

THE ANGLO-IRISH COINAGE OF HENRY VI

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THE new Anglo-Irish coinage introduced by King John *c.*1208, while distinctive in type to reflect the crown's lordship of Ireland, was purposefully struck to the same standards of weight and fineness as the English.¹ It marked a radical departure from existing monetary practice in the island, where the Irish penny weight standard was equivalent to half that of sterling, for, as Roger of Wendover put it, it was intended that 'the use of this [new] money should be general both in England and in Ireland, and that the penny of either realm without distinction should be placed in his [the king's] treasuries'.² Except in its fractional denominations, the primary function of the new money was thus not to meet any insular need as was the *raison d'être* for John's 'DOM[inus]' coinage that had been in extensive production for the previous two decades³ but rather, drawing on the lordship's revenues, to act as a supplement to the output of the English mints and to serve the wider requirements of the crown whenever the occasion demanded.

Transfer of Irish treasure was to be a feature of the ensuing century and represented a considerable proportion of the moneys accounted for at the Dublin exchequer, the bulk of it being redirected to meeting the crown's debts and, particularly, to funding its military involvements in France, Wales and Scotland.⁴ Thus, very little of the £140,000 that Michael Dolley estimated to have been struck in the episodic flurries of Irish mint activity between *c.*1208 and the final demise of operations at Dublin in 1301 – the minting of the majority of these issues being directly related to campaigning pressures – remained in Ireland to serve insular needs.⁵

By the beginning of the fourteenth century the crown's external disposal of the lordship's revenues had left the island's Anglo-Irish economy⁶ denuded of its silver reserves and its administration bereft of the financial means necessary for good government. It was a situation that was never to improve despite the promise extracted from Edward II in 1311 – in response to a plea from the Dublin government – that Ireland's revenues would be expended within the lordship 'for the preservation of the peace of the land ... and in its arduous affairs there',⁷ for it never proved possible to raise adequate resources within the island itself. The large surpluses hitherto extracted from the Irish exchequer, particularly during the reign of

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¹ The new Irish penny standards were thus approximately 22.0 grains weight and *c.*93.33–93.75 per cent fineness and were [probably] to remain so throughout the thirteenth century: see Allen 2012, 142–6 and 159–61 for discussions of the English standards. Parity of standards with the English coinage was to continue until the assertion of 'Anglo-Irish separatism' in the Irish parliament of 1460.

² *Jussit ... rex, ut illius monetae usus tam in Anglia quam in Hibernia communis ab omnibus haberetur, et utriusque regni denarius in thesauris suis indifferenter poneretur*: Coxe 1841–44, III (1841), 233–4.

³ The fractional denominations, which are rarely found outside Ireland, seem to have been designed only for insular consumption conforming to the accepted Irish currency standard of half the English penny. See Dykes 2013, 124.

⁴ Lydon 1964, 41–2.

⁵ Dolley 1968; Dolley 1993, 819; Lydon 1964, 53–7. The crown's military requirements are instanced by the recoinages of 1208/9–1211/12, *c.*1280–84, *c.*1294–95 and 1300–01. The recoinage of 1251–54 is probably to be connected with Henry III's collection of funds for a proposed Crusade which he intended to embark upon in 1256 but which was abandoned because of the Gascon campaign of 1253–54 to which the crusading treasure was diverted. For an indispensable survey of these coinages see Stewartby 2009, 60–2, 71, 97–8, 107, 158–63, 181–3, 544. See also Dykes 2013 for a reappraisal of the chronology of King John's REX coinage.

⁶ It should perhaps be stressed that the circulation of coin in Ireland was essentially confined to the Anglo-Irish 'colony' and the island's commercial communities. It was not a significant feature of the Gaelic parts of the country away from English control and influence.

⁷ *Nos de consilio nostro Anglie concessimus quod omnes denarii de exitibus dicte terre pervenientes de cetero expendantur in eadem terra circa conservacionem pacis eiusdem terre et in aliis arduis negociis ibidem ...*: From a letter, consequent upon the Ordinances of 1311, sent to the sheriff of Cork in 1311 or early 1312, quoted in Lydon 1964, 52–3. Similar letters were sent to other sheriffs and officials in Ireland.

