

## **Hid in the earth and secret places: A reassessment of a hoard of later medieval gold rings and silver coins found near the River Thame**

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### **Abstract**

This article presents a new assessment of the hoard of five gold finger rings and ten silver groats found together near the River Thame, Oxfordshire, in 1940. It proposes a refined date of manufacture for the exquisite reliquary ring and reports newly identified elements of its design, suggesting it held a second relic. A holistic understanding of the landscape, topography, contemporary institutions, places and events is used to interpret the hoarded material. It is advocated that the hoarded rings and coins were more likely the property of Notley Abbey, not Thame Abbey as has been thought, and were rescued from Thomas Cromwell's commissioners in 1538, and then buried at a place of cultural significance. The paper also draws attention to the problems of interpreting and dating hoards, from the curation of objects and coins, to the definitions of terminology. It emphasises the continued practice of hoarding from prehistory into the later- and post-medieval periods.

### **Introduction**

During the Second World War Mr Willcocks Goldsworthy McKenzie and his wife were walking their dog in an area north of the town of Thame, when they happened upon something glistening in the soil. Investigating further, Mr McKenzie recovered a group of five medieval gold rings and ten silver coins. An inquest led by the Coroner was held on 28 May 1940 where the jury returned a verdict that the find was Treasure Trove. With the support of the Art Fund the Ashmolean Museum acquired the hoard, which became known as the 'Thame Hoard'.

Little attention has been paid to the hoard as a whole since its discovery with only the impressive reliquary ring featuring in general publications on later medieval jewellery or exhibition catalogues. An assessment of the find spot has not been

attempted, and the hoard merits a re-examination in light of methodological developments and other archaeological finds from the last seventy-five years. There are still unanswered questions regarding the hoard, and this article addresses in particular the date of the reliquary ring, the significance of the find spot of the hoard near a watercourse of the River Thame, the ownership of the objects, the deposition date of the hoard, how this example of hoarding compares with those in other periods, and how the curation of objects and coins affects our dating of hoards.

As noted by Cessford *et al* and Allen later medieval hoards containing coins and jewellery are atypical.<sup>1</sup> By 2013 only seventeen out of 495 known English and Welsh coin hoards dated between 1066 and 1544 contained both types of material culture, with rings being the most common type of jewellery found in them.<sup>2</sup> The dates of the coins are most often used to date the deposit: the latest dated coin providing a *terminus post quem* (TPQ). In the case of the hoard found near Thame the ten silver groats date from 1351 – 1454 (table 1). The two earliest are somewhat worn, but the latest are in good condition suggesting that they were not in circulation for very long (figure 1).<sup>3</sup>

The gold rings are:

- a) a posy ring with an inscription on the outer band of *tout pour vous* (fifteenth century);<sup>4</sup>
- b) a large stirrup ring set with a large toadstone (a fossilised tooth of a *Lepidotes*, rather than the fictitious stone from a toad's head) (fifteenth century);
- c) a smaller stirrup ring set with a cabochon turquoise (fourteenth century);
- d) a large bezelled ring with engraved shoulders, a table cut peridot and a small quatrefoil hole cut behind the bezel (mid-late fourteenth century);<sup>5</sup> and
- e) an ornate reliquary ring set with cut amethyst thought to have once held a fragment of the True Cross (figures 2 and 3).<sup>6</sup>

Whilst the first four were dated to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Evans *et al* suggested a date of the early sixteenth century for the reliquary ring, and following this a deposition date of the sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup> An association of the group with the Abbot of Thame, Robert King, was made and an argument for loss at the time of the Dissolution of Thame Abbey. Evans' suggestion that the hoard was lost from Thame Abbey is based on the location of the hoard north of Thame, her dating of the reliquary ring as early 16th century, and the suggestion that amethyst was used in abbatial rings. These features led her to conclude that the reliquary ring 'must

probably have belonged to Robert King' who was appointed as the new Abbot in 1529 to a house that had suffered under his predecessors' rule.<sup>8</sup>

Further to the 1941 publication, Cherry included the hoard in his discussion of the Fishpool Hoard,<sup>9</sup> and the reliquary ring features in a number of books on medieval jewellery and exhibitions. In the catalogue for the *Age of Chivalry* exhibition,<sup>10</sup> a late fourteenth-century date was proposed based on Hunt's work that compared the ring with a late fourteenth-century casket in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA),<sup>11</sup> and documentary evidence referring to rings that contained fragments of the True Cross. A Parisian workshop was also suggested. The earlier date of the ring and the coin evidence has been used to argue deposition during the Wars of the Roses in 1460.<sup>12</sup>

While the interpretations so far are plausible, there has been little discussion of other possibilities as to the deposition date or the *place* of the hoard in the landscape. Additionally the conventional association with Thame Abbey has not been questioned, apart from Cherry's thoughts that the reliquary ring could have been owned by either a lay or a religious man. Most recently Campbell has called attention to the fact that this important ring, 'Perhaps the most exceptional of all ecclesiastical rings',<sup>13</sup> – and the hoard – is still little known.<sup>14</sup> The place of this hoard within a wider context of multi-period hoarding has also not been reflected upon before. These points are all to be considered below.

### **The reliquary ring**

The most sumptuous ring in the hoard is the large, highly decorative and beautifully crafted gold reliquary ring (figures 3–8). The hoop of the ring is set with cut amethyst, its box bezel is decorated on the top with a large, cut amethyst in the shape of a double armed cross and a gold openwork frame decorated with lettering and two fleurs-de-lis. The sides of the bezel have similar lettering, and the shoulders are decorated with gold roundels enclosing two more letters and two crowns. Altogether the letters read DOMINE MEMANTO MEI (sic), 'O Lord, Remember me' from Luke 23:42.<sup>15</sup> The bezel is opened by rotating two quatrefoil flowers at either end of the box, and inside is a void to hold a relic (figure 4). The reverse of the bezel has an engraved scene of the Crucifixion (figure 5). While no detailed description of every element of the ring is required here, there are some aspects that have not been

identified to date, and need highlighting and consideration. These include the use of enamel, the imagery and the possibility that a second relic was held in the ring.

The surviving enamel on the ring includes the *rouge cler* on the background of the *basse-taille* Crucifixion scene, and traces of a green enamel on the edges. A yellow (now with a green tinge) fills the halos above the heads of the Virgin Mary and St John as seen in figure 6. Notably the depiction of the Virgin Mary is unconventional as her hair is not fully covered and clearly visible – a trait that is more often associated with Mary Magdalene in Crucifixion scenes. Nevertheless, there is no other attribute that suggests it is Mary Magdalene, such as an unguent jar or a skull. There is a possibility that the Virgin Mary is depicted soon after taking off her kerchief and covering Christ's loins with it, leaving her hair uncovered. This action is referred to in the Nicholas Love's popular *The Myrrour of the Blessid Life of Ihesu-Christ* (1401 translation of the 13<sup>th</sup>-century Franciscan text *Meditationes Vitae Christi*).<sup>16</sup>

*Rouge cler* traces appear again on the hatched face of the plate that sits under the patriarchal cross – this would have originally created a darker tone to the amethyst above (figure 7 (a)). A very small trace of red was found behind one of the openwork letter Ms on the bezel. It is unclear whether this is a thin layer of enamel or a reddish tarnish.<sup>17</sup> If the former, it suggests all the letters may have had a red ground behind them. No other enamel can be identified on the engraved foliage panels inside the bezel as has been previously suggested by Campbell.<sup>18</sup> The foliage motifs seen in figures 4 and 7 (b) are not identical; and both plates have been decorated to take into account the opening mechanism by adjusting the placement of the leaves, indicating that they were decorated after the main body of the ring was constructed and are not reused elements. Differing gold colours show that there are two types of gold used for the plates.<sup>19</sup> A further element in the construction of the ring is that the loose plate with *rouge cler* on one side and engraved foliage on the other is made up of two thin sheets of gold beaten together – this is clearly evident when looking at the section of the plate, and where the engraver has made a mistake and carved too deeply, going through the thickness of the decorated plate (figure 7 (b)).

