

EDWARDIAN STERLINGS IN THE 1900 BERSCAR (CLOSEBURN) FIND

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ON Christmas Eve, 1900 a substantial hoard of sterlings of the Edwardian period was discovered at Berscar Farm, Closeburn, Dumfriesshire. A detailed list of the coins was published by Adam Richardson,¹ the English element being classified according to the arrangement worked out by Burns in connection with the (much larger) Montrave hoard. A concordance between the Burns classification and that of the Fox brothers, which has been the standard reference for the series since it appeared, has recently been published, together with a summary of the contents of the Montrave hoard according to the Fox classification.² The purpose of the present paper is to treat, so far as is possible, the contents of the Berscar hoard in a similar way. Unfortunately, three other important hoards of the period found in Scotland at the beginning of this century, before the Fox classification was published, were not listed according to Burns but by classifications devised specially for the purpose by Macdonald;³ a good deal of significant information can be obtained from these three hoards too by reconstructing their contents according to Fox but that is a matter for separate treatment on another occasion.

According to Richardson, 1,376 coins from Berscar were submitted to the authorities,⁴ but his list contains one fewer of Bury than his summary, and the contents as listed were as follows:

English, regular (1286)		Newcastle	17
London	630	York	32
Canterbury	357	Illegible, English type	28
Durham	147	Berwick (English)	31
Bury	61	Scottish,	
Bristol	27	Alexander III	5
Chester	2	John Balliol	2
Exeter	2	Robert Bruce	1
Kingston	1	Irish	3
Lincoln	10	Continental	19
			1,375

¹ Richardson, A. B., 'Notice of the Find of Coins at Closeburn, Dumfriesshire', *PSAS* xxxv, 1901, 639-59. Mr. W. F. Cormack has kindly pointed out to me that the name Borscar, by which this find is generally known, is apparently an error. James Davidson used the spelling Berscar in 'Coin Finds of Dumfriesshire and Galloway' (*Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, xxvi, p. 107) and this is the form on the Ordnance Survey Map.

² Tatler, G. L. V., and Stewart, B. H. I. H., 'Edwardian Sterlings in the Montrave Hoard', *BNJ* xxxi (1963),

80-7. On p. 87, total of IVd should be 220.

³ MacDonald, (Sir) George, 'A Hoard of Edward Pennies Found at Lochmaben' and 'Two Hoards of Edward Pennies Recently Found in Scotland' (Blackhills and Mellendean, 1911), *NC* 4th ser., v (1905), 63-82 and xiii (1913), 57-118.

⁴ For a parcel of eight possible strays from the hoard, including an Aquitaine denier, see Stewart, 'A Group of Sterlings from Closeburn', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 3rd ser., xlv (1968), 243-4.

The English coins from Berscar are listed at the end of this paper in two pairs of columns, that on the left showing the numbers of each Burns variety as originally recorded, that on the right the postulated Fox equivalents. In order to facilitate comparison with the coins from Montrave as tabulated according to Burns,⁵ the Berscar coins have been similarly tabulated here (Table 6). It is apparent from the figures given by Richardson for the several varieties that he had some difficulty in following the Burns classification exactly, and the proportions contained in other hoards will normally illustrate this. The Montrave hoard itself is an obvious point of reference, having originally been listed by the same arrangement. But it was buried substantially later than Berscar and the lapse of time apparently had an effect on relative proportions. In order to demonstrate this, summaries of three other finds as well as of the Berscar and Montrave hoards (Tables 3 and 4) are given according to the main Fox groups: the 1935 Boyton hoard (Table 1), buried in the 1320s, late in group XV but lacking XVd; the 1966 Loch Doon hoard (Table 2), with a single coin of XVd; and the 1967 Danish find from Kirial (Table 5), which contained English coins as late as the mid 1360s.⁶

Much the most serious of Richardson's problems in following the Burns classification concerned varieties A42 to A49, from late group X to group XV according to Fox, that is, effectively the whole of the coinage allotted to Edward II. Except for the Durham mint, where the episcopal marks appropriate to this period were available as a guide, he managed to classify only three coins of Bury and two of Canterbury as falling between A42 and A49 inclusive. It is clear that all the other coins of this period have been lumped in with A40, reading EDWARR (Xb and later XI onwards), and A39, reading EDWAR (middle and later X; and earlier XI). It is not necessary to examine all the points at which Richardson's interpretation of the Burns classification may have been inexact; one example will serve, but other points have received comment in the

