THE STAFFORD (1800) AND OULTON (1795) HOARDS

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STAFFORD (1800)

The original report of this find appeared in the Staffordshire Advertiser of 13 December 1800:

A short time ago between two and three hundred pieces of ancient silver coin were discovered in Mr. Kingstone's tanyard in this town, about a yard from the surface of the ground. They were contained in a small jug and are in an excellent state of preservation. It is supposed they have lain there about 700 years as they appear to have been coined during the reigns of Ethelred, Canute and Hardincnute which last monarch died (it is said through excessive eating and drinking) at Lambeth in the year 1041.

This report was later quoted, with a few minor alterations, firstly in the Gentleman's Magazine and then by the Revd. Stebbing Shaw in the second volume of his History and Antiquities of Staffordshire. The former is the source for a reference to the find by Lindsay, which in turn was the source for the more recent Inventory reference to it, in which it is no. 338. In Mr. Michael Dolley's listing of Viking Age coin hoards from Great Britain and Ireland, the find is no. 158.

Since no details are given of the source of the Advertiser's information, the report should be treated with some caution. The lack of reference to any coins of Harold I is to be commented on. This might mean that the report should be regarded as a defective source but if, for example, some or all of the coins of Harthacnut were of the 'jewel-cross' type, then it is possible that 'jewel-cross' pennies in the name of Harold I were present but not identified and so were casually grouped with those of Harthacnut.

In the William Salt Library at Stafford, among the papers of Stebbing Shaw, is a letter dated 23 January 1802 from Thomas Sharp, the Coventry antiquarian, collector, and author. The postscript of this reads:

As you do not if I remember right collect coins, I shall be very glad to purchase any that you may have remaining of the Stephens—the Stone discovery of Confessors and Conquerers or Stafford Canutes.

Sharp's assumption that Shaw had not collected coins was incorrect for in the final two decades of the preceding century Shaw made frequent purchases at London auctions. 'The Stephens' refers to the single coin acquired by Shaw from the Ashby de la Zouch find of 1789 while 'the Stone discovery' is that made at Oulton near Stone in 1795, examined below. 'The Stafford Canutes' may only be a reference to the Stafford find of 1800.

The Oulton find included, as far as may be seen, only a small proportion of coins of William I. That Sharp nevertheless mentioned them would suggest that, in spite of the
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In the Advertiser, the Stafford find contained only coins of Cnut. However, as this is only a casually written postscript to a letter, it may not be assumed that Sharp is consistent here. The Wedmore hoard (Inventory 374) has shown that a hoard deposited as late as c. 1043 could consist mainly of coins of Cnut and include the odd coin of Æthelred II. The newspaper report cannot therefore be discredited as yet.

Nevertheless there is here the first evidence regarding the dispersal of the hoard. Shaw almost certainly sold his coins to Sharp for by this time he was in severe financial difficulties due to chronic illness and the cost of convalescing by the sea and to the costs incurred with his book. Sharp's collection of coins was purchased by the Revd. William Woolston, whose collection of English coins was sold after his death in 1817 to Matthew Young. Young presumably incorporated Woolston's coins in his general stock and disposed of them piecemeal. Sharp did, however, allow certain of his coins struck at Shrewsbury to be illustrated and described in Owen and Blakeway's History of Shrewsbury. The coins fall into two groups, the first consisting of three quatrefoil-type pennies of Cnut by the moneyers Brungar, Ælfhelm, and Crinan. Although the illustrations are not always accurate, the coins may be read with little difficulty.

9. Obv. +CNVTREX<ANGLORVM> Rev. +BR VHE AR<RO> NSE
   BMC—cf. Lockett 3754 (not illustrated but a cast is in the B.M.).
10. Obv. +CNVTREX<ANGLR> Rev. +ÆL FEL M<ON SC>OB
    BMC—.
11. Obv. +CNVTRE[X]ANGLO Rev. +ÆR<IN ONZE ROB
    BMC—but cf. Hildebrand (1881) 3124 which is from a different obverse die while BMC 502 appears to combine the obverse die with a different reverse die.

