtaining in Ireland. It can be argued that large scale exploitation of the resources of the Irish colony, particularly in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, crippled it at a crucial point in its development and made it more vulnerable to the onslaught which was to follow. That had not, however, been the intention of the Crown in converting the colony's resources to its own use. Indeed, the Crown merely extended to Ireland policies which it was pursuing in England. Likewise, it must be said that while Mr Dolley is undoubtedly correct in asserting that the primary purpose of minting coin in Ireland was to aid the Crown and augment its resources, the same is true in regard to English coinage. In general, then, it can be said that English resources were also exploited by the Crown in order to promote and finance its military activities.

There was, however, an additional reason, and a pressing one at that, for minting coinage, namely the financing of trade, particularly overseas trade. From an early date the need for a currency capable of servicing foreign trade was felt by the new class of merchants to be found in the expanding trading towns of the colony.

Mr Dolley is, no doubt, correct in asserting that the primary purpose of minting coinage such as this was to finance the Crown's activities. Yet, he is equally aware of the fact that John's new coinage, minted after 1204, in common with that minted subequently, had an additional function viz. the financing of trade. If, therefore, there was an outflow of capital from Ireland, this can be accounted for, at least in part, by the general trading situation, and in these circumstances, particularly bearing in mind the present inadequate state of our knowledge of medieval Irish economic history, an over-simplistic assertion of royal exploitation should be avoided. In short, in discussing the outflow of money, trading factors must be balanced against royal monetary policies. Moreover, royal exploitation of the resources of the colony was itself, to some extent at least, offset by private investment. "After 1169 . . . intercourse between England and the new colony was on such a scale that it would be remarkable if there had not been a certain flow of English coin into Ireland for all that official policy appears to have been one of spoilation. What does surprise is the scale on which English coin reached Ireland, and . . . it will be suggested that a proportion at least of imported specie represents private as opposed to royal investment in the lands of the new lordship". In western Europe as a whole, the thirteenth century was a period of very considerable capital investment in agriculture, and Ireland was no exception to the general phenomenon. In Ireland, however, because of deficiency in the documentary evidence, it is impossible to quantify this, but it is clear that the new Anglo-Irish landowners were investing heavily. Because of lack of documentation regarding the Irish situation we are even more dependent on non-documentary forms of evidence, the researches of numismatists, on the one hand, and of archaeologists on the other. Here Mr Dolley's work is invaluable. His conclusions, based largely on the evidence of coin hoards, contribute greatly to our knowledge of medieval Irish economic history particularly in relation to such key questions as the volume of coinage minted, monetary policies and the flow of money. The evidence of substantial capital investment in Irish land in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, which he has provided, is particularly valuable.

Valuable also are his conclusions in regard to fifteenth century developments, developments towards which, it would appear, the author is sympathetic. Political conditions in Ireland, and indeed outside it, precluded, at least for the bulk of the fifteenth century, any possibility of royal

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exploitation. It was a period in which there was little royal intervention in Irish affairs. Not until the end of the century, in the reign of Henry VII, was there any effective intervention and even that was limited. The degree of independence of the English Monarchy displayed by the more important and powerful members of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, who struggled for control of the Irish administration and the Irish Parliament, was matched by monetary and economic policies geared to the interests of a colony long neglected by the English Crown. In this connection the decisions of the Irish Parliament of February 1460 in regard to monetary policy were to be of the utmost significance. As Mr Dolley points out, "the proposed new Anglo-Irish coinage was to be founded on two concepts which at the time must have seemed quite revolutionary. The first was that the new coins were to have distinctive types so that there could be absolutely no possibility of confusion between them and their English counterparts. The second was that the Irish coins should weigh only three-quarters as much as English pieces with the same nominal value. The thinking behind these innovations may be summarized as follows. The low weight would mean that the Anglo-Irish coins would not be acceptable outside the colony and especially in England, while the striking new designs ensured that they would at once be recognized for what they were. Thus the drain of silver out of Ireland would be automatically halted —nobody was going to give fourpennyworth of goods or services for a coin which when brought to England would be worth threepence. Furthermore, and this was an essential part of the scheme, there was now a positive inducement for English coin to be carried into Ireland. It was laid down that an unclipped English groat would pass in the colony for more than its face-value in England, and proportional premiums were tariffed for the other principal gold and silver denominations of the period. In other words, the trader who came into Ireland with money to spend would find that his coins would go further than at home. The whole scheme amounted, in fact, to a very carefully contrived devaluation of the Irish pound, and it was rightly anticipated not only that the bullion reserves of the colony would mount sharply but also that there would be a very considerable stimulus to Irish exports as merchants from England hastened to buy cheaply such staple commodities as corn, hides and timber."

This last passage, quoted at length, sets out the essence of the author's thesis regarding the later fifteenth century situation. The argument that the Irish administration, in the second half of the century, was pursuing policies in the interests of the colony is, of course, well founded as can be seen from political developments in the period. Mr Dolley, however, has added a new perspective, indeed a new dimension, to our knowledge of the subject by showing that monetary policies, aimed at conserving Irish bullion, attracting bullion from abroad — in a period of scarcity not alone in Ireland but in western Europe as a whole — and encouraging Irish exports, were also promoted. As such, his conclusions deserve close attention. They are certainly of the greatest importance.

In general, this book is the work of a skilled numismatist and historian. However much one may feel unhappy about some of the author's conclusions in regard to thirteenth century developments, his conclusions as a whole contribute greatly to our knowledge of medieval Irish history, particularly the economic history of the period which has been for so long almost neglected. The book should help to focus attention on the importance of coins as historical evidence. Mr Dolley's expertise in this area is well established, and the present work will undoubtedly enhance his own reputation while leaving us all in his debt.

A. F. O'Brien

Captain Swing. By E. J. Hosbawm and George Rudé. Penguin University Books, 1973. £1.40.

This is a paperback edition of a study first published in 1969. As such, an opportunity for marginal revisions, suggested by searching reviews and new analytical techniques, is afforded. The authors both admit to and parry 'lacunae' in their subject, source, skill and interpretive range, while retaining confidence in the body of their original objectives.

The methodological analysis and the methodology used must serve as a case study for any research on Ireland's agrarian struggles. The geographical pattern of the spread of riots, as based

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