<i>Burns/Fox</i>	<i>BRISTOL</i>			<i>CANTERBURY</i>		
	<i>Berscar</i>	<i>Montrave</i>	<i>Doon</i>	<i>Berscar</i>	<i>Montrave</i>	<i>Doon</i>
A14-15/IIIc-d	15	64	12	44	52	5
A18/III f	0	9	0	0	3	1
A16-17/III g	0	38	8	0	66	13
A19-23, 25/IVa-c	—	—	—	0	166	33
	15	111	20	44	287	52

	<i>LINCOLN</i>			<i>LONDON</i>		
	<i>Berscar</i>	<i>Montrave</i>	<i>Doon</i>	<i>Berscar</i>	<i>Montrave</i>	<i>Doon</i>
A14-15/IIIc-d	10	42	3	77	222	34
A18/III f	0	7	1	1	20	2
A16-17/III g	0	44	8	9	175	30
A19-23, 25/IVa-c	—	—	—	11	345	54
	10	93	12	98	762	120

⁵ *BNJ* xxxi, 86.

BNJ xxxviii (1969), 31-49; Kirial, *NNA* 1970, 37-168.

⁶ Boyton, *NC* 5th ser., xvi (1936), 115-54; Doon,

Mules are listed according to the later die.

lists. The Berscar figures for A14-15 (IIIc-d) at London, Canterbury, Bristol, and Lincoln are inflated: they almost certainly include some of A16-17 (IIIg) and, at the two main mints, of A19-23 and A25 (IVa-c), as can be seen from the comparison with the Montrave and Loch Doon figures set out above.

One of the most interesting features of the Berscar hoard was the presence (if properly described) of no less than six coins of Burns A50, Fox XVd, the very rare heavy pennies of Edward III, the minting of which was revived after a lapse in the 1320s. All mints except Durham are represented, Bury apparently by two specimens, although only one can today be located, that in the British Museum from Montrave, and only one other is on record (noted by Lawrence as being from the same hoard). Bury received dies in 1329. Pennies were struck at Canterbury between Michaelmas 1328 and 1329 and again between January and Michaelmas 1331; and at London between February 1329 and September 1330. At York a Keeper of the Exchange was not appointed until August 1331, but the date of closure is not known exactly; it may have been before Michaelmas 1333, the closing date of the last surviving account. The A50 penny of York thus gives a burial date for the hoard of autumn 1331 or later. The absence from the hoard of any specimen of A50 of Durham alone, the most northerly English mint, could perhaps be seen as favouring a later rather than an earlier dating for these easily recognizable coins, although the total number of identified examples of A50 in the hoard is far too small to permit very much weight to be given to such an argument from this evidence alone.

In spite of the doubts over parts of the classification, the Berscar figures provide useful material for comparison, and it is also interesting to take into account the Kirial hoard. It has been demonstrated, in the report on the Loch Doon hoard, that in hoards buried from the 1320s onwards, which can be regarded as containing a cross-section of the currency of the time, the percentages of each mint are remarkably consistent. Kirial is entirely typical in this respect and Berscar only remarkable for being slightly above quota in coins of Bury and York and slightly below—the only hoard analysed to have less than 50 per cent—in coins of London. Chronologically the picture is as follows:

<i>Fox Groups</i>	<i>Group XV hoards</i>			<i>Later hoards</i>	
	<i>Boyton</i> %	<i>Doon</i> %	<i>Berscar</i> %	<i>Montrave</i> %	<i>Kirial</i> %
I-V	20.0	21.4	21.5	27.6	29.3
VI-IXa	2.1	3.1	2.1	3.5	2.5
IXb	9.7	10.2	10.0	9.3	8.7
X-XV	68.1	61.9	66.4	59.6	59.2
Uncertain	2.4	0.1			0.4

These figures suggest that hoards buried in the 1360s should contain a much higher proportion of pre-1300 coins, a paradox more easily understood if expressed in the opposite way: that the group XV hoards have an abnormally high representation of the more recent issues, groups IXb to XV, the coins of which were struck in large quantities from 1300 to the early 1320s, whereas these coins had long been out of

