Introduction

The tradition of using gold currency in these islands dates back as far as the late Iron Age, with the impetus for the first indigenous production of gold coins derived from continental predecessors. The ‘Gallo-Belgic’ coins, from north-west Gaul, are widely agreed to have been the first gold coins to find use in Britain, and it was from the design of these that the indigenous Iron Age staters were copied and adapted.2 The Roman period saw gold coinage used much more widely as an entire currency system was imported to Britain, with first the aureus and later the solidus circulating as the high-value coin of Empire. In the late sixth century gold tremisses from Merovingian France began to be imported into Kent and the Thames valley, and this led to the development of the Anglo-Saxon thrymsas in the seventh century.

Gold from the Islamic east, Byzantium and Italy inspired the kings of the Middle Ages to look to produce their own coinages, and as England’s mercantile links with the near continent developed so the appearance of coins from continental neighbours increased. Gold coin was becoming an increasingly important requirement of the burgeoning powers of north-west Europe in the medieval period. Though none had yet struck their own native gold denominations, documentary sources at least point to Islamic and Byzantine gold coins in use from the twelfth century, largely for ceremonial and ecclesiastical payments and for the financing of military campaigns. The presence of ‘Oboli de Muc’ (Almohad dinars) in the England of Richard I serve to clarify an increasing need for larger denomination coinages,3 and documentary evidence alludes to the circulation of Byzantine bezants in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.4 Henry III zealously sought to fill his coffers with such specie and was eventually to issue his own gold penny, largely based on the Florentine florin, in 1257.5 Though an unsuccessful enterprise in the short-term, this was a requirement that would not go away and Edward III, after an unsuccessful first attempt, struck gold in his own name from 1344. From this time forward every English monarch would strike specie in gold. Up until the middle of the fifteenth century the volume of foreign coins entering the English currency was modest, and it was the Tudor period that saw waves of foreign gold begin to enter the country. This survey will examine finds of foreign gold coins from Tudor England to ascertain their prevalence, use and impact upon the English currency.

Background

In the Tudor period gold coins circulated amongst those fortunate enough to be in contact with them, and it comes as little surprise that foreign gold coins, in this case from the near continent, entered the circulating medium. How this occurred and to what extent, and what evidence exists to interrogate the condition of the currency with regards to foreign gold, will be discussed below.

Acknowledgements: The author is grateful to Barrie Cook, Jane Postans, Ian Leins and David Symons for comment on a draft version of this paper.

1 Opening line from Thomas Dekker’s Old Fortunatus (1600) taken from Muldrew 2001, 114.
2 See de Jersey 1996, 15-19, for an overview and Burnett 1995 for discussion of ‘Gallo-Belgic’ coinage in Britain.
3 Grierson 1951, 75-81.
4 Cook 1999b.
5 The situation is well summarised in Woodhead 1996, 2-6.
In the work of the Elizabethan dramatists by far the most common reference to any gold coin is to the ‘French crown’. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* it appears thus:

Quince. You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man, a proper man, as one shall see in a summer’s day; a most lovely gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

Bottom. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

Quince. Why, what you will.

Bottom. I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow.

Quince. Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play bare-faced . . .

This dialogue concerning the shade of beard that would best serve Bottom in his portrayal of Pyramus serves as a useful literary basis from which to reflect upon the extent to which continental gold impacted upon the specie of top-end coinage in Tudor England. For the purposes of this survey, the period from the accession of Henry Tudor to the death of Elizabeth I provides a defined period of time in which we start to see new developments emerging. An increasing quantity of foreign coin, especially gold, was entering the country up to the end of Elizabeth’s reign, after which foreign gold coin is virtually absent from the currency. There was also a palpable shift in the attitude of royal officialdom in dealing with foreign coin, both by legislating against it, and at other times grudgingly accepting these invasive monies. This was made explicit, along with references in the work of playwrights of the later Tudor period, in the form of an increasing proliferation of royal proclamations which began in the reign of Henry VIII. The ambit of this work therefore is to reassess the situation, synthesising new find evidence and supporting data from select literary and documentary sources. The geographical area covered includes what in Tudor times were the Kingdom of England and the Principality of Wales; it excludes Scotland on the grounds that a separate monarchy and a different monetary system operated north of the border, and thus inclusion of the Scottish material would skew the data.

Gold coins are a familiar feature in later sixteenth-century works and the seemingly ubiquitous French crown makes another appearance, in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*, when Bulcalf gives Bardolph ‘four Harry tenne shillings in French Crownes . . . .’. Shakespeare is not the only Elizabethan dramatist to mention French crowns; in Ben Jonson’s *Every Man out of his Humour*, as the protagonists await the arrival of the knight Puntarvolo and are instead presented with one of his hounds, Carlo Buffone suggests to Fastidious Brisk that

‘You should give him a French crown for it; the boy would find two better figures in that, and a good figure of your bounty beside.’

‘Tut, the boy wants no crowns.’

‘No crown; speak in the singular number and we’ll believe you.’

Other mention of continental gold comes in Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta*, ‘And yet I’ll give her many a golden cross, with Christian posies round about the ring’. The ‘golden cross’ here

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5 The term ‘French crown’ appears to have been used as an umbrella term for many of the foreign gold coins that circulated at the time and bore some resemblance to the official French specie (Allen and Dunstan 1938–40, 294–5).


7 Allen and Dunstan suggest that this reference to a ‘bald’ French crown, i.e. having no hair, implies that there were two qualities of crown circulating at the time, bald and otherwise. They further suggest that this ‘baldness’ originated from the dull, reddish colour of crowns that were stamped in a lower gold alloy and thus revealed more obvious degradation after being in circulation, as Flemish guilders did. Other references to bald crowns are found in *Henry IV*, pt. I and *King Lear* and in Jonson’s *The Case is Altered* (Allen and Dunstan 1938–40, 295–6).

