Offa's Dyke

Journal

Aims and Scope

Offa's Dyke Journal is a peer-reviewed venue for the publication of high-quality research on the archaeology, history and heritage of frontiers and borderlands focusing on the Anglo-Welsh border. The editors invite submissions that explore dimensions of Offa's Dyke, Wat's Dyke and the 'short dykes' of western Britain, including their life-histories and landscape contexts. *ODJ* will also consider comparative studies on the material culture and monumentality of frontiers and borderlands from elsewhere in Britain, Europe and beyond. We accept:

1. Notes and Reviews of up to 3,000 words
2. Interim reports on fieldwork of up to 5,000 words
3. Original discussions, syntheses and analyses of up to 10,000 words

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Front cover: The River Dee looking east from the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. Here, the Offa's Dyke Path traverses the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct & Canal World Heritage Site (Photograph: Howard Williams, 2022, with thanks to Rose Guy for assistance). Cover and logo design by Howard Williams, Liam Delaney.

Offa's Dyke Journal

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Special issue: Borders in Early Medieval Britain

Edited by Ben Guy, Howard Williams and Liam Delaney

Bige Habban: An Introduction to Money, Trade and Cross-Border Traffic

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This short survey examines issues in early medieval cross-border trade, particularly with reference to England, but also drawing comparisons with mainland Europe and other regions of Britain. Three themes are considered: tolls charged on traders and travellers; the vulnerability of traders and the importance of building trust and familiarity; and the practical challenges of moving between different means of exchange.

In the years since the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union in 2016, borders and their impact on trade have stormed back into public consciousness. 'Hard borders' have sprouted up again like long, tangling weeds. This development is a powerful, painful reminder that borders do not help the movement of people or goods. Barriers that are costly and slow to negotiate might be enough to steer traders in a different direction, or cause extra expenses that have to be passed on to the customer. But these developments also underline the fact that borders can and do change. They can mean everything or nothing, and vary depending on whether one thinks of the movement of goods, people or money, and might vary significantly from one frontier or community to another. All depends on the societies that dwell either side of the border and the circumstances in which they live.

It is telling that cross-border trade as such has received relatively little attention from early medievalists. Borders simply have not seemed to matter, being either accepted as a fact of life or brushed aside as insignificant. Interest instead has tended to fall on transnational links and long-distance communication (Scales 2022) and, in economic contexts, on the break between long- and short-distance trade. Both kinds of exchange were of course essential and important in their own ways. Quantitatively there is no doubt that local, intra-regional exchange was more significant, especially in the economically straitened world of post-Roman Europe (Wickham 2005: 693–824). Long-distance trade took several forms. At one extreme was the movement of rare luxuries like pigments, spices or silks over vast distances, servicing only elites. But there were also long-distance networks of production and distribution that may have been indirectly supported by elite patronage, yet involved (and perhaps benefited) a wider range of participants; one thinks of the series of trading 'emporia' on either side of the North Sea in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries (Loveluck 2013: 178–212). In the context of the Roman Empire and even, to a lesser extent, the Carolingian Empire, large

political units smoothed out some of the kinks that complicated any and all kinds of long-distance exchange, including borders, and thereby stimulated interregional, long-distance exchange (Dopsch 1937: 339–357; Bruand 2002; Verhulst 2002: 85–113). As always, exchange was not just about economics, and all these structures – local, and long-distance of either bulk goods or luxuries – were tightly intermeshed with networks of communication and cultural exchange (McCormick 2001; Frankopan 2015).

The small role assigned to frontiers reflects an implicit sense that early medieval borders were weak and permeable. And on the whole this impression is right, even if it is not quite the whole point. Travellers generally did not pass under the watchful eye of West Saxon or Mercian security guards, at least not at the point of entry. The outer borders of Anglo-Saxon England were highly porous. Actually crossing them seems to have been relatively easy, and there is precious little evidence for traders being stopped at borders. One of the first viking forays into England is an exception that proves the rule. Sometime in the reign of Beorhtric of Wessex (786–802), three ships of Norwegian vikings landed at Portland in Dorset. Beaduheard the king's reeve set out from Dorchester to meet these unexpected visitors, thinking them to be traders whom he should lead to the *regiam villam*. The vikings had other ideas, and killed him. Poor Beaduheard's fate reflects that traders might show up anywhere on the coast, but perhaps not that they did so regularly, since the reeve was based ten miles inland. Indeed, the vikings presumably kept the peace for at least a day, since it would have taken that long for Beaduheard to be informed of their arrival and make his way to Portland. Maybe they actually turned up with the intention of trading peacefully, and things only soured when they could not do so on their own terms (Æthelweard, *Chronicle*, *temp.* Beorhtric; *EHD*: 180).

