

## Unequal Partners in Government? Domesday Moneyers

Japanese Society of Western Historians Conference, Hiroshima, 20 May 2018

Prosopography is a fashionable buzz word in Western historiography. All studies that hinge on family or social groups and have aspirations to attract funding latch onto the word. More often than not, however, there is little understanding of what prosopography is and what its methodology entails. What it is not is straight forward genealogy. We are all familiar with those antiquarian tracts that drone on endlessly about the descent of this or that kin. They are of use to neither man nor beast. Nor is prosopography the compilation of databases of the same. Acquiring modern clothing makes no difference. Prosopography proper, it is true, draws on such resources, but it rises above them to recover patterns that throw light on the structure of society and government. This paper aims to study moneyers in these terms. We know their names in greater numbers than any other class. In identifying them in Domesday Book we open up the prospect of gaining fresh insights into the impact of the Norman Conquest on the modes of government.

The compilation of Domesday Book is still a hotly debated subject. There is agreement that it drew on the data collected in what contemporaries called the *descriptio*, 'the writing down', of the whole of England in 1086. Yet opinions vary on when and for what purpose the surviving text, a digest of the returns, was written. Fortunately, for the present purposes the debate is largely academic. Whatever the circumstances of its production, there is no doubt that Domesday Book, intentionally or otherwise, documents a turning point in English history. Recording the names of those who held land, if only notionally, on 5 January 1066, the day on which Edward the Confessor died, and 'now', that is the time of the survey, it shows that an English aristocracy had been all-but-completely replaced by Normans in the aftermath of the Battle of Hastings on 14 October 1066.

The Conquest was to all appearances complete. The only Englishmen of rank who survived were experts in the administration of the precocious system of local government that characterized England and made it so attractive to invaders in the first place. Of baronial status there were only a handful. But lower down the social scale are to be found moneyers. From a reform of the currency in 973 into the twelfth century, the coinage had been periodically withdrawn and struck anew with the name of each mint and the moneyer on the reverse. The thousands of surviving coins from the eleventh and twelfth centuries show that Englishmen continued to mint through the Conquest years and then well into the reign of Henry I (1101-1135). To all appearances it would seem that they were untouched by the new regime. However, so far only a handful of moneyers have been positively identified in Domesday Book and their fates examined in detail. The evidence is equivocal.

We can start with Agemund of Lincoln who minted between 1059 and 1070. Domesday Book shows that in 1066 he held extensive lands, some twenty-three manors and sokelands, in Lincolnshire. By 1086, however, they had all passed to the Norman Jocelin son of Lambert with the exception of his tenements in Lincoln itself and possibly a single manor just outside. Deorman, who minted at London between 1044 and 1059 and probably at Steyning until 1077, was somewhat more fortunate. In contrast to Agemund, he held five estates of the king in Hertfordshire and one in Middlesex, along with a half a knight fee of the Archbishop of Canterbury in Kent in 1086. He is not recorded as

holding any of these lands himself in 1066, but it is likely that, in one way or another, he inherited them from kinsmen. Thirdly, there is Swetmann of Oxford. Possibly minting from as early as 1050 to 1062, he is explicitly identified in the Domesday account of Oxford itself. His name, however, is not found elsewhere in the Oxfordshire folios and the four instances found beyond are most likely references to other individuals. Swetman, it seems, had no land outside the borough in which he minted. He was apparently of modest means and modest status both before the Conquest as after.

The three moneyers who are well attested in Domesday Book were of varying wealth and experienced different trajectories following the Conquest. What, then, was the norm? This paper aims initially to set out a methodology for identifying moneyers and provide a preliminary analysis of their fate in these terms before briefly exploring the implications for our understanding the nature of royal government in 1086. The first task is, to say the least, a tricky business. A comprehensive account of moneying was no part of the Domesday survey. All references to the process are incidental: we hear only of a handful of mints, moneyers, and their dues and Swetman alone is named. We do, though, get a sense of the status of moneyers. Swetman held his house freely as did an anonymous moneyer in York, while Agemund in Lincoln and seven unnamed moneyers in Hereford enjoyed *sake and soke*. A further one in Wallingford was 'quit so long as he does the coining'. The separate renders that other moneyers made to the crown suggests that such privileges were common. The implications are clear. Like Deorman of London, moneyers held their lands directly from the king. Where they can be traced in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as in Nottingham and Winchester, their lands were constituted as separate fees that were held in chief of the king.

