'John De Courcy and the Early Anglo-Irish Coinage' Reflections on the Talk Presented by Dr Martin Allen at the NSI-NB Meeting on 1st March 2019

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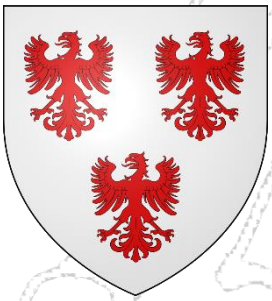
"After a certain point, money is meaningless, it ceases to be the goal, the game is what counts."
Aristotle Onassis

Thinking about Irish history in coins, it occurred to me that the past always has two sides: the misty mythical one, rooted deep in the prehistoric landscapes legendised by Irish lore, and the utilitarian side depicting countless conquests driven by the lust for riches and power and sowing the seeds of the endless conflicts in the troubled land. Mighty time is tossing this coin, and when it flips the ordinary turns legendary and vice versa. The name of John de Courcy turned up many times on my travels across the province, particularly in the areas of Downpatrick and Carrickfergus, and his adventures, lionised by the hagiographers and reduced to the prosaic motives by the historians, have never ceased to astonish me.

On the rainy Friday night of 1st March 2019, our Numismatic Society hosted the eagerly anticipated talk by Dr Martin Allen, the Senior Assistant Keeper at the Fitzwilliam Museum. The topic was the early Anglo-Irish coinage of John de Courcy. Some twenty coin-enthusiasts turned up for the event, including three members from the southern branch headed by the Chairman Michael E. Kenny. The talk was largely based on the research published by Dr Allen last year in the British Numismatic Journal, and few coins were provided for display by the Society members to bring life to the pallid statistics and taxonomies of the exemplary academic paper.



Coat of arms of Courcy family

One then may wonder what would be the purpose of writing extended meeting notes, after the publication of the comprehensive academic paper and, previously, two books by Steve Flanders in 2015 and by Michael Sheane in 2017? Well, there may be none, but nevertheless, we hope re-posting what has already been said on the matter will further encourage interest amongst our readers. Not many coins struck by John de Courcy have survived, and most of them have rather doubtful provenance dating back to the second half of XIX – first half of the XX cc. The growing popularity of metal-detecting in Ireland and the absence of an efficient and amicable find reporting mechanism, similar to the PAS in Great Britain, inevitably result in the new finds often passing unrecorded and, possibly, sold privately. It cannot be overemphasised that each new discovery of the coins of John de Courcy is most important for late medieval numismatics and Irish historical studies. Besides, it reduces the number of yet unearthed coins waiting for professional archaeologists to be discovered, so the system and legislation must adapt to avoid the permanent loss of valuable information. But for now, let us get back on track of the narrative.

After a brief introduction by the Society Chairman Mr Alan Dunlop, Dr Allen enthusiastically commenced his talk. His BNJ paper was the result of his research for the Volume 9 (The British Isles, 1066-1279) of the Medieval European Coinage series, a major international work of reference for medieval numismatists, archaeologists and historians. Whilst working on the volume, Dr Allen

discovered shortcomings in the up-to-date information on the early Anglo-Irish coinage, particularly that about John de Courcy. Much of the original research done by W. Seaby, M. Dolley and W. O'Sullivan dates to the 1960s and, particularly, Dolley's conjectures were not always traceable for the primary sources. Dr Allen's pursuit to make a comprehensive review of the topic brought him in contact with many museums, auction houses and individual collectors in the UK and Ireland. His quest turned out not to be an easy one, with some museum collections inaccessible for examination due the lack of specialist curators, while other coins from the archaeological excavations and occasional finds lacked documented provenance or were in a condition making them unsuitable for the statistical analysis.

Apparently, the coinage of John de Courcy first came in sight in 1863 when a hoard of coins, reportedly bought from a Newry resident, was published by Aquilla Smith, a prominent Irish medical doctor, numismatist and archaeologist. Very few more coins of John de Courcy emerged until the unique St. Patrick 'halfpenny' found during the excavations on the Lismahon motte, Co. Down, and published by W. Seaby in 1958. Some more examples of his coins have appeared inj recent auction sales. The questions of the purpose, circulation and volume of the coinage call for some historical insight. At this point, it is instructive to revisit the political landscape in Ireland in the 1170s and the identity and deeds of the person who struck these coins, John de Courcy. The following chronology of the events is extended by the author using open sources, as compared to the succinct biography presented by Dr Allen in his paper and during the talk.

