

## **Newspapers and Numismatics: forgotten Medieval and Tudor coin finds from West Midlands periodicals, 1786–1905**

*Murray Andrews, Institute of Archaeology, University College London*

Prior to the twentieth century newspapers and other periodicals served as important repositories for information concerning local archaeological finds, many of which escaped formal publication in scholarly journals or monographs. Since the 1960s a number of academics have interrogated these sources to rediscover and reintegrate such 'forgotten finds' into the archaeological record (e.g. Douch 1962; Manville 1993), and with the development of digital newspaper archives – most notably the British Library's British Newspapers Online and the National Library of Wales' Welsh Newspapers Online – the systematic scrutiny of eighteenth and nineteenth century source material has become an increasingly viable pursuit. Numismatists have been among the keenest to exploit these large antiquarian datasets, and recent targeted studies have uncovered a vast number of 'new' forgotten coin hoards from Yorkshire (Briggs 2012) and the Civil War period (Besly and Briggs 2013), although far fewer studies have sought to integrate comparable evidence for 'single finds' – coins individually, rather than collectively, deposited in the past – from newspaper sources (although c.f. Andrews 2014). This paper builds on such work by presenting a corpus of 34 'forgotten' medieval and Tudor coin finds found in the West Midlands and reported in local newspapers during the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries, offering critical commentary to assess their likely character in light of modern numismatic scholarship.

As is evident from the catalogue, the nature of finds represented in newspaper sources varies. At least five finds clearly represent deliberately deposited coin hoards, two probably buried in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries (Long Mynd, Shropshire; Milcote Farm, Warwickshire), one in the late fifteenth century (Old Windmill Inn, Coventry), another in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries (Leominster, Herefordshire), and the last a particularly unusual find most likely buried in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries (Near Bewdley, Worcestershire). A further five finds represent groups of coins apparently found together but so poorly recorded that it is impossible to establish whether they represent a hoard or a group of unrelated single finds, and the remainder evidently represent single finds of coins deposited or lost individually during the medieval and Tudor periods. A recurrent problem in interpreting antiquarian finds records concerns the accuracy of contemporary attributions. Although some journalists clearly ran their assessments past local antiquaries and numismatists – many of whom were members of, and lectured to, county archaeological societies (e.g. Warwick and Warwickshire Advertiser, 13 January 1844, 3; Tamworth Herald, 26 February 1881, 5) – even the latter could not be expected to identify coins to modern standards. A number of finds of post-1279 Edwardian pennies, for instance, were confidently attributed by contemporaries to Edward I or II, but it would not be until the turn of the twentieth century that numismatists would establish their correct typological ordering and attribution; as such, in lieu of further details it is impossible to identify these finds any less broadly than as coins of Edward I–III. In some cases, however, details provided allow coins to be identified to a much higher degree of accuracy, and these issues are discussed below individual catalogue entries.

From a broad perspective, the finds corpus offers much that is new and of interest at both local and national levels. The large number of new single finds provide valuable additions to a numismatic corpus that, when viewed alongside excavation and metal-detector finds, has the potential to shed light on broader patterns of monetary circulation and commercial activity in the West Midlands; in particular, the number of finds recorded from urban areas and the hilly, pastoral counties of Herefordshire and Shropshire serves as an important corrective to a metal-detector dataset so often biased to lowland areas dominated by modern arable farming (Cooper and Green 2017). At the individual level, however, some of these finds are themselves of interest; Edwardian pennies from Kemerton (Worcestershire) and

Kenley (Shropshire) may provide examples of the 'church find' phenomenon so well attested in continental churches, a possible groat of Richard III from the Wye Bridge at Hereford may represent a foundation deposit commemorating the bridge's construction in 1490, and a probable accumulation of individually lost Short Cross coins at Bitterscote (Staffordshire) may mark the site of an extramural fair for the adjacent town of Tamworth.

Coin hoards add important new points to a growing dataset for the medieval and Tudor periods, and in the case of the find from near Bewdley offer entirely new evidence for the presence of otherwise unattested continental coins on British soil – a discovery whose absence from the numismatic literature is all the more remarkable for the fact that it once passed under the nose of the Keeper of Antiquities at the British Museum. At a more local level, two hoards have important implications for the dating of standing buildings. The coin hoard apparently deposited in a structural context at the Old Windmill Inn, Coventry, provides reasonably firm evidence for redating the building to at least the later fifteenth century, a particularly significant conclusion given recent scientific and typological dating of timber-framed buildings at 119–23 Upper Spon Street and 159–62 Spon Street to the mid and late fifteenth centuries (Meeson and Alcock 2016, 19) – the latter located just c.60m northwest of the Old Windmill Inn. If we accept the suggestion that the Elizabethan hoard from Leominster was found at Ebnall Farm, it may provide comparable evidence for a redating of the building's earliest phases. In presenting a restricted body of material this paper only begins to scratch the surface of the West Midlands newspaper record; future work is likely to uncover many other forgotten finds from prehistory to the present day.

## CATALOGUE

This catalogue follows a standard format organised by county. Individual entries are prefaced by a location (including approximate NGR), date of discovery (§=in or slightly before), find character (i.e. hoard or single find), and circumstances of discovery. Relevant newspaper entries are quoted, and supplemented by a brief commentary on their numismatic and locational attributes. Numismatic catalogue numbers follow North (1991) and Poey d'Avant (1860).

