THE 1868 HOARD FROM THE ALBERT DOCK LOCK PIT, HULL

By F. BANKS

FOLLOWING publication of the *Inventory*[1] in 1956 Dr. D. M. Metcalf extended the list of recorded British finds in a group of three papers,[2] the material for which was gleaned from sources not readily available to numismatists. One such find noted in the last of these papers was of a small parcel of 19 coins from Hull attributed as demi-sterlings of John the Blind (1309–1347).

In amplification of the reference Dr. Metcalf collected together the available information and published this in *BNJ* xxxiii, 1964,[3] with details of six coins in the British Museum collection believed to be from the hoard. This paper, intended as a starting point for further and more local research, relied upon information which, from circumstances beyond Dr. Metcalf's control, was incomplete. During the Hull air-raid the Albion Street Museum suffered damage, not so much from the incendiary bomb as from tons of water and rough handling. The collections were hurriedly salvaged and removed to a safer place and, following the death of Thomas Sheppard, are only now receiving the attention he himself would have desired. Mr. John Bartlett, writing in 1964,[4] could not have known that seventeen of the original nineteen pieces recorded in the Museum catalogue of 1927[5] were to be found later strewn amongst unsorted material left as it was salvaged. With the coins was the original descriptive slip from which the catalogue entry was made. Sheppard was a keen numismatist although his correspondence with Miss Kitson Clark in 1931 does reflect an element of expediency in response to a persistent demand upon his time. His catalogue entry stated clearly that the hoard was 'found during the construction of the Albert Dock, 10th September, 1868'.

Mr. William Foot Walker, Secretary to the East Riding Antiquarian Society, in drawing attention to the above entry has also made available a copy of an article by Alderman John Symons, a keen local antiquarian, on 'A Discovery of Ancient Coins in Hull' published in 1889 in his book, *Kingstoniana*. Symons says:

'Some time in September, 1868, Mr. Dale Thomas[6] called upon me and told me that a vast number of small coins had been found by the navvies while excavating the West Dock, now known as the Albert Dock. The excavation was then nearly completed, except near the dock entrance, and here were concentrated on the finishing operations, about six hundred men . . .

'The whole of the navvies who worked in the gang stated that they were discovered twenty one feet below the surface at the extreme end of the dock near the Lime Kiln Drain . . . One of the men struck his spade on . . . a cist containing a number of small coins . . . in a very fine state of preservation, the head being very distinct. . . . As soon as the coins fell out there followed a general scramble for them'.

[1] *Inventory of British Coin Hoards, AD. 600–1500* by J. D. A. Thompson, R.N.S. Special publication No. 1, 1st edition 1956.

[2] Find Records of Medieval Coins from Gough's Camden's *Britannia*, *NC* 1957. Eighteenth century Finds of Medieval Coins from the Records of the Society of Antiquaries, *NC* 1958. Some Finds of Medieval Coins from Scotland and the North of England, *BNJ* xxx, 1960.

[3] 'A Fourteenth-century Deposit from Hull', by D. M. Metcalf, *BNJ* xxxiii, 1964, pp. 80–82.

[4] *Ibid*, note 4.

[5] *Hull Wilberforce House Museum Catalogue, 1927* (Hull Museum Publication No. 124), p. 37, Item no. 389.

[6] Superintendent Dock Master to the Hull Dock Company.

The finder, a Michael Farran, said they had 'tumbled some hundreds out of the muck when digging' and 'divided them between the men and boys'. Thinking them of no value he had kept none for himself.

Symons mentions that, news of the find reaching London, the Treasury 'made a raid upon the holders'. This raid does not appear to be on local record. I am grateful to Mr. Hobson and the staff of the British Transport Docks Board in Hull who have carried out a close search of their records without result[1] and also to Mr. Philip T. Meldrum who has carried the enquiry to the Records Department of Kingston upon Hull Corporation. Dr. K. J. Allison, presently working on the *Victoria County History of Hull and East Yorkshire* has no knowledge of references to the hoard. No local record is held and Sheppard's reference to an old press notice would elicit no more than Symons' painstaking enquiry at the time of the discovery. In the absence of such a report we cannot assess the precise size of the hoard and must rest upon the finder's estimate of 'some hundreds'.