The patriarchal or double armed cross is exceptionally well executed; with tapered sides to ensure it is held in place by the openwork top panel (figure 8 (a)). No one however, has ever mentioned that the reverse of the vertical arm has a purposefully carved, hollow groove (figure 8 (b)). It is highly unlikely that a jewel

cutter would have taken the risk of including this feature if it were to serve no purpose. It may have improved the reflection of light, but it could also have accommodated a second relic. This may have been a second splinter of the True Cross or a thorn, allegedly from the Crown of Thorns. Supporting this hypothesis is the slight convex curve to the red enamelled panel that backs the jewel cross and would have accommodated and supported the relic. Other later medieval reliquary pendants have survived which would have contained multiple relics, such as the c.1200 reliquary from Whithorn, Galloway, with twelve cells that all once would have held relics, including a cross shaped setting that probably held a fragment of the True Cross.<sup>20</sup>

Until now, a lack of interest has been shown in the possible meaning of the foliage on the ring's decorated plates. The two plants or trees depicted have distinct rounded bases, perhaps suggesting they are the acanthuses sprouting from the root and symbolising Christ's ascension (see figures 4 and 7 (b)). However, the leaves appear to have points along their edges and at the tips – and thus are more similar to holly leaves, rather than acanthus. The trunks and branches of the engraved trees, however, have thorns projecting from them. I can find no botanical comparable to the design but perhaps the trees represent a composite, imagined by the goldsmith that references the Rood and the tree of thorns from which the Crown was made. As part of the reliquary ring the decorated plates would have encompassed the relics, one of which was decorated with blood red enamel. These elements, the inscription, and crucifixion scene and the relics, would have led the wearer to reflect on the divinity of Christ, his suffering, and the Eucharist, whilst also invoking salvation.

Dating this ring has proved to be a challenge from the moment of its first discovery, and even omitted altogether in publications when the date of the hoard's deposition is given.<sup>21</sup> Hunt's work moved back the manufacture date from Evans' early sixteenth century to the end of the fourteenth century, however, the key comparative piece that influenced his, and Alexander and Binski's, reassessment was in fact a modern forgery.<sup>22</sup> The piece in question was a tortoiseshell 'casket of similar workmanship' acquired by the MFA from Hunt.<sup>23</sup> Hunt went so far as to suggest that the same workshop, or even the same artist produced both the ring and tortoiseshell casket with its openwork lettering in the fourteenth century.<sup>24</sup> In 1991 the casket was identified as a Gothic revival piece of nineteenth- or early twentieth-century manufacture,<sup>25</sup> but the reliquary ring was not reassessed. Despite this error, Hunt did

make valuable comparisons with decorative *Lettres Bâtards* in fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries manuscripts, and ultimately suggested a late fourteenth-century date.<sup>26</sup> In his study of rings, Oman also argued for a fourteenth-century date,<sup>27</sup> and research into French and English goldsmithing and enamelling by Campbell led her to speculate a date of *c* 1350.<sup>28</sup> Alexander and Binski's references to documentary sources reveal that reliquary rings holding fragments of the True Cross were in circulation in the late fourteenth century, a ring containing '*lignum dominicum*' belonging to Richard II was repaired by a goldsmith in 1397.<sup>29</sup>

With this in mind, further comparisons are presented here to refine the date of manufacture to *c* 1400. The style of the openworked letter Ms in the MEMANTO MEI DOMINE invocation are comparable to fifteenth-century pilgrim badges made up of crowned Ms, representing the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven. A cuttle bone mould for such crowned, angular Ms was excavated among metalworking materials of 15th century date in London.<sup>30</sup> Spencer argues that the more rounded Ms of such badges are earlier in date from *c* 1350–1400 ceramic phases,<sup>31</sup> and are comparable in form to the elaborate Founder's Jewel of *c* 1350 in New College, Oxford. A silver crowned M badge of angular style from Haddenham, Buckinghamshire, has been dated to the fifteenth century by James Robinson,<sup>32</sup> and a second badge formed of all the letters of MARIA has also been stylistically dated to the same period.<sup>33</sup> Thus it may be argued that the style of the angular Ms on the reliquary ring shifts the dating from the fourteenth century to the turn of the fifteenth century or just after.

The use of the ring however, may have extended for many generations after its manufacture. Richard II's repair of his reliquary ring shows the care and investment in such a precious devotional accessory. 'Antique' rings are referred to in inventories and the ownership of True Cross reliquary rings continued right into the sixteenth century. For example, in the 1530 inventory made at the death of Margaret of Austria (b.1480) a ring and tablet are of particular note and comparable with our gold, enamelled, gem set reliquary ring:

*77. Une bague ou ymage a demi rond, ou qu'est ung crucifix attaché en une croix de bois de deux couleurs, que l'on dit estre de la sainte croix, et les ymages de Notre-Dame et saint Jehan, couvert d'ung cristal, et le tout mus en or; et derriere est graveé une ymage de la Veronique, pesant 2 ½ onces 2 estrellins 3 gramms. ... 86. Ung petit tableau d'or, ou qu'est une ymage de*

*Notre Dame, assise en ung siege, tenant son enfant, esmaillé de blanc et rouge; a l'entour est escript en lettres d'esmail blanc: O mater dei memento mei nunc et in hora mortis. Et derriere se ferme a deux demies-portettes, pesant 1 once 9 ½ estrellins 4 grammes.*<sup>34</sup>

It is quite possible that these pieces were either new or old when acquired by Margaret. A French craftsmen, perhaps in her court if they were not old, made them.<sup>35</sup> A Parisian craftsmen has also been proposed as the maker of the reliquary ring found near Thame – although one that may have been working in England at the turn of the fifteenth century.<sup>36</sup>

It is impossible to say with certainty for whom the reliquary ring was made, but a closer analysis of the *place* of the hoard does suggest an alternative owner prior to its deposition, other than the Abbot of Thame.