### HEREFORDSHIRE

**Castle Frome** (SO674462 or SO675457) June 1861

Single find(s): 1x AR halfgroat of Henry VII    Agricultural work

*'A few days ago, one of the men in the service of Mr. Jenkins, of the Hill, Castle Froome, while at work in the hop-yard, turned up an antique silver coin in excellent preservation. The coin is a half groat of Henry VI., 1416 1461, the obverse bearing the mark distinguishing that king's coins from those of his father, the crown surmounted by an arch and a ball...on the reverse is the usual inscription of the Plantagenets, "Posui Deum adiutorem meum", within which is "Civitas Cantor". The spot where it was found is distant about 300 yards from the ruins of the castle.'*  
(Hereford Times, 22 June 1861, 9)

There is no reason to doubt the identification of this coin as a halfgroat, although the description of a crown 'surmounted by an arch and a ball' demands a reattribution to Class II or IIIa-c of Henry VII's Facing Bust issue (c.f. North 1711–2, struck 1486–1500 under Archbishop John Morton). The Hill Farm in Castle Froome is located at SO 67314535, and two hopyards belonging to the Hill estate are recorded in the tithe map of 1840 (TNA IR 30/14/47); one, "Boxes Hopyard", at SO674462, and another, "Cow Pasture Hopyard", at SO675457. There is no obvious reason to favour one location over the other.

**Bye Street, Hereford** (SO512401) August 1854

Single find(s): 3x ?AR coins Building work

*'On Monday the 7th instant, as workmen were digging a trench for a foundation on premises belonging to Mr. Lee, and occupied by Mr. Myer, in Bye-street, in this city, they found...two silver pennies of Edward I., and another coin supposed to be Saxon.'*

(Hereford Journal, 16 August 1854, 3)

All three coins are of uncertain attribution. The two coins attributed to Edward I probably represent two discrete single finds of Edwardian (i.e. 1279–1377) pennies, and the identity of the coin 'supposed to be Saxon' cannot be verified. Bye Street is the modern Commercial Street, having been renamed in 1855, and Mr. Myer is evidently Abraham Myer, the Hereford-based German Jewish silversmith, jeweller, and pawnbroker. The specific location of his premises, however, cannot be determined, and the stated findspot represents a convenient point in the locality.

**Nr. Red Coat Hospital, Hereford** (SO512404) June 1839

Single find(s): 1x AR penny of Edward I-III Gardening?

*'On Monday last a silver penny, of the reign of Edward the 1st, was found in a garden near to the Red Coat Hospital, in this city.'*

(Hereford Journal, 5 June 1839, 3)

As with the previous record, this probably represents a single find of a silver Edwardian penny (1279–1377). The Coningsby Hospital, nicknamed the 'Red Coat Hospital' after its residential dress code, was located at SO51154044, and the stated findspot represents a convenient point in the locality.

**Wye Bridge, Hereford** (SO50813958) June 1839

Single find(s): 1x AR groat of Richard III Unknown

*'On the same day [i.e. 3 June 1839], a groat of Richard III. was picked up by a person passing over Wyebidge.'*

(Hereford Journal, 5 June 1839, 3)

There is nothing inherently implausible in this description; groats of Richard III would have formed a significant part of the circulating currency at the time of the bridge's rebuilding in 1490, and the coin may well represent an accidental loss or deliberate foundation deposit integrated into the fabric at this date. The coin could have been dislodged from the medieval fabric during repairs to the bridge after it was rebuilt and widened in 1826, at which point it would have been exposed for discovery. The stated findspot represents a central spot on the bridge.

**Herefordshire Canal** (SO514405) §1841

Single find(s): 1x AV ryal of Edward IV Building work

*'A labourer, in excavating the Herefordshire Canal, lately found a "rose noble" of Edward III... it is in a most beautiful state of preservation.'*

(Worcestershire Chronicle, 10 March 1841)

The description of the coin as a "rose noble" suggests that this find represents a ryal of Edward IV's light coinage (c.f. North 1549–53, struck 1464/5–1470). The Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal ran for 34 miles, and was built in two phases in the 1790s and 1830s/40s. The newspaper record evidently concerns the latter building phase, intended to extend the route from Ledbury to Hereford. Work on this stretch was underway in early 1840, although by mid-September it was yet to reach Withington (Hereford Times, 19 September 1840, 3); the relatively late date of the newspaper account, therefore, suggests that the findspot lay close to Hereford, and the stated findspot represents a point near the canal terminus at Barr's Court.

**Kington area** (SO3057) §1858  
 Single find(s): 3+ AV coins Unknown

*'We have, within the last few days, seen a silver penny of King Edward II., found recently in this vicinity...the coin is in good preservation, the inscriptions on both sides being very plain. We understand that several other coins have been found in the neighbourhood, one a sixpence of the reign of Elizabeth, and another of the reign of Charles, but which Charles we have not heard'*  
 (Hereford Times, 7 August 1858, 8)

At least three coins are attested, all evidently unrelated single finds; one AR Edwardian penny (1279–1377), one AR sixpence of Elizabeth I, and an AR sixpence of Charles I-II. Additional coins may have been found, but their character is unknown. The findspot represents a point in the vicinity of Kington.

**Leominster** (SO47355892 or SO49535836?) July 1786  
 Coin hoard: AR coins of Elizabeth I Building work

*'Saturday as some masons were stocking up the pitching near the foundation of a very old house, to erect scaffolding for a new building belonging to Mr. Tudor, of Leominster in this, the pick-axe struck upon, and broke a leaden pot (very much corroded) full of the broad silver coin of Queen Elizabeth, supposed to have been hid in the troublesome time of King Charles the First. The pot was within the back part of the old building, and very little below the surface of the ground. About seven years ago, a large quantity of the same sort of coin was found at Eaton, near Leominster.'*  
 (Hereford Journal, 27 July 1786, 3)

This record clearly concerns a hoard of Elizabethan coins. The 'broad silver coins' may have been crowns or halfcrowns (struck 1601–1603), but could alternatively represent shillings (struck 1558–1561 and 1583–1603) and/or sixpences (struck 1561–1602). This composition, coupled with the apparent absence of coins of the Stuart kings, is consistent with a deposit in the reign of Elizabeth I, and most likely in the latter part thereof (c.1583–1603), rather than in the English Civil War. The circumstances of discovery – buried in the ground in a 'leaden pot' beside a 'very old house' – are paralleled by several seventeenth century coin hoards (Besly and Briggs 2013, 170–2).