The find spot in the bank of the old Lime Kiln Creek (now the lock pit of the Albert Dock) was once a mouth of the River Hull delta at its confluence with the Humber. Symons states, on loose authority, that this old course was sealed off in the time of Edward I so that the river in its new (and present) course would scour and offer access to vessels of deeper draught. In 1300 Hull's sole regal issue was made, presumably to meet the area's demand for coin. It is acceptable to associate the hoard's deposit with a period coincident with the expansion of the King's Town upon the Hull, a growing port which in the time of Edward III was already taking trade from York itself and whence northern wool was being shipped to the Scheldt in ever increasing quantities.

Mr. R. Weiller of the Luxembourg State Museums has kindly given me further details in amplification of a reference to the hoard made in a recent paper.[2] Dr. Lawrence's information on the known surviving pieces was passed to Messrs. Bernays and Vannérus who wrote it into their 1934 'Complément' to the standard work on the coins of Luxembourg.[3] The pieces here mentioned were three in the British Museum (presumably listed numbers 18, 19 and 20), nine pieces in his own collection and nineteen in that of the Hull Museums. The text, in translation, is not conclusive upon whether those of Dr. Lawrence are included in the nineteen which are stated to be the total of the deposit. Miss M. M. Archibald informs me that, additional to the six pieces listed by Dr. Metcalf, the B.M. collection also contains one of 8·1 gr (·526 gm), and apparently from the hoard, which was acquired in 1912 ex Lawrence.

One is at once aware of the coincidence between the detail of the coins in the Hull Museum catalogue and those in the list of Dr. Lawrence which has been preserved by Mr. Blunt.[4] A routine weight check of the pieces in the Hull Museum was carried out on a modern instrument under facilities offered by the East Riding Group Pathologist at the Beverley Westwood Hospital Laboratory. The comparison, generally, is in agreement but if these are the same coins there is sufficient discrepancy in them, weight for weight, to suggest that the figures furnished to or by Dr. Lawrence are rather less than accurate. I am satisfied, in lack of conclusive evidence to the contrary, that the list of Dr. Lawrence's pertains to

[1] Some old records which might have helped were cleared out and destroyed shortly after the last war.

[2] 'Medieval Coins of Luxembourg in the British Museum', R. Weiller, *NC*(7) vii (1967), p. 183.

[3] *Histoire Numismatique du Comté puis Duché de Luxembourg et de ses Fiefs* (with Supplement), by E. Bernays and J. Vannérus, Brussels, 1910; *'Complément'* Brussels, 1934, pp. 49–50, pl. 1, fig. 6. A specimen of dies A.2, ex Bernays, is in the Cabinet des Médailles de la Bibliothèque Royale, 5 Rue du Musée, Bruxelles I, Belgium.

[4] See Metcalf (note 3, p. 65).

the Hull Museum coins and that the weights given to or by him were an acceptable approximation. I should mention, at this point, that the weights of three of the B.M. specimens were inaccurately given by Dr. Metcalf in his earlier paper. In two cases this arose from incorrect ticketing detail and the third as the result of an uncorrected printer's error. This can easily happen.