## Place

Bradley has most recently advocated the refocusing of our investigations of hoards to their place in the landscape and associations with topographical features.<sup>37</sup> In Yates and Bradley's study of Bronze Age hoards in the south east of England a connection between hoard find spots and watery locations was noted,<sup>38</sup> as has been recognised in other regions and periods.<sup>39</sup> What is striking about Yates and Bradley's study is that on the West Sussex Coastal Plain deposits of metalwork were found to be related to 'minor tributaries rather than major rivers', and beside or overlooking springs and confluences.<sup>40</sup> While these are interpreted as votive deposits, with the depositors not intending to recover the objects, the choice as to where these hoards were placed was clearly based on a social construct.<sup>41</sup> Although the Bronze Age events are occurring within a very different time and belief system, we can similarly pay more attention to the *place* of the later medieval hoard, and what factors may have been behind the choices concerning its deposition in the more recent past.

When in 1940 near the River Thame, the McKenzie's watched their dog scurry into some brushwood, they saw something shine. What had caught their eye were the rings and coins that were partially embedded in alluvial sediment that had been dredged in the summer of 1939 and had been deposited about five feet (1.5 m) from the water's edge. The treasure was taken to the police, and P.S. Hermon of Thame carried out a further investigation of the area, but nothing else was found.<sup>42</sup>

We must first consider a number of possibilities as to how the group of objects arrived at this location and the notion of recovery:

1. The group of rings and coins was originally deposited (or lost) in the water.
2. The hoard could have been deposited on/near either one of the banks, a tree that lined the edge of the bank perhaps marking the spot. As the course of the water changed over time the hoard was eroded out and became part of the bed.
3. This hoard was not meant to be recovered, and was votive in nature. Or
4. It was deposited with the intent to retrieve it.

As long as the pieces were not lost accidentally, then regardless of whether they were meant to be recovered or not, there was a purposeful action and choice made.

The water alongside which the hoard was found was not the River Thame as often stated,<sup>43</sup> but a small tributary of it – now labelled as a drain on the modern OS 1: 5,000 map. This locale echoes the tributary locations of Bronze Age hoards on the West Sussex Coastal Plain.<sup>44</sup> To the north of the Thame tributary is the county of Buckinghamshire. This is not a modern administrative line or modern drain, and the watercourse forms the historic boundary of Haddenham parish, Buckinghamshire, and Thame, Oxfordshire and appears on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition County Series maps (figure 9).<sup>45</sup> Moreover, around 230 m west of the find spot lies the confluence of the tributary and the River Thame, that in turn forms the intersection of the boundaries of Haddenham and Long Crendon parishes, Buckinghamshire, and Thame (figure 10). In the later medieval period both the Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire sides of the find spot were meadow areas and were enclosed before the eighteenth century.<sup>46</sup> The watercourse is not only a tributary of the River Thame, but is an ancient boundary, suggesting that the location of the hoard at such a point was no coincidence – this location was specifically chosen.

This administrative boundary would have had a real social significance in the later medieval period, albeit not an economic one, and be well known to local people. Thame was a key location with excellent road connections. It was a market borough that was prospering and expanding in the first half of the thirteenth century; the main road from Aylesford to Oxford having been moved to run through it in 1219.<sup>47</sup> An important bridge on this road at Scotsgrove End was recorded as needing repairs in 1444–5,<sup>48</sup> 350m south-east of the hoard's find spot. The River Thame itself was an important routeway too, being navigable by barge until the eighteenth century.<sup>49</sup>



Indeed, the nearby Notley Abbey, Buckinghamshire, petitioned the King and Council with a complaint of gorges [pools] erected by Sir John Molyns that interrupted the river traffic of the abbey during the second quarter of the fourteenth century.<sup>50</sup>

The hidden deposition spot of the hoard would therefore have been located in an important and easily remembered place near the traversed waterway. It is quite possible that a particular tree or stump may have identified the exact location. The physical features of the landscape would have been used to create a mental map for finding and recovering the treasure, a description of which could have been passed on to another to retrieve the hoard, if necessary, and when it was safe to do so. But the locale would not have been easily happened upon by accident or guessed by anyone looking for hidden materials.

Recent investigations of boundaries have identified them as liminal places with deep cultural and social meanings; and they were both physical and metaphysical.<sup>51</sup> Funerary rites and locations of monumental media as expressions of social identity have been associated with boundaries in previous periods but little discussion has included the later medieval period, the exception being administrative elements of boundaries and enclosures.

A hoard found near the River Alne at Alnwick Abbey, Northumberland, is a noteworthy comparison from the later medieval period. Two silver brooches and two copper alloy seal matrices were found together during repairs to a bridge over the River.<sup>52</sup> The fourteenth-century brooches bear Latin forms of ‘Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews’, and have been interpreted as a protective offering deposited by a member of the Abbey perhaps at a time of threat from the Scots. The fourteenth-century matrices, despite their base metal forms and most likely *original* secular owner(s), had religious legends and symbols too; one was of three scallop shells with the legend + IE SV SELE DE AMVR LELE, ‘I am the seal of loyal love’; and the second a figure with the legend TIME ET AMA DEUM, ‘Fear and love God’. The objects were perhaps once given as offerings to the Abbey’s shrine(s).<sup>53</sup> Making such an offering to a shrine would have been a regular part of pilgrimage. Shrines became festooned with offered material, including, brooches, necklaces, coins, gems, wax models that often represented body parts which required healing, and other objects or items of clothing.<sup>54</sup> The key feature, apart from the religious character of the hoard in Alnwick, is the chosen deposition spot at the water’s edge, and at the river which formed a boundary to the precinct of Alnwick Abbey.

Purposeful foundation deposits or deliberate concealments of coins in Scotland have been discussed by Hall in relation to secondary uses of these objects.<sup>55</sup> Within his survey a key example is a black farthing found in a pit dug into a boundary ditch of Blackfriars monastery and interpreted as having an apotropaic function.<sup>56</sup> Two further parallels for possible ritual deposits of religious objects at watery locations can be cited. A cruciform badge mould was found on the shores of Lake Derwentwater, near Keswick, Cumbria, at a point where pilgrims would leave the mainland to travel to St Herbert's Island – a deposition as a 'ritual pilgrimage offering' has been suggested.<sup>57</sup> And most relevant to the reliquary under discussion in this paper, is a fifteenth- to sixteenth-century, pendant reliquary for a Holy Rood fragment found in the River Tay at Carpow, Perth and Kinross. Hall observed that this chance find contained apotropaic power and could have been ritually deposited by a pilgrim while crossing the Tay by ferry, on their way to or from St Andrews.<sup>58</sup> Whilst not administrative boundaries these watery places could be viewed as liminal locations; the liminality relates to not only the physical environment of land:water, but also the transformation the owner was undergoing from traveller to pilgrim, moving across physical obstacles and moving closer to their sacred destination.

Natural features and watercourses feature prominently in the administrative boundaries of the medieval period.<sup>59</sup> Notley Abbey, like Alnwick, also used the natural waterway of the River Thame as its eastern boundary. Indeed the founding charter of c 1160 specified 'all land in Earl's Park and between park and Thaeme Stream'.<sup>60</sup> The river and other natural watercourses were sources of water, transport, food, physical bounds, and ultimately socially and economically significant places.

