

A late 14th-century coin hoard from Tranent, East Lothian

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ABSTRACT

A find of 150 Scottish and English silver coins provides a valuable and fully documented addition to the small number of coin hoards attributable to the reign of Robert II.

INTRODUCTION

The hoard was discovered in August 1980 about a mile to the east of the village of Tranent, East Lothian (NGR NT 4173) by a man walking his dog. Investigation by members of the then National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland suggested that the coins lay spread out lengthwise over about five metres along two furrows. The field had been ploughed in 1979 but was uncultivated and overgrown the following year having been temporarily taken over by the National Coal Board. The finder had made a thorough search of the area and recovered a total of 148 coins but the subsequent examination of the site by Museum staff produced a further piece and shortly afterwards another stray was reported. No trace of a container was found and, if there were one originally, it was probably of an organic material which had since rotted away. No associated finds were made nor was anything present to suggest a marker though again such may long have disappeared. The find was declared to be Treasure Trove and disposition is recorded below.

THE HOARD

The hoard is made up of 59 Scottish, 83 English, one Irish and seven Continental coins, all of silver. Over half the total comprises pennies or sterlings of the type introduced by Edward I in 1279 and Alexander III about 1280. There are two examples of the latter present, minted between 1280 and 1286 but, as is the norm, the native issues are far outnumbered by the English pieces. The hoard contains 60 of these pennies of Edward I and II running from class Ic (1279) up to class XVc (1320–35), the majority belonging to the London mint but including issues of Canterbury, Durham, Newcastle, York, Bury, Bristol and Berwick. Also present is one Edward I Irish penny of Waterford and seven Continental imitation sterlings. The proportions of English, Scottish, Irish and Continental pieces, respectively 86%, 3%, 1% and 10%, matches the normal pattern reasonably well though the percentage of Continental pieces, at 10%, is somewhat higher than the usual maximum of 3% in hoards hidden after 1300 (Metcalf 1977, 14). Though not relevant for dating purposes here, the

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absence of class XVD pennies, the first of Edward III issued between 1327 and 1335, is noteworthy (Mayhew 1975, 34–5).

Edward III's later issues are represented by a further 23 coins. Six of these are pennies of the 'florin' coinage of 1344 to 1351. The majority, however, belong to the pre-Treaty output of the fourth coinage minted between 1351 and 1361. Among these are two groats and one halfgroat of London but the remaining 12 coins are all pennies of Durham. The latest coins of Edward III and indeed the latest English issues in the hoard are two Treaty-period pennies, of Durham and York, struck between 1363 and 1369.

Apart from the two Alexander III sterlings mentioned above, the Scottish pieces belong to the reigns of David II and Robert II. There are 29 coins of the former and 27 of the latter and in both groups the larger denominations of groats and halfgroats predominate over pennies, especially for the later reign. David II's earlier pre-1357 coinage is represented by a single penny of the second issue of 1351–7 but the majority of this king's coins from Tranent, seven groats, five halfgroats and five pennies, belong to the second coinage of 1357 to 1367 which witnessed the introduction of the larger silver coins to the Scottish series. These 17 are from the Edinburgh mint except for one groat of Aberdeen. David II's third 'light' coinage covering the final four years of his reign is represented by four each of the groats, halfgroats and pennies of Edinburgh.

The 27 coins of Robert II present are made up of 14 groats, nine halfgroats and four pennies. Nine of the groats are of Edinburgh and five of Perth. However, of the halfgroats six are of Perth and three of Edinburgh while all four pennies are of the Perth mint. The proportions accord with the hoard evidence as well as the mint records that at the beginning of the reign Perth had the greater output (Stewart 1971a, 228). Equally noteworthy perhaps is the absence of Dundee coins, though rare, dated to late in the reign possibly after 1385 (Stewart 1971b, 59–60). Apart from this the coins of Robert II have not so far lent themselves to a chronological classification so the latest coin in the hoard cannot be said to be more than belonging to the reign of Robert II.

