ON Tuesday, 4 June 1630, the archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher, wrote to William Laud, then bishop of London. Congratulating Laud on his election as chancellor of the University of Oxford, Ussher took the opportunity to remind him of his predecessor’s (William Herbert, 3rd earl of Pembroke) gift of Greek manuscripts to the Bodleian Library the year before. He went on to say that he had lately been offered ‘a great bargain of ancient Coins to the number of 5500, gold, silver, and copper pieces, to be sold for 600£. A greater number, I suppose, are not to be found together in any part of Europe, that collection of Abraham Gorlaeus only
excepted, which Prince Henry purchased, and left unto his Majesty'.

It would be a ‘Treasure’, he added, that would make the ‘University Library … without all comparison farr to exceed all the other Libraries, that are in Christendom’.

Although an historian, a scholar of considerable range and an assiduous user of Sir Robert Cotton’s extensive library, there is little evidence that Ussher knew much about coins, and his flattering picture of the ‘bargain’ may perhaps have been as much the result of persuasive sales-talk as of reality. It is not obvious that Ussher had even seen any of the coins and Laud was naturally cautious in his reply. TARTLY making the point that it had been he who had been ‘the means’ of securing Pembroke’s gift for the university, he stressed that his own purse was ‘too shallow’ for such a major purchase and that other potential benefactors such as ‘my Lords, the Duke of Buckingham, and the Earl of Pembroke’ were dead.

Nevertheless, he asked for further particulars:

You say they [the coins] are a great bargain at 600l.; I pray therefore if you have so much interest in the seller, send me word, as soon as you can, how many ounces the gold coin comes unto, and how many the silver, and then I shall be able to judge of the copper; and then, upon my return to those your letters, I will give you answer, whether I can find any noble spirit that will deal for them or no.

In his reply of 25 August 1630 Ussher failed to provide the information Laud had requested but he did reveal that ‘The Bargain of ancient Coins’ had been offered to him by ‘the son and heyr of Mr. Harrison sometime schoolmaster at Saint Pauls London’. The existence of such a remarkable collection of ‘ancient coins’ apparently never mentioned by informed contemporaries must have come as some surprise to Laud. While no antiquary himself he always had his ear close to the ground for possible cultural benefactions for his beloved university, manuscripts, books and coins. Yet there the matter rested and as far as we know it was never pursued by Laud although the vindictive ransacking of his papers by his pathologically-driven nemesis William Prynne and the subsequent disappearance of much of them might well have thrown a lamentable veil over the episode.

Ussher’s ‘Mr. Harrison sometime schoolmaster at Saint Pauls London’ is an obscure figure today, although his stormy relationship with the Worshipful Company of Mercers – the governors of St Paul’s School – is well documented. According to the Alumni Cantabrigienses Harrison – John Harrison – was born in London in 1552, the younger son of Rychard Harrison, rector of Bradeston and Narford in Norfolk. It is, however, a statement that presents us with some difficulty. While Harrison’s date and place of birth are not subject to question, it has proved impossible to establish the Venns’ authority for their assertion as to his birth.

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1. For the Gorlaeus Purchase and Prince Henry’s collection of coins and medals see the Appendix, pp. 225–9 below.
3. Cotton’s cabinet was said to have comprised the best collection of coins and medals in Britain until Prince Henry’s purchases. Ussher’s only known interest in Cotton’s coins arises from his researches in church history and a note in his Britannicarum Ecclesiarum Antiquitates that among them was a likely coin of ‘King Lucius’, to him a proof of the existence of this mythical figure allegedly the first Christian king in Britain: Ussher 1639, 39–40. See Dolley 1952–54, 254–8 for his identification of the coin as a Gallic stater.
4. Bliss 1857, 275: 5 July 1630. The royal favourite George Villiers, 1st duke of Buckingham, assassinated in 1628, was a notable collector of works of art, manuscripts and books. His political rival William Herbert, 3rd earl of Pembroke (1580–1630), was a generous patron of literature and the arts, Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones being among his protégés. The collection of 250 Greek manuscripts presented by him to the Bodleian in 1628 had cost him £700: ODNB.
6. Laud, as bishop of London, would have doubtless been aware of the elder Harrison’s schoolmasterly reputation but would not necessarily have known anything about his antiquarian or numismatic interests.
7. Laud donated over 1,000 manuscripts as well as coins (see n. 8 below) and books to the university, founded a lectureship in Arabic and augmented the stipend of the professor of Hebrew, and was a considerable benefactor of his college, St John’s.
8. Perhaps Ussher’s prompting may have put into Laud’s mind the desirability of making a numismatic gift to Oxford because he later acquired the cabinet of John Barkham, dean of Bocking, which he presented to the Bodleian Library between 1636 and 1639.
10. Venn and Venn 1922, 315.
11. Cooper and Cooper 1861 give 1553 as the year of Harrison’s birth. They are not always accurate in their dates, however, for instance erroneously giving 1598 as Harrison’s death.
presumably a faithful transcription of a contemporary record now lost.

contemporary (Masters 1784, 101) as a man of ‘great Reading, extensive Knowledge and accurate Judgement’, and his note was

See also Bliss’s ‘Preface’ to Wood 1813, 13. We do not know the source of Baker’s information but he was characterised by a

where they were caught.

of Angling, as any Age can produce’, spending a tenth of his time fishing and giving the fish to the poor living near the rivers

Walton, in

The Compleat Angler

(Walton and Cotton 2014, 39–40) tells us that Nowell was ‘as dear a lover, and constant practiser

of England

, who himself seems to have been the son of a Cheapside goldsmith of an earlier generation.16

Nowell, who became dean of St Paul’s in 1560, played a not unimportant role in Harrison’s life. He was the executive trustee of the estate of his brother Robert, one-time attorney-general of the Court of Wards, who died in 1569, and disbursed small monetary gifts from the estate on a number of occasions to young Harrison referring to him as ‘our coosyn [kinsman] or variants thereof.17 His mother, too, ‘Mrs Harrysonne in chepsyed’, one of twelve ‘woomen of welthe’, received thirty shillings in 1569 towards the cost of a black gown for Robert Nowell’s obsequies.18

Apparently entered as a commensal19 at Eton in 1565, Harrison was elected a King’s Scholar of the college the following year.20 In 1570 he was elected a scholar of King’s College, Cambridge, becoming a fellow three years later. At Michaelmas 1579, however, he was deprived of his fellowship.21 No reason for his dismissal appears in the college records but the eighteenth-century Cambridge historian, Thomas Baker, a painstaking and normally trustworthy scholar, noted that Harrison was expelled ‘ob doctrinam minus sanam in concione evulgatum, quam retractare noluit’.22 Unless Harrison was blatantly wayward in his teaching these words might be taken to suggest some publicly radical dissent from the college’s religious conformity though there is little hint of any heretical leanings, either puritan or papist, in Harrison’s subsequent career. While King’s did have some share in the

12 Neither the records of Eton College nor those of King’s College, Cambridge give the name or occupation of Harrison’s father. The information given in Sterry 1943, 159; Eton College Registers: <http://archives.etoncollege.com/> and the Cambridge University Alumni Database: <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/>; comes from Venn and Venn (see n. 10 above).