There is a consensus that the family name of de Courcy originated from the village of Courcy-sur-Dives in Calvados, Normandy. The place name probably developed from the Roman word *curtus*, meaning small or short. The surname appeared in the Domesday Book of 1086 as that of Richard de Curci of Oxford. It seems there are different genealogies of John de Courcy. In one view, he was probably a brother of William de Courcy III (d. 1171), lord of Stoke Courcy (Stogursey), for both had a brother Jordan, and, as such, son of William de Courcy II (fl. c. 1125). The latter's wife, Avice de Rumilly, was daughter of William Meschin of Copeland in Cumbria, and John succeeded to a portion of his estates at Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire, which may suggest his illegitimacy. Steve Flanders, however, states John was a nephew of William de Courcy II and a cousin of William de Courcy III.

The 'Song of Dermot and the Earl', an early 13th c. anonymous Anglo-Norman verse chronicle survived in a single manuscript of 17th c., claims that Henry II granted Ulster to John 'if by force he could conquer it'. In 1176 John arrived in Ireland with the King's deputy William Fitz Audelin and joined the Dublin garrison, supposedly hoping to gain a share of the land for himself. The Normans had long-held ambitions for the conquest of Ireland. Back in 1155, Pope Adrian IV, the only English Pope, had issued a Papal Bull giving the recently crowed King of England Henry II the authority to invade Ireland to remedy 'ecclesiastical corruption and abuses', i.e., to facilitate the Papal reforms within the Church in Ireland

Hiberno-Norse Semi-Bracteate Penny, c. 1110-50 (https://oldcurrencyexchange.com)
The bracteates and semi-bracteates (c. 0.6 g.) were the last Hiberno-Norse issues before the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169. Given the scarcity of the bracteate finds, as well as their extensive debasement and fragility, it is doubtful that they were circulated as currency at the time.

Meanwhile, the political situation in Ireland was complicated by the death of Muircheartach Mac Lochlainn, the High King of Ireland, in 1166. His

protegee, Diarmait Mac Murchada, King of Leinster, was deprived of his kingdom in 1166 by the council of Irish Kings headed by the new High King of Ireland Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair on the grounds that Mac Murchada had abducted the wife of the King of Breifne, Tigernán Ua Ruairc. Mac Murchada fled via Bristol to Normandy and sought the help of Henry II in regaining his kingdom, promising to swear loyalty to the English King in return. Having obtained Henry's permission to recruit royal subjects for his campaign, Mac Murchada gathered an army of Norman knights and Welsh and Fleming mercenaries and landed at Wexford in 1169. In a short time and with a great brutality, he re-instated his control of Leinster, alongside capturing Hiberno-Norse Waterford and Dublin. The Irish kings were taken by surprise with the Normans' stamina, skills and superior weapons. A peace treaty was signed at Ferns, acknowledging Diarmait as the rightful King of Leinster and Ruaidrí as his overlord, alongside the agreement to send Diarmait's foreign allies away permanently.

One of the leading supporters of Diarmait's cause was Cambro-Norman Marcher Lord Richard de Clare, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, nicknamed Strongbow. Strongbow married Mac Murchada's daughter Aoife in 1170 and was named the heir to the kingdom. Mac Murchada died suddenly in 1171 and Strongbow declared himself the King of Leinster. However, he was not accepted by the Gaelic community from inside and outside Leinster. Ruaidrí, in alliance with the Norse-Gaelic army, launched a massive counteroffensive, which proved unsuccessful and a disaster for the Irish.

The situation in Ireland caused serious concern for Henry II, who did not like the idea of the establishment of a rival Norman state in Ireland. As the result, Henry II with a large fleet landed in Ireland in 1171 to impose his suzerain authority. Most Norman barons affirmed their loyalty to the King and, in return, retained their conquests as the knight fees. After negotiations, Strongbow received Leinster in fief, both Waterford and Dublin were proclaimed Royal Cities, while Meath was granted to Hugh de Lacy, along with the permission to employ royal troops to conquer the kingdom.