Comparison of the few coins made known to us brings certain points to notice. These are:—

1. The obverse die, reading +EDWARDENSISREX, is the same for all pieces examined, as Dr. Metcalf has pointed out. The head and its three-pointed crown are unmistakeable.
2. The reverse dies, linked by the common obverse die, are two in number. They read CIVI TAS LON DON and MON ETA MAR CES, the legend cut by a central cross with groups of three pellets in each quartering. Minor imperfections in the 'LONDON' die are noticeable.
3. The lettering is also distinctive, particularly in the N of accentuated Lombardic style. Were it not for the wedge-tailed R, with which it can be compared, it could be misread for such.
4. The dies, although evidently the same in each case and used throughout, do show signs of what can be taken for wear between one coin and another. Ghosting is extensive too.
5. All coins examined are poorly struck. In Appendix A, in which the readings are given, it is noticeable that legibility is about 50%; and this is a high figure since many letters can only be partially read.
6. The die-axis, over the sample, is irregular and does not conform to a boxed-die pattern.
7. It is unsafe, on the basis of the sample alone, to assess an average weight standard for the issue. The extremes recorded are 5·55 gr (·3545 gm) and 11·1 gr (·761 gm). The main range might be between 6·5 and 9·5 gr (·421 and ·615 gm).
8. The coins, with one exception (Hull Museums), are of a like condition and appearance. The silver content is low and the exceptional piece has an appearance of copper which has been silver washed. The ticket with the B.M. coin ex Dr. Lawrence carries the description 'Æ (Plated)' which, Miss Archibald informs me, it is not. Dr. Metcalf has undertaken surface analysis of two pieces and his findings and remarks follow this paper.

In the list at Appendix A I have not shown the two coins exhibited by Mr. C. A. Whitton to the British Numismatic Society on 27th February, 1946, as insufficient detail is given in the *BNJ* notice. Their common obverse die identity indicates my listed types A 1 and A 2.

Consideration of origin and dating of the deposit presents obvious difficulties. Dr. Lawrence was tempted to associate Die 2 with the reverse of a rare billon coin attributed to Marche-en-Famenne (now in Belgium), temp. John the Blind (1309–1347), the reading of which is MONETA NARCH. This similarity and the common baseness of the alloy with the Hull coins can naturally lead to a suspicion of common origin. There is, unfortunately, no evidence that the Hull issue enjoyed any circulation at all, either here or on the Continent. This is unusual when we have evidence of other issues of this nature which appear in hoards and as single finds from time to time.

The recognition of these pieces as being of a kind and of an unknown type, and no knowledge of other provenance, determined Dr. Metcalf to attribute the hoard as the output of a local forger. This is quite possible. We have also to acknowledge the fact that there is ample evidence of the importation of base Continental coin over this period. The bulk of such pieces are of higher silver content than those in the Hull deposit and in billon (which these appear to be) are rare indeed. The use of Die 1 may be interpreted as indication that the issue was intended to mix alongside the regular English pieces but in this case Die 2 would be unnecessary. The find spot indicates trans-shipment. They could have been going to, say, London for distribution there, although their imitative character would be at once recognised thereabouts one would expect, or the converse argument can be applied and a Continental destination considered. In this case the destination would have been an area where all three dies were acceptable. If the MONETA MARCES die is credibly in imitation of a known die from a mint of John the Blind it is possible that the coins of this mint passed in John's territories in the Low Countries. It would be presumptuous to assume that the traffic in coins as base as these was all one way although the profit in England would have been greater than on the Continent where a lower silver standard was accepted. The political and commercial climate of the period could have offered gain to those with the means and the wit to take their chance in the traffic. I put this view forward purely for consideration and would stress my own neutrality regarding origin and purpose.

Doubts have been expressed in the past on the authenticity of the hoard. Had this been the case the forger would have been knowledgeable in numismatics to the extent of

a: Cutting dies of such good style;

b: Introducing the element of continental coins (of MARCES) in the proportion one would expect to find in such a hoard;

c: Concealing the hoard in a spot where it must be found, and

d: Obtaining or manufacturing a suitable container.