The reeve of Dorchester had intended that he should conduct the viking traders to Dorchester, a royal estate. That plan was characteristic of early medieval handling of new arrivals. Alfred's laws state that traders were meant to present themselves to the king's reeve at a public meeting before heading into the country (Laws of Alfred, c. 34: *Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1: 68–69; *EHD*: 413). If tolls were to be taken, and checks or other controls conducted, they did not take place at the border itself, but in settings like this: foci of institutional authority, or places where people stopped to meet and do business (the two often being one and the same). Towns were not the only such places, as Alfred's law implies, but more is known about them. These were complex locations where several interests came together. London in the seventh and eighth centuries illustrates what might have been going on. The king of Kent made special arrangements for visitors from his kingdom who did business in the city, which suggest that they had difficulty pinning down trading partners from afar who might not be able to come and vouch for a questionable deal (Laws of Hlothhere and Eadric, c. 16–16.3: *Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1: 10–11; *EHD*: 395). An added complication was that the king of Kent was probably not the dominant power in London (Naismith 2018: 62–71 and 84–95). That position belonged at this stage to the rulers of the Mercians, and it was in their name that tolls were charged on incoming ships. These are only known because

Æthelbald, king of the Mercians (716–757), bestowed exemption from them to various churches (Kelly 1992; Adam 1996; Stoclet 1999; Middleton 2005). There is no indication that ships from Francia or Frisia were more liable to tolls than those from East Anglia, Northumbria or indeed from London itself. Anyone who used the port facilities at London seems to have been liable.

Paying for access: tolls

As well as being diagnostic of trade that crossed from one jurisdiction into another, tolls were an important source of income and a visible statement of authority. How much was charged by the king in London during the eighth century is not clear (ten per cent was a common rate elsewhere in Europe: Middleton 2005: 329–330), and it is not possible to gauge the overall yield for the king, but the fact that exemption was sought by leading churches and granted in the form of a diploma normally used to concede landed property speaks to the value of tolls (Kelly 1992: 3–5; Maddicott 2006: 24). It is also worth stressing that conceding exemption from tolls seems to have been a short-lived experiment: surviving examples largely come from the time of Æthelbald, with a couple of later examples that explicitly copy or renew his grants.

But the radio silence does not mean tolls had gone away. Other rulers were simply much less willing than Æthelbald to let go of rights to toll, which is generally the only time they impinge on the written record. When kings did concede rights to take toll, or exemption from paying, they did so on a limited scale. London's waterfront continued to be a major source of tolls: Æthelred II granted a wharf and adjacent property in the city to a royal priest named Wulfstan, along with the toll deriving from them, and around 1010 these were bequeathed by Wulfstan to the monastery of Chertsey (Sawyer 1968: no. 940; *Charters of Chertsey Abbey*: no. 10). Importantly, entering a new jurisdiction by overland travel could also incur a toll. At Worcester in the late ninth century, reorganisation of the town and concession of selected privileges to the cathedral meant that tolls on one of the most essential and widely distributed commodities of the Early Middle Ages, salt, briefly came into view. The local rulers — Ealdorman Æthelred and his wife Æthelflæd, with Alfred the Great — granted rights to most fines, rents and other dues from the newly established town at Worcester, but retained the tolls charged on wagons or animals laden with salt (the 'wagon-shilling' and 'load-penny') (Sawyer 1968: no. 223; *Cartularium Saxonicum*: no. 579; *EHD*: 540–541).

The richest but bittiest collection of information on tolls, Domesday Book, refers to tolls being taken in at least twenty locations in eleventh-century England (Figure 1). These references are undoubtedly far from complete, and several are incidental, only occurring in the context of disputes, or among lists of customs. It is likely that most or all towns in the kingdom charged a toll on sales in their market, as did markets outside towns. Typically, the proceeds went to the king and the earl, though again the exceptions to that rule tend to be better recorded. Other tolls targeted stopping points on routeways.

Figure 1: locations with references to tolls in Domesday Book

An Old English account of the archbishop's customs in York, composed around the time of the Domesday survey, refers to tolls being taken on every road leading to the town (Peacock 1905: 413–414; Palliser 1990: 25). In Lincolnshire, a series of new or enlarged tolls had sprung up along the coast, targeted at ships plying the route between northern and southern England: the locals testified that no fewer than twenty-four ships from Hastings had paid toll at Saltfleet or Saltfleetby and its environs (GDB 375r), and the area remained an important market centre into the later Middle Ages (Sawyer 1998: 21–22; Hines 2017: 124–125).

Who paid toll, and how much, depended on several factors: the commodity in question; whether it was being transported by ship, by wagon or by horseback; and, crucially, on who was bringing it. Several of the Domesday tolls targeted 'external' (*extranei*) people or merchants. This should probably not be read as 'foreign' in the modern sense of the word; rather, it meant anyone from outside the local jurisdiction (Rothwell 2010). Whether they came from overseas was immaterial. At Northwich in Cheshire — a major centre of salt production — the benefits for the locals are especially clear. Those who came from other shires had to pay 4*d.* per cart or 1*d.* per horse, but the people of Cheshire paid only 2*d.* or a halfpenny (?*minutam*) respectively. But this was apparently more to support domestic needs than to give the locals a strong commercial advantage, for they were liable to suffer a hefty fine if they spent more than three days on the journey to and from Northwich (GDB 268r).