Edward I – averaging annually about £6,300 between 1278 and 1299 – were dwindling considerably by his grandson's time; and during the years 1315 to 1361 the annual average was little more than £2,000, hardly enough to govern and defend effectively the lordship's 'obedient shires' around Dublin.⁸ It is not surprising therefore that, after the closure of the Dublin mint in 1301, no attempt, even during the Bruce invasion in 1315–18, was made to strike any coinage in Ireland for close on four decades.

The spasmodic Irish coinages of the thirteenth century had been instituted by the English government essentially for reasons of state with little regard for any purely insular monetary requirement other than that of taxation. By the 1330s, as the lordship's economy developed, the initiative was moving to the Anglo-Irish colonists themselves. Their want of good coin had become a major grievance among the Anglo-Irish who since the earliest years of the new century had been reduced to the import of base Continental coin to provide sufficient currency for everyday transactions.⁹ It was therefore a departure from past practice and a *reactive* gesture to pleas from the Dublin administration when, in 1336, Edward III set on foot a scheme for the production of 'money of halfpennies and farthings ... at the Dublin mint for the king and his people of those parts'.¹⁰ But the project was dependent on the finding and exploitation of local silver mines. Dies were sanguinely ordered but nothing came of the enterprise; obviously the search for silver had been unavailing despite the crown's exhortation of the island's 'cities, boroughs, towns and other people [to] give their counsel and aid'. Two years later, in June 1338, the plan was revived, though – significantly coinciding with opening of the king's offensive in Flanders – the penny was added to the fractional denominations. March 1339 saw eight pairs of dies for sterlings with a similar number for halfpennies and farthings being ordered to be sent to Ireland but it was again quickly found that the lordship's economic situation – the Irish internal revenue had fallen to an annual average of £1,200 in 1337–40¹¹ – could in no way sustain the production of the extensive coinage envisaged.¹² Striking seems to have been restricted to a limited issue of the fractional coins presumably intended for consumption within the lordship and lasted no more than four months or so. Only two halfpennies and a likely farthing – commensurate with the debased (c.83.3 per cent fine) and reduced-weight English class XVe (star-marked) halfpennies and farthings of 1335–43 – are known today from what must have been in the event a relatively exiguous coinage.¹³

Concurrently with the order for the dies in March 1339 an optimistic instruction had been issued by Edward III to ban the circulation of *moneta nigra vocata Turneys* ('the black money called "Turneys"') under pain of forfeiture of the money and goods. Little more than three months later, on 12 June, the prohibition was rescinded 'until the king have caused other money to be made' since 'he has learned from the community of that land that great damage is done to the king and the men of the land by that prohibition, through lack of money of sterling'. This hint of a more than temporary official toleration of inferior Continental coin clearly reflected the unyielding problem of securing sufficient silver for Irish mint production.¹⁴ Not surprisingly the dies were eventually recalled from Dublin in November 1340 and it was not to be for another eighty years that any further attempt was undertaken by government to embark on another coinage for Ireland. The English coinage reforms of 1351 were not echoed in the lordship, the country's monetary economy being dominated by increasingly deteriorating English pennies of the first two Edwards supplemented by savagely clipped Edward III groats and half-groats, forgeries, and, during the last quarter of the fourteenth century, by a significant influx of inferior Scottish groats of David II and Robert II, especially, but not solely, into eastern Ulster. Here, they may well have circulated at their face value

⁸ Richardson and Sayles 1962, 93–4, 100.

⁹ See Simon 1749, 15–17.

¹⁰ Dykes 1976, 47–8.

¹¹ Richardson and Sayles 1962, 97.

¹² For this coinage see Dykes 1976, 44–50.

¹³ The halfpennies are in the Ulster Museum and a private collection; the farthing, struck from a defective pyriform flan rendering the legends incomplete, is in the National Museum of Ireland; for illustrations see Dykes 1976, pl. X, a, b, and c.

