

THE COMPOSITION OF THE CUERDALE HOARD

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THE Cuerdale treasure was found on the south bank of the River Ribble in Lancashire on 15 May 1840, on the property of Mr William Assheton of Downham Hall, when repairs to the river bank were being carried out.¹ The find, consisting of some 7,000 coins and nearly 1,000 ounces of silver ingots and cut up ornaments, naturally aroused great local interest and the *Preston Chronicle* of 23 May 1840 wrote: 'the numismatic collectors and connoisseurs (*sic*) are quite in a *furor* about the matter, and the spot where the treasure was found has, since the discovery, been more zealously scratched than any dunghill in the best populated poultry yard!'. The basic report on the coins, was published by Edward Hawkins² but no complete record is possible as it is clear that, in spite of all the efforts of Mr Assheton and his steward, a number of significant coins were abstracted before the inquest and many of these were not returned. The workmen too are reported as having coins for sale later on. Two major abstractions can be established today, the one with certainty, the other with a fair degree of confidence. The first was by Mr Assheton's steward who acted in the mistaken belief that he was doing his employer a service. The latter was in Italy at the time of the discovery and remained abroad for some time after, but, immediately on his return, he placed this parcel in the hands of the authorities. This must have happened after the inquest, for many of the coins, including more than one that was unique, were in due course returned to Mr Assheton. Hawkins must too, by this time, have got a certain way with his report because he publishes most of this parcel as an appendix to it. The steward Hawkins treats generously, acknowledging his good intentions, remarking how little the law of treasure trove was understood, and adding 'it is not, therefore, a subject of surprise that a zealous servant should retain possession of what he strongly felt was his master's property'.

But of other abstractions Hawkins is forthright in his condemnation. Some others, whom he does not identify, abstracted, he says, 'several coins of considerable interest' to satisfy 'the avidity of collectors'. Of these he writes: 'such ill-doings would not be so frequent if it were the general practice to give to actions their simple and appropriate names. Theft is theft, by whatever palliative people may attempt to veil its deformity'.³

The second major abstraction appears to have got into the hands of a Mr Joseph Kenyon of 7 Butler Street, Preston. Within a month of the discovery, and while Mr Assheton was still in Italy, Kenyon had sent a brief account of the hoard, dated 10 June 1840, to the *Numismatic Chronicle*⁴ and at the inquest, held in August 1840, he appeared, with a Mr Thomas Glover of Manchester, as an expert witness as to its composition.⁵ Curiously there is no reference to anybody from the British Museum having attended the inquest. It must, however, have been an important occasion in Preston. The Crown was represented by the attorney-general and the solicitor-general of the Duchy; Mr Assheton by a Mr John Addison, and the coroner sat with a jury of sixteen members who are named in the *Preston Chronicle*

¹ The names of the fourteen men working on the job under the direction of Jonathan Richardson, Mr Assheton's bailiff, are given in Frank Coupe's *Walton-le-Dale* (Preston, 1954), p. 22. I owe this reference, and the extracts from the local papers cited below, to the kindness of Mr B. J. N. Edwards, the Lancashire County Archaeologist.

² E. Hawkins, 'An account of coins and treasure found in Cuerdale', *NC* 1st series, 5 (1842-43), 1-48, 53-104.

But note that the paging in the offprint differs and that pages 53-7 of the original have actually been reset.

³ Hawkins, p. 104.

⁴ J. Kenyon, 'Discovery of Ancient Coins and other Treasure near Preston', *NC* 1st series, 3 (1840-41), 62-5.

⁵ *Blackburn Standard* reprinted in *The Preston Pilot and County Advertiser*, 21 August 1840.

of 22 August 1840. They consisted of a watchmaker, two upholsterers, a cotton spinner, a printer, a gardener, a draper, a stationer, a hosier, a gilder, two gentlemen, a tobacconist, a hatter, a pawnbroker and the foreman, whose occupation is not given.