8 Kent 1985, 395.

9 The Scots material is comparatively much more numerous and will be the subject of a subsequent paper, as will the silver, billon and copper coinage for England and Wales in the same period.

10 William Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, III, ii. 236 (1597). ‘Harry ten shillings’ are the base half-sovereigns. Allen and Dunstan 1938–40, 289, suggest that French crowns were probably the rough equivalent of these in value.

11 Ben Jonson, *Every Man out of His Humour*, II i. (1599).

12 Allen and Dunstan 1938–40, 297, suggest that many gold coin reverses could fit this description.
refers to an unspecified gold coin. In Jonson, a ‘chequin’ appears, and in Henry V, a Portuguese ‘moy’ is mentioned. These examples clearly indicate a certain knowledge and experience of foreign gold coins, but do finds of coins themselves back up this idea?

From a numismatic perspective our understanding has been that continental gold can hardly have been a prominent feature of the circulating medium. However, these literary examples, coupled with the number of proclamations issued (especially under Elizabeth I) which dealt in some way with foreign gold, are sufficient in number to suggest that we take a second look at this assumption. In 1983 Mayhew posed the question whether the glut of new continental gold finds which had begun to become more conspicuous (both in hoards and increasingly as single finds) could potentially alter our understanding of the significance of these coins played in the currency. Mayhew also speculated whether this spate of finds would be able to tell us ‘whether sixteenth-century foreign gold was quite plentiful in Britain, as the rash of recent finds suggested, or whether it was more usually confined to the merchant community in the larger trading towns’. In the intervening twenty-three years, the increased appreciation of the contribution made by stray losses combined with the notable rise in the recording of single finds should have brought us to a place where we can re-evaluate the position with some confidence.

Of the English and Welsh coin finds in Mayhew’s 1983 survey a total of six casual finds are mentioned, to which the present author can add another four that had been discovered by that date. In the period from 1983 to 2006 a further twelve finds have been added to the corpus (see Appendix 1). These new finds have largely been recorded through the Coin Register and in more recent years via the Portable Antiquities Scheme. What this small dataset makes clear is that the increased recording of finds has almost doubled the known number of examples in just under a quarter of a century. Figure 1 shows the stray losses plotted geographically. They show a bias towards the east coast of England, with most falling east of a line from the Solent to the Humber estuary. Only the Sheffield and Meriden examples are located in central England, and there are three coastal finds (one in south-west Wales and two in Cornwall) to the west. The picture suggests that the majority of the coins entered the country through the ports of the south and east and diffused inland from there. The west coast coins are likely to have entered circulation via trading ships from the Iberian peninsular and been lost thereafter, though considering their coastal findspots derivation from wrecked vessels cannot be ruled out.

Only one coin appears which was minted in the thirty years between 1550 and 1580. A proclamation of 1559 prohibiting the export of all gold and coin over the £4 permitted for merchants suggests that there was an urgent need to remedy the lack of quality currency which had resulted from the debasement in the earlier part of the century driving the good money, and gold, abroad.

The hoard locations are comparatively more evenly distributed than the single finds, with a more regular, though modest, national coverage. Central England and the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire coast display a distinct lack of hoards with a foreign element. The west coast shows an appreciable concentration with the two Cornish and one Welsh example, and the sites further inland at Cefn Garw and Sherborne. The return to fine standards under Edward VI and Mary made it more feasible for foreign gold to circulate and all but two of the hoards discussed here were deposited from the 1550s. De-hoarding of good quality gold could explain the lack of 1544–60 hoards which is seen generally for the period, with Brown and Dolley recording just four examples. French coins minted after 1515 are not found, other than in

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14 This is identified as an Italian zecchino (Allen and Dunstan 1938–40, 289).
15 This is identified as a Portuguese gold coin of an unspecified denomination (Allen and Dunstan 1938–40, 297). Moy is a contraction of ‘moeda’ meaning gold coin.
16 Challis 1978, 216.
18 Mayhew 1983, 263. Spufford suggests that the majority of money in England in the sixteenth century was to be found concentrated in London and the seaports, and that gold coin specifically was more an urban feature and rarely to be found in the countryside (Spufford 1999, 385–6).
19 Hughes and Larkin 1964–69 (hereafter Proclamations), No. 457.
20 Brown and Dolley 1971, 22.
Fig. 1. Map showing locations of stray losses of foreign gold.

KEY TO STRAY LOSS FINDSPOTS

1. Framlingham, Suffolk.
2. Helford Estuary, Cornwall.
3. Horsley Cross, Essex.
5. Sheffield, S. Yorks.
7. Rushford, Norfolk.
8. Lamphey, Dyfed.
10. South Downs, near Brighton, Sussex.
12. Totland, Isle of Wight.
15. Harlow Common, Essex.
16. Fishtoft, Lincs.
18. Praa Sands, Cornwall.
22. Whitton, Suffolk.
KEY TO HOARD FINDSPOTS

1. Sherborne, Dorset.
2. Cefn Garw, Monmouthshire.
4. Bisham Abbey, Maidenhead, Berks.
5. Bearpark, Durham.

7. Ely, Cambs.
8. West Wycombe, Bucks.
9. Margam Beach, West Glamorgan.
10. Praa Sands, Cornwall.
11. Mounts Bay, Cornwall.

