RECENT COIN HOARDS FROM WALES, 1985–1992

EDWARD BESLY

SINCE the flurry of significant coin hoards from Wales between 1979 and 1981, which have been published elsewhere, the principality has reverted to its more normal pattern of occasional hoard finds, of modest size. The following eight small hoards of English coins have been recorded under treasure trove procedures at the National Museum of Wales between 1985 and 1992.

1. Monmouth, Gwent, 1991/2

Late in 1991 or early in 1992, the following twelve Anglo-Saxon coins were found by use of a metal detector on the Buckholt, a prominent hill two kilometres north of Monmouth. The coins were shown to the Monmouth Archaeological Society, but in spite of patient encouragement from the society and others, the finder did not make them available for official examination or treasure trove proceedings. Subsequent investigation by Gwent Constabulary confirmed the facts of the find, but the coins had by then been lost and may never become available for detailed recording. The sole record of the coins is therefore that made by the finder.

The coins are said to have been scattered over several square feet on a steep slope and are said all to be of the CRVX type (BMC iiia) of Æthelred II, with reverse legends stated to be as follows:

1. LEØFSIGE M-O GLEA (Leofsige, Gloucester) parallels 1.435–9; V.235
2. PI...E M-O GLEA (Wihtsige, Gloucester) 1.440–3; V. ; C.360
3. ÆLFGET M-O HERE (Aelfget, Hereford) 1.445–7; V.236
4. BYRHSTAN M-O HERE (‘HE ligated’) (Byrhstan, Hereford) 1.448–9; V. ; C.427–8
5. LEØFRIC M-O GIEL (Leofric, Ilchester) 1.481–2; V.251; SCBI 36.260
6. GOD M-O LVNDO (Goda, London) 1.701–5; V.363; C.812–13
7. GO... DO, ‘sheared coin’ (Goda?, London) as no. 6?
8. OSPOLD M-O SNOT (Oswold, Nottingham) 1.863–6; V.436; C.1104
9. ÆDELPLÆN M-O OXNA (Aethelwine, Oxford) 1.872–3; V. ; C.1043–4
10. ÆLFRIC M-O SVDDBYR (Aelfric, Southwark) 1.915–27; V.449–55
11. TVN... O SVDBY (Tuneman, Southwark) 1.997–1002; V.498–502
12. ...IN M-O EO... (? , York) ?

The list of parallels is by no means exhaustive, but serves to indicate that the readings provided are nearly all consistent with coins of known moneyers in the CRVX type, eleven of them being mint/moneyer combinations represented by two or more examples in the Igelösa hoard. Confidence in the finder’s readings is increased by the observations that the British Museum’s specimen corresponding to no. 4 has H and E of ‘HERE’ ligated and the BM’s penny of Leofric of Ilchester has the same reading ‘GIEL’, presumably the same die. The mint

2 The Cefn Coed and Allt-yr-Yn finds were dealt with by George Boon when Keeper of Archaeology and Numismatics at the National Museum.

It was stated that the coins had been stolen in Hereford in December 1992 whilst in the keeping of a friend of the finder.

Coins of similar type from the Igelösa and Värpinge hoards (K. Jonsson, Viking Age Hoards and Late Anglo-Saxon Coins (Stockholm, 1987), pp. 132–46 and 123–31) and the Copenhagen collection (SCBI 7).
reading [LVN]DO tends to confirm that no. 7 is a cut half of the same type as no. 6. At Oxford, ‘ÆDELPIE[N]’ is a curiosity, which might arise from a misreading of ‘ÆDELPINE’ with N and E ligated, as BMC 297. The sole uncertainty surrounds no. 12, which was said to be badly corroded. The likely moneyer is [Dahf]in, who is known at York in Æthelræd’s CRVX, Helmet and Last Small Cross and Cnut’s Quatrefoil types. However, other interpretations are possible: if, for instance, the character read as ‘I’ were the right half of an ‘A’ [+OBA]N M-O E[FRPI], as SCB1 21 no. 71, would be a possible candidate.

