A Brief Tour of Medieval Coin Hoards from Britain and Ireland Part Two: AD 1154–1351

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The BNS MCHBI website, introduced in late 2022, provides online access to a comprehensive database of 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 continue to take you on a quick tour in time and space through Britain and Ireland, looking at the distribution of coin hoards by different historic periods, and highlighting selected examples. An earlier article by us covered Medieval hoards deposited prior to 1154[4]. The breakdown of hoards into fourteen age groups facilitates a degree of understanding behind the reasons for deposition of many hoards.

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

Table 1 – The Number of Medieval Coin Hoards of 5+ coins by Age Group and Region

In the above table we see only those medieval hoards having a minimum number of five coins. The first seven coin groupings were addressed by us in Part 1 of this article, and here we address the next four groups, i.e. hoards deposited from 1154 to 1351 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 the 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.

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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. (Link).
[4] Robert Page and William Wilson, "A Brief Tour of Medieval Coin Hoards from Britain and Ireland – Part One: 450-1154 AD", BNS Research Blog (Link)

h) **The 1154-80 Period: Including "Tealby Pennies" of Henry II**

Following the accession of Henry II of England on 19 December 1154, the English currency remained initially unchanged, with the late cross-and-crosslets pennies (the "Watford type"), originating under Stephen of England and possibly Empress Matilda, continuing in production until c.1158; only then were they replaced by the Tealby pennies, introduced c.1158–1160 as the first major reform of the reign and characterised by wide flans, irregular dies, and often poorly executed but more naturalistic portraits, remaining in issue until the Short Cross recoinage of 1180. This delayed reform reflects both administrative continuity and the practical constraints of reorganising the minting system after the disruption of The Anarchy and can be interpreted as part of Henry II's broader programme to reassert royal control and standardise the coinage within the emerging Angevin Empire.
Cross-and-crosslet (Tealby type) coin hoards have been found almost exclusively in England, with only one example from Wales. A hoard of this period from Scotland (Dyke 1780) does not record whether any Tealby pennies were present; the hoard may have been of Scottish coins only.

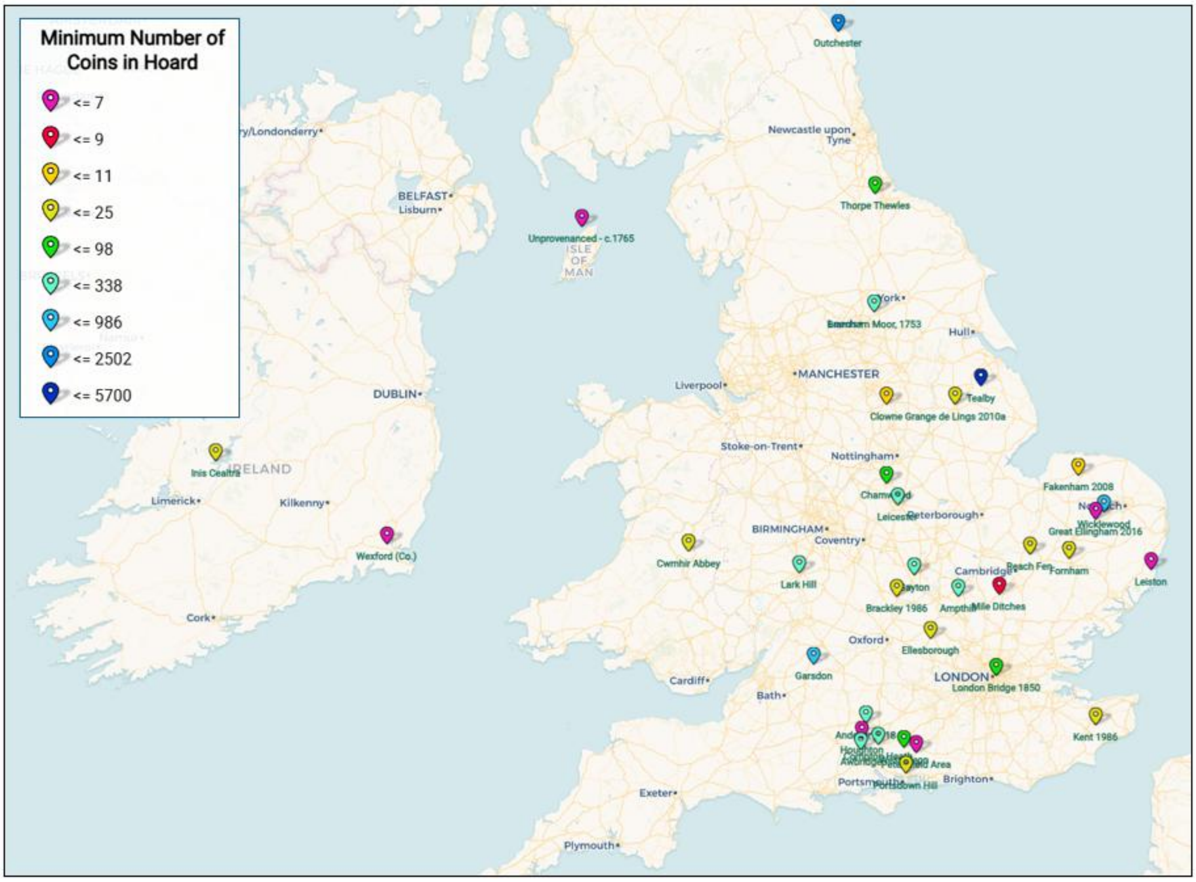

Figure 1 - Hoards of 5+coins deposited during 1154-80. (Map-link)

Looking at each of the four regions in turn, and starting with **England,** there had been significant crisis driven hoarding during the Anarchy period, and hoarding habits continued into the 1150s–60s even after political stabilisation. There was localised instability with isolated disturbances generating small-scale precautionary concealments, as well as fiscal pressure - Royal demands could result in the temporary concealment of coin.