Fig. 2. Map showing locations of hoards including foreign gold.
hoards, and Portuguese coins tend westward, suggestive of the continuing importance of Bristol as a focal port. Challis notes records of seizures of coin being illegally exported, much of which was foreign gold: French and Burgundian crowns, Spanish pistolets, Portuguese cruzados, ducats from Venice, Castile, Hungary and Portugal, guilders from Flanders and the Rhineland, and many other less common coins such as portuques and saluts.²¹ Most of these coins occur as finds in this survey (excepting the guilders and saluts).

French coins

At the opening of the sixteenth century the threat of an English invasion of France was enough of a reality that the French kings made substantial payments to the English Treasury to avoid this prospect. (French concerns had become more focused on their neighbours to the south and east. The House of Anjou had maintained a claim to Naples since the 1470s and one of the first acts of Francis I upon his succession was to engage in campaigning in Italy.)²² There had been a steady flow of French coin entering England as a result of arrangements regulated by the treaties of Picquigny in 1475 and Etaples in 1492. A proportion of this went to the mint for coinage, but some was retained and used to repay debts abroad and in paying foreign nationals.²³ Some coins may well have filtered down into circulation via such sources. French crowns entering the coffer of Henry VIII peaked at a sum as high as 200,000 crowns in one year alone.²⁴ These payments were in the form of the écuy d'or au soleil (the French crown), of which there are seven single finds from England. These have mostly been made in the south and east of the country, with the furthest outliers on the Isle of Wight in the west and at Sheffield to the north.

French coins form the largest group found in England and Wales from any single continental state (36.4% of the single finds) and this is probably not surprising since they, along with coins from Flanders, had the shortest distance to travel of specie from any European mint. There are eight hoards of the period which contain continental gold coin and three of these, Streat (Sussex), Bearpark (Durham) and Ely (Cambs.), include French issues.²⁵ The Streat hoard (deposited 1560–1) contained a single écuy of Louis XI, this coin being the earliest in the hoard. Two coins, one of which was an écuy of Francis I, came from excavations at Bearpark in Durham and these were found in such close proximity that they are probably associated,²⁶ being either a small hoard or purse loss. The Ely hoard, deposited in the late sixteenth century and discovered in c.1733, consisted almost entirely of French coins (14 écux or demi-écus au soleil) and spanned most of the reigns from Louis XI to Henry III. It thus comprised issues struck over the best part of a century, with a single angel of Henry VII included in the group. The composition of the Ely hoard is so different to the other examples that there is a strong possibility that this hoard was taken from circulation in France and deposited shortly after its owner came to England.

²¹ Challis 1978, 297.
²² Francis defeated the Swiss in Milanese service at the Battle of Marignano (Melegnano), in northern Italy, and occupied Milan (Hagen-Jahnke and Wulff 1985, plate 4).
²³ See for example Kent 2000, 366, where the suggestion is made that French crowns were retained in their original form and used in large overseas payments such as for the first instalment of Margaret Tudor's dowry in 1504, when 5000 'crowns of solaires' were paid. See also Kent 2005 and Challis 1978, 198–206. This kind of arrangement was nothing new. In the fourteenth century the ransom of King John II of France arrived in the form of écus and the dowry of Violante Visconti came in florins, some of which were coined into English coin, but most were retained in the chamber treasury to be used as the king instructed (Cook 1989, 130–2). The New Year list of gifts received by Elizabeth for 1561–2 included two money gifts of foreign coins. Among the presents the Duchess of Somerset gave £14 in 'royals and ducetts' in a black and silver purse, while Lord Hunsdon, the Queen's cousin, gave £13 6s. 8d. in 'double ducetts' in a purse of crimson silk (Doran 2003, 104). I am grateful to Barrie Cook for bringing this reference to my attention.
²⁴ Challis 1978, 187.
²⁵ Details of these hoards will be found in Appendix 2, nos 3, 5 and 7.
²⁶ Mayhew 1983, 262.
TABLE 1. French coin finds by ruler

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ruler</th>
<th>Casual finds</th>
<th>Streat</th>
<th>Bearpark</th>
<th>Ely</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louis XI (1461-75)</td>
<td>3 (4)*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (5)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles VIII (1493-98)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis XII (1498-1515)</td>
<td>3 (4)*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 (5)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis I (1515-47)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles IX (1560-74)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry III (1574-89)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One coin could not be attributed with certainty, other than to say it was of either Louis XI or XII.

The popularity of the French crown did not go unnoticed, and in 1526 Henry VIII and his Council introduced the crown of the rose in direct imitation of it, in order to remove it from circulation. The crown of the rose was valued at 4s. 6d., the same as the French crown, but it was almost immediately replaced by the crown of the double rose, valued at 5s. and struck from 22 carat fine gold instead of the 23c 3½ gr fine used before.27 The crown soleil was first legislated for in 1522, when it was made current at 4s. 6d.,28 and maintained this value until 1539 when it was raised to 4s. 8d.29 In 1550, under Edward VI, French crowns were raised to 7s., but just three months later they were reduced to 6s. 4d.,30 at which value they remained under Mary.31 In October 1560, under Elizabeth, French crowns were reduced to 6s.,32 and by November of the same year all foreign gold coin other than French, Flemish and Burgundian crowns were outlawed.33 The Ely hoard is somewhat incongruous, containing as it does French coins of the later monarchs Francis I, Charles IX and Henry III. Only Bearpark yielded a coin of any of these kings. It is interesting to note that the casual losses were all minted before 1515.34

Spanish coins

Anglo-Spanish relations fluctuated markedly in the sixteenth century. The high points were the marital alliances between Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon, and later between Mary and Philip II. However, with Henry's divorce from Catherine and the severance from Rome and Protestant Elizabeth's succession, the threat of war between the nations was made real. This culminated in the attempted invasion of England by the Armada in 1588. Given these connections it would have been almost impossible for some quantity of Spanish coinage not to have entered circulation in some way. The obvious links between the two countries are also reflected in the proclamations relating to coinage that were issued, with a hiatus around the period of Mary's marriage to Philip of Spain.