The water itself was also symbolic in ceremonies of the Catholic faith, and featured prominently in later medieval ritual or 'devotional' landscapes. Anderson has argued the case for the ritual discard of pilgrim ampullae in landscapes, particularly on arable land, and the ritual use of the holy water that they contained.<sup>61</sup> These objects were relic holders too, like our reliquary ring – although of lower value and workmanship. But they were equally important in their use and potentially their placement in the landscape. Stocker and Everson have also shown that water, causeways, medieval votive depositions, and monastic foundations were closely and symbolically linked, in their study of the ritual landscape of the Witham Valley, Lincolnshire.<sup>62</sup>

The place in the landscape has had an effect on the modern story of the hoard. The dredging of the waterway and dumping of the material was a stroke of luck for the recovery of the rings and coins. But the fact that the deposit was left on the southern, Thame side of the water has led, perhaps erroneously, to the hoard's name, and an association with Thame Abbey that now requires consideration.

### **Owner(s) and deposition date**

Suggesting who the owner was and when the hoard was deposited is as difficult to establish today as it was in the 1940s. The possible date of the hoard's deposition has clouded the interpretation of the owner, and date of the reliquary ring. Cherry has cautioned against the assumption that the owner must have been a religious and opened the discussion to include the possibility of a high status layman, and that the reliquary ring dates from before the loss of the hoard in the 1460s (based on the date of the youngest coin).<sup>63</sup> However, a new proposition is made here: the rings and coins were not associated with the Thame Abbey and the Abbot of Thame, Robert King,<sup>64</sup> but rather with the Abbey of Notley, and all the rings may once have belonged to laymen or women, before being gifted to an abbey shrine(s).

A note of caution is necessary however, as the proposal here for the accumulation of these fifteen objects and their deposition is just one possible explanation out of many. The hoard could well have been made up of stolen items, buried by a thief, for example, or a particularly unfortunate, accidental loss of a purse containing the remarkable collection of objects.<sup>65</sup> The small size of hoard and lack of surviving container could lead us to refer to the objects a 'purse hoard', but this is a potentially misleading term and numismatists have argued that it should be abandoned.<sup>66</sup>

We will never know with certainty the events that led to its assemblage and deposition, but this should not dissuade us from the investigation of different scenarios, or detract from this or other hoards' importance.<sup>67</sup>

### **Notley Abbey**

Notley, situated 2 km north-east of the hoard's find spot (figure 9), was one of the largest and wealthiest Augustinian abbeys in the Oxfordshire region, and the wealthiest monastic community in Buckinghamshire. Little is known about it compared with other houses, and it has rather been overshadowed by Dorchester Abbey, Oxfordshire, and perhaps by its mid twentieth-century owners, Vivian Leigh

and Laurence Olivier.<sup>68</sup> As at Dorchester Abbey, Notley followed the customs and observances of the Arrouaisians, although connections between English and Irish houses with the mother-house of St Nicholas, Arrouaise, weakened over time.<sup>69</sup> Excavation has been limited and the cartulary was destroyed.<sup>70</sup> But we know it was founded by Walter Gifford in around 1160, and at the Dissolution Notley was wealthier than Dorchester and St Frideswide's, Oxford, with its possessions valued at £495 18s. 10d. (gross).<sup>71</sup> The wealth of Notley was primarily amassed through eleven dependent parish churches and tithes, rather than land ownership. These included the Chapel of St Anne at Caversham, near Reading.

A possible scenario offered here to explain the composition and deposition of the hoard is that the rings and coins had been offerings at a shrine belonging to Notley. The group of objects were rescued from this shrine and hidden before Thomas Cromwell's commissioners arrived in 1538. The shrine may have been that of St Mary in the Chapel of St Anne at Caversham, or they formed part of the offerings at a shrine at the Abbey itself.

Our Lady of Caversham was a well-known place of pilgrimage, which experienced fluctuations in popularity. It had royal patrons who visited or made benefactions: Henry III; Queen Elizabeth of York in 1502; and Henry VIII made two offerings of 18s 4d in 1517 and 6s 8d on Lady Day in 1520. Queen Catherine of Aragon also visited in 1522. By 1535 the offerings were valued at £8.<sup>72</sup> The wealth of the chapel, although nowhere near that of the popular Walsingham,<sup>73</sup> was reflected in the 'image of our ladye' that Dr London, Cromwell's commissioner, took down and described as being 'plated with silver'. It was also reported to Cromwell that the Notley canon who 'sang in [the] chapel and had the offerings. ... was accustomed to show many pretty relics'.<sup>74</sup> Would the reliquary ring of gold and amethyst have been too splendid for this relatively minor shrine? Perhaps, although Isabel Beauchamp, Countess of Warwick, who died in 1439 bequeathed to Our Lady of Caversham:

a crown of gold made of my chain, weighing twenty five pounds, and other broken gold in my cabinet; and two tablets, the one of St Katherine, the other of St George, the precious stones of which tablets to be set in the said crown. I will that my tablet, with the image of Our Lady ... be offered unto our Lady of Walsingham ...; and a tabernacle of silver, like the timber to that over our Lady of Caversham.<sup>75</sup>

As Haigh and Loades have commented this wish may never have been fulfilled as the crown was not recorded by London.<sup>76</sup> But perhaps her wish was honoured and the crown, among other valued offerings, had been pre-emptively removed to Notley for hiding?

At least one principal relic housed at Caversham was reported as being 'conveyed home to Notley' before Dr London or his assistants could lock it up or send it to Cromwell in September 1538.<sup>77</sup> This was an angel with one wing that brought to Caversham the spear head that pierced Christ's side upon the Cross. Dr London wrote to Cromwell that he had sent a servant 'purposely for it' when it was found to be missing. We know therefore that Notley was facing a threat to its valued and powerful relics, not only at the outlying chapel, but also at the Abbey. There were other holy 'idoltrous' relics at Caversham as listed by London, including the dagger that slew Henry VI, the knife that killed Saint Edward and 'many other holy things'. London 'defaced that chapel inward and ... sent home the canon to his monastery at Notley'.<sup>78</sup> No doubt the canon forewarned his fellows and perhaps took small relics or treasures from the chapel with him. It is also possible that some were taken earlier along with the one winged angel in anticipation of London's visit. London notes in his letter to Wriothesley on 17 September that he had missed a 'piece of the holy halter Judas was hanged with'.<sup>79</sup> Perhaps there were other items he had missed, such as the rings and silver groats.

In other religious houses attempts were made to save their treasures from Cromwell. When his commissioners arrived at Glastonbury Abbey there was a distinct lack of valuables and much was subsequently found in various hiding places. In correspondence with Cromwell, Pollard, Moyle, and Layton reported to

have found money and plate hid in walls, vaults, and other secret places, and some conveyed to divers places in the country, and they expect to find more if they wait here a fortnight. ... At their first entry into the treasury and vestry found neither jewels, plate, nor ornaments, sufficient for a poor parish church, but recovered it by diligent enquiry and search. ... The abbot and monks had embezzled and stolen as much plate and ornaments as would have sufficed for a new abbey.<sup>80</sup>

As Cherry suggests, perhaps more lies undisturbed in Somerset.<sup>81</sup>

We can imagine many attempts were made to save the Catholic treasures, and three further examples may be cited. In Ludlow, friars also unsuccessfully hid cruets, chalices, a pax, a paten, and a foot of a monstrance from their house in an 'old hose'.<sup>82</sup> Significantly they were hidden in a ditch behind their friary: a nearby and memorable place and not just an indistinct hole in the ground. The prior of the Charterhouse, Coventry, was also reported as conveying 'substance of the house' to a number of men, and 'part hid in the earth'.<sup>83</sup> Alongside Ramsey Abbey's possible hoarding of a fourteenth-century censer, incense boat and pewter plates in Whittlesea Mere,<sup>84</sup> this evidence shows that many attempts were made to hide monastic treasures before Cromwell could seize them.

