

JONATHAN RASHLEIGH, 1820-1905

HUGH PAGAN

The accident of fate by which the inherited Rashleigh family coin collection was sold by the Sotheby firm of auctioneers in June 1909 as the property of Evelyn William Rashleigh (1850-1926), at that point the collection's owner, has had the regrettable result that the role in the collection's formation played by Jonathan Rashleigh (1820-1905), Evelyn William Rashleigh's father, has been somewhat disguised from posterity¹. The association of this fine specialist collection in the British series with Evelyn William Rashleigh is especially unfortunate in that there is not the slightest evidence that he took any interest in numismatics whatever.

Jonathan Rashleigh, the second son of William Rashleigh MP, a major Cornish landowner whose family had lived at Menabilly, outside Fowey on Cornwall's southern coast, since the middle of the sixteenth century, was born on 7 January 1820. After education at Harrow School and at Balliol College, Oxford (BA 1842), he made an early first marriage on 1 August 1843 to Mary Pole Stuart, daughter of William Stuart, of Aldenham Abbey, Hertfordshire and of Tempsford Hall, Bedfordshire, and, as a younger son not expecting to inherit the Rashleigh family estates, settled with his first wife in London, seemingly as a gentleman of leisure. Their London address, at least from the late 1840s onwards, was 3 Cumberland Terrace, Regent's Park.

The nucleus of a coin collection had already been in the possession of Philip Rashleigh (1729-1811), Jonathan Rashleigh's great-uncle, by 1768, and it cannot be ruled out that this portion of the collection had originally been put together by some earlier member of the Rashleigh family. It was not however until after the discovery in 1774 of the famous Trewiddle hoard of Anglo-Saxon coins and ornamental metalwork, on an estate belonging to John Rashleigh (1742-1803), of Penquite, Cornwall, one of Philip Rashleigh's younger brothers, that the family collection assumed any significance.

This is not the place to discuss the composition and wider significance of the Trewiddle hoard, the subject of a major joint publication in 1961 by David Wilson and Christopher Blunt², but it is convenient to note here that when in 1802 Philip Rashleigh loaned the Anglo-Saxon coins in his possession for study by Taylor Combe, the coin expert at the British Museum, he seems not to have distinguished between the coins owned by him which had formed part of the Trewiddle hoard, probably deposited in the late 860s, and other Anglo-Saxon coins which he had inherited or which he had added to the family collection before or since the discovery of the hoard³. This had the unfortunate result that a surviving list of these coins, given in a letter of 23 July 1802 from Taylor Combe to Rashleigh, preserved in Rashleigh family possession until the 1950s and now preserved in the Department of Coins and Medals at the British

¹ It should in fairness be recorded that the introduction to the Sotheby catalogue notes that "it was reserved to ... the late Mr. Jonathan Rashleigh to bring the collection up to its present standard of quality, to which end, his keen antiquarian and numismatic knowledge greatly contributed", and also notes that "the late Mr. Jonathan Rashleigh bought at most of the principal sales (held at this house) during the last fifty years".

² David M. Wilson and C.E. Blunt 'The Trewiddle hoard', *Archaeologia* xcvi, 1961, 75-122, and plates xxii-xxx.

³ The year 1802 may have been of some significance in Philip Rashleigh's development of the family coin collection, for the 1909 Sotheby catalogue features a number of coins in the later hammered and milled series with provenances from the Tyssen sale in that year.

Museum, was subsequently taken as evidence for all the coins on it either having derived from the Trewiddle hoard itself, if of late eighth-century or ninth-century date, or for having been found close by, if of later date.

This was to have an adverse effect both on published articles on the Trewiddle hoard written separately in the 1860s by Jonathan Rashleigh and by John Jope Rogers, who owned between them at that time the great bulk of the coins and of the metalwork found in 1774⁴, and on the compilation of the Sotheby auction catalogue of 1909, in which tenth-century coins of Aethelstan, Eadmund, Eadred, Eadwig and Eadgar, in Philip Rashleigh's possession in 1802 but quite unconnected with the hoard of 1774 (and not particularly likely from their types and moneyers' names to derive from a find or finds made anywhere in the south-west of England), are nonetheless described, in common with coins in the sale that certainly derive from the Trewiddle hoard, as having been "found near St.Austell, Cornwall"⁵.

