A Brief Tour of Medieval Coin Hoards from Britain and Ireland
Part One: 450-1154 AD

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The BNS MCHBI website, introduced in late 2022, provides online access to a comprehensive database of Medieval coin hoards found in Britain and Ireland. It will be of interest to coin collectors, numismatic researchers, archaeologists, historians, metal detectorists, and in fact anyone wanting to know which hoards are located where. The MCHBI website has been described in a BNS Research Blog article[3] and features hoards deposited from c. AD 450 to the coinage debasement of 1544 in Henry VIII's reign.

In this article we will take you on a quick tour through Britain and Ireland, looking at the distribution of coin hoards by different historic periods, and highlighting selected examples. This article is different to many, in that it provides the reader with many clickable hyperlinks which can be followed to easily learn more about any hoard. Although some links are provided directly in the text, it is possible to access all the hoards for a particular time period by simply clicking on the "map-link" beneath each of the illustrated maps.

The breakdown of hoards into fourteen age groups facilitates a degree of understanding behind the reasons for deposition of many hoards. Firstly, below is shown the breakdown of Medieval coin hoards by region and age-group using the data available in March 2026. From a geographic point of view, the hoards are divided into those found in England, Wales, the Isle of Man, Ireland, and Scotland. From a timing viewpoint, hoards have been sub-divided into a similar scheme as presented by Murray Andrews in his 2019 hoard volume[4]. This article deals with the first seven groups.

Coin Groupings	English	Irish	IOM	Scottish	Welsh	All Regions
Post-Roman and Early Medieval (AD 450-670)	28	0	0	1	0	29
Early Silver Pence (AD 670-760)	80	0	0	1	0	81
Eighth- and ninth-century coinage (AD 760-880)	93	7	2	7	3	112
~ Tenth-century coinage (880-973)	77	40	7	12	3	139
Late Anglo-Saxon period	101	37	14	12	8	172
Normans: William I, II & Henry I (1066-1135)	82	12	4	2	6	106
Stephen and the Anarchy (1135-1154)	28	2	0	2	1	33
Tealby pennies of Henry II (1154-79)	41	5	1	2	1	50
Short Cross Hoards (1180-1247)	135	16	1	15	6	173
Henry III Long Cross (1247-78)	83	14	0	13	8	118
Edwards I, II, III (1279-1351)	199	43	9	174	22	447
From Edward III's 4th Coinage (1351) to 1412 Weight Reduction.	152	25	2	73	21	273
Hoards dating 1412–1464	98	5	0	10	8	121
Edward IV light Coinage to end H. VIII 2nd coinage (1464-1544)	179	25	1	35	14	254
TOTALS FOR ALL AGE GROUPS	1446	227	37	331	120	2161

Figure 1 - Hoards of two or more coins.

Inspection of figure 1 shows that far more hoards have been documented for England than elsewhere – this is partially due to the history of coin use but is also due to the better hoard record from England than elsewhere. The definition of "coin hoard" used here is "two or more coins deposited at the same time" and so includes many small hoards of just a few coins resulting from an accidental loss such as

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[3] Robert Page, Nov. 2022, "MCHBI" – A BNS Online Map Application for Medieval Coin Hoards in Britain and Ireland, BNS Research Blog.
[4] Murray Andrews, 2019, Coin Hoarding in Medieval England and Wales, c.973-1544, British Archaeological Reports.

a purse drop. Records of such small hoards are commonly only seen in the Portable Antiquities Scheme records ("PAS") for England and Wales; there being few such equivalent type records from the other three regions. It is therefore helpful to filter the dataset to remove the smaller hoards and thus focus on larger hoards more likely to have been deliberately deposited. In figure 2 we see only those medieval hoards having a minimum number of five coins.

Coin Groupings	English	Irish	IOM	Scottish	Welsh	All Regions
Post-Roman and Early Medieval (AD 450-670)	12	0	0	0	0	12
Early Silver Pence (AD 670-760)	36	0	0	0	0	36
Eighth- and ninth-century coinage (AD 760-880)	67	3	1	2	1	74
~ Tenth-century coinage (880-973)	53	27	5	6	1	92
Late Anglo-Saxon period	58	26	12	9	5	110
Normans: William I, II & Henry I (1066-1135)	49	8	4	0	4	65
Stephen and the Anarchy (1135-1154)	20	2	0	1	1	24
Tealby pennies of Henry II (1154-79)	29	2	1	1	1	34
Short Cross Hoards (1180-1247)	97	11	1	15	4	128
Henry III Long Cross (1247-78)	57	13	0	9	7	86
Edwards I, II, III (1279-1351)	156	30	8	139	17	350
From Edward III's 4th Coinage (1351) to 1412 Weight Reduction.	100	19	0	45	10	174
Hoards dating 1412–1464	69	3	0	7	8	87
Edward IV light Coinage to end H. VIII 2nd coinage (1464-1544)	120	17	1	29	9	176
TOTALS FOR ALL AGE GROUPS	976	160	31	248	77	1492

Figure 2- Hoards with five or more coins.

This filter which removed hoards having less than five coins has taken out approximatively 31% of the dataset, or, in other words, over two-thirds of the medieval hoards in the database may have been deliberately buried rather than accidentally lost. It should be noted that some historic hoards have contradictory or scant sources. Also note that hoards of smaller numbers of coins appear less frequently in more historic reporting, and this may cause a skew in the data as methods of reporting and the field of study have changed over time.

There now follows a discussion of hoards having five or more coins by Age Group. The article has been divided into two parts, and this first part covers hoards deposited before the introduction of the Tealby coinage of Henry II in 1154 AD.

Some of the maps shown below may show a slightly different number of hoards than indicated in the table – this is due to the fact that some hoards have a wide range of uncertainty as to when they were deposited, and the year range may straddle the date separating two age groups. All maps are colour coded to indicate the minimum number of coins in the hoard. Featured hoards are hyperlinked to the relevant online MCHBI database entry.

a) **Post-Roman and Early Medieval (c.AD 450-670)**

Between c. AD 450 and 670, Britain experienced a complex and uneven monetary landscape, spanning the post-Roman period up to the introduction of the sceatta coinage. This was a period in which links with Western Europe were being re-established after the collapse of Roman administration, and the nature of coinage, whether produced locally or imported, reflected the rebuilding of these connections. According to Gildas, Bede, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the British ruler Vortigern invited Germanic mercenaries to defend post-Roman Britain from northern raiders. Their arrival, traditionally dated to 449 AD under Hengist and Horsa, probably Jutes who settled in Kent, marked the beginning of wider Germanic migration and the gradual establishment of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Modern scholarship treats this date as symbolic of a mid-fifth-century settlement process

rather than a precise historical event, representing the transition from post-Roman British rule to emerging Anglo-Saxon polities.

In the immediate post-Roman period (c. 450–550), circulation was dominated by residual late Roman bronze issues of emperors such as Constantine I and Honorius. These coins increasingly functioned not as currency but as curated items, bullion, and status objects, often heavily worn or modified, and deposited in non-economic contexts. By the mid-sixth century (c. 550–580), coin use contracted sharply, with exchange operating primarily through bullion and gift-based systems.

From the later sixth century, coin circulation re-emerged through imported Merovingian gold tremisses, associated with elite networks under rulers such as Chlothar II and Dagobert I. By c. 620, locally produced Anglo-Saxon gold thrymsas appeared; hoards such as the Sutton Hoo and Crondall Hoards demonstrate a hybrid bullion–coin economy concentrated in southeastern England, in which coins also functioned as symbols of wealth and status within elite social and political networks.

By c. 650–670, this gold-based system declined, paving the way for the introduction of silver sceatta coinage. Overall, the period reflects a progression from residual Roman coinage and elite-controlled imports through phases of monetary contraction and proto-monetary recovery, during which coins operated both as currency and as markers of status, preceding the establishment of a more broadly circulating, silver-based coinage system.

There are only twelve hoards of five or more coins recorded for this period, and all are in England. Of these hoards, four are in the North-west, and the remainder in the South-East and East Anglia. These latter hoards include the well-known hoards of Crondall and Patching. Details of all hoards mentioned can easily be found on the MCHBI website. The probable early fifth century Irish Coleraine hoard is slightly too early to include in the MCHBI database. Coinage of this period is notable for gold tremisses and thrymsas with the West Norfolk hoard being an outstanding example.