Borders, within or between polities, in themselves mattered less than oversight of the places those traders were likely to be heading for, or of the traders themselves and the routes they travelled. That is to say, tolls and controls focused less on political borders and more on bridges, gates or ports, and applied to some commodities more than others. They were as much internal as external. To use a military analogy, controls on trade were a matter of defence-in-depth instead of holding a continuous line (Brookes 2013: 44–45). New or stringent local controls could take as much effort to negotiate as long-distance ones. This point is highlighted by the final provision of a treaty between Alfred and Guthrum (written between 878 and 890), which relates to a border — probably of fairly recent creation — between the two kings' territories that cut diagonally through the south midlands (Alfred-Guthrum treaty, c. 5: *Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1: 128–129; *EHD*: 417). The treaty says that commerce in cattle or goods (*mid yrfe* [*ond*] *mid æhtum*) was only allowed between the people either side of the border if hostages were given as a gesture of goodwill. Had this provision applied to any and all commerce, it would have been a cumbersome imposition, and should probably be read as a baseline that could be adjusted for people who were known and trusted, potentially family and friends who had done business with neighbours for years, but who now happened to find themselves cut off by a new border. Strikingly, there is no mention of any toll. Established relations of this kind are also implied in one of the other legal texts concerning cross-border relations, that known as the ordinance of *Dunsætan*, which implies that the two groups were selling goods to one another (Ordinance of *Dunsætan*, c. 8–8.1: *Gesetze der Anglesachsen*, vol. 1: 378; Noble 1983: 108). This only came up through the possibility of

vouching for warranty — that is, needing to vouch for a contested purchase — which perhaps suggests that by and large the rules for cross-border commerce worked and did not need extensive elaboration (Molyneaux 2012: 269–270).

How these specific, compartmentalised controls and charges on trade fitted together as part of a larger whole is more difficult to divine, at least from Anglo-Saxon England and its neighbours within Britain. The surviving information is simply too fragmented. A comparative glance at other regions of central and western Europe is therefore instructive. Two points stand out. First, as hinted at in relation to Domesday Book, there could be an awful lot of tolls and charges, their landscape changing in response to new personalities, power configurations and trading routes (McCormick 2001: 640–647; Ganshof 1959a and b; Stoclet 1999). Already in the reign of Charlemagne (768–814), there were ropes being drawn across waterways and watchmen scanned rivers for boats passing under bridges so that tolls could be exacted on bridges and rivers as well as from markets (*Capitulare missorum* of 805, c. 13: *Capitularia, tomus primus*: 124). At Ribe and Southampton, and perhaps at other specialised trading sites, ditches that were too small for defensive purposes may have been dug in order to funnel visitors into selected points of entry, where tolls could be levied more easily (Garner 1993: 121–122; Feveile 2012: 119–120). Not surprisingly, people took measures to try and get around these widespread tolls. English merchants travelling through Charlemagne's kingdom incurred the king's wrath for masquerading as pilgrims so as to escape paying tolls (Alcuin, *Letters*: no. 100; *EHD*: 848). An unknown English king negotiated a reduced, collective payment for English merchants going to Pavia, in lieu of the invasive and unwelcome search procedures at toll stations (*clusae*) (*Honorantie civitatis Papie*: 18–19). It is likely that tolls became even more numerous in the tenth and eleventh centuries as aristocrats in many parts of Europe sought to solidify their grip on land and its inhabitants. In Ottonian and Salian Germany it was common practice for grants of rights over towns or markets to include a *teloneum* or toll, for the benefit of the patron. In Normandy in 996 an assembly of peasants got together to discuss ways to circumvent tolls or blocks on woods and rivers, but their gathering was violently dispersed by the duke's men before it could get anything done (Gowers 2013). It may well be that the growth and formalisation of towns in late Anglo-Saxon England also triggered the proliferation of tolls.

