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## ESCHAREN 1980

by Dr. W. Op den Velde

Escharen (municipality of Grave) is a small village on the south bank of the river Maas. In the course of preliminary building activities on a piece of farm land on the west side of the Botseweg, a road in Escharen, many prehistorical and Roman finds were made. After amateur archaeologists had begun further investigations of the area, some early medieval material came to light on the east side of the Botseweg. A search with a metal detector yielded nine very well preserved early medieval silver coins, in addition to a gold fibula and some bronze artifacts. This site is several kilometers away from the find spot of the Escharen hoard of gold tremisses (De Man 1898, Lafaurie 1959/60). The coins were found in 1980 and belong to the series of denarial coinage, commonly known as "sceattas". They were buried near the surface and lay in a single line, over a span of one metre, in what was perhaps an old plough furrow. There was no connection with recognizable archaeological structures. A preliminary report on these coins was published by Verwers (1983).

### *Description of the coins*

All photographs twice enlarged

1.



Obv. on the right a diademed head, to its left a large A, in front of the head traces of runic characters **h l**

Rev. cross with four pellets, illegible legend.

Silver, 1.10 g

Continental runic type, Rigold series D, BMC type 2c.

2.



Similar to no. 1

Obv. **h l**

Silver 1.20 g

3.



Similar to no. 1

Obv.

Silver, 1.20 g

4.



Similar to no. 1

Obv.

Silver, somewhat corroded, 1.15 g

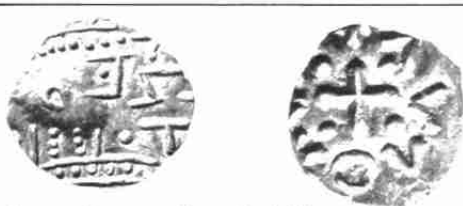
5.



Similar to no. 1. Obv.

Rev. struck off centre.

Silver, 1.105 g



Aston Rowant hoard, 1.41 g

Published with permission of the Trustees of the British Museum, London.

A die-identical coin is present in the collection of the British Museum, London, no. 12.16.95, Aston Rowant hoard 1971.

6.







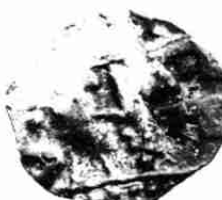




Obv. similar to no. 1.

Rev. very indistinct face? with arc of dots and radiating lines, to the left of which indecipherable letters, sometimes interpreted as TILV.

Silver, 1.25 g

Rigold series D/E, BMC type 10

7.   Similar to no. 6  
Obv.   
Silver, 1.245 g  
Obv. die-duplicate of no. 8
8.   Similar to no. 6  
Obv.   
Silver, 1.11 g  
Obv. die-duplicate of no. 7
9.   Similar to no. 6  
Obv.   
Silver, 0.98 g, chipped. Obv. seems to be die-identical with the coin formerly belonging to the Lockett collection, see p. 10.

These nine coins can be regarded as a small hoard, consisting of two closely related types of coins with similar obverse design, namely BMC type 2c (continental runic type) and BMC type 10.

Many different types and varieties of the early medieval denarial coin series have been listed and described (Op den Velde 1982; Stewart 1984). The continental runic type is a common one. Specimens have been found in the following hoards and finds:

ENGLAND	Aston Rowant	162
	Birchington	2
	Caister-on-Sea	1
	Cambridge	2
	Dunstable	1
	Grimsby	1
	Kempston	1

	Kingston Down	1	
	North Ferriby	2	
	Reculver	1	
	Southampton	3	
	Thanet	4	
	Tibenham	1	
	Watton	1	
	Whitby	1	
FRANCE	Bais	17	
	Nice-Cimiez	2	
	Nohanent	2	
	Plassac	1	
	St-Pierre-les-Étieux	2	
GERMANY	Bonn	1	
	Euskirchen	1	
	Remagen	1	
	Rheinbach	1	
	Xanten	2	
NETHERLANDS	Bakkum	1	
	Domburg	189	
	Dommelen	2	
	Escharen	5	(this article)
	Kats	1	
	Maurik	1	
	Nijmegen	1	
	Posterholt	1	
	Rotterdam	1	
	Schouwen	1	
	Wijk-bij-Duurstede	4	
DENMARK	Dankirke	2	
BELGIUM	De Panne	3	

Many more specimens exist in both public and private collections. This relatively large number and the rareness of the links, indicate large-scale production.