Other coin hoards include late Roman-period silver such as found at Wem. The nearest part of Europe to England was Merovingian France; the presence of Merovingian coins in England indicates trading activities and exchange long before 600 AD. All thirty-seven coins found at the famous Sutton Hoo ship burial are Merovingian tremisses. In due course the Anglo-Saxons introduced their own gold coinage modelled on the Merovingian tremisses, and this is the main component of the previously mentioned Crondall hoard.

A Merovingian gold tremissis found 2010-15 in a dispersed hoard from the Colchester district. Image credit: PAS, record # ESS-F0D125

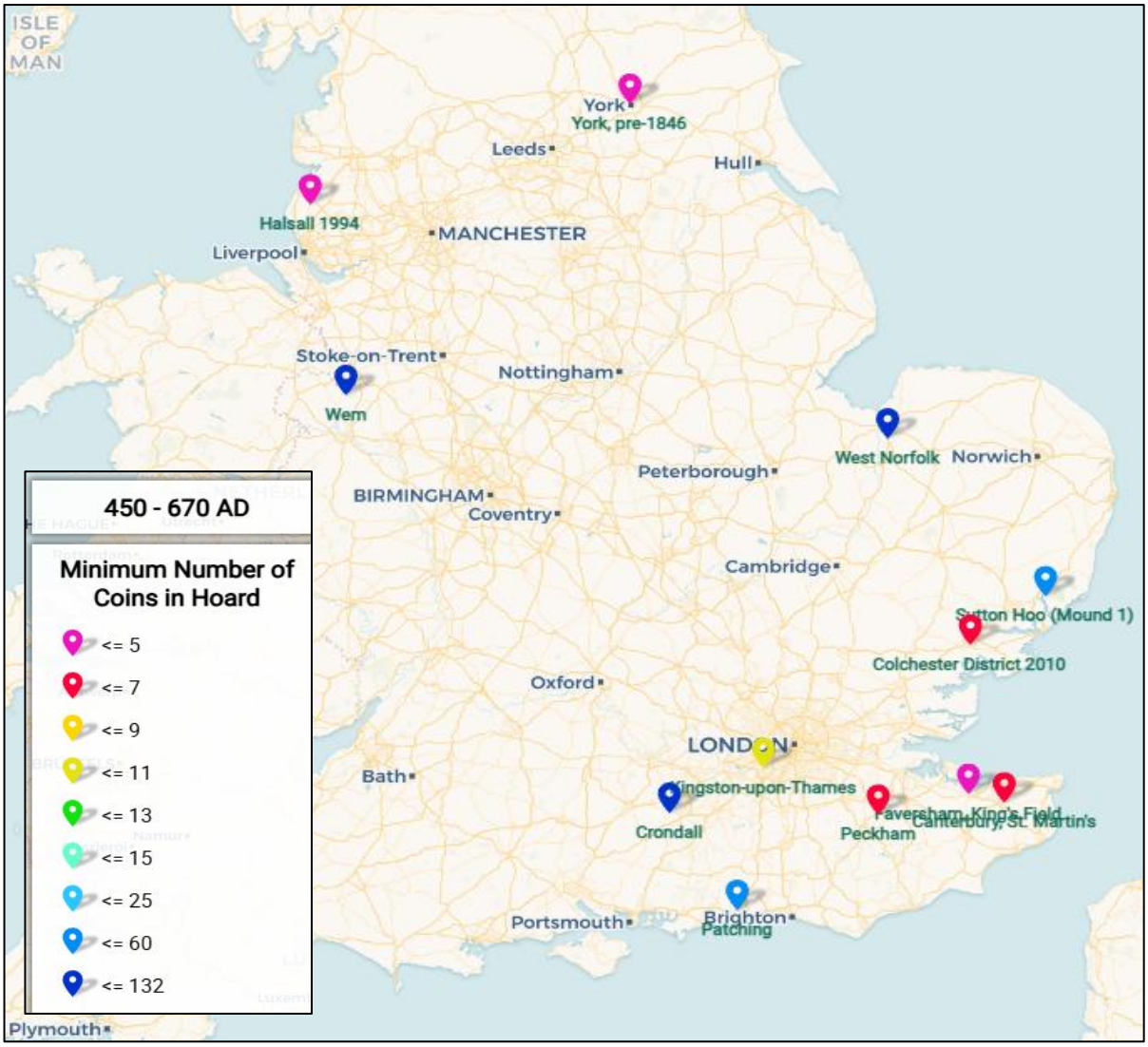


Figure 3 - Hoards with 5+ coins, deposited 450-670 AD. (Map link)

b) Early Silver Pence (AD 670-760)

Figure 4 - A silver sceatta *of Primary Phase Series BII; date: AD 700-710. Image credit: PAS. From a scattered hoard found at Cranfield, Beds., 2013*

Here we are looking at the Sceatta Coinage; sceattas being small, thick silver coins minted in England, Frisia and Jutland. It is likely that the coins were known to contemporaries as "pennies" (Old English: peningas). Known hoards with at least five coins were all found in England. Geographically, we see a concentration of hoards in East Anglia and the Essex and Kent coastal regions.

Compared to later Anglo-Saxon periods, coin hoards from 670–760 AD are relatively scarce, reflecting a still-developing monetary economy characterised by lower overall coin production, limited use of currency beyond key trading centres, the continued importance of gift exchange and bullion-based transactions, and generally smaller individual accumulations of portable wealth.

When Thompson published his pioneering hoard inventory in 1956[5] he knew of only eleven hoards of this period. Nowadays we have thirty-six sceatta hoards of five or more coins, increasing to eighty-one if we decrease the hoard threshold to two coins. All but one are in England, the exception being from Norrie's Law in Scotland. The coinage was mainly in use in southern and eastern England, with limited circulation in the North. The Northumbrians introduced debased silver sceattas, these then being replaced by copper stycas.

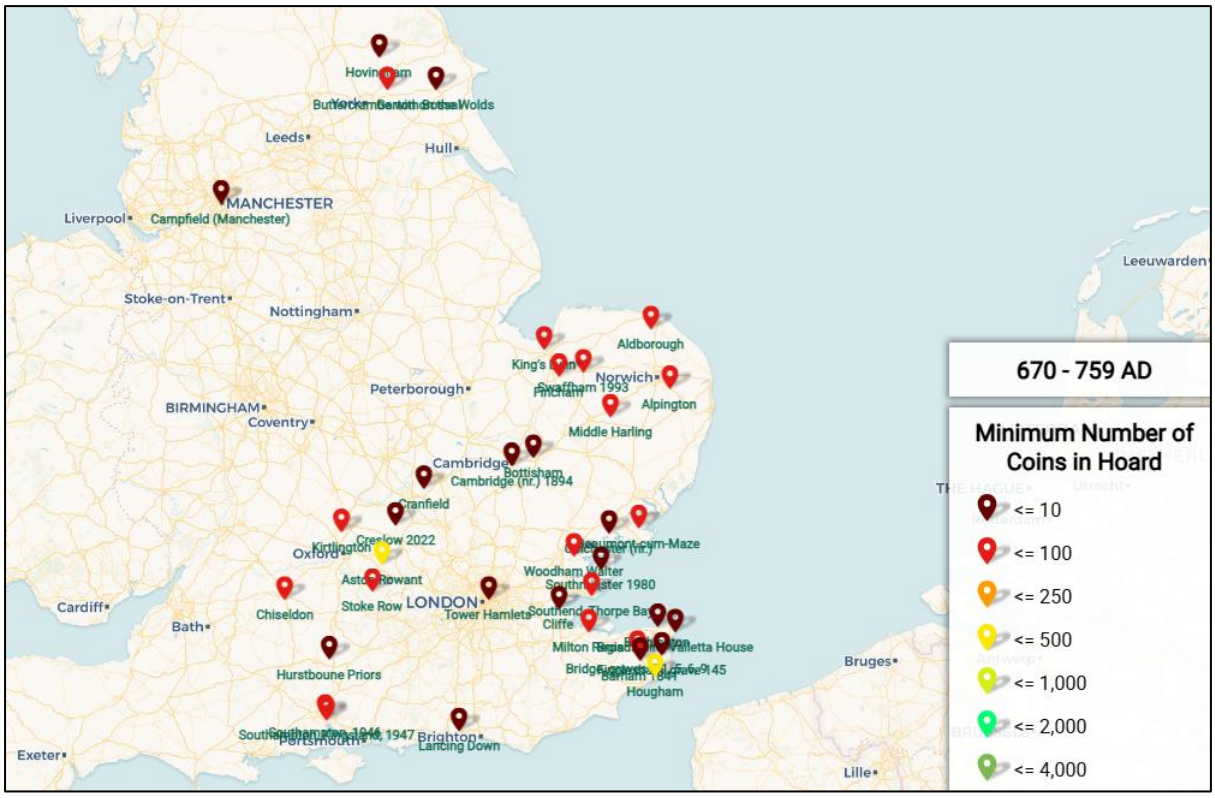


Figure 5 - Hoards with 5+ coins, deposited 670-760 AD. (Map link)

There are very few known sceatta hoards from northern England, with only three recorded in the North-East and a single hoard in the Manchester area. The North-East hoards themselves are unremarkable in composition, typically containing between six and twenty coins, and comprising a mixture of native Anglo-Saxon issues and continental imports. Aside from the limited number of hoards, there is little to suggest any significant divergence from patterns observed elsewhere in England. This scarcity may indicate that the use of sceattas was somewhat more restricted in the north, possibly reflecting lower levels of trade or fewer economic centres compared with southern regions. Nevertheless, the surviving hoards do not display any distinctive regional characteristics in terms of coin composition, suggesting that, despite geographic variation in circulation, the underlying practices of hoarding and deposition were broadly consistent across England.