28 Proclamations, no. 88, and reiterated in nos 95, 102, 103, 111 and 112.
29 Proclamations, no. 190.5. The crown variations 'porpentine' and 'dolphin' and their halves are mentioned for the first time in this proclamation.
30 Proclamations, nos 364 and 367.
31 Proclamations, nos 405 and 406.
32 Proclamations, no. 472. Burgundian and 'Kaiser' (Imperial) crowns are included at the same value.
33 Proclamations, no. 487.
34 A hoard of coins of Louis XI and Charles VIII was found at Dunstable, Beds., in 1835 but is omitted here as the fabric of the coins was not recorded at the time. See Allen 2002, no. 274.
TABLE 2. Spanish coin finds by ruler

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ruler</th>
<th>Casual finds</th>
<th>Maidenhead</th>
<th>Sherborne</th>
<th>Streat</th>
<th>Shocklach</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ferdinand &amp; Isabella (1474–1504)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>+1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanna &amp; Charles V (1516–56)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip II (1556–98)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3 (+1) #</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14 (+1) #</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The issuer of the Sherborne coin is not recorded.
# The uncertain extra coin is a possible escudo from Suffolk.

Spanish gold coins first appear in the proclamation of 25 May 1522, where the large ducat (exelente) is valued at 4s. 6d. In 1526 its value is increased to 4s. 8d. and the double-ducat (double exelente) appears at 9s. 4d. In 1538 the value of the large double-ducat is increased to 10s., and a year later this is repeated, with the large ducat proclaimed at 5s. Under Mary, in 1554, the double-ducat of Spain with two faces was valued at 13s. 4d. and the ducat of Spain with two faces at 6s. 8d. In Elizabeth’s reign an illustrated proclamation valuing pistolets at 5s. 10d. declares that only four types of pistolet were to be valid, and two of these were Spanish – the ducat and the escudo. On 15 November 1560 all Spanish coins were outlawed. As far as the hoards are concerned Spanish coins were present in those from Sherborne (Dorset), Streat (Sussex), Maidenhead and Shocklach (Cheshire). Apart from the Maidenhead coins only single examples have been found in each of the other hoards and as stray losses. The strays were found at Meriden (West Midlands), Alfriston (Sussex) and Great Bookham (Surrey), with a possible example from Whitton (Suffolk).

Italian coins

As early as the twelfth century the English government was aware of the gold coins of the Italian states, which were to provide the impetus and design prototypes for the attempts by Henry III and later Edward III to introduce an indigenous gold coinage. Italian silver coins first appear as English finds in the eleventh century, with the most prolific being the welcom ‘galley halfpennies’ or Venetian soldini in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which have been discussed by Spufford. As far as gold from Italy for our period is concerned we have five single finds, from Framlingham (Suffolk), the ‘Sussex Weald’, Brookland (Kent), Harlow Common (Essex), and Oxford (Appendix I: nos 1, 13, 14, 15 and 20), with three of these dating to the decades either side of 1530. The Streat hoard contained a single ducat of Lucca struck under Charles V. Maidenhead contained a Venetian zecchino of Doge Francesco Venerio, and Bearpark included a scudo d’oro of Pope Pius V. No hoard contains more than a single Italian coin and all three appear in hoards deposited in the 1550s and 1560s.

Royal proclamations first refer to coins from the Italian states in 1522, when the ducat (large) was valued at 4s. 6d. In 1526 this value was increased to 4s. 8d. and by 1539 it was 5s. In 1554 the pistolet was valued at 6s. 2d., but this was lowered to 5s. 10d in 1560.
2 November 1560 an illustrated proclamation valuing pistolets at 5s. 10d. declared that only four types were valid and two of these were Italian – the Venetian and Florentine scudi. On 15 November in the same year all such coins were outlawed.

Portuguese coins

Commerce between England and Portugal had been well established since the second half of the thirteenth century and one would therefore expect some coin of this earlier period to be found. Furthermore, when John III came to the throne in 1521 Portugal was the leading maritime and colonial power in Western Europe, so it comes as no surprise to find Portuguese coinage of that period also entering the English circulating medium. The first to make an impact, in the thirteenth century, was the silver dinhiero and from the fifteenth century and into the Tudor period the silver chinfréos (or half-reals, sometimes called ‘dandyprats’) become fairly well attested as both strays and in hoards.

The first and only proclamation to make reference to Portuguese gold came under Mary on 4 May 1554, in which cruzados of both the long and short cross variety were made legal tender at 6s. 4d. and 6s. 8d. respectively. This situation was short-lived as the cruzados, along with much other foreign specie, were demonetised by the proclamation of 15 November 1560.

Only one Portuguese gold coin of this period has been recorded as a stray find, though they appear in three hoards – Sherborne, Cefn Garw and Maidenhead. Interestingly the first two of these hoards were deposited in the 1530s, at least twenty years before the first proclamation making them legal tender, so we can surmise, to some degree, that the proclamation came as a response to the fact that cruzados were already actively circulating and were in need of some official sanction. The third example, a substantial hoard of 318 coins, all gold, contained a single portuguez (a ten-cruzado piece that is rarely encountered). Boon explains the presence of the Portuguese coin in the Cefn Garw hoard as indicative of the trade between the Iberian peninsula and the Bristol channel ports. Since Bristol was a leading port from the medieval period, at times second only to London, its role as an entrepôt for Portuguese coins is more readily explained. Though it is dangerous to make assumptions from such a small dataset, the Portuguese material does tend to the west, with the single find at Lamplhe and coins in the Sherborne hoard adding to the Cefn Garw example and reinforcing this picture of a west coast bias for Portuguese specie. Wrecked vessels at Glamorgan and Mounts Bay (Cornwall) have both yielded Portuguese coins (Appendix 2: nos 11 and 12).

48 Proclamations, no. 473.
49 Proclamations, no. 474.
50 Kent 1985, 389.
52 Six dinhieros have been found or excavated, see Cook’s Iberian list (Cook 1999a, 272).
53 Grierson 1972, 80–5; Cook 1994, 71–4; Cook 1999a, 266; Allen 2002, 34.
54 Ten chinfréos of Alfonso V appear in Cook’s list (Cook 1999a, 277) and other examples occur in hoards; two each in the hoards from Hartford (Hunts) and Mendlesham Green (Suffolk), and one each from Downham (Lancs.) and Leighdon (Cook 1994, 70–5), and from Maidstone (Kent) and the ‘unknown no. 10 hoard’ (Allen 2002, 79–81). See also nos 307 and 308 in the Coin Register in this volume for a chinfráo and real branco of Alfonso V.
56 Proclamations, no. 412.
57 Proclamations, no. 487.
58 Cruzados and other Portuguese gold coins are a regular feature in hoards from France and the Low Countries: an unknown number of coins from Havre, France, dep. 1559 (Brown and Dolley 1971, BR6; RN 4, 3 (1932), 241); fourteen from Tracy-Bocage, France, dep. 1581 (Brown and Dolley 1971, BR7; Chenu 1937, 334); one from Termonde, Belgium, dep. 1562 (Brown and Dolley 1971, AR5; RN 79 1972); twelve from Talmont, France, dep. 1566 (Brown and Dolley 1971, BR9; RN 3 (1884), 271–2); two from Jumet, Belgium, dep. 1576 (Brown and Dolley 1971, AR9; De Piteurs de Budinghen 1851, 91); eighteen from Herentals, Belgium, dep. 1580 (Brown and Dolley 1971, AR11; Naster 1956, 180); unknown number of coins from Montesquieu-la-Consielle, France, dep. 1530s–50s (Brown and Dolley, 1971, BR3; RN 4, 3 (1899), 108).
59 This denomination was introduced by Manuel I in 1499 and reflects Portugal’s wealth in this period. This large imposing coin was struck from gold imported from West Africa, it had a fineness of 23 1/4 carats and a nominal weight of around 55 g. They were struck at Lisbon and Porto (Hagen-Jahnke and Walburg 1985, plate 6).
60 Boon 1986, 124–6. According to Boon this is well attested in the port books.
61 Milne and Halley 1984, 103.
Burgundy and the Netherlands

Burgundian coins first appeared in quantity in England in the reign of Edward IV, in the form of the double patard which arrived as a result of a strengthening of bonds between Edward and Charles the Bold from 1469. Along with the double patard the gold Burgundian florin was also allowed to circulate and was valued at 3s. 6d., though none have so far been found here. Flemish nobles are found in hoards deposited up to the 1465 recoinage, indicating the successful elimination of the foreign and earlier English gold by this measure. After this period few Burgundian coins have been found and they only really reappear when Charles V succeeds to the Burgundian lands. The first hoard in which Burgundian gold coins appear is from Streat (deposited late 1550s), where the majority of the coins (five out of nine) were of Charles. Two stray losses from Lincolnshire were of Charles (Appendix 1: nos 16 and 17). The only other hoarded gold coins from the Low Countries come from the West Wycombe find – two issues imitative of the English noble and the Spanish ducat from independent Netherlandish states.

Other coins

A single Hungarian ducat of Mathias Corvinus (1458–90) was found on the Helford Estuary, Cornwall (Appendix 2: no. 2). The coastal findspot may indicate that this novelty derives from an unknown wreck, since such coins are absent from the few English hoards that do contain European gold. However, Hungarian coins are known to have circulated on the near-continent, examples having been found in hoards from Belgium. The Herentals hoard deposited as late as 1580 contained two ducats of this king as well as two of Ladislas II and one each of Louis II and Ferdinand. The Joncret hoard included a ducat of Ladislas II, and the Hainaut hoard contained a ‘florin’ of Mathias.

The sphere of circulation that England was part of in this period means that we find fairly consistent sources for our foreign coin: France, Spain, the Italian states, Portugal and the Low Countries contribute the vast bulk of the gold encountered. This is largely explained by geographical proximity, by trade and other fiscal relationships that existed along the western continental seaboard, and by the visits of trading fleets from the Mediterranean. It should be noted that certain foreign gold coins which are found on the continent are not encountered in England.

Conclusion

Despite the relatively small number of coins, the combination of the finds evidence with that drawn from the contemporary proclamations allows us to propose certain conclusions. The comparative distribution of the hoards against the single finds is suggestive inasmuch as the latter cluster more readily to the eastern and southern shoreline (loosely bounded by a line between the Solent and the Humber), whereas the hoards, though fewer in number, are spread more evenly and penetrate further inland. The supposition that foreign coin came in largely via the major ports and thereafter diffused further into the shires seems to be validated to some degree by the distribution of the single losses. If indeed some of the large ransoms received in London were used for payments then it is likely that losses of these coins would cluster in London and its environs and diminish the farther one travelled from the capital.