The second group is one of five coins struck in the latter part of the reign of Edward the Confessor. These are discussed below in the section on the Oulton find. Coins struck at Shrewsbury should be well represented in both the Stafford and the Oulton finds while, turning to the first group, 'quatrefoil' type pennies of Shrewsbury are by no means common, so that a group of even only three in this collection would suggest that Sharp had had access to a hoard containing coins of this type found in the west of England or the Midlands. It is quite possible, therefore, that these were some of the coins purchased by Sharp from Shaw, although the possibility that Sharp may have obtained the coins from another find, such as that from Kingsholm, a suburb of Gloucester, in c. 1780 cannot be discounted. One cannot conclude too much from the fact that the three coins are of one type only, for by coincidence this type may have been better represented among the coins struck at Shrewsbury in the find than the other issues of Cnut. In the present state of our knowledge, the find may be summarized as follows:

STAFFORD, Eastgate Street. Autumn 1800. Deposit: unknown date between c. 1016 and c. 1040.

Between 200 and 300 silver pennies of Cnut. An almost contemporary newspaper report refers also to coins of Æthelred II and Harthacnut but not of Harold I: this report may neither be confirmed nor absolutely rejected. No individual coins are identified for certain but three Cnut pennies of BMC type viii struck at Shrewsbury in the collection of Thomas Sharp may be from this find. Found in a 'small jug'.

1 Ruding, Annals (1819), v, p. 306 note m = 1840 edn., p. 381 n. 8.
Disposition. Some or all of the coins were acquired by the Revd. Stebbing Shaw, who probably sold them in 1802 to Thomas Sharp.


OULTON (NEAR STONE), STAFFS. (1795)

The first report of a discovery of coins at Oulton appeared in the Staffordshire Advertiser of 7 March 1795:

Extract of a letter from Stone, March 3rd.

'As the gardener of Mr. Shelley of Oulton, near this place, was digging in his master’s orchard, he found a gold ring, and upwards of a thousand small pieces of silver coin, most of which were perfect; and on examination proved to be the coin of St. Edward the Confessor, one of our Saxon kings, who reigned upwards of 700 years ago.—It could not be discovered in what they had been kept, as the covering, whatever it might have been, had mouldered into dust.'

A second report appeared two days later in Aris’s Birmingham Gazette:

On Saturday last as a poor labouring man was digging in an orchard at Otton [sic] near Stone, in Staffordshire, he discovered a quantity of silver coin and a number of gold rings and bracelets; which from the dates on the former appear to have been buried during the Revolution, in the time of Charles I.—As soon as it was known, a number of people assembled to pursue the search for this hidden treasure, and could not be dispersed till a party of the Glasgow Rangers, who happened to be stationed at Stone, were called out to protect the premises, and under a promise of a division of the spoil; but they unfortunately arrived too late to receive any benefit from it, the greater part being carried off by the populace.

These reports were not noticed by Stebbing Shaw who published in the following year in the Gentleman’s Magazine a brief account of coin hoards in Staffordshire which he had noted while preparing his history of the county. On the Oulton find he wrote:

In 1795 was likewise found at Oulton near Stone, a parcel of 4000 silver coins, all Saxon, except some of William the Conqueror; 40 of which of the different sorts are in my possession; and, with the above, and other much more remarkable curiosities since discovered in this county, will greatly embellish the General History of my First Volume, now very forward in the press.

In the draft of this letter which is preserved among Shaw’s papers in the William Salt Library, Shaw had originally written:

In Febly 1795 was likewise found at Oulton near Stone one parcel about 4000 silver coins mostly Saxon and of Wm Conqueror—40 of which are in my possession in the highest preservation but were now sold about the county and the north.

It is likely that Shaw’s information about the find came from whoever sold him the coins, possibly one of the people mentioned in the Gazette account.