As such, contemporary moneyers ought to regularly appear in Domesday Book as holders of land in both 1066 and 1086. Further, identifying them ought to be a simple matter of correlating the data with the coin evidence. But inevitably life is not that simple. Neither of the datasets is free of uncertainties and ambiguities. First the Domesday evidence. The terms of the survey initially specified three datums for tenure, namely, the day on which King Edward was alive and dead, when the land was acquired by its new holder, and 1086. In practice, though, the jurors presented what evidence they had and this was often outside these terms. Thus, apparent holders of land in 1066 might hold from any time in the reign of Edward the Confessor up to the usually indeterminate date when his Norman successor took over. What purports to be contemporary should, of course, be no later than 1086: although the date of the compilation of Domesday Book has been questioned, there is no doubt that it generally drew its information from the returns of the survey. If there is later material, it is probably minimal in extent. Conversely, it was not necessarily up-to-date. There are said to be no moneyers in Huntingdon, but the coin evidence indicates minting in issues before and after the survey. If not plain mistaken or a later interpolation, the stated absence of moneyers must relate to an earlier period. The data, then, are not as firmly dated as they appear.

Nor is the coin record. The sequence of the issues in the reigns of Edward the Conqueror, Harold II, and William I is generally accepted, but there remains disagreement over chronology. In particular, it has been suggested that the PAXS type, hitherto assigned to the period 1083-1086, is most likely the first issue of William II rather than the last of William I. The type was struck in the greatest number of mints, and moneyers within them, for the whole period, but, if the re-dating is correct, the data are

later than the Domesday survey. In its turn, the reassessment of PAXS requires a re-examination of the remaining issues of the reign of William the Conqueror, a task as yet to be undertaken.

All this uncertainty would be surmountable were either source more precise in its identification of individuals. Domesday's focus was the tenants-in-chief in 1086. The scribes were assiduous in distinguishing one from the other by the use of distinctive bynames, that is toponymics, patronymics, nicknames, occupation names, and the like. By contrast, the English holders of land in both 1066 and 1086 are rarely so identified. The information was available but apparently deemed irrelevant to the scribes' purpose. The coin ascriptions are no more precise: bynames are again rare. There was usually no room on the coins for such, it is true, but, more to the point, no need for them. The three to four year life cycle of each type and the record of the mint was sufficient to identify any particular moneyer, even if he had a common name such as Godwine or Leofric. So, we have masses of undifferentiated common names – perhaps as many as 30,000 in total – that are difficult to distinguish one from another.

Difficult but not impossible. In the absence of bynames, individuals who forfeited after the Conquest can sometimes be identified in Domesday Book with a degree of certainty from the holder in 1086. Many tenants-in-chief at the time of the Domesday survey owed their title to what is called antecessorial succession, that is, they were granted the estates of a single individual, their *antecessor*, in their entirety. It follows that a recurring name in the baron's fee is likely to be that of the same individual. Recurring patterns of names are also suggestive. Where two or more names are paired, either in 1066, 1086, or both, in a number of contexts, then again it might be assumed that the references are to the same people. Rare name forms may point in the same direction and, if all else fails, geographical proximity may provide a clue. These are the standard tools of the trade in Domesday prosopography. In pursuing moneyers, we can add tenurial profiling to the list. As thegns of higher status, moneyers are more likely to be found in some contexts than others.

In what follows Domesday names have been taken from my own database which is based on the John Palmer's Hull dataset. All entries have been cross referenced to the Phillimore edition of Domesday Book, the Alecto Digital Domesday, and the Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England (PASE) website. The coin evidence comes from the FitzWilliam Museum Early Medieval Coin Finds (EMC) dataset, which brings together single find coins and the Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles (SCBI) dataset, and has been cross-referenced to the corresponding PASE entries. Normalization of names is different in all these datasets and so equivalences have been indicated where appropriate by references to von Feilitzen's *The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book*. Otherwise the PASE forms have been used. Apart from the Domesday poles of 1066 and 1086, an elastic approach to chronology has been adopted. Close dating is a rarity in early medieval studies and, for the purposes of prosopography if desirable, it is not strictly necessary. So associations have been deemed relevant whether the individuals minted in the past, present, or was to do so in the future. On the same basis the coin evidence has not been confined to the reign of William the Conqueror, but has also been drawn from the reigns before as after the inquest.