Some of the larger hoards of Cross-and-Crosslet coin hoards were found over two hundred years ago; we have the Tealby hoard itself, discovered in 1807 and with maybe 6,000 coins, and in the far north, Outchester, with about 1,000 coins. Although imperfectly recorded, as is typical for early 19th-century finds, the Outchester hoard consisted predominantly of Tealby (Cross-and-Crosslets) pennies of Henry II but also included Scottish sterlings reflecting a mixed Anglo-Scottish composition characteristic of the northern circulation zone, particularly in Northumberland. The latest coin is a Tealby penny of Class E (c.1170-c.1174). Based on the extant coins, the hoard was probably deposited in the early 1170s. It is tempting to link the deposit of the hoard with disturbances in 1173–4, when the Scots made three armed incursions into Northumberland. The locality of Outchester was ravaged in April 1174. The circumstantial evidence is attractive, but a definitive link cannot be made on the available evidence, and we can only suggest the hoard was deposited 1170 - 1174. For further information on this interesting hoard see the article by Crafter[5].

Also in the north, near Middlesborough, a hoard of 98 Henry II Tealby pennies was discovered in a sand pit near Thorpe Thewles in 1932. Hoards of this coin type are particularly rare in the north of England with a far greater proportion being found to the south. In contrast to the Outchester Hoard though, this hoard contained no Scottish sterlings.

The earliest of all the Cross-and-crosslet hoards, though, was that of Compton Heath in Hampshire found in 1758, when over three hundred coins were found during road construction.

In more recent times we have a number of significant metal-detecting discoveries: Wicklewood with 482 coins found in 1989, Gayton found in 1998-99 with 311 coins, and, lastly, Garsdon, found in 2022 with c. 574 coins. Gayton and Garsden both close with type F, and so were buried c.1180, perhaps in response to currency reform. Wicklewood, closing in type D and buried in or after 1171, possibly represents precautionary burial at the onset of instability, not a response to coinage reform. The East Anglian setting reinforces this: the region was politically sensitive, making it prone to early, defensive hoarding behaviour in advance of or associated with the 1173-1174 revolt against Henry II.

For **Wales** we see a fragmented landscape divided between native Welsh principalities and Anglo-Norman marcher lordships, forming a persistent frontier zone. No major, securely published Welsh coin hoard can currently be attributed specifically to the period 1154–1180; the only example of a hoard from this period is a small one from Cwmhir Abbey. Discovered in 1970 it contained 13 French and Anglo-Gallic coins: Aquitaine, Henry II denier (8) Richard I denier (3), Melle denier and a Bordeaux 12th century denier.

In **Scotland** between 1154 and 1180 there was already had a functioning royal coinage system, first introduced under David I, but it was still relatively small-scale and heavily influenced by England. Under Malcolm IV, coin production continued on a limited basis, with English pennies still dominating everyday use. From a hoarding perspective, any coin deposits from this period would tend to be mixed or overwhelmingly English, especially in the south, which reflects how dependent Scotland still was on cross-border monetary supply. Under William the Lion (1165-1214), there was a gradual strengthening of the system, with more active minting and a clearer assertion of royal control. Even so, Scottish coins continued to closely copy English types, especially those of Henry II. The political backdrop matters here too, particularly the Treaty of Falaise[6], which followed William's capture and reinforced English influence, with William having to swear fealty to Henry II (this was revoked in 1189). In terms of hoarding, this is the period where we might expect to see more clearly border-focused "emergency" deposits, likely linked to instability and military pressure, rather than long-term saving.

However, there is a dearth of hoards from Scotland during this period, and the only possible example we are aware of is the shadowy hoard at Dyke. Found in the year 1780 in digging a foundation to enlarge the church of Dyke. One of the workmen, when removing earth found the coins and disposed of them to silversmiths. There were perhaps over 2,000 pennies of William I minted at Edinburgh, Perth, Roxburgh, Stirling, and Berwick. About a hundred of the coins were acquired by the Society of

[5] Crafter, T.C.R., (2017), 'The Outchester Hoard', 1817, BNJ vol. 87 pp. 222-227 (link)

Antiquaries of Scotland. Further hoards are likely to be found, and it may well be that some hoards of this period have not been reported.

In **Ireland** we only have two known hoards form this period which is a little surprising as the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169/theoretically should have been the cause of increased hoarding.

The immediate catalyst was a dynastic dispute involving Diarmait Mac Murchada, who had been expelled from his kingdom of Leinster in 1166 by a coalition led by the High King Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair. Seeking to regain power, Diarmait appealed to Henry II for support, who granted him permission to recruit forces from among his Anglo-Norman subjects.

In 1169, the first contingents of these forces—comprising Cambro-Norman and Flemish mercenaries—landed in south-east Ireland, particularly at Wexford. These forces quickly captured Wexford and helped Diarmait reassert control over parts of Leinster.

The situation escalated in 1170 when a larger force led by Richard de Clare—better known as Strongbow—arrived. He captured Waterford and then Dublin, marking a decisive shift in the balance of power.

These developments alarmed Henry II, who feared the emergence of an independent Anglo-Norman principality. In response, he personally intervened in 1171, landing in Ireland with a substantial army—the first English king to do so. He secured the submission of many Irish kings and asserted direct royal authority, laying the foundations for the later Lordship of Ireland.

The two hoards that have been reported are Inis Cealtra and Wexford. The hoard at Inis Cealtra was discovered in 1977 during archaeological investigations at InisCealtra, or Inishcaltra (Holy Island), a small island in Lough Derg, County Clare, with extensive remains of a medieval monastic settlement. It contained 21 pennies, of which 19 were of Henry II's Cross and Crosslets (or Tealby) coinage. The other hoard, Wexford, was discovered in 1846 and is smaller with only six coins – three are of Tealby type but the other three are Hiberno-Scandinavian. The presence of Tealby types in Wexford is unsurprising given that the town was one of the initial points of Anglo-Norman landfall in 1169, but the coexistence of earlier coinage underscores a transitional monetary environment rather than a rapid replacement of currency.

i) Short Cross Hoards (1180-1247)

Between c.1180 and 1247 the economies of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland became increasingly monetised, with coin progressively displacing barter, labour services, cattle wealth, and weighed bullion in taxation, rents, and trade. The English penny had long been a trusted silver currency since the late Anglo-Saxon period, and the sterling system—reinforced and standardised by the coinage reforms of Henry II—provided the monetary foundation for this expansion in circulation and use.

