

Re-Interpreting Ninth- and Tenth-Century Viking Hoards in England

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Silver hoards (see Figure 1) are characteristic of Viking activity throughout Northern Europe. Such hoarding occurred heavily in England during the late eighth to early eleventh centuries. Anglo-Saxon England was the only British territory with a solely coin-based economic system, thus Viking hoards found in England are unique in the large number of coins they contain. This can be quite helpful in figuring a more exact date of deposition than would be

possible for a generic bullion hoard, comprised mainly of metal pieces.¹ Unfortunately, the mass amount of coinage also complicates Anglo-Norse scholars' deeper understanding of hoards and isolates hoard scholarship in England from the rest of the British Isles and Scandinavia. As will be shown, many scholars tend to focus solely on the coins, neglecting information which the ornaments and bullion

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Fig. 1: The contents of the Cuerdale silver hoard, including coins, ingots, hack-silver and ornaments (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

1. James Graham-Campbell, 'The Cuerdale Hoard: Comparisons and Context', in *Viking Treasure from the North West: The Cuerdale Hoard in its Context*, ed. by James Graham-Campbell, Liverpool Museum 5, (Great Britain: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, 1992) pp. 107-15 (p. 107); Birgitta Hårdh, 'The Function of Silver in the Viking Age', in *Coins and Archaeology*, ed. by H. Clarke and E. Schia, BAR Int. Ser. 556 (1989), pp. 43-52, (p. 43); Marion M. Archibald, 'Dating Cuerdale: The Evidence of the Coins', in *Viking Treasure from the North West*, pp. 15-20, (p. 15).

provide. Even within this scholarship there are many differing opinions on the function of hoards in the later Anglo-Saxon period.

It is the aim of this paper to bring together the various hoard studies in a brief review of interpretation and propose a plausible direction in which to further the understanding of English hoards during the Viking period. The paper will begin with a background summary of proposed interpretations, discussing the more commonly suggested economic explanation for hoarding as well as ritual purposes which have yet to be seriously considered. It will continue with an examination and definition of the Scandinavian-English hoard and finally provide a potential re-interpretation based on a typology of the hoard's components. This paper does not intend to suggest a specific function or understanding of Scandinavian hoards but to broaden the scope of interpretation and illustrate the unconsidered possibilities for their study in Anglo-Saxon England.

Previous Interpretations

While hoarding was not unknown in England prior to the ninth century, the hoarding peak occurs during the period of frequent Viking interaction with the Anglo-Saxons. It seems fairly evident that the Vikings in some way influenced the practice.² What is uncertain are the circumstances surrounding this increase in hoarding: who is performing the act, for what purpose, and what affect did the Scandinavians have?

Economic Function

The initial assumption of Anglo-Saxon scholars, and continued opinion of some, was that these hoards represented the hasty burying of wealth as Anglo-Saxons fled from Viking attacks. Families would deposit their coins and maybe a few prized treasures in the earth for safe-keeping with the intention of reclaiming the hoard; evidently a number of unlucky individuals were unable to return or were the unfortunate victims of poor memory. Graham-Campbell likens a hoard to an early medieval safe-deposit box. It is often suggested that hoards occurred during times of

2. Graham-Campbell, 'The Cuerdale Hoard', p. 107; Hårdh, 'The Function of Silver in the Viking Age', p. 43.

turbulence and war; therefore the denser the amount of hoards the worse the devastation.³ Graham-Campbell writes, ‘This was a century of turbulence in the lives both of the native inhabitants of these islands and of the Viking intruders [...] an unsafe period during which to have lived when one would have been well advised to keep treasure buried in the ground for safety, even if sudden death might mean its loss to family or followers’.⁴ It is understandable that the content of English hoards, collections of coins, ingots and broken ornaments, would evoke such utilitarian interpretations. Scandinavians traded on a bullion system, circulating pieces of silver by weight. Viking hoards tend to contain ingots, metal pieces forged for circulation, and hack-silver, broken pieces of silver ornament.⁵ The presence of such materials within these hoards immediately tempts one to assume an economic function. However, little analysis has been performed beyond this ‘safe-deposit box’ model to comprehend the situation that inspired either the hoarding or exchange of the bullion prior to its deposition. To further archaeological understanding it is crucial to consider why these specific items were deposited and why in a specific location. The former has prevailed as the sole interpretation of English hoards until very recently, in spite of a number of issues.⁶

Due to Anglo-Saxon scholars having distanced their interpretation of coin hoards from the discussion surrounding bullion hoards of elsewhere, they have failed to note that hoarding activity drastically increased globally with Scandinavian interaction. It is unlikely that this was a universally common invention in reaction to the appearance of Vikings. It is more probable that hoarding was a Scandinavian tradition, either observed by the Vikings in these regions, or appropriated by the local

3. James Graham-Campbell, ‘Viking Silver Hoards: An Introduction’, in *The Vikings*, ed. by R.T. Farrell, (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1982), pp. 32-41, (p. 34); Dawn M. Hadley, ‘Burial, Belief and Identity in Later Anglo-Saxon England’, in *Reflections: 50 Years of Medieval Archaeology, 1957-2007*, ed. by Roberta Gilchrist and Andrew Reynolds, Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 30, (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2009), pp. 465-88, (p. 481); Hårdh, ‘The Function of Silver in the Viking Age’, p. 44.