Moneyers in 1086 and their antecedents should be most readily identifiable in the Domesday accounts of the boroughs in which they worked. Entered at the head of the

county folios, these accounts are typically divided into two broad sections, the first relating to the dues of the king and the second to privileged landholdings. The properties that rendered them are conventionally known as customary and non-customary respectively. Moneyers are more likely to be found in the latter. We have already noticed Agemund of Lincoln who appears in the account of the privileged lawmen. Since his father was Walraven and both names appear in the Lincoln coin record, they can readily be identified as the moneyors of the same names. Likewise, Godric son of Eadgifu, the lawman, may also have been the Godric, or one of a series of Godrics, who coined sometime between 1042 and 1086. He was succeeded by Peter of Valognes and so can be identified with the Godric who preceded Peter in Burton by Lincoln. Despite the matronymic, it is possible that he was the Godric who was Agemund's son since in the thirteenth century Burton was held by the de Paris family to whom Agemund's post-Conquest estates had descended.

Beorhtræd and Deorman can be likewise confidently identified as moneyers in Oxford. Although they held a house in the borough jointly, there is no explicit indication that they were related like Agemund and Walraven. Nevertheless, both names are rare and their tenurial interdependence must therefore suggest that they are the Beorhtræd and Deorman who coined in the reigns of Edward the Confessor, William the Conqueror, and the early years of his son Rufus. They were likely father and son. Whether Deorman of Oxford is identical with Deorman of London is unclear.

In the account of Colchester there are no less than seven names that coincide with those of moneyers there between 1046 and 1089. Ælfsige, Beorhtric, Deorman, Godric, Goldman, Wulfric, and Wulfwine all held tenements from the king (there is no comparable record of non-customary lands). Here, however, there is no particularly significant association between them and so we can only be confident that the rarer names represent individuals. Thus, Goldmann is only attested in this entry and the coin record, while Deorman is confined to the same in the Essex folios. Both are almost certainly the Goldman and Deorman who minted between 1059 and 1068 and 1053 and 1062 respectively. Again, it is unclear if the latter is identical with one or other of the Deormans already noticed. The Leofsunnu mentioned in the same account must be the Maldon moneyer who worked between 1072 and 1086. The name is only otherwise found in the Essex and Suffolk folios of Domesday Book in eleven entries relating to land in the immediate vicinity of Colchester and Maldon. Ten had passed to three tenants-in-chief by 1086 and one was continued to be held as a subtenancy by Leofsunu. The rarity of the name, however, suggests that they probably all belonged to the same man before the Conquest. Again, the York account provides the names of Authulfr and Arnketil who are found in the coin record for the periods 1059 to 1074 and 1044-1066. The former probably held Eddlethorpe to the east of York and the latter Morton to the west; both estates passed out of their hands after the Conquest. Finally, Brunman the reeve in Canterbury may also have been a moneyer. Domesday records that he took tolls from foreigners and so it is only his name that links him with moneying. But moneyers are known to have taken other roles in royal administration, notably money changing, in the twelfth century and his identity with the Brunman who minted between 1048 and 1050 is therefore not impossible.

The haul of names is not great. Towns were not part of the Domesday commissioners' remit and their Domesday accounts are, with but few exceptions,

notoriously incomplete and elliptical. We can use the coin record on its own to suggest the names of those who are noticed but unnamed (Table 1). Even then, though, only a small number of moneyers working in the mid to late eleventh century can be identified. We might expect to be better served in the account of their lands outside the boroughs. As in boroughs, tenurial profiling indicates where they are most likely to be found. The rural estates of Agemund of Lincoln and Deorman of London were enrolled among the lands of the *taini regis* of Lincolnshire, Hertfordshire, and Middlesex, respectively. These, the king's thegns, were Englishmen who had survived the Conquest as royal servants and minor lords holding directly of the crown. Their estates are in the normal course of events entered as the last breve in each county. However, in the counties that had been given over to local magnates – Kent, Sussex, Cheshire, and Shropshire – they might be enrolled in various places or are otherwise signalled by the identity of the holder in 1066 and the tenant in 1086. It is in these sections of Domesday Book that the lands of moneyers in 1086 are most likely enrolled.