The process by which Jonathan Rashleigh became first interested and then deeply interested in numismatics cannot now be recovered. He is likely to have been presented with the family coin collection at some time during his father's lifetime, for his father did not die until 1855, but it can be deduced that the principal determining factor in causing him to embark on numismatics seriously was his acquisition towards the end of the 1840s of the bulk of the great Watford, Hertfordshire, hoard of coins of Henry I and Stephen, written up by him soon afterwards for the *Numismatic Chronicle*⁶. The parcel of coins in question, totalling 1094 silver pennies and 33 cut halfpence, had in fact been discovered as long ago as April 1818 in a field within what was then the hamlet of Oxhey, some two and a half miles south-east of Watford's town centre, and had stayed together ever since. Rashleigh did not disclose in his *NC* article the identity of the individual from whom the coins had come to him, but local contacts must surely have been involved, for Aldenham Abbey (now Wall Hall), his first wife's family residence, is only three and a half miles to the north-east of Watford.

At all events, Rashleigh was elected a member of the Numismatic Society of London on 23 March 1848 and was to remain associated with it and with its successor body, the Royal Numismatic Society, until his death on 12 April 1905⁷. He was elected almost at once to the Society's Council, serving on it continuously for the years 1848/9 to 1853/4, and although he

⁴ J.Rashleigh, 'An account of Anglo-Saxon coins and gold and silver ornaments found at Trewiddle, near St.Austell, Cornwall, A.D.1774, and some remarks on other Anglo-Saxon hoards', *NC*, Second Series, viii, 137-57, 1868; J.J.Rogers, 'Saxon silver ornaments and coins found at Trewiddle, near St.Austell : A.D.1774', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall* ii, 1867, 292-305. Rogers had earlier published a shorter note, 'An account of a collection of Saxon ornaments found in Cornwall', *Arch J* xxi, 1864, 169, 183-4.

⁵ The possibility that these tenth-century coins represented a "second St.Austell's hoard" was dismissed by Wilson and Blunt, *op.cit.*, 111, but was unfortunately resurrected by Michael Metcalf in his *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Coin Finds 973-1086*, 1998, 244. Metcalf seems not to have been aware of the discussion of the topic by Wilson and Blunt, and the present writer pointed out in his review of Metcalf's book, *NC* 1999, 384-6, that Metcalf was wrong in arguing for the existence of this second hoard.

⁶ J.Rashleigh, 'Descriptive list of a collection of coins of Henry I and Stephen, discovered in Hertfordshire, in 1818', *NC*, First Series, 137-65, 1850. The cataloguing of Rashleigh's coins of this period for the catalogue of 1909, although admirable for that date, can readily be improved on today, and it would be excellent if an updated listing were to be produced of the coins that Rashleigh had acquired from the hoard.

⁷ He was at the time of his death the Royal Numismatic Society's second senior Fellow by date of election, being junior only to James Cove Jones FSA (1823-1910), an early Hon.Secretary of the Numismatic Society of London, who had been elected a member of that body on 26 January 1843. Both were senior in terms of length of membership to Sir John Evans (1823-1908), who was only elected to the Numismatic Society of London on 26 April 1849, and who remembered it as being probable that it was Rashleigh who had proposed him as a member.

did not resume membership of the Council in later years, his status within the Society and the numismatic community was recognised by the fact that it was he who was chosen by the Society in 1899 to make the presentation to his oldest and closest numismatic friend Sir John Evans of the portrait medal that had been commissioned to mark Evans's fiftieth anniversary of Society membership and twenty-fifth anniversary as the Society's President⁸.

The course of Rashleigh's long career as a collector and as a numismatic scholar can be traced from his purchases at coin auction sales and from the pages of *NC*, to which he contributed a further important article on the coins of Stephen in the early 1850s, and two major articles in the late 1860s, the first the article on the Trewiddle hoard already mentioned above, and the second on the coinages struck in Northumbria by Anglo-Saxon and Viking rulers up to the middle of the tenth century⁹.