The following coins are recorded as having passed through Kenyon's hands. Those specifically stated to be from Cuerdale, are marked with an asterisk, but the Cuerdale provenance may safely be accepted for all:

ALFRED

- 1.* *BMC* v Moneyer Burgnoth = *SCBI* Norweb 141
- 2.* *BMC* v Moneyer Heahstan = *SCBI* Oxford 247
3. *BMC* vi London monogram, Haigh 1870, pl. iii, 2⁶
4. *BMC* vi London monogram, Haigh 1870, pl. iii, 3
5. *BMC* viii Lincoln monogram, Heribert pl. IV, 2 = *BMC* 81
6. *BMC* ix London monogram, moneyer Herewulf pl. IV, 5 = Lockett 2703
- 7.* *BMC* ix London monogram, moneyer uncertain = BM, ex Lockett 511
8. *BMC* x London monogram, no bust, moneyer Tilewine = BM, ex Montagu, 1895, 535. Correspondence Martin-Lindsay, (see below)
9. *BMC* xviii 'Orsnaforda', Haigh 1870, pl. VI, 1 = ? Bruun 65(a)
10. *BMC* xviii 'Orsnaforda', 'very blundered', *NC* 1st series, 7 (1844-5), 39-40
- 11.* *BMC* xxi Exeter, = Lockett 500

Temp. ALFRED

- 12.* Halfpenny without king's name, moneyer Everat = *SCBI* Cambridge 563

ARCHBISHOP PLEGMUND

13. Type DoRo moneyer not stated. Correspondence Martin-Lindsay.

This is a remarkable assembly of coins, most of them great rarities. Nos. 1 and 2 are of a distinctive type of considerable rarity. In fact, before this find Hawkins believed that only two whole coins and one fragment were known.⁷ The two coins of type vi, though not so rare, would have stood out among the rest as the type was relatively scarce in this hoard. No. 5 is unique. Kenyon published it in 1843 saying (somewhat disingenuously) that 'it was found in the neighbourhood of Preston, and came into my possession some time ago'.⁸ Of No. 6 one other specimen is known, *BMC* 115 from Cuerdale. No. 7 is unique. No. 8 was also believed to be unique, but a second turned up in 1951 in a parcel that also clearly emanated from Cuerdale. When the Montagu coin was sold to the BM in 1895, it had a pedigree going back no further than the Huxtable Sale of 1859, but a letter from the Rev. J. W. Martin to John Lindsay, dated 28 Jan 1842, says that at that time it was in the possession of Kenyon.⁹ No. 9 calls for no comment. No. 10 Kenyon published in 1844/5 saying that 'it was lately washed up by the *silvery stream* of the Ribble and fell into my hands'.¹⁰

Of No. 11 only one other specimen was known (*BMC* 79, ex Cuerdale) until the Morley St Peter hoard produced a third. It is interesting to note that the only whole specimen then known of the corresponding coin of the Winchester mint, *BMC* 156, which came from the Cuff Sale of 1854, was stated by Martin in a letter to Lindsay dated 29 November 1841 to be from Cuerdale.

No. 12 is a unique variety (omitting the king's name altogether) of a denomination of which there are few examples in the hoard. No. 13 could be any one of a number of known examples.

Joseph Kenyon is described in 1825 as an 'attorney's clerk'¹¹ and later ran a private

⁶ D. H. Haigh, 'Coins of Ælfred the Great', *NC* 2nd series, 10 (1870), 19-39.

⁷ Hawkins, pp. 11-12.

⁸ J. Kenyon, 'The Mercian penny of Heribert', *NC* 1st series, 6 (1843-4), 163-8.

⁹ Original correspondence of Martin-Lindsay in the possession of Mr Norman Shiel by whose kind permission

reference is made to it here.

¹⁰ J. Kenyon, 'Worcester Penny of Alfred', *NC* 1st series, 7 (1844-45), 39-40.