Table I: *unnamed moneyers in Domesday Book*

	1066	1086	1080-1083	PAXS
<b>Bridport</b>	1	Hwætman		
<b>Chester</b>	7	Ælfsige Bruning Leofnoth EalhSIGe Dunning Huskarl ThronDR		
<b>Colchester</b>	U			
<b>Dorchester</b>	2	Unknown		
<b>Hereford</b>	7	Ælfwig Eadric Earnwig		
<b>Huntingdon</b>	3	Leofwine Godric Godwine	0	
<b>Ipswich</b>			U	Ælfric Ælfwine Æthelwine Leofwine Sveinn
<b>Lewes</b>			U	Ælfric Osweald Wynræd
<b>Norwich</b>		1	Unknown	Eadweald Eadwine Godric Godwine

				Howard Inhune Ulfketil
<b>Nottingham</b>	2	Forni		
<b>Shaftesbury</b>	3	Unknown		
<b>Shrewsbury</b>	3	Æthelric Earnwig Godwine Wudumann Wulfmær		
<b>Sudbury</b>			U	Wulfric
<b>Wallingford</b>			1	Svertingr Æthelwine Svertingr
<b>Wareham</b>	2	Sidumann		
<b>York</b>			1	Authbjorn Leofwine Leysingr Sunnulfr Thorr

U=unspecified number

The Yorkshire evidence is the most prolific and there rare name forms are the main indicator. The king's thegns Hardulfr, and Snaebeorn only appear once each on the Yorkshire folios, and Arngrimr three times. All three held in both 1066 and 1086 and are almost certainly identical with the moneyers of the same names who minted variously between 1048-1098. Indeed, Arngrimr held in Huntington in conjunction with a Frithgrestr who minted in Chester between 1068-1070 where an Arngrimr was also active. Skuli, who by 1086 had been succeeded by a Thorketil, is another candidate. Again, the name is rare, but it is known to be that of Agemund of Lincoln's brother. Swein, Thorr, and Ulfketil also held in both 1066 and 1086 in adjacent vills, but we can be less certain of their identity since their names are so common.

The Lincolnshire evidence is similarly discursive. Kolgrimr, one of the few Englishmen of means in 1086, held one parcel of land in 1086 in succession to Agemund. Before the Conquest he was the reeve of Grantham and had held three demesne manors in the vicinity of the town. These he retained after the Conquest and thereafter acquired eight further estates in chief and sixteen tenancies. His preferment was most likely related to ministerial service in King William's administration, but he may have started his career as the moneyer who coined at Lincoln between 1044 and 1056. The Auti who minted between 1050 and 1062 may be the Auti who held in Hibaldstow in succession to a Brunier. Finally, the Leofric who held in Creeton in both 1066 and 1086, could be the Stamford moneyer. However, the name is so common that no firm conclusion can be reached.

Elsewhere the evidence is sparser. In Hampshire Eadwine was succeeded by Godwine in Bartley and they may therefore represent the moneyers who minted at Winchester before and after the Conquest. Likewise, a Leofwine succeeded a Godric in Handley in Derbyshire, again reflecting the sequence of moneyers of the same name at

the Derby mint. In both cases, however, the names are so common that certainty again alludes us. Rarer names afford more confidence. Osmær and Beorhtweard, who were king's thegns in Somerset holding a single estate each, are likely to be the moneyers at Bath and Bristol respectively. An Atsurr, who held Kinoulton in Nottinghamshire, was probably the Nottingham moneyer of the same name and may be the Atsurr son of Svala who enjoyed sake and soke. Beorhtwine, who held eleven manors of the king in both 1066 and 1086 in Dorset, was a reeve, but, given the comparative rarity of his name, it is not impossible that he was the moneyer of the same name who minted at Bridport between 1083 and 1086 and probably at Frome before the Conquest. Other *taini regis* have such common names that it is impossible to link them with confidence.

Identifying moneyers who held before the Conquest and lost their estates thereafter is a more hit and miss affair. Tenurial profiling is of less value here. The simple *tenuit* formula may indicate those who held with sake and soke, but such king's thegns did not necessarily hold all their lands so privileged. It is, then, cross-linking that provides the best evidence for the identification of moneyers in 1066. Deorman of London's antecedents were probably moneyers or related to moneyers. Deorman himself is not known to have held land before the Conquest unless he was the Deorman who was the lord of Moreton Morrell in Warwickshire. It is, though, unlikely that he enjoyed especial preferment after the Conquest. His antecessor in Hertfordshire was Alwin Horne, a king's thegn, who was presumably a kinsman of Leofwine Horne, a Rochester moneyer in Kent. Further, Deorman held Watton with an Alward and succeeded to an Algar in Islington, both names of London moneyers who coined between 1042 and sometime in the reign of William the Conqueror and 1046-1053 respectively. It seems eminently likely that Dorman succeeded to the family business and the family lands.