The second point is the division that could arise from the complicated network of tolls, which encoded differences between groups. Exemption was granted to just a select few. Merchants who did not enjoy that privilege could factor in the expense by charging more for their wares — potentially a substantial mark-up in the case of merchandise brought over a long distance, through numerous tolls. But the rural population also had to travel extensively to fulfil obligations to lords and to use markets, probably frequently, and in the process would have been subject to any and all tolls charged on intervening routes. Erecting new tolls affected both the dedicated merchants and those who travelled or traded on a more local basis. These two constituencies and their different rights were one of the concerns behind an inquest on tolls carried out on a section of the Danube and its environs at some point between 903 and 906 (*Capitularia, tomus secundus*: 249–252;
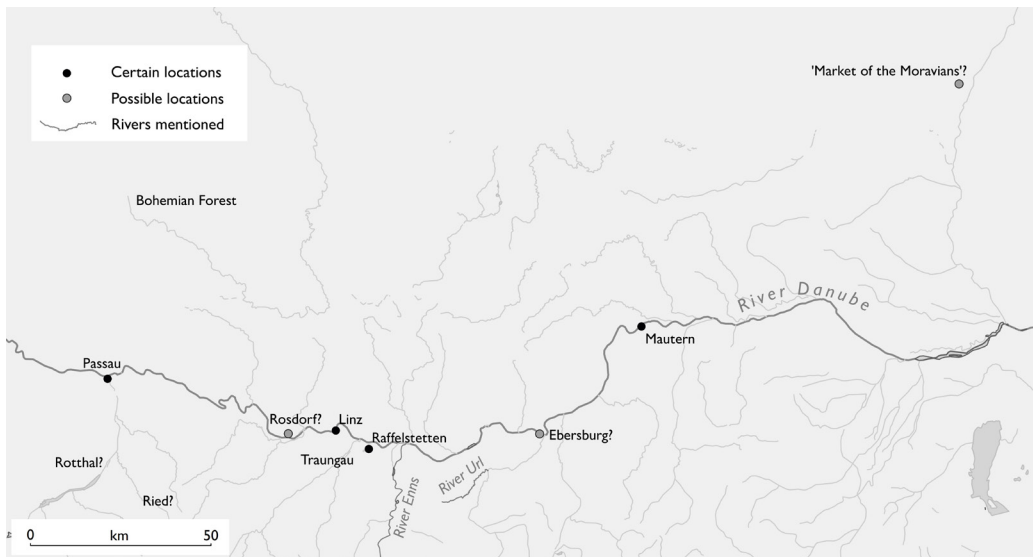
Figure 2: the region of the Raffelstetten toll inquest. Rivers named on this map are referred to in the text. 'Certain locations' refer to places named in the text and identifiable with confidence; 'possible locations' refer to places named in the text that are more tentatively identifiable.

Jarrett 2016) (see Figure 2). The inquest had arisen at the request of the Bavarians, who felt that they were weighed down by unfair tolls: the result, as it survives, represents what the king's appointed investigators had decided should be acceptable, looking back to precedents from the ninth century (Adam 1996: 31–34 and 121–125; Johanek 1991; Ganshof 1966). Not surprisingly, it shows considerable favour to Bavarians, and especially to free Bavarian peasants and landholders who engaged in trade on the rivers and roads of the region. Those who bought salt for domestic needs were exempt from all toll, for instance. Slavs living in the three counties covered by the investigation were also relatively favoured, though not quite to the same degree as their Bavarian counterparts: it was only Bavarians from the Traungau who were exempt from paying toll on the River Url, for example. Unfree denizens of Bavarian territory engaged in trade too, though suffered harsher penalties if they were caught breaking the rules. Outsiders had a harder time. Slavs from Russia or Bohemia were liable to limitations on where they could trade, and had to pay a fixed, higher rate of toll. Those with the hardest lot of all were professional merchants, some of them Jewish: 'let merchants ... wherever they should come from in this country or other countries, pay the just toll as much for slaves as for other goods' (*Capitularia, tomus secundus*: 252; Jarrett 2016).

The dangers of cross-border trade

Along the Danube, tolls could be a reflection of privilege in ethnicity, geography and status. The situation along this stretch of river and its neighbouring lands was of

course the product of distinct local developments between various communities, but in addition it points to tolls being an economic manifestation of tensions that could well have been found in many places, including England. Balancing the power differential of distinct communities presented a constant challenge, and *Dunsæte* and the Alfred-Guthrum treaty, along with the treaty of the 990s between the English and the viking army known as II Æthelred (*Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1: 220–227; *EHD*: 437–439), imply simmering tension, and efforts to contain conflict between people either side of the border. Traders, professional or otherwise, who crossed over put themselves in the firing line. Trading by definition involved moving between communities, at a time when familiarity and local knowledge were key to getting by. Outsiders stood at significant risk simply by virtue of being foreigners, here meaning not just foreign by virtue of coming from what would now be considered a different country, but foreign to specific local communities. One did not need to travel far before becoming a foreigner. Two near-identical passages in the laws of Ine of Wessex (688×694) and Wihtred of Kent (695) required travellers leaving the road to announce themselves by shouting or blowing a horn, in order to avoid being seen as a thief, which was the default assumption if one met a stranger skulking about where they should not be (Laws of Ine, c. 20; Laws of Wihtred c. 28; *Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1: 14 and 98; *EHD*: 398 and 401). Foreigners lived with suspicion and risk. The Frisians who dwelt in late eighth-century Northumbria had to flee the country when the son of a nobleman was killed in a fight with a Frisian merchant, the whole community presumably being liable to wrath and reprisal, perhaps as extended kinsmen, or even a fictive kin-group (Altfrid, *Vita S. Liudgeri*, c. 11: 407). This is why the *Dunsæte* and Alfred-Guthrum provisions, along with the English-viking treaty known as II Æthelred, took such care to protect those on either side: the risk of trouble was high. And even with good relations, problems could come from above as well as from dealing with one's peers across a border. Offa and Charlemagne had a dispute over the marriage of their children around 790 that allegedly led to both rulers halting cross-Channel traffic (Nelson 2001: 132–135; Story 2003: 184–187; Keynes 2005: 16–17; McKitterick 2008: 282–284).