It can be gleaned from the provenances given in the 1909 auction catalogue that Rashleigh's purchases of coins in the sale room effectively began in 1848, when numerous lots were acquired by or for him at the Pembroke, W.A.A.White, Alchorne and Corke sales¹⁰, and continued on a very regular basis up to the end of the 1860s. He was again to be a significant buyer at the Bergne sale, 1873, and rounded off his collection by purchases at a few later sales, including the Shepherd sale, 1885, and the Marsham, Montagu duplicates and Henderson sales, all in 1888. The final acquisitions by him documented by the catalogue are of one, and possibly two, coins purchased at the Henry Webb sale, 1894, and of a single coin from the sale of Hyman Montagu's principal collection in 1895-6.

This last coin, an Oxford pound of Charles I, said to be "one of the finest specimens known", lot 491 in the third portion of Montagu's English coins sold in November 1896, was knocked down to Rashleigh in his own name, and his habit of buying coins personally in the sale room, evidenced throughout his collecting career and recorded in named copies of the catalogues of the sales concerned, enables us today both to check the veracity of some of the provenances given in the 1909 Sotheby catalogue and to provide back histories for some of the coins sold in 1909 without provenances.

⁸ See Evans's tribute to Rashleigh printed as part of Evans's Presidential Address to the Royal Numismatic Society in June 1905, *Proc Num Soc 1904/5*, 29-31. Evans describes Rashleigh here as "the model of a courteous educated gentleman", and notes his willingness to provide information about "his wonderful collection of coins" to "any one really interested in numismatics"

⁹ J.Rashleigh, 'An account of some baronial and other coins of King Stephen's reign', *NC*, First Series, xiii, 181-91 (incorporating a publication of the 1825 Dartford, Kent hoard of coins of Henry I and Stephen, of which Rashleigh had then recently acquired the bulk from the London coin dealer C.R.Taylor); J.Rashleigh, 'Remarks on the coins of the Anglo-Saxon and Danish kings of Northumberland', *NC*, Second Series, ix, 54-107, 1869. The present writer is fortunate enough to possess a bound volume from the library of the numismatic scholar Daniel Henry Haigh which contains copies of all four of Rashleigh's contributions to *NC* cited here, together with Haigh's own retained copy of an autograph letter written by him to Rashleigh on 23 February 1869, in which Haigh discusses various issues arising from Rashleigh's writings on the coinage of Stephen and on the coinage of Viking Northumbria.

¹⁰ Three of the coins featured in the auction catalogue had featured in the 1844 sale of the Duke of Devonshire's collection, with no intervening provenance between then and their acquisition by Rashleigh being stated, but Rashleigh will doubtless have acquired them via the coin trade subsequent to the 1844 sale. That his purchases from coin auctions commenced, to all intents and purposes, in 1848, can be concluded from the fact that only one coin in the catalogue has a recorded provenance going back without any intervening ownership to the Durrant sale, 1847, which was strong in all the series in which Rashleigh was later to be particularly interested, and this coin, lot 871, a half-guinea of Queen Anne sold to Rashleigh under his own name, will have been an isolated purchase by Rashleigh as a saleroom beginner.

The position on this front is not wholly straightforward, for at some sales, most notably at the W.A.A.White sale in 1848, Rashleigh seems to have put all his bids through a dealer, in this instance Cureton. At some other sales Rashleigh seems to have purchased some lots under his own name and others through a dealer, and a prime example of this is the Cuff sale, 1854, where Rashleigh purchased some lots under his own name but appears to have acquired a rather larger number of lots via the dealer Jacob Wolf Dantziger. Additionally, a fair number of coins known to have passed to Rashleigh from well-known collections were evidently post-sale acquisitions from members of the coin trade, and here it is appropriate to instance the Pembroke sale of 1848, at which Rashleigh is recorded in named copies of the catalogue as the buyer only of lots 14, 36, 61 and 156 (to which can be added lots 19 and 106, knocked down to a purchaser 'Steuart', divinely Rashleigh's father-in-law William Stuart), although he ended up with several other lots bought at the sale by the dealers Cureton, Curt and Webster.

Nonetheless, study of named copies of coin auction catalogues from 1848 onwards reveals that the cataloguer of the sale of 1909 seems to have been unaware that Rashleigh had made significant purchases under his own name at the Stretton sale, 1855, the Christmas sale, 1864, and the Sainthill sale, 1870, and at a number of lesser sales of the period, particularly in the early and mid 1850s. At the Sainthill sale Rashleigh acquired coins of Aethelstan, Eadmund, Aethelred II, Cnut and Harold II in addition to the two coins with Sainthill provenance recognised in the 1909 catalogue, while lots 415 and 416 purchased under his name at the Stretton sale provide useful provenances for a significant group of pre-Reform coins of Eadgar, offered without provenances in the sale of 1909 but which can in fact be confidently identified with coins in these lots from the Stretton collection and thus with the important Co.Kilkenny hoard of coins of Eadgar acquired in the mid 1820s by a member of the Stretton family.

Rashleigh's first wife died in 1852, leaving him a youthful widower with five small children during much of his middle life. He occupied some of his time during this period by serving as a member of the Metropolitan Board of Works, on which he represented the St.Pancras district, and as a member of the Metropolitan Asylums Board. It was not until 1869 that his life took a new direction, with his second marriage on 3 August 1869 to an Irish heiress, Jane Elizabeth Pugh, daughter of Arthur Pugh, of Lissadrone, Co.Mayo, by whom he had four further children. Their initial marital home outside London was at Fortfield House, Sidmouth, Devon, but in 1871 Jonathan Rashleigh purchased the Feniton Court estate, not very many miles away in East Devon, and he and his wife were preparing to move in there when William Rashleigh, Jonathan's older brother, died on 31 October of that year, presumably unexpectedly, and, as William had had no sons, Jonathan inherited the family's 30,000 acre Menabilly estate in Cornwall¹¹.

Jonathan Rashleigh's primary subsequent focus was on his responsibilities at Menabilly and within the county of Cornwall, for which he served as High Sheriff for the year 1877, as well as acting as a Deputy Lieutenant and as a county magistrate¹². He did however retain the

¹¹ The diaries of Peter Orlando Hutchinson (1810-1897), of Sidmouth, Devon, published online www.eastdevonaonb.org, contain an entry under 4 October 1871 in which Hutchinson records that he 'dined at Fortfield House, the residence of Mr. and Mrs.Rashleigh and their family. Mr.Rashleigh has bought Feniton Court, and is getting it in order to go there soon'. Other guests present at the dinner included "Mr. and Miss Bayley of Cotford" (the present writer's great-great-grandfather William Rutter Bayley, with one of his daughters), and Hutchinson notes that "conversation and music filled up the time after we returned to the drawing room, and Mr.Rashleigh amused us with some very good conjuring amongst other things, taking a dozen and a half of eggs from an empty bag".

¹² Sir John Evans records that Rashleigh was "much interested in botany and horticulture, and those who have visited the gardens at Menabilly must all have carried away a lasting impression, not only of the almost tropical

Feniton Court property, and it can be discerned that his close involvement in later life with Devon and Cornwall caused him from the late 1860s onwards to build up his holdings of coins struck at Exeter, both during the Anglo-Saxon and Norman periods and as regards the issues of the Exeter mint for Charles I during the English Civil War.

As a final contribution to our knowledge of Rashleigh's numismatic activities, the present writer was surprised to discover a few months ago that "Rose", the so far unidentified purchaser of lots 219, 220, 226 and 236 in the Arthur Briggs sale, 1893, all comprising coins of Edward the Confessor and shown by Oliver Burrows in *BNJ* xlvii, 1977, pp 66-76, to belong to a parcel from the 1872 Queen Victoria Street hoard from the City of London, can be identified as a buying name used by Rashleigh.¹³ This follows from the fact that all the coins in the lots concerned can be identified coin-by-coin with coins without stated provenances that feature in the Rashleigh catalogue of 1909, and it should offer at least the theoretical possibility of tracing the present whereabouts of up to thirty-two coins from this major hoard.



climate and the luxuriant vegetation of the spot, but also of the skill with which these natural advantages have been utilized by the proprietor of this beautiful domain" (*Proc Num Soc 1904/5*, 31). Menabilly was to become, much later on, the Cornish residence of the novelist Daphne Du Maurier, having already featured as the inspiration for Manderley, the house that occupies a central role in Du Maurier's famous novel *Rebecca*.

¹³ An alternative hypothesis is that the auctioneer's clerk either misheard or mis-transcribed Rashleigh's own name given at the time as that of the buyer. Of some possible relevance here is that at the Martin sale, 1859, lots 413, 414 and 415, all of which ended up in Rashleigh's possession, are recorded in named copies of the catalogue as having been purchased by an otherwise unfamiliar buyer named "Robson", which might be an earlier instance of Rashleigh buying under a "nom de vente".