¹⁴ *Calendar of Close Rolls: Edward III, 1339–1341*, 98 (1 March 1339), 225 (12 June 1339). See also Dykes 1976, 48.

despite attempts to tariff them at threepence sterling.¹⁵ Wear, the intense clipping to which any higher-value coins were subjected, and the prevalence of inferior foreign coinage, created a currency which by the closing years of the century was deplorable in the extreme.¹⁶

Any 'good' coin in the island was promptly exported so that little was acceptable for taxes. By January 1380, at the end of its tether, the Irish parliament petitioned Richard II:

Because merchants, for their personal benefit, take gold and silver out of the country to finance their trade, so that little or nothing remains in the said land, whereby the said lieges are greatly impoverished, . . . to ordain and grant in the said land, mining and coinage; that is to say, mining of all kinds of metal, and coinage of gold and silver. And that each lord of the land within the lordship may have a mine, making plate or pieces or metal for conversion into bullion, or to make vessels or their other essentials, without sending or carrying it as merchandise out of the country.

Although the king approved the petition and authorised the mining of gold and silver in Ireland for conversion into 'the king's coinage in the city of Dublin' nothing came of his response and the export of such silver as warranted it continued unabated.¹⁷

The lordship was by now effectively bankrupt, its council in disarray and much of the country outside the 'four obedient shires' of Dublin, Louth, Meath and Kildare (what was later and on a reduced scale to become the Pale) less secure than it had been in the mid-thirteenth century; there was no money in the Irish exchequer 'to meet even the ordinary costs of government, let alone those of military activity' and there were many in the island administration who feared that, unless urgent relief was forthcoming, the colony would cease to exist.¹⁸ There was no solution but to make the lordship totally dependent on England.

It was in this context that Richard II was prevailed upon to intervene in Ireland himself – the first English king to do so personally since John in 1210 – and in 1394–95 and 1399, for a time free of continental imbroglios, he led two expeditions to curb the resurgence of the Irish chieftains and 'kinglets' and to restore the authority of his Dublin administration. But despite the scale even of his first expedition – his army was the largest to land in Ireland during the Middle Ages while his fleet of transports and fighting ships was vast¹⁹ – Richard was, unlike his ancestor, to issue no coinage to mark his *adventus*.

In the event, Richard's Irish campaigns, successful though they were at the time and resulting in a fleeting submission of 'the great chieftains of the Irish nation', brought no long-term solution to the lordship's problems. The internal political situation quickly deteriorated and the colony became even more of a net drain on English resources. But this support, continuing but fluctuating and intermittent, was never sufficient. Continual insular warfare, piracy in the Irish Sea and administrative malfeasance and extortion left little for the 'comfort and safeguard of the king's lieges'.

Change of dynasty saw no alleviation of the lordship's problems. Ireland remained a liability; a financial embarrassment to an English crown more focussed on marshalling its resources to pursue its aims in France than to succour the lordship or even defend its interests there. The island's desperate situation brought forth in April 1421 yet another declaration from the 'poor

¹⁵ Dolley 1972, 16–17.

¹⁶ For the hoard evidence on which this paragraph is based see Dolley 1972, 51–53, 62–3; Seaby and Stewart 1964, 94–102, esp. 'Appendix' (pp. 99–102), and the references contained therein. As Dolley stressed in 1972 very little systematic work had been done on hoards of this period so that his listing ('Appendix II B' (p. 62) may not have been complete. The evidence set out in the authorities quoted has, however, not been modified over the decades since their publication.

¹⁷ 'It pleases the king that anyone may mine and excavate from their own soil in the said land gold, silver and all other metals, for six years to come; rendering a ninth to the king; and that they may make plate or pieces from the gold and silver which they have thus dug out, and convert it to the king's coinage in the city of Dublin, receiving the king's money of an equal value, saving the lordship of the king, and the customary fees for the said coinage, and without the said place, piece or other bullion being sent or carried by way of merchandise or in any other way out of the said land, save by the special permission of the king in his letters, except to England; on pain of forfeiture of the same if it be found, or payment of the value of the same by whomsoever shall be thus convicted': Martin and Given-Wilson 2005, 178, no. 43. See also Berry 1907, 477 and Simon 1749, 19, note †, quoting Harris 1745, 210.