Finds of Anglo-Saxon coins of any period from South Wales are very rare, although a small group of finds of Æthelræd II is beginning to emerge. In addition to Monmouth, one other hoard and four single finds are recorded:

- Caerwent, Gwent, 1909 single find CRVX; Lincoln, Leofman
- Penrice, Gower, 1825 hoard c. 30 Helmet pennies. Eleven coins were recorded in detail, from Barnstaple, Bath, Canterbury, Cricklade, Exeter, ‘Gothabyrig’ (this coin now in N.M.W.), Lincoln (2), London, Winchester (2).
- St Lythans, S. Glam., 1993 single find Helmet; Lydford, Bruna
- Sully Moors, S. Glam., 1989 single find Last Small Cross; Shaftesbury, Aelfwine
- Llanstephan, Dyfed, date? single find Last (?) Small Cross; London, Wulfryd

The Penrice and Monmouth hoards conform with the general pattern of other ‘smaller’ British hoards of the time in consisting of single types. The closest parallels to Monmouth appear to be Isleworth, 1886 and Bradda Head, I.O.M., c. 1848. The last, of which twelve coins from several hundred of BMC iii—a—c were recorded, includes a wide spread of mints, while the twenty-eight from Isleworth (again part of a larger hoard) show a strong regional bias, including sixteen London, four Rochester and three Canterbury coins, with single examples from Colchester, Exeter, Maldon, Thetford and Winchester. Allowing for the smaller numbers involved, the presence of two each from the relatively minor mints of Gloucester and Hereford also gives the Monmouth group a distinctly ‘regional’ composition.

The finding of a late tenth century hoard close to Monmouth is also important in local terms. Recent excavations in Monmouth have produced no coins earlier than William II, but small amounts of possible tenth century ‘Chester’ ware hint at earlier origins for the town. Given the general scarcity of coins of the period west of the Severn, the nearby presence of a hoard provides significant support for this view. In 997, ‘the Danes went around Devonshire into the mouth of the Severn, and there ravaged in Cornwall, Wales and Devon’; the continuing vulnerability of the area to Viking raids might provide a valid context for the non-recovery of the hoard.

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7 Given there as First Small Cross. Jonsson and Van der Meer (n.6) record a London moneyer of this name from c.1003 (Helmet); Wulfryd, spelt thus, is known in Last Small Cross (SCBI 7. 958).
2. Slebech, Pembrokeshire (Dyfed), 1991 (Plate 10, 1–12)

Twelve Short Cross coins (ten pennies and two cut halves) were found early in December 1991 by use of a metal detector. The coins were scattered in ploughsoil on land in Slebech Park, near Haverfordwest. The find was declared promptly to the local coroner, who deemed it not to be treasure trove. All of the coins are of classes Ib–c, apart from one IVa; none is noticeably worn, suggesting a date for their loss around 1195–1200.

The find comprises:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Mint</th>
<th>Moneyer</th>
<th>Weight, die-axis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ib</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>Hugo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Gefrei</td>
<td>1.37g, 280°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Pieres</td>
<td>1.36g, 150°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>Raul</td>
<td>1.33g, 90°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>(b?) Northampton?</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.66g, 270°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Ib</td>
<td>Oxford</td>
<td>Owe(in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>lc</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Raul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Raul</td>
<td>1.27g, 0°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Raul</td>
<td>1.22g, 180°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Raul</td>
<td>1.16g, 135°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Winchester</td>
<td>Gocelm</td>
<td>1.37g, 160°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>IVa</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Stivene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Slebech resembles the somewhat larger Scotforth (Lancs.) hoard in closing with a single IVa. It contains no class III, but its small size reduces any possible significance of this. The findspot lies within 200 metres of the Commandery and church of the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem at Slebech, which was in their possession by 1176. This would appear to be only the second hoard of the Short Cross period reported from Wales, the other being the late Wrexham hoard of 1926, which closed with a single VIIIb. The ‘thirty-eight silver coins or shillings of Henry I’ found in a grave in Llangurig churchyard (Montgomery) c.1753 may perhaps record another, although the reference might imply a later, great hoard.

3. Cefn Coed, Mid Glamorgan, 1986

A hoard of thirty-one silver pennies, comprising twenty-six Edwardian sterlings, two Irish pennies of Edward I and three pennies of Alexander III of Scotland, was found around 20 May 1986 by Mr J.L. Haymer, in his garden at Morlais Villa, Lower Vaynol Road, Cefn Coed-y-cymmer, near Merthyr Tydfil (SO 03280805). The find was declared treasure trove at an inquest at Merthyr Tydfil on 16 July 1986. Nine coins (nos 3, 4, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 26, 27 in the following list) were purchased by the National Museum of Wales and the remainder returned to the finder.
England


Ireland

27–28: Edward I, Waterford mint pennies, second coinage (2)

Scotland

29–31: Alexander III, sterling pennies (3)

There is one coin of numismatic interest, the Illg penny of Edward I with pellet-barred Ns on the obverse (pl. 10, 13). The significance of this feature has received differing interpretations.¹⁵ The latest coins are a little worn, so the Cefn Coed deposit, like those from Neath Abbey, was probably deposited at the end of Edward II’s reign, when the turmoil in Glamorgan over the king’s flight and the searches for the dispersed royal treasure would have caused many prudent people to conceal their cash. Another modest hoard of sterlings, ‘several silver pennies of Edward I and one of Alexander I (sic) of Scotland’, was found in 1859 at Morlais Castle, about two kilometres away to the north east.¹⁶

Tudor and Stuart hoards

4. Cemaes Bay, Anglesey (Gwynedd), 1987–8

Eight coins of Elizabeth I were found on 26 November 1987 and 27 February 1988, by use of a metal detector. They were scattered over an area of about seven square metres adjacent to a former footpath. There being no evidence for concealment, the coins were not regarded as treasure trove.

England

1–3. Elizabeth I

Shillings

Martlet (1560–1), 5.68g; Bell (1583), 5.84g; Crescent (1587–90), 5.74g

4–8.

Sixpences

Lion 1567, 2.63g; Coronet? 1567, 2.59g; Coronet 1568, 2.82g; Scallop 1585, 2.78g; Tun 1593, 3.11g

The coins are corroded, but none is greatly worn. The finds appear to represent a purseful of coins lost around the turn of the seventeenth century.


¹⁶ Neath: R.H.M. Dolley, BNJ 28 (1958), 294–8 and 555–9; Boon, 1986, pp. 109–12. Morlais Castle: Arch Camb 1859, 101. A further local find (of 20–30 coins, said to include Edward III and David (II), and so later, if genuine) in woodland ‘near Merthyr Tydfil’ was reported by telephone on 8 Oct. 1991, but an appointment to show the coins at the N.M.W. was not kept.
5. Mynydd Fochriw, Mid Glamorgan, 1991

A hoard of eight silver coins was found by a metal detectorist on 28 April 1991, on common
land on the north side of Mynydd Fochriw, near Merthyr Tydfil (SO 09980506). Subsequent
excavation by the National Museum of Wales indicated that the coins had lain on an old
surface at the side of a probable hillside way. The spot is a remote one, even today. A
coroners’ inquest at Merthyr Tydfil on 25 September 1991 ruled that the coins were not
treasure trove.

**England**

1. Elizabeth I  
   Shilling  
   Crosslets, 4.84g (clipped)

2-3. Sixpences  
   Coronet 1570, 2.40g; Crescent 1589, 2.58g

4. James I  
   Half crown  
   3rd coinage, Trefoil, N.2122, 14.34g

5. Shilling  
   2nd coinage, 2nd bust, Lys, 5.48g

6. Charles I  
   Half crown  
   Tun, 13.93g

7. Shilling  
   Harp, Sharp D5/1, 5.53g

**Ireland**

8. James I  
   Shilling  
   Tower Mint, 2nd coinage, 4th bust, Rose, 3.81g

The find again appears to represent a modest sum of ready money (9s 9d), lost at the side of a
hillside thoroughfare around 1638–40. The latest coin (no.6) is unworn. The Irish shilling is
both worn and bent, as is usual in hoards of this time. This and the James I half crown have
been acquired by the National Museum of Wales.

6. Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan, 1988

A hoard of thirty-five coins was found on 27 September 1988 by two metal detectorists on
farmland at Cilfynydd, Pontypridd (ST 086911). The find was declared treasure trove at an
inquest at Aberdare on 21 October 1988 and has been acquired by the National Museum of
Wales.

**England**

1-7. Mary  
   Groats  
   Lys; Crosslets (2); uncertain

8. Philip and Mary  
   Groat  
   N.1997 Pheon 1561 (2); Coronet 1567, 15??; Ermine

9-12. Elizabeth I  
   Groats  
   N.1997 Pheon 1561 (2); Coronet 1567, 15??; Ermine

13-26. Sixpences  
   N.1997 Pheon 1561 (2); Coronet 1567, 15??; Ermine

27. Threepence  
   N.1998 p.m.?, 15??

28. James I  
   Shilling  
   1st coinage, 2nd bust, Thistle

29-32. Sixpences  
   1/2 Lys 1604; 2/3 Lys 1604; 2/4 Scallop 1606 (2)

33-34. Charles I  
   Shillings  
   N.2231 Anchor; N.2232 Triangle

35. Sixpence  
   N.2241 Tun

The latest coin is unworn, which suggests a date of deposit around 1640–2, on the eve of the
Civil War. The site of the discovery consists of a rectangular platform bounded by low banks,
about 10 (E–W) × 25 (N–S) metres, cut into a steep west-facing hillside above the river Taff,
ENE of Pontypridd. Within this, at the northern end, is an uneven mound of stone rubble.
Apart from a few strays the coins were found scattered in the western part of this feature; they
RECENT COIN HOARDS FROM WALES, 1985–1992

appear to have been concealed within a building which subsequently collapsed. Pottery sherds, mainly of the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries, were also found. No building is marked on the local 1841 tithe map, though the first edition 1:2,500 Ordnance Survey, carried out in 1873, marks a patch of rough ground/shrubs at the spot. The site has much in common with the long huts and hafotai, or summer dwellings of farmers and shepherds, of which several examples have recently been identified in upland Glamorgan. These have been attributed to the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries, which accords with the evidence from the Cilfnynydd site.

The Fochriw and Pontypridd hoards are small (£0 9s 9d and £0 16s 9d respectively), and their compositions also demonstrate the slowness of penetration of new money into rural Wales, which at this time was lightly populated and remote. Two other local parallels are the Llysworney and Pendoylan finds from the Vale of Glamorgan, while in North Wales coins of Charles I accounted for only 6.3 and 2.9 per cent respectively of the large hoards from Conwy and Prestatyn. Five or so years later, the picture had changed dramatically under the impact of the Civil War, with Charles’s coins comprising 63 per cent (nineteen shillings out of £1 10s) of the nearby Trehafod (Rhondda) find and 75 per cent of the Penybryn (Ruabon, Clwyd) hoard, both deposits of 1644–5.

Sovereign hoards

7. Allt-yr-yn, Newport, Gwent, 1985

The hoard comprises seven sovereigns and twelve half-sovereigns, all of Queen Victoria, found by metal detectors on land belonging to Strawberry Farm, Allt-yr-yn, Newport (ST 29878884), not far from a barracks erected in 1845. The coins were declared treasure trove at Newport on 31 July 1985, and returned to the finders.

Great Britain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Sovereigns</th>
<th>1851, 1863, 1864, 1869, 1872 (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Half-sovereigns</td>
<td>1856, 1867 (2), 1869, 1870, 1871 (2), 1873, 1874, 1876, 1877, 1878</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Sovereign</th>
<th>Sydney Mint 1866</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The coins were described in evidence as ‘fairly evenly graduated in point of wear from the earliest to the latest’ and a date of deposition c.1878–9 postulated. The Sydney mint sovereigns were legal tender in Britain from 1866, and the presence of a specimen close to a seaport is unsurprising. The St Pancras (1963) hoard of 62 sovereigns and the Wisbech (1964) hoard of 96 sovereigns and one half, both of which closed in 1875, each included five Sydney sovereigns of Australian type.

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18 E. Besly, English Civil War Coin Hoards, B.M.O.P. 51 (1987), pp. 89, E14 (Prestatyn); 100, K11 (Conwy); 105, K42 (Llysworney); 106, K49 (Pendoylan).
19 Besly, Hoards, pp. 92–3, F13 (Penybryn) and F14 (Trehafod).
21 M.M. Archibald, BNJ 33 (1965), 156–8 (Wisbech); J.P.C. Kenil, BNJ 37 (1969), 144 (St Pancras).
8. Llanafan, Dyfed, 1990

On 8 March 1990, Mr Richard Askie found a hoard of 33 gold coins while planting a new hedge inside the boundary of his property at Eithin Bach, Brynafan, Llanafan (ST 71157275). The coins had been buried in rouleaux in a small metal container, approximately thirty centimetres deep within the boundary bank at the foot of one of three ash trees, which still stand. The hoard was declared treasure trove at an inquest at Aberaeron, Dyfed, on 6 July 1990. It comprises thirty sovereigns and three halves, as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>Sovereigns (21)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>London Young Head/shield 1856 7.91g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Young Head/St George 1876 7.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-8.</td>
<td>Jubilee Head 1889 (2), 1890 (2), 1892 (2) 7.98, 7.97, 7.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-15.</td>
<td>Old Head 1893, 1894, 1896 (2), 1898 (2), 1900 7.98, 8.00, 7.98, 7.96, 7.97, 7.97, 7.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Sydney Young Head/shield 1875 7.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-19.</td>
<td>Melbourne Jubilee Head 1888, 1890, 1891 7.96, 7.96, 7.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Old Head 1893 7.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Perth Old Head 1900 7.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Half-sovereigns (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. London Jubilee Head 1892 3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-4. Old Head 1895, 1899 3.97, 3.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edward VII</th>
<th>Sovereigns (8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-30.</td>
<td>London 1906 (2), 1909, 1910 (3) 7.98 (all six coins)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Melbourne 1903 7.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Perth 1902 7.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>George V</th>
<th>Sovereign (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>London 1913 7.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The latest coin, of 1913, shows slight signs of wear, so a deposit date of 1914–15, following the outbreak of the Great War, would appear likely. The war curtailed circulation of sovereigns sharply and although they continued to be produced in London until 1917 new issues probably reached remote areas such as west Wales very slowly, if at all. The Llanafan hoard could therefore have been deposited distinctly later than its latest coin. Sovereigns were certainly hoarded in England until at least the late 1920s, since the Atherstone (Warwicks.) hoard, dated by its silver and bronze coins to 1928, contained 69 sovereigns and 79 halves, none later than 1910. On balance, though, the Llanafan hoard was probably buried in 1914; it parallels closely the recent Bentley (Suffolk) find, where there is good evidence for burial in August 1914. The proportion of Colonial issues (eight coins: 25.4 percent of the total value), too, is similar and appears to be typical of hoards from rural areas.

The weights of the coins are recorded, for completeness, and fully bear out the famous consistency of Royal Mint sovereigns. Over half lie on or within 0.01g of the standard (123.274gr/7.988g), while only four of the sovereigns (including the three oldest) and one half sovereign lie at or below the least current weight of 122.5gr (7.938g) set in 1821 and confirmed in the 1870 Coinage Act.

Thirteen sovereigns and one half (nos 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 16, 18, 21, 23, 25, 27, 31 and 33) have been acquired by the National Museum of Wales, one sovereign of 1892 and the half-sovereign of that year by the Ceredigion Museum, and the remainder were returned to the finder.

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23 G.P. Dyer, pers. comm.