In spite of the final statement in the GM letter no mention was made of the find in the first volume of Shaw’s The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire which appeared in 1798. The following year, while he was collecting material for the second volume, Shaw

1 GM 1796, pp. 983–4.
received a letter dated 19 February from John Dent, a solicitor in Stone. Part of this letter, which is also preserved in the William Salt Library, reads:

A few years ago, I think in the year 1795, there was found in Mr. Shelley’s garden a large quantity of Saxon coins. There were 10 different sorts, and Mrs. Shelley has a good many of them now; there was also found a Gold Ring, quite whole and a lump of pure gold, which Mrs. Shelley has also. . . . If you should come into this neighbourhood Mr. and Mrs. Shelley will be very glad to see you and you will then have an opportunity of seeing the coins which are very curious and well worth seeing.

The final sentence shows that Shaw’s information about the find had been second-hand: the draft of his GM letter demonstrates that he had believed that the coins had been dispersed shortly after the discovery and it is presumably for this reason that he had not followed it up further. In his reference to the hoard in the next volume of his history, which appeared in 1801, Shaw appears to have been more cautious for he merely stated:  

To our former account, p. 37 &c we should have added the large collection of Saxon coins found at Oulton, near Stone, as will be there more fully noticed.

Shaw died, however, the following year without writing anything further on the find. If the Staffordshire antiquaries who succeeded him noted the hoard, they merely copied what he had written. The exception is the local historian and popular writer F. Hackwood who wrote about it on two occasions and who used the original Advertiser report of the discovery as well. Hackwood adds a detail that the coins were ‘enclosed in a coarse clay vessel’ which may be considered almost certainly incorrect as it conflicts with the Advertiser account. This detail may have been transferred from the account of the Stafford find, which was found in ‘a small jug’ and the newspaper report of which was known to Hackwood. The hoard passed otherwise unnoticed until the present decade when Mrs. J. S. Martin noted it and Mr. Michael Dolley proposed it as the source of a group of Edward the Confessor pennies of type BMC. The hoard is no. 185 in his listing of Viking Age coin hoards from Great Britain and Ireland.

The contradictions in the various accounts of the discovery may briefly be commented on. The total given in the Advertiser of 1,000 coins found is to be preferred to Shaw’s figure of 4,000, as the former appears to be the better source. However, if the free-for-all that is described in the Gazette did indeed occur, then it is difficult to see how the number of coins could have been assessed. Both figures are apparently then rough estimates and possibly neither may approach anywhere near the truth. Shaw’s statement that the find included coins of William I is correct as it is confirmed in the postscript of the letter to him from Thomas Sharp, quoted earlier in this note, and by other evidence discussed below. These were clearly in a distinct minority to the Anglo-Saxon coins.

Objects of gold occur in only five of the seventy-three eleventh-century hoards found in the British Isles. Five gold finger-rings are recorded from the Sutton, Isle of Ely, find (Inventory 346) and two from the Soberton, Hants, find (Inventory 334). It would be quite feasible for ‘a number of gold rings’ to have been found at Oulton as stated in the Gazette account. Since, however, two of the other reports of the Oulton discovery refer

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1 See n. 3 p. 22, supra.
2 Parts of the proof copy of volume ii, part 2 of Shaw’s History have recently come to light so it is not beyond the realms of possibility that one day more of Shaw’s information on this and other Staffordshire finds will be known.
4 ‘Stafford, Stamford or Steyning?’, SNC 1962, pp. 106 and 107.
5 SCBI The Hiberno-Norse Coins in the British Museum (1966), pp. 44 and 53.
to one ring only, it seems more likely that only one was indeed found. The reference to gold ‘bracelets’ in the *Gazette* account could be taken as an allusion to armlets, necklets, or even penannular brooches. Although silver or silver gilt items of this sort are known from a very small number of coin hoards deposited in the eleventh century, there are only two hoards of this date known to the author to have included any items of gold jewellery—the London, St. Mary Hill Church, find (Inventory 250) with a gold filigree brooch and the Halton Moor find (Inventory 181) with two gold bracteates. The occurrence of a number of gold ‘bracelets’ in the Oulton find is, therefore, highly unlikely. What is probable is that this is an exaggerated reference to the ‘lump of pure gold’ mentioned in the letter to Stebbing Shaw from John Dent. This was possibly a small ingot and if it did give rise to the story of gold ‘bracelets’, may have been in the form of a curved bar. It is most unfortunate that no further information about this item was given for no other eleventh-century coin hoard is known to have included such an item. Another possibility is that the object was a fragment of an armlet, necklet, or penannular brooch.

