



A few Notes on the Coins of the Potter-
Meols Collection, found on the Cheshire Shore,
and presented to the Chester and North Wales
Archæological and Historic Society by Mr. T.
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THE faint radiance that glimmers along the distant horizons of history is so strangely illusive, that the student welcomes any means by which the feeble glow can be caught and focussed into useful light. Perhaps no objects so readily yield their many-sided story as the pieces of money, struck and passed from hand to hand, in the days when other records were few. None of the many creations of the great human family are more durable; and none fix their enduring narrative within such certain chronological limits. It was especially an appreciation of this last attribute that led to this modest enquiry being undertaken.

As it is quite impossible now to say where *all* the coins described by *Dr. Hume*, in his book "Antiquities from the Sea Coast of Cheshire," ultimately found a resting place, it seems reasonable to suppose that a few of them, at least, passed into Mr. Potter's hands; and that, therefore, our list and *Dr. Hume's* may, occasionally, be describing the same specimen. But, in the main, the

two collections are so evidently distinct, that it will be safe to consider them as complementary to each other.

Taking this view, then, and regarding the two portions of the gatherings as one whole, it may be said that they are singularly free from the suspicion of added pieces. A common danger in setting people to look for things, and paying them to do so, is that items are apt to creep in; items, which, genuine enough in themselves, are not of the district. The old prejudice that associates "endowment of research" with bogus discovery, may, however, be ignored for once; for, all through, there is an apparent identity of origin indicated.

Then, concerning another frequent trouble connected with the unearthing of treasure—the leakage. Even liberally allowing for the inevitable loss of many specimens, through their having fallen into the hands of irresponsible people, the gaps in the long series are still formidable. But, if they are carefully analysed, they are found to be just of the order that the antiquary would anticipate on purely historical grounds.

Had we, for instance, been hastily inclined to expect more gold pieces in the collections, a second thought at once explains their scarcity, by their limited circulation in times when even the lowest values of them had such a high purchasing power. Besides, with the exception of Roman or Greek, a few early British, and Henry III.'s so-called "gold penny," no money was struck in the precious metal until nearly the middle of the reign of Edward III., when our little settlement was in a rapid decline.

Were we surprised at the limited number of Greek, Roman, or early British strikings, a consideration of

their solidity immediately demands that a large percentage of those originally scattered must have sunk deeply into the quicksands, as the sea dug them out of their previous resting place.

Deducting reasonable exceptions, the lighter coins have survived the trying conditions best. Copper and Bronze must also have suffered, both in quantity and quality, from the solvent action of vegetable acids in these forest beds.

Turning, however, from these suggestions of loss, let us hasten to examine the wealth we possess, and to be grateful for it.

Taking the yield of this district in its entirety, it proclaims itself the ordinary money of the people; the everyday cash of commerce showing signs of the wear and tear of constant interchange. A favoured specimen here and there, in "mint" state, tells of careful hoarding; but there is no indication of a buried treasure chest, or of the spoils of a lost galleon.

Perhaps the most important problem in connection with a "find" of coins is, "How did they come there"? A careful weighing of all the available evidence, points to the existence of a settlement near Dove Point from the earliest times. This station may have originally been on what was an island at certain states of the tide; but any structure of the nature of a "lake dwelling," as ordinarily understood, is prohibited by the exposed position, and the fury of the winds and waves on this wild coast.

This coast village was, probably, the immediate source of all the miscellaneous collection of coins and antiquities which, for so many years, turned up in its vicinity; but a glance at the immense variety of the "finds,"

compels us to look for some extraneous auxiliary supply. Probably, shipwreck was the great feeder in this case. At a time when the Dee was of a greater relative maritime importance, and more especially in the pre-compass days (when mariners kept closer in-shore), many a goodly vessel must have been caught by the treacherous currents, and urged by the prevalent gales on to this dangerous lee-shore.

Mr. G. H. Morton, in his "Geology of the Country round Liverpool," speaking of shipwrecks, attributes the finds to "objects washed up from them, and subsequently lost or thrown away by the villagers."

From the positions in which the various things occur, it seems certain that they must have passed through the hands of these villagers; that, in fact, as *Dr. Hume* puts it, "Neptune did not hide them; but he assists at their finding by disintegrating the turf-bog, in which hundreds more probably lie buried."

Speaking of another interesting problem, *Dr. Hume* says: "The great bulk of our heterogeneous series will be found to appertain to the 13th century; hence the induction that the settlement then attained the height of its prosperity. From this period its decline seems to have been rapid, pointing to some great flood or other disaster—during which the forest was levelled, and mostly swept away—as a proximate cause."