Traders had limited protections against such hazards. As seen with the shouting, horn-blowing wanderers of the seventh century, distrust of unfamiliar people was the baseline. One of the tasks of traders who presented themselves to the Alfredian king's reeve in a public meeting was to introduce anyone they were bringing with them; the traders also took responsibility for bringing those men to justice if they misbehaved. These extra men could be slaves for sale, or, perhaps more likely, simply new colleagues who had yet to gain the confidence of the king's reeve and of the community more widely. Fortunately, porous borders meant that those immediately on either side of them would probably have been known to each other. This knowledge mattered because in practice most buying and selling was not done by professional merchants, but by peasants and others who dealt fairly locally. Neither the Alfred-Guthrum treaty nor *Dunsæte* gives any indication of the status of the people involved, but they very probably included regular Welshmen, Englishmen or subjects of Guthrum with goods to sell, and a market or

buyer that happened to live in an area that answered to a different political authority. There would have been familiar faces on both sides, and borders as such mattered little for those who dwelt and dealt along the margins, save perhaps in times and areas of direct military conflict. Professional merchants were in a more challenging position. Generally, they worked far from home; indeed, the Old English wisdom poem *Maxims I* makes a piece of sententious wisdom out of the joy that a Frisian trader's wife felt on his return home, with the cautionary note that she may have been unfaithful to him during the long, cold nights of his absence (*Maxims I*, ll. 24b–35a: 68–69). That imaginary trader's travels might have taken him far and wide, but in practice even journeying from one end of England to the other put merchants at as much risk as going overseas. One of the worst incidents of preying on traders came when a group of York-based merchants landed in Kent and were robbed, prompting King Edgar (959–75) to retaliate brutally against the locals (Roger of Wendover, *Chronicle, s.a.* 974; *EHD*: 284). Other risks were smaller yet still cumbersome. There is also a Frankish capitulary that tries to forbid peasants from over-charging travellers, for example (Capitulary of Ver, 884, c. 13; *Capitularia, tomus secundus*, 375).

The way merchants mitigated against these risks was by using well-trodden routes and building up contacts and local savvy along the way. In effect, they got to know the people and places they dealt with. This has been demonstrated very effectively by Søren Sindbæk in relation to Viking-Age Scandinavia, where the distribution of various types of object shows how major arteries of trade flowed from big centres to big centres, not via local ones except as waystations; there were separate capillary networks that took goods out from major centres to the countryside (Sindbæk 2007a and b; 2009a and b). Merchants would, then, have plied certain specific routes, getting to know people and places along the way. Their mental map of England and its neighbours might have looked something like the strip maps created in later times to show the path between key points (MacEachren and Johnson 1987). Once arrived, they might even stay for a good long while and acquire land — partly as a *pied á terre*, and partly as an investment to help business and cement ties to the local community. Frankish traders owned land in eighth-century London (Sawyer 1968: no. 133; *Cartularium Saxonicum*: no. 259), and Welsh sailors as a group rented property in the estate at Tidenham on the Severn Estuary (*Anglo-Saxon Charters*: 204–207). Trust and familiarity were key tools in the merchant's arsenal, and could be built up by long-term residence, or by intermarriage with the local community.

Means of exchange across borders

Crossing borders for trading purposes comes across as commonplace. It involved social and administrative hurdles, but also practical ones, like not being able to use the same money. The means of exchange that was used in these settings carries interest as a proxy for several things: the direction and intensity of travel, oversight of trade and also the different kinds of economy that prevailed. It is also susceptible to close analysis because the available body of evidence is relatively large and can generally be attributed and

dated with a degree of precision. For all these reasons coins will be considered more closely in what follows, even if it must always be remembered that while all coin was money, not all money was coin. There is a further reason why looking at the flows of currency matters. England had native silver sources, though the evidence for their exploitation in the Early Middle Ages is limited (Naismith 2017: 13–17). Where, then, did the silver used in making Anglo-Saxon coin come from? Sometimes there was clearly a vast amount of it on hand. Part of the stock of coin could have come from reminting existing Anglo-Saxon currency, but that could only go so far: a major source must have come from incoming foreign coin. This in turn raises the question of how coin related to cargo. Merchants from ancient times to the present have tended to set out from A to B with commodities that are available at A and desirable in B — but after doing their business, they would then stock up with goods that are available in B but desirable in A, essentially reversing the process (perhaps with intermediary stops), and reducing the amount of actual cash that was carried as far as possible (Spufford 1988: 274). This had advantages for traders. Coins were liable to lose a significant amount of value if they had to be melted and reminted, especially multiple times. They were also more easily stolen than many commodities.