¹¹ E. Baines, *History, Directory, and Gazetteer of the County Palatine of Lancaster* (Liverpool, 1825), II. I owe this reference to Mr H. E. Pagan.

school at 7 Butler Street, Preston.¹² I have been unable to find out anything about the dispersal of his coin collection, but two of his rarest coins from Cuerdale turned up in the 1868 sale of another Lancashire man, Mr Thomas Norris of Bury, without, it should be noted, any reference either to Cuerdale or to Kenyon. Although the two letters that he published in the *Numismatic Chronicle* had shown considerable knowledge of the subject, Kenyon does not appear ever to have been a member of the Numismatic Society. The only reference to him that I have come across in contemporary writings is in a letter from Martin to Lindsay dated 10 December 1841: 'Mr. Kenyon of No 7 Butler Street, Preston, Lancashire, has a ten guinea coin of Plegmund with DORO in centre of the reverse. If you were to write to him, I have no doubt he would furnish you immediately with an impression in wax or plaster. I will not have any further communication or correspondence with him'.¹³ The reference to 'a ten guinea coin' suggests that it was for sale and it is more than possible that Kenyon supplied some of the rarities in this series that turn up without provenance in auction sales of the two decades following the find. Certainly there is no sign of any public sale of a collection that looked like being his. No doubt any that remained in his hands at his death were sold privately to a dealer or a collector. There must still have attached to them some of the stigma of which Hawkins wrote so forcibly.

Another rather mysterious Preston man, described in the Montagu sale catalogue of 1895, as 'Dr Andrew Moore' and by Haigh in *NC* 1870, p. 27, as Andrew Moore, M.D. (he must therefore have been a medical doctor although I have been unable to trace him in medical works of reference) became possessed of at least two important coins. One, the unique penny of Halfdan of the 'two emperor' type, acquired by the British Museum at the Montagu sale of 1895 (lot 400) after it had passed through the Wigan¹⁴ and Brice collections.¹⁵ In the Montagu catalogue it is specifically stated to be from Cuerdale. The other is a barbarous variety of the London monogram type, with the head facing left. This is illustrated by Haigh in 1870, pl. III, 9, and may confidently be identified as the coin acquired by the British Museum at the Montagu Sale of 1895, lot 528. There it was said to be from the Stokes, Murchison (lot 189) and Shepherd (lot 73) sales, but it cannot be identified in the six-day sale in 1854 of Charles Stokes which contained no Anglo-Saxon coins. As with Kenyon's coins, I have been unable to trace any auction sale of Moore's collection, probably for the same reason.

I have no record of Moore's dates, but Haigh, writing to J. Rashleigh in a letter dated 30 January 1869, says 'this penny' (the two-emperor type) 'when I saw it, was in the hands of Dr Moore of Preston. He was then advanced in life and can scarcely now be living'.¹⁶ It must be at least possible that Dr Moore acquired his Cuerdale coins from Kenyon. If my suggestion that Mr Assheton's steward and the latter picked out between them many of the great rarities, Kenyon might have matched the steward's selection of the two-emperor coin of Ceolwulf by picking for himself the only other coin of this type in the hoard, the Halfdan that Dr Moore later possessed.

Since then other smaller parcels have been located. The Rev. T. Hugo, a local curate, acquired a number of 'strays' which are said to have included a coin of Alfred by a previously unknown (but regrettably not identified) moneyer.¹⁷ In 1951, a small parcel was bought from a local family by B. A. Seaby Ltd and this consisted of a cut halfpenny of Alfred's *BMC* type v; the London penny of *BMC* type x, referred to above; an Orsnaforda penny; and a penny of Edward the Elder of *BMC* type iii by the moneyer Wulfred. This again looks like being a careful selection.¹⁸ Finally there was the bequest to the British Museum in 1956 by Mr T. W. Armitage of a number of fragments which he had described to me as

¹² I owe this information to Mr Roy Hawkins who kindly consulted local directories for me.

¹³ The Martin-Lindsay correspondence referred to above.

¹⁴ Bought en bloc by Rollin & Feuardent in 1872.

¹⁵ Bought en bloc by Montagu in 1887.

¹⁶ Letter in the possession of the writer.

¹⁷ Rev. T. Hugo, 'On the field of Cuerdale', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 8 (1853), 330-35.

¹⁸ 'Proceedings of the Society: Exhibitions', *BNJ* 26 (1949-51), 354-55.

'sweepings from Cuerdale'. This is probable, for smallish fragments tended to be little esteemed at the time of the discovery. Among them was one of an entirely new type with a name on the obverse beginning *ce* – which has reasonably been identified as *Ceolwulf*.¹⁹

If one may judge by the sample abstracted by Mr Assheton's steward (which as stated above was returned to Hawkins) the second major abstraction would also have contained a number of the more ordinary pieces in the find. Such pieces rapidly lose their provenance and today it is only some of the rarities that can be identified. Common coins were quickly being offered for sale and a warning is given against buying from the workmen, often at extravagant prices. The hint is added that the Duchy of Lancaster may commence proceedings against those who have bought them.²⁰

What emerges very clearly is that at least two people, who had access to the treasure prior to its surrender to the coroner for the inquest, not only made a careful examination of the coins but picked out, in one case for himself, in the other for his master, a number of the greatest rarities in the hoard, clearly identifiable by their types. This was the case with the only two coins of the two-emperor type, with the unique Alfred *BMC* type iii, and with the one of the Lincoln type (*BMC* viii). It is quite possible too that another of this type, but by a different moneyer, first noticed in the Murchison sale of 1866²¹ was also abstracted from the hoard, but it has no recorded provenance. Two of the three and a half Wessex type coins in the hoard (*BMC* xxi) and both of the only two known London monogram coins without the king's bust (*BMC* x) can now be shown to have been abstracted.

A study of the rare Alfred *BMC* type v points in the same direction. Hawkins's original report records six whole specimens and two fragments. Four of the former and both the latter went to the British Museum, as did a further unrecorded fragment (*BMC* 181-6 and 188). It may be assumed that the other two whole coins were duplicates, probably by Dunna and Liafvald. The supplement (those abstracted by the steward) added five whole coins. Six others have appeared in sales with alleged Cuerdale provenances²² and a specimen by Dunna in the Cuff sale of 1854 is most likely to be a duplicate from Cuerdale. It is first recorded in a paper by Haigh dated 16 July 1842 with two others of the same type belonging to Kenyon to both of which the Cuerdale provenance is attached.²³ It is more than possible that at least one other, from the Wigan collection 1872, (not to mention several more that first appeared in the sale room in that century) originally came from Cuerdale. If we add these together (including the Cuff coin but not counting other possibles) we get a total of seventeen whole specimens and three fragments as likely to have come from the hoard. Of these the British Museum acquired at the time no more than four whole coins and the three fragments.

Of the extremely rare coins of the Mercian king, *Ceolwulf* II, Hawkins was, at first, able to record from the hoard a single specimen, which the British Museum secured (*BMC* 403). He quickly added to that the two-emperor coin that had been abstracted by Mr Assheton's steward. Two more of this king are known that are likely to be from Cuerdale. One with a pedigree going back to the Shepherd sale of 1885²⁴ is specifically stated to be from this hoard.²⁵ The other is at the neighbouring Stonyhurst College in a collection which contains a parcel which, though unprovenanced, is clearly from Cuerdale. Another coin of *Ceolwulf*

¹⁹ H. E. Pagan, 'An Unpublished fragment of a coin of *Ceolwulf* II', *BNJ* 41 (1972), 14-20.

²⁰ 'Correspondence, Q. Q.', *NC* 1st series, 4 (1841-42), 186.