Godman, who held land in Grantchester in Cambridgeshire, was probably the Hertford moneyer, for his land passed to Godlamb, probably the Cambridge moneyer who held it from the Count Alan in 1086. On the same grounds, Leofstan, Leofwine, Alfred, and Sigeræd, who, *inter alios*, held land in 1066 in the Kentish villis of Pising and Pineham, were probably the moneyers of the same names in Canterbury. By 1086 their holding had passed to Hugh de Port who appears to have held them in demesne. If Sigeræd was Sigeræd of Chilham, he had held his lands with sake and soke.

Otherwise, rare names are the main indicator. Sigeræd son of Aelfeva, King Edward's thegn, may have been the Newport moneyer in Buckinghamshire. His lands had passed to Earl Hugh by the time of the Domesday survey. The Colbein who held Lach Dennis and Goostrey in Cheshire is most likely the Chester moneyer who also appears to have minted at Derby. Wicing, who held eleven manors in Devon, must be the Exeter and Lydford moneyer. His estates passed to brothers William Cheever and Ralf de Pomeroy. Ifing of Alreford was in all likelihood another Exeter moneyer. Hwætman who had held Wey in Dorset was clearly the moneyer at the Bridport and Dorchester mints both before and after the Conquest. The name only otherwise appears once in the Herefordshire folios of Domesday Book. By 1086 his manor had passed to Fulcred, a Frenchman. The Aslacr in the Lincolnshire folios who, like Agemund, gave title to Jocelin son of Lambert, held seven estates and may be the Lincoln moneyer of the same name. An Alnoth, who held two manors in Ingham with him, could be the Ælfnoth who minted in Lincoln into the reign of William the Conqueror. Yet another Lincoln moneyer may be the Asfrith who preceded Alfred of Lincoln in two manors. In Nottinghamshire Atsurr, who preceded

William Peverel, is probably the king's thegn who held Kinoulton and the Wædel who held one parcel of land in Somerset was almost certainly the Bath moneyer. Finally, five rare names are recorded in a pre-Conquest schedule of king's thegns postscriptally inserted into the Yorkshire folios which are probably those of York moneyers. Lesingr held some eleven parcels of land in 1066. By 1086 at least two had passed to Robert Malet, but the fate of the others is unrecorded – the schedule has no TRW details. It is likely, though, that they had been lost, for, by the time they emerge into the light of history, they too were held by newcomers. A Rosketill. held seven estates of which at least five passed to Normans, while Svartkollr probably had as many as six estates and Raven two. A Man who preceded Drogo de Beuvriere in Ellerby may have been another York moneyer.

Our results are summarized in Table 2. At best somewhere in the region of forty-four or so moneyers can be identified who held land in 1066 or thereabouts. There are no more than eighteen for 1086. These represent at most 33% of the moneyers working in 1066, 11% of the PAXS moneyers, and 25% of the issue before. There can be no doubt that those with more common names, the vast majority in the corpus, must also be represented to a greater or lesser degree in Domesday Book. It is possible that the later history of their fees may, in some cases, help to identify them. Such an analysis has been beyond the scope of the present study. The majority, nevertheless, will probably remain irrecoverable. Much of the data is intractable. That is not to say, however, that what has been recovered is without value. The methodology applied above cannot claim to provide absolute certainty in every case. It is also by necessity county based. Like Deorman of London and Colbein of Chester, moneyers may have regularly held land outside the shire in which they minted. Nevertheless, the resulting analysis has uncovered enough probable identifications to draw wider conclusions.

Table 2: *Domesday moneyers*

Mint	c.1066	c.1086
Bath	Wædel, Osmær's father	Osmær
Bridport	Hwætman	Beorhtwine
Bristol	Beorhtweard	Beorhtweard
Cambridge		Godlamb
Canterbury	Alfred, Brunman, Leofstan, Leofwine, Sigeræd	
Chester	Colbein	
Colchester	Deorman, Goldman	
Derby	Godric	Leofwine
Exeter	Wicing	
Hertford	Godman	
Lincoln	Ælfnoth, Agemund, Asfrith, Aslacr, Auti, Godric son of Eadgifu, Kolgrimr, Walraven	
London	Algar	Deorman, Alfward
Maldon	Leofsunnu	
Newport	Sigeræd son of Aelfeva	

Nottingham	Atsurr	Atsurr
Oxford	Swetmann	Beorhtræd, Deorman
Stamford	Leofric	Leofric
Winchester	Eadwine	Godwine
York	Arngrimr, Arnketil, Authulfr, Hardulfr, Lesingr, Man, Raven, Rosketill, Skuli, Snaebeorn, Svartkollr, Thorr, Swein, Ulfketil	Arngrimr, Hardulfr, Snaebeorn, Swein, Thorr, , Ulfketil

NB moneyers who worked in more than one mint are entered only once.