This doubt of authenticity was voiced at the time of the find and Symons closely questioned as many as possible who were present at the finding. All, without exception, affirmed that the cist (a stone hollowed out as a container) could not have been planted without their knowing it and Michael Farran himself had no doubts about it, which he could have been expected to have held had any suspicious circumstances attached to its embedment in the earth there. To my mind the account so lucidly set down by Symons dispels any doubts on the find itself—

'They had sold some hundreds for a mere trifle, consequently they could not have been planted for gain; and as there were night and day watchmen, such planting would be difficult'.

Aquilla Smith, to whom one of the coins was sent, expressed the opinion that it was genuine (a halfpenny of Edward I). The expressions of doubt at this time were possibly influenced by the exposure of Billie and Charlie less than a decade before and similar productions elsewhere which made frequent appearances.

The proportion of Die 1 and Die 2 to each other cannot be estimated with accuracy on the basis of such a slender sample and therefore any deliberate attempt to contrive a pattern to the hoard content cannot be assumed. Any suggestion that this was the case and that 19th century forgery has been presented to us is finally dispelled by the analysis carried

out by Dr. Metcalf and Miss Hamblin. I believe the conclusions reached must decide this particular question once and for all.

It could happen that further specimens will be noted and other dies emerge as a result. We shall only arrive at a dating for this deposit when a Hull type can be identified in a dateable hoard of mixed content. So far we have no record of association with anything at all. It is just possible that the 1868 Treasury Inquiry arrived at a determination of hoard content which might have given a pointer in this. In the absence of this record the little evidence remaining gives no hint of other types being found. A notification of any unlisted pieces will be welcomed. I am inclined to believe, though, that the sample examined is representative of the whole; we have drawn upon a diverse field.[1]

I must express my thanks to Mr. R. H. Thompson, Librarian to the British Numismatic Society and to Mr. J. E. Bartlett and Miss N. R. Whitcomb of the Hull Museums for the generous help they have given in this enquiry and to those I have referred to in my text, particularly, Dr. Metcalf, Miss Archibald and Mr. Foot Walker. Such help and goodwill has been remarkable throughout by all concerned and has made my discussion of the facts relatively straightforward. Discussion on origin must consider other facts with which I am not competent to deal and I trust, therefore, that what I have recorded will assist those whose work lies in that direction.

Notes to Appendix A.

The Hull Museum coins are believed to have been acquired shortly after the discovery of the hoard. One came from a donor at Withernsea, East Riding.

B.M. Nos. 1, 2 and 3 were presented by Mr. William Locking of 193 Coltman St., Kingston upon Hull, in 1868.

The F.B. pieces came from a private collection at Kettering, Northants, in 1963, via Mr. J. Smith of Stonegate Coins, York.

The W.F.W. pieces came from a local collection via a Hull auction *c.* 1953.

The specimen in the Brussels Museum (see Note 3, p. 66) is ex Bernays. The provenance was unknown and the 'Complément' does not record the die-axis.

The pieces in the collection of Peter Woodhead have no attached provenance or pedigree. One of Mr. Blunt's came from Lincoln's in 1925, also without provenance.

I have used abbreviations to indicate the location of these known survivals as follows:—

H.M.	Hull Museums
B.M.	British Museum
F.B.	F. Banks, Esq.
W.F.W.	W. Foot Walker, Esq.
BRUSSELS	Brussels Museum
P.W.	P. Woodhead, Esq.
C.E.B.	C. E. Blunt, Esq.

Specimens of the coins are illustrated (enlarged) on plate XXI. These are the A 1 combination only as a clear A 2 specimen is not at present available.

[1] Examples of these pieces are not known to the Yorkshire and Leeds City Museums and enquiries of the smaller museums in the area have proved negative. None are in stock at Messrs. B. A. Seaby Ltd. and none in the stock or well known forgery trays of A. H. Baldwin and Son.