Morton confirms this, remarking, "most of the objects found belong to the 13th century. The gap after this is probably due to some catastrophe, caused by some wide-spread invasion by the sea; as at Stanlow, towards the end of the 13th century." The picturesque account of the flood at Stanlow, in the "Chronicle of St. Wer-

burg," tells of "a dreadful inundation from the sea in 1279. This calamity was followed, in 1287, by the fall of the great Tower of the Church, in a violent storm. In the same year the lands of the Abbey suffered from a second inundation."

The *coins*, both ours and those listed by *Dr. Hume*, point to a focus of commercial prosperity about the middle of the reign of Henry III. (say 1250); but they do *not* support the idea of a sweeping change so early as the end of the 13th century, as Edward I.'s later issues, and the coinages of Edward II., and even of Edward III., are fairly well represented. Our two Edward III. Quarter-Nobles were not issued until 1351. From this it would appear that, if the destruction of this settlement came from the sea, and no doubt it did, its disappearance did not synchronise with the disaster at Stanlow, but probably took place during the reign of Edward III.

A broken chain of later coins might be regarded as proving the existence of the village, under reduced circumstances, up to quite recent times (say even the middle of the 17th century); but there are evidences that any late community must have lived on quite a different site from the early settlers. Possibly, loss at sea alone is sufficient to explain the existence of the later coins, as they occur in a somewhat irregular sequence. Guineas found on the surrounding sandbanks undoubtedly came from the wreck of a vessel in the reign of William III.

To take the lists a little more in detail, we note the appearance of only three Greek pieces, and they are not important ones; but what a vista of early voyaging they open up! Who brought them from Carthage?

The Roman period is, of course, more favoured. Omitting doubtful items, the *Potter* selection consists of ten specimens, which range from Claudius Cæsar (A.D. 41) to Postumus (A.D. 267). *Dr. Hume's* portion extends from Claudius to Magnus Maximus (the last Roman money struck in England, A.D. 388), and totals 55.

It is of interest to note here, that our own City's "finds" amount to some hundreds of specimens, and cover a period of about two centuries; whilst the dredgings from the Thames, near London Bridge, run from the reign of Augustus (B.C. 30) to that of Honorius (A.D. 423), and are numbered by thousands.

After their complete conquest, the Romans permitted only the Imperial money to circulate in Britain. They only actually struck money here during a century. Mints existed in London and Colchester, from A.D. 287 to 388.

Both the collections under survey are weak in coins emanating from a Romano-British mint. *Hume* quotes one, and also one bearing the "Britannia" reverse, which first appeared during the reign of Hadrian, about 122; but was more generally used by Antoninus Pius (A.D. 140), and is fairly frequent in "finds" from other parts of England.

The appearance of a few of the undecipherable fragments of Roman coins from the Meols colony, suggests the action of fire; no doubt a common enough occurrence in those unsettled days; but how it calls to mind the great rebellion under Boadicea! Probably, the local fire was totally unconnected with the British uprising, which culminated in the destruction of Londinium in A.D. 62. For one reason, Suetonius himself, whose absence from the south gave Boadicea her opportunity,

was at this time up in North Wales, with his victorious army. Even to-day, workmen occasionally cut through the fire stratum which underlies the City of London, and divides the older from the later Roman Metropolis.

Who can say that the coin of Claudius in our possession was not once the property of one of the XXth Legionaries, who came over with him in A.D. 43, and were stationed in Chester.

The coins of the Constantines, so common in most districts, are almost entirely wanting in the *Potter* "finds," and are very poorly represented in *Dr. Hume's*. York, where Constantine the Great was proclaimed in 306, turns them up in hundreds.

At the close of the Roman occupation in 410, comes a long break in the numismatic history of our island. Then we arrive at that interesting link between our Latin and our Teutonic conquerors, the Anglo-Saxon sceat. Unfortunately, the Cheshire shore has not yet yielded a specimen of this; but it may be worth while to note that Professor Reary considers these pieces as, probably, antedating most of the extant Anglo-Saxon and Irish manuscripts or architecture. Fancy little discs of metal belonging to a past when, perhaps, the hallowed stone of our Cathedral's 6th-century font lay unhewn in its native quarry, and before the building of even the Saxon walls of our much-defended City.

The Northumbrian styca (of which *Dr. Hume* mentions three), follows the sceat in about a hundred years. Meols is one of the very few places, outside their ancient limits of circulation, where they have been unearthed.

Amongst the later pieces, the Edgar Penny especially appeals to us, as that King visited Chester; though

Professor Owen throws grave doubt upon the picturesque incident of his row on our famous river.

The Penny of Æthelred II., with the "Hand of Providence" reverse, is an interesting coin. The specimen mentioned by *Dr. Hume* was a distinct one, being more legible as regards the place of mintage.

The "Sovereign" type Penny of Edward the Confessor, reproduces as its obverse the Great Seal of England of that period.

The Pence of Bishop Beaumont and Bishop Hatfield, recall the assistance their distinctive marks rendered in correctly attributing some of the coins of the first three Edwards, when neither dates nor numerals appeared on the money.