Government played a major role in deepening monetisation by demanding payment in coin for taxes, scutage, fines, feudal dues, and customs, forcing wider sections of society to obtain silver pennies. Expanding markets, urban growth, wool exports, and long-distance trade further increased circulation across the British Isles and into northern Europe. Under rulers such as King John and Henry III, coin use became embedded in administration and warfare. As coined silver accumulated in private and institutional hands, hoarding emerged as a rational strategy for securing portable wealth in a world without reliable banking institutions.

The deposition of Short Cross hoards was driven by multiple factors rather than a single cause. Some hoards likely represent merchant capital, rent collections, tax revenues, or institutional reserves that were deliberately concealed for security. Others were emergency deposits associated with periods of political and military instability, particularly during the troubled reign of John and, in many cases, warfare, civil unrest, raids, or displacement probably prevented owners from recovering their hidden wealth.

England: Short cross hoards are quite widespread, having been found in all five regions. The largest English short cross hoard is a 1902 hoard from Colchester with over 11,000 coins, followed by about 2,800 coins from Sudbourne in Suffolk. The Colchester (1902) hoard has a closing date in the 1230s. It demonstrates the existence of large concentrations of monetised wealth in an urban environment and strongly reflects the commercial expansion of thirteenth-century England. The probable association with Jewish financiers and merchants is especially important because it links the hoard directly to credit networks, taxation pressures, and the increasingly cash-based economy of Henry III's reign. At Sudbourne in Suffolk, during the restoration in 1879 of the ancient Church, a wooden box containing an estimated 2,800 silver pennies was discovered beneath the flooring of the nave. The box crumbled away when exposed to the atmosphere, but the coins seemed to have been carefully packed within it. They comprised Irish pennies of King John, Scottish sterlings of William the Lion, and money of the Short Cross Series, which formed the great bulk of the hoard.

East Anglia and the eastern counties provide strong evidence for commercial monetisation. Hoards from counties such as Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, and Lincolnshire frequently contain large numbers of relatively fresh Short Cross pennies from numerous mints. Their composition reflects active circulation within a highly commercialised region deeply connected to wool exports, market exchange, and North Sea trade.

Figure 2 - An Irish penny of King John, from the City of Peterborough Hoard, a Short Cross coin hoard from Cambridgeshire of 350 hammered coins - mainly English, but also some Irish and Scottish coins, dating to the late 1230s-early 1240s which was discovered by a metal detectorist in 2021. Image credit: Portable Antiquities Scheme, record # LEIC-0AFD85

Fillongley in Warwickshire, a 1997 metal detecting discovery of 127 coins, is an example of a hoard which may have been deposited due to unrest at the time of Magna Carta; the latest Short Cross class represented in the hoard is class VIb2 which suggests that the date of deposition was c. 1215. Other hoards deposited during the period of unrest following the signing of Magna Carta and the death of King John generally contain fewer than ten coins, marking Fillongley as a hoard of interest.

Ireland: Regional differences were significant. In Ireland, English sterlings entered a hybrid economy where coin circulated alongside older bullion and cattle-based traditions, particularly in Hiberno-Scandinavian towns such as Dublin. The two largest Irish Short Cross hoards are from Corofin in the

