Some Notes on "Peny-Yard Pence."

By V. B. Crowther-Beynon, M.B.E., M.A., F.S.A.

In John Guillim's Display of Heraldry (p. 295, ed. 1660) appears the following description of a coat-of-arms: "He beareth, Azure, three Peny-yard pence, Proper, by the name of Spence: these are so named of the place where they were first coined, which was (as is supposed) in the Castle of Penny-yard near the Market Town of Rosse, scituated upon the River of Wye, in the County of Hereford." An illustration of the arms is annexed to the description (v. Plate, Fig. 1).

Desirous of further information as to the nature of "Peny-yard pence," I consulted a variety of dictionaries and encyclopaedias, as well as a number of numismatic books, but could find no reference to these pieces.

No information was forthcoming even from such a work as Martin Leake's Historical Account of English Money (1745) which mentions a good many miscellaneous issues under what we may, perhaps, call their nicknames, such as Crokards, Pollards, Galley-halfpence, Suskins, Dotkins, etc. Enquiries addressed to long-suffering collector-friends, including several eminent numismatists, elicited but little information, though one or two remembered having heard of Peny-yard pence. I consulted several well-known antiquaries resident in, or acquainted with, Herefordshire, and though all were more or less familiar with the name and, in some cases, kindly furnished me with references to these coins in certain non-numismatic publications, no one was able to say he had ever seen a specimen or could give any complete account of them. One gentleman, indeed, confessed to having set out to investigate the subject but was obliged to abandon the quest in despair.
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It may, perhaps, be worth while to give the results, meagre and inconclusive though they be, of my search for information on the matter, though the serious numismatist will probably consider the subject too trivial to merit much attention.

First, a word as to the place where Peny-yard pence are alleged to have had their origin. I do not know what reason Guillim had for calling the castle by the name Peny-yard instead of the commonly accepted spelling Penyard, unless it was a desire to lend plausibility to his theory of the origin of Peny-yard pence. The Rev. A. T. Bannister, in Place-names of Herefordshire (1916), gives the place a Welsh derivation: Pen-gardd, meaning "Head of the enclosure." Dr. D. R. Paterson, F.S.A., however, in his Old Cardiff (1926), when discussing the derivation of Penarth (p. 20), translates Pen-gardd "the end of the high land," gardd having two different meanings: (1) enclosure and (2) hill or promontory. Of these alternative interpretations "the end of the high land" seems the more appropriate to Penyard. Bannister, in his book, quotes two references to Penyard occurring in early documents, viz., Penyerd regis (1227) and Peniord in foresta de Dene (1302), but there is nothing here to support the division of the name into two words.

Penyard Castle, of which slight remains are still visible, stands at an elevation of some 500 ft. on the hill of the same name, and is in the parish of Weston-under-Penyard, about 2 miles east of Ross-on-Wye. There seems abundant evidence to show that ironstone-digging and iron-smelting have been extensively carried on in the neighbourhood of Penyard from at least as early as Roman times, the fuel required for the industry being conveniently available in the adjacent Forest of Dean. Scoriae in great profusion are found all over the area and the account which appears in the Victoria County History of Herefordshire of the Roman settlement of Areconium (as it was called) states (V. C. H. Herefs. I, p. 188):

"The slope [i.e. of Penyard Hill] towards Weston on the West is called Cinder Hill and the surface has only to be turned up to show that it consists of an immense mass of scoriae."
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In W. H. Cooke's *Continuation of Duncomb's History of Herefordshire* (1882), the author (vol. iii, pp. 220-1) attributes this refuse to the itinerant forges which were employed there, but were "suppressed by Royal order in 1226 to prevent the complete destruction of the chase, and, probably, the game therein. (Close Rolls, ro Hen. iii)."

Cooke then goes on to say:

"Coins called Penyard pence, made and stamped at these forges for circulation among the workpeople and villagers, are frequently picked up. They are not of uniform quality, some being mere brass. The device on both faces is usually the same—a cross moline with a pellet on each of the four quarters, much worn, representing either the sun or a star or some arbitrary ornament according to the fancy of the maker. The family of Spence of Hang West in the North Riding, assumed c. 1638 as their armorial bearing: Az. 3 Peny-yard Pence, proper, in reference to which circumstance the Herald Guillim remarks (1679), 'they are so named from the place where they were coined.' Yet, although he resided in the neighbourhood, he supplies no further information, nor have we any proof when, or by whom, this heraldic bearing was granted, though this allusion sufficiently proves that coins were known by this appellation."

This is the most circumstantial account of Peny-yard pence which I have been able to discover, and it may be well, before proceeding to other references to these pieces, to examine the statement in detail. John Guillim was born in 1565 and died in 1621 (Dict. of Nat. Biography), and the first edition of his *Display of Heraldry* was issued in 1611 and was followed by other editions in 1632, 1638, 1660, 1666 and 1679. Copies of all these are in the library of the Society of Antiquaries and I find that the Spence arms appear in all except the first (1611). Though the 1632 edition, which first records these arms, was issued after Guillim's death, its title-page states that it was "corrected and much enlarged by the Author."
himselfe in his life time." The editor was one Ralph Mae who (as explained in the preface) was a close personal friend of Guillim's and had been entrusted by him with the additional material and notes collected before the author's death. Mae does not appear to have been very deeply versed in heraldry, and in view of this fact and of other evidence to be adduced later, it seems a not unfair assumption that Guillim himself was responsible for the inclusion of the Spence arms in the 2nd edition of the "Display." With regard to this family, though I have not made exhaustive search, I have not traced their present representatives. Hang West is the name of a Wapentake in the North Riding of Yorkshire, situated within the ancient division of Richmondshire, and the *Victoria County History of the North Riding* deals very fully with the families in this area, the arms of most of them being given, but there is no mention of Spence. Moreover, the Honble. Philip Carey, F.S.A., York Herald, has kindly made investigation and can find no record of any such grant of arms at the Herald's College nor in any Visitation records. It would seem, therefore, that the assumption of these arms was unauthorized. Nor, again, have I found any evidence of a connection between the family of Spence and Herefordshire. Cooke's suggested date, c. 1638, for the assumption of the arms is, I suspect, based on the discovery that the arms appear in the 1638 edition of Guillim and not in that of 1611, the existence of the intermediate 1632 issue being, perhaps, unknown to him or forgotten.

The next reference to Peny-yard pence which I have found occurs in that remarkable book, *The Academy of Armory*, by Randle Holme, the first edition of which appeared in 1688, and a later one in 1701. In Bk. III, ch. ii, lxxxiv, we find: "He beareth azure a Penny yard penny proper. It is stamped with a cross moline between 12 round buttons and are (sic) called Penny-yard pence of the place where they were first coined, which was (as is supposed) in the Castle of Penny-yard near the Market Town of Rosse in Herefordshire.

G[ules] a Cheveron between 3 such A[rg.] born by Penny."
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It is fairly obvious that Holme derives his main facts from Guillim. It may also be noted that the above arms of Spence (but not those of Penny) appear in our present-day standard books of reference, Papworth and Morant's *Dictionary of Heraldry*, and Burke's *General Armoury*, *Peny-yard* being spelt *Penny-yard* in both. Clark and Wormull's *Introduction to Heraldry* (1794) also include "Penny-yard penny" in the section explaining technical terms, and an illustration appears on Pl. 12, Fig. 16, which follows closely the charge as given by Guillim. Berry's *Encyclopaedia Heraldica* refers to "Penny-yard pence, a small piece of coin called by that name (Pl. XLV, 22). This coin is stamped with a cross moline between twelve balls, and is called *penny-yard-pence* from the place where they were coined, which is supposed to have been at Penny-yard Castle near Ross, in Herefordshire." Elsewhere in the book Berry gives the arms of Spence (with no territorial attribution) as: "Az. three penny yard pence ppr." Mention of this heraldic charge may also be found in other books dealing with the subject.

We pass next to the Rev. C. J. Robinson's *History of the Castles of Herefordshire* (1869), which contains the following note under Penyward Castle (pp. 116-7):

"There seems to have been a mint established at the Castle in the sixteenth century and silver pennies of a particular coinage have occasionally been found there."

I am quite unable to state the grounds on which the author gives this date for the establishment of the alleged Penyward mint. From the same work we learn that the Castle of Penyward, which had been in the possession of the Talbot family from the thirteenth century, passed, on the death of Gilbert, 7th Earl of Shrewsbury, in 1626, to his second daughter, Elizabeth, Countess of Kent, and remained in her family until sold in 1740. A petition, dated 20 October, 1631, by Henry, Earl of Kent, and Elizabeth, his wife, prays that Sir John Kirle, of Much Marcle, to whom Penyward Park had been leased, might be restricted from felling the timber trees. These, amounting to 20,000, had been reserved by the lease, but notwithstanding,
Sir John "has felled and converted into coal for making iron, about 1,800 trees and still continues." It appears from this that in spite of the order of Henry III referred to above, iron-smelting had been revived, if indeed it had ever ceased.

In the Herefordshire section, vol. vi of Brayley and Britton's *Beauties of England and Wales* (1805), the authors describe the remains of Penyard Castle, and mention the existence of Peny-yard pence, quoting Guillim's description of the Spence arms and adding:

"Guillim supposes these coins to have been minted at this castle and with much probability, as silver pence of a particular coinage are sometimes found there."

A footnote states that an engraving of a silver Penyard (sic) penny may be seen in Bonner's *Perspective Itinerary No. II*. This last-named book, which appears to be an album of engravings with descriptive letterpress, is probably of no great literary value, but is apparently scarce, for it was only after a protracted and vain search in all the leading libraries from the British Museum downwards, including the Bodleian and the Cambridge University libraries, that I at length ascertained the existence of a copy in the Hereford Public Library. I am indebted to the courtesy and kindness of the librarian, Mr. F. C. Morgan, for a very carefully executed copy of the illustration in Bonner's book, where it appears on Pl. XI, Fig. 5, as "a Silver penny coined at Penyard Castle, near Ross, Herefordshire" (v. Plate, Fig. 2). Bonner again quotes Guillim's statement concerning the Spence arms and adds: "Similarly coins found in the neighbourhood are in the possession of a gentleman in Ross." It will be seen that Bonner's illustration is very similar to the Peny-yard penny on the Spence coat as given by Guillim, except for having an engrailed border round the coin.

Mr. Henry Holford (a former resident at Ross) has kindly furnished me with another reference to these elusive coins, if such they be. The 1859 volume of the *Art Journal* contains an article by Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall on "Excursions in S. Wales," which

includes a description of Penyard Castle. A footnote runs as follows: “In Bonner’s Itinerary is an engraving of a silver penny understood to have been coined at Penyard Castle,” to which is added the usual information as to the arms of Spence; an illustration is appended which agrees closely with Bonner’s and is doubtless copied from it (v. Plate, Fig. 3).

So much for Peny-yard pence in what may be called their native surroundings, and it must be confessed that the above accounts leave the matter still shrouded in considerable mystery, due in part, doubtless, to the fact that the writers do not appear to have had much, if any, technical knowledge of numismatics.

By the merest chance I came upon a reference to Peny-yard pence in an entirely unexpected quarter. In Hasted’s History of Kent (1778) vol. i, p. 60, appears an account of the discovery “about 27 years ago” (i.e. about 1750) of an “ancient piece of money” at Eltham. The object was found by a labourer when digging, and it is described as “very fair and well-preserved.” An engraving is given which is here reproduced (v. Plate, Fig. 4). The account goes on to say that in 1751 a certain Mr. Charles Clarke of Balliol College, Oxford, published some “Conjectures,” endeavouring to prove that the Eltham find was a coin of Richard I, but that in the following year Mr. George North, F.S.A. (whose name is familiar to readers of Ruding’s Annals of the Coinage and who was a sound numismatist in advance of his time), brought out a pamphlet challenging Mr. Clarke’s attribution and contending that the coin was not of any regal issue but was

“... a piece of the base money denominated Peny-yard pence from their being stamped or made at Peny-yard, a place near Ross in Herefordshire, about the time of Henry iii, when this sort of money is supposed to have begun to be made at the forges there for the currency of the workmen employed at them.”

In the Royal Numismatic Society’s library is a thin quarto volume consisting of Clarke’s “Conjectures” and North’s “counter-
blaste," bound together, each brochure being furnished with an illustration of the obverse and reverse of the Eltham "coin." These seem to be identical with that appearing in Hasted and with each other. Clarke’s pamphlet, extending to 26 pages (excluding an appendix dealing with an entirely different matter) displays the prolix and tumid literary style beloved of the eighteenth century dilettante, but it contributes nothing to the elucidation of our problem. North’s pages, long-winded as they are, reveal the numismatic expert, and the author has little difficulty in annihilating one by one Clarke’s theories and conclusions.

A comparison of the illustrations at once shows that there is but a limited resemblance between the Eltham piece and that figured by Bonner. The obverse and reverse are not alike, as is the general rule with Peny-yard pence according to Cooke. One face has the device of a cross recercellee cantoned by single pellets, instead of a cross moline cantoned by triple pellets. The other face has a long cross fleurettée with alternate crescents and mullets in the angles, while both faces have a border of pellets outside a dotted circle. North’s paper contains the following passage:

“One of the latter sort [i.e. Peny-yard pence of base metal] is in my own possession, wherein the work and device is so exactly like that side which he [Clarke] represents as the obverse and pierced in the same manner in the centre of the cross, that it might be imagined to be the very identical piece. But mine has this difference, that both sides are alike, viz., a cross moline (such I call it till a better term can be found) with a pellet in each of the 4 quarters. From which particular it is highly probable that the device of the sun or star, and crescent on the reverse, on which he puts so much stress, is a mere arbitrary ornament or fancy of the maker.”

This exhausts the references which I have so far been able to discover, dealing with Peny-yard pence, and it remains to consider the question whether there actually was a local issue of coins
or tokens at Penyard and, if so, what were its character and purpose.

It may clear the ground if we first examine the Eltham find and the piece from his own collection described by North. Here we cannot, I think, fail to recognize two examples of that widely varied series of jettons known as the “sterling” type, which has been admirably dealt with by the late Dr. F. P. Barnard, F.S.A., in *The Casting Counter and the Counting Board* (1916) and earlier by Snelling in his *View of ... jettons and counters* (1769), and by others. These pieces, to which the name “black money” was once given, are of many types, the commonest kind being those bearing on the obverse a conventional full-faced crowned bust, similar to those on our silver pennies, and on the reverse some kind of cross cantoned by pellets, trefoils, etc., examples with the crescent and mullet in the angles of the cross being not infrequent (v. Plate, Figs. 5, 6). With regard to specimens displaying what seem to be reverse types (not necessarily identical) on both faces, as in the case of the two pieces we are considering, Dr. Barnard writes (*op. cit.* p. 94):

“Some pieces of this series have the reverse type of a cross and its attendant details the same on both faces, as though mules; probably, however, they are not really such. Now and again, too, crosses appear on each side, but of different designs.”

Though Clarke in his “Conjectures” makes no allusion to the matter, North describes his own specimen, as well as the Eltham piece, as being pierced in the centre, which is also a general, though by no means universal, feature of the “sterling” type of jetton. The date of these pieces, according to Dr. Barnard, is approximately 1280 to 1350. As to the name Peny-yard pence, which the antiquary, North, appears to have had no hesitation in applying to the two pieces in question, it may be pertinent to make one more quotation from his paper. After alluding to the similarity
in type between his own example and that of his opponent, he continues:

"The very same piece may be found in Guillim's Display of Heraldry, Edit. 1679, p. 221. He beareth Azure 3 Peny yard Pence, proper, by the name of Spence. But no further information can be had from thence, as it cannot be found when, or by whom, that Bearing was granted, than that it sufficiently proves those pieces long since went by that appellation."

One would like to know whether North based his attribution merely on the information given by Guillim, and the supposed similarity between the pieces in question and the charges on the Spence coat of arms—a similarity which can hardly be considered so close as he contends—or whether Peny-yard pence were actually a class of "coins" recognized by that name among numismatists of his day, in which case one would expect to find some reference to them in the numismatic literature of the time.

Turning now to the references to these coins in connection with their reputed place of issue, the various passages which have been quoted seem to suggest that they were struck locally, and in silver as well as base metal. We should require a good deal of independent corroboration before we could accept the existence, in such a remote spot as this and at so early a date, of a semi-private mint issuing a purely local currency, especially in silver. My friend, Dr. L. A. Lawrence, F.S.A., with whom I have discussed the matter and whose qualifications to express an opinion none will dispute, is frankly sceptical both as to the silver Peny-yard pence and the local mint. On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that these objects existed only in the imagination of the writers I have quoted, since we are told that they were "frequently picked up" and that examples were known to be "in the possession of a gentleman at Ross." The fact that they have apparently lapsed into almost complete oblivion may be partly due to the fact that they were, so far as we can see, always without legend; when, therefore, they had once drifted
away from their place of origin or discovery, and if they were unaccompanied by any record of provenance, there would be nothing to associate them with any particular locality. The Curator of the Hereford Museum, where, if anywhere, one might expect to find one, informs me that there is no specimen in that collection, nor have I heard of a named example anywhere else. Dr. Barnard, our chief authority on jettons, told me that though the name of Peny-yard penny was known to him, he had never actually met with one.

We know that jettons or casting counters, together with the counting-board, were in general use during the Middle Ages for keeping the accounts of Royal establishments, religious houses, landed estates, etc., and indeed for all kinds of monetary calculations. The jettons have been found in great numbers on the sites of monastic institutions, a fact which has bestowed upon them the popular name of "Abbey pieces." If such a colloquial term as this was commonly adopted for jettons in general, it seems quite likely that a more localized name, such as "Peny-yard pence" may have been applied to a class of coin which turned up from time to time in the limited area of the Penyard iron industry. There is sufficient evidence to show that the activity of this local industry continued for a long period and would necessitate a considerable amount of what we should now call "book-keeping" and the use of the counter and reckoning-board. This would account for the frequent occurrence of Peny-yard pence in the district. A somewhat similar example of local names for familiar finds is recorded in Camden's Britannia, in connection with Binchester, Co. Durham (the Roman Vinovium), where the author mentions "peeces of Romaine coine often digged up there, which they call Binchester Pennies." If Roman coins found on the site of Vinovium came to be known as "Binchester pennies," why not "Peny-yard pennies" on the Herefordshire site?

Guillim, as we have seen, lived in this part of Herefordshire and may well have been familiar with the appearance of the so-called Peny-yard pence. When wishing to blazon the Spence arms (which probably were of the punning or canting class—*pence* for *Spence*) Guillim may have thought he detected a resemblance between the charges on
this shield and his local Peny-yard pence and boldly applied the latter name to the arms. The cross moline cantoned by groups of three pellets is found on the reverse of the Portcullis halfpenny of Elizabeth, and devices more or less similar occur on a few early pennies, but it can hardly be considered typical of the English regal silver penny of the mediæval period; and by the rules of heraldry, what Guillim calls “Peny-yard pence proper” must be silver (or gold). On the other hand, were we able to accept Bonner’s “silver penny coined at Penyard Castle” as an accurate description and illustration of a class of coin actually and repeatedly found at Penyard over a period which would include Guillim’s day, there would seem to be reasonable justification for the latter’s attribution though, even so, one must lay the responsibility for so naming the heraldic charges on Guillim himself.

Before dismissing the subject of the Spence arms, it is with considerable hesitation that I put forward the following suggestion for what it is worth. Papworth and Morant record the arms of a family of Spence of Yorkshire as: Sable, 3 millstones argent, 2 and 1. Now a millstone is an uncommon heraldic charge and is usually represented as a circular object fitted with a millrind or fer de moulin. I believe, however, I am correct in saying that a fer de moulin sometimes takes the form of a cross moline (which is practically two millrinds intersecting at right angles). Thus Planché (The Pursuivant of Arms, p. 52, ed. 1873) figures a coat of Guy Ferre (temp. Edw. i) bearing a cross moline, and blazons it: “Gules, a Fer de moulin argent.” If the silver millstones of Spence were so represented, can we not, with a little imagination, visualize a coat of arms bearing a considerable resemblance to that of Spence as given by Guillim? It is at least a coincidence that two families of the same name and in the same county, should have adopted two decidedly unusual coats of arms which, nevertheless, ex hypothesi, bear a distinct resemblance to each other. Is it within the bounds of possibility that Guillim could have seen a badly executed or defaced shield of Spence of Yorkshire and then, by translating “millstones argent” into “Peny-yard pence proper,” aided by a little juggling with the
tincture of the field and the addition of a few pellets to the charges, could have evolved his own version of the arms of Spence of Hang West? I leave this question to the judgment of the reader. It is only fair to state that Guillim elsewhere in his book (p. 127, ed. 1660) blazons the arms of Milveton as: az. three millstones arg., the millstones being represented as circular pierced stones, viewed in perspective and without millrinds.

As regards the main problem which forms the subject of this paper, it must be confessed that no very satisfactory conclusion has been reached. Most, if not all, of the references to Peny-yard pence which I have quoted, seem to be ultimately traceable to Guillim, and though we may readily believe that base-metal jettons of a more or less constant type have occurred in the past near Penyard Castle in such numbers as to have acquired the local name of "Peny-yard penny," we must, I think, wait for more evidence before accepting either the silver Peny-yard penny or the existence of the local mint.

If we are right in attributing the responsibility for most of the fables which have attached themselves to these mysterious coins to the vivid imagination of John Guillim, we have here but one more example of the well-known phenomenon of a rash or unsupported statement once made, which, after being blindly accepted by subsequent writers, has gradually crystallized into a tenet of general belief.
THE GOLD COINAGE AT OXFORD OF CHARLES I

Plate I