¹⁸ Saul 1997, 270, 273. As James Lydon has stressed 'For the rest of the middle ages the Irish lordship was a liability, a financial embarrassment to the English crown': Lydon 1964, 49.

¹⁹ His army in 1394–95 has been estimated as totalling 8–10,000 men and his fleet more than 500 vessels. His army in 1399 was much smaller but still numbered at least 4,500 men: Lydon 1963, 140, 142; Saul 1997, 288, n. 58. Richard's armies were comparable in size to those led against France during the Hundred Years' War: Lydon 1963, 142–3.

humble lieges' of the Anglo-Irish parliament – a lengthy document of nineteen articles – begging the king (Henry V) to come to the lordship in person again, even to declare a crusade, for the land, ravaged by Irish enemies and English rebels, 'has descended to so great a decline that it will never be relieved . . . without [his] most sovereign and gracious presence'. They added many, bitter, complaints: 'Holders of land, craftsmen and labourers, being burdened with various intolerable charges and wars from day to day, are daily leaving in great numbers. Because of this the cultivation of the said land is greatly injured and disused, and the King's lieges greatly enfeebled in resisting his enemies . . .²⁰ The land is destroyed by Irish enemies and English rebels; if the King himself come not the land is lost'.²¹

The declaration had been drawn up by the partisans of James Butler, fourth earl of Ormond, the newly-appointed lieutenant, in a parliament he had summoned to Dublin in April 1420. While the grievances it highlighted were undoubtedly real the declaration has to be understood in the context of the growing enmity between Ormond and his predecessor, Sir John Talbot (later earl of Shrewsbury), and particularly their struggle to control the Dublin government.²² Most of the articles were thus deliberately directed against the administration of Talbot, who, while he had been an effective lieutenant during his six years in office, had alienated many among the Anglo-Irish. They complained of oppressions by Talbot and his associates, their grinding taxation and misappropriation of revenue and their failure to execute the laws effectively. The lordship's administration – staffed largely by Talbot nominees – was alleged not only to be incompetent but miscreant. The offices of the Dublin exchequer especially (Fig. 1) were 'not so duly kept or served as they used to be and ought to be' and the adequacy of its officials was called into question; they were not learned in writing nor in letters; they were extortionate, taking excessive fees; and many, as pluralists in their own department or operating through deputies, feathered their own or their masters' nests.²³

On his arrival in Ireland Ormond had quickly appointed new barons of the exchequer and in the two years he held office he did much, if ephemerally, to improve the Dublin administration. He also vigorously set about pacifying the country. Over matters that were outside his control and directly within the purview of the crown he was, however, able to achieve little, for England, it was dismissively made plain, was so ridden with other 'dissensions, commotions, lawsuits, scandals, and intolerable evils' that little attention could be given to Ireland.²⁴

One plea that thus fell by the wayside was that contained in Article Three of the declaration: that 'the King's money under his mint may be made in his said land at his said city [Dublin], viz. the two-pence, penny, halfpenny, and farthing in the same manner as it is made in the kingdom of England, with all manner of offices and ministers as are necessary in such a case, to the great profit and relief of the King's said lieges'.²⁵ It was not until long after Ormond's departure from Ireland and nine months after the infant Henry VI's accession, in June 1423, that the 'King's Lieutenant and Justices in Ireland' were granted power to appoint 'workmen to work, make, manufacture, coin and strike in Ireland, in such places as shall be judged most expedient, the King's money: viz., groats, half-groats, pence, halfpence and farthings of pure silver, and the money so worked from time to time to deliver and pay to natives of the country and others. Provided always that such money shall be of the same weight, alloy and assay in all things as the King's silver money which is worked in the Tower of