One of the largest sceatta hoards is that of Aston Rowant in Oxfordshire, now thought to have contained over 400 coins. In 1972 the hoard was reported to total 175 coins, by 1994 the total was 350, and in either case it was then the largest single find of sceattas in Britain. The hoard is believed to have been hidden in either in 710–15 AD. Only about a quarter of the coins were from Anglo-Saxon mints in Britain. The remainder are from mainland Europe, mostly from Merovingian mints around

[5] J.D.A. Thompson, 1956, "Inventory of British Coin Hoards", RNS Special Publication No.1.

the mouth of the Rhine. The owner may therefore have been a Frisian merchant travelling along the Icknield Way.

At Aldborough, near the North Norfolk coast, metal detecting has turned up over 80 sceattas over a seven year period. These small silver coins represent the earliest native English silver coinage and date from circa 675 to the middle of the eighth century. They were scattered over a small area, about 30m by 30m, and clearly represent a hoard or part of a hoard dispersed at some point in the past.

Figure 6 - Some of the Aldborough sceattas. BM Image from the PAS report.

c) Eighth and Ninth Century Coinage (AD 760-880)

Hoards are concentrated in England with a few in SW Scotland and none in Wales other than a solitary hoard from Anglesey. This is the period in which we first see hoards of 5+ coins also appearing in Ireland. Coinage of the period includes the stycas of Northumbria and the broad flan Anglo-Saxon coins minted in southern and central England. By the late 830s Vikings in Ireland began targeting the major monasteries. Despite the Irish resistance and some sound defeats, the Vikings became entrenched ever deeper into the country.

Figure 8 - A penny of Cynethryth from a scattered hoard found in the Aiskew region of North Yorkshire, image credit: PAS, record # YORYM-731473

Figure 7 - Two stycas from the Wharton hoard (2017), image credit: PAS, record ID LANCUM-1A7BCA

Styca hoards include that of Kirkoswald in Cumbria, where a hoard of at least 542 AE stycas was discovered amongst the roots of a tree which had blown over in 1808.

Two notable clusters of styca hoards can be identified in northern England, reflecting both the political and administrative geography of the Kingdom of Northumbria. The first cluster is at Bamburgh, a principal royal centre, where two hoards of more than five coins each have been discovered. The first was found between 1999 and 2004, and the second in 2009, both at or near Bamburgh Castle, which functioned during this period as a key seat of power for the Northumbrian kings. The second cluster is concentrated in and around the city of York, another major political and ecclesiastical centre within Northumbria. The distribution of these hoards suggests that stycas were primarily associated with centres of authority, where they were hoarded in significant numbers, and were comparatively rare in peripheral areas. The Hexham hoard, discussed below, represents a notable exception to this pattern, indicating that while administrative centres were focal points for coin accumulation, occasional finds beyond these hubs demonstrate some circulation into wider regions. Overall, the evidence supports the interpretation that stycas functioned both as a medium of local exchange and as instruments of wealth accumulation within elite networks, with their deposition closely linked to the centres of political power.

One of the few Irish hoards of this period, Mullaghboden, is the only find from Britain and Ireland composed solely of Carolingian coins: these must have been collected in Aquitaine c. 845, and may have belonged to a Viking who left France after the campaigns of 843-6 and fought in the Irish campaigns of 846-8.

The Viking Great Army movements in England in the 870s were the cause of a number of hoards, e.g. the very well-publicized Leominster (Hereford) hoard, discovered in a field near Leominster and which may have been buried by the Viking Great Army. The hoard includes three items of gold jewellery, a silver ingot and twenty-nine silver coins, including a number of rare 'two emperors' coins; originally there may have been about three hundred coins though the finders stole most. A further forty-four coins have subsequently been recovered, and the two men who illegally tried to sell the coins have now been jailed.

A notably large English styca hoard is that of Hexham, discovered by a gravedigger in 1832. This hoard contained 8-10,000 stycas, and was found by the sexton, Mr. Airey, and his assistant, who struck a bronze vessel containing a mass of stycas. Some coins were lost or dispersed immediately after the discovery before the find could be properly secured. The hoard was probably buried in the 850-860 period, possibly in fear of Viking attack.

Another large hoard of this period is that of Dorking, discovered in 1817, just to the southwest of Dorking, it contained c.600-1500 coins, including pennies of Ethelwulf [839-58] and Æthelberht [860-65], and also coins of Ciolwulf I, Biornwulf, Wiglaf, Berhtulf, Burgred, Eadmund, Aethelstan, Ceolnoth, Ecgbeorht, and a Carolingian coin of Pepin, King of Soissons. The hoard is dated about 862, whose burial coincides with increasing Viking raids in southern England.

Although there is no specific recorded raid on Dorking itself in 862, the area lay on important inland route (Stane Street), meaning that Viking armies moving between London and the south coast could easily have passed nearby.

The largest hoard of this period is that found near Bolton Percy in 1967. The discovery consisted primarily of a large group of Northumbrian copper-alloy stycas—small base-metal coins—amounting to roughly 1,700–1,800 pieces. These coins were struck in the ninth century for a range of Northumbrian kings, including Eanred, Æthelred II, Redwulf and Osberht, as well as for archbishops of York such as Eanbald II and Wigmund. The assemblage is notable for containing many irregular or derivative issues, suggesting late and possibly unofficial production.

The hoard was unearthed during the ploughing of a field by the banks of the river Wharfe at Bolton Percy in Yorkshire in the late autumn of 1967. Credit for the actual discovery belongs to two schoolboys who noticed some of the coins lying on the surface and brought them to their teacher's attention. Subsequently the Keeper of the Yorkshire Museum in York conducted an examination of the site and unearthed the major portion of the hoard; part was contained in a pot and the rest was either scattered around the pot or lying in a separate, compact mass alongside it, the shape of which suggested that these coins had at one time been contained in a box. As to the site of the discovery, research that the field where the coins were found was probably the same field where a hoard of the same composition came to light in 1846. York fell to a Viking attack in 866 and it might be possible to associate the coins' burial with that attack or its aftermath.