The presence of the Robert II coins gives a date of post-1371 for the deposit of the Tranent hoard while the absence of issues of Robert III provides a *terminus ante quem* of c 1390. The groats of David II seem to have entered circulation in large numbers after their introduction in 1357 and the common 14th-century Scottish hoards composed wholly of sterlings were replaced after 1360 by hoards containing groats with or without the lesser denominations contemporary or earlier. The number of such hoards hidden or lost in Scotland between 1360 and 1390 is not large and consists of 13 published finds (Metcalf 1977, 42–4, nos 145–157). The 19th-century finds from Branxholm, Closeburn, Drumlanrig, Edinburgh and Tynron are rather tenuous and provide little information. Three others are a mixture of sterlings and groats like the Tranent hoard but these from Montrave, Closeburn and Redgorton are earlier in their deposit since they did not contain coins of Robert II and so presumably pre-date 1371. The hoard of four groats of Robert II from Birse hidden sometime during the reign is really too small for comparative purposes.

The 18th-century 'pot of' coins from Lumphanan containing coins of both David II and Robert II but without any English issues is probably to be assigned towards the end of Robert II's reign (Murray 1978, 77–9). The small hoard of three groats of David II and seven groats of Robert II from Dipple is dated to after 1385 on account of the presence of a Dundee groat of Robert II (Stewart 1971b, 59–60). Two more, better documented, hoards also did not contain an English element. The 80 coins from Craigie (Seaby & Stewart 1964, 104) and the 34 from Drumnadrochit (Murray 1978, 79) likewise had somewhat similar proportions of Robert II coins to David II coins (approximately 2:1) and were also assigned to late in the reign ie c 1385 and 1385–90 respectively.

Much more similar to the Tranent hoard is one found in 1978 at Aberdour in Fife (Archibald 1979, 105, no 288; Woodhead *et al* 1988, 69–72). This consisted of 277 silver coins up to the reigns of

Edward III and Robert II with a provisional date of deposit c 1380. A more detailed comparison will therefore be interesting now both hoards have been published.

It may be useful to look at some hoards of the period from outside Scotland which may reflect the currency pattern in Scotland. The Elvett Moor hoard, apart from one Edward III groat, contained groats of David II and Robert II with those of the latter slightly more numerous. A date c 1390 was suggested (Murray 1978, 73–77) but in view of the more equal proportions perhaps one around 1380 would be better. The Balleny hoard from Northern Ireland of 19 groats of David II and 11 of Robert II ought therefore to be earlier and the suggested date of deposit is c 1375 (Seaby & Stewart 1964, 99). A later find (1977) also from Northern Ireland from Newtownards consisting of one sterling of Edward I, seven pre-Treaty groats of Edward III and six groats of David II should be placed earlier than the 1380 suggested in the report (Bateson 1978, 103), perhaps c 1370.

The Tranent hoard with its high proportion of English coins and with the coins of David II and Robert II in roughly equal proportion (in both number and value) would therefore seem to belong to the first half of Robert II's reign, probably having been hidden c 1375–80. A summary of the main hoards of the period would provide the following picture:

Hoard	Date	Number	Sterlings	Edward III	David II	Robert II	Deposit
Montrave	1877	9441	X	X	X		c 1365
Closeburn	1846	10000+	X	X	X		–1370
Redgorton	1789	c 200	X		X		–1370
(Newtownards)	1977	14	1	7	6		c 1370
Tranent	1980	150	71	22	30	27	1375–80
Aberdour	1978	277	X	X	X	X	c 1380
(Balleny)	1962	30			19	11	c 1375
Lumphanan	–1750	'pot'			X	X	+1371
(Elvett Moor)	1756	157		1	68	88	c 1380 ('1390')
Craigie	1893	80	1		26	53	c 1385
Drumnadrochit	1931	34			12	22	1385–90
Dipple	1866	10			3	7	+1385
Birse	–1842	4				4	–1390

The general condition of the coins in the Tranent hoard as regards wear is worn or fairly worn, suggesting a hoard put together over a fairly short period, perhaps as an intended payment rather than a savings hoard gathered over a long period wherein the condition should have been better, or ready cash gathered in an emergency wherein the condition might have been expected to be more mixed. The wear on the Robert II coins, especially the groats, suggests that they had seen some years' circulation and had not been deposited in the early years of the reign. The contents of this find probably reflect the currency of Scotland in the 1370s, with the issues of David II and Robert II now predominating. The divergence in weight between the Scottish and English coinages, marked by David II's 'light' issue of 1367 and the consequent diminished value of the Scottish groat in England where it was ordered to pass at threepence in 1374, had the effect of making the English coins disappear from circulation in Scotland. The larger denominations would have gone first and indeed only two groats and one halfgroat of Edward III were recovered at Tranent. So many earlier sterlings had reached Scotland in the late 13th and early 14th centuries that these survived longer, but the higher percentage of Continental imitation sterlings from Tranent might suggest people were being less fussy in accepting these as the English sterlings became scarcer. These seem to have disappeared by 1380 leaving the coins of Robert II to become the main issues available.