![Fig. 1.](image)

Of the forty coins acquired by Shaw, perhaps all Anglo-Saxon, only one may be identified with certainty. In 1797 he exhibited two coins before members of the Society of Antiquaries, whose minutes for 4 May include the statement:

The Revd. Stebbing Shaw exhibited to the Society two unpublished English coins: one of Edward the Confessor found at Oulton in Staffordshire, the other of Stephen found at Ashby Woulds in Leicestershire, the types of which were heretofore unknown.

Ruding was present at the meeting. Among his manuscript notes now in the Department of Manuscripts at the British Museum are drawings of two coins stated to belong to Shaw. One is his well-known penny of Stephen from the Ashby de la Zouch (Ashby Woulds) find,\(^1\) the other,\(^2\) illustrated above, is a *BMC* type xiv penny of Edward the Confessor minted at Worcester by Heathewulf and is without doubt the coin from Oulton. Ruding’s note to the coin reads ‘cccxxvii Revd. S. Shaw. Mr. (i.e. Taylor) Combe reads it LI for Lincoln’ and he has added in pencil on his drawing just above the mint signature the letters LI upside down.\(^3\) The coin did not find a place in his *Annals*. It will presumably have been sold to Thomas Sharp with the rest of Shaw’s coins, passing subsequently into William Woolston’s collection and later into the stock of Matthew Young. In Mr. F. Elmore Jones’s list of examples in his study of this type, this is the

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\(^1\) Additional MSS. 18095, pp. 55r and 56v.
\(^2\) Additional MSS. 18094, pp. 82v and 83r.
\(^3\) The coin is included on p. 25 of the Index of Moneyers in the Taylor Combe Manuscript entitled *Engravings of British and Anglo Saxon Coins* now in the Library of the British Numismatic Society. It is described as belonging to Shaw and the reverse inscription is given as *HEATHEWULF ON* as Ruding had written.
eighth coin. It was lot 866 in the V. J. E. Ryan sale and had a pedigree going back to the collection of the Revd. J. W. Martin, sold in 1859.

Thomas Sharp's collection also included a small group of five pennies of Edward the Confessor struck at Shrewsbury. As has been suggested above, these may have been some of the coins which he purchased from Shaw and which came from the Oulton find. Although this is not absolutely certain, they are briefly noted here in case future evidence should confirm this possibility. The coins are:

**BMC type vii**

20. **Obv. +EDPER* DREI*  
Rev. +GODESBRONDONSER**

Godesbrand. This would appear to be the specimen in the Lockett collection (lot 3809) (not illustrated) ex Carlyon Britton collection (lot 608) and now in the British Museum (B.M. 1960/5/1/40).

**BMC type ix**

21. **Obv. EADPARDRE+ANGL*  
Rev. +LEOFSTLANOINSERO**

Leofstan. cf. **BMC** 1181 (ex City of London (1872) find).

**BMC type xv**

16. **Obv. EADPARDREX  
Rev. +GODPINEONSROBB**

Godwine. cf. **SCBI** Oxford i. 1076 and idem Reading 178.

17. **Obv. EADPARDREX  
Rev. +PVLMIERONSROI**

Wulfmaer. An example from the same dies is in the collection of Shrewsbury Borough Museum and Art Gallery without provenance.

18. **Obv. EDPARDREXAI  
Rev. +EARNPIONSRP**

Earnwi. An example from the same dies is also in the collection of Shrewsbury Borough Museum and Art Gallery without provenance. Cf. also **BMC** 1187 from a different obverse die.