4. Graham-Campbell, ‘The Cuerdale Hoard’, p. 107.

5. Kruse, Susan E., ‘Ingots and Weight Units in Viking Age Silver Hoards’, *World Archaeology* vol. 20, no. 2 (1988), pp. 285-301, (pp. 285-290).

6. Richard Bradley, *The Passage of Arms*, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1998), pp. 15-6; Hadley, ‘Burial, Belief and Identity’, p. 481.

populace. This suggestion is supported by the enormous presence of hoards in Scandinavian regions as well. It is safe to assume that some of the English hoards were deposited by Vikings. Nonetheless, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Vikings may have been hoarding their wealth for economic purposes. Perhaps the hoards represent the accumulated treasure of Viking raiders, similarly buried for safe keeping.

Another primary issue is hoard locale. Many hoards are in obvious and easily discoverable locations, such as on burial mounds (such as Lilla Howe) or in churchyards (such as Goldsborough), which seem to be odd places for the hiding of wealth from raiders. The remainder of hoards are in locations impossible for recovery, such as within graves. That such poor locations were chosen, some far too accessible and others where recovery would be unfeasible, alludes to a greater purpose to hoarding than simply as a ‘security measure’.⁷

Ritual Purposes

Looking beyond the hoard’s numismatic and bullion content, it may be possible to glimpse aspects of a potential ritual or belief surrounding the practice of deposition. Scholars in Scandinavia have focused more heavily on the votive aspects of hoards.⁸ One recurring theme is the supposed cult of Oðin. It is based on a passage in the Ynglinga Saga:

All dead men should be burned, and that with them their chattels should be borne to bale; for with such wealth as a man brought to his bale should he come to Valhall; and that there also should he enjoy whatsoever he had buried himself in the ground.⁹

7. Guy Halsall, ‘The Viking Presence in England?: The Burial Evidence Reconsidered’, in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. by Dawn M.

Hadley and Julian D. Richards, (Belgium: Brepole Publishers, 2000), pp. 259-76, (p. 267); Hadley, ‘Burial, Belief and Identity’, pp. 474-482.

8. Hårdh, ‘The Function of Silver in the Viking Age’, pp. 43-52.

9. This saga passage is quoted from Albany F. Major, ‘Ship Burials in Scandinavian Lands and the Beliefs that Underlie Them’, *Folklore* 35 (1924), pp. 113-50, (p. 123). See William Morris and Eirikr Magnússon, trans., *Saga Library*, vol III, (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893), p. 20 for the original source (cited by Major).

This implies that warriors anticipating acceptance into Valhalla upon their death should bury any wealth they might wish to enjoy there.¹⁰

The Ynglinga Saga, as with any saga, may not be completely culturally accurate both because of its late date and Christian undertones; however, the record allows for consideration that such a belief existed in the Scandinavian past. If Scandinavian warriors were indeed burying their collected wealth as an offering to Oðin, this could explain the large amount of coins and bullion compared to ornaments—these were not valuable possessions hidden away to be retrieved, but a generic offering to secure wealth in the afterlife. There is also the possibility that the act of deposition was itself part of the funerary ritual. Halsall likens hoards to grave goods, considering that, although graves themselves become relatively unfurnished after the seventh century, hoarding occurs more frequently and may in fact be a substitute.¹¹

Certain hoards—Croydon, Cuedale and perhaps Beeston Tor—may be related to the winter camps of the Great Army, the first Scandinavian group to campaign actively for conquest of England.¹² The *dísir* are Scandinavian goddesses who protect the prosperity and good fortune of a specific location. Scandinavians have been known to bury coins under building foundations for luck, and it could be that these hoards are representative of similar offerings to the *dísir* for protection of a winter camp.¹³

Coins potentially have amuletic significance in Anglo-Saxon England. In earlier Anglo-Saxon graves, coins have been found strung into jewellery,

10. Svein H. Gullbekk, 'Coinage and monetary economics', in *The Viking World*, ed. by Stefan Brink and Neil Price, (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 159-69, (p. 164); Hårdh, 'The Function of Silver in the Viking Age', p. 43.

11. Halsall, 'The Viking Presence in England?', p. 268.

12. N.P. Brooks and J.A. Graham-Campbell, 'Reflections on the Viking-Age Silver Hoard from Corydon, Surrey' in *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History*, ed. by M.A.S Blackburn, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1986), pp. 91-110, (p. 97); N.J. Higham Northumbria, Mercia and the Irish Sea Norse, 893-926', in *Viking Treasure from the North West: The Cuedale Hoard in its Context*, ed. by James Graham-Campbell, Liverpool Museum 5, (Great Britain: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, 1992), pp. 21-30, (p. 29); Graham-Campbell, 'The Cuedale Hoard', p. 107.