13 Harrison 1863?

14 TNA: PRO, PROB 11/50. Robert Harryson made his will on 19 April 1568, probate being granted the following month. The ‘Protocollum Books’ of King’s College, Cambridge record that Harrison came from ‘nr civitate Lomby’: information from Patricia McGuire. ‘Lomby’ has been interpreted as ‘London’, following Venn and Venn 1922, 315.

15 Burke 1914, 12. Baptism in Westminster might explain the ‘nr [near?] civitate Lomby’ in the King’s College records (see n.14 above). For Nowell see ODNB.

16 Edelen 1962, 259–60.

17 For details of these gifts see: Grosart 1877, 164, 172, 188, 192. These payments were probably rather in the nature of family gratuities or pocket money than of ‘doles’ to poor students that characterized other payments from the Nowell estate. Cf. Sterry 1898, 93. Harrison was again referred to as ‘his coosyn’ in a 1602 codicil to Nowell’s will, where he and his wife were bequeathed £6 13s. 4d. and every one of their children 20s.: TNA: PRO, PROB 11/99, f. 89v.

18 Grosart 1877, 6.

19 Commensals (‘table companions’ who ate with the Scholars in College Hall) were boys who were educated free of charge, but paid for their board and lodging. Harrison presumably entered Eton as a commensal while awaiting election to a scholarship.

Sterry 1943, 159.

20 Harrison (Jo[hn] Harrison) matriculated from King’s College on 10 Nov. 1570: Cambridge University Archives, Matr. 1, 255. Admitted scholar of King’s College 24 Aug. 1570; fellow 24 Aug. 1573. He became B.A. in 1574–75, M.A. in 1578 and was incorporated M.A. at Oxford 11 July 1585: Cooper and Cooper 1861, 222. See also Sterry 1943, 160; Venn and Venn 1922, 315; <http://archives.etoncollege.com/>; <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/>; and Wood 1815, col. 234.

21 Baker’s note is reproduced by Philip Bliss in his edition of Anthony Wood’s Fasti Oxonienses: Wood 1815, col. 234, n. 7. See also Bliss’s ‘Preface’ to Wood 1813, 13. We do not know the source of Baker’s information but he was characterised by a contemporary (Masters 1784, 101) as a man of ‘great Reading, extensive Knowledge and accurate Judgement’, and his note was presumably a faithful transcription of a contemporary record now lost.

22 A keen angler, Nowell is depicted with his fishing hooks in his right hand and rods on the wall above his head. Izaak Walton, in The Compleat Angler (Walton and Cotton 2014, 39–40) tells us that Nowell was ‘as dear a lover, and constant practiser of Angling, as any Age can produce’, spending a tenth of his time fishing and giving the fish to the poor living near the rivers where they were caught.
troubles which beset religion in Cambridge at this time it was much more seriously harassed by growing dissatisfaction among the younger fellows over the college’s administration and complaints of malpractice on the part of the provost, Roger Goad. ‘Many Evils’, it was reported, had ‘broken in by intestine Jars’ resulting, by 1576, in ‘sundry great and enormous disorders’ at the college. In part, the unrest arose from the provost’s strict imposition of discipline, but underlying it was discontent over the poor stipends of the younger fellows and their consequent demand for a larger share in the college’s income. Harrison was certainly not among the ringleaders of the 1576 dispute but such friction was a recurring feature of Goad’s provostship and, bearing in mind Harrison’s later behaviour at St Paul’s, his ejection from King’s may have had less to do with any unorthodoxy in his religious inclinations or erroneous teaching than with an aggressive and vocal antagonism towards the government of the college.

Whatever the reason for his enforced departure from Cambridge, Harrison was quickly found another place, for the following year he was appointed Surmaster of St Paul’s School, and in 1581, at the age of twenty-nine, the school’s youngest High Master. Without doubt he owed a great deal to the influence of Alexander Nowell, a mainstream Protestant reformer, who seems to have played a dominant role in both appointments.

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24 Strype 1725, II, 419. For the problems at King’s that were a recurring feature of Goad’s provostship see Strype 1725, II, 419–22 and Leigh 1899, 68–84.
25 It was said of the provost ‘No wonder young Scholars swelled against him, who bound them hard to the observation of the Statutes’. Thomas Fuller added ‘He had many contests with the young Frie of this Colledge, chiefly because he loved their good better then they themselves’: Fuller 1811, I, 144.
26 Presumably Harrison’s appointment as Surmaster in 1580 was engineered by Nowell as a precursor to his appointment as High Master of St Paul’s.
The fifteen years of Harrison's High Mastership were increasingly fraught, and his relations with the Mercers' Company deteriorated so much that even as early as 1586 he was threatened with dismissal. He was saved on this occasion by the intervention of Sir Francis Walsingham, who appointed Nowell and Dr John Hammond, chancellor of the diocese of London since 1575 and, as it happens, another Nowell family member, to report on the case. How Harrison succeeded in enlisting the interest of the Queen's principal secretary of state and spymaster in his affairs is unknown but he was adept at securing support in very high places, often through family connections, particularly Nowell, and, as the historian of St Paul's points out, on this occasion ‘Harrison was put in the fortunate position of having close relations in both the members of the tribunal appointed to report on his conduct’.

