

BNS Hoards Conference, Sat. July 15th, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford – Speakers and Topics

Robert Page

INTRODUCTION

The BNS Summer Conference will be in the Headley Lecture Theatre at the Ashmolean commencing at 10:30. It is open to all; not just BNS members. General admission is £10 which includes a light lunch, students go free, and anyone can attend free via Zoom.

For registration see: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/bns-summer-conference-coin-hoards-discovery-and-interpretation-tickets-623216255597>

At this all-day Conference, focused on the British Isles, leading figures working on coin hoards and related material will look at recent discoveries and what we can learn from them along with the latest thinking on how coinage came to be hoarded and then hidden. It will then consider the latest techniques being used to recover and interpret hoards and to make available hoard data for researchers and collectors.

SPEAKERS & TOPICS

Anni Byard. Iron Age and early Roman coin hoards from North Wales and the Welsh Marches.

Hoards from Eastern Britain have done much to help us understand the relationship between British Iron age societies and the Roman empire along with the impact of the Roman conquest after 43 AD. The same cannot be said for Wales, which features strongly in the later stages of the Roman conquest, with a lack of hoards of Iron age and Roman coins dating to before 96AD. In this paper Anni Byard will focus on recent hoards from north Wales and the Marches of Celtic and Roman coins from this period which are helping remedy this. It will consider their context, recovery, content and offer some initial thoughts on what they add to our knowledge.

Anni Byard is an archaeologist specialising in metal 'small' finds. She has an undergraduate degree in archaeology from the University of Liverpool and a masters in landscape archaeology from the University of Oxford. Anni worked in commercial archaeology for several years before joining the Portable Antiquities Scheme as the Finds Liaison Officer for Oxfordshire and West Berkshire in 2008. Anni left the PAS in 2019 to undertake her PhD. She currently works part-time for Oxford Archaeology South as their small finds specialist.

Philip J. Wise. '1066 and All That': A hoard of 11th century coins from Braintree, Essex.

An exceptionally rare and historically important hoard of Early Medieval coins was recently discovered in north-east Essex. Known as the Braintree Hoard, it comprises 142 silver pennies, dating from the reigns of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) and Harold II (1066). The hoard was buried in the early Autumn of 1066, at around the time the Battle of Hastings. The Braintree hoard is the first hoard from the east of England to which a 1066 deposition date can be assigned. Exceptionally it also includes two silver Byzantine coins. In this paper Philip Wise will provide an overview of the research he has undertaken on the hoard in conjunction with Dr Gareth Williams, the Curator of Early Medieval Coinage at the British Museum. It will consider the reasons why the hoard might have been buried and the evidence from the Domesday Book for land ownership in the area where the hoard was found. The paper will also look at how the hoard has increased our knowledge of the mints at Colchester, Ipswich and Sudbury, and its potential for the future of our understanding of coin production and usage at the time of the Norman Conquest.

Philip Wise is a museum curator, archaeologist and historian. He has worked in a variety of local authority museums since 1983 and has been at Colchester for almost 25 years, initially as Curator of Archaeology and more recently as Heritage Manager. He is responsible for the heritage management of Colchester's archaeological sites and monuments, and was one of the team who worked on the redevelopment of Colchester Castle from 2012 to 2014. Amongst his extensive list of publications on archaeological and historical subjects are several on numismatics, including coin hoards and single coin finds from Warwickshire and Essex. He has also worked in a voluntary capacity for a number of national organisations including Arts Council England, the Council for British Archaeology and the Society for Museum Archaeology. He is the current chair of Museums Essex.

Dr Barrie Cook. Trauma and transformation: the context of the 2019 Hambleton hoard and other finds of c.1344-56.

The mid-fourteenth century in England was a time of great economic and monetary challenge. The English coinage was moved to a bi-metallic standard and developed multi-denominational structure, with the introduction of a regular gold coinage, something that occurred across several years of trial and error between 1344 and 1351. Meanwhile in 1348 the Black Death arrived in England and raged across the country through 1349, with further outbreaks thereafter in the early 1350s, allowing almost no time for recovery. During these years, the plague reduced the population by between one third and one half, challenging the social and economic order. The 2019 Hambleton hoard and other finds from the period of Edward III's Third Coinage (1344-51) and the years immediately following offer potential insights into the transformation of the currency and the trauma of the Black Death, arguably the most challenging and devastating time in English history.

