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Two Early Nineteenth-Century ‘Small Change’ Hoards from Worcestershire

MURRAY ANDREWS

British hoards of modern base metal coins and tokens are poorly attested in the numismatic literature, with just 11 examples dated *c.*1697–1901 listed in Brown and Dolley’s *Coin Hoards of Great Britain and Ireland 1500–1967*.¹ This note describes two previously-unpublished early nineteenth-century hoards found in the county of Worcestershire in 1908 and 2008–12. Since both hoards consist exclusively of bronze and copper coins and tokens that were less than 300 years old at the point of discovery, neither find qualifies as Treasure under the terms of the Treasure Act 1996 or the earlier common law of Treasure Trove.

1. Badsey, Worcestershire, 1908

Dep.: *c.*1800

6 Æ

Disp.: Worcestershire Archives.

During the late 1970s the Worcestershire County Record Office received three deposits of miscellaneous papers relating to families and properties in Badsey, a rural parish 25km south-east of Worcester in the Vale of Evesham. Among this material is a blue paper envelope containing five coins and a token labelled as having been found together ‘near the fireplace’ in the hall of the Old Manor House in January 1908.²

The hoard consists exclusively of bronze and copper halfpennies and farthings, which span the reigns of Charles II (1660–85) to George III (1760–1820). While four coins are official products of the Tower mint (nos 1, 2, 4–5), one coin – an ‘Old Bust’ halfpenny in the name of George II (no. 3) – is an obvious imitation, and was probably manufactured at Birmingham after 1740.³ The coins are all either moderately worn (nos 1, 2, 4–5) or heavily worn (no. 3), and one has been countermarked on the obverse by four small round punches encircling the bust (no. 5). The sole token in the hoard is a Macclesfield halfpenny dated 1790 (no. 6), which is also moderately worn. The latest dated specimens are two Third Issue halfpence of George III (nos 4–5), providing a *terminus post quem* of 1799 for the hoard as a whole.

Built in the late sixteenth-century on the site of Seyne House, a medieval rest house belonging to Evesham Abbey, the Old Manor House is a prominent Grade-II* listed building on the north-west side of Badsey High Street, and features elaborate herring-bone timber framing on its Tudor upper floor.⁴ The building was subject to significant alterations in *c.*1800, which included the infilling of its ground-floor passageway with new bay windows and the rendering of its wooden exterior.⁵

¹ Brown and Dolley 1971, pp. 37–43.

² Worcester, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS), 750:854 BA 7842 3/ii/15.

³ Smith and Mossman 2012.

⁴ Brookes and Pevsner 2007, p. 120.

⁵ Noyes 2019.

However, many of these alterations were reversed after the sale of the property to John Tutin and Matilda Osborne Wingfield in January 1908,⁶ who reinstated the ground-floor passageway and restored many of the interior and exterior fixtures.⁷ Given the coincidence of dates, it seems likely that this hoard was deposited 'near the fireplace' during the building works of c.1800, probably as the contents of an accidentally-lost purse, and was rediscovered during the subsequent restoration in 1908.

CATALOGUE

Charles II (1660-85)

1. Copper farthing, Sole Issue, 1672-9, 4.88g.

William III (1694-1702)

2. Halfpenny, First Issue, 1695-8, 9.39g.

George II (1727-60)

3. Halfpenny, copy of Old Bust Issue, 1740+, 8.16g.

George III (1760-1820)

- 4-5. Halfpenny, Third Issue, 1799, 12.13g, 10.55g.

Macclesfield token

6. Halfpenny, D&H Cheshire 17, 1790, 11.30g.

2. Bayton, Worcestershire, 2008-12

Dep.: 1806-17

17 Æ

Disp.: To be deposited with a local museum.

In 2013 the North Worcestershire Archaeology Group was presented with a small assemblage of coins and artefacts found during metal-detecting on farmland near Lower Collier's Hill Farm, Bayton, in 2008-12. The material dated exclusively to the period c.1550-1950, and appeared to represent low-density manuring scatter from a documented post-medieval and modern field.⁸ An exception, however, was provided by a small group of bronze coins and blanks, which probably represent the contents of a plough-scattered hoard.

The hoard consists of 11 bronze halfpennies and farthings spanning the reigns of George II (1727-60) to George III (1760-1820), together with six halfpenny- and farthing-size bronze coin blanks. Six of the coins are official Tower issues (nos 1-3, 9-11), while the remaining five are imitations, most probably of Birmingham manufacture. The coins are all heavily worn and in exceptionally poor condition, with four specimens nearly worn flat (nos 2, 6-8). The latest coin in the hoard, a Fourth Issue halfpenny of George III (no. 11), provides a *terminus post quem* of 1806, while a *terminus ante quem* is set by the demonetisation of early Georgian halfpence in 1814-17.⁹

⁶ Badsey, Badsey Society, 4116/LB/BMRR.

⁷ Sparrow 2002, p. 31.

⁸ Andrews 2014.

⁹ Craig 1953, pp. 266-7.

The findspot of the hoard lay in the immediate vicinity of 'Highwood', a labourer's cottage depicted on the 1815 Bayton parish map¹⁰ and known to have been occupied by colliers and farmworkers until the late nineteenth century.¹¹ This property seems to have been abandoned by the 1890s, and was eventually demolished at some point between 1910 and 1927.¹² With an overall face value of 8d., equivalent to less than half a day's wage for an agricultural labourer in 1806–10,¹³ it seems likely that the hoard represents the contents of an accidentally-lost purse belonging to one of Highwood's former occupants.

CATALOGUE

George II (1727-60)

1. Halfpenny, Old Bust Issue, 174 [...], 6.46g.

George III (1760-1820)

2–3. Halfpenny, First Issue, 177 [...], 9.42g, 7.26g.
 4–8. Halfpenny, copy of First Issue, 1770+, 6.69g, 5.99g, 5.09g, 4.81g, 4.45g.
 9. Farthing, First Issue, 177 [...], 4.28g.
 10. Halfpenny, Third Issue, 1799, 6.32g.
 11. Halfpenny, Fourth Issue, 1806, 6.42g.

Coin blanks

12–16. Halfpenny-size, 6.53g, 4.96g, 4.55g, 4.18g, 3.87g.
 17. Farthing-size, 2.62g.

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¹⁰ Worcester, WAAS, 970.5:126 BA 1181.

¹¹ Kew, The National Archives, RG 9/1846, p. 9; RG 11/2625, p. 1.

¹² Lea 1912; Andrews 2014, pp. 4-5.

¹³ Clark 2001, p. 503.