Predictably, Harrison, despite his continued truculence, was eventually reinstated. He nevertheless persisted in making himself objectionable to the governors by frequently complaining about his poor remuneration. On one occasion, using his pupils as pawns in his struggle, he even composed a dramatic dialogue for them to perform at a Mercers’ visitation venting the broadest hints of his poverty: ‘What! Is my Mr’s [Master’s] living so little and yet doth he take so many paynes … [Therefore] prefer my M’s suit [Master’s suit] to this worshipful company that his living may be accordynge to his paynes’. But his campaign was successful, his stipend being doubled to £69 6s. 8d. in 1591 and handsomely increased again to £109 6s. 8d. a year later. More significantly, Harrison alleged that the governors had abused their management of the school and had diverted the increasing rents from the school’s estates to their own purposes. In their turn the governors came to regard Harrison as ‘factious, turbulent and malapert’. They condemned ‘his little continuance in the school, the small number of his scholars and the weakness of those he hath which was to be accounted his fault, for the workman is to be known by his work’, as well as his ‘meddling with the lands and rents’ and ‘slandering of the company’. The Mercers’ governance of the school throughout the sixteenth century was certainly close and all-embracing and a number of High Masters fell foul of their interference and high-handedness; nonetheless, Harrison throughout his time at St Paul’s was a particularly arrogant and contentious character, and on 5 August 1596 he was eventually dismissed.

27 For a vivid narrative of Harrison’s High Mastership of St Paul’s, on which much of the following three paragraphs is based, see McDonnell 1959, 109–63.
28 Only two years after his appointment (23 July 1583) he had ‘of his own head without notice or knowledge [of the governors] violently expelled and put out of the scole the surmaster and under usher and commanded them openly in the scole not to teach there nor the boies to obey them’. McDonnell 1959, 111–12.
29 Hammond, a distinguished civil lawyer, was the son of Nowell’s sister, Beatrice, and presumably owed his position in the diocese – he had already been appointed commissary to the dean and chapter of St Paul’s – to the patronage of his uncle, Hammond’s likely nephew, the physician Dr John Hammond of Chertsey, was married to Harrison’s sister Mary: Moore Smith 1926a, 237–8, Moore Smith 1926b, and ODNB.
30 McDonnell 1959, 134. Walsingham’s secretary at this time was Nicholas Faunt, a relation of Harrison’s by marriage. For Faunt see ODNB.
31 McDonnell 1959, 139, 142. These levels of stipend were confirmed in the school’s Amending Ordinances of 1602 to continue ‘untill such tyme as … the fall of rentes or other juste considerations be occasioned to abate the same’: Gardiner 1884, 391. See also Strype 1720, I, 168: ‘He had some Contest with the Company of Mercers for the Augmentation of his Salary. And by an Order agreed and established, it was considerably increased to him and his Successors’. Harrison’s increased stipend seems strikingly generous in comparison with the total emoluments of £39 11s. 8d. per annum paid to Camden as headmaster of Westminster, but Camden was allowed to benefit from fee-paying pupils while Harrison was not. Both enjoyed free accommodation and could take boarders. In contrast to Harrison’s continued pleas of poverty Camden could maintain that he had ‘gathered a contented sufficiency by my long labours’ at Westminster: Gardiner 1884, 390; McDonnell 1909, 154; and personal note from Hugh Pagan.
33 McDonnell 1959, 145. By the time of Harrison’s departure from St. Paul’s the number of pupils had sunk to ‘little above fifty’ compared to the statutory 153. It should be stressed, however, that 1592 to 1598 were years of plague in London which would have had some effect on school registrations. Two or three boarders in Harrison’s house died ‘of the sicknes’ in January 1594. See McDonnell 1959, 143–4.
34 Four of the first ten High Masters (1509–1640) were dismissed, while two others narrowly escaped dismissal, one by death and the other by resignation: McDonnell 1959, passim. Differences in religious doctrine may have played a part in some instances but not in the case of Harrison.
How Harrison had survived for ten years since his first notice to quit in 1586 despite the governors’ repeated complaints of his incompetence, neglect of duty and insolence is remarkable and can be explained only by the influence of Nowell and, through him and other family relations, the High Master’s facility in drawing upon the support of powerful members of the Elizabethan establishment.  

Unfortunately for Harrison, by 1596 Nowell, then approaching his ninetieth year and declining into senility, was no longer the prop he had been and could not attend the vital meeting when Harrison was finally dismissed. Harrison tried a variety of subterfuges to stave off his departure, seeking the support of the earl of Essex and lord keeper Egerton, even alleging that the latter and ‘others of the Privy Council’ had ordered that the complaints against him should be heard by ‘Mr doctor Andrews Doctor Cotton Dr White and Mr Camden’.  

Harrison’s attempt to enrol the support of these learned men seems from the record to have had no foundation other than in his desperate imagination, though both as headmaster and antiquary he must have been well-known to Camden. He remained recalcitrant even after his dismissal, having to be ejected by the sheriff’s officers from his school house, clinging on as long as he could to the High Master’s country retreat in Stepney and still vainly protesting his claims to the Court of Arches.

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35 In addition to Walsingham, at various times the earls of Leicester and Essex, Archbishop Whitgift and Sir Thomas Egerton: McDonnell 1959, passim.

36 McDonnell 1959, 149–50. The members of this pretended board of inquiry were Lancelot Andrewes, then a prebend of St Paul’s, Thomas White, also a prebend of St Paul’s, and William Camden, the author of Britannia, headmaster of Westminster School since 1593 and himself an Old Pauline. It may be, as McDonnell suggests, that ‘Doctor Cotton’ was Robert Cotton, the young antiquary and scholarly collector, although it seems more likely that he was a kinsman, William Cotton, a doctor of divinity, another prebendary of St Paul’s, city vicar, rector of Finchley and later bishop of Exeter.

37 McDonnell 1959, 151. Harrison described the small house in Stepney as ‘an old noisome place’. It was occupied at the time of his dismissal by his mother ‘an ancient woman’: Gardiner 1884, 377–8 and n. 5; McDonnell 1959, 141, 154–5.
An intriguing sidelight on the saga is that a repeated complaint about Harrison was that while he was permitted to accommodate boarders in his St Paul’s house he also let out rooms to paying tenants in contravention of the school statutes. We know from other sources that one of his more exotic residents was the renegade Spanish statesman Antonio Perez who lodged with Harrison, his *hospes Ludimagistri*, in 1593. Trying, at a price, to ‘divulge his King’s secrets’ to an unresponsive English government, he met there Anthony Standing, the double agent and familiar of the earl of Essex, who was yet another of Harrison’s kinsmen. Thirty-eight Perez had been brought over to England by Anthony Bacon, a central figure in Essex’s intelligence operations, while constantly hovering in the background was the shadowy figure of Nicholas Faunt, Walsingham’s former secretary and a Harrison relation by marriage. Perhaps naively – or simply trying to make money by letting accommodation – Harrison, in entertaining the treacherous Perez, was dabbling in murky waters but it highlights the web of his familial connections which go far to explaining the access of a relatively humble schoolmaster to grandees like Walsingham and Essex.