APPENDIX A

ALBERT DOCK HOARD
HULL. 10th SEPTEMBER, 1868
KNOWN PARCELS

DIES A EDWARDENSISREX
1 CIVI TAS LON DON
2 MON ETA MAR CES

			gm	gr	Die Axis	Die Identity	Obverse	Reverse
1	H.M.	1	·432	6·68	↖	A 2	A RE	MON ES
2		2	·452	6·98	↗	A 1	+E SISREX	TASLON
3		3	·5372	8·29	↙	A 1	+EDW EX	CIVITA NDON
4		4	·7015	10·85	↖	A 1	+EDW ENSISR	C ASLONDON
5		5	·384	5 92	↙	A 1	+E ENSISREX	CIVI DON
6		6	·4875	7·54	↙	A 1	RDEN REX	CIVITA DON
7		7	·4845	7·48	↙	A 1	+EDWAR REX	CIVI ONDON
8		8	·552	8 52	↗	A 1	WARDEN	TASLONDO
9		9	·418	6·41	↖	A 1	DENSIS	CIVITAS ON ON
10		10	·4658	7·18	↙	A 1	+ W N X	CIVITAS N
11		11	·494	7·61	↖	A 1	+E AR ISREX	C VITASLONDON
12		12	·449	6·92	↘	A 1	+ ISREX	TAS OND
13		13	·466	7·2	↖	A 1	+ WARDENSISREX	TASLONDO
14		14	·607	9·36	↗	A 1	NSISREX	CIVITAS N
15		15	·387	5·98	↙	A 1	+EDWARDE X	CIVITA DON
16		16	·609	9·4	↙	A 1	+EDW NSISRE	CI ONDON
17		17	·638	9·81	↓	A 1	+E ENSISREX	C SLONDON
18	B.M.	1	·761	11·1	↙	A 1	+EDWA ENSISREX	CIVITASLONDON
19		2	·5961	9·2	↖	A 1	+EDWARDENSISREX	CIVI LONDON
20		3	·4729	7·3	→	A 1	+EDW EN REX	C VITASLONDON
21		4	·5767	8·9	→	A 1	+E AR SISREX	CIVITASLONDON
22		5	·447	6.9	↙	A 2	+EDWARDENS EX	MONETAM CES
23		6	·568	8·8	↘	A 2	+ X	MONETAM S
24		7	·526	8·1	↙	A 1	DENSISREX	C TASL DON
25	F.B.		·418	6·45	↙	A 1	+E RDEN EX	CIVI DON
26			·4893	7·57	↘	A 1	+EDWARDEN X	CIVI ONDON
27			·541	8 38	↖	A 1	+EDWAR X	CIVI ONDON
28			·5329	8·28	↖	A 1	WA ENSISRE	ASLONDON
29			·677	10·4	↙	A 1	+ NSISREX	CIVITAS DON
30	W.F.W.		·37	5·75	↙	A 1	+EDWARD REX	C DON
31			·4517	6·95	↙	A 1	+EDWAR	CIVITAS
32			·532	8·22	↙	A 2	+E SREX	NETA
33			·681	10·5	↖	A 2	WARDEN X	ETAMARCES
34	BRUSSELS		·46	7·1		A 2	ARDENSI REX	ETAMARCES
35	P.W.		·3545	5·55	↙	A 1	+ ISREX	CIVITASLO N
36			·6240	9·52	←	A 1	+EDWAR EX	CIVITA DON
37			·4959	7·65	↙	A 2	ARDENSI EX	MONETA S
38	C.E.B.		·4518	6·96	↙	A 1	+ ARD ISREX	CIVITASLO D N
39			·4620	7·15	→	A 1	ENSIS	A DON

APPENDIX B

ANALYSIS OF THE METAL CONTENTS OF COINS FROM THE HULL HOARD

By D. M. METCALF *and* L. K. HAMBLIN

The opportunity to undertake an analysis of the metal contents of the Hull halfpence was welcome for more than one reason. We hoped that, if it proved possible to detect a range of trace-elements or minor constituents in the alloy, such as occurs in many medieval coins, the results would put the authenticity of the Hull pieces beyond question, and would dispose of the suggestions, made at the time of their discovery a hundred years ago, that they were a 'hoax'. Secondly we thought that it would be of interest to know what proportions of silver they contained. It is always difficult to guess the alloy of a debased medieval coin from its surface. The Hull halfpennies, moreover, are variable in their appearance. Some of them are of a reddish colour, with dark grey patches, as though they were of copper which had been lightly silvered. Others are a uniform greyish silver colour, suggesting a base silver alloy.