13. Catharina Raudvere, 'Popular religion in the Viking Age', in *The Viking World*, pp. 235-43, (p. 240); Ralph Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic*, (New Amsterdam and New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1987), p. 125.

transforming them into something other than simple wealth for the afterlife. Coins seem to have particular apotropaic value as amulets due to their small circular form and their age. Later medieval sources suggest that amulets were used for protection and healing to enable corporeal resurrection.¹⁴ A number of Viking-Age burials also incorporate coins, often placed under the head of the skeleton.¹⁵ While the majority of these burials seem to be Anglo-Saxon in nature, there is at least one which is certainly Scandinavian. There were two coin burials found at Repton. One is reminiscent of a traditional furnished pagan burial: under a mound, in a stone building, at least 249 disarticulated bodies were buried, and in the centre multiple weapons, ornaments and metalwork fragments were found with five silver pennies, probably once accompanying a central burial. By the churchyard was another coin burial more akin to those of Anglo-Saxons. In the grave of a female individual had been deposited five silver pennies and a gold ring.¹⁶

Whether this was an appropriation of Anglo-Saxon customs or a mutual belief in the magical properties of coins, this burial is of the same category of ninth-century coin burials as those at Bath, Kintbury and Leigh-on-Sea.¹⁷ Unfortunately it is difficult to distinguish Viking from Anglo-Saxon burials by the form of the grave alone, particularly since unfurnished burial was the accepted practice during this period. If there is no material evidence aside from coins then it is nearly impossible to culturally identify the individual. Thus, while the assumption is often made that these churchyard burials furnished with Anglo-Saxon minted coins contain Anglo-Saxon individuals it is clear from Repton that reconsideration is in order. Brooks

14. Gilchrist, Roberta, 'Magic for the Dead? The Archaeology of Magic in Later Medieval Burials', *Medieval Archaeology* 54 (2008), pp. 119-59, (pp. 130-150); Hadley, 'Burial, Belief and Identity', pp. 474-482.

15. Hadley, 'Burial, Belief and Identity', pp. 474-481; Paul Robinson, 'Saxon Coins of Edward the Elder from St. Mary's Churchyard, Amesbury', *Numismatic Circular* 144 (1984), pp. 198-201, (p. 199).

16. Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Repton and the Vikings', *Antiquity* 66 (1992), 36-51, (pp. 41-45).

17. C.E. Blunt and H.E. Pagan, 'Three Tenth-Century Hoards: Bath (1755), Kintbury (1761), Threadneedle Street (before 1924)', *British Numismatic Journal* 45 (1975), pp. 19-32, (pp. 19-28); C.E. Blunt and R.H.M. Dolley, 'The Hoard Evidence for the Coins of Alfred', *British Numismatic Journal* 29 (1959), pp. 220-47, (pp. 235-7).

suggests that two such burials—Dunsforth, Yorkshire and Gainford, Durham—should be attributed to Vikings based on numismatics. He claims that such Northern hoards would normally contain Northumbrian stycas, not Anglo-Saxon silver pennies.¹⁸ This ambiguity of identity is an unfortunate theme of Viking-Age hoards.

Yet another type of hoard, common in both Britain and Scandinavia, may indicate a votive purpose for hoarding. Water hoards are of a slightly different nature than those on dry land and their frequency also increases in England during the Viking-Age. Whereas land hoards in Britain contain mostly bullion and metal ornaments, water hoards usually contain weaponry, among other sacrificial items, such as food and animal remains. It is generally agreed that discarding weaponry into bodies of water is imbued with ritual purpose; water is often associated with religious cleansing and healing, as well as being linked commonly with death in Scandinavian and Germanic myth.¹⁹ A number of water hoards found in England are attributed to the Scandinavians. Most contain only swords, but, close to the riverbank in Skerne, a still-sheathed Viking sword was found contemporary with an adze and the bones of various domesticates, none with evidence of butchery.²⁰ This combination of materials led to the general belief that there was some ritual or ideological purpose to their deposition.

The deposition of goods in water and under the earth certainly have distinct functions, yet this does not preclude them both from having ritual significance. It must be remembered that the transformation of an object's meaning does not necessarily require physical modification.²¹ Simple bullion may no longer have consistent, or any, economic value once it is within the ground.

18. Graham-Campbell, 'The Cuerdale Hoard', p. 107.

19. Bradley, pp. 4, 10-33; David M. Wilson, 'Some neglected late Anglo-Saxon Swords', *Medieval Archaeology* 9 (1965), pp. 50-2; Merrifield, p. 108; Gilchrist, p. 151.