62 Spufford 1964, 111. A convention was agreed which allowed English and Burgundian silver coins to circulate legally in the other’s realm, with the double patard equal in value to the English groat. See Cook (1999a, 275–6) for a list of thirty double patards as single finds and excavated coins from England.
64 Hungarian ducats could easily have found acceptance in areas where the Venetian ducats had first become accepted currency since they are almost identical in weight and fineness (Spufford, 1999, 333).
66 Brown and Dolley 1971, AR9; RBN 2.1 (1851), 92.
67 Brown and Dolley 1971, AR1; RBN (1923), 105.
It seems that the proclamations were made in reaction to the foreign pieces in circulation rather than legislating for coins that the crown deemed to be of sufficient quality to allow into the English system. It is noteworthy that the proclamations legislate against some coins that have not been encountered in this survey – the carolus; the French crowns with porpentine and dolphin and their halves; and the Florentine scudo (although coins of other Italian states are found – Bolognese, Lucchese, Genoese and Papal gold coins have all come to light as English finds). What is clear is that the proclamations are not reliable guides to estimating the impact of foreign gold when judged against the finds evidence, although the 1560 demonetisation acts as a useful terminal point after which only a limited quantity of newly minted specie entered currency in England, though what was already circulating continued to do so for some years thereafter. Overall the English hoards compare favourably with the continental mixed hoards found in France and the Low Countries, and it is possible to suggest that these countries shared some common elements in the foreign coins that circulated there, though the majority of coins in hoards in each kingdom would be indigenous issues. Hoards that are composed almost entirely of foreign coins (such as Sherborne, Sleaford and Ely) are usually explained as having been taken from currency abroad and deposited before their contents could be diluted by circulation here. This applies not just to England, as the hoard of English coins found at Angers (Maine-et-Loire) in France in 1911 shows.\(^{68}\)

Comparing contemporary estimates for English and foreign gold Kent suggested that 9% of all coin (silver and gold) in circulation in England in the middle of the sixteenth century was foreign.\(^{69}\) Of the hoard coins included in this survey 12% are foreign; if we count just this element in hoards that contain both English and foreign gold coins (and eliminate those hoards which are likely to have come wholly from abroad and hence to be unrepresentative of the circulating medium) then the figure is 8.8%. Brown and Dolley record fifteen hoards for our period which contain gold, of which just one (Maidenhead) contains a foreign element.\(^ {70}\) Allen’s more recent list of English hoards, though terminating in 1544, shows a similar proportion. Of the 45 hoards dated 1485–1544, thirteen include gold coins and just one of these (Sherborne) boasts any foreign coins.\(^ {71}\) Hoarding is, by its nature, selective, so it is unsurprising to find that few foreign coins make it into such groups; the instability of their legal status and acceptance would have counted against their being selected against good English coin. Single find data can serve as a useful control on the picture presented by the hoards, and records on the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) database show sixteen English gold coins against six foreign.\(^ {72}\)

The paucity of finds can be compared to the situation with the bezant, of which we have not a single specimen,\(^ {73}\) although contemporary official documents state quite clearly that these coins were in existence in England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The same is true for the Burgundian florin, made legal tender by the agreement with Charles the Bold in 1469, but also unknown in hoards or as chance finds. One could therefore infer that the paucity of find evidence for the period discussed here does not necessarily reflect the quantity of foreign gold pieces actually in the circulating medium at the time. We have either not yet recovered enough finds to flesh out the true picture or other factors have affected the survival rate. What we can say here is that in the last quarter of a century our dataset has doubled and certain trends can now be observed, as discussed above. As new finds come to light we can test these observations against the data, but it will only be when a statistically viable sample has been recovered that we will be able to draw more positive conclusions on the nature of the foreign gold element in the currency of Tudor England.

\(^{68}\) Schneider 1968, 73–84.
\(^ {70}\) Brown and Dolley 1971, 21–24; for Maidenhead see Appendix 2: no. 4.
\(^ {71}\) Allen 2002.
\(^ {72}\) http://finds.org.uk. It is possible that finders may be more likely to report the more novel or unusual coins because they can more easily identify the obvious English Tudor-period coinage themselves (N. Mayhew, pers. comm.).
\(^ {73}\) Cook 1999b.
APPENDIX 1: SINGLE FINDS OF CONTINENTAL GOLD COINS FROM TUDOR ENGLAND

(The coins have been ordered by known (or presumed) date of striking.)

1. Bentivoglio family (1446–1506), Bologna, ducat, Framlington, Suffolk [TM 285 635], 2003 (PAS: SF-10432)


3. Louis XI, King of France (1461–83), écu d’or or écu à la couronne, Horsley Cross, Manningtree, Essex [TM 125 275], 2004 (BNJ 75, Coin Register 2005, no. 265)

4. Louis XI, King of France (1461–83), écu d’or or écu à la couronne, Paris, ‘Great Horsley’, Essex [TL 975 305], 2004 (BNJ 75, Coin Register 2005, no. 266)

5. Louis XI, King of France (1461–83), écu d’or or écu à la couronne, Sheffield [SK 355 875], 2005 (BNJ 76, Coin Register 2006, no. 309)

6. Charles VIII, King of France (1493–98), écu, Rushford, Norfolk [TL 925 815], 1994 (BNJ 64, Coin Register 1994, no. 340)

7. Manuel I, King of Portugal (1495–1521), cruzado, Lamphey, Dyfed [SN 015 005], 1988 (BNJ 58, Coin Register 1988, no. 250)

8. Ferdinand & Isabella, King and Queen of Spain (1497–1504), double excelente, Alfriston, Sussex, [TQ 515 035], 1980 (recorded in the British Museum)


11. Louis XII, King of France (1498–1515), écu, Totland, Isle of Wight [SZ 325 865], 2005 (PAS: IOW-3E9B62)

12. Charles V and Joanna, King and Queen of Spain (1516–56), escudo, Seville, Meriden, West Midlands [SP 245 825], 1996 (BNJ 68, Coin Register 1998, no. 198)