If that equation applied to foreign traders active in Anglo-Saxon England — goods › money › other goods — it would be difficult to account for the apparently large inflow of foreign silver. The Frisian traders who came in the seventh and eighth centuries might have come over with wine, sold that wine in London, Ipswich or Southampton (Theuws 2018: esp. 68–70), then used the proceeds to invest in wool or slaves, for example, to take back with them. That is why another option presents itself: that silver and gold was in itself one of the goods that traders coming from overseas to England trafficked in. Lacking native sources, precious metal might have been in demand in England, and carried enough of a premium to be viable as an import good. This seems to have been the case by the early twelfth century: the miracles of St Mary of Laon, famous for their account of the monks getting into a debate with a Cornish peasant about King Arthur, say that when those monks first travelled to England to raise funds for rebuilding their church, they did so in the company of merchants who were going from Flanders to England to buy wool, armed with big sacks of silver (Hermann, *Miracula S. Mariae Laudunensis*, II.4: *Patrologia latina*, vol. CLVI: cols. 975C–977B). Actual coin-finds in England suggest how this relationship worked in practice, though their testimony needs to be read with care, because coins are at the end of the day just lumps of metal. They do not tell us who used them or how. Moreover, as pieces of metal, they could easily be melted down into something else, such as other (English) coins — so the possibility exists that some or most coins moving between distinct polities would be turned into the local currency. In other words, it is necessary to think of the metal as well as the coin.

The issue boils down to two questions: were people required or encouraged (for instance by preferential pricing) to use a particular kind of coin for some or all purposes; and (if so) when and how did they exchange others for the acceptable kind? So far,

the emphasis has fallen on coin coming in from overseas, from mainland Europe, but there was also extensive traffic between separate kingdoms within England in the period down to political consolidation in the tenth century. In principle the movement of coin from one Anglo-Saxon kingdom to another should have been treated in the same way. Yet finds of coins paint a more integrated picture. In the period from the late sixth century to the later eighth, it is difficult to see much evidence of any coin, English or foreign, being systematically reminted. Merovingian gold *tremisses* were probably the main source of gold for early English gold shillings (the latter minted after about 620), yet the two circulated side by side and have been found together in at least one hoard (Crondall, Hampshire: Sutherland 1948). Some incoming *tremisses* must therefore have been melted down, but not all of them, and not because there was a hard and fast rule against using them. Frankish coins were no longer brought to England in large quantity after the mid-seventh century, the principal source shifting north-eastwards to Frisia. This realignment relates to wider reorientation of English political and cultural relations eastwards (Platts 2021: 169–177 and 277–278). Frisian coin issues of the late seventh and early eighth centuries grew to account for a large proportion of finds of relevant coins found in England (about a quarter) (Naismith 2017: 87–91; though cf. Theuws 2018), and are likely to have been an important source for the silver of many English pennies. Again, however, the coins were not all reminted: many circulated in their original state.

This begs the question of what was happening in England. Why was it that only some Frankish gold coins were remade into Anglo-Saxon ones, and a larger (but still far from complete) share of Frisian silver pieces turned into Anglo-Saxon pennies? One factor was surely the huge diversity of early Anglo-Saxon coinage. Minting simply does not seem to have been a matter of large-scale territorial jurisdiction. Instead, minting should be attributed to smaller, probably more personalised forces that followed a more selective logic than blanket bans on outside coins. Some coin issues might have been driven by what we might call social or political motives, such as when a major patron wanted to make an expenditure in cash for military, building or other purposes. Others could have been driven by economic forces, as when a king or other powerful agency demanded that tolls, church-scot or other dues had to be paid in a certain kind of coin, which would have required anyone liable to them to obtain the appropriate kind of coin. In other words, it was crossing personal and social boundaries that affected the manufacture of early coins, the number and complexity of these mounting as the more accessible silver coinage proliferated.

The middle part of the eighth century was a watershed in the mobility of money. Kings started to put their names on coins, and in short order also oversaw the creation of spheres of monetary circulation that corresponded to political dominance. In the English context this was a new development. Firewalls sprang up between neighbouring coinages, and the assumption is that people were now expected to use only the permissible currency when dealing in that kingdom. These did not change the fundamental shape of the monetary economy, in that finds remain overwhelmingly concentrated in the same eastern area as before. Rulers could not call into being a radical redirection of coin to

politically significant regions like northern Northumbria or western Mercia. Even so, a seismic shift was taking place in the level of intervention rulers claimed within these limits. Its impact can be seen in surviving coin finds, which no longer show extensive circulation of outside currency (Naismith 2012a).