²⁰ The Black Death and the successive plagues of the second half of the fourteenth century had a profound economic effect on the lordship and by 1400 seem to have reduced its Anglo-Irish population by some fifty per cent. Mortality was greatest in the lordship's ports, towns and corn-growing areas, 'where the rat population was highest', far more than in the pastoral districts of the Irish: 'so great and so hideous among the English lieges and not among the Irish'. Recovery was slow and government authority suffered greatly through its inability to deal effectively with the instability of the borderlands outside the lordship beset both by Irish depredations and by the incessant feuding of the Anglo-Irish settlers. Dublin's failure to maintain peace or protect the king's subjects in such areas prompted many to abandon their holdings and to seek a better life, either in more peaceful parts of the lordship or in England itself. Financially, the disruption and malaise inevitably resulted in a considerable reduction in internal revenue: Otway-Ruthven 1993, 269–70; Ellis 1998, 21–2.

²¹ Curtis 2012, 296; Berry 1907, 563–85; see *CIRCLE*, *RHC* 221/111.

²² For the dispute – lasting from 1414 to 1447 – see Griffith 1941–42.

²³ Berry 1907, 574–5; see *CIRCLE*, *RHC* 221/111, article 12.

²⁴ Curtis 2012, 296–7.

²⁵ *Petunt quod certe monete cudantur in Dublinia sicut in Anglia, cum omnibus officariis, monetariis, &c., necessariis*: Tresham 1828, 221, no. 111, article 3 (Irish Patent Roll, 9 Henry V, erroneously listed by Tresham as Irish Close Roll, 1 Henry VI: see *CIRCLE*, *RHC* 221/111, article 3). See also Berry 1907, 564–5 and Smith 1841, 4 [1843, 51].



Fig. 1. The Dublin Court of the Exchequer. From an early fifteenth-century (temp. Henry VI) coloured drawing of the Court of the Irish Exchequer in the *Red Book of the Irish Exchequer*. (Original lost in the destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland in 1922; illustration reproduced from Gilbert 1874–84, vol. III (1879), pl. xxxvii.)²⁶

London'. The other conditions relating to the production of the coinage were also to be the same as those operating at the Tower Mint.²⁷ Eighteen months later, in February 1425, John Cobbham was appointed master of the coinage to be made in Dublin Castle on terms similar to those in the original grant and preserving parity with London-struck coinage.²⁸ Then, in July 1425, an order was made to the treasurer and chamberlains of the Irish exchequer to pay to William Goldesmy[th?], 'striker of the money in Dublin Castle', 100 shillings a year already granted him by the king,²⁹ fairly conclusive evidence that a coinage had already been put in hand in Dublin.³⁰

In 1841 Aquilla Smith (1806–90), in a seminal paper delivered to the Royal Irish Academy, proposed that a silver penny then in the cabinet of the Rev. Joseph William Martin (1776–1858) of Keston, near Bromley in Kent (Fig. 2) should be attributed to this coinage.³¹ In 1412 the English coinage weight standard had been reduced from 18 to 15 grains to the penny in the face

²⁶ For a description of the scene depicted see Gilbert 1874–84, 3 (1879), 'Introduction, Plate XXXVII' and Ferguson 1854, 44–6.

²⁷ *Calendar of Patent Rolls: Henry VI, 1422–1429*, 107; TNA: PRO, C 66/410, m. 20.

²⁸ *Rex concessit Johanni Cobbham officium magistri cunagii in castro Dublinie faciendi, durante beneplacito, proviso quod moneta operata sit ejusdem ponderis, allaie, et assaie, sicut moneta argenti que in Londonio operata est, et quod dictus Johannes tantum pro factura 1 libre monete in castro predicto operate percipiat, et Regi tantum reddat, quantum magister monete in terra predicta pro hujusmodi libra percipit et reddit, et quod idem Johannes ad premissa facienda per indenturam obligetur, eisdem modo et forma quibus magister cunagii in terra predicta pro tempore obligatus existit. Trym, 6 February: Extended from Tresham 1828, 235–6, no. 21 (Irish Patent Roll, 3 Henry VI); For an English translation see *CIRCLE, RHC 235/21*. See also Simon 1749, 20 and Smith 1843, 54.*