20. John Dent, 'Skerne', *Current Archaeology* 91 (1984), pp. 251-3.

21. Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, 'The Cultural Biography of Objects', *World Archaeology* 31, no. 2 (1999), pp. 169-78, (p. 174).

Re-Interpretation

Economic function and ritual importance are not necessarily exclusive. Ambiguity in interpretation results from a lack of comparison with other similar hoards. The way forward is to compile a dataset of Scandinavian hoards in England and to then fully analyse this data against itself. Such a study would enable hoard patterns to be seen on a larger scale. Issues immediately arise concerning hoard typology; one of the major difficulties in English hoard interpretation is the likelihood that these hoards were deposited by both Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, possibly with differing motive. The initial task must be to isolate the Scandinavian hoards from the more apparently Anglo-Saxon.

Identification

As previously noted, there is a lack of communication between scholars on the subject of hoards. Each excavator interprets his find using the methods he thinks most logical. As a consequence, a multitude of opposing interpretations for the same hoard can develop. The main issue in need of clarification before beginning an analysis of English hoards is how to identify a Viking hoard.

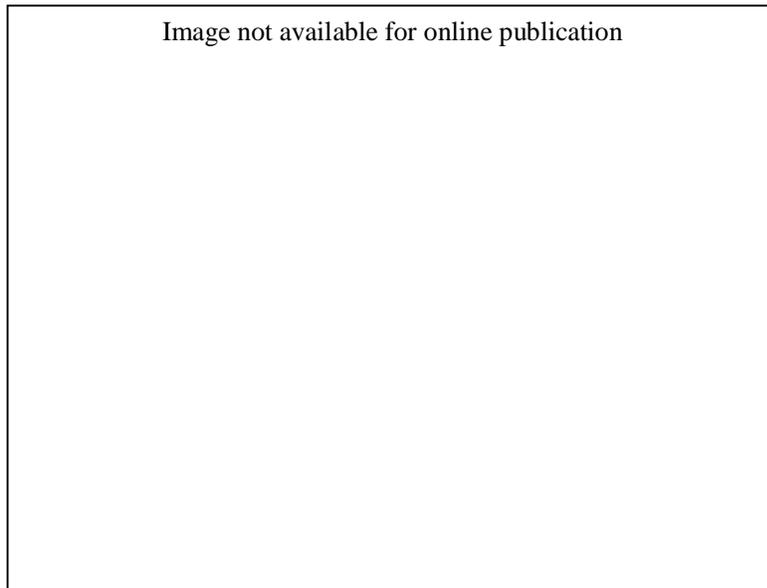


Fig 2: The contents of the Goldsborough hoard displayed, showing ingot fragments, hack-silver and ornaments, including the thistle-brooch (© The Trustees of the British Museum)

There are certain criteria in the components and condition of a hoard which generally denote previous Viking ownership (see figure 2).²² These qualifications are based on the material distinction between the Viking bullion system and the Anglo-Saxon coin currency. This is not to suggest a purely economic function for the burying of such wealth; however, as components, they seem to have been collected for their economic value. For this reason the inclusion of ingots and hack-silver is characteristic of Scandinavian hoards. Such bullion is unlikely to have been exchanged into Anglo-Saxon hands as it was meaningless in their economy. Another characteristic is the presence of foreign coins, particularly those of non-continental origin, and ornaments, specifically of a Norse or foreign style. These are indicative of global trade or travel. Arabic coins, for instance, are more indicative than continental coins, as the Anglo-Saxons traded with the Carolingians.²³ The final major indication of a non-Anglo-Saxon hoard is nick-marks. The Vikings would often test the quality of metal with a knife. The presence of such nicking on metals and ornaments suggests the circulation of these as bullion. The Cuerdale Hoard is expected to have an average of five to fifteen nick marks on each coin. Unfortunately nicking is most reliably noticed at a microscopic level and only recently has this been researched.²⁴

In practice these are rough guidelines for identification. Hoard contents vary drastically by time period, region and, most opaquely, by owner. The Talnotrie hoard, located in what is now Scotland but would have been Northumbria in the ninth century, has a definite Scandinavian disposition. The inclusion of spindle-whorls, precious stones and wax led Graham-Campbell to consider it of native Scot origin; however, the mixture of coins (silver pennies, stycas, a Carolingian denier and a fragment of an Arabic dirham), the fragmented coin potentially representing hack-silver, could easily label this a Viking hoard.²⁵ Herein lies the difficulty in attempting to generalize hoards by their components. It is also quite possible that hoards made up entirely of Anglo-Saxon coins could have been deposited by a

22. Graham-Campbell, 'The Cuerdale Hoard', p. 109.

23. Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage. Vol 1: The Early Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 155-189.