The *Pedigree of the Harrison Family* tells us that sometime after his dismissal Harrison retired to Bressingham, a village near Diss in Norfolk and was ‘steward to Prince Philip’, an individual who defied identification until Professor G.C. Moore Smith came up with the not unreasonable suggestion that it was probably a garbled reference to Thomas Howard, 14th earl of Arundel, the son of Philip, the thirteenth earl who died in the Tower in 1595.40 The Howards were extensive landowners in Norfolk – their ‘country’ – and lords of several manors in the Bressingham area.41 Francis Blomefield, the county historian, refers to a court leet held at Bressingham in 1564 which the record describes as ‘The first General Court-Baron and Leet, of the Noble Prince THOMAS Duke of Norfolk, Earl-Marshal of England’ – grandfather of the fourteenth earl of Arundel – so it seems that locally at least the princely title was informally afforded to the Howards.42 Since the thirteenth earl died while Harrison was still at St Paul’s it is more plausible that the latter was ‘steward’ – if the story was true – to his son.43 In such circumstances Harrison’s appointment must date to a period after the accession of King James when Arundel’s confiscated estates were restored and, more likely some years later, when Arundel began to emerge as a scholarly collector and to patronise antiquaries of the like of Camden and Cotton. Harrison’s reputation of being ‘a great antiquary of coins and English history’ might well have appealed to the connoisseur earl, a move to Norfolk – where Harrison still had landowning cousins – perhaps having been facilitated by his professed supporter, Camden.

Harrison’s character in Norfolk became increasingly that of a reclusive eccentric. Blomefield, describing Bressingham [Brisingham] in 1736, tells us that:

> In this Parish lived one Mr. Harrison, who was a curious Collector of Roman Coins, of Gold, Silver, and Copper, from Pompey the Great, to Honorius and Arcadius, … He was a very curious Person, and lived in the House in which Robert Kent Senior, now dwells, which was adorned in a very odd Manner: In the parlour stood the Effigies of a Man, which, had a Speaking Trumpet, put through the Wall into the Yard, fixed to his Mouth, so that upon one's entering the Room, it used to bid him Welcome, by a Servant's speaking into the Trumpet in the Yard.

We know nothing of Harrison's antiquarian interests other than his coin collection, he may have been connected with the early Society of Antiquaries, but this is questionable, and

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38 Rudd 1878, 175; Birch 1754, I, 156–7; *Ant Perezzii ad Comitem Essexium … & ad Alios Epistololarum* (Paris, no date), f. 20v.
39 Anthony Bacon was the elder brother of Francis Bacon, the future lord chancellor. Both at this time were protégés of Essex, while Faunt in 1593 was also probably closely associated with the earl's circle.
40 Harrison 1863; Moore Smith 1927.
41 Blomefield 1739, I, 33 et seq.
43 If true, Harrison was probably a local under-steward for the Howard manors in the Bressingham area. See n. 50 below.
44 Blomefield 1739, I, 48.
no writings by him – if any existed – have survived. Furthermore, however extensive Harrison’s coin collection may have been it seems to have escaped the notice of his contemporaries until the mid-1620s; at least there seems to be no extant reference to it until that time. But then, although the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries constituted a formative

45 The antiquary William Burton included ‘– Harrison schoolem’ in a contemporary list of ‘Antiquarii temp. Eliz. Reg.’ but this should not necessarily be interpreted as implying membership of the Society of Antiquaries: ‘Spes’ 1852. In his will Harrison refers to his ‘Works’ but whether he meant by this unpublished compositions or mechanical ‘wonders’ like his ventroloquial contrivance cannot be established. His coins – doubtless covered by ‘my Antiquities’ – are not specifically mentioned: Norfolk Record Office: NCC. 60 Jay; see n. 52 below.
period in the development of numismatics, little can be said of any Elizabethan or Jacobean coin collector in England before the second decade of the seventeenth century. We know from his own account that the topographer and historian William Harrison built up a collection of Roman and medieval coins, some of which he intended to illustrate ‘as livelie portraits of everie emperor … and kings of this Island, since the time of Edward the Confessor’ in a projected Chronologie.\(^46\) This was never published and we have no details of his collection. Neither do we know anything about the Romano-British coins of the Kent antiquary, John Twyne, nor of the more substantial collections of Lord Burghley, whose ‘many coins and very rare ancient monuments’ Camden enthused about to the Flemish geographer and antiquary, Abraham Ortelius, in 1577.\(^47\) The famed collections of Henry Herbert, second earl of Pembroke and of Henry Howard, earl of Northampton, Camden’s first patron, have slipped under the radar too. It is only when we come to Henry, Prince of Wales and Robert Cotton that any conspectus of a major numismatic collection can be built up, but our knowledge of the former is fragmentary and even with the latter there is much detail, especially of Cotton’s ancient coins, that defies definition.\(^48\)

The little that we do know about Harrison’s collection is due to that assiduous antiquary Sir Simonds D’Ewes, busily collecting material for a planned work on Roman coins which, like his Anglo-Saxon dictionary and other antiquarian projects, never saw the light of day.\(^49\) He noted in his Autobiography for November 1625 that

> On Monday, the 7th day of this month, being at Quidenham, in Norfolk, with my kind acquaintance, Sir Thomas Holland, Knt.,\(^50\) I went in the afternoon to a town some three miles distant from thence, called Bissingham [sic], where dwelt one Mr. Harrison, a great collector and storer of ancient Greek and Roman coins. His store of them, both in gold, and silver, and copper, was very great, and I had then speech with him about buying some of them, although it took not effect till after his decease in the year 1631[sic].\(^51\)

D’Ewes, though, was not the type to give up, and after Harrison’s death he pursued the possibility of purchase again. Harrison’s will, which was proved on 8 December 1628 – he had died in the late autumn – made his elder son Francis his executor.\(^52\) And it was Francis Harrison who, having failed to capitalise on any interest generated by Archbishop Ussher in his father’s collection, and no doubt having unsuccessfully hawked it around other potential buyers, did eventually succeed in selling at least some small part of it to D’Ewes, as the latter had hoped over six years earlier. On Tuesday, 15 May 1632 D’Ewes tells us that he ‘bought of Mr. Harrison, son and heir of the elder Mr. Harrison, that lived a little before at Bissingham [sic] in the county of Norfolk, and was now deceased, divers ancient Roman coins, gold, silver, and copper’.\(^53\) D’Ewes does not say what he paid for the coins, but he was disappointed to find that a collection of some hundreds of specimens that had been many years in the making should contain ‘divers pieces amongst them that were certainly false and adulterate’.\(^54\)

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\(^{46}\) Furnivall 1877, 356–7. Of these coins Harrison tells us that ‘although presentlie I want a few, yet I doo not doubt but to obtaime them all’ either through friendship or purchase. He worried, however, that their cost ‘as it hath done hitherto’ might delay or even prevent publication of his Chronologie: Furnivall 1877, 357.

\(^{47}\) Hessels 1887, Epistle 71 (4 Aug. 1577), 167–9 (the summary translation given here is that of the editor Hessels (p. 168)).

\(^{48}\) For Prince Henry’s collection see Appendix, pp. 225–9 below.

\(^{49}\) For the only modern, if brief, account of D’Ewes’s numismatic interests see Watson 1966, 13–15.

\(^{50}\) Sir Thomas Holland (c.1578–1626) succeeded his father John Holland as chief steward to the Howard East Anglian estates in 1612: Thrush and Ferris 2010, 754. Harrison would thus have been well known to Holland who probably suggested the visit to Bressingham.

\(^{51}\) Halliwell 1845, I, 282.

\(^{52}\) For Harrison’s will (11 July 1628) see Norfolk Record Office: NCC. 60 Jay. His inventoried domestic and personal effects at death were valued at £195 13s. 4d. (2 Dec. 1628): Norfolk Record Office: DN/INV34/116.

\(^{53}\) Halliwell 1845, II, 71.

\(^{54}\) These ‘false and adulterate pieces’ may have resulted from a lack of discrimination on Harrison’s part, although sixteenth- and seventeenth-century numismatists were frequently deceived by deliberate forgeries. On the other hand Harrison, in his anxiety to assemble a representative collection of all the Roman emperors, may have deliberately introduced unauthentic coins when he could not find genuine ones; a not uncommon feature of numismatic collections of the period.
After I had bought some hundreds of them, containing many of the Roman Emperors, from Pompey the Great to Honorius and Arcadius, I spent the remainder of this month for the most part, in overviewing and sorting them; and afterwards perfecting my series by some I bought in other places, I caused them all which I made part of that series, to be put into roundles of ivory, together with some silver British, Saxon, and English coins which I had gotten into my hands, and so placed them in drawers, in a box made on purpose for them, in which they now stand in my library. The deceased Mr. Harrison had transcribed into the printed collection of coins set forth by Adolphus Occo that learned physician, whilst he lived at Augsburg, in Germany, many new reverses of divers coins he had, and some inscriptions also which Occo had never seen. This made me borrow that book of his son, and to transcribe all those written additions out of it into a printed Occo I bought, the two last days of May.

55 Adolphus Occo, *Imperatorum Romanorum Numismata a Pompeio Magno ad Heraclium* (Antwerp, 1579): Dekesel 1997, 672, O Category1. Occo’s extensive chronological work was a standard reference for collectors of Roman Imperial coins during the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the subject of a number of editions until 1730. Evelyn described Occo’s book as ‘of so universal use as may no more be wanting to a Medalist, than a Dictionary to the Learning of a Language. Besides, we have in that Industrious Work an Account and Series from the Great Pompey to Heraclius, which is as long as any Medals were tolerable, together with a just Character of their Persons, and a succinct History of their Lives and signal Actions out of the most approv’d Authors, with Historical and Chronological Notes, the Year when struck, and upon what occasion; in short, a Work acceptable to the Curious, and such as may serve for an ample Repertorie on many Occasions’: Evelyn 1697, 242. See also Babelon 2004, 7.

56 Halliwell 1845, II, 71–2. D’Ewes adds that he spent the afternoons in the ensuing July ‘for the most part in sorting my coins, buying, Wednesday, July the 11th, divers very good Roman coins, gold, silver, and copper, of one Mrs. Routh, a goldsmith’s widow’.
Clearly Harrison, whatever the complexion of his Greek pieces, had – with ‘Occo’ as his vade mecum – over the years probably concentrated on building up an ‘historical’ collection of Roman imperial coins – the easiest classical coins to acquire from London goldsmiths and by way of local finds.\footnote{With his Cheapside background Harrison might have had readier access than most to London’s contemporary coin dealers, mostly represented by the goldsmith fraternity.} If the value set on the overall collection by Francis Harrison was anywhere near justified it may explain why his father constantly pleaded poverty, even tapping a former pupil, Lionel Cranfield, later lord treasurer and earl of Middlesex for £100 in 1609.\footnote{Mead 1990, 26.} Of course if one was able to trace Harrison’s copy of Imperatorum Romanorum Numismata – if it is still in existence – the true nature and extent of what might conceivably have been a significant collection of Roman coins might be revealed.