Apparently, Henry was peacefully accepted by the Irish clergy and by most of the Irish Kings. The latter perhaps were not fully aware of the feudal obligations, as understood by Henry, and were hoping that Henry would halt the expansion of both Leinster and Hiberno-Normans. The events culminated in signing the Treaty of Windsor in 1175 between Henry and Ruaidrí. However, with the death of Strongbow in 1176, Ruaidrí unable to control all Irish Kings and Henry unable or unwilling to control his Anglo-Norman vassals, within two years Ireland was flooded with a new wave of the predatory knights of fortune, with John de Courcy being one of the most prominent figures at the time.

Henry II, AR Penny, 'Tealby' coinage, class A, c. 1158-63, Newcastle
(NumisBids: Morton & Eden Ltd Auction 91, Lot 81).
'Tealby' or 'Cross and Crosslets' coinage (1158-80) of Henry II was the first recoinage after the Civil War and the Anarchy. The coins were poorly struck on irregular flans at 30 mints involved in the operation.

Taking the advantage of the situation and in the best Norman fashion, John de Courcy grew impatient for his own land. In late January 1177 he gathered a force of 22 knights and some 300 foot soldiers, possibly assisted by the Irish kerns, and, against Fitz Audelin's wishes, swiftly marched north into Ulaid (Ulaidh) taking the town of Dún Dá Leathghlas (today's Downpatrick) by surprise about 1st February 1177. The town was sacked by the invaders and after two fierce battles, in February and June 1177, de Courcy defeated and forced the local chieftain, Ruaidhrí Mac Duinn Shléibhe (Rory MacDunleavy) to flee. Mac Carthaigh's book (early 17th c.) gives the following description of the

events of 24th June: 'John de Courcy came secretly with a band of knights and archers from Dublin to Down, and reaching it unperceived, they made a dyke from sea to sea about Down. The Ulaidh then assembled, under Ruaidhrí Mac Duinn Shléibhe, to make an attack on Down against John, but on reaching it they retreated without striking a blow when they saw the Englishmen with their horses in full battledress. When the Englishmen saw the Ulaidh in flight, they followed them with their people, and inflicted slaughter upon them, both by drowning and by the sword. The Bachall Fínghin and Bachall Rónáin Fhinn and many other relics were left behind in that slaughter.' Among the relics taken were also the Canóin Pátraic, along with Gilla in Choimded Ua Caráin, Archbishop of Armagh, who was sent to Dublin together with the trophies. Unsuccessful mediation was attempted in 1177 by the papal legate Cardinal Vivian, who arrived from the Isle of Man where he had solemnized King Gudrodr's (Guðrøðr Óláfsson) marriage.

William I of Scotland, AR Penny, c. 1180-1195, Roxburgh, 1.44 g.
(Classical Numismatic Group Auction 109 Lot 984).
Contemporary English and Scottish coins dominate the content of the coin hoards from the Isle of Man. Although nominally being the vassals of the Kings of Norway, the Manx Kings had ever closer economic and political links with Ireland and Scotland.

Encouraged by the success in Down, de Courcy moved further up north invading the territory of Dal nAraide. He then subdued Cú Mide Ua Flainn, the King of Uí Thuirtre and Fir Lí in County Antrim, and reached the north coast at Coleraine. On his way back, at the Rock of Fergus he began to build the great stone keep (today's Carrickfergus castle) which secured his conquests from the north. In the south he built the castles at Dundrum and Clough. There is some evidence that he built his first castle at Dún Dá Leathghlas, but the fortification did not last long, as the town became the spiritual capital of the Lecale. Despite John's success, he was defeated twice in 1178 by Fir Li and by Airgialla and Cú Ulad Mac Dúinn Sléibe, who killed 450 Englishmen. Nevertheless, John quickly won the support of the Irish clerics and some Irish rulers, who often assisted his invasions and raids.

De Courcy would style himself as *princeps Ultoniae*, 'master of Ulster', and following the feudal tradition, he divided the newly conquered Lecale amongst his knights, many of whom came from northwest England. However, few of them survived to witness the downfall of John in 1204, and among those who did, only few retained their lands afterwards. Starting in 1179, John conferred his ecclesiastical patronage, founding new abbeys and priories, and subjecting unreformed monasteries to new orders with mother-houses predominantly in Cumbria. The pinnacle of this development was the alleged discovery of the remains of Saints Patrick, Brigit, and Colum Cille at Down in 1185. According to the later writers, the event was celebrated on 9th June 1186 with a great pomp and attended by Cardinal Vivian on behalf of the Pope.

The silver Arm Shrine of St Patrick (Ulster Museum on loan from the Diocese of Down and Connor) supposedly contained the relics of the Saint discovered in 1185 by the Bishop of Down under auspices of John de Courcy. Although the evidence is lacking, it may be of English silversmith and made in Down around 1200s.

With respect to the latter evets, it is intriguing that no native Irish annalists made references to this discovery. For instance, the Four Masters, who gave accurate account of

the past visits of the papal envoys to Ireland, including Cardinal Vivian's visit in 1177, omitted his visit in 1186 or the translation of the relics of the three Irish Saints. The only contemporary testimony was provided by Gerald of Wales (Giraldus Cambrensis), a royal clerk and chaplain to King Henry II who accompanied Prince John on his first expedition in Ireland in 1185, in his *Topographia Hibernica*. The later writers described the events in colourful details, which makes their evidence suspicious. The history of the Arm Shrine of St Patrick only adds to the confusion. It is believed that the reliquary was made in 1200s to contain the arm fragments detached from the body of St Patrick. Over the following centuries the relics wore out and were replaced in the 1850s by the relics allegedly brought by Cardinal Vivian in 1186 and preserved in the Church of St. Mark in Rome.

Henry II, AR Penny, Short Cross type, class 1b (c. 1180-9), London, 1.37 g. (Ira & Larry Goldberg Auctioneers)
The Short Cross coinage replaced the poorly struck Tealby coinage and, with only minor alterations, carried on through the reigns of Henry II to Henry III.

According to *Florilegium Insulæ Sanctorum* (1624) written by Irish hagiologist Thomas Messingham, the relics of the three Irish saints were revealed to the Bishop of Down, Echmílid mac Máel Martain (Malachias III) in his prayer. Malachias shared his vision with John de Courcy, 'a man much given to the service of God', by whose advice and assistance supplication was made to the Pope for the translation of the relics. This was accomplished and the respective Feast added to the church calendar. Nevertheless, the whole story has ever been doubted and it has even been speculated that the invention and translation of the relics was concocted by John de Courcy and, willingly or unwillingly, aided by Malachias to reconcile the natives with the Norman conquest. Indeed, John was fond of the divine providence and he kept a book of Colum Cille's prophecies, believing they forecasted his conquest. He promoted the cult of St. Patrick by altering the dedication of Down Cathedral from the Holy Trinity to St. Patrick and commissioning the revised hagiography of St. Patrick, *Vita Patricii*, to Jocelin of Furness.

In about 1180 John married Gudrodr's daughter, Affreca. This was likely a political marriage, allowing John to ally with her father, who paid homage to the King of Norway, and helped to secure his newly acquired territories from Norse raids. Affreca took active part in John's patronage of the Irish church and founded the Grey Abbey in 1193, as a daughter house of Holmcultram Abbey in Cumbria. The couple had no legitimate issues, although Patrick de Courcy, 2nd Lord Kinsale (d. c. 1260) may have been John's illegitimate son.

Tomb effigy of King John, Worcester Cathedral

Back in 1177, King Henry II appointed his ten-year-old son, John 'Lackland', as the feudal Lord of Ireland (*Dominus Hiberniae*), with the plan that John would become the King of Ireland when he came of age. Henry envisioned Ireland to be sub-kingdom of the 'Angevin Empire'. From April to December 1185 young Prince John made his first visit to Ireland, which turned out to be unsuccessful due to financial constraints and lack of diplomatic skills. John returned to England and complained bitterly to his father about the raising power of the Hiberno-Norman barons, particularly the powerful Viceroy of Ireland, Hugh de Lacy. Fortunately for John, the latter was assassinated in 1186 by an Irishman.

The first Anglo-Irish coinage, **the Profile Issue**, is deemed to be concurrent with the expedition of Prince John to Ireland in 1185. The coinage is represented by a single denomination. The obverse of

the coins depicts a young male's head wearing a diadem with a row of annulets around the neck, which may indicate a chain mail. The inscription states IOhANNES. The reverse bears a short cross potent with a fleur-de-lis and a pellet in each quarter, surrounded by a beaded circle and the name of the moneyer. Six moneyers are known for this coinage and the coins are thought to be struck in Dublin. These coins are excessively rare today, with only few in private hands. Martin Allen examined 12 coins of the Profile Issue for his paper and reported the following observations.

John as Lord of Ireland, AR Halfpenny or Irish Penny, Profile Issue, c. 1185, attributed to Dublin
https://oldcurrencyexchange.com

Although the absence of royal regalia (such as a crown and a sceptre) and the simple title led earlier researchers to think that these coins might have been issued by John de Courcy in Downpatrick and Carrickfergus, there is no evidence to support these claims. The duration of the coinage is unknown, but it must have been relatively short lived. The mint was likely to be Dublin. The average weight of these coins is 0.58 g. which is about 40% of the contemporary English penny (c. 1.42 g.). Previously, they have been perceived as light half-pennies, but more likely they are full pennies struck on a local weight standard. The latter might have been derived from the late Hiberno-Norse bracteates, although there is a noticeable time gap between the two coinages.

Likely contemporary to the Profile coinage of Prince John is the **baronial Crozier coinage of John de Courcy**, which is known from only two pieces: the first found at Lismahon motte in 1958 and, from the dig records, the second specimen was at the motte of Rathmullan excavated in 1978, and since then it has unknown location. The obverse shows Bishop's crozier with a small cross to the left surrounded by the inscription +PATRICIVS. The reverse depicts a cross annuletty with the name +IOh'S:DE CVRCI around it. By a stretch of the imagination, the image of crozier could be attributed to the legendary *Bachal Isu* ('The Staff of Jesus'), which was brought by St. Patrick to Ireland, reposited by Richard Strongbow in 1173 in the Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, and stripped of its precious ornaments and burnt as 'a superstitious relic' by the Protestant Reformers in 1538. The coin might have been issued in Downpatrick to celebrate the 'translation' of the relics in 1186. The coins seem struck from debased silver, causing their extensive corrosion and fragility.

John De Courcy, Lord of Ulster (1177-1205), AR Farthing, Anonymous St Patrick coinage, Downpatrick, 0.36 g.
https://oldcurrencyexchange.com

Alongside the Crozier coinage, John de Courcy issued a smaller denomination, known as **St Patrick farthings**, which survived in greater numbers. They were attributed by Aquilla Smith in the 1860s. Martin Allen identified three distinctive groups and some sub-groups of the coinage, whose common feature is the name of St. Patrick around a processional cross or simple cross pattée on the obverse. The reverse shows a cross potent with a crescent in each angle (the first group), a voided cross potent (the second group), or a cross pommée (the third group), surrounded by the inscription of the mint name or that of John de Courcy.

The coins were struck in Downpatrick and Carrickfergus, with the latter being the capital of de Courcy's barony. The average weight of 0.35 g. suggests that they were intended to match the "mascle farthings" issued by Prince John. The denomination of these coins is still debated and it is possible that these coins circulated as halfpennies struck on a local standard. The imagery study of St. Patrick farthing coinage conducted by Dr Allen revealed the adoption of the voided cross reverse characteristic of the contemporary Prince John's DOM coinage. This coherence further extends on the obverse of the larger denomination, possibly half-penny or penny on an Irish standard, which is referred to as **DOM and CAPVT coinages of John de Courcy**.

John as Lord of Ireland, (1177-1205), AR Farthing or Irish Halfpenny, DOM coinage, Waterford, 0.27 g.
https://oldcurrencyexchange.com

The coins of these two series have been divided in three distinct groups and show on the obverse a full-face male image, often referred to as 'moonface', diademed with a row of pellets. The inscription around the 'portrait' states +IOhANNES DOMI (or variants), clearly referring to John the Lord (*Dominus*) of Ireland, on the coins of the first group (with voided cross potent reverse) and of the second group (with voided cross pommée on the reverse). The title on the obverse of the third group contains +CAPVT IOhANNIS or +CAPVT IOThIS PEGIS (or variants), which translates as 'Head of King John', clearly indicating that it was issued after the accession of King John in April 1199. The CAPVT coinage was possibly the transitional issue preceding the REX coinage of King John.

John De Courcy, Lord of Ulster (1177-1205)
AR Halfpenny or Irish Penny, DOM coinage, Carrickfergus
(Private Collection of NSI-NB)

John De Courcy, Lord of Ulster (1177-1205)
AR Halfpenny or Irish Penny, CAPVT coinage, Downpatrick
(Private Collection of NSI-NB)

The coins were struck in Carrickfergus and Downpatrick. The average weight of the John de Courcy's DOM 'halfpennies' is 0.70 g. and is close to that of Prince John's DOM coins (av. 0.71 g.), which suggests that they may have been intended to match a half of the standard English penny (c. 1.42 g.). The chronology of the DOM and CAPVT coinages is not precise. According to Michael Dolley, the DOM coinage of John de Courcy should have followed the introduction of the Prince John's DOM coinage, possibly between 1190 and 1199. The CAPVT coinage may have been struck between 1199 (the year of the accession) and 1204, when John de Courcy was expelled from Ireland. What led to this expulsion was the following chain of events.

In 1193 to 1194, Lord John rebelled against King Richard I, but de Courcy remained loyal. In 1194 to 1195, de Courcy acted as one of two Richard I's justiciars in Ireland, alongside Walter de Lacy, the Lord of Mide (Meath). They joined forces against Prince John's allies and also aided Cathal Crobderg Ua Conchobair against William de Burgh. In 1198, de Courcy invaded Connaught, but was confronted by the Kings of Connaught and Thomond. He attempted to avoid the battle and retreated northwest,

but instead, was met by the Prince of Tirconnell. He barely escaped the capture, while suffering a crushing defeat by the united army of Connaught and Thomond. In 1200, Cathal fled to Ulster and persuaded de Courcy and Hugh II de Lacy to invade Connacht for the second time. That again proved to be unsuccessful and deadly enterprise, as more than half of the Englishmen were slayed in a battle near Kilmagduagh in Galway.

John as Lord of Ireland (1177-99), AR Halfpenny or Irish Penny, DOM coinage (1190-9), Dublin, 0.71 g.
https://oldcurrencyexchange.com

In 1201, de Courcy was captured and brought to Dublin to swear allegiance to King John. He and the de Lacys later became enemies. It seems some of de Courcy's tenants defected at that point, possibly annoyed by his continuous mishaps. Hugh de Lacy's Meath tenants defeated de Courcy in the battle of Down in 1204. He was captured but offered hostages to King John and went to England in 1205. He had his English lands restored, but his lands in Ulster were forfeited to the Crown and in May 1205 King John granted them to Hugh de Lacy II, along with the new title of the Earl of Ulster. Dissatisfied with the King's decision, John rushed on the Isle of Man where he managed to convince his brother-in-law King Rognvaldr (Rǫgnvaldr Guðrøðarson) who provided a fleet of some 100 boats to aid John's invasion of Ulster. In July 1205, de Courcy landed at Strangford and set a siege to the Dundrum Castle. Walter de Lacy promptly arrived with his forces from Meath and de Courcy was expelled and took refuge in Tir nEogain with Aed Ua Neill. In November of 1207 he returned to England, only reappearing in 1210 to help King John overthrow now disgraced de Lacys. However, de Courcy never regained Ulster and possibly carried on as a royal pensioner. He died some time before 1219, when the justiciar was ordered to secure the dower lands for his wife Affreca.

Concluding the presentation, Dr Martin Allen summarised the following key points about the Anglo-Irish coinage of John de Courcy. The coinage includes the lightweight Crozier 'halfpennies', or pennies struck at Down on a local Irish standard. This first type reflects de Courcy's patronage of the cult of St. Patrick across Lecale. This was followed by St. Patrick 'farthings' and DOM and CAPVT 'halfpennies', which had the increased weight matching, respectively, a quarter and a half of the contemporary English penny. The denominations are tentative and the coins could have been Irish halfpennies and pennies, respectively. The later reverses of St. Patrick 'farthings' and the iconography of the DOM and CAPVT 'halfpennies' were copied from the DOM coinage of Prince John as Lord of Ireland, suggesting the attempt to integrate the baronial coinage into the contemporary Irish monetary system. The coins were minted in Carrickfergus and Downpatrick, and the outputs of both mints were much smaller than those of the Prince John's DOM coinage. The location of the hoards and single finds suggests that the primary area of circulation of John de Courcy coinage was Ulster, although they spread to the other parts of Ireland, as far as Corofin in Co. Clare and Arklow in Co. Wicklow, and circulated alongside the suzerain coinage. The purpose of the coinage is deemed to be fiscal needs of de Courcy's administration.

A few questions were raised by the audience, to which Dr Martin Allen provided comprehensive replies. In particular, Michael E. Kenny wondered if the metal content of the Crozier 'halfpenny' has ever been studied. Dr Allen replied that the surface metallography would rather be ambiguous, because medieval coins often have a complex structure with the silver content decreasing towards the coin core. The most reliable content quantification would be destructive, viz., melting down the coin and probing the average content, which is obviously impossible to do with a rare specimen.

Another question concerned the scarcity of John de Courcy's coins. Dr Allen replied that the amount of transactions for Ulster administration of de Courcy was a fraction of that at Dublin and Waterford, and the ratio of the survived specimens of the baronial and sovereign coinages is consistent with the size of the economies.

Alan Dunlop noted that the iconography of the Crozier and St. Patrick coins shows some similarity to the contemporary French coins, and Dr Allen responded that de Courcys were of French origin and may have retained some French connections and influences.

Concerning the weight standards, the Profile issue of Prince John and Crozier issue of John de Courcy both have the common feature of the light weight. This, however, does not suggest the attribution of the Profile issue to John de Courcy, as a justiciary in Ireland, and their weight to a local Ulster standard, neither does the absence of the royal regalia on the Profile portrait. The pearled diadem and the row of annulets around the neck, as well as overall youthful facial features, are all consistent with the image of the Prince John during his first military expedition in Ireland.

The final note was made by Michael E. Kenny and concerned the role of coins in studying and teaching history. Hobbyists and collectors learn much of the history through their studies of coins. Dr Allen agreed that numismatics is indispensable for the archaeological dating and historical studies. However, his personal experience of giving talks on coins suggests that historians are not fully appreciative of the value of coins in teaching.

Concluding these meeting notes, I take the liberty to recall the highlights of my personal experience of meeting Dr Martin Allen and learning about the coins and life of John de Courcy, the 'Prince of Ulster'. Time and historians have distorted the true image of the man. As some lionise his stamina, military and communication skills, eager in faith and gallantry, depicting an image of the indomitable mouse in a bucket of cream robbed of the butter by the big cats, the others view him as a wolf amongst the lions preying on the Irish and desperate to get a lion's share. Indeed, his countless battles, gains and losses, alliances and quarrels made him a person of extraordinary experience, which one could have not gained other than by God's will. At the end, his ambitions overwhelmed his capabilities, so he collapsed under the weight of his fortune and misfortunes. Concerning the coinage, it is intriguing indeed to think about all these open questions on the nature and statistics of the coins, and to hope that some answers will be discovered during our lifetime. We hope that the growing concerns regarding the metal-detecting in Ireland will be adequately addressed, so the new finds can be reported and thoroughly recorded to facilitate our understanding of the early Ulster coinage. The academic view that the DOM coinage was actually the pennies and halfpennies on the Irish weight standard equal to a half of the English penny weight may also have sense in the context of the subsequent REX coinage of King John, the latter supposedly aimed to drain Ireland of silver to fund King's military campaigns. From this perspective, the lightweight DOM coinage might have served the opposite purpose, i.e., was intended to keep scarce silver resources for Prince John's campaigns and administration in Ireland. The future research will reveal the truth, sadly dispelling the mythical side of the history of the knight and his coins.

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