

The Crosscryne Hoard: a Third Note on the Edwardian Sterlings found near Biggar

by Ian Stewart

In volumes xcv (pp. 309–10) and xcvi (pp. 251–2) of these *Proceedings*, I have published notes on two parcels of Edwardian and associated sterlings which apparently come from a mid-nineteenth-century hoard found near Biggar. Both parcels had belonged to grand-daughters of Adam Wyld, who had probably been an earlier owner. An identification of the hoard, hitherto apparently unknown to modern numismatists, from which these parcels derive, has now been suggested to me by Mr Brian Lambie, and I am much indebted to him for his kindness in allowing me to publish it here and in assisting me in the preparation of this note. It is most gratifying that the original publication of a small parcel of the coins should have led both to the emergence of a second parcel and now to the context of a large but forgotten hoard.

The following passage occurs in William Hunter's *Biggar and the House of Fleming* (2nd edition 1876, p. 445):

'It serves somewhat to confirm the statement that a battle was fought at Biggar at the time referred to, that fragments of ancient armour, according to report, have been repeatedly dug up in the neighbourhood of the town; and that coins of the reign of Edward I have been found in the adjoining fields. One of these, found on Gum's meadow by Adam Wyld Esq., is still in the possession of that gentleman; and another, found some forty years ago by Mr Peter Williamson on the Burrow Muir, is now in the possession of William Ballantyne Esq., Manufacturer, Glasgow.

'A few years ago, an immense number of these coins were dug up at a spot on the south side of Crosscryne, about three miles from Biggar, which tradition points out as lying on the exact line of the march of the English army. That zealous antiquary, Mr Sim of Coulter, visited the spot and found the coins scattered about in such abundance that he was led to entertain the opinion that a

¹ Malmer, *op. cit.*, *passim*, and especially p. 359.

portion of Edward's military chest had been there deposited, either from the circumstances of a wagon breaking down or for the purpose of concealment.

'As might be expected, Mr Sim has in his repositories a number of these coins. . . .' The author was keen to prove that the presence of so many coins of the period helped to substantiate the tradition of a battle fought there at the end of the thirteenth century, but the Wyld coins, which I have examined, suggest a date too late for this explanation (c. 1320+).

The Sim mentioned is Adam, and not George, who edited *The Coinage of Scotland* for the press (1887) after the death of Edward Burns. Before that date Edwardian hoards could not be accurately dated and Burns was the first to establish the broad chronology of the series. Adam Sim of Coulter was a typical Victorian laird with antiquarian (but not, apparently, specialist numismatic) interests; he was a Fellow of this Society. After his death in 1868 his relatives handed over the most valuable of his antiquities to the National Museum, and there were two auctions, in 1869 and 1914, at which the rest were sold. No items which could include sterlings from Crosscryne are included in either of the sale catalogues, and Mr Stevenson informs me that none of the Edwardian or Alexandrian sterlings in the National collection can be identified as Sim's, and there is in fact no record of any such coins having been obtained from him.

None of the places mentioned by Hunter are sufficiently near one another to allow the coins to have been scattered from the one source: the battle itself took place over a wide area, covering all three spots named, but most of the coins examined are too late to have been lost as a result of this campaign. Other local deposits may have had some connection with the battle, or with several movements of the English and Scottish armies recorded in the area around the same time, and ending with a week's visit by Edward II in 1310.

Presumably each of the two groups of Wyld coins comes from a single source, and that source is likely to have been the Crosscryne hoard in each case. Being so large, it is the most probable source of coins from the area, though Wyld himself had a coin from Gum's meadow. The bulk of the hoard was probably dispersed. Mr Lambie, who lives at Biggar, has sent me a rubbing of a coin in his own possession allegedly from Crosscryne: it is a London penny of Burns A 41.

In the light of the above, several aspects of the summary given in vol. xcvi need revision, as follows:

BIGGAR (Crosscryne, and elsewhere?), Lanarkshire, 'a few years' before 1867. 'An immense number of sterlings', English, Scottish and Continental. Deposit c. 1320 or later. Discovered 'at a spot on the south side of Crosscryne, about three miles from Biggar'. Many also found scattered in local fields, presumably from separate deposits not necessarily of exactly the same period. Some to (descendants of) Adam Wyld, and to Adam Sim: many probably locally dispersed. 21 coins examined (add to earlier list 1 London penny, Fox X, Burns A 41), may have come from the main (Crosscryne) deposit.

Published *PSAS*, xcvi, xcvi and 100; Wm. Hunter, *Biggar and the House of Fleming* (1867), 445.