The obverse design of the continental runic type is, at its best, a careful copy of an English denarial coin type, which belongs to the so-called primary series, the earliest type of this regular silver coinage. The runic characters "Æpa" or "Apa" to the right of the diademed head, almost certainly denote moneyers and not rulers. The reverse shows a cross with four pellets, and meaningless characters (not runes) which are intended to give the impression of a legend. This reverse design has also been found on several Merovingian coin types, such as De Belfort (1892/94) No 6547 and No 6189.

BMC type 10, however, is rare. There are only four recorded finds of known provenance:

ENGLAND	i. Long Wittenham	1
NETHERLANDS	b. Domburg**	1
	h. Escharen	4 (this article)
	c. "Friesland"	1

and five of unknown provenance:

a. British Museum	1
d. De Belfort No 5796	1
e. Ex coll. Lockett	1 ?
f. Ex coll. Grantley	1 ?
(possibly a forgery)	
g. Koninklijk Penningkabinet	1 ?
(possibly a forgery)	

The obverse of BMC type 10 is analogous to that of the continental runic type. It is not unlikely that both types originate from the same mint(s). The reverse with a barbaric face shows a resemblance to the "porcupine" design, found on many denarial coins. That two heads should occur on one coin, one quite clear and one very indistinct, is intriguing. It is possible that this is a transitional type between the continental runic type and the porcupine series. The meaning of the legend TILV to the left of the "porcupine" head is uncertain. The suggestion that it refers to the city of Tiel is unjustified (Metcalf 1984).

\*\* De Belfort (1892/94) mentions three BMC type 10 coins found at Domburg, but this is due to a misunderstanding. De Belfort incorrectly translated Rethaan Macaré's "3e soort" (referring to Rethaan Macaré's own typology) as "3 different coins".



- a. British Museum, London, No 86  
Lindsay 1842 P1 I-6  
Hill 1949/51 P1 II-40



- b. Domburg, Zeeuws Museum, Middelburg, No 188  
Rethaan Macaré I P1 2-40  
Van der Chijs 1866 P1 V-49  
Dirks 1870 P1 F-7  
De Belfort No 5861 (not No 5796)  
Baldwin Brown 1915 P1 VII-16



- c. "Friesland", ex coll. J.W Stephanik  
De Man 1895 P1 I-2  
Auction Muller 1904 P1 II-1  
Le Gentilhomme 1938 fig 6



- d. Ex coll. Duhamel, à Etrichy  
De Belfort No 5796 (not No 5861)



- e. Ex coll. Lockett  
Auction Glendining 1955 No 228



- f. Ex coll. Grantley  
Auction Glendining 1974 No 3  
Auction Spink 1982 No 45  
Photograph kindly provided by Spink & Son, London



- g. National Collection, No 1946-22,  
Koninklijk Penningkabinet Leiden  
No provenance recorded  
Cast forgery, 1.60 gram



- h. Escharen (1980) No 9 (and 6, 7, 8)



- i. Long Wittenham, found alongside the Thames  
Metcalf 1984.

For the references cited see the paper by Op den Velde, De Boone, Pol 1984.



It may be assumed from the rarity of BMC type 10 (9 or possibly 12 specimens known), that only a limited number of these coins were minted. This is confirmed by the fact that several of the known specimens are die-linked (Escharen 7-8, Escharen 9-Lockett)\*.

The dating of these coins is difficult. Although in the past various periods have been suggested, it is now generally accepted that the continental runic type was issued between 700 and 715 (Blackburn 1984). It seems very likely that BMC type 10 was produced in the same period. The place of origin of the continental runic type is still uncertain, as stylistic analysis gives little hold and the distribution pattern of the finds covers a very extended area. Merovingian, English and southern Low Countries origins have to be considered (Op den Velde, De Boone, Pol 1984), the last of which is the most probable one. Whichever the origin, these coins were probably minted under Merovingian authority. Both Quentovic and Domburg have been suggested as places of issue, but there is no firm evidence pointing to either of these.

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\* However, a closer look at these coins raises a problem (see p. 10), as De Belfort 5796 bears a close resemblance to the coin in the Lockett collection. It may possibly be the same coin, acquired by Lockett at a later date. Furthermore, it would appear that the only coin of this type in the collection of the Koninklijk Penninkabinet in Leiden, is a cast forgery. Its origin is uncertain, but it is most likely to be an old acquisition. The BMC type 10 coin in the Grantley collection also has the same characteristics, as far as can be ascertained from its photograph. Therefore, the possibility that it too is a cast specimen has to be considered. It is conceivable that the coin from the Lockett collection was used to prepare a mould, which would reduce the total number of genuine BMC type 10 denarii to nine.

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