²¹ Lot 194, now *SCBI* Lincoln, 2.

²² Burgnoth and Heahstan, ex Kenyon; Heahstan, Seaby 1951; Eadelm, BM, ex Lockett 488; Liafwald, ex Martin 1859; another *SCBI* Mack 731.

²³ D. H. Haigh, 'On the coins of the Cuerdale find, with the names "Siefredus", "Cunnetti", and "Ebraice"', *NC* 1st series, 5 (1842-43), 106-17.

²⁴ Though the sale was in 1885 the collection had been

formed by the Rev. E. J. Shepherd who died in 1874.

²⁵ It is so described in the Shepherd catalogue but by the time it came up in the Montagu sale of 1895 a provenance from the Assheton collection as well had been added. This is unlikely: it was not among the coins abstracted by the steward and there is moreover no reason to believe that Mr Assheton parted with any other than the thirty-two coins that he gave to the tenant farmer of the land on which the find was made and a *Ceolwulf* was not among these. These latter coins were sold at Sotheby on 2 February 1920, lots 160-72.

It may well be from this find. It is first recorded (without provenance) in the Cuff sale of 1854 (lot 292). Another first recorded in the Bruun sale of 1925 (lot 35) may possibly be. One can therefore point with reasonable confidence to four coins of this very rare king having been in the hoard and quite likely the Cuff example can be added to make a total of five. The British Museum secured at the time no more than one.

It is a sorry story. Here we have the most important coin hoard of Viking times, meticulously recorded by Edward Hawkins, to the extent that the material was available to him. And it is a measure of his care and skill that few coins of the Cunnetti type that pass through the sale room from time to time (and nearly all must be from Cuerdale) prove to be from dies not represented in the selection made by Hawkins for the National Collection.

Recently the suggestion has been made that six Carolingian coins from the mint of Quentovic in the Boulogne Museum are from the Cuerdale hoard.²⁶

The case for this rests on

(i) an entry in the minutes of a meeting of the Boulogne Museum Committee on 10 December 1842 which records the presentation to the museum by the Duchy of Lancaster of six coins of Charles the Bald and thirty-six Cunnetti coins from the Cuerdale hoard.

(ii) the discovery of sixteen of the latter and of six Carolingian coins of the mint of Quentovic 'wrapped in a single sheet of paper', something that, prima facie, suggests that the two groups are to be associated, and, as the Cunnettis may convincingly be accepted to be from Cuerdale, would therefore point to a Cuerdale provenance for the Carolingian pieces as well, which the writers regard as 'sure'.

The Carolingian coins had with them a label reading 'V.100.3 Charles le Chauve N^o 6017 a 6022'. The inventory to which these numbers refer cannot, unfortunately, now be found, but two coins of Louis the Pious also of Quentovic, have a label in the same hand and with numbers not far distant from those on the other parcel. These two coins came from the Meyer collection which was dispersed in 1902, presumably lots 163-4, and the labels on the Charles parcel must be accepted as dating substantially after the gift of the coins from Cuerdale in 1842.

The Cunnetti coins had no label; the fact that only sixteen out of the thirty-six are today in the collection need have no significance: the registers show that duplicates have from time to time been sold or exchanged.

The objection to the Cuerdale provenance for the Charles coins, which the writers very properly point out, is that Hawkins listed no more than a single coin of Charles of Quentovic in the find and this coin was retained by the British Museum.²⁷ They add, however, that Hawkins's report is undoubtedly incomplete (as the earlier part of this note clearly shows) and they consider that the association of the two parcels is demonstrated by their being found wrapped together.

It is well known that a lot of material, some of it very important, failed to pass through Hawkins's hands, but there is, as far as my knowledge goes, only one case which did come to him failing to find a place in his published record. That is of two fragmentary coins of Hedeby which it is not unreasonable to believe Hawkins simply failed to identify.²⁸ But it is significant that they were none the less retained for the National Collection. No such doubt as to identification could arise over the Quentovic coins. That whatever was presented to Boulogne passed through Hawkins's hands can hardly be disputed since the gift came from the Duchy of Lancaster.