The analysis was made possible through the generosity of Mr. Banks, who entrusted the specimens from his own collection to us. We selected two of them—one (A) which looked as though it was made of copper, and the other (B) of a much whiter colour. A small area, about 1 mm × 1 mm, on the face of each coin was cleaned with emery paper, 600 grade, in order to discount any superficial effects such as 'surface enrichment', and to obtain results corresponding as far as possible with the original composition of the alloy. The coins were submitted to X-ray fluorescence spectrometry, using the 'Milliprobe' in the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art, at Oxford. The procedures were the same as those which we have followed with other medieval coins, and which have been described fully elsewhere.[1] The results, for the interior composition of the Hull coins, were:

A. Cat. no. 29. Silver, 22–27%. Copper, 70–76%. Lead, 2%.
The cleaned area was at 3 o'clock on the reverse. The initial reading showed only 61–63% copper, indicating surface enrichment with silver, or inhomogeneity.

B. Cat. no. 27. Silver, 28–29%. Copper, 69–70%. Lead, 2–2¼%.
The cleaned area was at 11–12 o'clock on the obverse.

No gold or zinc was detected in either coin. For gold, standards containing as little as 0·1% gold in silver, and also in copper, were used; the lower limit of detectability was somewhere about 0·1%. For zinc, about 0·2% would have shown on the preliminary scan (even though an amount less than about 1% could not have been quantified, with the standards that were available). Zinc is normally absent from English coins of the period; its absence here is in line with what might have been expected.

The amount of lead was high by any comparison. In the middle ages, lead was used in refining silver by the cupellation process, and residual amounts of it were left in the silver. It should have been removed, and its presence can be interpreted as a sign of not very

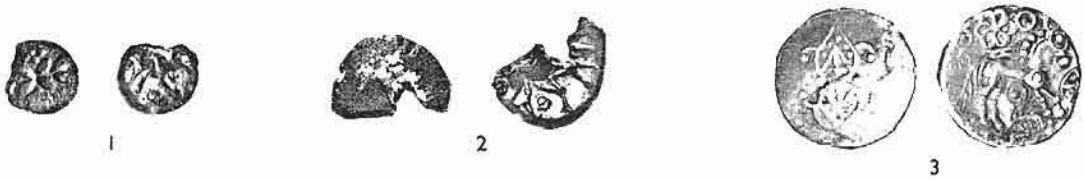
[1] See D. M. Metcalf, J. M. Merrick, and L. K. Hamblin, *Studies in the Composition of Early Medieval Coins* (Minerva Numismatic Handbooks, no. 3), Newcastle, 1968.

efficient refining. Forbes and Dalladay found that thirteenth-century coins,[1] containing around 90% silver, had lead contents in the range 0·4% to 1·5%. For coins with only 25–30% silver, a proportionately less amount might have been expected. The 2% which these coins contain may in part have been a deliberate addition by the counterfeiter, or it may simply reflect a low degree of technical skill. The figures should, however, be regarded as subject to a possible margin of error of about 0·5%, for reasons connected with the standards that were available.[2]