Northumbria was the first to move in this direction, probably in the 740s, and set itself up as a self-contained and increasingly idiosyncratic monetary zone. For the next century, circulation within the kingdom was dominated by local coin. The south was more complicated. Offa dominated England south of the Humber when (around 780) he brought in the first controls over circulation, which essentially targeted Frankish and Frisian coin. One aim of the closely parallel currency reforms of Charlemagne (768–814) and Offa in the early 790s was to distance their respective coinages in terms of weight, making it harder for them to circulate side by side (Garipzanov 2016). Within England south of the Humber, though, a sort of Anglo-Saxon 'Eurozone' emerged: people could use coins from Kent or Wessex in East Anglia or Mercia, or in any combination (Naismith 2012b: 203–218). This monetary entente began as an outgrowth of the political dominance of Offa and Coenwulf (796–821), and subsequently the rulers of Wessex, but survived various conflicts between individual kingdoms. That cooperation took more overt form in the 860s when Wessex adopted the same coin-type as Mercia, and laid the basis for the alignment of Mercian and West Saxon coinage that prevailed through the later ninth and tenth centuries, recognising the same king from Alfred's time onwards. But even if people could use coin from multiple kingdoms within Southumbrian England, they generally did not use coins from mainland Europe. Instead of about a quarter of all finds from England around 700 being made in Frisia, Francia or Jutland, only about one per cent of finds in the later years of Offa came from the Carolingian Empire (Naismith 2012b: 205–207). Metallurgical analysis nonetheless suggests that foreign silver remained the key contributor to Anglo-Saxon pennies, just in reminted form (Naismith 2012b: 157–161); a rare example is known of a coin from Cologne in the years around 900 that was re-struck in England a few years later, in this case without having been melted down (Blunt 1981). Current research into the metallurgy of English coinage also suggests that the turnover of bullion was fairly rapid, meaning a continuous, healthy stream of silver. Exactly where that stream came from (save when local coin was reminted) remains to be discovered.

So, two kinds of policy prevailed in the eighth century and after. One related to mainland European coin, and was on the whole a hard and effective barrier. People did not use Carolingian coin in England, but their actual exchange did not happen at or even near borders: it probably occurred wherever traders happened to go. The second related to internal political borders. North and south mattered here. Northumbria went its own way internally, though its debased ninth-century coins circulated on a surprisingly significant scale in southern England and a few have been found much further afield: specimens have surfaced in Scandinavia, Poland, Germany, Italy and Spain. Whether this circulation was driven by its economic attractions as a low-value

coin, or by other factors remains unclear, and while some finds might fit into known Scandinavian networks, others do not. The southern kingdoms, meanwhile, occupied a shared monetary space. There is also no indication that later internal borders within the larger kingdom of England, such as those that emerged between shires or ealdormen's territories, affected the circulation of coins or other means of exchange.

A third and final kind of frontier also needs to be considered: those which separated one kind of economy from another. That includes how coins were handled. There might be subtle gradations in what they meant to people in different areas or social contexts. In late-seventh-century England, coins circulated quite widely, but they were generally only put in burials in coastal regions of the east and south-east. This could well suggest that the handling of coined money carried a stronger, more widely understood social significance in the latter regions, perhaps tied in with a generally higher degree of autonomy in economic and other spheres; autonomy that extended beyond the elite, and that was expressed differently for men and women (Scull and Naylor 2016: 227–230). An even starker division emerged later between the English and groups to their west and north: vikings, Picts, Britons, Gaels and others. These operated beyond a different kind of border — not just political but economic, with fundamentally different approaches to means of exchange and their regulation on either side. Coined money was used on a much smaller scale in these regions, and was not sanctioned and supported by royal command. That said, 'border' may not always be the right word here. Some regions of Britain and Ireland outside England had very developed monetary economies. Dublin in particular was for a time at the end of the tenth century closely integrated into the English monetary system, to the extent that it used dies from England and some moneyers in England even used dies cut in Dublin. Geographical and political boundaries had little obvious impact, though that changed in the eleventh century as Dublin's monetary economy became more distinct (Naismith 2017: 331–332). Other differences developed gradually, and the western and northern regions of England most exposed to the Irish and Welsh kingdoms and to north Britain had limited circulation of coin, especially before the tenth century. They may not in practice have been so different to their neighbours beyond English dominion, meaning that there was a softer and more gradual shift away from coin-based exchange as one moved west and north.

