

A Small Parcel of Coins from the Oulton, Staffordshire Hoard of 1795 (CCH 266) - An Australian Connection

By Steve Green

From the Staffordshire Advertiser of 7 March 1795:

"as the gardener of Mr Shelley, of Oulton, was digging in his master's orchard, he found a gold ring, and upwards of a thousand small pieces of silver coin, most of which were perfect; and on examination proved to be the coin of St Edward the Confessor."¹

A group of Anglo Saxon and Norman coins recently went to auction in Sydney through Noble Numismatics (Sale 121). To have 5 Pyramid type pennies in an Australian sale is unheard of as far as I am aware, and I immediately sensed that this was something very important. As soon as I saw the group I suspected that they had come from a previously unknown hoard found in the mid 19th century but I had no idea until I conducted further research that they had actually come from a well-known but poorly recorded late 18th century hoard and had been held by the same family for nearly 225 years.

The coins were sent by the vendor very close to auction close-off time and given more time and the expert advice of Hugh Pagan some of the attributions have now been revised.

The parcel comprised 11 coins and 3 large fragments and its only known provenance was from the 'Shelley' collection. The parcel begins with Eadward the Confessor's Expanding Cross – Heavy type (c.1052-3) and terminates with William I's Bonnet type (c. 1068-1070) with the BMC xv 'Pyramids' type (4 coins plus one other coin broken into two fragments) being the most prolifically represented.

The three oldest coins in the parcel are from London, Canterbury and Winchester respectively but the remainder are firmly fixed to the west Midlands.

Samuel Fallows Shelley was born at West Bromwich, (part of Staffordshire at the time) in about 1835 the son of William Shelley and Hannah Parker. Samuel is most likely descended from the Mr Shelley of Oulton, Staffordshire in whose orchard the hoard was found in 1795. John Dent, a solicitor of Stone, Staffordshire in 1798 wrote to Stebbing Shaw:

"A few years ago, I think in the year 1795, there was found in Mr Shelley's garden a large quantity of Saxon coins. There were ten different sorts, and Mrs Shelley has a good many of them now....."²

Samuel Shelley came to the Australian colonies in 1864 and settled in Queensland. He was a farmer at Southport near Brisbane and was married with eight children including his second son Anthony. Samuel died at Southport in 1903 aged 68 years. His death certificate describes his father William Shelley as a 'Gentleman'.³

The only other information that we have about these coins is that Anthony Shelley, the son of Samuel, showed them to the Brisbane Museum in the 1930's. He died in 1947. The parcel was sent to Noble

¹ British Numismatic Journal Volume XXXVIII (1969), pp 24-30, The Stafford (1800) and Oulton (1795) Hoards by P.H. Robinson

² Ibid p. 25

³ Queensland Register of Deaths 1903 / 2229

Numismatics in Sydney for auction by one of his descendants. One could speculate that some or all of the other of Samuel's seven children might have received similar parcels from their father.

Lot 1820 – Expanding Cross – Aelfwine of London

Obverse – EDPE: •RD REX:

Reverse – ÆLPINE ON LVND:

Same reverse die as SCBI 24, 687

Lot 1821 – Elræd of Canterbury

Obverse – EDPR• D REX

Reverse – ELRÆD ON CÆNTCÆN

I haven't found any die duplicates for this but compare BMC 69, ex Chancton hoard, this mint and moneyer, with mint signature CÆNTCÆ:

Lot 1822 – Sovereign Eagles – Anderbode of Winchester

Obverse – EADPARD REX ANGL••

Reverse – ANDERODA• ON PINC

Same dies as BMC 1448, ex Chancton hoard.

Lot 1823 – Hammer Cross – Bruninc of Chester

Obverse - EADPARD REX

Reverse – BRVNINC ON LEGEEC

Die duplicate of SCBI 5, 348, 349 and 350 (and obverse die link with # 351), SCBI 6, 690 and SCBI 17, 436.