TABLE 1
Contents of the Boyton Hoard (c. 1325) arranged according to Fox

<i>Fox Groups</i>																	
	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>VII</i>	<i>VIII</i>	<i>IX</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>XI</i>	<i>XII</i>	<i>XIII</i>	<i>XIV</i>	<i>XV</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Total</i>
BRISTOL		12	47						27								86
BURY			7	2				1	5	60	33	2	15	39	20	4	188
CANTERBURY		4	44	111	2				55	478	161	8	42	117	122		1,144
CHESTER			5						3								8
DURHAM		11	8	7	1				33	142	80	7	11	14	12	3	329
EXETER									5								5
KINGSTON									6								6
LINCOLN			14														14
LONDON	56	44	147	195	5	1	6	18	235	906	185	4	25	54	77		1,958
NEWCASTLE			7						16	23							46
YORK		5	37						30								72
UNCERTAIN										2							2
TOTAL	56	76	316	315	8	1	6	19	415	1,611	459	21	93	224	231	7	3,858

TABLE 2
Contents of the Loch Doon Hoard (c. 1332) arranged according to Fox

<i>Fox Groups</i>																	
	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>VII</i>	<i>VIII</i>	<i>IX</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>XI</i>	<i>XII</i>	<i>XIII</i>	<i>XIV</i>	<i>XV</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Total</i>
BRISTOL		8	20						12								40
BURY			3	4				1	5	18	7		4	10	10		62
CANTERBURY		2	20	47	3				23	209	68	3	24	26	35	15	475
CHESTER									1								1
DURHAM		1	5	4	1				19	71	35		7	5	19	11	178
EXETER									4								4
KINGSTON									6								6
LINCOLN			12														12
LONDON	19	30	71	91	7	2	2	28	106	385	80	3	14	16	19	13	886
NEWCASTLE			3						7	12							22
YORK		4	14						13						1		32
UNCERTAIN																4	4
TOTAL	19	45	148	146	11	2	2	29	196	695	190	6	49	57	84	43	1,722

TABLE 3
Contents of the Berscar Hoard (c. 1335?) arranged according to Fox

<i>Fox Groups</i>	<i>Fox Groups</i>														<i>Total</i>
	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>VII</i>	<i>VIII</i>	<i>IX</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>XI-XII</i>	<i>XIII-XIV</i>	<i>XV</i>		
BRISTOL		2	15						10						27
BURY			1	1					3	51				5	61
CANTERBURY		1	45	8					19	280	2			2	357
CHESTER			1						1						2
DURHAM		1	9	5	1				14	75	22	11		9	147
EXETER									2						2
KINGSTON									1						1
LINCOLN			10												10
LONDON	6	19	91	37	1		5	8	69	393				1	630
NEWCASTLE			4						11	2					17
YORK		3	15						13					1	32
TOTAL	6	26	191	51	2		5	8	143	801	24	11		18	1,286

TABLE 4
Contents of the Montrave Hoard (c. 1360) arranged according to Fox

<i>Fox Groups</i>	<i>Fox Groups</i>														<i>Total</i>
	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>VII</i>	<i>VIII</i>	<i>IX</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>XI-XII</i>	<i>XIII</i>	<i>XIV</i>	<i>XV</i>	
BRISTOL		42	119						54						215
BURY			4	18	1		1	1	16	112	61	38	66	25	343
CANTERBURY		13	126	281	14		4	1	124	989	349	87	180	38	2,206
CHESTER			5						5						10
DURHAM		14	51	23	1	1			76	288	137	18	31	28	668
EXETER									15						15
KINGSTON									17						17
LINCOLN			93												93
LONDON	82	187	468	527	37	10	18	97	530	1,830	391	46	103	36	4,362
NEWCASTLE			25						20	61					106
YORK		25	112						55					2	194
TOTAL	82	281	1,003	849	53	11	23	99	912	3,280	938	189	380	129	8,229

TABLE 5
Contents of the Kirial Hoard (c. 1365) arranged according to Fox

	<i>Fox Groups</i>															Total	%	
	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>VI</i>	<i>VII</i>	<i>VIII</i>	<i>IX</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>XI</i>	<i>XII</i>	<i>XIII</i>	<i>XIV</i>	<i>XV</i>			<i>Uncertain</i>
BRISTOL		7	47						3								57	3.2
BURY				3		1			1	26	13		8	4	6		62	3.5
CANTERBURY		1	23	68	2	1	2		30	223	53	6	22	9	20	6	466	26.2
CHESTER			3														3	0.2
DURHAM		3	7	5					14	97	31	1	16	3	13	1	191	10.7
EXETER									3								3	0.2
KINGSTON									1								1	0.1
LINCOLN			14														14	0.8
LONDON	22	42	115	107	6	3	4	23	90	398	57	1	11	3	27		909	51.1
NEWCASTLE			7						13	3							23	1.3
YORK		6	33						10								49	2.8
UNCERTAIN										2							2	
TOTAL	22	59	249	183	8	5	6	23	165	749	154	8	57	19	66	7	1,780	