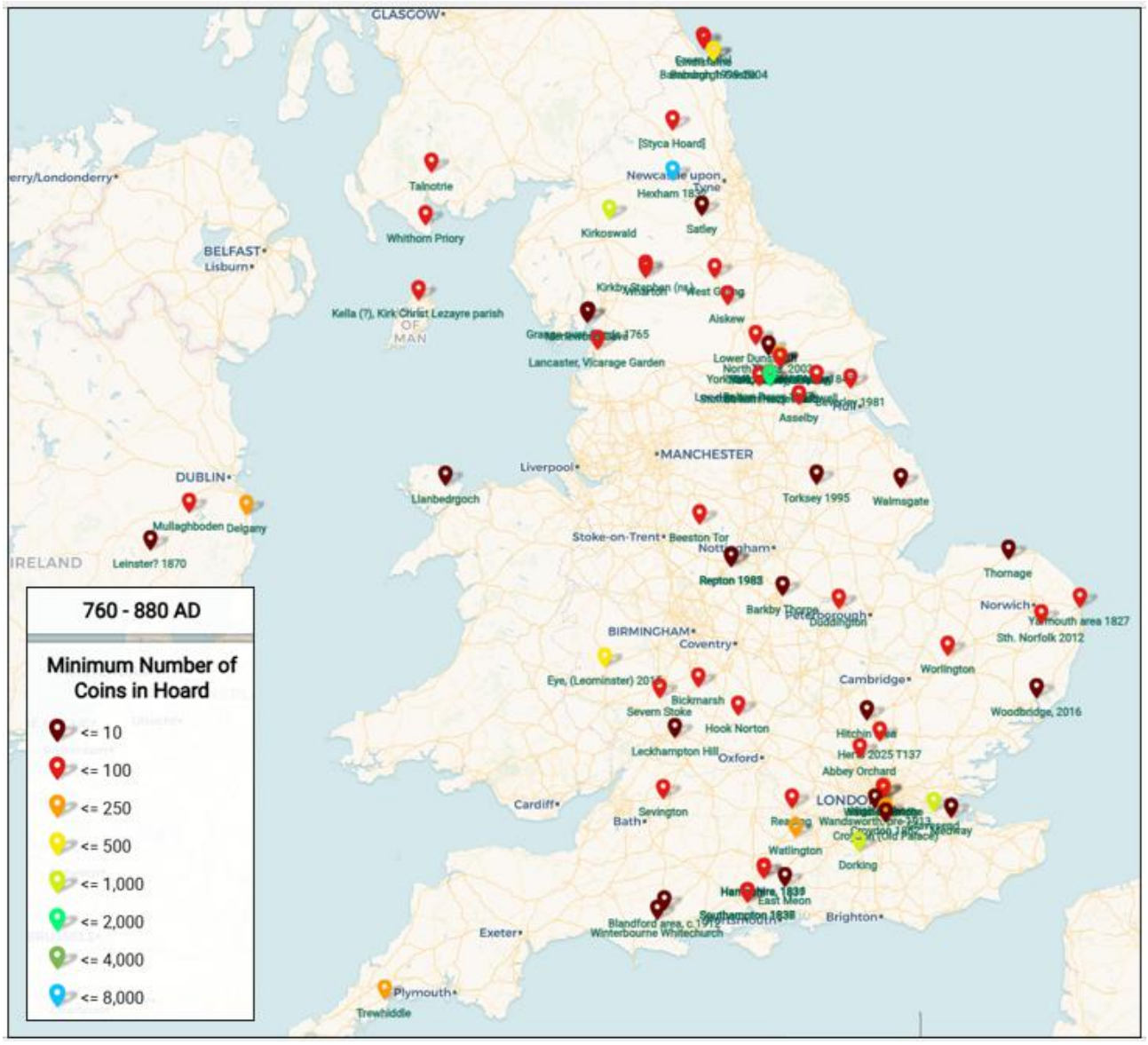


Figure 9 - Hoards with 5+ coins, deposited 760-880 AD. (Map link)

d) c.10th Century Coinage (880-973)

Figure 10 - Eric Bloodaxe silver penny; struck 952-954 AD, image credit: York Museums Trust.

We now see more hoards than in the prior period, and an increased number of hoards from Ireland. In the first quarter of the tenth century, Vikings established several cities in Ireland, notably, Waterford, Cork, Wexford, and Limerick, and after several generations a new Hiberno-Norse identity emerged. In 917 the Vikings had recaptured Dublin, whilst Ragnall left Ireland in 918 and became king of York. The numismatic history of the period features the Hiberno-Norse coinage in York, spanning the period from 919 until the violent end of the last Hiberno-Norse king of York, Eric Bloodaxe in 954, with a brief period of Anglo-Saxon intervention under Athelstan from 927 to 940. No Viking coins were struck in Ireland in this period, with the earliest Hiberno-Norse coins not being first produced in Dublin until about 997 under the authority of Sihtric Silkbeard. The middle of the tenth century featured continuous confrontation between the Irish and Vikings, with intermittent success on both sides.

Whilst some of the Irish hoards of this period have less than 10 coins, most are in the 10-100 coin bracket, and many of the hoards were found in the 19th century.

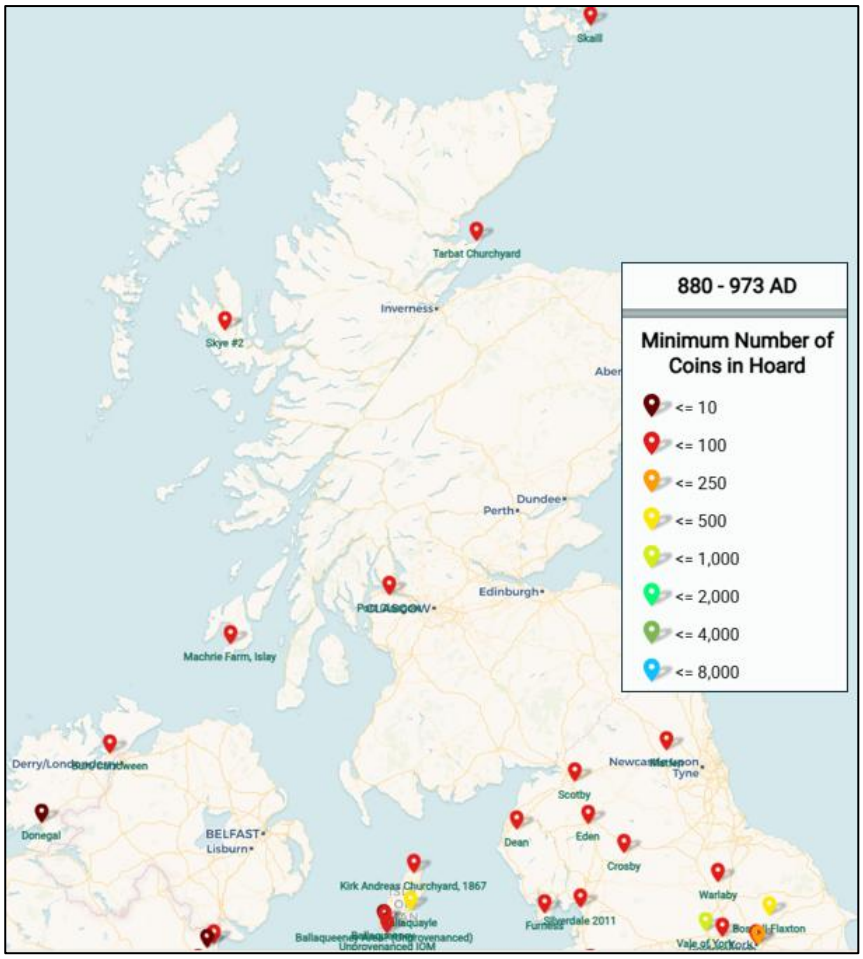


Figure 11 - Northern Britain and Ireland, hoards of 5+ coins deposited 880-973 AD (map-link)

Some significant hoards of northern Britain and Ireland include the 2007 Vale of York hoard near Harrogate, and in Ireland the Smarmore hoard of 1929.

The Vale of York hoard, discovered by metal detecting, contained 617 coins and is typical of Viking mixed hoards of the early tenth century. The hoard contains a mixture of Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Viking, Islamic & Carolingian coins. The mixture of coins in the hoard permits an unusually close dating for the hoard to 927-928 AD. The smaller Irish Smarmore hoard, found in County Louth contained

c.75 coins and is an important example of mid-10th century coin circulation in the Irish Sea world, having coins which are all of Anglo-Saxon origin, with no Islamic or other foreign coins—an unusual feature compared to many Viking-Age hoards. Deposition was c. 965-970 AD.

In England the most well-known hoard of the period is the hoard buried at Cuerdale c. 905-10 AD; it being the largest Viking silver treasure trove ever found outside of Russia. The Cuerdale Hoard was discovered in 1840 during repairs to the River Ribble embankment at Cuerdale near Preston. Labourers uncovered a large lead chest containing a massive accumulation of silver. In total the hoard comprised about 8,600 objects weighing approximately forty kilograms, including 7,000–8,000 coins, silver ingots, hack-silver, and fragments of jewellery such as arm-rings. The coins show the wide circulation networks of the Viking world. They include Anglo-Saxon pennies of Alfred the Great and Ceolwulf II, Viking issues associated with Guthrum, numerous Carolingian deniers from western Europe, and a number of Islamic silver dirhams. The latest coins date to about AD 905–910, indicating deposition shortly after this, and probably connected with Viking groups displaced from Dublin in 902 and active in north-west England. The hoard is interpreted as a Viking war-chest or bullion reserve, hidden near an important river crossing and never recovered. Much of the surviving material is now preserved in the British Museum, with additional pieces in regional museums.

