

TWO FOURTEENTH-CENTURY COIN HOARDS FROM LANCASHIRE

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Abstract

This paper discusses two medieval coin hoards recently discovered near Clitheroe and places them in their historical and numismatic context. The hoards were reported to Stuart Noon, the Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) for Lancashire and Cumbria, who asked the author to identify and interpret them.

Discovery and summary of the contents

The smaller of the two hoards was discovered in early 2017 in a field close to Pendleton Hall, south-east of Clitheroe. Its Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) reference number is LANCUM-18B6DA. The hoard contained six silver pennies of Edward I (who reigned between 1272 and 1307). There was no evidence of a container. Analysis of the LiDAR data shows that the hoard was not associated with any archaeological features. The small size of the hoard suggests that this was a purse hoard rather than a savings hoard.

The second and larger of the two hoards was discovered in late 2017 by multiple finders in a field between the villages of Sawley and Rimington, near Swanside Beck, north-east of Clitheroe (PAS number LANCUM-730B56). The coins were discovered scattered over an area of 15m² with no evidence of a container. Analysis of the LiDAR data shows that the hoard is not associated with any other nearby archaeological features. The Sawley hoard comprises 37 silver coins of Edward I and Edward II (r. 1307–27) and two silver Scottish pennies of Alexander III (r.1249–86) and John Baliol (r. 1292–6), giving a total of 39 coins in total.

Detailed lists of both hoards are shown in Appendices 1 and 2.

Dating and weights

The Pendleton hoard

The latest coin in the Pendleton hoard dates to the 1280s and so a deposition date of the mid- to late-1280s or early 1290s can be estimated. The coins have been allocated to different classes, each of which represents the coin's date and type. The absence of later coins of classes 5 to 8 (c.1289–c.1299) may not be significant because mint output was significantly lower in the 1290s compared with the 1280s (Allen 2012, Appendix C). The coins are all in good condition showing little signs of wear or 'clipping' (where the coins have had their edges cut off illegally to profit from the silver). The coins weigh just over and some just under the correct weight of 22.2 grains (1.43 grams), which was the standard weight of the penny between 1279 and 1344 (Allen 2012, 147). It is worthy of note that the 22.2 grain standard was temporally reduced in the Royal mints to 22.0 grains in 1280 to provide the king with extra profits. The 22.2 grain standard was restored in early 1281 (Allen 2012, 148). The condition and weight of the coins suggests that they were deposited soon after entering circulation, which would support a deposition date in the 1280s rather than later. Being a small hoard it would be unwise to draw too many conclusions on its exact deposition date.

The Sawley hoard

The latest coin present in the larger Sawley hoard dates from between c.1312 and c.1314 and so a date of c.1312–c.1315 for the hoard's deposition can be suggested. The absence of coins later than 1314 may be significant in terms of dating. The three latest coins weigh between 1.30g and 1.39g,

and the mean weight for all the coins in the hoard is 1.32g. However, the recorded weights of the coins should be treated with caution as there is the possibility of incorrectly calibrated scales and incorrect readings (Figures 1 & 2). The presence of the Scottish coins does not shed light on the deposition date. Between John Baliol being deposed in 1296 and the recovery of Berwick in 1318 by Robert I there was no Scottish coinage minted and Scottish issues of Alexander III are frequently found in Edwardian hoards dating between 1280 and 1351 (Figures 3 & 4) (Allen 2012, 479–90).



Figure 1 Edward I penny class 2b



Figure 2 Edward I penny class 10cf2a



Figure 3 Alexander III penny class J



Figure 4 reverse of Figure 3

Summary of classes, mints and denominations

This section will provide a more detailed discussion on the contents of the Pendleton and Sawley hoards. Due to the small size of the hoards (less than 100 coins) it is not possible to provide a detailed analysis and comparison with other contemporary hoards. The hoards' small size makes them more liable to bias in terms of class, mint and denomination proportions.

An analysis of the coins in the Pendleton hoard shows that classes 2 and 3 are the most common.

Class	No. of coins	Percentage
Class 2 (late 1279–mid 1280)	2	33.3
Class 3 (mid 1280–c.1282)	2	33.3
Class 3 or 4	1	16.7
Class 4 (c.1282–c.1289)	1	16.7
Total	6	100.0

Table 1: Classes represented in the Pendleton hoard

Among the classes represented in the Sawley hoard, coins of class 10cf make up the largest proportion, followed by coins of class 3. There are no coins of classes 5 to 8 except a probable class 4/5 mule (a coin minted with the current class or type on one side and the previous type on the other). As mentioned above, the 1290s was a period of relatively low mint output, though the small size of the hoard may also be a reason for the absence of these coins. The presence of a small number of Scottish coins is not unusual for English coin hoards deposited in the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries. Scottish coins of this period were minted to the same standards and weights as the English ones and so were frequently exchanged across the border.