14. Andrea Gritti, Doge of Venice (1523–38), half scudo d’oro, Brookland, Kent [TQ 985 355], 2005 (PAS: forthcoming)


17. Charles V, Brabant (1549), couronne au soleil, Antwerp, Kentsby, Lincolnshire [TF 365 765], 1878 (SCMB no. 782, Oct. 1983; recorded in the British Museum)

18. Philip II, Count of Flanders and King of Spain (1556–98), half-real fragment, Praa Sands, Breage, Cornwall [SW 580 278], 2002 (PAS: CORN-D19C13)

24 The original reference in the Coin Register records the findspot as Great Horsley, but no such place is known and it is possible that instead the findspot should be Great Horsey to which the NGR refers. The author is grateful to Caroline McDonald for this information.
19. Philip II, King of Spain (1580), unknown denomination.  
Great Bookham, Surrey [TQ 135 545], 1958 (NCirc 1958, 183)

20. Ottavio II Farnesi (1586), two-doppia piece, Parma and Piacenza, 
Oxford [SP 515 065], 1935 (SCMB 582, 1935 Oct)

21. Louis ?, king of France, écu, 
Eaton Bray, Buckinghamshire [SP 975 205], 2003 (PAS: BUC-9BDCA8)

22. Unknown, from the description of this coin fragment it is possibly an escudo, 
Whitton, Suffolk [TM 145 475], 1999 (PAS: SF-523)

APPENDIX 2: TUDOR-PERIOD HOARDS CONTAINING CONTINENTAL GOLD COIN

(The hoards are ordered by date of deposit. The eight definite hoards are followed by three groups of finds that comprise beached material from shipwrecks.)

1. Sherborne, Dorset [ST 635 165], 1970
Deposited: c.1530s

Coins: Nine Portuguese cruzados (plain-cross type) and one Spanish excelente, along with 184 English silver issues of the reigns from Henry VI-Henry VII with the latest dated c.1535-40.  

2. Cefn Garw, Tregaron, Monmouthshire [SO 415 105], 1962
Deposited: c.1536

Coins: Nine gold coins, one being a cruzado (plain cross type) of John III, King of Portugal (1521–57). The English coins were: Edward IV, angels: 2; Henry VII, angels: 3; Henry VIII, angel: 1, crowns of the double rose: 2.  

3. Streat, Sussex [TQ 355 155], 1989
Deposited: c.1554–1560/1

Coins: A parcel of nine coins which included a double excelente of Ferdinand and Isabella and an escudo of Joanna and Charles, both from Spain; five crowns of Charles V from the Burgundian Netherlands; a French écu au soleil of Louis XI (1461–83) and an Italian ducat of Lucca struck by Charles V.  

4. Bisham Abbey, Maidenhead, Berkshire [SU 875 815], 1878
Deposited: after 1565/6

Coins: 318 gold coins, of which seven were Spanish (six of Ferdinand and Isabella and one of Joanna and Charles) with a Venetian zecchio of Francesco Venedico (1554–5) and a ten-cruzado piece of Manuel I (1495–1521) from Portugal. The English coins were as follows: Henry VI, noble: 1; Edward IV, ryal: 6; Henry VII, angel: 1, half-angel: 1; Henry VIII, half-sovereigns: 134, crowns: 25; Edward VI, sovereign: 1, half-sovereigns: 25; Elizabeth, half-sovereigns: 10, half-crowns: 2.  
Kent 1985, 405; NC 18 (1878), 304–6.

5. Bearpark, Durham [NZ 235 435], 1980
Deposited: after 1566

Coins: These two coins were discovered during archaeological excavation 'fairly close together' and are probably the remains of a small hoard or a purse loss. The coins are an écu d'or of Bretagne of Francis I, King of France (1515–47), Nantes mint (first issue) and a scudo d'oro of Pope Pius V (1566–1572).  
Mayhew 1983, 262.

6. Shocklach, Cheshire [SJ 435 495], 2003
Deposited: mid to late 1580s

Coins: twenty-four coins of which fourteen are silver and ten gold, with the one foreign piece being a double excelente of Philip II. The English gold were as follows: Henry VII, angels: 4; Henry VIII, angels: 2, half-angel: 1, half-sovereigns: 2. Also included were silver coins of Elizabeth, sixpences: 12, threepence: 1, halfgroat:1.  
Cook, forthcoming.

7. Ely, Cambridgeshire [TL 545 805], c.1733
Deposited: after 1589

Coins: One English gold angel and thirteen French gold coins (either écus or demi-écus au soleil).  
8. West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire [SU 825 945], 1978
Deposited: 1590 or later;
Coins: Two gold coins of the Netherlands, one a Gelderland Zaanstekers Harderwijk (1583–5) and one Kampen ducat (c. 1589–96) in a hoard with sixteen English gold coins that can be summarised as follows: Henry VIII, angels: 3, half-sovereigns: 3, posthumous half-sovereigns: 6; Edward VI, half-sovereign: 1; Elizabeth I, half-pounds: 3.

The following group of coins were beach finds derived from the wreck of the Ann Francis.

9. Margam/Aberavon Beach, West Glamorgan [SS 765 855], 1972–5
Deposited: 28 December 1583
Coins: 200 or so coins are said to have been recovered in the area, though only thirty-seven have been recorded to any standard and only sixteen of those recorded fully. Of the thirty-seven coins thirty-six are silver with just one of gold, that being a San Vicente of John III, King of Portugal (1556–7). The silver specie included ten coins of Ferdinand and Isabella, three of John III of Portugal and a selection of coins not usually found as English finds; two were Spanish coins from Mexican mints, seventeen were from various of the German states, two were Habsburg coins, one was a Low Country guilder and the last from Poland.
Redknapp and Besly 1997, 191–207; *Coin Hoards II* (1916), 120 no. 466.