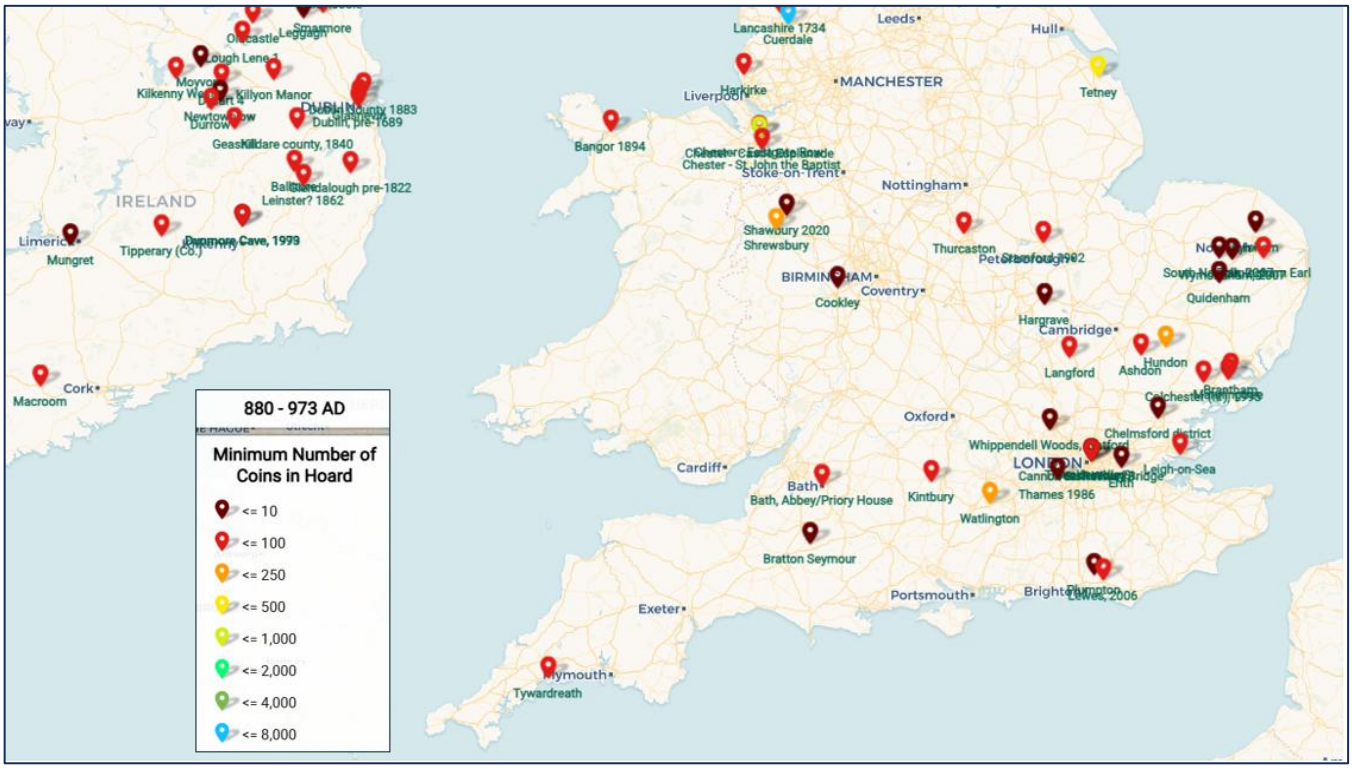


Figure 12 - Southern England and Ireland, hoards of 5+coins, deposited, 880-973 AD (map-link).

Watlington is another hoard associated with Viking movements. Discovered in 2015 by a metal-detectorist, it comprised 186 silver coins and seven items of silver jewellery, including arm-rings and ingot fragments. Most coins are Anglo-Saxon pennies, together with two rare “Two Emperors” pennies depicting Valentinian II and Theodosius I, types reused in late ninth-century circulation. The hoard is dated to c. AD 879–880 and is linked with the activities of the Great Heathen Army. The coins include issues of Alfred the Great and Ceolwulf II. The hoard was declared Treasure and acquired by the Ashmolean Museum, where it is now preserved. It is considered one of the most important Viking-

period hoards discovered in Britain in recent decades because it provides rare evidence for the coinage circulating among the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings at the time.

A hoard of particular significance is that of Morley St Peter, discovered in 1958. The hoard comprised a large number of Viking imitations of coins originally issued by Edward the Elder, alongside several official issues of both Edward and Alfred the Great. Many of the imitative coins exhibit blundered dies or stylistic deviations from the originals, indicating both the technical limitations of Viking workshops and the adaptation of recognised English types. The inclusion of official Wessex issues alongside imitations demonstrates that such coins circulated relatively freely within the economy, suggesting a blurring of boundaries between official and unofficial currency, with likely economic implications for trade and payment systems.

The hoard has a tightly constrained date of deposition, most probably in the winter of 924, a period coinciding with significant developments in Viking activity in England. Following the submission of Viking rulers in Northumbria to the overlordship of Edward the Elder in 923–924, the imitation of Edward's coinage may reflect both political acknowledgement and economic integration within the emerging Anglo-Saxon monetary framework. Similar patterns of imitation are also observed after the establishment of the Viking kingdom of East Anglia and during the monetary union of Wessex and Mercia under Alfred and Ceorlwulf, indicating that the production and circulation of imitation coinage was closely tied to shifts in political authority and control over regional economies.

This period ends in 973, a year which is significant in English numismatics because it marks the monetary reform of Edgar the Peaceful, which established a uniform national penny coinage. From this point on, numerous royal mints struck coins of standardised design simultaneously, with the king's portrait and name on the obverse and the moneyer and mint on the reverse.
The reform is traditionally associated with Edgar's imperial-style coronation at Bath in 973. It created a tightly controlled system in which coin types were periodically replaced through recoinages, a structure that continued for about a century and became one of the most sophisticated centrally regulated monetary systems in medieval Europe, forming the basis for the modern study of the late Anglo-Saxon penny series.

e) The Late Anglo-Saxon Period (973-1066)

This is a period which saw continued strife between the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings. One famous Viking victory being the Battle of Maldon in 991 AD, after which Danegeld of over three million silver pennies was paid. Hoards of this period are found in all five regions, including notable hoards on the Isle of Man. In this period coin hoarding in Ireland was driven by a combination of continued political instability, Viking trade, and the use of silver as a store of wealth. Warfare among Irish rulers and the Norse towns, especially during the rise of Brian Bóru and the events surrounding the Battle of Clontarf, encouraged people to conceal silver for safety. The Hiberno-Norse ports of Dublin, Waterford, Limerick, and Wexford were major trading centres linked to England and Scandinavia, bringing large numbers of English pennies—particularly those of Æthelred II and Cnut—into circulation. Since coinage in much of Ireland functioned primarily as bullion rather than regular currency, coins were often buried as stored silver, merchant stock, tribute payments, or personal savings, sometimes never recovered due to death, displacement, or forgotten locations. A peak of hoarding activity coincides with the crushing defeat of the Vikings at Tara in 980.