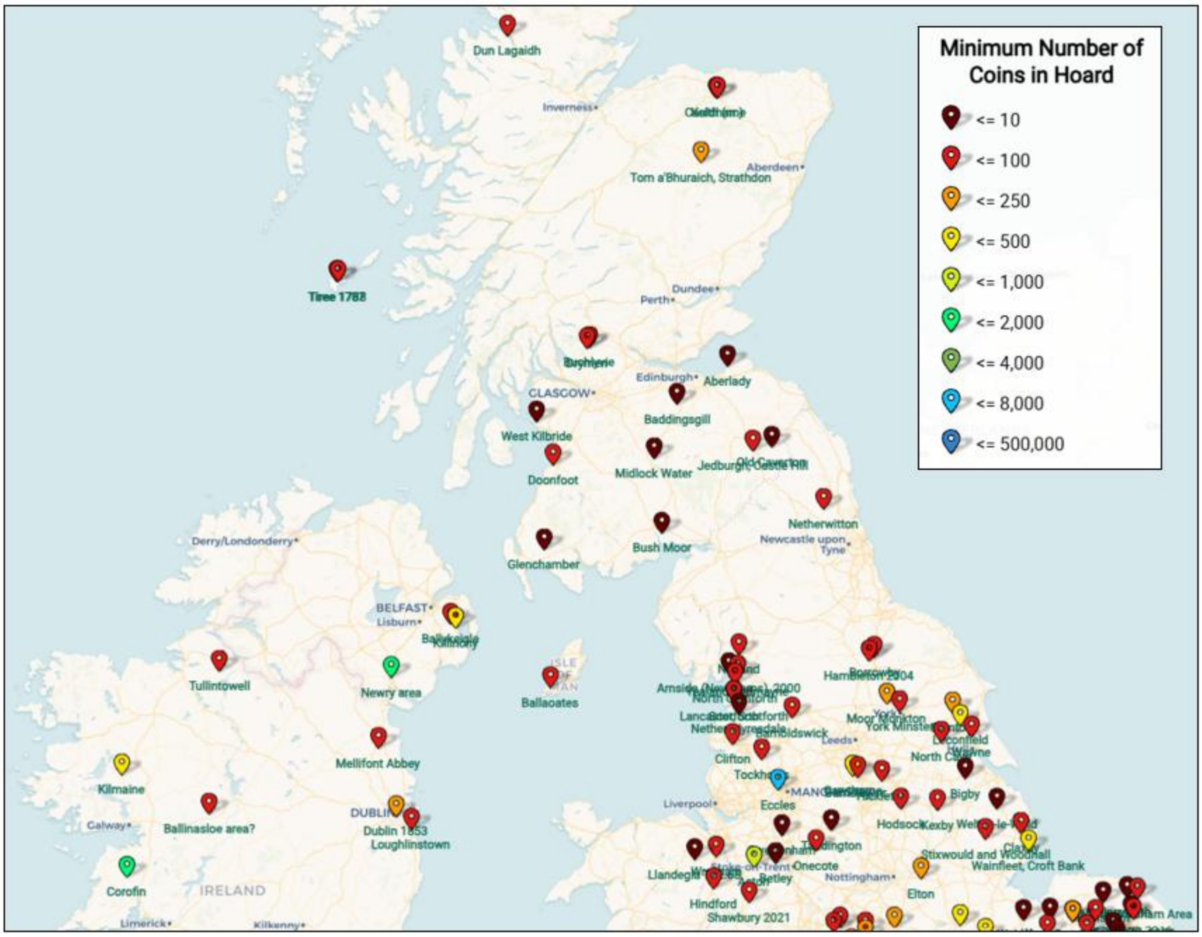

Figure 3 - Northern Britain and Ireland, hoards deposited during the Short Cross period (Map-link)

west with over a 1,000 coins and a hoard from the Newry area with 1,125 coins. The latter has a problem in that the hoard contained a coin of Henry III belongs to nearly a decade later than anything else in the hoard; this has been assumed a stray. The cause of the hoard's concealment was probably an incident in the 1220s when the area west of the Shannon was in turmoil. The Newry area hoard contained over five hundred English short cross pennies but is also notable for the 264 farthings of John de Courcy of Downpatrick and Carrickfergus, this coinage being relatively rare in hoards outside Ulster.

Scotland and Wales: The short cross hoards found in Scotland are smaller, with the largest being Tom a'Bhuraich with some two hundred coins. Welsh hoards are also generally smaller and contain below one hundred coins. In Scotland, increasing economic integration with England encouraged adoption of sterling-style coinage (accelerated by Alexander III) and wider coin circulation. In Wales, monetisation spread unevenly, strongest in marcher and Anglo-Norman regions while traditional structures persisted longer elsewhere. Across all regions, however, the growing prevalence of standardised silver pennies in hoards reflects the emergence of a more integrated and cash-oriented economic world.

j) **Henry III Long Cross Hoards (1247-1279)**

In 1247, Henry III replaced the earlier short-cross penny coinage (1180–1247) with a redesigned type known as the long-cross penny. The new design extended the cross on the reverse all the way to the edge of the coin.

Hoards of the Henry III long-cross period are widespread in England except for the South-West, and are also seen in Wales, particularly in some Welsh coastal locations. In Ireland there are also a number of widespread hoards.

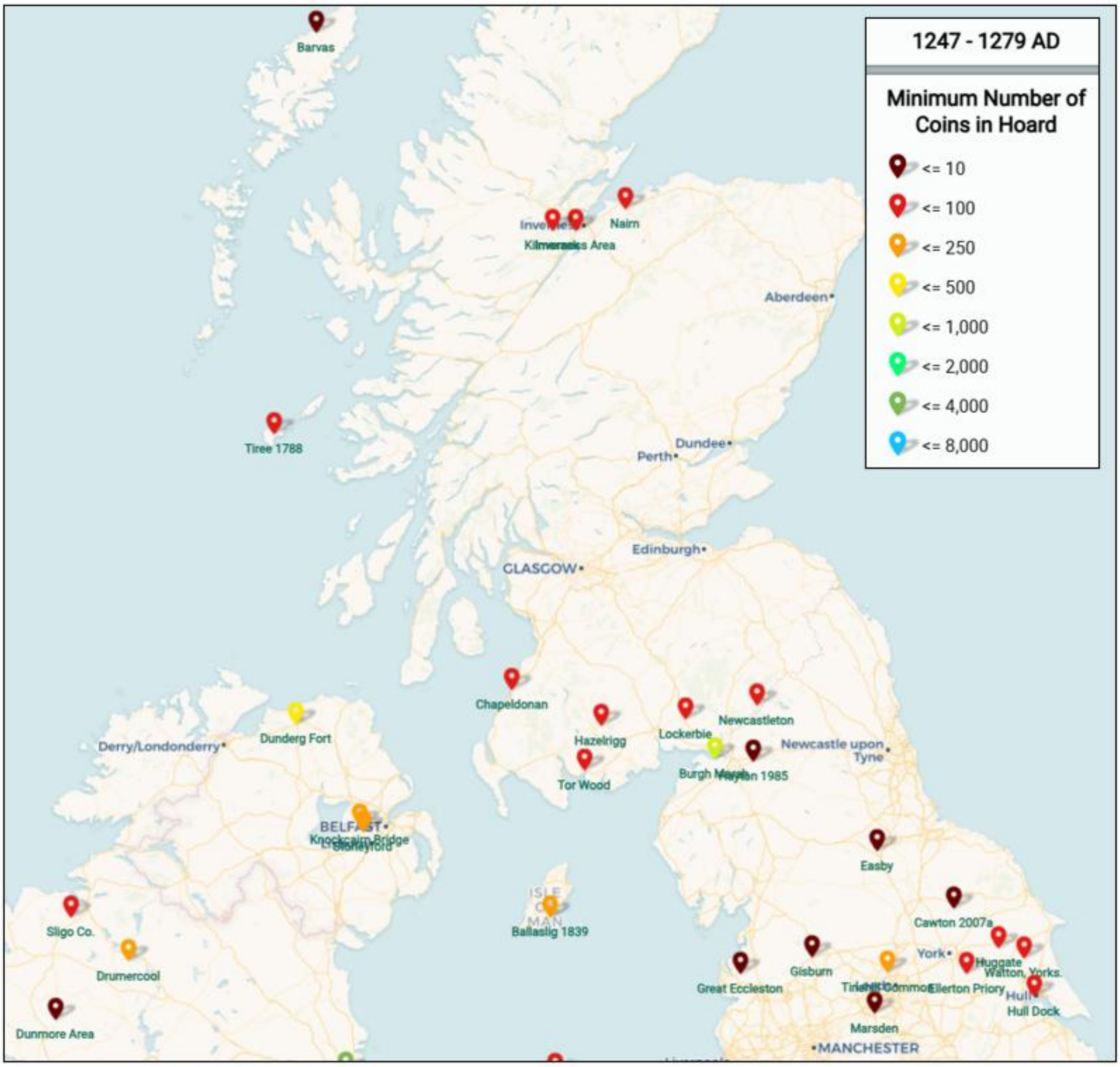

Figure 4 - Northen Britain and Ireland, coin hoards of 5+ coins, deposited during the period of Henry III's Long Cross coinage. (Map-link)

The long-cross pennies have been divided into seven classes which can be helpful to date hoards: Classes 1&2 (1247–c.1250) represent the earliest issues of the reform; Classes 3&4 (c.1250s) circulated widely during the middle of Henry III's reign; Class 5 (c.1260s) commonly appears in hoards associated with the Second Barons' War; and Classes 6–7 issued posthumously in the 1270s are the latest long-cross issues before the reform of Edward I.