The same might be said of D’Ewes’s copy of ‘Occo’, which would be some guide to the Roman element of his coin cabinet, because what happened to his coins after his death remains a mystery. D’Ewes himself had been concerned that his collections should stay in his family and that scholars should always have access to them. In 1705, however, his library was acquired from his grandson for £450 by Sir Robert Harley, later earl of Oxford, through the agency of Humfrey Wanley. Wanley found that the D’Ewes coin collection, which by then probably comprised only his non-classical pieces, had been ‘grieviously plunder’d’ and he was able to buy what was left for a mere twenty guineas.\footnote{Watson 1966, 58–9.} This residue may have gone astray when Edward Harley’s antiquities were auctioned in March 1742.\footnote{Manville and Robertson 1986, 5. Edward Harley, 2nd earl of Oxford, was Robert Harley’s son and himself a major collector of manuscripts, books, antiquities, coins and medals. His pictures and antiquities were sold by Christopher Cock the Covent Garden auctioneer on 8 March 1742 and the five subsequent days, and the coins and medals on 18 March and the five subsequent days.} D’Ewes’s classical coins had gone nearly a century earlier, the antiquary Roger Dodsworth reporting after his death in 1650, that he had ‘given order to sell all his Roman and Greek Coynes, and keep his Britishe ones’.\footnote{Watson 1966, 15.} Six years later, as Hugh Pagan has noted, Elias Ashmole told a friend that ‘one Herveigh a gentleman hath bought all the silver coins of Sir Simon D’Ewes’.\footnote{Pagan 1987, 176. Hervey [John Hervey] is included by John Evelyn in his list of those English coin collectors, ‘Worthy and Illustrious Persons both Knowledgeable and Curious, whose Collections have done Honor to themselves and the Nation’: Evelyn 1697, 245. For Hervey see Henning 1983, II, 540 and ODNB.} Hugh Pagan thought it likely that ‘Herveigh’ was John Hervey (1616–80) of Ickworth, a Suffolk neighbour of D’Ewes, who assembled a notable collection of coins and medals which was inherited by his collateral descendants, the earls of Bristol, and was said to have been bequeathed to King George III. Perhaps some of Harrison’s classical coins thus remained in East Anglia until their transfer to the royal collection and, if so, they may conceivably lurk in the trays of the British Museum.\footnote{Pagan 1987, 176, n. 21.}

## APPENDIX

**PRINCE HENRY’S COLLECTION OF COINS AND MEDALS**

Abraham Gorlaeus or van Goorle (1549–1609) was a native of Antwerp who had been councillor and treasurer to Adolf van Nieuwenaar, the stadtholder of Gelderland and Utrecht during the Dutch Revolt. After his retirement to Delft in 1595 Gorlaeus devoted his leisure to building up a remarkable collection of engraved antique and renaissance gemstones and classical coins which, through his publications Dactyliotheca seu Annulorum sigillarium... (1601) and Thesaurus numismatum Romanorum (1607), became among the most celebrated in northern Europe.\footnote{The popularity of Dactyliotheca – which illustrated 196 rings and 148 intaglios and cameos, some duplicated – was such that an annotated edition of the catalogue could still be published by Jacob Gronovius in 1695 decades after Gorlaeus’s collection had been dispersed.} His numismatic cabinet alone was said by Joseph Scaliger to comprise more than 4,000 ‘exquisite’ gold coins and over 10,000 silver and 15,000 bronze coins.\footnote{Scaliger 1612, 500–1; Botley and van Miert 2012, IV, 555 (letter to Pierre-Antoine Rascas, Intendant of the French Cabinet des Médailles, 12 January 1603). Cf. Babelon 2004, 82.}

Some years before his death, writing to Sir Robert Cotton, Gorlaeus offered to sell his coins but nothing seems to have come of this at the time. After the antiquary’s death, however, and perhaps through the good offices of...
Cotton, at least part of Gorlaeus’s collection was secured for Henry, Prince of Wales. In any event this became received opinion publically expressed initially – as far as I am aware – by the Antwerp epigraphist Pierre François Sweertius in his appreciation of Gorlaeus of 1628 and reiterated by Ussher and others after him. Unhappily, the extent of the purchase is open to considerable doubt since no contemporary inventory exists and the prince’s cabinet was savagely rifled even before Abraham van der Doort compiled his catalogue of the royal collections for Charles I about 1639. If the Gorlaeus letter is exploratory to the purchase, as it may well be, it would seem that something in the region of 630 gold and over 7,400 silver Greek and Roman coins were involved.

The water is muddied too by the fact that, in addition to his coins and medals, Prince Henry also bought the engraved gems and finger rings that Gorlaeus had illustrated in his *Dactyliotheca*, Francis Douce – admittedly two centuries later – noting in his copy of the 1695 edition of the catalogue that ‘The entire [my italics] collection of Gorlaeus’s *Dactyliotheca* was purchased by Prince Henry and Charles the first, and sold and dispersed at Cromwell’s accession’. Such contemporary documentary evidence for the prince’s acquisitions that has survived is perfunctory and confusing, and, since it is open to differing interpretations, any attempt to unravel it must necessarily be

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66 BL: Cotton MS Julius C III, f. 375. The index to Cotton MS Julius C. III dates Gorlaeus’s letter to 1600. David Howarth 1997, 65–6, n. 38 suggests, on the basis of this letter, that Cotton was instrumental in acquiring the Gorlaeus collection for the Prince of Wales. This seems not unlikely but 1611, the date he posits for the letter, is clearly impossible since Gorlaeus had died two years earlier.

67 Sweertius 1628, 87: ‘Heredes hunc venerandæ Antiquitatis thesaurum vendiderunt IACOBI Magnæ Britannie Regis F. HENRICO Walliarum Principi …’. The traditional belief was echoed in the nineteenth century by James Dallaway in his annotated edition of Horace Walpole’s *Anecdotes of Painting* that the Prince’s ‘medals and gems … were purchased of the executors of Abraham Gorlée, (the author of the *Dactyliotheca* [sic]):’ Walpole 1828, II, 47, note.

68 Millar, 1960; BL: Cotton MS Julius C III, f. 375.

69 Quoted in Henig 2008, 270. Henig comments that ‘As far as we know, this is the first substantial collection of classical gems to have reached Britain’: ibid., 269. Charles I was, of course, not involved in the Gorlaeus purchases.
speculative. A fundamental question is whether there were distinct purchases of the coins and medals and of the rings and gems; a question still lacking a wholly convincing answer even in the light of Sir Roy Strong’s seminal study of Prince Henry.70

Strong alluded to a warrant issued to the exchequer in April 1612 in respect of ‘the custom and subsidy of a cabinet of antiquities brought into this realm by Hans von Dirbige and sold to the Prince’.71 The name of the importing agent72 posits a continental provenance for the cabinet which Strong supposed had belonged to Gorlaeus. Strong identified the cabinet with one described by van der Doort as a black ebony table inlaid with ivory beneath which a series of round ivory tables were kept.73 The latter had been among the prince’s collections and furniture removed by Charles I from St James’s Palace to Whitehall some time after his brother’s death and although van der Doort gives no indication of the presence of any contents Strong judged that it had contained coins and medals.74 Strong’s inference was presumably made in the light of van der Doort’s immediately succeeding statement that M’r Thomas Carew did remove by his Servants likewise [from St James’s Palace] all the meddalls agotts— and other things wth were made in ye king by the decease of Prince Henry of famous memory, whereof the said M’r Thomas Carew had gotten the key, till such time as the medalls and such other things should bee deliv’ed into ye Carbonett roome, wth foresaid deliv’ing hee did delay from time to time till his decease.75