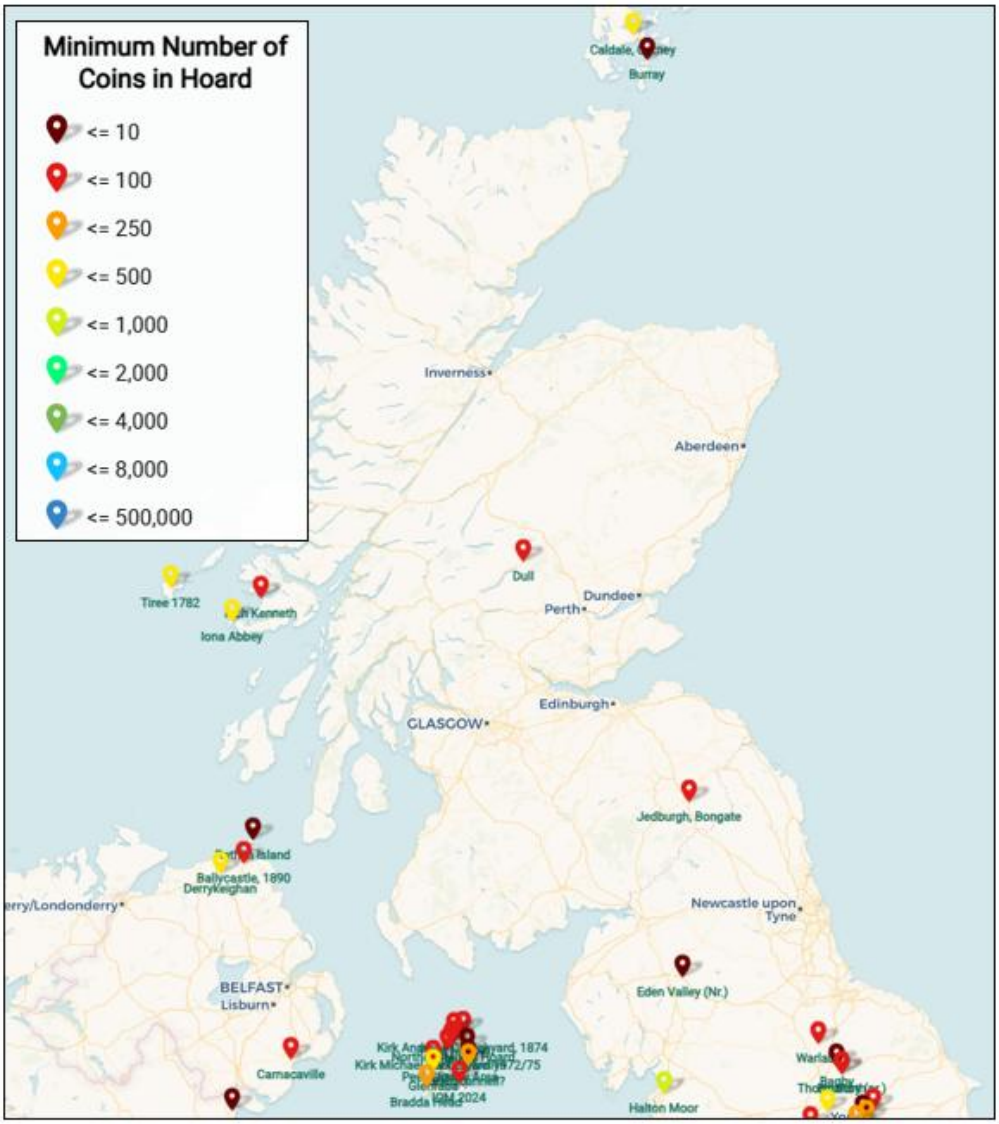


Figure 13 - Northern Britain & Ireland, hoards of 5+ coins, dep. 973-1066 AD. (Map-link)

Example Irish hoards include Dalkey, deposited after 970-975, and the larger Derrykeighan hoard, also deposited after 975. For the hoard found c.1840 at Dalkey near Dublin, contemporary accounts state that the hoard was found in the town of Dalkey near the castle entrance, after which the coins were quickly dispersed into private collections. Numismatically the hoard is notable because it consisted largely of late 10th-century English pennies of Edgar. The very earliest silver pennies actually struck in the country were produced nearby in Dublin under the Viking King Sihtric III from c. 998 AD.

Figure 14- Sihtric III penny, type I/II mule, Dublin, c.1020 AD. [RP Collection].

The hoard at Derrykeighan was discovered five years later, in 1843, by a man digging a grave. It is a Viking-Age coin hoard found in County Antrim and is one of the more important 10th-century hoards from the north of Ireland. Over 260 coins were found, including issues of Æthelstan, Eadmund, Eadred, Eadwig, Eadgar, Regnald Guthfrithsson, Eric Blood Axe and Pepin II of Aquitaine. Although the coins quickly became scattered, about two-fifths of the total came into the possession of three collectors: Carruthers, Edward Benn of Glenravil, Co. Antrim, and James Bell of Prospect, Ballymoney, Co. Antrim. Other Anglo-Saxon coins now in the Belfast Museum may well have originated from this source.

Turning now to Scotland, and starting in the far north, back in 1774 a coin hoard was found at Caldale on Orkney. A hoard of at least about three hundred silver coins of Cnut was found in two horns during peat cutting. Other items found with coins were silver armlets, ring-money and some probable ingots, as well as some silver fibulae in the form of crescents and other shapes. The bulk of the hoard is now in the British Museum.

Two other similar-sized Scottish hoards of note, also found on islands, are Tiree (1782) and Iona Abbey (1950). Tiree is an early-recorded but poorly documented Viking-Age silver deposit. The find was imperfectly recorded in antiquarian sources and subsequently dispersed, so no full inventory survives and much of its composition must be reconstructed from later summaries. It comprised a mixed silver assemblage, including Anglo-Saxon pennies, likely Hiberno-Norse coinage, and bullion (ingots and/or hack-silver)—a combination characteristic of the economy operating in the Irish Sea zone.

Iona Abbey is an Anglo-Saxon hoard composed predominantly of pre-reform coinage, including six issues of Æthelred II, was discovered on 11 August 1950 during drainage works. any of the pennies were adhered together by corrosion and proved fragile, with some fragmenting during recovery and conservation; however, the majority were successfully stabilised, several surviving in near mint condition. The assemblage is estimated to have comprised over 350 coins, of which 343 were fully catalogued and subsequently published in the *Numismatic Chronicle*.

Figure 15 - Southern region, hoards of 5+ coins, deposited 973-1066 AD (MCHBI map link).

The larger English hoards include Lenborough (2014), Cambridge (1993), Halton Moor (1815), and Sedlescombe (1876). Hoards in southern England are fewer than those in eastern England. In England, the beginning of this period is marked by the reform of the coinage under Eadgar in 973 or just after, resulting in a coinage in which all the coins struck throughout Edgar's kingdom were of a uniform design carrying the king's name and bust on the obverse, and a small cross in the centre of the reverse surrounded by an inscription providing the name of the moneyer and mint. Design uniformity was further enforced by having coin dies prepared centrally, initially perhaps at Winchester only. Danish areas in the North and East stopped producing their own coinage.

Figure 16 - The unique Agnus Dei mule from Lenborough, image © Trustees of the British Museum.

Lenborough (2014) discovered in Buckinghamshire, comprises 5,248 silver pennies—the largest Saxon coin hoard found in Britain for over 150 years. The coins span the reigns of Æthelred II (d. 1016) and Cnut (r. 1016–1035). While most coins belong to established types, several are unusual, including three imitations in Æthelred's name not struck England (two in Dublin, one in Scandinavia). One coin is unique: it combines Æthelred's rare 'Agnus Dei' obverse, otherwise known on c.30 examples, with an unexpected reverse of a standard type, likely reflecting a minting error.

f) The Normans (1066-1135)

The Norman invasion in 1066 and continuing military activity over the next few years was undoubtedly responsible for a number of hoards being concealed. Most of the Norman hoards are from England, though we do see a number from Ireland. One of the larger hoards of this period is the 2019 Chew Valley hoard with about 2,600 coins, though the largest is from the City of London, the 1872 Walbrook discovery with over 6,500 coins. The Chew Valley hoard was deposited just after the conquest, and contains coins of William I. By contrast, an important hoard buried immediately before the conquest is that found in the Braintree area in 2019. It contained 145 coins – mainly of Edward the Confessor and Harold II, though unusually there were a few Byzantine coins present too.

Whereas the English hoards of this period generally consist of Anglo-Saxon and Norman coins the situation is not the same in Ireland. Ireland between 1066 and 1135 was politically fragmented, with power contested among major dynasties such as the Uí Briain, Uí Conchobair, and Meic Lochlainn. Although the idea of a high kingship persisted after Brian Boru, it remained unstable and frequently challenged by rulers including Toirdelbach Ua Briain and Toirdelbach Ua Conchobair. Regular warfare, raids, and shifting alliances created an environment of insecurity in which the concealment of wealth was often a rational response. The Norman Conquest had no immediate political impact on Ireland.

Urban centres such as Dublin, Waterford, and Limerick remained key trade and exchange hubs, while ecclesiastical reform led to greater concentration of wealth in church institutions. Combined with ongoing Irish Sea raiding and instability, these factors fostered conditions in which silver was accumulated and frequently buried, resulting in hoards typically composed of mixed coinage and bullion, often deposited during periods of conflict or uncertainty.

It is also noteworthy that several substantial coin hoards from this period have been recovered in London and York, highlighting the economic and administrative importance of these settlements under both Harold II Godwinson and William I. For example, the Nr.York 2023 hoard comprised 181 PAX pennies of Harold II, underscoring York's continuing role as a major economic centre. Another significant though less well-documented hoard is that of Scaldwell (The "War Area" hoard), discovered before or around 1914. This hoard contained almost exclusively a single type of coin of William I, all struck at Northampton (HAMTUN) by the moneyer Saewine. Careful study of this hoard has been instrumental for numismatists to be able to confirm that the mint signature HAMTUN refers to Northampton rather than Southampton, demonstrating how a single, well-preserved hoard can provide crucial insights into medieval minting practices and the attribution of coinage.