TABLE 6
Contents of the Berscar Hoard arranged according to Burns

	<i>Burns Varieties</i>																									Total											
	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14-15</i>	<i>16-17</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>33-34</i>	<i>35-36</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>38</i>		<i>39</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>46-48</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>50</i>		
BRISTOL					2						15															10								27			
BURY ST EDMUNDS														1		1											3	1	19	31			3	2	61		
CANTERBURY				1		1					44						4	4							1	18	10	88	181	1		1	1	2	357		
CHESTER																										1								2			
DURHAM					1					5	3	1							5		1					14	6	5	62	2	21		2	10	9	147	
EXETER																										2								2			
KINGSTON																										1								1			
LINCOLN											10																								10		
LONDON	6	7	6	6	2	1	1				77	9	1	4		7	22	4		1		5	8	13		56	21	69	294	9				1	630		
NEWCASTLE											4																11	2							17		
YORK				3	5			1	9																		13							1	32		
TOTAL	6	7	6	13	2	6	1	1	10	158	12	1	4	1	7	26	8	5	1	1	5	8	14			129	40	181	568	12	21	1	3	13	9	6	1,286

issue by the time that the Montrave and Kirial hoards were buried and their relative abundance in currency hoards had gradually declined.

In addition to the regular English coins in the Berscar hoard, there were 31 English coins of Berwick⁷ (2.4 per cent of the total of the regular English mints), three Dublin pence of Edward I, five second-coinage sterlings of Alexander III,⁸ two sterlings of Balliol's second issue,⁹ one of Bruce,¹⁰ and nineteen continental coins of sterling type.¹¹ Amongst these last was one of Louis of Bavaria of the mint of Aix, with the title *Imperator* which he obtained in 1328; this coin substantiates a date of burial within the reign of Edward III, and gives some confidence in the accuracy of Richardson's description of coins of Burns A50.

LIST OF EDWARDIAN STERLINGS IN THE 1900 BERSCAR FIND

<i>Total</i>	<i>Burns Nos.</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Fox Groups</i>	<i>Total</i>
BRISTOL				
2	A5		IIb	2
15	A14-15	Probably includes IIIg	IIIc-d	15
8	A37	Star	IXb	8
2	A37	No star	IXb	2
27				27
BURY ST. EDMUNDS				
1	A16-17	Robert de Hadeleie	IIIg	1
1	A21		IVa-c	1
3	A37	Star	IXb	3
1	A38		Xa	1
19	A39		Xb	19
31	A40		Xc-f	31
3	'A50'	A50 but Roman N's and no pellet stops	XVa-c	3
2	A50	Obv. with Gothic n?	XVd	2
61				61

⁷ From the details given by Richardson for his nos. 139-50, it is possible to make some guesses (which may of course be wrong) as to the Blunt classes to which they belonged: class Ia, 2 coins (R. 139, 143); Ib, 2 (145); II, 1 (144); IIIa or IVa, 1 (140); IVa, 6 (141, 148, 149); IVb, 7 (147); IVc, 11 (142, 146); V, 1 (150).

⁸ All with 24 points reverse. Burns group I, class II?, colon before *Alexander*, cf. B. fig. 147; gp. I, cl. III, cf. Richardson, *N.M.A. Cat.* 28 (as B. fig. 151 but *Gra.*); gp. II, cl. II, cf. *N.M.A. Cat.* 48 (B. fig. 169); gp. II, cl. III/II, cf. *N.M.A. Cat.* 79 (B. fig. 183); Balliol type, cf. *N.M.A. Cat.* 106, *Dei Gr.* (B. fig. 209).

⁹ B. fig. 219.

¹⁰ B. fig. 225.