The beach of Praa Sands has yielded a fair number of coin finds, with the following group likely to have either been found or been more likely beached material derived from a wreck. Although many of the coins are earlier than the remit of this paper, the latest coin in the group dates from the reign of Charles and Joanna and the group as a whole must therefore have been lost after 1485.

Deposited: late fifteenth century
Coins: Castille: Florin of Peter IV, dobla of Henry III, two half-doblas, three doblas and two entregos of Henry IV, florin of Alfonso V, three castellanos of Ferdinand and Isabella: Aregon: half-florin of John I, florin of Martin, dobla of Alfonso of Avila; Papal States: ducat of Pope Sixtus.

The following coins are believed to have come from the wreck of the *St Antony*, a Flemish carrack owned by John III of Portugal and laden with bullion, plate and silver and other cargo, which was driven ashore in 1526 on route from Flanders to Lisbon.

11. Mounts Bay, Cornwall [SW 496 311], pre-1985
Portugal, unspecified.
Kent 1985, 404.

**APPENDIX 3: SELECTED TUDOR PROCLAMATIONS CONCERNED WITH CONTINENTAL GOLD COINAGE**

(The proclamations are ordered by reign, with summaries of their content and an indication of the coins to which each refers. Taken from Hughes and Larkin 1964–9.)

**Henry VII**

88. ‘Revaluing Coinage’, 25 May 1522. Ducat (large) valued at 4s. 6d.; crown soleil (i.e. French crowns of the sun) at 4s. 4d.; and the crown not soleil (i.e. all other crowns) at 4s.

95. ‘Revaluing Coinage’, 24 November 1522. As previous, with the following additions: Carolus 6s. 10d.; base gold florins 3s. 3d. and 2s. 1d.

102. ‘Revaluing Coinage’, 6 July 1525. As previous.

103. ‘Revaluing Gold and Silver Coins’, 8 July 1525. As previous.

111. ‘Revaluing Coinage’, 22 August 1526. Single ducat (large) 4s. 8d.; crown soleil and any other crown of same weight and fineness 4s. 6d.; double-ducat 9s. 4d. This proclamation saw the introduction of Henry VIII’s crown of the rose.

112. ‘Revaluing Coins: Announcing New Coinage’, 5 November 1526. ‘Crowns of the sun having due weight and fineness, and all other crowns being of like weight and fineness . . . not notably broken, shall be still current . . . for 4s. 6d.’

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75 The coins in this group are distinctly different from that of the single coin of Philip II of Flanders made at the same location and which is included in Appendix 1: No. 17.

76 I am grateful to Barrie Cook for access to unpublished data on the finds from this site.

178. 'Revaluing Coinage', 27 March 1538. Double-ducat (large) 10s.
190.5 'Regulating the Value of Coins', 27 March 1539. Double-ducat (large) 10s.; ducat (large) 5s.; crown of the sun, pomegranate and dolphin 4s. 8d.; half-crown of the sun, pomegranate and dolphin 2s. 4d.; crown not soleil 4s.

Edward VI

364. 'Raising Value of French Crowns', 4 August 1550. French crowns of the sun 7s.
367. 'Lowering Value of French Crowns to 6s. 4d.', 1 December 1550.

Mary

406. 'Evaluating French Crowns at 6s. 4d.', 4 March 1554. As previous.
408. 'Evaluating Foreign Coins', 8 March 1554. All manner of French crowns 6s. 4d.; double-ducat of Spain (two faces) 13s. 4d.; ducat (two faces) of Spain 6s. 8d.
412. 'Evaluating Portuguese Coins', 4 May 1554. Crusado (long cross) 6s. 4d.; pistolet 6s. 2d.; crusado (short cross) 6s. 8d.

Elizabeth I

457. 'Prohibiting Export of all Gold and Coin: Allowing Merchants to take £4 out of Realm', 1 May 1559. Export of both English and foreign coin prohibited, bar merchants who can take a maximum of £4 overseas.
472. 'Prohibiting Traffic in Coin: Devouring foreign coin', 9 October 1560. Burgundian, Kaiser (Imperial) and French crowns reduced to 6s.; pistolets to 5s. 10d. (Illustrated.)
473. 'Identifying Pistolet Coins Worth 5s. 10d.', 2 November 1560. The Spanish ducato and escudo, the Venetian and Florentine scudi identified by description and illustration as being 'pistolets', other similar strange coins were excluded and thus outlawed. (Illustrated.)
487. 'Announcing New Small Coins, Outlawing Foreign Coins', 15 November 1560. All foreign gold coin outlawed bar French, Flemish and Burgundian crowns. Warded of a coin like an angel but barely worth 9s. 3d., let alone the 10s. of an English angel. (Illustrated.)
491. 'Revaluing Coinage [draft]', 13 March 1562. The 'strong gold' being French and Burgundian crowns valued at 6s. to be revalued at 4s.
533. 'Prohibiting Debased Foreign Coin', 1 June 1565. Prohibiting an angel imitation.
538. 'Prohibiting Counterfeit and Foreign Coins', 1 December 1565. Prohibiting another 'royal' angel-like coin. (Illustrated.)
693. 'Warning Against Foreign Debasement of English Coin', 12 October 1587. Tower mint manufacturing standard weights for the gold coin, to be distributed to the cities, boroughs and towns. Every French or Flemish crown current for 6s., can have a remedy not above 2 grains. It also makes it lawful to refuse to accept underweight coins and to strike holes in them should they be encountered and to cut counterfeit coins into pieces.

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