The largest English hoard is that from [Colchester](#) ("Colchester II") found in 1969, and which contained over 14,000 coins, most likely related to an accumulation by Jewish merchants. 1,916 class 6 posthumous Henry III coins of Bury were probably added as hoard "top-up" in the mid-1270s. This is the largest Medieval hoard ever recovered intact in Britain; Tutbury was larger but scattered in a river bed. It is known from contemporary documentary evidence that in the 1270's several stone houses belonging to the Jewish community stood on the site where the hoard was found. Furthermore, the deposition date of the Colchester II hoard would seem to tie in well with the actions of the late 1270s when many Jews were arrested and executed.

Figure 5- A Henry III penny from the Colchester Hoard. Randulf, Bury St Edmunds, Class 5c2 [RP Collection].

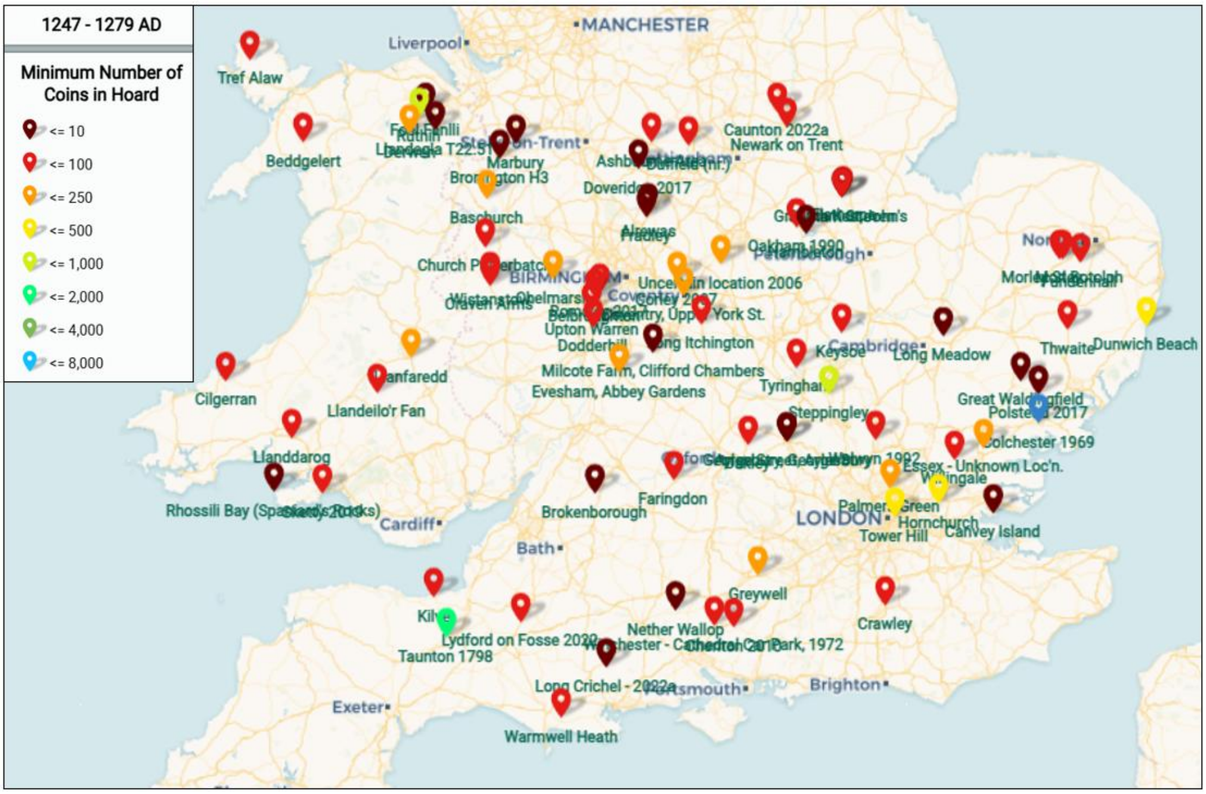

Figure 6 - Southern Britain, hoards of 5+ coins, deposited during the period of Henry III long cross pennies. ([Map-link](#))

After Colchester, the next largest hoard was that of [Bantry](#) in SW Ireland, with just over 700 coins. Other large Irish coins include [Dunderg Fort](#) and [St Mary's Church, Sevenchurches](#).

The Welsh hoards of Henry III each have 26 or less coins each. Scottish hoards are also small, but two have about 70 coins each. ([Tiree](#) and [Hazelrigg](#)).

Many hoards of the period include a few continental imitations, a few Anglo-Irish issues of Henry III and/or a few Scottish coins of Alexander III.

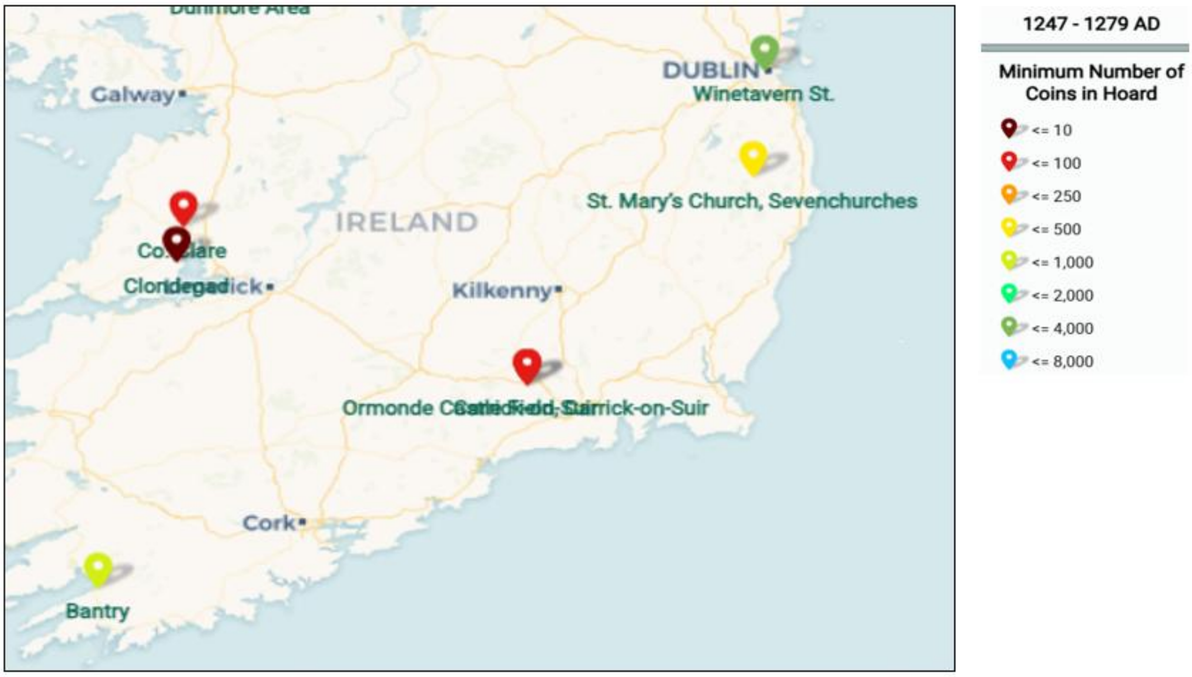

Figure 7 - Southern Irish hoards of 5+ coins, deposited during the period of Henry III long cross pennies. (Map-link)

j) Edwards I, II & III (1279-1351)

Hoards of this period are more numerous than those of any other medieval series, with over 350 hoards containing five or more coins currently recorded in the Medieval Coin Hoards of Britain and Ireland (MCHBI) database. This was a period of prolonged warfare and political instability, and the campaigns of Edward I, the Scottish Wars of Independence and subsequent Anglo-Scottish conflicts undoubtedly contributed to the high level of hoarding, although not every hoard can be linked directly to military activity.

Edward I's great recoinage, introduced in 1279, produced enormous quantities of high-quality silver pennies which rapidly became the principal currency of England. English armies campaigning in Scotland were largely paid in this sterling coinage, and as English garrisons became established, Edwardian pennies circulated widely throughout southern Scotland alongside the native Scottish issues of Alexander III and John Balliol. Even after the English occupation ended, Edwardian pennies continued to circulate for many decades owing to their abundance, consistent weight and widespread acceptance. The enormous mint output, combined with the exceptional number of surviving hoards, has made the pennies of Edward I among the commonest medieval hammered coins encountered today.

A few of the following maps have been filtered to display only hoards containing at least one hundred coins.

Scottish hoards found in and around Berwick, Dunbar, Edinburgh and Stirling are among those most plausibly associated with military activity, these centres having been repeatedly occupied or contested during the campaigns of Edward I and his successors.

As the map below illustrates, there is a marked concentration of hoards in southern Scotland and the Borders. Among the largest are the Langhope, Hoard, estimated to have contained about 4,000 coins, and the Dunscore Hoard, discovered by metal detectorists in 2021, which comprised more than 8,400 silver coins. The Dunscore Hoard is one of the largest medieval coin hoards discovered in Scotland since the nineteenth century. Dating principally from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, it consists predominantly of pennies of Edward I and Edward II, together with Scottish, Irish and continental issues, illustrating the international character of silver currency circulating in Britain during this period. Following its discovery, the site was excavated by the Treasure Trove Unit and archaeologists from National Museums Scotland, and the coins continue to be catalogued and studied.