The coins at Boulogne consist of five deniers and one obole. The deniers are of two distinct types, the one with obverse legend GRATIA DI REX, the other CARLVS REX FR and, on the reverse, a cross with two pellets at the end of each arm. The obole is of the

²⁶ M. Dhémin and P. Leclercq, 'The Coins of Quentovic from the Cuerdale Hoard in the Museum of Boulogne-sur-Mer', *BNI* 53 (1982), 104-7.

²⁷ R. H. M. Dolley and E. F. Morrison *The Carolingian*

Coins in the British Museum (London, 1966), no. 194.

²⁸ Michael Dolley and Tuukka Takvio, 'An Unpublished Hoard-provenance for the Ninth-century Coinage of Hedeby', *NC* (1974), 196-2.

former type as is the denier recorded by Hawkins. The second type (Morrison and Grunthal 1371) is, as the writers point out, of great rarity. In fact they can only record the specimen in the Paris collection and one in the Meyer sale, lot 354. They point out that the Brussels specimen, listed by Morrison and Grunthal is in fact a different variety. The British Museum has no example of this and, until 1956, had no obole. The coins at Boulogne would therefore have been welcome additions to the collection, and it is hard to believe that Hawkins, whose record is so good in securing for the British Museum all the coins it needed from those in the hoard that passed through his hands,²⁹ would have allowed these coins to leave.

How then can one account for the presence in the same wrapping of the Cunnetti and Quentovic coins? It is a sad fact, as the writers point out, that many provincial coin collections in France were often 'deregistered in order to hide them during the second world war', and it is known that steps had been taken in the first world war to protect the Boulogne collection. Either occasion might have resulted in some confusion of the material, and in attempting to sort things out, probably a number of years ago, it must be possible that the coincidence of the number of the Quentovic coins in the name of Charles with the number recorded as having been presented in 1842 would have led to their being placed with the Cuerdale coins. It may not be irrelevant that the Meyer collection had, as noted above, an example of the denier Morrison and Grunthal 1371, which is a coin of such rarity that the possibility cannot be ruled out that one of the Boulogne examples came from the Meyer sale from which it is known that purchases were made.

The museum at Boulogne would, of course, have had a special interest in coins of the neighbouring mint of Quentovic, something that is reflected in the presence in the cabinet of the two from the Meyer collection in the name of Louis. Had this special interest been recognized by Hawkins one would have expected him to have sent to Boulogne one or more of the Cnut coins of that mint, of which there were recorded in his original report some twenty-six specimens. There are none among the Cnut coins now in the collection at Boulogne. Experience of some other distributions of Carolingian coins from this hoard suggests that those in the name of Charles would, for the most part, have been of the mints of Melle and Le Mans. Over ninety per cent of the coins of Charles in the hoard, as recorded by Hawkins, were from mints in the west of France and no mint outside that area contributed more than ten coins at most.³⁰

On the evidence so far adduced, and from what we know of Hawkins's methods, it does not appear to the present writer that a Cuerdale provenance should be accepted for the Quentovic coins of Charles at Boulogne.

I am greatly indebted to Monsieur Dhénin and to Monsieur Leclercq, who have most courteously answered various points that I have raised, and in particular to the latter who so kindly gave me facilities to inspect the actual coins at Boulogne. I am also indebted to Mr H. E. Pagan for details from the Meyer sale catalogue.

²⁹ An exception is the parcel submitted on behalf of Mr Assheton, which, for some reason unexplained, was returned to him.

³⁰ C. S. S. Lyon and B. H. I. H. Stewart, 'The Northumbrian Viking Coins in the Cuerdale Hoard' *Anglo-Saxon Coins*, edited by R. H. M. Dolley (London, 1961), p. 98.