The gold contents of thirteenth-century coins are usually about 0·25%, as shown, again by Forbes and Dalladay. The gold derives, in all probability, from the silver ores, and as it is a 'nobler' metal than silver it survives the refining process. We would have expected a proportionate trace of gold in the Hull halfpence—say, 0·05% to 0·1%, and it is a pity that so small an amount cannot be measured with any degree of confidence on the Milliprobe. Modern (nineteenth-century) silver would be very unlikely to contain even that much gold. A complementary analysis by spark spectrography might eventually be useful. Nevertheless, we think that the figures for lead indicate quite clearly that the two coins are medieval (in the context of all the other features discussed by Mr. Banks), rather than modern objects. There is no analytical evidence which might help to show whether they are of English or continental manufacture. There might be some interest in comparing continental sterlings with their English equivalents, but it seems desirable to clarify one's ideas about what one could hope to demonstrate, before embarking on such a project. In the design and analysis of scientific experiments, no amount of analysis makes up for shortcomings of design!

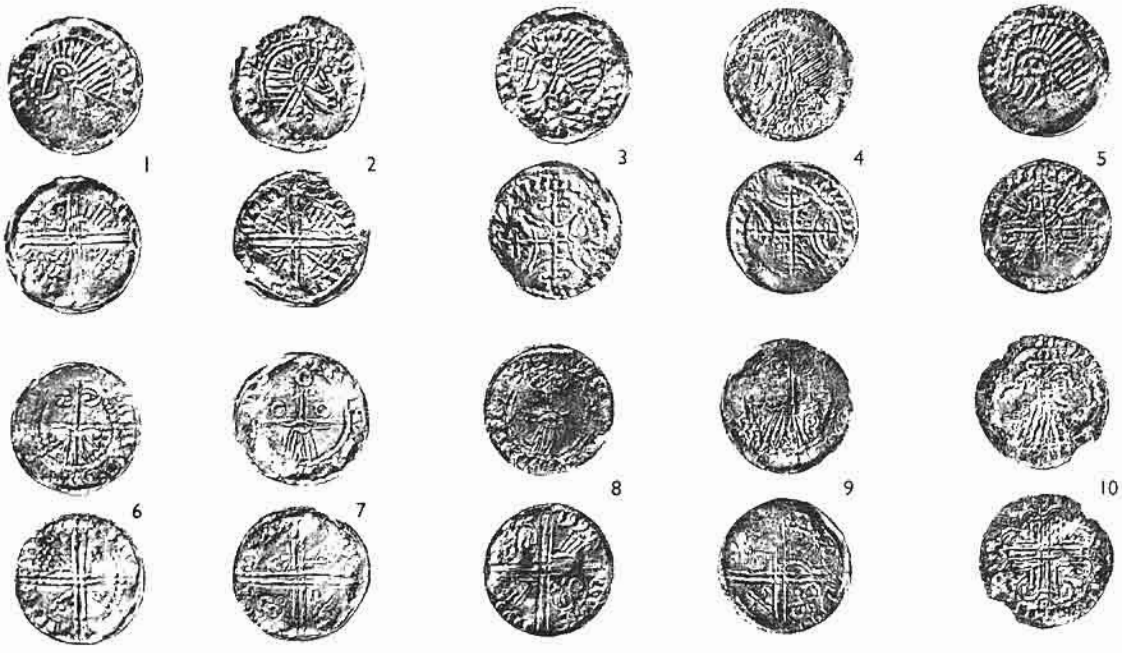
[1] J. S. Forbes and D. B. Dalladay, 'Composition of English Silver Coins (870–1300)', *BNJ* xxx (1960–61), 82–7. As its title indicates, this article stops short of the fourteenth century, but the thirteenth-century analyses are quite self-consistent, and seem to provide an adequate basis for comparison.

[2] They were lead in copper/zinc, which will have a different matrix effect from lead in copper/silver. Also, the closest standards were 1·3% and 1·7% lead, which was not an ideal basis for the graph.



1 2 3

THREE NEW ANCIENT BRITISH VARIETIES



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

DOLLEY & LANE : HIBERNO-NORSE COINS FOUND IN NORTHERN ITALY