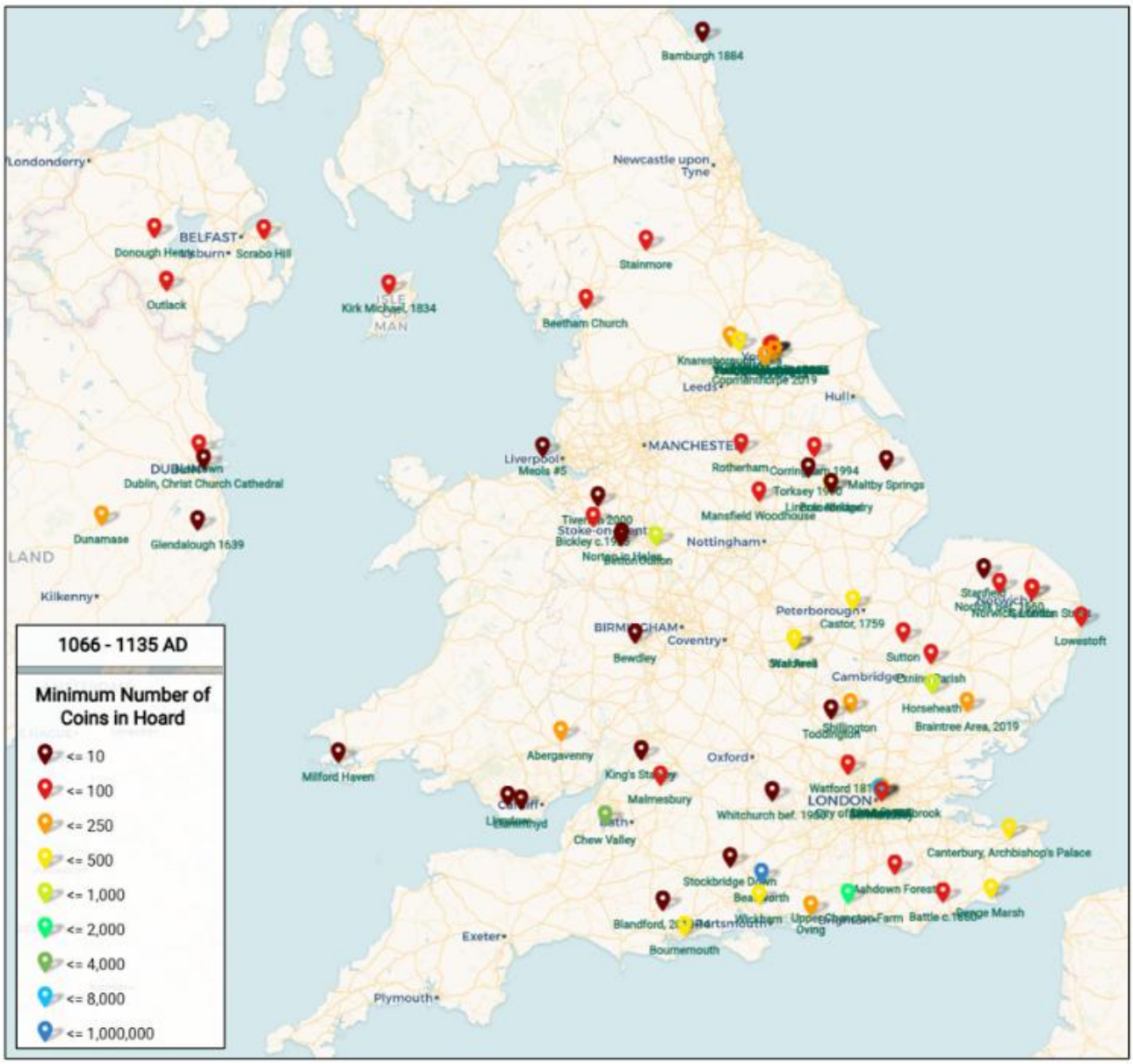


Figure 17 - Hoards of 5+ coins deposited 1066-1135 AD (Map-link)

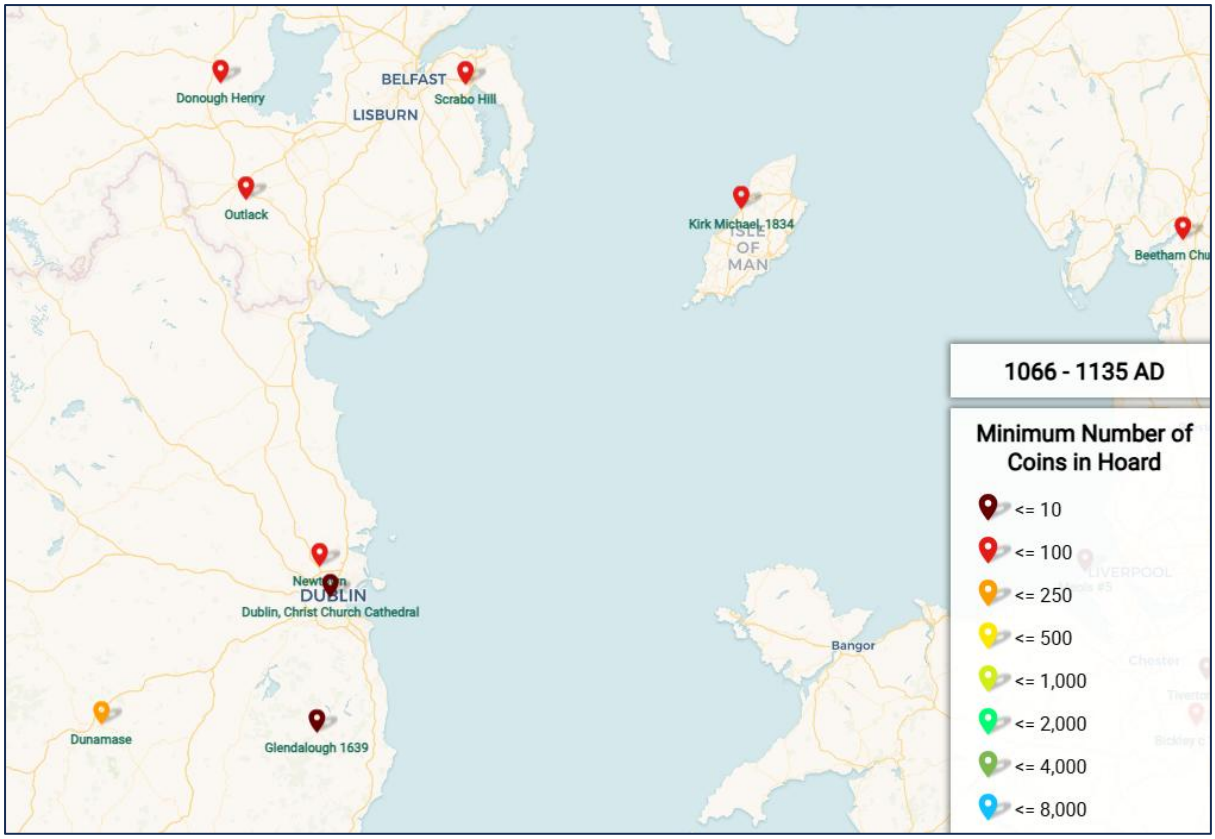


Figure 18 - Part of the Irish Sea area, showing hoards of 5+ coins deposited 1066-1135 AD. (Map-link).

Irish hoards of this period are predominantly or exclusively of Hiberno-Scandinavian coins. In the map above the three hoards in the north-eastern part of Ireland all contain Hiberno-Scandinavian i.e. Viking-type deposits rather than Norman. These hoards being Scrabo Hill (c.1854), Donough Henry (1823) and Outlack (1847), similarly the Kirk Michael (1834) hoard on the Isle of Man also contains Hiberno-Scandinavian coins. Further south in Ireland are several hoards in the Dublin area, and several in the hinterland. Of the latter, the largest is Dunamase discovered in 1749-58 and containing over 200 Hiberno-Scandinavian coins. The other three hoards also contain Hiberno-Scandinavian coins.

It is noteworthy that no coin hoards from 1066–1135 AD have been recorded in Scotland, a pattern likely reflecting both the limited extent of coin minting in Scotland during this period and the broader political instability in England following the Norman Conquest. The Stainmore hoard, discovered between 2017 and 2024 in Cumbria, represents the northernmost find of this era. This hoard consisted of William II Cross-in-Quatrefoil pennies and has been interpreted in a historical context: its deposition may be associated with the capture of Carlisle by the English from the Kingdom of the Scots in 1092, situating the hoard within a period of military activity and territorial consolidation.