24. Graham-Campbell, 'The Cuerdale Hoard', p. 109.

25. Graham-Campbell, 'The Cuerdale Hoard', p. 111.

Viking. The Scandinavians who ruled the Northumbrian territories from the late ninth century - the area known as the Danelaw—quickly adopted minting, mimicking the coins of the southern Anglo-Saxon kings and circulating them throughout England.²⁶ Such a hoard could represent the wealth of a Danelaw resident. Anglo-Saxon coinage would have been the most available form of currency, so the English coin could also have merely been collected as bullion. It would be equally troublesome to identify such a coin hoard as Scandinavian if the Vikings collected coins for amuletic purposes without nicking them.

Another consideration is how far to extend the scope of the term ‘hoard’. Should hoards of coins found within graves or weapons deposited into bodies of water be grouped with those materials buried in the earth? Water and land hoards certainly boast different components and most likely are discarded with different motives, even if both contain a ritual aspect. It is significant that both land hoards and grave goods were buried in the ground; yet with grave goods there is the surety of a lack of intent for recovery. Rituals surrounding burials are specifically focused on the deceased and his or her relationship with the community. Coin and bullion hoards are not necessarily analogous. While there is a similarity in the material components, and possibly in their meaning or role upon deposition, they may also have completely isolated, or even opposing, functions.

Typological Analysis

For the following examination of hoards, only land hoards are considered. This limits the dataset to a manageable size and allows the issue of economic versus ritual motive to be better highlighted. A dataset was compiled based on the above criteria for Viking hoards (for information on the complete contents of each hoard considered see Appendix). What follows is an example of but one of the many studies that could enlighten Anglo-Norse hoard scholars.

Sheehan provides an innovative interpretation of Viking-Age hoards in Ireland.²⁷ The focus of his study is the non-numismatic materials, which makes it a

26. Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, pp. 316-325.

27. John Sheehan, ‘Social and Economic Integration in Viking-age Ireland: The Evidence of the Hoards’, in *Land, Sea and Home*, ed. by John Hines, Alan Lane and Mark Rednap, (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2004), pp. 177-88.

useful model from which to base a revolutionary study of English hoards. He divides the Irish hoards into four classes based on their non-numismatic components, as ‘it is felt that this allows the varying degrees of complexity present within the hoards to become evident’. He then maps these classes to observe economic and social patterns.²⁸

Sheehan’s first class is composed completely of ornaments, which he suggests should be viewed in purely social terms, most likely reflecting political and military alliances. These are items that convey status and were not meant for daily use.²⁹ There are a surprising number of class one hoards in Anglo-Saxon England, though only two—Orton Scar and Lilla Howe—contain no coinage whatsoever. The majority of these hoards are located in the Danelaw territory (see Figure 3). As Sheehan suggests this may show political relations as opposed to economic exchanges. It could be that the presence of ornaments in hoards displays a domestic ritual, rather than that of a warrior. The Lilla Howe materials were deposited

on a prominent barrow, leaning toward a ritual or belief-driven interpretation. However, the Orton Scar hoard was hidden between two rocks, potential markers for recovery.³⁰ It is notable that all but Talnotrie contain solely Anglo-Saxon minted coins. This recalls Graham-Campbell’s suggestion of the Anglo-Saxon origin of the

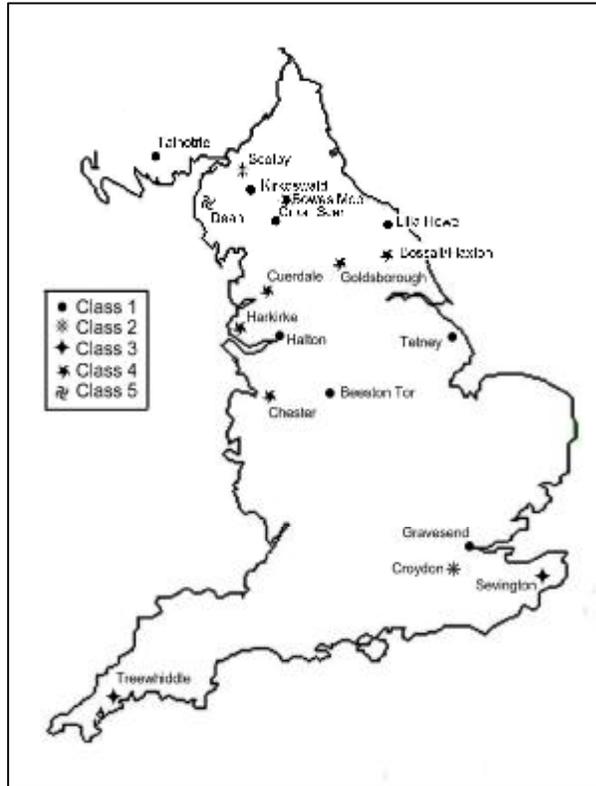


Fig. 3: Map of Viking hoards found in England, modelled after Sheehan’s five class system.

28. *Ibid.*, 177-88.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 181-3.