Class	No. of coins	Percentage
Class 2 (late 1279–mid 1280)	1	2.6
Class 3 (mid 1280–c.1282)	5	12.8
Class 4 (c.1282–c.1289)	4	10.3
Class 4/5 mule? (1289–90)	1	2.6
Class 9 (c.1299–late 1300)	4	10.3
Class 10ab (late 1300–c.1305)	1	2.6
Class 10cf (c.1305–c.1310)	18	46.2
Class 11 (c.1310–c.1314)	3	7.7
Scottish issues (c.1280–96)	2	5.1
Total	39	100.2

Table 2: Classes represented in the Sawley hoard

During the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries London and Canterbury were the two prominent mints in England. The mint can be determined by the mint signature on its coins. These mints were supported by a number of smaller ecclesiastical mints such as Durham, which was taken into the King's hands in 1302–3 and 1305–7 (Allen 2003, 14), and Bury St Edmunds. Temporary mints such as Bristol, Chester, Lincoln, Newcastle and York (both Royal and Episcopal) were opened during times of recoinage. Further details on this are given below.

The mints represented in the Pendleton hoard are Canterbury, Lincoln and London. Coins from London form 50 per cent of the hoard, followed by Canterbury with just over 33 per cent.

Mint	No. of coins	Percentage
Canterbury	2	33.3
Lincoln	1	16.7
London	3	50.0
Total	6	100.0

Table 3: Mints represented in the Pendleton hoard

The geographical distribution of mints in the Sawley hoard shows more variety than the Pendleton hoard due to its larger size. Like Pendleton, coins from London form the largest percentage of coins in the hoard with over 50 per cent, followed by Canterbury with just over 15 per cent. The other coins come from either smaller ecclesiastical mints or temporary mints. There is no sign of any potential northern bias within the mint distribution in either hoard though caution is needed due to their small size.

The Scottish issues of Alexander III (post 1280) and John Baliol did not have mint signatures on the reverse – the exception is some coins of John Baliol from St Andrews which name the mint. The different mints are thought to be represented by the number of points on the mullets or stars on the reverse (Stewart 1971, 216).

Mint	No. of coins	Percentage
Bristol	1	2.6
Bury St Edmunds	2	5.1
Canterbury	6	15.4
Chester	1	2.6
Durham	2	5.1
London	22	56.4
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1	2.6
York (Royal mint)	2	5.1
Scottish mints	2	5.1
Total	39	100.0

Table 4: Mints represented in the Sawley hoard

The penny is the only denomination found in both hoards despite smaller denominations such as the halfpenny and farthing being in circulation. This indicates a degree of selection in both hoards in that only the larger denomination was chosen to be hoarded. Allen compiled a list of the 68 hoards that were deposited in England and Wales between 1279 and 1351 and were discovered before 2002. All but one of the adequately recorded hoards contained more pence than halfpennies or farthings: the exception is the Newcastle-upon-Tyne hoard which contained two gold leopards of Edward III (Allen 2002, 55–63).

The numismatic history of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries

One of the major landmarks in the history of English medieval coinage occurred in 1279 when Edward I issued a general recoinage and changed the design of the coins. The new design featured a single long cross dividing the reverse into four quarters. The previous design, introduced by Henry III with his recoinage in 1247, had a long voided cross (a long cross composed of two edges with a gap in the middle). By 1279 the coinage was in a poor condition: coins were worn and clipped, and foreign coins were in circulation, known as ‘black money’ because they had been struck from poor-quality silver. The condition of the currency led to merchants refusing to accept poor-quality coins as payments for their goods or loan repayments (Mate 1972, 41). The recoinage started in late 1279 and by 1280 temporary mints such as Bristol, Chester and Lincoln had been opened to assist with

the process. Also, new denominations were introduced in 1280 such as the short-lived groat (4d), the halfpenny and the farthing.

The success of the recoinage and the new coins restored trust in the currency and at the same time princes and other rulers from Continental Europe began to imitate the English coins. These Continental coins (known as pollards and crockards) were of slightly less weight compared to the English coins. These coins are frequently encountered in hoards in the British Isles, examples in north-west England being those found in Maryport and Wigton in Cumbria (Savage 2015, 25–7).

By 1299 the currency was again in an unsatisfactory condition with large numbers of pollards and crockards in circulation. In addition good English currency was leaving the country as a result of Edward I's foreign policy and the more reasonable mint prices on the Continent (Mate, 1972, 60). Due to the lack of good money in circulation in the late 1290s and with only small amounts of new coin being produced, Edward was forced to allow the continuing circulation of pollards and crockards despite merchants and others refusing to accept them (Mate, 1972, 64). In 1300 the pollards and crockards were demonetised and Edward instructed that only English sterlings (coins produced in England to the sterling standard of 92.5 per cent silver) were to be current and all Continental issues had to be brought to the mints to be recoinage (Mate, 1972, 67). As with the 1279 recoinage, temporary provincial mints such as Bristol, Chester and Exeter were opened to assist in the recoinage of pollards and crockards in England, which had been completed by 1301.

The recoinage of 1300–1 was the last major monetary event to happen until Edward III's reforms in 1335. The later reign of Edward I after 1301 and that of Edward II saw very few changes to the currency except that mint output had begun to fall sharply by the 1320s, which resulted in the closure of the Canterbury mint in 1323 (Allen 2012, 262).

Conclusions

Firm conclusions about both hoards are difficult given their small size. However, it is reasonable to state, based on their weight and condition, that the Pendleton hoard was deposited soon after the coins entered circulation. It can be argued, based on the similarity of the weights between the earliest and latest coins and the proportions of classes, that the Sawley hoard was assembled from coins taken out of circulation on a single occasion in the early-fourteenth century. Both hoards show no northern bias in terms of mint distribution, with the majority of the coins coming from the southern mints. Both hoards show a degree of selection in terms of denominations. We do not know who originally owned the hoards nor the reasons for burying their wealth. Given the small size of the Pendleton hoard, this could have been an accidental rather than a deliberate concealment. The estimated date of deposition for the Sawley hoard in the early-fourteenth century was a time of uncertainty with hostilities between England and Scotland, and this uncertainty may be the reason for the hoard's deposition.

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Author profile

The author has been an independent researcher and freelance archaeologist and numismatist since 2010, based in Carlisle and specializing in medieval and post medieval coins. He currently assists with the identification of all the medieval and post-medieval numismatic finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme in North West England and beyond. He has published widely in national and local journals on

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Appendices 1 and 2

These lists are based on the treasure reports produced by the author and Stuart Noon. They are laid out with the class first and then the letter forms (e.g. S2 or H2) as listed in North (1989), followed by a description of any double striking or misspelt legends or other observations and by the weight (in grams) and any damage to the coin.

Appendix 1: Pendleton

Edward I pennies (North 1989 classification)

Canterbury (2):

1. Class 3g–4a3; S3, unknown stops possibly commas. Coin is double struck and the obverse legend reads as +GLDNNANGLDNSHY[B] rather than the usual +EDWRANGLDNSHYB. The reverse reads as CIVI/TAS/CA[N or T?]AS/C instead of the usual CIVI/TAS/CAN/TOR. Weight 1.40g
2. Class 4a1, 1.40g

Lincoln (1):

3. Class 3d; H2, 1.45g

London (3):

- 4 and 5. Class 2b; 1.42g and 1.45g
6. Class 3g1; S2 on reverse, coin has been double struck and the obverse legend reads as +EDWR'AN[G]+EDW'HYB and the reverse reads as CIVI/TAS/LOTAS/N. Weight is 1.45g

Appendix 2: Sawley

Edward I and II pennies (North 1989 classification)

Bristol (1):

1. Class 2b, 1.29g

Bury St Edmunds (2):

2. Class 10cf1, 1.36g
3. Class 10cf3b2, straight-sided lettering on reverse, 1.39g

Canterbury (6):

4. Class 3g2; S3, stops 1, 1.36g
5. Class 4b, 1.34g
6. Class 10cf2a, 1.22g
7. Class 10cf3b1, 1.32g (coin slightly chipped)
8. Class 10cf5b, right petal of the central lis of crown is damaged. Incurved lettering on the reverse and angled back C may point to a mule with 11b2 or earlier class 10cf. Weight 1.37g (coin slightly clipped)
9. Class 11b1, reverse legend reads [CIVI/TA]N/CAN/TOR, 1.39g

Chester (1):

10. Class 3g1; S2, 1.19g

Durham (2):

11. Class 10cf2a; cross moline initial mark (indicating the coin was minted under the authority of Bishop Anthony Bek (1283-1311)), 1.35g
12. Class 10cf3b1; unknown initial mark, 1.05g

London (22):

13. Class 3c; H1?, 1.34g
14. Class 4a3; 1.28 g (coin slightly chipped)
15. Class 4b; 1.22g
16. Class 4e; 0.89g
17. Class 4e; no pellet and unbarred A on reverse indicating a mule with either class 5 or early class 4, 1.22g
18. Class 9b1; star on breast, pothook N's, 1.30g
19. Class 9b1; no star on breast, pothook N's, 1.21g
20. Class 9b2; no star on breast, pothook N's, 1.36g

- 21. Class 10ab5 (late variety); tall crown, 1.31g
- 22 to 27. Class 10cf1; 1.73g, 1.39 g, 1.38g, 1.36g (2), 1.31g
- 28 and 30. Class 10fc2a; 1.34g, 1.31g, 1.28g
- 31. Class 10cf3b1; unbroken O's with C broken at the bottom on the reverse, 1.33g
- 32. Class 10cf3b1; unbroken O's and broken letter D on reverse, 1.36g
- 33 and 34. Class 11a2; 1.30g and 1.30g
- Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1):*
- 35. Class 9b1; Unbarred N on obverse and barred on the reverse, no visible star on breast, obverse double struck, 1.37 g
- York (Royal) (2):*
- 36. Class 3b-d; 0.67g (coin damaged and worn)
- 37. Class 3e; 1.11g
- Scotland single-cross pennies: Alexander III and John Baliol (2) (Stewart and North 1990 and Holmes and Stewartby 2010 classifications):*
- 38. Alexander III class Bb/Mc mule with hair type D, 23 points on reverse, three mullets with six points and one with five, 1.34g
- 39. Alexander III class J issued under John Baliol in the name of Alexander, +RE/XSC/OTO/RVM reverse, 24 points in total, four mullets with six points, 1.34g

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