There is, however, no reason to assume that van der Doort’s two statements were directly connected, that the unspecified ‘antiquities’ referred to in the warrant related to numismatic items or indeed that von Dirbige’s cabinet and the ebony table were the same pieces of furniture. It could be that, as Martin Henig has declared, the imported cabinet contained Gorlaeus’s rings and gems.76 But this judgement is as intuitive as that of Strong. It must be stressed, too, that the warrant related to an allowance payable to the farmers of the customs and not to any payment for its acquisition, that in the way of such things then the warrant was almost certainly in arrears, and that thus the cabinet might well have been subsumed in a purchase made a year earlier. For in 1611 a payment of £2,200—a considerable sum for the time—had been made in instalments between 10 May and 10 August to one ‘Abraham vanhutton’ ‘for Antiquities of medalls and coynes bought of him’.77 Again the name of the vendor (Van Houten?) points to a continental, probably Dutch, provenance for these coins and medals and although Strong did not directly associate them with the Gorlaeus purchase it seems reasonable to assume that they were what was bought from the antiquary’s estate. It was doubtless the same purchase of ‘certain Meddalls of Gould and strange Coyne, wth cost his Highnes. 2200li’ that was entered by Richard Connock, the prince’s Auditor-General, in his inventory of his master’s income, debts and assets drawn up in December 1612 after Henry’s death.78 No specific reference is made in this document to the prince’s finger rings or his engraved gems although they may be have been embraced in another unquantified entry of ‘Jewells, horses, with their furniture, and other things of great value bought by his Highnes’. This, though, is unlikely since this latter item seems to relate to very high value purchases and it seems more reasonable to assume that both medals and coins and gemstones were covered by the £2,200 especially if this did relate to the Gorlaeus purchase. In that event one could visualize van Hutton as vendor on behalf of Gorlaeus’s executors and von Dirbige as importing agent being both involved in the same undertaking.

Shortly after the prince’s death the assiduous ‘news-gatherer’ John Chamberlain told his friend Sir Dudley Carleton, the English ambassador to Venice and a seeker out of works of art for Henry, that he understood that the latter’s ‘debts are but nine thousand pound, and his moveables amount to much more, specially his horses and pictures which are many and rare, and his medalls or auncient coynes of gold will yeeld above three thousand pound’.79

Although we have no detail of Prince Henry’s coins and medals, according to Patrick Young, the royal Librarian, they were ancient Greek and Roman.80 On the positive evidence of Connock’s audit and even the gossip of  

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72 Professor Timothy Wilkes has suggested that ‘Hans von Dirbige’ may have been a Dutch jeweller, Jan van de Beecke: MacLeod 2012, 134.
73 ‘Table of black ebbone wooden laied in wth white Ivory under wch Table is a place wherein is a set of tourn’d round Tables made of Ivory’: Millar 1960, 74 [1].
74 ‘In van der Doort’s time the ebony tables were kept in leather- or felt-lined drawers and clearly not in the ebony cabinet: Millar 1960, 129-44 (passim).
75 Millar 1960, 74 [1]. Sir Oliver Millar suggested that Carew was Thomas Carey, second son of Robert Carey, first earl of Monmouth, and a courtier of both James I and Charles I who died in 1634.
76 Henig points out that van der Doort nowhere mentions the gem collection in his catalogue other than referring to a still extant Claudius cameo that was kept separately in a leather case. Henig 2008, 26; Millar 1960, 128 [1].
77 TNA: PRO, E 351/2793, rot. 8d.
78 ‘Inner Temple MS 538/17, ff. 425–6: a manuscript entitled ‘A Briefe of the estate of the Prince his Revenues & Debts, for the King’s Ma[jes]tie’ and dated 22 December 1612 from the collection bequeathed to the Inner Temple in 1707 by William Petty, the lawyer, Whig polemicist and keeper of the Tower records. Calendared in Davies 1972, II, 779. A version of this document from the papers of Sir Julius Caesar is reproduced in Bray 1806, 16.
79 TNA: PRO, SP 14/71, f. 66: transcribed in Calendar of State Papers Domestic, James I, 71, 156, no. 38. See also McClure 1939, I, 391. Again one should probably assume that Chamberlain considered the prince’s gem stones as part of his numismatic collection.
80 ‘NUMISMATA Antiqua Graeca, ac Romana’: a note by Young quoted by John Evelyn in a letter to Samuel Pepys, 26 August 1689. De la Bédoyère 2005, 199. Bray 1819, II, 246 dates the letter to 12 August 1689. See also Evelyn 1697, 246. As Hugh Pagan points out by the time of van der Doort a random accumulation of non-classical coins and medals had ‘drifted’ into the royal collection but whether any had belonged to the prince cannot be established: Pagan 1987, 175.
Chamberlain – usually reliable, it must be said – the collection must have been sizeable and, presumably, did derive, at least in some part, from Gorlaeus’s executors thus bearing out Ussher’s supposition about its magnitude and source. John Evelyn might have overressed the cake when, probably on hearsay, he told Samuel Pepys years later that the prince’s cabinet contained ‘ten thousand Medals, not inferior to most abroad, and far superior to any at home’.

Nevertheless, the cabinet comprised not only the Gorlaeus collection but that of William Fulke (1536/7–1589), a Cambridge theologian and master of Pembroke Hall, a now forgotten collection of ‘divers pieces of gould and silver coynes and medalls of antiquity … to the value of 600 l. sterling’. This collection had been sold to the prince by William Fulke’s elder son, Christopher, but he had not received any payment for it because of Henry’s ‘suddaine and untymelie death’. This explains why no reference was made to any disbursement in Connock’s 1612 inventory and we know of it only because it was still outstanding in December 1616. Added to the £2,200 recorded it of course brings the value of the prince’s cabinet close to the figure cited by Chamberlain.