While the coins from Tranent may have been accidentally lost, it is more likely that they represent the non-recovery of a carefully concealed hoard contained in a holder of organic material since rotted and hidden in a spot no longer retaining its marker. No significant events seem to have occurred in the vicinity of Tranent at that time, but Robert II's reign was not the most peaceful or law-

abiding and many minor local or personal causes may have led to non-recovery. This may be for the best as it is not always wise to attempt to equate hoards with major historical events. Something as mundane as death by natural cause may have prevented the owner from passing on the hiding place to his heirs.

DISPOSAL OF HOARD

The coins were declared to be Treasure Trove and 37 were selected for retention by three major collections which paid the finder the full market value of the coins. The remainder were returned to the finder. The 37 are disposed as follows:

Royal Museum of Scotland (RMS): 11, viz nos 16, 44, 62-5, 95, 98, 100, 112, 114;

Hunterian Museum (HM): 20, viz nos 1, 2, 6, 43, 58, 59, 94, 96-7, 101, 102, 104, 107, 111, 118, 120, 139, 141, 147-8;

Ashmolean Museum (Ash): 6, viz nos 55, 93, 106, 117, 121, 137.

LIST OF CONTENTS

The sterlings of Edward I and II are listed first followed by the issues of Edward III and then by the Scottish coins, thus maintaining an approximate chronological sequence. The Edwardian sterlings are given their appropriate class number, the Continental sterlings a reference to Mayhew (1983) and the Irish penny to the Ulster Museum *Sylloge* (Dolley & Seaby 1968). The coins of Edward III have been given the standard reference to North (1975). The references for the Scottish coins are to the two standard works by Burns (1887) and Stewart (1967). The Scottish coins acquired by the Hunterian and Ashmolean Museums have been published in the Scottish *Sylloge* (Bateson & Mayhew 1987) and their number in this has been noted.

In addition each coin has been given its degree of wear (slightly worn (SW), fairly worn (FW), worn (W))/its weight in *grains*/the die axis/and, where relevant, its museum collection.

ENGLAND

Edward I-II Pennies

Berwick

1 Blunt Class IIIa W/16.4/340/HM.

Bristol

2-3 Fox class IIb W/19.4/180/HM; W/20.4/0.
4 IIIc chipped-W/12.8/340.

Bury St Edmunds

5 VIIIb SW/17.5/40.
6 IXa without star W/19.6/20/HM.
7 Xc-e crown 3 W/18.9/160.
8-9 XIV W/20.4/20; W/14.2/290.

Canterbury

10 IIIc-d chipped-W/12.7/160.
11 IIIg W/18.5/110.
12 IIIf late SW/19.2/200.
13-14 IXb without star clipped-W/14.8/300; star uncertain W/17.6/160.
15-16 Xc-e crown 2 W/18.9/40; E of EDWA omitted W/16.1/180/RMS.

Durham

17 Xb Bek W/19.0/200.
18-19 Xc-e crown 3? Bek W/14.9/220; W/19.3/0.
20 crown 3 Royal W/14.5/290.
21 crown and mm uncertain W/14.8/290.

22	XIa	Killawe W/15·8/230.
23	XVb	Beaumont W/20·6/150.
24	XVa–c	Beaumont W/16·4/0.

London

25	Ic	clipped-W/15·5/100.
26	IIIc	FW/18·3/120.
27	IIId	FW/13·1/190.
28	IIIc–d	FW/17·6/310.
29–31	IIIg	double-struck SW/17·8/0; holed FW/16·2/90; FW/16·9/120.
32	IVa	W/16·8/100.
33	IVc	SW/20·7/10.
34–38	IVa–c	W/19·0/90; FW/17·6/200; W/19·4/180; SW/21·3/70; FW/18·2/60.
39–40	IVd	W/15·6/330; W/19·6/90.
41	IVe	W/12·2/270.
42	<i>mule</i> Vb/IVe	FW/19·5/50.
43	IXa	W/17·3/30/HM.
44	Xb	trifoliolate crown FW/18·4/180/RMS.
45–46	Xc–e	crown 1 FW/20·7/290; FW/16·7/20.
47–49		crown 2 FW/19·6/40; FW/20·1/140; W/17·2/240.
50–52		crown 3 W/19·8/230; W/16·5/200; W/17·6/280.
53–54	XIa	FW/16·4; W/17·6/140.
55	XII	W/Ash.
56	XVc	FW/20·1/150.