The most visibly different monetary practice in the regions under viking dominance was the extensive use of cut and weighed precious metal in exchange contexts (Graham-Campbell 1995; Williams 2015; Kershaw 2017). Both bullion and coin relied in different ways on precious metal, so need to be seen as points along a continuum rather than binary opposites. Bullion-based systems also used coins, and coin-based ones allowed for some use of gold and silver objects in exchange — and both existed as part of a more complex array of commodity monies. Even within the eastern part of England, gold and silver objects, as well as other commodities such as livestock and grain, were used to settle debts in land transactions (Naismith 2013: 312–313), and no laws mandated the use of coin to the exclusion of other media. Conversely, in the area that probably lay under the authority

of Scandinavian rulers based in York, several different circuits of exchange media can be identified: one based on local coin in York itself and the immediate environs; and another based on hack-silver (but also admitting a wider range of coin) in rural Yorkshire (Kershaw 2020). Further work might reveal even more layers and patterns, just as it has become apparent how permeable and durable the use of uncoined metal was in lowland Britain. Scattered finds from across English territory of bullion point to viking-style handling of silver by people travelling well away from borders (Kershaw 2015), while in Yorkshire and the East Midlands circulation of bullion on the viking model continued for at least a decade after English political takeover, albeit probably losing ground in favour of coin (Williams 2020a: 135–136). These finds need not all represent the proceeds of peaceful trade, but nor can they all be explained away as the losses or deposits of raiders and soldiers. They add up to a more fluid picture of exchange across borders and between economic systems. Passing from one region to another meant moving, by degrees, from one set of preferences and cultural norms to another — not crossing a hard and fast line beyond which coin or bullion was no longer acceptable. Law was only part of the picture. The decision to use one medium or another, be it coin, bullion or something else, most likely reflects who one was dealing with. Hoards like those from the Vale of York or Glenfaba on the Isle of Man, both of which contained several kinds of coins alongside whole silver objects, ingots and pieces of hackmetal, should be seen as a sort of economic menu, something like a modern-day wallet with small change, notes, a giftcard and several credit cards, all to deal with different situations and constituencies (Bornholdt Collins *et al.* 2014; Williams 2008; 2011). Silver pennies within England had the advantage of fungibility: others were obliged to accept them. Prices may well have varied depending on means of payment, with bullion or commodity prices perhaps being higher unless the deal was between friends or driven by factors of honour, prestige and tradition. Those benefits extended, in a looser fashion, to other parts of Britain and Ireland, where English coin circulated and was imitated. It was probably not mandated in Alba or the Welsh and Irish kingdoms as it was in England, but the stability and predictability of Anglo-Saxon pennies, and the ease of using them if one wanted to do business in England or its neighbours, probably meant that individuals had a vested interest in using them where possible.

Conclusion

It should not be seen as a disappointment to end by reiterating that borders as such meant little in relation to exchange and movement of people. Or, at least, borders in the sense of national or regnal divisions mattered little: passage between jurisdictions of people and goods mattered a lot, with the important caveat that internal borders and barriers were no less important than 'external' ones. That in itself is interesting. Traders and other kinds of travellers could move about with relative impunity as long as they were prepared to pay the price that any travel entailed. Tolls were one aspect of this: a recognition of authority and, often, a significant source of income. One suspects that they are little known not because they were scarce, but because they were

commonplace. What is clear is that they were as much internal as external. Coined money reflects another of these potential controls; potential in that it simply did not always play this role. As with tolls, they reflect a layered picture of exchange. Not all coins were exchanged at ports of entry; indeed, canny merchants probably engineered their transactions to involve as little exchanging of coin as possible. They would probably only bring coin in bulk when silver was itself a desirable commodity; otherwise, they brought goods, sold them, and used the proceeds (coin or otherwise) to purchase other goods for the next leg of their trip. Nonetheless, means of exchange including coins highlight other kinds of border, taken in a looser sense — between areas where coins are used extensively or not, controlled by ruling authorities or not, or used more as pieces of silver bullion. Often it is difficult to pinpoint exactly where such a border lay, and only sometimes would there have been a hard and fast line, which itself could easily shift.

Bige habban, 'to do business', across long-distance borders was difficult more for practical than for legal or jurisdictional reasons; in effect, it was difficult because of physical distance and the many local hurdles that had to be negotiated along the way. Yet people still did it. The nature of surviving sources means, if anything, that trade is mostly known either from the physical remains of very select goods (above all ceramics, but also coins and other metallic objects) or from written references to attempts to control it. These predispose historians to look at less personal aspects of the process: the goods involved, and the institutional dimensions of trade. What these leave out is the human picture. The English pilgrim who took pride in pulling a fast one on the local authorities in eighth-century Syria by smuggling a calabash full of balsam past the inspectors of goods (Huneburg of Heidenheim, *Hodoeporicon*: *Scriptores*: 101), or the Irish merchants who took umbrage in tenth-century Cambridge after the cloaks they had brought to sell were stolen by a nefarious local priest, who then had to get the support of the townspeople for his protection (*Liber Eliensis*, II.32: 107). Trade, local and long-distance, meant people dealing with people, with all the complications and benefits that followed. And, as has been noted already, exchange was never just about economics.

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