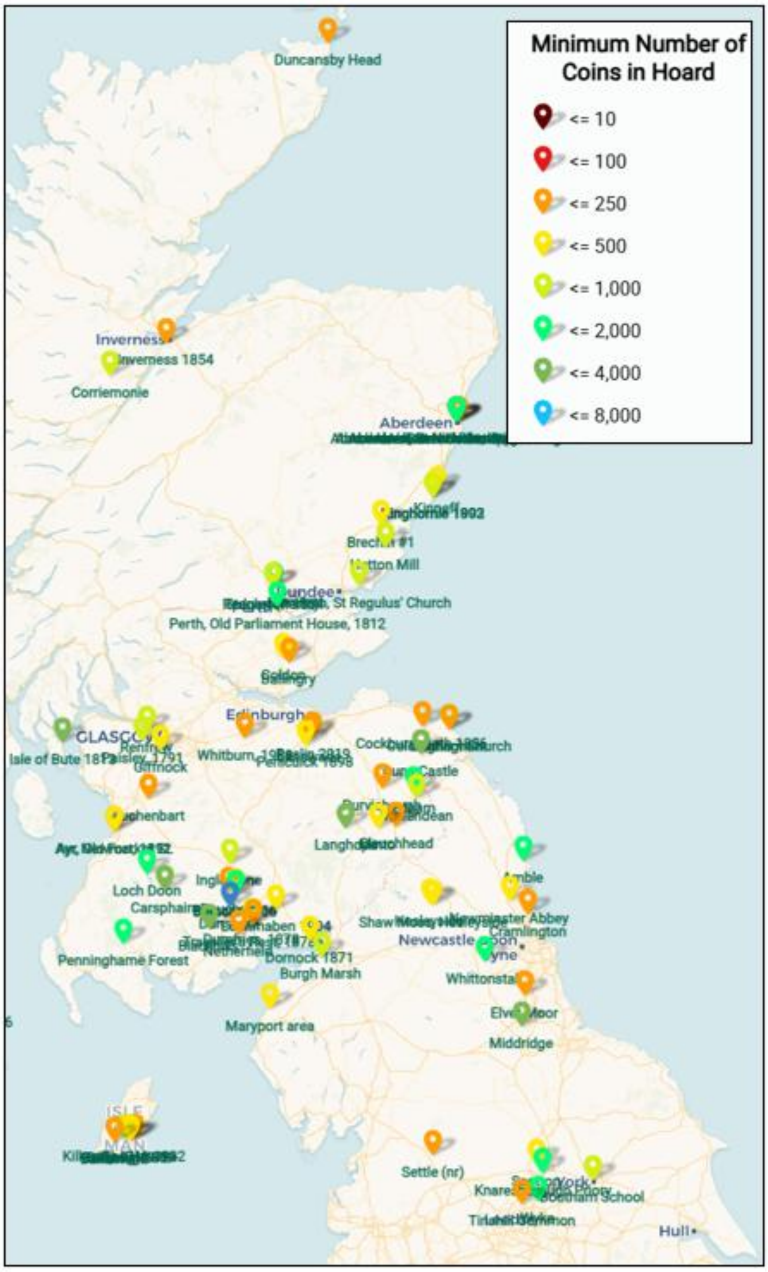

Fig. 8 – Northern British Hoards with over 100 coins, 1279-1351 (Map-link)

England: All Medieval hoards from anywhere in Britain and Ireland are overshadowed in size by the giant hoard from Tutbury in the English Midlands where pennies worth £1,000-1,500 (240,000 - 360,000 coins) ended up in the River Dove. This hoard constituted the travelling war chest of Thomas of Lancaster who had just been defeated at the nearby battle of Burton Bridge in 1322. It could have consisted of three barrels each containing £500 of coin, a total of 360,000 pennies if all three barrels were lost on the occasion. The coins were discovered by workers who were lowering the course of the River Dove by Tutbury Bridge – many were sold for their bullion value and melted down.

Still in southern Britain, the map overleaf shows the hoards with over one hundred coins. None of the hoards come close to Tutbury, but large hoards of note include an 1853 discovery at Braintree in Essex of 5000 coins or more, and of which little is known, and the better known 1935 discovery at Boyton in

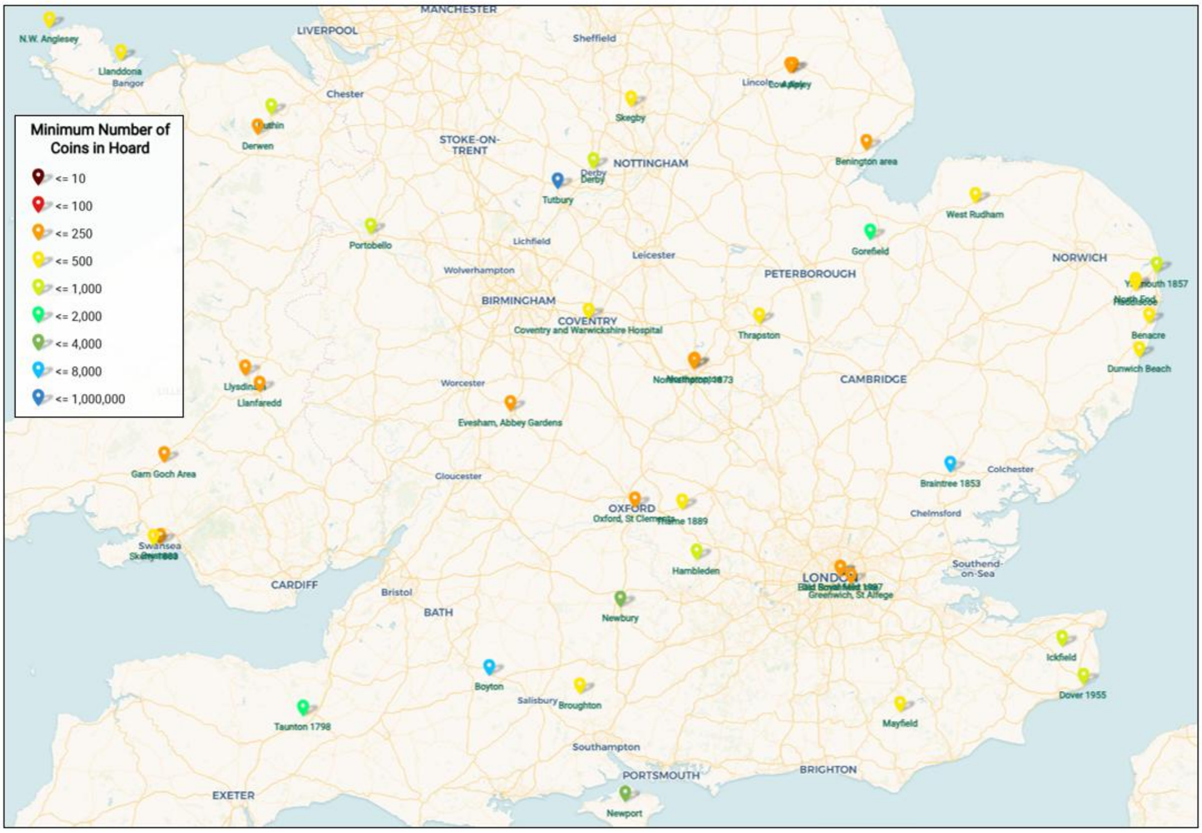

Figure 9 - Southern Britain, hoards of 100+ coins, deposited 1279-1351 (Map-link)

Wiltshire. A hoard of 4,147 coins was found there by workmen in 1935, while digging foundations in the grounds of Boyton Manor. The latest coin was an Edward II class 15b/c (mule) penny of Durham, which dates to 1321 or early 1322. The Boyton Hoard, deposited shortly after 1321, coincides with the outbreak of the Despenser War (1321–1322), a period of civil conflict between Edward II and the rebel Marcher Lords led by Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, and Roger Mortimer. Following the temporary exile of the Despensers in 1321, Edward II raised an army and launched a campaign against the rebels, culminating in the decisive royal victory at the Battle of Boroughbridge on 16 March 1322 and the execution of Lancaster shortly afterwards. Although Boyton itself lay some distance from the principal theatres of conflict, Wiltshire occupied an important position on the communications network between London, the west and the Welsh Marches, and military movements through the region would have contributed to an atmosphere of uncertainty. It cannot be stated with certainty that the hoard was concealed because of the Despenser War. Nevertheless, its date of deposition corresponds closely with this period of political and military instability, making the conflict the most plausible historical context for the burial of so substantial a sum.