Newcastle

57	IIIe	FW/16·1/340.
58	IXb	star W/19·7/310/HM.

York

59	IXb	episcopal star chipped-W/16·4/50/HM.
60		royal star uncertain W/21·3/140.

IRELAND

61		Edward I coinages of c 1279–84 second issue penny Waterford. <i>UM Sylloge cf</i> 498, Allen C, W/18·2/90.
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IMITATION STERLINGS

62		Jean D'Avesnes (1280–1304) Hainaut-Valenciennes 'crocard' Mayhew 24 W/14·5/0/RMS.
63		Robert de Béthune (1305–22) Flanders-Alost Mayhew 211–213 chipped-W/16·0/0/RMS.
64		Valéran de Ligny (1304–53) Serain Mayhew 220 FW/18·9/0/RMS.
65		Gaucher de Chatillon (1313–22) Yves Mayhew 239 W/17·7/180/RMS.
66		EDWARRA group Canterbury W.
67		?imitation EDWA with <i>open</i> E Canterbury W/18·1/110.
68		?imitation York royal fragmentary-FW/9·7/180.

ENGLAND

Edward III

Third (*florin*) Coinage 1344–51 pennies.

London

69		type 1 – reverse I North 1113 W/14·5/270.
70		type 2 – reverse II North 1114 clipped-W/15·3/280.
71–72		type 4 – reverse I North 1116 fragmentary-W/16·4/160; FW/17·8/320.

Durham

- 73 reverse I North 1125 W/18·2/130.

York

- 74 type 4 North 1130 W/16·9/90.

Fourth Coinage
Pre-Treaty Period 1351–61

- Series C (1351–52)
75 groat London North 1147 chipped and cracked-FW/66·1/20.
76 halfgroat London North 1148 W/37·2/40.
77–79 penny Durham North 1150 FW/16·8/40; W/15·9/350; W/16·4/230.
Series D (1352–53)
80–82 penny Durham North 1159 W/16/60; W/15·2/270; W/15·3/0.
Series E (1354–55)
83 groat London North 1163 SW/66·7.
84–86 penny Durham North 1170 W/15·2/310; W/19·2/310; fragmentary-W/14·2/30.
Series G (1356–61)
87 penny Durham variety with annulet on shoulders as noted by North W/17·9/340.
88–89 North 1220 W/16·1/130; W/16·4/290.

Treaty Period 1361–69
Treaty Series (1363–69)

- 90 penny York North 1268 W/19·3/160.
91 penny Durham North 1272 W/16·8/90.

SCOTLAND

Alexander III (Second Coinage 1280–86, pennies)

- 92 Burns Group II Class I, reverse of two stars of seven points and two mullets of six; Stewart D Burns 160(30) chipped-FW/18·4/270.
93 Burns Group II Class II, reverse of one mullet of five points in four quarter and three of six; Stewart E Burns 168(36) with pellet after ALEXAND as noted FW/19·7/0/Ash *Sylloge* 257/A.

David II

- 94 First Coinage (before 1357), second issue penny 1351–57
Burns 241(18) FW/14·4/90/HM *Sylloge* 337/H.

Second Coinage (1357–67)
Groats

Stewart group A (Burns small head)

- 95 Edinburgh Burns 257(10) but double saltire at end of observe legend and saltire after VILLA, Stewart A6 FW/65·4/4/20/RMS.

Stewart group B (Burns intermediate head – 1st and 2nd varieties)

- 96 Edinburgh Burns 280(21), Stewart B3d SW/64·2/70/HM *Sylloge* 380/H.
97 Edinburgh Burns 280(22), Stewart B3d FW/63·8/340/HM *Sylloge* 381/H.

Stewart group C (Burns intermediate head – 3rd variety)

- 98 Edinburgh Burns 287(25) but ornate A in outer legend, Stewart C1 SW/67·0/270/RMS.

Stewart group D (Burns Robert II head)

- 99 Edinburngh Burns 291(31), Stewart D1 FW/59·1/310.
 100 Edinburngh Burns 291(31) but with pellet first quarter, Stewart D2 clipped-SW/61·9/160/
 RMS.
 101 Edinburngh Burns 297(36), Stewart D3 SW/58·9/280/HM *Sylloge* 389/H.

Halfgroats (groups and heads as for groats).

Edinburngh

- 102 Burns 263(1), Stewart A5 (small head) chipped-SW/32·1/270/HM *Sylloge* 391/H.
 103 Burns 272(10), Stewart B3a (intermediate head 1/2) chipped-FW/30·4/90.
 104 Burns 272(10) but SCOTORV, Stewart B3a (intermediate head 1/2), SW/30·9/270/HM
Sylloge 397/H.
 105 Burns 293(15), Stewart D1 (Robert II head) W/29·9/270.

Aberdeen

- 106 Burns 265(6), Stewart A6 (small head) FW/31·5/40/Ash *Sylloge* 401/A.

Pennies (groups and heads as for groats)

Edinburngh

- 107 Burns 266(1), Stewart A (small head) FW/16·7/330/HM *Sylloge* 406/H.
 108 Burns 270(5), Stewart B1 (intermediate head) SW/17·8/10.
 109 Burns 270(5) but RER for REX as noted and plain A in DAVID and ornate A in
 VILLA, Stewart B1 (intermediate head) FW/15·8/180.
 110 Burns 274(6) but D is reversed and plain A in VILLA, Stewart B3b (intermediate head)
 fragmentary-SW/14·2/160.
 111 Burns 294(11), Stewart D1 (Robert II head) SW/14·7/40/HM *Sylloge* 411/H.

Third Coinage (1367–71)

Groats

(Edinburngh)

- 112 Burns – but noted under 297(37): with star behind head and between E and D on
 reverse (see *Sylloge* 390/A where suggested may be Second rather than Third Coinage)
 FW/58·2/340/RMS.
 113–114 Burns 301(38) but ornate As SW/61·9/180; SW/63·4/40/RMS.
 115 Burns 301(38) but saltire stops 3rd quarter SW/56·2/200.

Halfgroats

(Edinburngh)

- 116 Burns 281(22) FW/29·7/90.
 117–118 Burns 303(21) SW/28·8/170/Ash *Sylloge* 430/A; SW/29·8/0/HM *Sylloge* 431/H.
 119 Burns 303(22) FW/28·3/290.

Pennies

(Edinburngh)

- 120 Burns 303(12) SW/17·1/270/HM *Sylloge* 439/H.
 121–123 Burns 304(13) SW/14·5/90/Ash *Sylloge* 441/A; SW/13·9/90; SW/15·2/280.

Robert II (1371–90)

Groats

Edinburngh

- 124–132 Burns 309(3) FW/56·7/–; FW/57·9/180; FW/55·6/300; FW/58·3/–; FW/55·4/20; FW/55·3/
 230; FW/59·1/120; FW/59·4/40; FW/52·8/20.

Perth

- 133–136 Burns 317(10) FW/59·3/90; FW/57·3/10; FW/55·1/130; W/56·9/0.
137 Burns 335(14) but E in SCOTORVM SW/62·0/0/Ash *Sylloge* 476/A.

Halfgroats

Edinburgh

- 138 Burns 312(3) FW/28·9/130.
139–140 Burns 312(5) FW/26·5/180/HM *Sylloge* 481/H; FW/27·3/180.

Perth

- 141 Burns 320(9) SW/29·4/290/HM *Sylloge* 486/H.
142–143 Burns 320(9) but SCOTORVM SW/–/–; SW/24·3/150.
144–145 Burns 320(10) FW/24·3/240; FW/–/–.
146 Burns 321(11) but SCOTTORV ? and double cross after MEVS FW/29·7/180.

Pennies

Perth

- 147–149 Burns 322(8) FW/16·9/270/HM *Sylloge* 499/H; SW/12·4/90/HM *Sylloge* 500/H; clipped-FW/–/–.
150 Burns 331(13a) SW/14·4/270.

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