A small group of four coins, all struck at Stafford, are described in a chapter entitled *A Brief Historical Account of the Coinage of Staffordshire* in the second section of William Pitt's *A Topographical History of Staffordshire*, published in 1817. The author of this chapter does not give his name but the initials W. W. given in a footnote on page 2 betray him as the Revd. William Woolston who was also a subscriber to the book. The four coins were acquired on at least two occasions and no information is given of their provenances. There is no doubt, however, that all are from Oulton. As with Shaw's forty coins, all are 'in the highest state of preservation'. The second and third coins, described on page 2, are William I type Br. II pennies by the moneyers Godwine and Wulfnoth. The first of these is as **BMC** 140. An example of the second coin, the legends of which are given as obv. PILLEMV REX I rev. PVLFNOB ON SITEF is not in the national collection although a specimen was known to Brooke in York Museum. The mint signature is in fact ST:EFF. The fourth coin, described in a footnote on the following page, is an Edward the Confessor penny of type **BMC** xv, struck by Godwine and from the same dies as **BMC** 1218.

1 'An Unpublished Penny of Edward the Con-


3 Woolston also refers to a further coin of William I 'struck at Stafford, with a reverse considerably dif-

ferent from those' of his own four coins, in the Tyssen collection, which he had, however, never seen, and so
could not describe further. Two Stafford minted pennies of William I are listed in the sale catalogue of the Tyssen collection: lot 889, which is a type Br. II penny and lot 875, a type Br. VI penny. The latter coin is not known today and is certainly a coin from another mint misascribed. Presumably it is the coin referred to by Woolston.
The most interesting of the coins is the first, which may be identified from the description given as a ‘mule’ combining the first two types of William I. Woolston gives the legends as obv. PILLEMVS REX A rev. GODPINNE ON STEF. The form of the moneyer’s name indicates that the coin is the I/II ‘mule’ known to Brooke from a specimen in the Fitzwilliam Museum and ascribed by him to Salisbury. The legends read:

Obv. +PILLEMVSREXN       Rev. +GODPINNEONSEI

The coin is believed to have been purchased from the dealer Lincoln in 1871 but nothing further is known of its provenance. A second example, also ascribed to Salisbury, formed lot 873 in the sale of the V. J. E. Ryan collection and is now in the collection of Commander Mack. As the specimen in the Fitzwilliam Museum is fragmentary it is quite likely that the Ryan coin is the specimen which was in the Woolston collection.

There is no doubt that the ‘mule’ should be ascribed to Stafford as Woolston proposed although why he transcribed SLEI as STEF rather than STAEF or STAEF will never be known. Mr. Elmore Jones has demonstrated that the coin has an obverse die link with the William I type Br. I penny of Godwine at Stafford, lot 2840 in the Lockett collection and now in the British Museum and, as this die-link has not been fully published, it is not out of place to illustrate above both coins.

1 BMC Norman Kings ccxxiv.
Five pennies of Edward the Confessor (three of them incidentally struck at Shrewsbury) and stated to have come from the Oulton find formed part of a collection of coins sold by Captain Ralph Tichbourne Hinckes at Sotheby’s on 21 November 1921, lot 329. The five coins are, following the details given in the catalogue:  

\[ \text{BMC xi} \text{ Shrewsbury. Godwine. Rev. GODPINE ON } \text{STERO (cf. BMC 1182).} \]

\[ \text{Shrewsbury. Wudeman. Rev. PUDEM pains on } \text{OEOB (cf. BMC 1184).} \]

\[ \text{BMC xv} \text{ Shrewsbury. Godwine. Rev. GODPINE ON SROBR (BMC—but cf. SCBI Oxford I 1076 and idem Reading 178 which end SROBB).} \]

\[ \text{Chester. Huscarl. Rev. HUSRALR ON LECE (cf. BMC 663).} \]

\[ \text{Stafford. Godwine. Rev. GODPINE ON STAE (cf. BMC 1218).} \]

I am grateful to Mr. H. E. Pagan for this reference. He suggests that the collection was formed in the nineteenth century as it contains no coins which date after 1870. It is possible that the five coins were acquired originally by an earlier member of Hinckes’s family, Peter Tichbourne Hinckes of Tettenhall in Staffordshire, who was a friend of Stebbing Shaw and a minor antiquary although not known to have collected coins.  