Tragically, little of the prince’s numismatic collection was long to survive his death. While Evelyn in his letter to Pepys was to an extent justified in saying that it had been ‘embezzled and carried away during our late barbarous rebellion, by whom and whither none can or is like to discover’, it is clear from van der Doort’s conscientiously detailed if incomplete catalogue that years before the Civil War it had been subject to considerable depredation; his terse entries indicating that not a few of the medals and coins in his charge were modern, mainly presentations from courtiers and friendly foreign rulers and added in Charles’s time.

Van der Doort’s limited English and, his descent when distressed into a far from coherent Anglo-Dutch ‘patois’, makes his résumé of the background to the cabinet of a site.

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81 If Scaliger’s estimate of the size of Gorlaeus’s collection was reliable – and one suspects that it was a generalised exaggeration – it seems very unlikely that Prince Henry’s purchase embraced the whole of it. See nn. 65 and 68 above.

82 De la Bédoyère 2005, 199; Bray 1819, II, 246.

83 TNA: PRO, PC 2/28, f. 486; transcribed in Acts of the Privy Council of England, 35 (1616–17), 98–9. The Fulke purchase was vouched for by Sir David Murray and Adam Newton both close servants to Prince Henry and presumably took place during 1611–12. In accordance with his father’s will (proved 9 October 1589) Christopher Fulke had inherited the former’s ‘antiquities … if he shall have delight in them, or else to be sold to someone that delights in antiquities’: TNA: PRO, PROB 11/74/422.

84 De la Bédoyère 2005, 199; Bray 1819, II, 246. Evelyn’s letter embodied some of the material he was putting together for his projected work on medals which he was to publish eight years later as his Numismata. In this Evelyn added that the prince’s collections had been ‘impair’d and miserably imbezel’d, not only by the Rebels during the late Civil Wars, but even since, thro the Negligence of others’: Evelyn 1697, 246–7.

collection difficult to follow. What seems to emerge, however, is that after Henry’s premature death it came to be appraised by some of the prince’s former confidants including the earl of Arundel and Sir Henry Fanshawe, both virtuosi and collectors of distinction. The unfortunate Dutchman suspected the valuers of having pocketed many pieces and in the circumstances one can understand the reluctance of Carey who subsequently had custody of the collection to hand over the keys to van der Doort. Indeed, van der Doort, who did not succeed in securing the keys until after the courtier’s death in 1634, concluded that Carey had himself made off with much of what remained, selling it on to London goldsmiths.

Only a modicum of Prince Henry’s collection can thus eventually have come to Charles I’s new cabinet room at Whitehall but as Evelyn lamented, though augmented by the king, even this was to be seriously eroded. In 1647 ‘because of soldiers being there’ both the coins and the gems, together with the ‘king’s books and manuscripts’, were removed from Whitehall and taken back to St James’s Palace for ‘publick Use’, being for a few weeks during the following year put under the inept charge of the preacher Hugh Peter who was subsequently to be blamed for much of their loss. An inventory made in 1652 by John Durie, another preacher, appointed three years earlier to take charge of the collections under the direction of Bulstrode Whitelocke, the parliamentarian keeper of the Great Seal, revealed, according to George Vertue, that only 1,200 coins remained. But there was even further depletion and by the time of the Restoration when Elias Ashmole was appointed by Charles II to ‘make a discription [sic] of his Medalls’, now moved back again to Whitehall, the coins had been drastically reduced to a mere four hundred. Evelyn’s hope in his Numismata that the collection ‘put in Order, and Methodiz’d by Mr. Ashmole … may be still in being and to be recovered’ was dashed shortly afterwards when its remnants were destroyed in the great palace conflagration of January 1698: ‘White-hall utterly burnt to the ground, nothing but the walls & ruines left.’

Some, at least, of Prince Henry’s rings, intaglios and cameos may have had a rather better fate. Although a number were disposed of by his brother – who is said not to have had the same interest in classical antiquities – or sold during the Commonwealth, the majority seem to have outlasted the Interregnum. Evelyn, going with some relations to Court at Whitehall in November 1660, remarked on seeing in ‘his Majesties Cabinet and Closet of rarietes … a vast number of Achates, Onyxes, & Intaglios’. Unhappily, many, probably most, of what Evelyn saw were engulfed in the 1698 fire. Even so a few rings and gems, identified by Henig as emanating from the Gorlaeus purchase through comparison with the illustrations in Dactyliotheca and Ashmole’s collection of wax impressions, seem to have survived to this day and there may well be other strays still to be accounted for. This in mind it could well be that some few of the coins that Ashmole catalogued in 1660 survived the Whitehall blaze and still also lie low among the unprovenanced pre-1838 acquisitions in the British Museum. But this is a conundrum never likely to be resolved.

85 The valuers also included the prince’s surveyor, Inigo Jones, and Sir Thomas Chaloner, his chamberlain. The collection was in the charge of Sir David Murray, an intimate of Henry, and a subordinate, ‘Mr. Flemming’. Millar 1960, 155. See also Millar 1960, xvi and Strong 1986, 199. Evelyn told Peps that Arundel’s ‘very rich Collection as well of Medals, as of other Intaglios … with innumerable other rarities’ were ‘scatter’d and squander’d away by his Countesse’ while Fanshawe’s ‘noble Collection of Medals … after his decease were thrown about the house … for children to play at Counters with’: De la Bédoyère 2005, 193–4; Bray 1819, II, 240–1. Evelyn erroneously names Henry Fanshawe as ‘Simon’.

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87 De Beer 1955, V, 283; Walpole 1765, 79.

88 De Beer 1955, III, 260. As well as disposing of rings and gemstones Charles I, as with the coins and medals, added a substantial number of modern items to his brother’s collection which would have explained the ‘vast number’ of rarities seen by Evelyn.


90 Comprehensive registration of the national collection began only in 1838 and establishing the source of coins acquired before this date is fraught with difficulty.
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POSTSCRIPT

While this paper was in the press Andrew Burnett very kindly shared with me some of the fruits of his researches into the history of numismatics in Britain. It seems clear from Dr Burnett’s work, based on the papers of Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc and the Harley manuscripts, that Harrison’s coin collection was of significance and that some of his coins – via D’Ewes and the George III collection – are traceable in the British Museum today. Dr Burnett will be publishing his findings in due course.