These coins either have no provenance or were bought or gifted from early 20th century collections. It is very tempting to speculate that some of these came from the Oulton hoard (but not SCBI 6, 690, known long before the Oulton hoard's discovery).

Lot 1824 – Hammer cross – Aegelwine of Worcester

Obverse – EADPARRD REX

Reverse – [Æ]GELPINE ON PIHREC

Die duplicate of SCBI 20, 1272

Lot 1825 – Pyramids – Edric of Hereford

Obverse – EADPARD REX A

Reverse – EDRIC ON HEREFO

The only other example I could find is SCBI 17, 492 which has no provenance but has been pierced and filled. It appears to be from different dies.

Lot 1826 – Pyramids – Leofnoth of Chester – this coin has very poorly struck legends especially the obverse

Obverse – EADPARD REX

Reverse – LEOFNOÐ ON LEICS:

Probably same dies as SCBI 2, 1169, SCBI 5, 389 and SCBI 9, 1065. It seems likely that some of these, and some other possibly die linked specimens, also derive from the Oulton hoard.

Lot 1827 – Pyramids – Godwine of Stafford

Obverse – EADPARD RE – blurred strike on obverse particularly on the legend

Reverse – GODPINE ON STIE

Die duplicate of SCBI 9, 1079 (mint signature given as STIE) where it is wrongly attributed to Steyning. There are another 10 coins in the SCBI where they are attributed to Stafford and which also appear to be die duplicates – MEC 8, 2324 (mint signature incorrectly given as STÆ), SCBI 18, 1182 (Copenhagen - mint signature not provided, it was obtained from an auction in 1901), SCBI 20, 1328 (STIE and believed to be from Oulton), and SCBI 42, 1662-1668 (all incorrectly STÆ and from 19th and early 20th century collections), # 1664 and 1667 have the same blurred obverse strike). SCBI 30, 655 is the only example to be from different dies. It seems likely that most of these coins again derive from the Oulton hoard.

Lot 1828 – Pyramids – Alfwold of Wilton

Obverse – EADPARD REX

Reverse – ALFPOLD ON PILTV (with a possible stop after AL

There are no other examples in the SCBIs but compare BMC 1362, ex Soberton hoard, this type, mint and moneyer, with same reverse reading but the possible stop after AL not noted.

Lot 1829 – Three fragments

a. Hammer Cross – Wulfric (?) of Lincoln

Obverse – EADPAR[.....]

Reverse – PVL[.....]INCOL

The moneyer is probably Wulfric, as the coin is from the same obverse die as SCBI 7, 764 and 765 but as these coins are from different reverse dies to the present coin an attribution to Wulfric must at present remain probable only.

b. Pyramids – Wulfmaer of Shrewsbury – coin broken into two fragments

Obverse – EADPARD [REX]

Reverse – PVLMI[ER ON SR]O

Probably from the same reverse die as SCBI 17, 503

Lot 1830 – Bonnet – Godwine of Stafford

Obverse – PILLEMV REX

Reverse – GODPINE ON STEFFOR

Same dies as SCBI 17, 517

Lot 1831 – Bonnet – Goldwine of Winchcombe

Obverse – PILLEMVS REX

Reverse – GOLDPINE ON PI

The first recorded coin of the type for this mint and moneyer (as Dr Martin Allen has kindly confirmed in an email to Hugh Pagan).

I have to extend my thanks and acknowledgement to Hugh Pagan who took the trouble to examine photos of the coins and provided corrections and advice to both the attribution and possible die duplicates of the coins. This article could not have been written without his help. I am also grateful to Jim Noble of Noble Numismatics for permission to use his photos shown on the next page.



Pyramids – Edric of Hereford



Pyramids – Alfwold of Wilton



Bonnet – Godwine of Stafford



Bonnet – Goldwine of Winchcombe

Photos are courtesy of Noble Numismatics, Sydney.