Meols has only furnished us with some half-dozen Chester strikings; but then, our local mint was never a very active one.

The little Scottish collection shows that the Scotsman of those early days was just as enterprising as we find him now!

Irish pieces are slightly more plentiful, as one would expect from the proximity of the two coasts. They commence with the 11th century Hiberno-Danish Penny, and run on intermittently to the Half-pence of William III.

Considered as a series, our "cut" half-pence and farthings are the most complete. "Cutting" silver pennies into halves for half-pence, and into four for farthings, was a common practice, and even continued after its prohibition, when the smaller pieces were regularly coined, in 1280.

It is very difficult for us, in this 20th century, to realise the great marketing-power of these insignificant-looking fractions. It helps us, perhaps, if we remember, that a penny in the reign of Henry III. equalled nearly thirteen shillings of our money to-day. The great number of these divided coins in our collection, confirms an opinion that the colony near Dove Point was not a wealthy one, as they far outnumber the pieces of higher value.

“Clipping” is also amply illustrated by many of our specimens, despite the terrible penalties this fraudulent practice entailed.

Quite a fair proportion of “rarities” appear in our lists, notably: Pennies of Henry I., and of the first issue of Henry II., minted at Ipswich; Henry III., struck at Rhuddlan; and one of his of the “Rex Terce” type; also a Penny of John Baliol, coined at St. Andrews; and a Half-penny of Robert III., of Perth; and Farthings of Edward I., of Lincoln and Dublin.

To endeavour to individualise the breaks in the continuity of our long series would be a heavy task, nor is it a necessary one, for, as we noted earlier, they are what could have been prophesied by any student of the circumstances under which the antiquities were found; and they amply confirm the precarious existence, and rapid decline, of this little township, which *Dr. Hume* thinks had quite disappeared before Elizabeth's time.

Appended is a list of the Potter-Meols coins, complete as far as it goes, but not weighted with the special distinctions of the scientific numismatist, which are needless refinements for our purpose.

I must, in closing, gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Newstead and Mr. Shone for kindly help; and to Dr. Hume and Mr. Morton for their books. Without pledging any of these authorities to my views, I may say that this modest Paper could not have been written without their sympathy and assistance.

SUMMARY OF THE "POTTER-MEOLS" COINS

<i>Roman</i> , A.D. 51-268	-	-	-	-	10
<i>Anglo-Saxon</i> , &c., 956-1066	-	-	-	-	8
<i>William I. to Henry III.</i> , 1066-1272	-	-	-	-	79
<i>Edward I. and II.</i> , 1272-1327	-	-	-	-	55
<i>Continental Sterlings</i> , circa 1272-1327	-	-	-	-	4
<i>Edward III.</i> , 1327-1377	-	-	-	-	14
<i>Richard II. to Mary</i> , 1377-1558	-	-	-	-	3
<i>Elizabeth</i> , 1558-1603	-	-	-	-	6
<i>Later and Sundries (Scotch, &c.)</i>	-	-	-	-	42
Grand Total	-	-	-	-	<u>221</u>

SUMMARY OF COINS LISTED BY DR. HUME

<i>Greek</i>	-	-	-	-	-	3
<i>Roman</i>	-	-	-	-	-	55
<i>Ancient British</i>	-	-	-	-	-	3
<i>Saxon and Danish</i>	-	-	-	-	-	12
<i>Anglo-Norman—</i>						
<i>William II. and Henry III.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	88
<i>Edward I. and II.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	70
<i>Edward III.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	6
<i>Richard II. to Philip and Mary</i>	-	-	-	-	-	10
<i>Elizabeth</i>	-	-	-	-	-	14
<i>Later and Scotch, &c.</i>	-	-	-	-	-	86
Grand Total	-	-	-	-	-	<u>347</u>

**List of Coins in the "Potter" Collection, found on the Chesbire
Shore, near Meols, and now in the Chester Museum**

ROMAN

Reign.	Period.	Description	Obverse.	Reverse.	Quantity.	Notes.
Claudius ...	A.D. 41-54	2nd Brass	(?) ...	(?) ...	1	Much worn
Nero ...	" 54-68	"	(?) ...	Female figure, S.C.	1	Worn
Vespasian ...	" 70-79	Denarius	Imp. Cæs. Augg., &c.	Obliterated ...	1	
Aurelius ..	" 161-180	2nd Brass	Aurelius Antoninus, Marcus, &c.		1	Much patinated
Gallienus ...	" 260-268	3rd "	Gallienus Aug., &c.	A Centaur Appolini Cons. Aug.	1	
Postumus ...	" 258-267	3rd "	Imp. C. Postumus P. T. Aug.	Gladiator ...	1	
Various ...	Unat	tributable			4	Corroded
				Total	<u>10</u>	