Dr Barrie Cook has been curator of medieval and early modern coinage in the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum since 1985 and has published widely in his area of specialism and curated many numismatic exhibitions, as well as contributing to many more general exhibitions at the BM and elsewhere. He was curator of the major BM exhibition Germany: memories of a nation and adapted it for subsequent revivals in Berlin and Copenhagen. He was also the curator for Neil MacGregor's four Radio 4 series. He has been editor of the British Numismatic Journal and secretary of the Royal Numismatic Society and is currently treasurer of the UK Numismatic Trust.

Philippa Pearce. Not Just Coins in a Pot – Interpreting hoards at the British Museum.

The careful recovery of coin hoards is essential not just to preserve the contents but also to ensure the information contained in the ordering of the deposition is recovered in a scientific and accurate manner. The British Museum has become a world leading centre for such skills which is enabling numismatists, archaeologists and historians to secure information from hoards that was not previously available. This paper will provide an introduction to their work covering the British Museum involvement with the Treasure process and the part that conservators play in this. It will then describe the techniques used and the thinking behind these. The final part will focus on a few recent case studies, concerning Roman, early mediaeval and Civil War coin hoards.

Philippa Pearce is the senior conservator in the Department of Collections Care at the British Museum. She is the longest serving fulltime member of staff at the British Museum. Her work also includes putting on exhibitions, arranging loans and dealing with storage issues. Externally she has extensive experience as a conservator on archaeological excavations in Italy, Albania and Sudan. In recent years, the Museum's part in in the Portable Antiquities Scheme has formed an increasing part of her workload, with approximately 15,000 coins a year being cleaned for identification.

Dr. Murray Andrews. Counting the pennies: statistical approaches to coin hoarding.

The rise of hobbyist metal detecting has created a golden age of coin hoard discoveries, and recent years have seen dozens of new medieval examples unearthed from the fields of England and Wales. How can we best make sense of this numismatic 'big data'? Drawing on recent research, this talk examines how statistical techniques can help us understand patterns in the formation, deposition, and recovery of medieval coin hoards, shedding new light on coin hoarding as a socio-economic phenomenon in the Middle Ages.

Murray Andrews is Associate Professor of Numismatics at the Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo. He was awarded the Blunt Prize in 2020 for services to British numismatics, and his recent book 'Coin Hoarding in Medieval England and Wales, c.973-1544: Behaviours, motivations, and mentalités' was shortlisted for the International Association of Professional Numismatists 2019 Book Prize.

Rob Page. MCHBI – an online tool to assist with the study of medieval coin hoards.

The BNS introduced an online facility in November 2022 which allows users to examine the geographic distribution of Medieval coin hoards in Britain and Ireland (MCHBI), and to filter those hoards to a particular period or region of interest. The underlying database provides an online summary for each hoard, and details, with hyperlinks, to relevant references. Reports can easily be downloaded. MCHBI is an ongoing project with new data being continuously added, with the objective of making this the most comprehensive coin hoard dataset for the Medieval period in Britain and Ireland. It currently contains over 1,940 hoards, encompassing over 675,000 coins. After a short introduction to MCHBI there will be a demonstration of the system.

Rob Page is the project coordinator for “MCHBI” and is the website officer for the BNS. A retired geoscientist, his numismatic interests are mainly in hammered British coins, and he specialises in the long cross issues of Henry III. He has many years industry experience in project management and in building databases with MS Access.

Professor Chris Howgego. The Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire project.

Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire (CHRE) is a major long-term collaborative infrastructural project. It aims to promote the integration of numismatic data into broader research on the Roman Economy. The project collects information about hoards of coinages in use in the Roman Empire between 30 BC and AD 400. It also includes hoards of Roman coins from outside the Empire to investigate Rome's economic and cultural reach. All data are made freely available online. The 14,800 hoards currently documented contain over 5.8 million coins. The unparalleled quality and quantity of the data provide major opportunities both for traditional scholarship and for innovative interdisciplinary and diachronic studies. In this paper he will provide an overview of the CHRE project and the capabilities being developed within it.

Chris Howgego is keeper of the Heberden Coin Room at the Ashmolean Museum of Art. He has been on the staff of the Ashmolean since 1988, initially as curator of Greek and Roman Coins, then as Acting Keeper of the Heberden Coin Room in 2005, and as Keeper in 2006. In addition to lecturing on Roman Numismatics in the University of Oxford from 1988 until 2022, he was the Research Coordinator of the Ashmolean Museum from 2012 until 2020 and is the Director of the Coins Hoards of the Roman Empire project. He was Vice President of the Royal Numismatic Society for five years and is an Honorary Member of the Société royale de Numismatique de Belgique, a Corresponding Member of the American Numismatic Society, and holds the bronze and silver medals of the Norwegian Numismatic Society.

A few tickets for the conference are still available, and we hope to see you there!