30. Jeffrey Watkin and Faith Mann, ‘Some Later Saxon Finds from Lilla Howe, N. Yorks. and Their Context’, *Medieval Archaeology* 25 (1981), pp. 153-157; Rosemary Cramp, ‘The ‘Viking-Type’

Beeston Tor hoard. The hoard contains forty-nine pennies, all of Anglo-Saxon mint, three rings, two silver and niello disc brooches and a bronze binding. The composition displays characteristics of a Viking hoard, yet Graham-Campbell argues for an Anglo-Saxon origin because of the lack of foreign coins and absence of nick marks on the ornaments.³¹ It is conceivable that these ornament hoards may indeed represent those of Anglo-Saxons hiding valuables during Scandinavian attacks. Class two consists of hoards with ingots and class three includes both ingots and complete ornaments. It has been suggested that these hoards have been used for economic purposes.³² There is little difference between the distributions of these two classes,



Fig. 4: Map of bullion hoards (those containing ingots and/or hack-silver).

although the sample is regrettably small. All of these hoards, save Scotby, are mid- to late-ninth-century hoards located in the south. All are located along the coast (see Figure 4). They seem to correspond with the earlier Scandinavian raiding parties. Neither of the class three hoards contain silver ingots: Trehiddle includes a gold ingot, and that from Sevington is bronze.³³ This may be coincidence, or it may be that these were perceived as being more similar to ornaments than to currency. It is possible that class three fits in better with the first class of hoards, thereby calling into question whether these too represent Anglo-Saxon hoards.

Penannular Brooch and Torc from Orton Scar', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeology Society* 64 (1964), pp. 86-89.

31. Graham-Campbell, 'The Cuerdale Hoard', p. 107.

32. Sheehan, 'Social and Economic Integration', 184-5.

33. David M. Wilson and C.E. Blunt, 'The Trehiddle Hoard', *Archaeologia* 98 (1961), pp.75-122; Blunt 1972.

Class four consists of hack-silver with ingots, ornaments, or both.³⁴ Cuerdale, Harkirke, Chester and Bowes Moor contain hack-silver with only ingots. Bossall/Flaxton boasts hack-silver and ornaments and Goldsborough contains all three.³⁵ Aside from their northern location (mostly in Mercia and lower Northumbria) and ninth-century date there is no apparent pattern (see Figure 3).

Interestingly, bullion hoards, or hoards of coins with ingots, hack-silver, or both, tend to be located along, or close to, the coast (see Figure 4). The bullion hoards are Scotby, Croydon, Cuerdale, Harkirke, Chester and Bowes Moor (classes two and four). Perhaps they were deposited by Scandinavians upon arrival or departure, or by raiders traversing the coastline.

Sheehan has one further class: a hoard containing only hack-silver as a non-numismatic component.³⁶ No strictly hack-silver hoards, with or without coins, have been uncovered in England. As England had a coin based economy, it seems reasonable to consider another class of hoards composed entirely of coins. There appears to be only one such hoard that can be firmly identified as Viking: Dean contains only seven coins of Anglo-Saxon mint, twenty-three of Arabic origin, one Italian and three of unknown type.³⁷ This mixture of coins, with over three times the number of foreign than Anglo-Saxon, and the majority of those Arabic, is unlikely to have been composed by any other than a Viking.

It is difficult to answer conclusively the question of function or purpose; however, Sheehan's typology has aided in understanding in which locations certain types of hoards may have been deposited. This information, combined with knowledge of hoard components, hints at various burial circumstances. The strictly

34 Sheehan, 'Social and Economic Integration', pp. 186-7.

35 James Graham-Campbell, ed., *The Viking Treasure from the North West: The Cuerdale Hoard in its Context*, Liverpool Museum 5, (Great Britain: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, 1992); Graham-Campbell, 'The Cuerdale Hoard', p. 112; Blunt and Dolley, 'The Hoard Evidence for the Coins of Alfred', pp. 220-47; Graham Webster, 'A Saxon Treasure Hoard Found at Chester, 1950', *Archaeology Journal* 33 (1953), pp. 22-32; B.J.N. Edwards, 'Viking silver ingot from Bowes Moor, Yorkshire', *Archaeology Journal* 65 (1986), pp. 457-459; R.H.M. Dolley, 'A neglected but vital Yorkshire hoard' *British Numismatic Journal* 28, no. 1 (1955-7), pp. 11-17.

36 Sheehan, 'Social and Economic Integration', pp. 186-7.

37 J.S. Strudwick, 'Saxon and Arabic coins found at Dead, Cumberland', *British Numismatic Journal* 28, no. 1 (1955-7), pp. 177-80.

bullion hoards are found along the coast. These could represent the spoils of Viking raiders. Ritualistically, they may be gifts to the *dísir* for luck, *Oðin* for wealth, or funerary rituals for comrades fallen in battle or lost at sea. The hoards that include ornaments are mostly northern, in Danelaw territory. Perhaps this indicates less violent circumstances surrounding the deposition than is usually suspected. The presence of more typically Scandinavian hoards in regions of Danish settlement should not be surprising. Unfortunately, this does not clarify the motive behind the deposition.

Historical Analysis

When appropriating Sheehan's methodology, it must be remembered that his analysis is performed within a different historical context than that of England. Comparison with historical data is not a novel concept, but is often frowned upon by scholars, due to the ease of modifying evidence to fit the history, unconsciously or otherwise. However, if the overall position of the Vikings in Anglo-Saxon society is not considered when contextualizing a hoard, geographical patterns will only serve to amplify understanding so far.³⁸ The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is a solid source with which to begin the search for historical context.³⁹ Like all historical sources it is not completely accurate and includes only the events which were pertinent to the writers, but it is the main chronicle for later Anglo-Saxon England. The movement of the Scandinavian raiders, or 'the host' as the Chronicle refers to them, corresponds with only a select number of hoards. The dates of the Chronicle may be a year-or-so off, but give a relative idea of the movement of the Scandinavians within England (see Figure 5). Sevington is likely to have been a hoard made by the initial raiders, who landed in Kent around 850.⁴⁰ In 871-2, a party wintered in London, which may correspond with the Gravesend hoard of 871. They then migrated north, wintering in Repton in 874, which definitely correlates to the Scandinavian burial discovered there. From there a portion of these raiders headed north with the leader Halfdan, settling in Northumbria within the next year. This group could be associated with the

38. Brooks and Campbell, 'Reflections on the Viking-Age Silver Hoard', pp. 91-110; Bradley, *The Passage of Arms*, p. 17.

39. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, trans. by G.N. Garmonsway, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1955).

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-97.

Beeston Tor hoard of 875. The remainder rampaged through England, making their way to Exeter by 875-876. It is notable that the Treewhiddle hoard, a lone Viking hoard in Cornwall, is dated to 875. Wilson and Blunt suggest this to be the moveable wealth of a church fleeing from Vikings, but it could equally plausibly be the moveable wealth of a church plundered by this group, which split at Repton.⁴¹ There was an isolated group which attacked Tettenhall in 910, and then moved northward, perhaps also associated with the Harkirke hoard, though evidence is limited.⁴² Many of the hoards that seem to be associated with the movement of the Great Army are class two and three hoards. The military progression was somewhat contained to the south of Northumbria following Halfdan's settlement and the following establishment of the Danelaw. Many of the Scandinavian hoards are located within the Danelaw area, which suggests that these are not the hoards of raiders. Perhaps they are the hoards of frightened Anglo-Saxons; or perhaps there is a heavier Scandinavian ritual aspect than has yet been acknowledged for hoards in England.

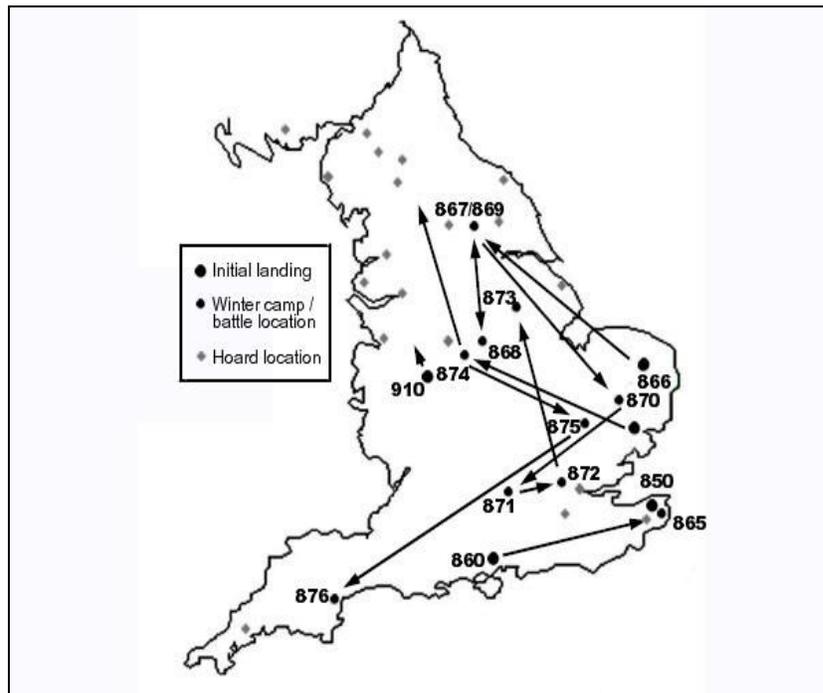


Fig. 5: Map of the chronological movement of the Vikings throughout England. The arrows mark the progression of raiding groups.

41. Wilson and Blunt, 'The Treewhiddle Hoard', p. 117.

42. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 64-97.