The one winged angel of Caversham was eventually recovered by London's servant and was sent to Cromwell. The plate of Notley Abbey suffered the same fate as the angel, as recorded in a letter from London to Thomas Thacker.<sup>85</sup> But the piece of halter, and perhaps the five gold rings and silver groats, were not recovered.

These offerings, and indeed the 'images' of shrines removed at the Dissolution were potentially of a great age – and certainly this was an inherent characteristic of the relics believed by the devotees. The spearhead that the angel reportedly brought to Caversham was at St Mary's shrine by 1160 (and perhaps since 1106),<sup>86</sup> and remained in the chapel until its confiscation by London in 1538. Isabel's bequest too provides evidence of items that might have been popular with secular men and women, such as tablets or rings, that moved into religious contexts as offerings. Money was also a popular bequest, and some coins could have been kept at the shrine, rather than being subsumed straight into the coffers of the religious community. We know coins were part of relic collections as indicated by London's relic inventory of Reading Abbey, where 'There be a multitude of small bonys, large stonys and coinys which wold occupie iiij shets of paper to make particularly an inventory of any part thereof.'<sup>87</sup> At Becket's shrine in Canterbury coins were left, and such offerings are depicted in early 13th century stained glass in Trinity Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral.<sup>88</sup> Some coins may have been used in protective rituals before they were offered at saints' shrines. For example, during her labour in 1300, Margaret of France placed coins upon her belly and invoked Thomas Becket. These coins were then sent to Canterbury to be placed upon his altar.<sup>89</sup> Hall has argued that British coins minted with crosses held sacred power and the cross gave the objects an apotropaic value – they were an element of

the widespread Rood cult.<sup>90</sup> Coins were therefore an apt object to use in invocations and gifts to shrines.

### The hoarded coins and their 'performative role'

While Evans' dating of the reliquary ring has been modified, she was open to the possibility that the coins, as well the rings, were kept for generations before deposition in the 1540s.<sup>91</sup> The lack of early sixteenth-century coins in the hoard and relatively unworn 1445 – 54 coins cannot be considered a conclusive reason for the hoard's deposition *not* to have occurred around eighty years later. The earliest coins themselves were a century old when the latest coins were minted, and we have other evidence for curation and use of coins long past their economical use.<sup>92</sup>

Taking a closer look at the coins, their minting dates and weights suggest that they were assembled before or perhaps around the time of the reduction in weight standard in 1464/5 (table 1). The 15 grain penny standard introduced in 1412 was replaced by a new weight based on the 12 grain penny. A full weight groat should have weighed: 4.7g pre-1412/3; 3.9g from c. 1412/13 to 1464/5; and 3.1g post-1464/5. There is evidence of clipping, but none to the 1464 weight of 3.1g. It is therefore possible that they were assembled and withdrawn from currency before the transition to the new weight standard. The owner of the groats was also not tempted or not in the position to return the coins to a mint for recoinage, even when the mint price was high. Allen has suggested that by 1470 less than 5% of groats in circulation had been struck before the weight reduction of 1464.<sup>93</sup> While 5% is relatively low and carry-over estimates are just that, Allen does show that pre-1464 coins were in economic circulation. What cannot be gauged is the proportion that were *out* of economic circulation and functioning as devotional offerings at shrines.

While the 1464/5 recoinage and its effect on groat circulation supports a 1460s deposition date, the numismatic composition of only groats is worth considering further. Hoards containing only groat coins are unusual amongst silver coin hoards in the 1351 – 1544 period.<sup>94</sup> The groat denomination was not the small change of daily life and was the highest value of silver coinage. It is not therefore representative of a contemporary purse in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries. A specific choice of a valuable, single denomination was made to create the assemblage, supporting the supposition that the coins would have been a suitable, and not an invaluable gift, to a shrine in the fifteenth century; or as curated coins kept to gift in the early sixteenth

century. As noted above Henry VIII's gifts to Caversham constituted shillings and pence, and Queen Elizabeth of York offered 2s. 6d. in 1502.<sup>95</sup> The coins could have been offered as either a group of 3s. 4d (their total worth in the 1460s) or as multiple, smaller donations over time, and by different people. Accumulation at the shrine over a long period of time was in itself a potential amplification of their powers.<sup>96</sup>

Also of interest are the outer obverse legends of the groats that read 'POSUI DEUM ADIUTOREM MEUM' (I have made God my helper). This declaration may have formed part of the pious offering and invocation for a literate donor. Similarly the legend would have been significant when hiding the hoard and invoking a plea for help during the religious upheaval. As discussed above the crosses on the groats would have also added to their apotropaic and devotional function. Notably, the majority of the coins in the hoard are from Henry VI's reign, perhaps chosen due to their depiction of this venerated king – indeed one that was commemorated at Caversham where the relic dagger that slew him was enshrined. Many pilgrim tokens of the cult of 'Good King Henry of Windsor' depicted the king and some were fashioned in pewter after his gold nobles.<sup>97</sup> Before the defeat of the Yorkist line in 1485 and subsequent freedom to venerate the ancestor of Henry Tudor, devotion had been restricted by Edward IV and Richard III. This belated freedom, and the fact that pilgrims were travelling to Windsor until as late as 1543,<sup>98</sup> may support the interpretation of long term curation and gifting of Lancastrian groats to the shrine in the later fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries. Significantly the hoard contains no coins of Edward IV or Richard III – perhaps we are seeing a deliberate choice in devotional coins, rather than the result of deposition before the 1460s?

If we accept the premise that these ten coins and the rings were rescued and smuggled out of a shrine, then the coin composition of the hoard may not be rigidly interpreted as coin hoards traditionally are, i.e. with regard to classification, circulation patterns and date of deposition. Kelleher has argued that coins in hoards 'were perceived differently [to single coins] by their owners and were infused with meanings';<sup>99</sup> while he links these meanings to storing and possessing wealth, he also acknowledges the new meanings coins held when reused. These coins, and others from the later medieval period, had a non-numismatic function and a more 'performative role' as Hall describes it.<sup>100</sup>

The Wars of the Roses and the Fishpool Hoard, dated to 1460s, provide a convenient moment in history with which to link the hoard found near Notley – an



interpretation first proposed by Cherry.<sup>101</sup> But the Fishpool Hoard is distinct, with a range of jewellery and over 1,200 gold coins – quite unlike the complete rings and few silver groats that could have been discreetly carried in a purse. Additionally no military action directly affected Thame or the nearby area, and we might expect it was an imminent and tangible threat that was the reason for hiding such a valued and significant group of objects that included the reliquary ring. Such substantial threats of pogroms were reasons for Jews to hide their treasures in the mid fourteenth century in mainland Europe.<sup>102</sup> The threat of the destruction of shrines and the removal of their associated offerings, and even the death of anti-Reformers, may have rather been the motivation at Notley in the sixteenth century.

The memorable location, near to the Abbey, and perhaps even on land owned by Notley, provided the opportunity to retrieve the hoard at a time when it was felt safe to do so, or when the religious changes were reversed. This reversal was anticipated at churches in Melford, Freckham, both Suffolk, and Flawford, Nottinghamshire, where alabaster altar panels were hidden,<sup>103</sup> but also at the other religious houses where treasures were being hidden in places that could be remembered.

### **Towards a methodology for later medieval hoards?**

The timely Portable Antiquities Scheme conference, and its proceedings edited by Naylor and Bland, revitalises interest in British hoards and incorporated papers on material from prehistory to the seventeenth century.<sup>104</sup> However, there is an obvious gap in the papers and that is later medieval hoards containing objects – numismatics takes a front seat for the period. Allen has shown that this bias is partly due to the relatively small number of hoards with objects.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless I would posit that small groups of objects found by chance, such as items from Alnwick Abbey, groups of non-precious metals without coins, and those not traditionally viewed as treasure or ‘hoards’,<sup>106</sup> have not been recognised as such either during recovery or in the published literature, and thus are not discussed in the context of hoarding. For the early medieval period Naylor has presented the potential of investigating non-precious metals in water-related deposits and what have been identified as ‘special deposits’.<sup>107</sup> These are interpreted as being permanent, not buried with the intention of recovery, and thus votive. The practice of such hoarding seems to have evaded recognition in studies of the later medieval or post-medieval periods because the

material (for the latter period at least) falls within a different terminology.

‘Concealed’, rather than hoarded, post-medieval objects and garments are found in buildings. From what we understand of these finds, they were removed from circulation, and were permanently deposited, with no intention of recovery. Following the definition of Bland (2015), they are then ‘votive hoards’. The non-precious nature of the commonly recovered shoes or items of clothing distances them from the term ‘hoard’ which is more often associated with coins or precious metal objects. This suggests a problem with terminology and definitions that need to be addressed within each study on such material; but also to remind archaeologists that hoarding and ‘special deposits’ continued through prehistory, the middle ages, and into the modern period. It is the causes, contextual meanings and social constructs that need to be sought in each case, and then compared.

A striking similarity between the hoards is their location. Just like the prehistoric and early medieval hoards, and indeed the later medieval examples referred to above, the *place* of the post-medieval ‘concealed’ objects is often located at boundaries and liminal points. These are not in the landscape, but in buildings – in areas associated with entrances and exits, for example, chimneys, window-jambs, doorjambs and roofs. The reasons for such deposits are often cited as being for the protection of the household and the inhabitants.

While the deposit of the gold rings and silver coins near Thame was associated with the closure of the monasteries and destruction of shrines – as I have argued here – they (and the other examples of rescuing treasures in the face of Cromwell’s commissioners) were carefully placed in a meaningful location on a hoped-for, temporary basis. It is certainly possible, if not probable, that a religious man burying such treasured pieces, including the double reliquary ring, would have prayed before, during, and after the act of burial with the hope of resurrecting the material when the threat of the Reformation had ended and a return to Catholicism was imminent. Indeed the coins’ inscriptions of ‘I have made God my helper’ can reveal the plea for God’s help. The intended resurrection of the objects and relics from the ground would have been highly pertinent and echoed the death and resurrection of Christ himself. The fact that there was an intention to retrieve the material is contradictory to our definition of a ‘votive’ hoard, and is distinct from the non-retrievable votive hoarding of earlier periods. But there was a votive, ritual element associated with this act of hoarding, and the others taking place during the Dissolution.

The curation of objects and coins leads to problems with the traditional method of dating hoards using the latest minted coin. Only recent studies have shown that in fact later medieval coins could have been curated for a number of years,<sup>108</sup> and as with the objects, they can only provide a possible TPQ. The coin hoard at Bredon Hill, Worcestershire, has also challenged hoarding dates based on the latest coin; the archaeological context of the Roman hoard was dated to 'not before AD 350' and thus seventy years later than the latest coins.<sup>109</sup> Reece has also stressed the need to understand the composition of coin hoards, with particular consideration to the assembly date of the components.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps in our case an assembly date would be when the coins – and rings – became part of the Abbey's possessions. Furthermore, the coins in hoards undergo a change in function;<sup>111</sup> having been taken out of circulation they were not true currency any longer thus losing their primary meaning. Indeed if they were gifted to a shrine they were out of circulation and in a new context becoming gifts and 'possessions' of the shrine with a new secondary purpose and meaning. A tertiary role would then be imparted to them upon their hoarding.

Future interpretations of hoards and hoarding need to look more closely at the objects and coins, the physical context, proximity to features and places, and the social and spiritual context of events that may have led to their assembly and deposition. The hoard from near Notley Abbey, demonstrates the ambiguity of hoards and hoarding. The coins and rings were hidden as treasured items, no doubt with a ritual, votive prayer, but could not be (and were not) retrieved. A more nuanced investigation is required for such finds and clear definitions of terminology, including 'hoard', 'votive', 'treasure' and 'concealed'. Studies will have to straddle intra-disciplinary divisions too; in this case knowledge about the objects, coins and the landscape, has been drawn together in an attempt to investigate the hoard, its composite pieces, and its historical context more fully.

As Bradley has advocated, the *place* of the hoard in the landscape has been scrutinised to uncover a deeper understanding of the hoard and a proposed alternative to its accumulation and deposition. It also highlights the significance of waterways and boundaries in the later medieval period. This work begins to supplement Stocker and Everson's investigation of the symbolic meanings of landscape in the medieval period,<sup>112</sup> but from a focus on a single group of objects. The authors lament the lack of fully developed symbolic landscape studies in medieval archaeology,<sup>113</sup> and their work indicates the need for studies that analyse and interpret entire landscapes –

including their finds, religious sites, and topography – and over time. As demonstrated in Griffiths *et al*'s volume, boundaries in the early medieval period were embedded at all levels of society.<sup>114</sup> Similarly in the following period, boundaries were equally important but their metaphysical and non-administrative roles feature little in archaeological texts. Within this article I have shown the deliberate deposition of material at a boundary in the landscape occurs in the later medieval/early post-medieval period, and such as act is not limited to earlier history and prehistory.

The significance of the convergence of three parish boundaries near to where the hoard of rings and coins was buried is a social construct continued from the pre-Conquest period. Such a place was often the location for assembly-places in the early medieval period.<sup>115</sup> Rather than suggesting that this parish boundary junction was echoing a public meeting place of governance, it was instead a place that maintained its social construct: it had become a covert and safe situation in the sixteenth century. It was also easily reached by either the main road to Oxford, or the River Thame – a short journey by boat from Notley Abbey. The perception of this area – of the tributary, the River, the boundaries and the proximity to the Abbey – was vital in the choice made by the individual hiding the rings and coins. No doubt, thought and care went into the act and embedded an additional existential dimension into the physical landscape. Elements of the natural world became a secret marker and protector of the hoard – within which the objects themselves were powerful entities containing apotropaic, semi-precious stones, images and relics.

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### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Cessford *et al* 2011, 281; Allen 2002, 35

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- <sup>2</sup> Data from Kelleher 2013, Appendix B. Since Kelleher's Portable Antiquities Scheme data download on 4th October 2008, a further six medieval coin hoards containing objects have been recorded on the database, three of which contained rings.
- <sup>3</sup> Held in the Ashmolean Museum Heberden Coin Room, acc. no. HCR8000
- <sup>4</sup> French was commonly used on English material, and does not indicate French manufacture.
- <sup>5</sup> The hole was cut to allow a close connection between the skin of the wearer and the peridot.
- <sup>6</sup> Held in the Antiquities Department, Ashmolean Museum, acc. nos AN1940.224–228. See Evans *et al* 1941, 199–200 for a more detailed description of the rings, and discussion of their apotropaic functions and dates. A missing amethyst setting from the reliquary ring's hoop was replaced with glass paste after its acquisition – this now off-coloured fill is visible in figure 3 above.
- <sup>7</sup> Evans *et al* 1941, 201
- <sup>8</sup> Evans *et al* 1941, 201–202
- <sup>9</sup> Cherry 1973
- <sup>10</sup> Alexander and Binski 1987, 487, cat. no. 657
- <sup>11</sup> Hunt 1973
- <sup>12</sup> Cherry 1973, 321
- <sup>13</sup> Campbell 2009, 47
- <sup>14</sup> Campbell 2003, 112
- <sup>15</sup> Or it can be read as MEMANTO MEI DOMINE, 'Remember me, O Lord'. Evans *et al* 1941, 201 and Ward *et al* 1981, pl 162 parallel the reliquary ring's inscription with fourteenth-century rings in the British Museum (acc. no. AF.882) and the V&A (acc. nos M.225-1962 and M.226-1962), but confuse it with their inscriptions of MATER DEI MEMANTO [MEI] (sic), 'Mother of God remember me'.
- <sup>16</sup> Besserman 2006, 237
- <sup>17</sup> My thanks to Stephanie Ward for discussing this element with me
- <sup>18</sup> Campbell 2003, 112
- <sup>19</sup> No elemental analysis has been undertaken to date
- <sup>20</sup> British Museum acc. no. 1946,0407.1
- <sup>21</sup> For example Hinton 2005, 238–245 and figs 8.2, 8.4
- <sup>22</sup> Hunt 1973; Evans *et al* 1941; Alexander and Binski 1987, 487, cat. no. 657
- <sup>23</sup> Hunt 1973, 351; MFA acc no MFA 53.2375
- <sup>24</sup> Hunt 1973, 352
- <sup>25</sup> Netzer 1991, 167–168, cat. no. A1
- <sup>26</sup> Hunt 1973, 352
- <sup>27</sup> Oman 1974
- <sup>28</sup> Campbell 2003
- <sup>29</sup> Alexander and Binski 1987, 487, cat. no. 657
- <sup>30</sup> Spencer 2010, 166
- <sup>31</sup> Spencer 2010, 155
- <sup>32</sup> Treasure Annual Report 2003, no. 131
- <sup>33</sup> Portable Antiquities Scheme SF-725306
- <sup>34</sup> Wien 1890, VIII, IX
- <sup>35</sup> Margaret commissioned, purchased and collected religious works of art (among others) and owned an important collection of art and artefacts. Raised as the future

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- wife of the French dauphin, Charles VIII, she was familiar with French courtly art, and a goldsmith, Martin des Ablieux, was on her payroll in 1525. Eichberger 2003
- <sup>36</sup> Alexander and Binski 1987, 487, cat. no. 657; Campbell 2003
- <sup>37</sup> Bradley 2015
- <sup>38</sup> Yates and Bradley 2010
- <sup>39</sup> Naylor and Bland 2015
- <sup>40</sup> Yates and Bradley 2010, 41; Bradley 2015, 24
- <sup>41</sup> Bradley 2015, 23
- <sup>42</sup> Details of the coroner's inquest as reported in the Oxford Times, 31st May 1940
- <sup>43</sup> A hand drawn map of the hoard's find spot is held in the Ashmolean Museum archives.
- <sup>44</sup> Bradley 2015, 24
- <sup>45</sup> 25 inch Oxfordshire XXXV.15, surveyed 1878–1879, published c 1881, and 6 inch Buckinghamshire XXXII surveyed 1878–1880, published 1885
- <sup>46</sup> Bucks. County Council 2009, fig 5; Lobel 1962
- <sup>47</sup> Lobel 1962
- <sup>48</sup> Lobel 1962
- <sup>49</sup> Lobel 1962, n. 1
- <sup>50</sup> National Archives SC 8/131/6525
- <sup>51</sup> Semple 2008; 2013; Griffiths *et al* 2003
- <sup>52</sup> Anonymous 1867, 82
- <sup>53</sup> Standley 2013, 82–83
- <sup>54</sup> Duffy 1992, 197–199, 385; Blick 2007, 186–188, 191; 2011
- <sup>55</sup> A hoard of coins was found the wall of Crieff parish church, and another recovered from the floor of the crossing of Glasgow Cathedral. Hall 2012b, 79
- <sup>56</sup> Hall 2012b, 79. A black copper farthing of James III, Edinburgh mint, decorated with Crown over saltire cross, dating to 1465 x 1466 was found in Context 88, the fill of a pit dug into a boundary ditch at Blackfriars House. The context was dated to Phase III (4): fourteenth-fifteenth century. A second black farthing of James III (1470 x 1471) was also excavated from Context 101, the fill of a boundary ditch pit, dated to the same period. Hall 2012a, catalogue nos 32 and 34.
- <sup>57</sup> Hall 2007, 84–85
- <sup>58</sup> Hall 2007, 85. There is of course, the possibility that the pendant was accidentally lost by a pilgrim
- <sup>59</sup> Rackham 2000; Lewis 2011
- <sup>60</sup> Sheahan 1862, 373
- <sup>61</sup> Anderson 2010
- <sup>62</sup> Stocker and Everson 2003
- <sup>63</sup> Cherry 1973, Appendix III
- <sup>64</sup> Evans *et al* 1941, 201
- <sup>65</sup> The composition of the coins and their relation to everyday currency is discussed further below
- <sup>66</sup> Kelleher 2013, 27
- <sup>67</sup> See also Kelleher 2013 for the importance and use of later medieval coin hoards
- <sup>68</sup> Olivier and Leigh bought the house in 1944
- <sup>69</sup> Dickinson 1951, 86
- <sup>70</sup> Pantin 1941; Jenkins 1954
- <sup>71</sup> Pantin 1941, 25; Sheahan 1862, 374
- <sup>72</sup> Haigh and Loades 1981, 67

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- <sup>73</sup> The offerings of the chapel of Our Lady at Walsingham were valued at £250 in 1535. Page 1906
- <sup>74</sup> Gairdner 1893a, 143
- <sup>75</sup> Nicolas 1826, 239. The transcription printed in Furnivall 1964, 117–118, reads ‘I woll oure lady of Cauersham. haue a crowne of gold I-made of my cheyne that weyth xxv li, with-yn my panyer’, and with other broken’ gold that is in ther In, and ij tablettes, the tone of seynte Katryne, And the tother of seynt George; And the stonys that bene In hem, to be sett yn the saide Crowne. All so I woll the tabelet with the Image of oure lady ... be offred to our’ lady of Walsyngham ... And a tabernacle all-so of syluer, lyke as the tymbur is In maner ouer oure lady of Cauersham’
- <sup>76</sup> Haigh and Loades 1981, 68
- <sup>77</sup> Gairdner 1893a, 147
- <sup>78</sup> Gairdner 1893a, 143
- <sup>79</sup> Gairdner 1893a, 143; Ditchfield and Page 1907
- <sup>80</sup> The Abbot and two monks were eventually executed – the hiding of treasures perhaps added to the charges of treason. Gairdner and Brodie 1895a, 70; 1895b, 186. A ‘new abbey’ could be interpreted as a suggestion that the Abbot and monks were hiding the materials in anticipation of furnishing a ‘new’ abbey, but also as a metaphorical description of the sheer volume of treasures ‘stolen’ and hidden.
- <sup>81</sup> Cherry 2000, 171
- <sup>82</sup> A leg from a pair of hose. Gairdner 1892, 473
- <sup>83</sup> Gairdner and Brodie 1894, 65
- <sup>84</sup> V&A acc. nos M.269-1923 and M.268-1923
- <sup>85</sup> Gairdner 1893b, 479
- <sup>86</sup> Haigh and Loades 1981, 63
- <sup>87</sup> Ditchfield and Page 1907
- <sup>88</sup> Silver coins are offered by Sir Jordan Fitz-Eisulf in thanks for a miracle. See also Blick 2011, 48–49
- <sup>89</sup> Webb 2000, 129;
- <sup>90</sup> Hall 2007, 80–81; Hall 2012b, 77
- <sup>91</sup> Evans *et al* 1941, 202
- <sup>92</sup> Standley 2013, 95–98
- <sup>93</sup> Allen 2012, 286
- <sup>94</sup> Allen 2003, 28. While the composition is unusual, the value of the silver coins is not – the median value of silver coin hoards is 3s in 1351–1464/5 and slightly over 4s in 1464/5–1544, see Allen 2015, 158
- <sup>95</sup> Haigh and Loades 1981, 66
- <sup>96</sup> Hall 2012b, 80 argues a similar point for the accumulation of coins deposited in hoards in Perth
- <sup>97</sup> Henry VI was killed in 1471 and within a year of his burial at Chertsey Abbey it became a place of pilgrimage. In 1485, Richard III ordered Henry’s remains to be moved to the Chapel of St George, Windsor, in an attempt to constrain the cult. Spencer 2010, 189
- <sup>98</sup> Spencer 2010, 189
- <sup>99</sup> Kelleher 2013, 139
- <sup>100</sup> Hall 2012b, 74
- <sup>101</sup> Cherry 1973
- <sup>102</sup> Descatoire 2009
- <sup>103</sup> Anderson 2004, 48–50

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- <sup>104</sup> The Portable Antiquities Scheme conference ‘Hoarding and Deposition of Metalwork: A British Perspective’ was held in 2011. Naylor and Bland 2015
- <sup>105</sup> Allen 2002, 35
- <sup>106</sup> As defined by the Portable Antiquities Scheme and Treasure Act 1996
- <sup>107</sup> Naylor 2015; Hamerow 2006
- <sup>108</sup> Standley 2013, 95–98; Kelleher 2012
- <sup>109</sup> Bland 2015, 13
- <sup>110</sup> Reece 2015
- <sup>111</sup> See Aitchison 1988 for the change in use of Roman coins once exported beyond the frontiers of Hadrian’s or Antonine Walls.
- <sup>112</sup> Stocker and Everson 2003
- <sup>113</sup> Stocker and Everson 2003, 272
- <sup>114</sup> Griffiths *et al* 2003
- <sup>115</sup> Pantos 2003, 40

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### Abbreviations

BAR British Archaeological Report

DCMS Department for Culture, Media and Sport

VCH Victoria County History

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### Illustration Captions

Table 1. Details of the ten silver groats found in the hoard, with corresponding references to Figure 1

Fig 1. The ten silver groats from the hoard © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Fig 2. The five gold rings from the hoard. Left to right: toadstone stirrup ring, posy ring, reliquary ring, turquoise stirrup ring and the peridot ring with engraved shoulders. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Fig 3. The reliquary ring showing the patriarchal amethyst cross and openwork top of the bezel with the start of the motto DOMINE MEMANTO MEI. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Fig 4. The open bezel with the decorated base of engraved foliage © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Fig 5. The underside of the bezel with the Crucifixion scene © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Fig 6. Magnified image of the heads of the Virgin Mary and St John showing the red and green/yellow enamel © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Fig 7. The plate from under the cross, (a) obverse (with traces of *rouge cler*); (b) reverse with engraved foliage. The engraver's mistakes are clearly visible at the base of the tree. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Fig 8. (a) The openwork top of the bezel; (b) the reverse of the amethyst cross with its hollow groove © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Fig 9. Annotated 1885 1<sup>st</sup> Edition County Series map showing the find spot of the hoard (circle); the location of Notley Abbey remains to the north (red rectangle); and Thame Abbey which became Thame Park to the south (black rectangle). © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited (2015). All rights reserved. (1885).

Fig 10. Map showing detail of the boundaries of Haddenham, Long Crendon and Thame parishes, and the find spot of the hoard. Long Crendon's boundary follows the

line of the River Thame, and the confluence of the three boundaries is at the point where the tributary meets the River. Map drawn by E R Standley



Table 1

<b>Monarch</b>	<b>Mint</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Issue Weight</b>	<b>Current weight (g)</b>	<b>Figure 1 reference number</b>
Edward III	London	1351 – 2	Pre-treaty series C	72gr, 4.7g	3.31	1a
Richard II	London	c 1390 – 99		72gr, 4.7g	3.56	1b
Henry V/VI	London	1413 – 22	Transitional variety, annulet, muled	60gr, 3.9g	3.75	1c
Henry VI	Calais	1422 – 27	I annulet	60gr, 3.9g	3.54	1d
Henry VI	Calais	1422 – 27	I annulet	60gr, 3.9g	3.74	1e
Henry VI	Calais	1422 – 27	I annulet	60gr, 3.9g	3.54	1f
Henry VI	Calais	1430 – 34	III pinecone-mascle	60gr, 3.9g	3.77	1g
Henry VI	Calais	1430 – 34	III pinecone-mascle	60gr, 3.9g	3.55	1h
Henry VI	Calais	1430 – 34	III pinecone-mascle	60gr, 3.9g	3.9	1i
Henry VI	London	1445 – 54	Leaf pellet	60gr, 3.9g	3.82	1j