²⁹ *Rex eisdem mandat quod Willelmo Goldesmy[th?], percussori monete in castro Dublinie, 100^s per annum ei per Regem concessos durante beneplacito annuatim solvant. [] Julii, anni predicti: Extended from Tresham 1828, 240, no. 35 (Close Roll, 3 Henry VI); For an English translation see *CIRCLE, RHC 240/35*. See also Smith 1843, 54.*

³⁰ Even if, as is likely, its *dies* were produced in London, the belief, expressed in Colgan 2003, 34, that the coinage was also struck there and exported to Dublin is without merit.

³¹ For a note on Martin, who 'collected extensively with special emphasis on choice condition and on rarity', see Dolley 1979, 446. With 'one exception' – possibly the Henry VI penny – Martin, in a letter to Aquilla Smith of 22 July 1840, states that he had not 'added ... a single [Irish] piece of any consequence to his Cabinet for more than 30 [years]': *ibid.*

of the shortage of bullion flowing into the London mint and, bearing in mind the parity of weight and fineness required in Cobbham's patent, it is clear that any Anglo-Irish coins struck under the 1423 grant should have adhered broadly to this standard. Aquilla Smith noted that the Martin penny weighed 12.25 grains (0.79 g), 'equal to many of the English pennies of Henry the Sixth'; too light, therefore, to be pre-1412 and too heavy to have been minted after 1460 when the Irish coinage was reduced to a lower standard than its English counterpart. On a stylistic comparison with English coins this penny may be placed in the early part of Henry VI's first reign (1422–61) since, as Aquilla Smith recognized, its initial mark, annulets and mullet connect it with English coins now placed in Group I of Henry VI's coinage (the Annulets coinage, 1422–late 1420s).³²



Fig. 2. Engraving of the then only known Henry VI penny. (Reproduced from Aquilla Smith 1843, 56.)

Typologically the penny departs from past practice, the traditional obverse triangle disappearing, and the king's bust – with a star to its right – now being surrounded with a circle of pellets. The penny therefore can be distinguished from its English counterparts only by its legends, *Obv: + HENRICVS DIIS HIBIIÆ*. (*Henricus Dominus Hiberniae*) and *Rev: CIVI/TAS/ DVBL/IIIIÆ* (*Civitas Dublinie*).

Three specimens – all from the same pair of dies – are known today, two in public collections and a third in a private cabinet:

(a) The British Museum, ex. Rev. J. W. Martin Collection:³³



Fig. 3. © Trustees of the British Museum (1859, 0529.26, 0.73 g).

(b) The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, ex Major J.S. Henderson, bequeathed to the museum in 1933:



Fig. 4. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (CM.5.2396-1933, 0.72 g).

(c) Private Collection:



Fig. 5. Reproduced from Finn 1996, 333, by courtesy of Spink and Son Ltd. (Private Collection, 0.65 g.)

³² Smith 1843, 56–7; Stewartby 2009, 290–7.

³³ The penny was acquired by the British Museum at the sale of Martin's collection in 1859: Sotheby & Son, 23–27 May, 1859, 56, lot 515, described in the catalogue as 'very fine, and the only specimen known' and sold to [Edward] Hawkins [Keeper of the Department of Antiquities, British Museum, 1826–60] for £1 17s. The overall collection made £2,623 18s. in the five-day sale.

The penny is all that is extant today of the 1425 coinage and there is no evidence that the groat, half-groat, halfpenny and farthing authorised in the patent of 1423 were ever struck. Whether the government ever seriously intended the coinage to be produced purely for consumption within the lordship, 'for the relief of the King's lieges', is questionable.³⁴ It must have been well aware that 'good coin' of English form and weight standard would never remain in Ireland for very long and that punitive preventive measures were ineffective; even as the coinage was being projected the staunchly reliable constable of Dublin Castle, Janico Dartasso, and others were being commissioned to inquire into the practice of merchants exporting silver from Ireland in exchange for 'clipped, washed or forged gold out of England'.³⁵ It may not be without relevance that the government's decision to embark on the coinage coincided with the start of the duke of Bedford's expeditions into Maine and Anjou.