The precise findspot for this hoard is uncertain. The aptly-named "Mr. Tudor" is most likely John Tudor Esq., a capital burgess and bailiff for Leominster at the end of the eighteenth century (Price 1795, 64), and the 1848 tithe map of Leominster (TNA IR 30/14/130) records land owned by two of his likely descendants, John Tudor and Rebecca Tudor. The former owned several plots around Ebnall (SO47355892) and the latter three plots adjoining South Street (SO49535836). Either location is plausible, although the former is perhaps more likely given the presence of apparent seventeenth century buildings at Ebnall Farm (Herefordshire SMR 5200). If the 'very old house' is in fact Ebnall Farm itself, its association with a late sixteenth century coin hoard may have implications for the dating of its earliest structural phases.

The reference to a previous hoard found at Eaton must relate to an October 1757 find of gold and silver coins at Eaton Coppice, attributed by contemporaries to King John (Manville 1993, 97, no. 151a). This early attribution is obviously false, but the suggestion in the Hereford Journal that the Eaton find contained 'the same sort of coin' may hint at a Tudor or Stuart-era hoard; it is not entirely implausible that the attribution to John represents a misreading of clipped and/or worn coins inscribed IACOBVS, i.e. issues of James I (1603–1625).

**Rectory area, Stretton Sugwas** (SO46774294) §1833  
 Single find(s): 1x AR groat of Richard II or III Other ground works

*'As some men were lately clearing a pool near the Rectory, at Stretton, Herefordshire, they found a silver groat of Richard 3d, in tolerable preservation.'*

(Worcester Herald, 16 November 1833, 2)

This coin may indeed have been a groat of Richard III, but given the absence of regnal ordinals on most pre-Tudor English coins it is equally likely to be a groat of Richard II. The "Stretton" is more likely identified with Stretton Sugwas than Stretton Grandison, the latter being a small sub-parochial settlement and lacking a rectory. The 1840 tithe map for Stretton Sugwas (TNA IR 30/14/198) shows two pools north of the rectory linked to the Yazor Brook; the findspot given is that closest to the rectory.

**Widemarsh, Nr. Hereford** (SO505407) April 1837

Single find(s): 1x AR sixpence of Elizabeth I Disturbed by animal

*'On Sunday a silver coin of Elizabeth (half-shilling) was found in a meadow at Widemarsh, near this city; a colt beating the ground with its foot, struck the coin, which attracted the attention of the person who found it.'*

(Hereford Journal, 26 April 1837, 3)

This coin is evidently a sixpence of Elizabeth I's second or third coinage (struck 1561–1602). Widemarsh is located roughly 1km northwest of Hereford; the stated findspot represents a point in the vicinity.

## SHROPSHIRE

**Castle Hill, Bridgnorth** (SO717927) §1856

Single find(s) or ?hoard: AR coins Building work

*'In making some excavations in the walk around the hill for the new sewerage, the workmen have come upon part of the old foundation wall of the castle...It may also be mentioned that the men employed in excavating have found several ancient coins, supposed to be of the reign of Edward I. These coins, we believe, are still in the possession of the finders.'*

(Bridgnorth Journal and South Shropshire Advertiser, 7 June 1856, 8)

As in previous records, this find clearly concerns a group of Edwardian pennies (1279–1377). The reference to 'several' coins is frustratingly ambiguous, and it is not clear whether the find represents a number of unrelated single finds or a small hoard. The precise location of the sewerage trench is uncertain, and the stated findspot is a central point in the castle grounds.

**Clun Forest** (SO2286) §1871

Single find(s): 1x AR coin of Elizabeth I Unknown

*'A silver coin of Queen Elizabeth [was] found in Clun Forest'*

(Shrewsbury Chronicle, 20 January 1871, 6)

This brief note clearly refers to a single find of a silver coin of Elizabeth I (1558–1603), although its precise denomination and findspot are unknown; the stated findspot is a central point in the vicinity.

**St. John the Baptist Church, Kenley** (SJ56280079) §1854

Single find(s): 1x AR penny of Edward I-III Unknown

*'From an antique coin picked up near where the altar stood, Dr. Slade conjectures that the east window and chancel roof might have been put up about the reign of Edward the Second, or Third. As the coin is in Dr. Slade's possession, he would be happy to have his theory corrected or confirmed.'*

(Shrewsbury Chronicle, 3 November 1854, 6)

The implication of this note is that the coin represents a silver penny of Edwardian type (1279–1377). That it was 'picked up near where the altar stood' is significant and invites comparison with continental 'church finds', which often include large medieval coin assemblages associated with the locations of contemporary altars and offertory chests (Klackenberg 1992, 34–8; Suchodolski 1996, 318). These finds are normally interpreted as pious offerings accidentally lost in the process of donation, and the Kenley penny could well represent comparable evidence for a practice that, for purely architectural reasons, is otherwise poorly attested in English churches. The stated findspot represents the location of the church.

**Long Mynd, nr. Pulverbatch** (SJ 41 00) November 1812

Coin hoard: AR pennies of Edward I-II      Agricultural or building work?