Fragmentary evidence indicates that moneyers were of thegnly rank well before 1066, but there is little to reveal their reach. The Domesday evidence adduced here suggests that on the eve of the Conquest it might be considerable. Agemund of Lincoln and Deorman of London did not stand alone in their wealth. The size of their holdings was matched by as many as eight further putative moneyers, namely Wicing of Exeter, Aslak of Lincoln, Leofsunu of Maldon, Atsurr of Nottingham, and Lesingr, Rosketill, Svartkollr, and possibly Ulfketil of York.

These tycoons of the moneying world, however, are outnumbered by those with more modest holdings. The majority of the moneyers that have been identified held one or two manors each. The contrast is the most pronounced among the York moneyers. Where Lesingr had eleven manors, Rosketill seven, and Svartkollr six, Authulfr had two and Authbjorn, Hardulfr, Raven, Skuli, and Snaebeorn one each. Smaller holdings may have been the norm in most mints. Like Swetmann, Goldman of Colchester and Beorhtræd of Oxford appear to have held no rural estates at all. This may have been common. There is many a name in the coin record for which there is no corresponding name in Domesday for the shire in which the moneyer worked. Forni, for example, minted in Nottingham up to 1072, but his name is not found in the Nottinghamshire folios. A Forne was a king's thegn in Yorkshire and a lawman of York, but there is nothing to associate him with the moneyer.

If the wealth of moneyers in 1066 varied, there was a decided levelling down thereafter. Kolgrimr of Lincoln certainly went up in the world, but he was advanced in the king's service as a minister rather than as a moneyer. Otherwise, it was only Deorman of London, and, if correctly identified, Beorhtwine of Bridport and Ulfketil of York who emerged apparently unscathed from the Conquest. All the other big-hitters lost estates, only retaining, if they were lucky, a rump of one or two manors like Agemund. Those who had always enjoyed such modest holdings tended to be more successful in retaining their land. The pattern, however, is the most pronounced in the North where English survivors were generally more common. Elsewhere in the country *taini regis* who were moneyers are the rarer.

It would seem, then, that in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest moneyers did not generally fare better than other classes of Englishman. Domesday Book attests that they tended to retain their urban tenements, but the more wealthy ones were stripped of their other properties. In this they are paralleled by urban patriciates in general. The lawmen of Cambridge, Lincoln, and York, for example, also lost their rural estates. The expertise of such specialists in justice and administration was essential to the Norman regime. Like the sheriffs and reeves who also survived the Conquest, they were retained

in place to ensure continuity of government. Their wider interests, however, were subject to the same vicissitudes of the Norman settlement as any other Englishman's. In their core functions as lawgivers and administrators, they stayed in place. So must we understand the lot of the moneyers. Moneying was a specialist activity that depended on confidence. Royal wealth, and by extension power, was founded in sound coin and the English moneyers underwrote its quality in the eyes of locals and foreigners alike. To dispense with their professional services was unthinkable.

I'm sure by now you are asking yourself whether this amounts to anything more than a pile of beans. You are right to ask the question, but I think the answer is yes, it does. It tells us a great deal about the nature of royal government in 1086. Much of our historiography has reinforced the narrative that royal power was imposed on local societies by strong kings against the will of their subjects. It's an attractive idea that appeals to the popular conception of the middle ages as red in tooth and claw. It is, however, a gross simplification. What goes under the name of a royal administration before the Conquest was more a partnership than a dictatorship. Kings could promulgate laws and writs, but it was the free communities of the shire and hundred that executed them. Royal power, such as it was, depended on the cooperation of their courts.

The identification of our moneyers in Domesday Book allows us to show that this same dynamic was no less important after the Conquest. Trust in the currency came from below and the royal administration had to accept it could only be guaranteed by moneyers who were members of their local communities. The retention of the lawmen tells the same tale. The balance of interests in this symbiotic relationship was, of course, always fluid. The loss of land after the Conquest shifted it in the king's favour. But the centrality of the relationship itself was unchallenged. It was not the Conquest that eroded the bond, but rather the development of common law procedures in the next century. That's another story. The continued functioning of moneyers through the Conquest years attests continuity of modes of government that had long characterized England.

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