

A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY DEPOSIT FROM HULL

By D. M. METCALF

A NOTE in the hand-writing of L. A. Lawrence, kindly made available to me by Mr. Blunt, describes a group of coins 'found many years ago at Hull during the construction of docks'. They were as follows:

- 1-18. 'Sterling' type, full-faced bust. Obv. EDWARDENSIS REX Rev. CIVITAS LONDON. All 18 coins were from the same pair of dies. 10.7, 10.3, 9.6, 9.3 (2), 8.3 (2), 8.2, 7.5 (2), 7.4, 7.0, 6.9 (2), 6.8, 6.4, 5.9, 5.8 gr.
19. Similar, with rev. inscription, MON(ETA) . . . CES. Lawrence writes, 'I think the coin of MARCES has the obv. from the same die as the coins reading CIVITAS LONDON.' 6.6 gr.

We have to do, evidently, with coins struck in imitation of Edward pence, or rather half-pence; and, Lawrence noted, 'struck by John the Blind'. In this he was perhaps thinking of a paragraph in Chautard's *Type Esterlin*, which proposes to attribute a rare billon coin reading MONETA NARCH' to a mint at Marche-en-Famène, in Luxemburg.¹ Another manuscript note records that in 1936 or thereabouts C. A. Whitton had a couple of 'Marche halfpennies'. At a meeting of the Society on 27 February 1946 he exhibited 2 coins corresponding with nos. 1-18 and 19 above respectively and firmly stated to be from the same obverse die².

A note on the discovery of the deposit was published by M. Kitson Clark, who quotes a letter written to her in 1931 by T. Sheppard, the Curator of the Hull Museum: 'I have no evidence of [Roman coins in a vase having been found at Hull] whatever. We merely have a record in one of the old Hull newspapers that such a find was made in Hull a century ago. At the same time in a creek which was excavated when making one of the Hull docks a large number of imitation coins of John the Blind were found, some of which were given to the Museum. I should not be at all surprised if this is not the hoard referred to, as Roman was the name given a century ago to almost anything ancient. The vase [is Roman].'³ Mr. J. Bartlett, the present Director of the Hull Museums, has kindly confirmed that all the post-Roman coins and all the records were lost—and doubtless destroyed—when the Albion Street Museum was bombed in 1943.⁴

It had, perhaps, escaped Sheppard's memory that he had, five years previously, edited a note giving details which, in view of the lapse of time—the discovery was said to have been made 'a little over a century ago' in 1907,⁵—are curious but appear to be circumstantial enough:

Old inhabitants of Hull may remember the discovery many years ago of a collection of small silver coins, which were then considered to be forgeries. They were found during the construction of the Albert Dock, and some of them were for sale in an old coin dealer's shop which then existed in Mytongate. A description appeared in more than one local work dealing with the history of Hull, and they were considered to be imitation Edward I pennies. Through the kindness of Mr F. W. Harness, of Wainfleet, one of them has been

¹ J. Chautard, *Imitations des monnaies au type esterlin frappées en Europe pendant le XIII^e et le XIV^e siècle*, Nancy, 1871, pp. 109 and 385 and plate XIV, 4.

² *BNJ* xxv (1945-48), 90.

³ M. Kitson Clark, *A Gazetteer of Roman Remains in East Yorkshire* (= Roman Malton and District, Report no. 5), Leeds, 1935, p. 93. I listed the deposit

summarily in 'Some Finds of Medieval Coins from Scotland and the North of England', *BNJ* xxx (1961), 88-123, as no. 20.

⁴ In a letter dated 7 September 1964.

⁵ T. Sheppard, 'Notes on the More Important Archaeological Discoveries in East Yorkshire', *The Transactions of the East Riding Antiquarian Society*, xiv (1907), 60.

presented to [the East Riding Antiquarian Society], and it appears the coin is not a forgery, but a demi-sterling of John the Blind (1309–1346), of Luxemburg. These coins were struck in base metal, in imitation of the English coins. These are what are met with in contemporary records under the name of 'Lussbeburgs'.¹

The mention of the Albert Dock is apparently an error. Hull's first modern dock was built under an Act of Parliament of 1774 and completed in 1778. The next was the Humber Dock, which was opened in 1809. The Junction Dock, between the two, was made in 1829. Then came the Railway Dock (1846), the Ferry Boat Dock (1847), and the Victoria Dock (1850).² The Junction Dock was at a later date known as Princes Dock. The Albert Dock was too late a construction to be the source of the hoard of coins. There is no reason to doubt that it is the Humber Dock which is in question; Sheppard's reference to the excavation of a creek (culled from a newspaper paragraph entitled: 'A Hundred Years Ago'?—I have not pursued this) fits in with such an interpretation.³

Six coins, perhaps from among those that were on sale to the public, have found their way into the collections of the British Museum. Three were presented by a Mr. Locking in 1868. Two, including a *MONETA . . . ES*, were obtained from a Mr. S. Smith in 1907 (and one of these is ticketed 21/2/1888). The sixth piece came from Lincoln's in 1902. The striking is often defective, but all six seem to be from the same obverse die, and the five *CIVITAS LONDON* coins from the same reverse die. Three specimens (marked with an asterisk) are illustrated in the accompanying enlarged photographs. The weights of the coins are:

1. 13.4 gr. Locking, 1868.

*4. 8.9 gr. Lincoln, 1902.

2. 9.2 gr. Locking, 1868.

5. 9.0 gr. S. Smith, 1907.

*3. 7.3 gr. Locking, 1868.

*6. 9.6 gr. S. Smith, 1907.



¹ T. Sheppard, 'Local Archaeological Notes', *TERAS* xxv (1926), 1–51, at p. 31.

² See *The Stranger's Guide, or Hand Book to the Port of Hull*, London and Hull, 1852, pp. 27–33.

³ Another point which some local historian may be able to resolve: whether there is any connexion

between the old coin dealer's shop in Mytongate and 'Wallis's Museum' ('the late Mr. G. Wallis, gunsmith, in myton-gate. It is intended very soon to be opened for public exhibition'—*A Modern Delineation of the Town and Port of Kingston upon Hull*, Hull, 1805, p. 56.)

It will be seen that they are in good style, and that they might belong to the first half of the fourteenth century. The lettering is rather large for half-pence. The unbroken inner circle on the obverse, and the crown with only three, instead of five, projections, mark them as of irregular workmanship. The average weight is low, but not too obviously so. The alloy remains undetermined.

The attribution of these coins to Luxemburg rests upon the slenderest evidence. It would be more plausible, considering that Hull was a sufficiently important place to have a mint of its own for the re-coinage of 1300, to interpret them as the work of a local forger.

It may not be out of place to mention the few other finds of medieval coins that are on record from Hull and its vicinity. The most unusual is a gold florin from the Dauphiné, struck by Guigues VIII (1319-33). It was found on the beach at Easington in 1902.¹ A noble, of the pre-treaty period, was found in Hull²; and a treaty half-noble was found at Bridlington.³ Vertue's puzzling gold piece is the only other item of note.⁴

¹ See *Hull Museum Publications* no. 12, 1902, p. 14.

² *Ibid* no. 42, 1907, pp. 9ff.

³ *Ibid*. no. 88, 1912, p. 8.

⁴ *BNJ*, xxx, p. 110, no. 109; *Trans. Yorks Num. Soc.*, 2nd series, ii (1964), p. 18, where suggestion is made that the coin is a Merovingian tremissis from Rodez.