The identification of two examples of the Edward the Confessor penny of \textit{BMC} type xv and with the reverse legend \textit{GODPINE ON STAE} (= \textit{BMC} 1218) as from the find at Oulton settles the attribution of these coins to Stafford if they were present in such quantities in the hoard. It may be postulated further that the majority of the somewhat rarer William I pennies of types I and II struck at Stafford, which appear in cabinets only in the years after 1800, also come from Oulton. The absence today of any coins struck at Stafford during the reign of Harold II, which one would have expected to be represented in the find, would suggest that, in fact, none may have been struck. However, the apparent paucity of coins of William I in the find as opposed to those of Edward the Confessor suggests that the hoard may have been composed of two main elements—a bullion reserve of out-of-date coin and a small parcel of current coins added to these at the time of concealment. The hoard could then be tentatively seen as part of the bullion reserve of the Stafford mint (as Mr. Pagan has suggested in a letter to me), while the smaller parcel might have consisted mainly of newly struck coins of William I type II. Another small element perhaps consisted of miscellaneous current coins received by the mint officials in the course of their duties and again added to the others at about the time of concealment. This reconstruction would explain why so many more coins of William I type II struck at Stafford have survived today than of type I, while the chances that any hypothetical Stafford pennies of Harold II should survive may be seen to be slender. The absence today then of Stafford pennies of Harold II may be fortuitous.

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1 In the catalogue the date for the discovery is given as 1794.


3 Michael Dolley, ‘Stafford, Stamford or Steyning?’, \textit{SNC} 1962, pp. 106 f. One coin from the same dies as \textit{BMC} 1218 is in the National Museum, Copenhagen, and is believed to be from a Scandinavian find.

4 The first record of a William I type Br. I penny of Godwine at Stafford is in 1819 (lot 183 in the sale of John Thane’s collection at Sotheby’s, 19 Apr. 1819). Br. II pennies of Godwine appear in 1802 (lot 889 in the sale catalogue of the Tyssen collection), 1810 (the date of the B.M. acquisition of \textit{BMC} 140 from B. C. Roberts) and 1817 (William Woolston collection—see above): the first reference to a Br. II penny by Wulfnoth is also in this collection. Two otherwise unidentified Br. II Stafford pennies were in lot 21 in the sale of the coins of an ‘Eminent Collector’ (H. R. Willett) at Sotheby’s on 23 Feb. 1824. It may be noted, however, that the Jubbergate, York, find of 1845 may be the source of the Br. II penny of Wulfnoth at Stafford, now in York Museum and referred to by Brooke (\textit{Norman Kings}, i. cccxxxvi).
For Inventory purposes, the find may be summarized as follows:

OULTON (near Stone), Staffs. February 1795. Deposit: c. 1069–70.

Over 1,000 (another figure given is 4,000, but it is possible that neither is at all accurate) Æ pennies, said to be of ten different types, which may or may not include 'mules', the majority of Edward the Confessor but a few of William I, with a gold ring and a small gold ingot (?). There was no trace of a container. Few coins identified for certain: Edward the Confessor BMC xi—Shrewsbury: Godwine and Wudeman. BMC xiv—Worcester: Heathewulf. BMC xv—Chester: Husearl. Shrewsbury: Godwine. Stafford: Godwine (2). William I Br. I/II—Stafford: Godwine. Br. II—Stafford: Godwine and Wulfnoth. The find is also probably the source of an uncertain number of Edward the Confessor type BMC xv and William I types Br. I and II pennies struck at Stafford and may be the source of a group of five pennies of Edward the Confessor at one time in the collection of Thomas Sharp: these are all struck in Shrewsbury: BMC vii—Godesbrand. BMC ix—Leofstan. BMC xv—Godwine, Wulfmaer, Earnwi.

Disposition. Many of the coins were retained by the Shelley family, the owners of the land on which the find was made until at least 1799 and cannot now be traced. Others were dispersed at the time of the discovery, forty being acquired by the Revd. Stebbing Shaw. These were probably sold in 1802 to Thomas Sharp, whose collection was later sold to the Revd. William Woolston, whose collection was sold after his death in 1817 to Matthew Young.


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