The absence of Scottish hoards and the limited northern distribution of English coins more generally highlight how political, military, and administrative developments influenced the circulation and accumulation of coinage.

g) Stephen and the Anarchy (1135-54)

The reign of Stephen of England (1135–1154), dominated by the civil war known as The Anarchy, created conditions conducive to coin hoarding, however hoards deposited during this period are not that common; particularly outside England; we have only one example each from Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.

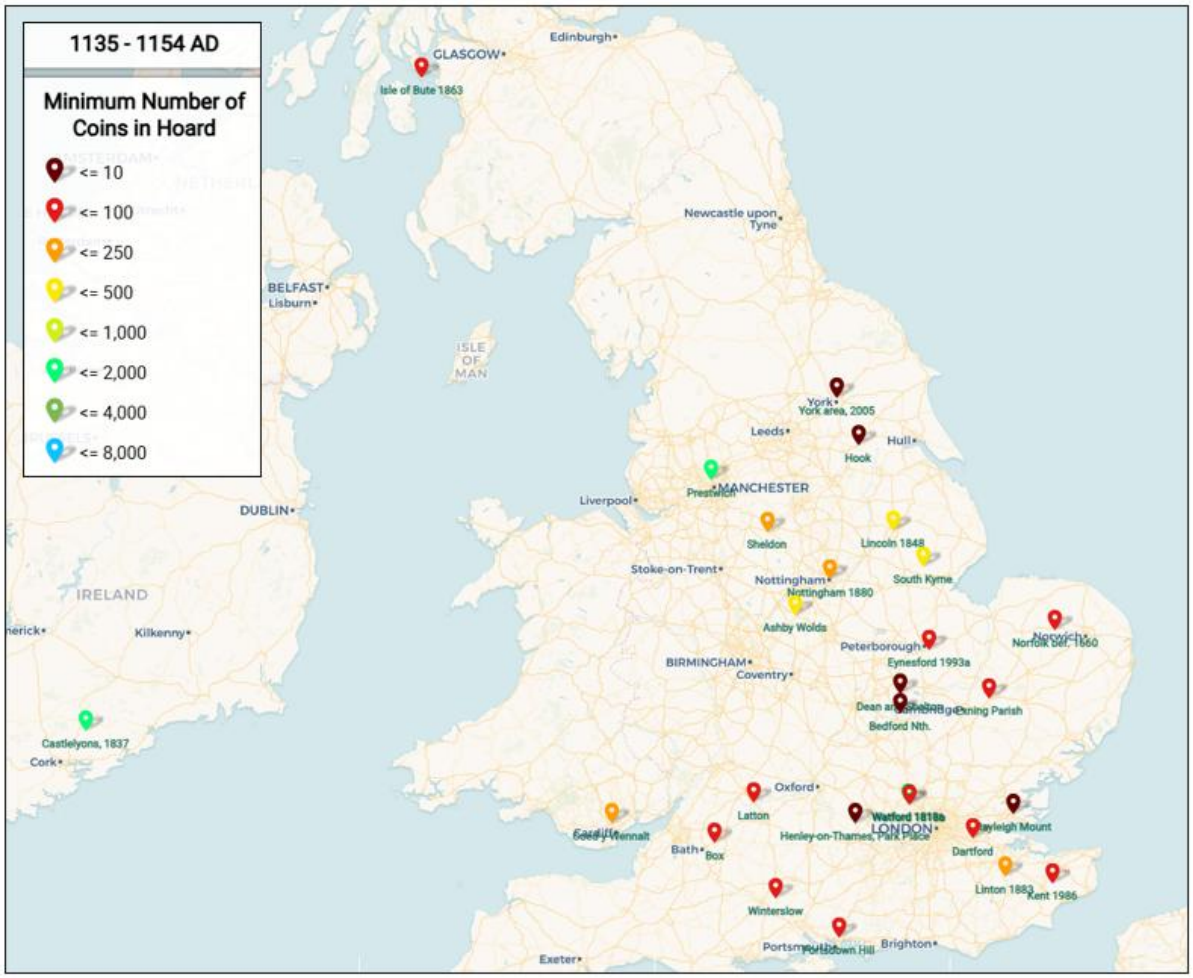


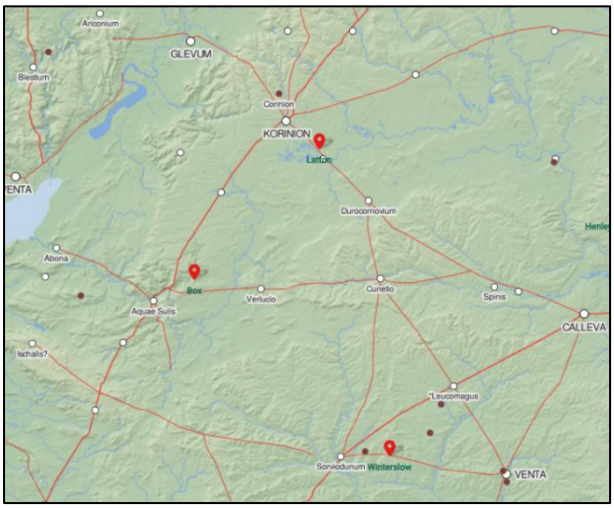
Figure 19 - Hoards of 5+ coins deposited 1135-54 AD (Map link)

Before addressing the English hoards, we will take a look at the three regional hoards. The largest of these being the Irish Castlelyons (1837) hoard which probably had nothing to do with the Anarchy, being a hoard of over 2000 late Hiberno-Scandinavian bracteates. Also perhaps not Anarchy-related, in Scotland the smaller Isle of Bute (1863) hoard was probably an emergency deposit most likely concealed during a period of insecurity rather than as long-term savings; the Firth of Clyde was exposed to maritime movement and conflict, including Norse-Gaelic activity. Sudden threats often prompted the burial of portable wealth. By contrast, the south Wales hoard, Coen-y-Wennalt (1980) is an Anarchy-related hoard consisting of 102 coins, chiefly of the Cardiff mint and chiefly of the Empress Maud, at a stroke trebling the recorded total of her coins: there were also coins of a hitherto unknown mint at Swansea, both in Stephen's name and in that of Henry of Neubourg, a younger son of the first Earl of Warwick who had conquered Gower – very significant additions to the 'baronial' series of the Anarchy.

Political instability of the time was the primary driver for hoarding. Stephen's contested succession against Empress Matilda led to prolonged, decentralised warfare. Much of the conflict consisted of localised struggles between rival barons rather than set-piece battles, producing chronic insecurity across large areas of the country. In such conditions, individuals often concealed valuables for safekeeping, sometimes never recovering it.

There are currently 25 English hoards with five or more coins. Inspection of the map shows that in general some of the larger of these English hoards have been found in the Midlands and the North, compared to smaller hoards in the South. The largest northern hoard is that of Prestwich, discovered in 1971 and containing over 1000 coins, mainly of Stephen with some baronial and Matilda types, and also a few earlier coins of Henry I. Geographically uneven conflict influenced hoarding patterns. Regions such as the Thames Valley, the south-west, and parts of the Midlands saw intense campaigning, sieges, and castle-building. These are the areas where coin hoards have been most frequently found.

Hoards often cluster along lines of movement or contested zones, suggesting deposition in response to immediate military threats. Old Roman routes continued, in many cases, to be utilised in Medieval times. The map on the right is an extract from the DARE[6] map of Roman Britain and shows three Anarchy hoards either on or close to these old routes.



A breakdown in royal authority compounded this instability allowing magnates to operate autonomously. Contemporary sources, notably the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, describe widespread disorder. The erosion of institutional security increased the perceived risk of keeping wealth visible or accessible, encouraging burial.

Monetary instability was another significant factor. The usual system of regulated minting broke down, leading to the appearance of "irregular" or locally produced coins. Differences in weight, silver content, and design undermined trust in the currency, prompting people to remove higher-quality coins from circulation and store them in hoards—a typical reaction to debasement.

One of the more interesting hoards of the period is that found at Box in Wiltshire by a metal detectorist. It included over sixty baronial coins of Earl William, and his father Earl Robert, and consisted of a major coinage of a previously unknown lion type. Other than a single metal detecting find in 2000 the Box hoard is the only known source of the lion type coinage.

In Part Two of this article the hoards deposited from 1154 to 1544 will be addressed.

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[6] Johan Åhlfeldt, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Lund University, Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire.