I recently had occasion to look through the Anglo-Saxon pennies in the trays of the Yorkshire Museum, and was most surprised to find there a coin of Edward the Confessor’s ‘Sovereign’ type which was clearly not a penny. It reads

EADPRD REX ANGLO /+BR-YNNIC ON LEG:

with some suggestion of pellets between each pair of the last five letters of the moneyer’s name. Besides being slightly chipped it is very thin and shows appreciable wear. Its weight is 7-0 grains and its average flan diameter is $\frac{5}{8}$ in. The edge does not look as though a ‘piecutter’ was used to produce the coin from a square flan, and the die-axis is irregular (c. 105°). The coin has a dark patina.

Mr. G. F. Wilmot, Keeper of the Yorkshire Museum, who has kindly given me permission to publish the coin, tells me that it comes from the Robert Cook Collection, and is described as follows in Cook’s catalogue:

1 The Cook Bequest is referred to in the Annual Report of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society 1920, p. xv.

‘Robert Bielby Cook, of 44 St. John Street, York, who died on May 29th 1919, in his Will, wrote: “I bequeath to the Yorkshire Philosophical Society my Collections of Old Coins, chiefly Roman and English, formed by my father, Robert Cook, and myself, and containing many specimens found in York and its neighbourhood, on condition that the same Collections be kept together as nearly as possible in their present condition, and known as the ‘Robert Cook Collection’. ”’ According to the York Herald of 3rd December 1919, Robert Bielby Cook, LL.B. was 58 when he died. He was the son of Robert Cook of Scarborough and was sometime Liberal Agent for Scarborough. He worked later in York as a searcher of Wills and genealogies, and published the Parish Register of St. Martin’s, Coney Street, York (Yorkshire Parish Register Society).
'Edward the Confessor (1042–1066) Pennies. No. 2 rev + BRENNI ON LEG (Leicester), cross voided, martlet in each angle, called the Confessor’s arms. Fig. in Hawkins, Type 19 Pl. XVII No. 228. Leicester Mint. Wt. 7 grs. 3/6.'

Mr. Willmot remarks\(^1\) that ‘Cook usually gives the name of the person from whom he purchased his coins, but in this case no name is given. Perhaps it was from a local workman’. He adds that the following coin in the catalogue—presumably therefore purchased later—was bought from W. M. Maish, Esq., Bristol on 22nd March 1898.

Leaving aside Cook’s misreading of the reverse inscription and his mistaken attribution of the coin to Leicester rather than Chester, the first point to be considered is its authenticity. There seems no valid reason to dispute this. Cook was essentially a collector of coins of the York mint and the inclusion in his collection of a ‘Leicester’ coin can best be explained if he bought it from the finder. If it were a fabrication he could hardly have purchased it for only 3/6d., nor would it have been sold to him as a penny. The thin, frail, chipped flan and the dark patina are in its favour, as is its apparent uniqueness. But the most telling evidence is that the obverse and reverse inscriptions are identical with those of No. 334 in the Chester Sylloge, unquestionably a penny of the Chester mint\(^2\). The correspondence is so close that the same peculiar form of G in LEG occurs on both, and so does the appearance of stops between the letters of the moneyer’s name. Even the details of the obverse and reverse designs tally so minutely that it is almost as though the dies used for the two coins were prepared from master dies with the aid of a reducing machine, though this is obviously impossible. But they must have been cut by the same hand, probably consecutively.

What denomination does the smaller coin represent? It can be argued that as late Anglo-Saxon pennies were commonly cut into halves or quarters to provide small change there was no need for a round halfpenny, and that a third-penny is therefore more to be expected. Now the pennies of the ‘Sovereign type listed in the British Museum Catalogue have an average weight of just over 20 grains, and more than three-quarters of them lie in the range 19\(\frac{1}{2}\)–21\(\frac{1}{2}\) grains. Taking BMC and the Chester Sylloge together, the heaviest Chester penny weighs 21\(\frac{1}{2}\) and the lightest 16\(\frac{1}{2}\) grains; Sylloge No. 334, referred to above, weighs 17\(\frac{1}{2}\) grains. Bearing in mind its condition Cook’s coin seems heavy for a third-penny although the hypothesis cannot be completely rejected on this account alone.

Claims were made from time to time in the nineteenth century for the existence of round halfpence or third-pennies of Edward the Confessor, but these seem without exception to have been pence of the Short Cross issue, BMC ii (actually the fourth type of the reign), this issue having been struck on small flans.\(^3\) The exceptionally wide variation in weight shown by the coins of that issue was no doubt partially responsible for the confusion, for of those listed in the British Museum Catalogue more than one-quarter weigh less than 12 grains and a quarter of these weigh less than 10 grains. It is coins of this lightest group which have been mistaken for halfpennies or third-pennies. In contrast the heaviest quarter of the coins of Type ii in BMC, although struck on flans of the same size, weigh between 16\(\frac{1}{2}\) and 19\(\frac{1}{2}\) grains and could not possibly have been halfpence. The reason for the use of such small flans for this issue has never been clear. It hardly seems likely that it was to distinguish Short Cross coins from those of the previous issue (Trefoil-Quadrilateral). It seems just possible

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1. In a letter dated 1st July, 1965.
2. *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles: Grosvenor Museum, Chester, Part I*, by Miss E. J. E. Pirie, Plate XII. I am not convinced that nos. 333 and 334 are from common obverse and reverse dies.
3. No. 333 is a duplicate of BMC 647.
4. See for example Eckroyd Smith in *The Reliquary*, vol. ix, pp. 169–171. (I am grateful to Mr. Blunt for giving me this reference.)
that an issue of round halfpence was contemplated and the dies prepared, and that at the last moment it was decided not to strike halfpence but to use the dies for a normal issue of pennies.

Mr. Blunt has drawn my attention to a coin exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries of London on 22nd December 1743 which was probably but not certainly also of BMC Type ii, and has kindly provided me with the following extract from the relevant (MS) minute book:

"[The Rev. George North shewed] a halfpenny of Edward the Confessor in good preservation weight 9⅞ grains found at Welwyn in Hertfordshire the manor of which was given to the Presbyter of that place by the same king. The profile head of the King to the right with an helmet on EDPERD REX + [voided] VFINC ON LVND. It is the only Saxon halfpenny that has yet appeared."

The reverse of the coin as described is entirely consistent with Type ii although the moneyer is probably Lifinc (cf. BMC 830). The obverse inscription when rearranged as +EDPERD RE is quite common in this type and were it not for the statement that the king's head faces right there would be no need to consider the possibility of the coin having been other than a penny of Type ii. The only possible alternative is that it was a round halfpenny of the Pointed Helmet type, BMC vii, but this does not seem very probable. Not only is there no mention of the sceptre invariably found on pennies of that type but there is also no suggestion of crescents at the end of each limb of the voided cross. Moreover there is no moneyer Lifinc recorded for the type at London in BMC and ligation of the ND of the mint signature does not seem to occur on pennies of this issue. The coin exhibited to the Society of Antiquaries in 1743 is thus more likely to have been a penny of Type ii, the right-facing portrait probably being an error of description.¹

There seems to have been at least an intermittent striking of round halfpence during the tenth century, although they rarely occur in coin hoards.² The latest known of these halfpence dates from the reign of Edgar, before the recoinage of c. 973. No eleventh-century round halfpennies are known from before the reign of Edward the Confessor, and in the light of the wealth of material from this period which has survived in hoards in Scandinavia and other countries around the Baltic Sea it can be assumed with reasonable confidence that none were struck. Cut halfpennies and to a lesser extent farthings are, however, quite common.

These continued to be used during the early part of Edward the Confessor's reign, and they are recorded in BMC for Types i-iv.³ There is however only one cut halfpenny recorded there for a later type—the Facing Bust Issue (BMC xiii), towards the end of the reign—and there can be little doubt that the practice of cutting pence became less common in the middle of the reign, if it did not cease altogether. After the Norman conquest the pattern changed little, if we can judge from the evidence of hoards, until towards the end of the reign of Henry I⁴: Brooke records only 18 cut halfpennies of the 'Paxs' type in the Beaworth hoard, or less than one-third of 1% of the coins in the hoard⁵, and apart from these his catalogue lists no cut halfpence of William I and only one of William II (Type v) and Carlyon-Britton's

¹ Ruding (Annals of the Coinage, 3rd edition, p. 141) transcribes this minute but miscopies the moneyer's name as VFINC and makes no mention of the voided cross.
³ This is also the case in the Fitzwilliam Museum Sylloge.
⁴ The validity of hoard evidence in this respect is, however, open to some question. In the excavations now being carried out at Winchester, out of 9 coins of William I and II so far discovered (all isolated finds) no less than 4 are cut halfpence.
lists add very few more. Hoards from Stephen's reign, in contrast, contain a substantial proportion of cut halfpence and farthings.

It can scarcely be inferred from the apparent dearth of cut halfpennies between 1050 and 1125 that round halfpennies were used instead throughout this period, because these in turn might have been expected to have occurred in hoards had they been minted in quantity. The existence of a round halfpenny of the 'Sovereign' type need not however be a matter for surprise if, as seems possible, it may not have been the universal custom at that time to cut pennies into halves and quarters. That round halfpennies were ordered to be struck in Henry I's reign is beyond question, although only one is known to have survived. It therefore seems unnecessary to consider further the possibility of the 'Sovereign' coin being a third-penny. No doubt round halfpennies of other issues will sooner or later come to light, though more probably as single finds than in hoards.

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1 P. Carlyon-Britton, 'William I & II, their Mints and Moneyers', *SNC* 1902. One cut halfpenny of Romney is noted of Brooke Type I, two of Wallingford of Type II and three of Wallingford and one of Derby of Type III, all of William I.