Ireland: Continuing our tour, we now move over to Ireland where the Edwardian hoards from this 1279-1351 period are shown on the map overleaf. This period saw two unsuccessful Scottish invasions against the Anglo-Irish in 1315 and 1327, prompted by the attempts of the native Irish nobility to reclaim independence, followed by a series of disastrous famines.

In the summer of 1348, Ireland was struck hard by the Black Death that arrived through the ports of Drogheda and Howth. Within the year between a third and a half of the population were dead. In the aftermath of the plague, the economy of Ireland collapsed, towns were deserted and the farms abandoned. Prolonged economic depression followed.

Three of the Irish hoards, all in the North, are quite large with over one thousand coins each: Ballykelly, and two hoards at Ballyclare found in 1811 and 1827.

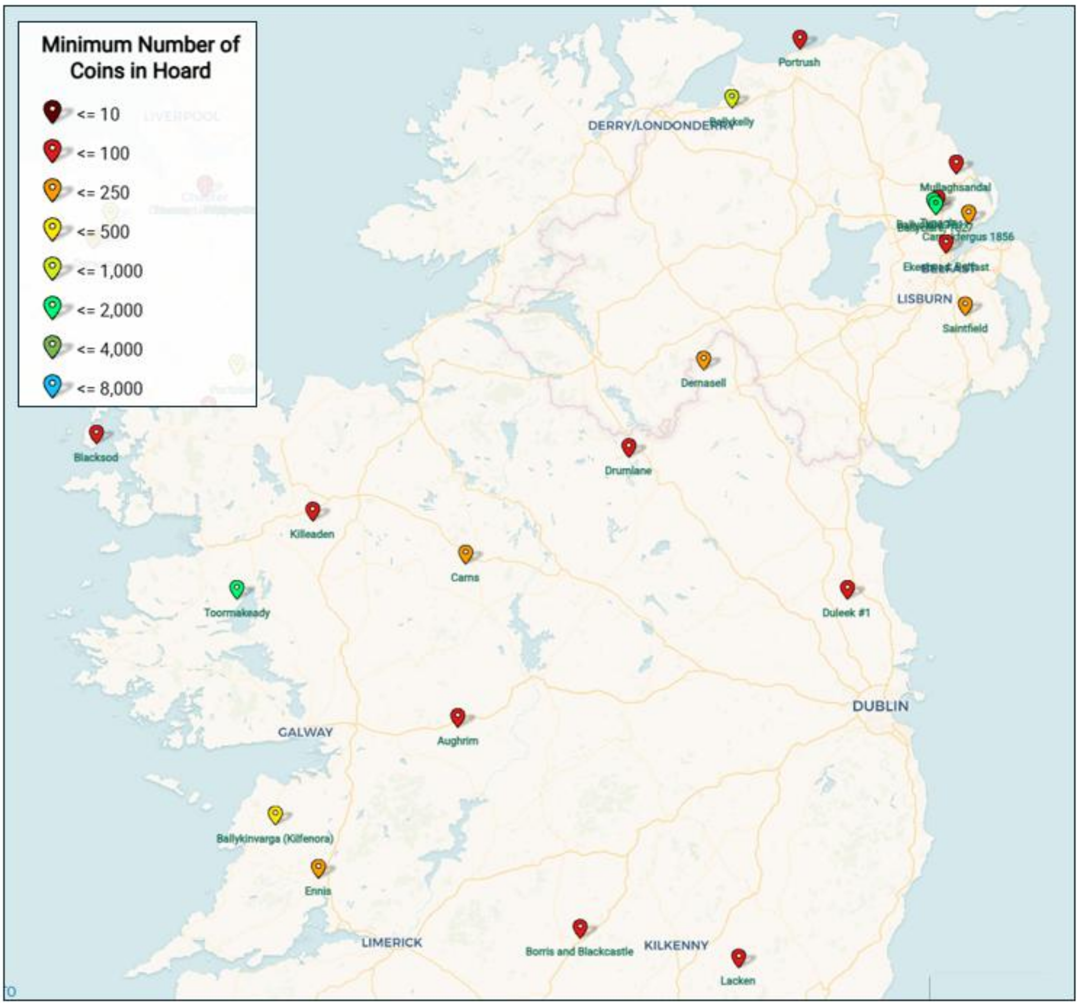

Figure 10-Showing part of Ireland, hoards of 20+ coins, deposited 1279-1351 (Map-link)

Between 1279 and 1351, Irish coin hoards are concentrated in north-east Ulster, particularly around Carrickfergus and modern Belfast. This reflects the region's position as the wealthiest and most highly monetised English lordship outside Dublin, sustained by a prosperous agricultural economy, the thriving port of Carrickfergus, and extensive trade with England, Scotland, and the Isle of Man.

North-east Ulster was also one of medieval Ireland's most politically unstable regions. Conflict between the Earldom of Ulster and neighbouring Gaelic lordships, compounded by the Bruce invasion of 1315–1318, encouraged merchants, landowners, and religious institutions to bury wealth for safekeeping. Many hoards were never recovered because their owners were killed, displaced, or impoverished by prolonged warfare.
Carrickfergus's role as the principal administrative and commercial centre in the northern part of Ireland further concentrated coin circulation, attracting silver from Dublin, England, and Scotland. Later hoards may also reflect the disruption of the Black Death from 1348, which reduced the likelihood of buried wealth being reclaimed.

That concludes our tour through Britain and Ireland for the years 1154-1351; in the final article the period from 1351-1544 will be examined. Readers are encouraged to share their thoughts using the Blog comments facility.