*'As a labourer was digging on the Longmynd, near Pulverbatch, Salop, a few days ago, his spade struck an earthen vessel, in which were deposited upwards of 80 silver coins, chiefly of the mintage of Edward I. and most of them in excellent preservation'*  
(Hereford Journal, 18 November 1812, 3)

This record clearly concerns a hoard of Edwardian coins, and the lack of reference to any variations in coin size suggests that the hoard was composed entirely of pennies, most likely those of classes I–XV (struck c.1279–1335). This would suggest a broad date of deposition c.1279–1351, although we cannot exclude the possibility that the deposit included issues of Edward III and might, therefore, have been deposited as late as the 1380s. The observation that the coins were housed in 'an earthen vessel' confirms their character as a deliberate hoard deposit, and invites comparison with early fourteenth-century coin hoards from Middridge (Co. Durham, deposited c.1311), Wyke (Yorkshire, deposited c.1314–44) and Boyton (Wiltshire, deposited c.1321), among others. The stated findspot represents a convenient point on the Long Mynd near Pulverbatch.

**'The Cemetery', Ludlow** (SO51047506) §1854

Single find(s) or ?hoard: AV and AR coins of Edward III and Richard II      Unknown

*'Several coins of considerable historical value have been kindly presented by the Rev. E. ff. Clayton, viz.: - A golden noble of the time of Edward the III., and a shilling of Richard the 2nd; both coins were found in the Cemetery, Ludlow.'*  
(The Shrewsbury Journal, 14 May 1884, 7)

Two coins are attested: a gold noble of Edward III (struck 1351–77) and a groat of Richard II (1377–99), the latter misidentified as a shilling. The character of these finds is uncertain; both could plausibly represent unrelated single finds, but the presence of two high-value chronologically-proximate coins from the same location may also be suggestive of a small hoard or a parcel from a somewhat larger hoard find. Identifying a precise findspot is complicated by the peculiar ecclesiastical geography of nineteenth century Ludlow; the individual who presented the coins, Rev. Edward Farrington Clayton, served as parish rector from 1867 to 1907, and therefore had jurisdiction over the churches of St Lawrence and St Leonard, both of which are shown on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map as adjoining graveyards. That at St Lawrence, however, had fallen out of active use in 1820, after which date St Leonards served as the principal parochial burial ground until the opening of a dedicated town cemetery at Henley Road in the early twentieth century. Presumably, therefore, the cemetery referred to in the 1884 newspaper account is that adjoining St Leonard's church, and the stated findspot represents a central point in that graveyard. The cemetery at St Leonard's church is situated within the precinct of the Carmelite (whitefriars) friary founded by Laurence de Ludlow in 1349

**Cattle Market, Ludlow** (SO51647458)      1861

Single find(s): 1x AR penny of Edward I-III      Building work

*'During the past week great progress has been made in excavating the soil from the foundations of the old Monastery in the new Cattle Market...A silver penny of the reign of Edward I. has been found in good preservation'* (Hereford Journal, 6 November 1861, 2)

This coin is clearly a silver penny of Edwardian type (1279–1377); the stated findspot represents a central point on the former cattle market site. The monastery referred to is that of the Austin / Augustinian Friary built c. AD 1282

**Nr. St Mary's Church, Leebotwood** (SO471987) §1890s  
Single find(s): 1x AV half-noble of Edward III Unknown

*'Tradition holds that Leebotwood was at one time much larger than it is at present, and that the greater part of the village occupied a site near the church...it was close to this spot that a few years ago Mr J.G. Dyke, of All Stretton, found a gold half noble of Edward III.'* (Ludlow Advertiser, 24 June 1899, 8)

There is no obvious reason to doubt the identification of this coin as a half-noble of Edward III's fourth coinage (struck 1351–77), although in lieu of further description it is not possible to assign a more precise date. The fields around Leebotwood church include several extant earthworks including holloways and housing platforms (Shropshire HER 00247) and a probable moated manorial site (Shropshire HER 03836), and it seems likely that the coin was associated with this wider deserted village complex; the stated findspot represents a central point near St Mary's Church.

## STAFFORDSHIRE

**Bitterscote, nr. Tamworth** (SK204035) 1884  
Single find(s) or ?hoard(s): AR coins Unknown

*'A few weeks since there was found at Bitterscote an old coin, one of a number of similar coins that are continually being dug up there, three specimens that are now before me as I write. They are silver pennies of the reign of Henry the Third (A.D. 1216–1272), and are of the earlier type of this reign before 1248, having the cross on the reverse extending only to the inner circle...The obverse has the head full face, a most grotesque caricature, with goggle eyes and an enormous nose, inscription, HENRICVS REX. Reverse, a voided cross pomme extending to the inner circle only, (which is invected) with four pellets conjoined in the quadrants, inscription, NICHOLAS ON CA, Nicholas, moneyer in Canterbury. The inscriptions on two of the coins are almost illegible, but on one can be distinguished ON LVND, showing it to be minted in London. These coins are frequently found at Bitterscote; I have probably a dozen through my hands in the course of the past few years. It appears that they do not turn up in quantities or collections, as in the case of the great find of Norman coins in the Hilly field, but singly, and at intervals in the course of gardening or agricultural operations. They are not confined to one particular spot, or plot of ground, but are scattered over a comparatively wide area; still, however, within the limits of the district known as Bitterscote.'* (Tamworth Herald, 6 September 1884, 5)

The anonymous author of this note records three pennies of the immobilised Short Cross type (struck 1180–1247), of which one was issued by the Canterbury moneyer Nichole, another by an unidentified London moneyer, and another reportedly lacked any identifying features. While the latter two coins cannot, therefore, be assigned to a particular class or subclass of the coinage, the first belongs to a moneyer active at Canterbury in classes VIIc1-3 and VIIId-b-c, and must therefore have been struck c.1236–44 (Allen 2001). These pennies were evidently samples of a larger number of coins found over the course of several years, although the author is careful to note that they 'do not turn up in quantities or collections, as in the case of the great find of Norman coins in the Hilly field' – presumably an allusion to the 1877 Tamworth hoard of c.300 pennies of William I-II – 'but singly...[and] scattered over a

comparatively wide area'. Although it is possible that the coins might represent one or more small dispersed hoard(s) (c.f. Horsnæs 2002), a more plausible interpretation is that the coins represent an accumulation of separate deposits at a location linked to intense commercial activity in the early thirteenth century, with close parallels provided by the contemporary site at Llanfaes (Anglesey; Besly 1995) – itself especially rich in Short Cross coins – or the tradition of early medieval 'productive sites' (e.g. Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire; Naylor and Richards 2010).

Found across a large area spanning several fields, Besly (1995, 49) has noted late thirteenth century textual evidence for markets and fairs at Llanfaes, and suggests that the coin assemblage pinpoints the location of these commercial centres at a site on the outskirts of the maerdref. Though Bitterscote itself is not named as the site of a medieval market or fair, its location just c.500m southwest of Tamworth may tie it to the commercial activities of the town, which was first granted the right to host two annual four-day fairs coinciding with the feasts of St George (23 April) and St Edward the Confessor (13 October) (Maxwell Lyte 1912, 380, mem. 9) in September 1336. The presence of a mint at Tamworth in the early tenth century, however, suggests that the town's role as a marketing locus was established long before the receipt of a grant in the fourteenth century, and indeed an inquisition of 1266 specifying the division of profits of an unspecified number of weekly markets and an annual fair at Tamworth between the college of St Edith and the crown (Maxwell Lyte 1916, 105, no. 306) provides indirect evidence for an early commercial function. While it might be anticipated that the weekly markets were conducted in the dedicated market plot north of the castle, it is possible that early fairs may have been extramural events and, if so, the Bitterscote assemblage could represent coins lost individually while transacting commerce at an annual fair. Its precise location, however, is unknown, and the stated findspot represents a convenient point in the Bitterscote area.

**Castle Brewery, Tamworth** (SK20460390) 1905  
Single find(s): 1x AR penny of Edward I-III Building work

*'Mr. E. Morgan, of the Castle Brewery, is at present erecting large cellars on a piece of ground adjoining the Brewery that formerly was a part of the Castle Hotel garden...On Friday a portion of the soil of the hotel garden fell in upon the east foundations of the cellar, and at a depth of eleven feet from the surface a silver penny of the time of Edward I or II was found.'*  
(Tamworth Herald, 12 August 1905, 5)

This coin is presumably a silver penny of Edwardian type (1279–1377). The stated findspot represents a central location on the site of the Castle Brewery.

## WARWICKSHIRE

**Coombe Abbey, Combe Fields** (SP404798) April 1825  
Single find(s): 1x AR coin of Edward I-III Building work

*'In excavating, a few days since, for the intended new works at Coombe Abbey, a silver coin of the reign of Edward III. was dug up about 18 inches below the surface of the ground'*  
(Warwick and Warwickshire General Advertiser, 16 April 1825, 3)

As previously, this is presumably a silver coin of Edwardian type (1279–1377); the given findspot is a central location at Coombe Abbey.

**Milcote Farm, Clifford Chambers** (SP19095276) §1830s  
Coin hoard: AR pennies of Edward I-II Agricultural work

*'Some thirty or forty years since, during the planting of an orchard, a skeleton of a man was discovered...and under the bones five or six silver coins of the reign of "Edward". The name*



*only was on the coins, so that they were of the period of Edward the First...but, from the state of the bones, and the disorderly way in which they had been lain, it is believed that they had no connection with the remains just exposed to sight'*

(Leamington Spa Courier, 17 February 1866, 8)

This record appears to discuss a small hoard of Edwardian coins, most likely pennies of classes I-XV (struck c.1279–1335). As at the Long Mynd (see above), this composition is consistent with a date of deposition c.1279–1351, although the potential inclusion of coins of Edward III may push the dating forwards as late as the 1380s. Milcote Farm was not included among the titheable areas in the 1842 tithe map of Clifford Chambers (TNA IR 30/13/49), but 1884 Ordnance Survey mapping shows an orchard plot adjoining a 'Milcote House', the only orchard and farmstead of its kind in the vicinity; the stated findspot represents this point.

## WEST MIDLANDS

**River Sherbourne, Coventry** (SP33427923) 1852

Single find(s) and/or ?hoard: AV and AR coins Building work

*'During the present week, the workmen employed in making the culvert for the Sherbourne, have from time to time dug up a great number of ancient coins and tokens from the bed of the river, especially where it flows under Palmer-lane. The most valuable are two gold coins – a rose noble and half noble, of the reign of Edward 3rd. There are also many silver coins, evidently of about the same period...'*

(Coventry Standard, 1 October 1852, 4)

At least two groups of finds are described here. The gold coins can be identified respectively as a noble and half-noble of Edward III's fourth coinage (struck 1351–77), and may either represent separate unrelated deposits in a riverine context or a small hoard of the period c.1351–80; if this second possibility is accepted, a close parallel is provided by the hoard deposited c.1380–1412 at Grimsargh (Lancashire), which contained two nobles and a single quarter noble (Andrews 2017, 248). The 'many silver coins' presumably consisted of medieval and/or post-medieval pennies and other silver coins, and are perhaps more likely to represent an accumulation of unrelated casual losses akin to the finds from the River Avon south of Fisherton Bridge at Salisbury (Robinson and Algar 2012, 249–52). The stated findspot is the point where the River Sherbourne crosses under Palmer Lane.

**'St Martin's Churchyard', Coventry** (SP33597903) 1836

Single find(s) and/or ?hoard: AV coin(s?) Other ground works

*'On Friday last a person employed digging a grave in St. Martin's Church-yard, in Coventry, discovered two ancient coins – one of them a large gold piece, in circumference rather larger than half-a-crown, proves to be a noble, of Edward III...upon the obverse side, there is the King's person, clothed in armour and represented sitting in a ship...and on the reverse is a cross fleury, with Lioneux, inscribed "Jesus autem transiens per me dium eorum ibat'*

(Leamington Spa Courier, 30 January 1836, 1)

Although this note concerns two coins, only one – correctly identified as a noble of Edward III, but of an uncertain issue within the fourth coinage (struck 1351–77) – is described in any detail; it is therefore impossible to be certain whether this represents a small hoard, most likely of the period c.1351–1412, or instead two unrelated single finds. The church at St Martins in the Field is an early twentieth century foundation, so it seems likely that the reporter – who was working for a newspaper based in Leamington Spa, and presumably reliant on second- or third-hand information – had simply confused the patronal saint of the Cathedral of St Michael. The given findspot, therefore, represents a central point in St Michael's churchyard.

**Old Windmill Inn, Spon Street, Coventry** (SP3289679017) April 1878

Coin hoard: AR coins of Edward IV Building work

*'An interesting discovery was made a few days ago in the course of repairing an old public-house in Spon-street, Coventry, known as the Windmill Inn. While the workmen were engaged in removing a portion of the building they found a number of old silver coins. A local numismatist and antiquarian has pronounced the collection a highly-interesting one, including silver pennies of Edward IV.'s time.'*

(Leamington Spa Courier, 27 April 1878, 7)

This record evidently concerns a hoard of late medieval silver coins, at least some of which were reportedly pennies of Edward IV. This attribution, offered by an anonymous 'local numismatist and antiquarian' – perhaps one of the several members of the Royal Numismatic Society resident in the West Midlands in this period – is an eminently plausible one, the coinages of Edward IV-V having been more-or-less successfully disentangled from the earlier issues of Edward I-III by the mid-nineteenth-century (e.g. Hawkins 1841). Whether these pennies belong to his heavy (i.e. struck 1461–4/5) or light (i.e. struck 1464/5–70 and 1471–83) coinages, however, is uncertain, although on balance of probabilities it seems more likely that they were post-1464/5 issues. The total number of coins found is not stated, and nor do we know whether or not coins of other denominations and/or issuers were present; any further discussion is therefore subject to large caveats, although an approximate date of deposition c.1464–1500 can be offered through comparison with better recorded hoards of this period.

Although two Windmill Inns are recorded at opposite ends of Spon Street on the 1888 Ordnance Survey map, it is clear that this record refers to the more famous Old Windmill Inn at SP3289679017, and the repair works that led to the discovery may relate to the installation of ground floor windows during the nineteenth century. In lieu of dendrochronological evidence this building has been dated to the sixteenth century on stylistic grounds (e.g. Pastscape MN 1553156), but the clear structural association with a later fifteenth century coin hoard provides the first firm evidence that the building has earlier origins. It may, therefore, be contemporary with buildings at 159–62 Spon Street, where dendrochronological and typological evidence suggests a late fifteenth century date (Meeson and Alcock 2016, 19). The depositional context finds clear parallels in fifteenth and early sixteenth century coin hoards from Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk), Llanelli (Carmarthenshire), St Albans (Hertfordshire), Welnetham (Suffolk), and the Cock and Tabard Inn at Westminster (London), all of which were found embedded in structural features – most frequently hollow roof beams and wall cavities – in old buildings undergoing demolition or repair in the nineteenth century.

**Unknown location** 1822

Single find(s): 1x AR coin of Elizabeth I Unknown

*'A coin – date 1560, reign Elizabeth – in most perfect preservation, was found in the stomach of a cow, slaughtered a few days ago, by Mr. Barber, a respectable butcher of Birmingham.'*  
(Berrow's Worcester Journal, 5 December 1822, 2)

This coin is presumably correctly attributed to Elizabeth I, but the rendering of the date as 1560 is clearly erroneous; most likely it represents a misreading of a worn coin struck in 1561, 1568, or 1580, albeit of an unknown denomination. The circumstances of discovery at the butcher's table are intriguing, but given the wide provisioning networks involved in the nineteenth century Birmingham meat industry it is not possible to state categorically where this coin is likely to have been originally deposited. It is nonetheless included as a find of potential West Midlands provenance, and at the very least a salutary example of the problems of redeposited archaeological material.

**WORCESTERSHIRE****The Rectory, Alvechurch** August 1884

Single find(s): 1x AR groat of Edward III Gardening

*'A few days ago the gardener at the Rectory, whilst digging close to the house, found an old coin...a common groat of Edward III., with the following inscription:- "Edward Di Grat. Rex Angl et Franc. D. Hib"...On the reverse side is written "Po sui Devm adjutorem meum. Civitas London"...amulets are interspersed in the legends, and the King's head is also on the coin.'*

(Berrow's Worcester Journal, 23 August 1884, 4)

The description and legend confirms the identity of this coin as a London groat of Edward III's fourth coinage Pre-Treaty series (struck 1351–61), although the precise class and subclass are uncertain. Alvechurch rectory is located at SP02697238, and the stated findspot represents a point in the vicinity.

**Near Bewdley (SO7875)** 1860

Coin hoard: AR deniers of Béarn Unknown

*'Mr G.R. Roberts exhibited a small silver coin, one of eight recently dug up near Bewdley... having been forwarded for verification to Mr. Hawkins, of the British Museum, that gentleman has pronounced them to have been struck at Bearn, in the south of France, by Count Centulli V., between 1130–34. The legend on the coins runs thus – Obverse, Centullo Comes; revers, Onor Forcas – Honour (the Viscount of) Fourque, a Maltese cross in the centre, with P.M. (Peace of Morlais).'*

(Berrow's Worcester Journal, 29 September 1860, 3)

This note details a small hoard of eight medieval silver deniers struck in the Lordship of Béarn in southwest France. Although specifically ascribed by Hawkins to Centule V, Viscount of Béarn (d. 1090), the coins in fact belong to a monnayage immobilisé struck for nearly two centuries (c.f. Poey d'Avant 3233–7); as such, without more detailed assessment of the coins themselves, the hoard might only be broadly dated to the twelfth or thirteenth century.

In compositional terms this find is highly unusual. No other Béarnaise medieval coins are attested among English single finds or coin hoards, although this situation should be considered in light of the general scarcity of foreign medieval coins as archaeological finds in British contexts. We might, therefore, query whether the find represents a genuine medieval hoard or a later collector's loss. The latter possibility, a traditional 'go-to' explanation for unusual and exotic coin finds, seems inherently implausible without imagining an otherwise unattested early modern or Victorian collector of French medieval coins accidentally losing their lot in a north Worcestershire field. The case for interpreting the find as a genuine medieval deposit is strengthened when it is viewed alongside the distinctive concentration of French and particularly Iberian coins in western Britain, including hoards from Abbey Cwmhir (Powys), Myddle and Broughton (Shropshire), Monknash (South Glamorgan), and a glut of single finds from around Bristol (du Quesne-Bird 1971) and the south Wales coast (Besly 2010). The association of so many of these finds with the River Severn and its Estuary is surely significant, and perhaps relates to the importance of Bristol as an international entrepôt in the medieval period. Béarn adjoins Spain and the Basque country, and continental evidence suggests that its deniers circulated across southern France and the Iberian peninsula; it is possible, therefore, that the Bewdley hoard could represent an unadulterated currency parcel originally sourced from a Gallo-Iberian context, transmitted to Britain in the purses and coffers of the merchants anchored at Bristol harbour – the principal centre for medieval Anglo-Iberian trade (Miranda 2013). If this possibility is entertained, the arrival of the coins in Worcestershire may be linked to the upriver flow of imported goods; their deposition

may reflect efforts to store foreign money ultimately intended to be exchanged for English coin, or alternatively could represent an effort to dispose of unusual coins of questionable acceptability in everyday commerce.

**Nettlebed Field, Beckford** (SO974377) §1846  
Single find(s): 1x AR penny of Edward I-III Unknown

*'A silver penny of one of the Edwards [was found], in a field called Nettlebed, situate on the south side of Bredon Hill, near the ancient camp.'*

Worcestershire Chronicle, 21 October 1846, 6

This is evidently a single find of a silver Edwardian penny (1279–1377). Nettlebed Field is situated in Beckford and has yielded significant Romano-British remains; the stated findspot represents a convenient point in the field.

**Westcroft, Droitwich** (SO895633) §1864  
Single find(s): 1x AR coin of Edward I-III Building work

*'During the excavations for laying down the drain of the Building Society's land at Westcroft, a silver coin of the reign of Edward I. was discovered by Mr. John Wood, of the Westcroft Inn, and has been forwarded by him to the collection of coins at the Worcester Museum.'*

(Worcestershire Chronicle, 8 June 1864, 2)

As previously, this coin is presumably a silver Edwardian penny (1279–1377). Westcroft lies southwest of Friar Street, and the findspot most probably lies in the ground immediately south of the Droitwich Union Workhouse, where extensive mid-nineteenth century building work is evidenced in the 1838 tithe map (TNA IR 30/39/48) and the 1885 Ordnance Survey map.

**St Nicholas' Church, Kemerton** (SO94593680) September 1846  
Single find(s): 1x AR coin of Edward I-III Unknown

*'A silver coin of King Edward III has just been discovered in the foundation of the chancel of Kemerton church.'*

(Berrow's Worcester Journal, 17 September 1846, 3)

This is also presumably a silver Edwardian coin (1279–1377) of an unknown denomination. The observation that the coin was discovered 'in the foundation of the chancel' is intriguing, although it is not clear whether this represents a deliberate structural foundation deposit or an accidentally lost coin embedded in a sub-surface context. The given findspot represents a central point in the church building.

**Talbot Inn, Kempsey** (SO85124896) §1843/4  
Single find(s): 1x AR shilling of Elizabeth I Agricultural work

*'A shilling of Elizabeth...[was] dug up in the orchard of the Talbot Inn, Kempsey.'*

(Berrow's Worcester Journal, 4 January 1844, 3)

There is no obvious reason to doubt the veracity of this find as a silver shilling of Elizabeth I (1558–1603). Named as the Talbot Hotel on the 1885 Ordnance Survey map, an adjoining plot recorded in the 1841 Kempsey tithe map (TNA IR 30/39/74) depicts a 'yard, garden and orchard' occupied by Edwin Pardoe, who remained the inn's proprietor until his death in September 1846 (Berrow's Worcester Journal, 1 October 1846, 3); the stated findspot represents a central point in this plot.

**Allotment Gardens, Redditch** (SP04666802) 1848

Single find(s): 1x AR groat of Mary Agricultural work

*'A silver coin, about the size of a shilling, was recently found by one of the tenants of the new allotment gardens, at Redditch...it is in fine preservation, and is of the reign of Queen Mary, a representation of whose head is impressed upon it. The name and titles are very distinct, as is also the impression on the obverse of the arms of England and France, surrounded by the words, Filia Veritas Temporis.'*

(Berrow's Worcester Journal, 6 July 1848, 4)

In conjunction with the reverse legend, the description of this coin as 'about the size of a shilling' confirms its identity as a silver groat of Mary (North 1960, struck 1553–4). From the mid-1840s a series of allotment gardens were opened on the outskirts of Redditch under the direction the Hon. R.H. Clive, and it seems likely that the 'new allotment gardens' referred to here were those opened near Easemore Farm in the early months of 1848 (Worcestershire Chronicle, 15 March 1848, 5); the stated findspot represents a central point in this plot.

**Copenhagen Street, Worcester** (SO84895474) §1855/6

Single find(s): 1x AR penny of Edward I-III Building work

*'During the digging of the foundations of the new model dwelling houses in Copenhagen Street, a number of ancient coins, and other relics of the past have been discovered... [including] a silver penny of one of the Edwards...'*

(Berrow's Worcester Journal, 12 January 1856, 5)

This note clearly describes a single find of a silver Edwardian penny (1279–1377), and has been noted by the author elsewhere (Andrews 2014, 7, no. 7). The model dwelling houses on Copenhagen Street were demolished in 1953, and their site is now occupied by the

Heart of Worcestershire College (Attwood 2015, 51); the stated findspot is a central location on this site.

**Diglis, Worcester** (SO84685341) 1844

Single find(s): 1x AR penny of Edward I-III Building work

*'A silver penny of Edward the First [was] found on the east side of the Severn whilst excavating for the weir at Diglis.'*

(Worcester Herald, 17 August 1844, 3)

As previously, this find evidently consisted of a silver Edwardian penny (1279–1377). The stated findspot represents a point at the eastern terminus of the Diglis Weir.

**Ryall Hill, nr. Upton on Severn** (SO86374033) 1827

Single find(s): 1x AR penny of Edward I Agricultural work

*'A short time since, a man digging a piece of ground at Ryall Hill, near Upton-on-Severn, found a silver penny, of the reign of Edward the 1st, coined at Exeter, and which is in a high state of preservation.'*

(Hereford Journal, 24 October 1827, 4)

This clearly represents a single find of an Edwardian coin, and the observation that it was minted at Exeter confirms its identity as a penny of Edward I's class IXb (North 1037/1, struck c.1299–1300/1). Ryall Hill is located on the east bank of the Severn 1.2km away from Upton; the stated findspot represents a central point on the hill.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Allen, M. 2001. The chronology, mints, and moneyers of the English coinage, 1180–1247. In J.P. Mass, ed. *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* 56. The J.P. Mass Collection. English Short Cross coins, 1180–1247. London: British Academy. pp. 1–12.
- Andrews, M. 2014. Coins from the city – some new (old) finds from Worcester newspapers, 1820–1950. *Worcestershire Recorder*. 90. pp. 6–8.
- Andrews, M. 2017. Two hoards of late medieval English gold coins. *British Numismatic Journal*. 87. pp. 247–52.
- Attwood, D.A. 2015. The Fleet/Waldegrave almshouses of Worcester. *Worcestershire Industrial Archaeology & Local History Society Newsletter*. 47. pp. 45–51.
- Besly, E. 1995. Short cross and other medieval coins from Llanfaes, Anglesey. *British Numismatic Journal*. 65. pp. 46–82.
- Besly, E. 2010. The Monknash find and other foreign medieval coins from South Wales. *British Numismatic Journal*. 80. pp. 196–99.
- Besly, E., and Briggs, C.S. 2013. Coin hoards of Charles I and the Commonwealth of England, 1625–60, from England and Wales. *British Numismatic Journal*. 83. pp. 166–206.
- Briggs, C.S. 2012. Numismatics from newsprint 1753–1884: some lost Yorkshire hoards exposed. *Yorkshire Numismatist*. 4. pp. 277–304.
- Cooper, A., and Green, C. 2017. Big questions for large, complex datasets: approaching time and space using complex object assemblages. *Internet Archaeology*. 45. [online]. Available at: < <http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue45/index.html> > [Accessed 6 July 2017].
- Douch, H.L. 1962. Archaeological discoveries recorded in Cornish newspapers before 1855. *Cornish Archaeology*. pp. 92–98
- Hawkins, E. 1841. *The silver coins of England*. London: Edward Lumley.
- Horsnæs, H.W. 2002. Many coins from one site. *Nordisk Numismatisk Årsskrift*. pp. 100–108.
- Klackenberg, H. 1992. *Moneta nostra: monetarisering i medeltidens Sverige*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell
- Manville, H.E. 1993. Additions and corrections to Thompson's Inventory and Brown and Dolley's Coin Hoards – Part 1. *British Numismatic Journal*. 63. pp. 91–113.
- Maxwell Lyte, H.C. 1912. *Calendar of the charter rolls preserved in the Public Record Office*. Vol. IV. London: HMSO.
- Maxwell Lyte, H.C. 1916. *Calendar of inquisitions miscellaneous (Chancery)*. Vol. I. London: HMSO.
- Meeson, B., and Alcock, N. 2016. Black Swan Terrace, Upper Spon Street, Coventry: a comparison of medieval renters. *Vernacular Architecture*. 47. pp. 1–19.
- Miranda, F. 2013. Before the Empire: Portugal and the Atlantic trade in the late middle ages. *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*. 5:1. pp. 69–85.
- Naylor, J., and Richards, J.D. 2010. A 'productive site' at Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire: salt, communication and trade in Anglo-Saxon England. In S. Worrell et al., eds. *A decade of discovery. Proceedings of the Portable Antiquities Scheme conference 2007*. Oxford: Archaeopress. pp. 193–200.
- North, J.J. 1991. *English hammered coinage*. Vol. 2. 3rd revised ed. London: Spink.
- Poey d'Avant, F. 1860. *Monnaies féodales de France*. Vol. II. Paris: Revue Numismatique Française.
- Price, J. 1795. *An historical & topographical account of Leominster, and it's vicinity*. Ludlow: H. Procter.
- Robinson, P., and Algar, D. 2012. Coins. In P. Saunders, ed. *Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum Medieval catalogue. Part 4*. Salisbury: Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum. pp. 242–63.
- Suchodolski, S. 1996. Absence of mind or magic? A few remarks on the so called small or single coin finds. *Numismatica e Anticità Classiche*. 25. pp. 317–27.
- du Quesne-Bird, N. 1971. Medieval and European coins. *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*. 90. pp. 136–40.

**Murray Andrews** ([murray.andrews.09@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:murray.andrews.09@ucl.ac.uk)) is a PhD student at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. His thesis, 'Coin hoards and society in medieval England and Wales, AD c.973–1544', is due for completion in 2018.