ANGLO - SAXON

Reign.	Period.	Description.	Type.	Mint.	Quantity.	Notes.
Edgar ...	956-975	Penny	... Cross ...	York	1	Rare, but broken
Ethelred II.	978-1015	"	.. Providence	(?)	1	
"	"	"	.. Common...	York	1	
Cnut ...	1017-1035	"	.. Profile ...	Chester or Leicester	1	Rare Mint
"	"	"	.. $\frac{3}{4}$ -bust ...	London	1	
Edw. Conf.	1042-1066	"	.. Profile ...	Chester	1	"
"	"	"	.. Sovereign	"	1	"
Hiberno-	Danish	"	.. Circa	11th Century	1	
				Total	<u>8</u>	

Reign.	Period.	Description.	Type.	Mint.	Quantity.	Notes.
William I...	1066-1087	"Cut" Farthing...	Uncertain	Uncertain	1	
" I. or II.	1066-1100	" Halfpenny	Star, side face	"	1	Rare
Henry I. ...	1100-1135	" "	Uncertain	London	1	"
" "	"	Penny	Profile	Uncertain	1	"
Henry II. ...	1154-1189	"	1st issue	Ipswich (2); uncertain (1)	3	Scarce
" ...	"	"	2nd "	London, Canterbury, &c.	5	
John ...	1199-1216	"Cut" Farthing...	Irish	Dublin	1	
Henry III...	1216-1272	Pennies	Long Cross	London, Canterbury, Oxford, Rhuddlan, &c.	10	Rhuddlan & "Rex Terci" scarce
" II. or III.	1154-1272 (Mostly Henry III.)	"Cut" Half-pence	Various	London, Lincoln, Dublin, Winchester, &c.	46	An interesting lot
" II. or III.	1154-1272 (Mostly Henry III.)	"Cut" Farthings	"	Uncertain Mints	10	"
Total					79	
Edward I. ...	1272-1307	Pennies	Usual bust	London, Canterbury, Bristol, Lincoln, York, and Bury-St.-Edmunds	25	Interesting
" I. or II.	1272-1327 (Mostly Edward I., but difficult to attribute)	Half-pennies	"	London, Dublin, and Waterford	9	"
" I. or II.	1272-1327 (Edward II.'s are not distinguishable from those of Edward I.)	Farthings	Usual bust	London, Lincoln, and Dublin	6	Lincoln, rare Dublin, "
" II. ...	1307-1327	Pennies	Usual bust	London, Canterbury, and Durham, &c.	15	All, undoubtedly belong to Edward II.
			1316-1333 {	Bishop Beaumont's m.m. Lion rampant and Fleur-de-lis		
Total					55	
" III. ...	1327-1377	Quarter-Nobles	3rd issue, 1351	m.m. Cross, London	2	
" III. ...	"	Half-groat	"	" "	1	
" III. ...	"	Pennies	"	London, York, Durham 2 Bp. Hatfield's, m.m. Bent Crozier	9	Hatfield's, scarce
			1345-1381 {	"		
" III. ...	"	Half-pence	Usual type	London	2	
Total					14	
" I, II, or III.	1272-1377	Sterlings or Derniers	Edwardian bust	Illegible	4	Common
Richard II...	1377-1399	Penny	Usual bust	York	1	Scarce
Henry VII...	1485-1509	Groat	2nd issue	London	1	
Mary ...	1553-1558	"	Mary alone	"	1	
Elizabeth ...	1558-1603	Shillings	Usual	m.m.'s Tun and Martin	2	Worn
" ...	"	Sixpences	"	" Rose and Castle	2	"
" ...	"	Pennies	1st & 2nd issue	"	2	
Charles I. ...	1625-1649	Sixpence	Tower	m.m. Eye	1	"
Total					10	

SCOTCH

Reign.	Period.	Description.	Type.	Mint.	Quantity.	Notes.
Will. the Lion	1165-1214	"Cut" Half-pence	Usual bust	Uncertain	2	
Alexander II.	1214-1249	Pennies	..	Edinburgh	2	
.. III.	1249-1285	..	..	"Rex Scot," &c.	4	
John Baliol	1292-1296	..	..	St. Andrews	1	Rare
Robert III.	1390-1406	Halfpenny	..	Perth	1	Very rare
Total					<u>10</u>	

VARIOUS

"Abbey" Tokens	...	...	..	...	2	
17th Century Tokens, Bristol (1657) and Westbury (1656)	...	...	...	...	2	
William and Mary, Irish Half-pence, 1693 and 1694	...	...	...	...	2	
Foreign Coppers (sundry)	...	...	...	...	5	
One Bronze Naval Medal (worn)	...	...	...	...	1	
Badly Corroded Coins and Fragments	...	...	...	...	19	
Total					<u>31</u>	