¹¹ Brabant, John I, 1261-94, Limburg (Chautard VIII, 10), 1 coin; Flanders, Robert de Bethune, 1305-22, Alost (Chautard III, 2 etc.), 5; Germany, Louis IV of Bavaria, Emperor 1314-47, Aix (Chautard XXII, 4), 1; Guelders, Raynold I, 1272-1326, Arnhem (Chautard XXXI, 4), 1; Hainault, Jean II d'Avesnes, 1280-1304, Valenciennes (Chautard IV, 1), 1; Ligny, Waleran II, 1304-53, Serain, crowned head facing in circle (cf. Chautard XVIII, 4) 2; head in triangle (Chautard XVIII, 3), 1; Luxemburg, John the Blind, 1309-46 (Chautard XV, 10), 2; Porcien, Gaucher of Châtillon, 1303-29, Yves (cf. Chautard XIX, 3), 4; Neuf-Château (cf. Chautard XIX, 4), 1.

<i>Total</i>	<i>Burns Nos.</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Fox Groups</i>	<i>Total</i>
CANTERBURY				
1	A5		IIb	1
1	A7		IIIb	1
44	A14-15	Includes vars. to A25, IVc	IIIc-d	44
4	A26		IVd	4
4	A27		IVe	4
1	A36	Star	IXa	1
7	A37	Star	IXb	7
11	A37	No star	IXb	11
8	A38		Xa	8
2	A38	Edwr R	Xb	2
88	A39		Xb	88
181	A40 }	Must include A42-9, later X to XVc	Xc-f	182
1	A41 }			
1	A45		XIb	1
1	A46		XIc-XII+	1
2	A50	Gothic n	XVd	2
<hr/> 357				<hr/> 357

CHESTER				
1	A16-17		IIIg	1
1	A37	No star	IXb	1
<hr/> 2				<hr/> 2

DURHAM				
1	A5		IIb	1
5	A13	Northern var.	IIIe	5
3	A14-15		IIIc	3
1	A16-17		IIIg	1
5	A28	Annulet-moline cross, no pellets on breast	IVb-c	5
1	A30		V	1
1	A37	Moline cross; star	IXb	1
4	A37	—; no star	IXb	4
9	A37	plain cross; no star	IXb	9
6	A38		Xa	6
2	A39	plain cross	Xb	2
3	A39	moline cross		3
16	A40	plain cross	Xc-f	16
46	A40	moline cross		46
2	A41	moline cross		2
21	A44	Crozier	XIa-b	21
1	A46	A of XIc; crozier	XIc	1
1	A46	Crozier	XII or XIII	1
10	A46-8	Lion and lis	XIII-XIV	10
9	A49		XVa-c	9
<hr/> 147				<hr/> 147

<i>Total</i>	<i>Burns Nos.</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Fox Groups</i>	<i>Total</i>
EXETER				
2	A37	Star	IXb	2
1	A37	KINGSTON-UPON-HULL Star	IXb	1
LINCOLN				
10	A14-15	Probably includes IIIg	IIIc-d	10
LONDON				
6	A1	Roman N	Ic	6
7	A3	}	IIa	13
6	A4			
6	A5			
2	A6		IIb	6
1	A8		IIIa	2
1	A11	Not distinguished by Fox	IIIb	1
77	A14-15	Probably includes later vars. to A25, IVc	III var. IIIc-d	1 77
9	A16-17		IIIg	9
1	A18		IIIh	1
4	A19	}	IVa-c	11
7	A22			
22	A26		IVd	22
1	A27/26		IVe/d	1
3	A27		IVe	3
1	A29		V	1
5	A31		VII	5
8	A33-34		VIII	8
10	A35-36	Star	IXa	10
3	A35-36	No star	IXa	3
27	A37	Star	IXb	27
29	A37	No star	IXb	29
10	A38/37		Xa/IXb	10
7	A38		Xa	7
4	A38	Edwr R	Xb	4
4	A39/37		Xb/IXb	4
65	A39		Xb	65
294	A40	} Must include A42-9, later	Xc-f	303
9	A41			
1	A50	Gothic n	XVd	1
630				630
NEWCASTLE				
4	A13	Northern var.	IIIe	4
7	A37	Star	IXb	7
4	A37	No star	IXb	4
2	A38		Xa	2
17				17

<i>Total</i>	<i>Burns Nos.</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Fox Groups</i>	<i>Total</i>
		YORK		
3	A5		IIb	3
5	A7		IIIb	5
1	A13	Quatrefoil	IIIe	1
9	A14-15		IIIc	9
4	A37	Star	IXb	4
1	A37	Star; quatrefoil	IXb	1
8	A37	No star	IXb	8
1	A49-50	Gothic n	XVd	1
<hr/> 32				<hr/> 32