Whatever its real purpose the exiguous nature of Cobbham's penny coinage and the limited period of its production point starkly to the inability of the Dublin mint to draw upon sufficient precious metal. The nub of the problem was the continued drainage of silver out of the lordship which despite perennial complaint and government legislation could never be contained while the island's coinage enjoyed a parity of standard with that of England. It is not surprising that no further attempt was made even to consider the production of a regal Anglo-Irish coinage during the remainder of Henry VI's reign: in any event the crown had far more pressing problems on the continent as its Anglo-Gallic dominions disintegrated. The Irish economy, always a subsidiary concern except when it could contribute to that of England, had necessarily to remain reliant on imported English and foreign coin, grievously sheared and counterfeited, and, by the 1440s, at least in parts of the country, on plated copies of clipped English groats – the egregious *money del Oraylly* [O'Reilly] vehemently and repeatedly condemned by the Anglo-Irish parliament.³⁶

The Irish parliament's reiterated denunciations of bad coin and government's limp attempts to ban 'unlawful money, provided that a coiner be ready at the said day to make the coin' meant little as long as the historic parity of standard with England existed and the crown was not prepared to delegate its regalian rights over the island's coinage.³⁷ This situation was to change dramatically with the flight to Ireland of Richard, duke of York, in 1459 and the embroilment of the country in the Wars of the Roses. Lieutenant of the lordship since 1447 – but now superseded and attainted – York had been highly regarded by both the 'English nation in Ireland' and many of the Irish chiefs. Desperate for support he capitalised on his popularity by convening a parliament at Drogheda in February 1460.³⁸ It was a stratagem that served to entrench his own political position but it was at the cost of an assault on the established constitutional relationship between England and Ireland. It cultivated an assertion of 'Anglo-Irish separatism' that was exemplified particularly by the parliament's radical provision of a new coinage separate from that of England and, critically, one of a sufficiently lower weight standard that it would not be profitable to export. As Steven Ellis has emphasised York had sacrificed the king's interests for the political support of the Anglo-Irish establishment.³⁹ One result was, however, the establishment of an Irish coinage, distinctively insular and usually of a lower weight-standard than its English counterpart, which would continue into the sixteenth century.

³⁴ No find spot is recorded for any of our three pennies but they are not likely to have been found in Ireland.

³⁵ Tresham 1828, 229, no. 109 (b) (Patent Roll, 1 Henry VI): For an English translation see *CIRCLE, RHC 229/109* (b). For the long military and administrative career of Janico Dartas (Dartasso) see *ODNB*. Hoard evidence indicates that during the second quarter of the fifteenth century savagely sheared Henry VI groats became the standard coin of the Anglo-Irish: Dolley 1972, 18, 62.

³⁶ Dolley 1972, 17–19; Dolley and Seaby 1967.

³⁷ Except in the case of Richard II's favourite Robert de Vere, earl of Oxford, who, on his creation as duke of Ireland in 1386, was granted the regal power of 'coining gold and silver, and of all kinds of money heretofore used in the said island'. De Vere, however, was never to enjoy his new authority; he never even saw Ireland, for little more than a year later he was forced into exile and had forfeited all his lands and titles. See Simon 1749, 18.

³⁸ For the parliament of 1460 see Otway-Ruthven 1993, 386–8; Curtis 2012, 321–3; Ellis 1998, 59–63.

³⁹ Ellis 1978, 18.

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Even in the reign of Henry VIII, *Laudabiliter* remained significant: England's break with the Roman Catholic Church in 1534 led Irish nobles to argue they no longer owed allegiance to the English king whose power in Ireland depended on papal authority. As Irish nationalism grew during the 19th century, the possibility that the original presence in Ireland of English invaders might have been based on a "dodgy dossier" began to be explored by new generations of historians. And the longest shadow is cast by the Irish famine of 1845-1849 and the British government's inadequate response. But all these events were ultimately shaped by that first invasion, exactly 850 years ago.