Conclusion

Unfortunately there are no hard and fast rules for the identification and interpretation of Viking hoards in England. As evidenced by this brief analysis, an examination of hoards can dredge up a variety of explanations, depending on the angle from which they are viewed. Each find must be analyzed individually based on its contents, condition and location. Further answers may be found in a deeper study of the life cycle of all of the objects themselves.⁴³ This goes beyond simply tracing coins from their site of origin, to putting hoards into an historical context, as well as considering the type of meaning each object may have gained on its journey. Utilizing a coin hoard to determine its exact date is useful, but to understand the hoard fully as an archaeological artefact is much more complicated. Every aspect of the hoard must be examined and contextualized. If such an analysis were to be performed on all hoards from the late Anglo-Saxon period, more obvious patterns would emerge on an historical, or maybe even an ideological level. The overriding question of economic versus ritual motive may never be answered, but there is much to be gained in the attempt.

⁴³ Bradley, *The Passage of Arms*, p. 33; Gosden and Marshall, pp. 169-78.

Appendix: Chart of Scandinavian Hoards found in England.

Hoard	Location	Date	Types	Ingot(s)	Hack-silver	Ornaments	Non-metal	Sources
Beeston Tor, Staffordshire		c. 875	49: Anglo-Saxon	none	none	3 rings (1 silver, 2 bronze), 2 silver and niello disc brooches (no necks), 1 bronze binding.	none	Brooks and Graham-Campbell 1986: 110, Graham-Campbell 1992: 107, Blunt and Dolley 1959: 222, Wilson 1964: 118-122
Bossal/Tlaxton, Yorkshire	deposited in a leaden box	c. 927	269: Anglo-Saxon, 1 dirham	none	piece of silver stirrup, pieces of silver chain, pieces of armrings	plain silver ring, small silver crucifix	none	Graham-Campbell 1992: 112, Dolley 1953-7
Bowes Moor, Yorkshire		10 th c.	none	6 complete, 11 fragments – all decorated	4 other metal items, all decorated	none	none	Edward 1986, Kruse 1988
Chester, Cheshire	found along the wall of a Roman/Mercian an	c. 970	522: Anglo-Saxon, 1 Milanese, 2 Carolingian	11 complete, 73 fragments	16 small pellets of flattened bars – maybe coin blanks, 6 fragments of decorated brooches, 34 fragments of plain brooches and bracelets, ring money, 2 coiled wires	none	none	Webster 1950
Croydon, Surrey	on the edge of an old parish, contained in a coarse linen bag	c. 875	250: Anglo-Saxon, Kufic dirhams and Carolingian denier	3 ingots, a cut section of a fourth	none	none	none	Brooks and Graham-Campbell 1986, Blunt and Dolley 1959: 222-4
Cwerdale, Lancashire	found in a lead container	c. 905	7250-7500: Viking and Anglo-Saxon make from England, 1000 Frankish and Italian), 50 Arabic, 1 Byzantine and 4 Hedeby	305 ingots and fragments	large amount of hack-silver that was once brooches, rings, arm rings, etc.	none	5 bone pins – perhaps fasteners from money bags	Graham-Campbell 1992b, Blunt and Dolley 1959: 240-6, Wilson 1964: 128-9

Dean, Cumbria	deposited in a lead vessel	c. 915	At least 34; 7 Anglo-Saxon, 23 Arabic, 1 Italian, 3 unknown	none	none	none	none	none	Edwards 1992, Blunt and Dolly 1959: 247, Stradwick 1955-7
Goldsbrough, Yorkshire	found in a pot by a churchyard	c. 925-30	37; 2 Anglo-Saxon, 35 dirham	contains ingots but no detail is given on amount or condition	14 pieces of bullion	fragments of silver bracelets, 1 silver buckle, thistle brooch, hoop of an Irish embossed brooch, small cruciform pendant	none	none	Graham-Campbell 1992:112, Blunt and Dolly 1959: 247
Gravesend, Kent		c. 871	522; all AS except 1 continental	none	none	silver pendant cross	none	none	Blunt and Dolly 1959: 221, Wilson 1964: 134-5
Hatton, Cheshire	deposited in silver gift cup	1025	860; silver coins of Char	none	none	6 embossed gold discs, 1 torque of plaited silver wire	none	none	Edwards 1992, Graham-Campbell 1992: 112
Hartke, Little Crosby, Lancashire		c. 910	nearly 100 coins	none	small amount of bullion melted down in 1611	none	none	none	Edwards 1992, Graham-Campbell 1992: 112, Blunt and Dolly 1959: 247
Kirkoswald, Cumbria		c. 865	542 styca	none	none	1 silver trefoil brooch set with garnets	none	none	Edwards 1992, Graham-Campbell 1992: 107, Wilson 1964: 139-40
Lilla Howe, Godthland, Yorkshire	found on a BA barrow	mid-9 th – 10 th c.	none	none	none	2 apparently Scan gold discs, several plain gold rings, 1 gold brooch, middle-late Saxon strap-ends	none	none	Watkin and Mann 1981
Orton Scar, Cumbria	hidden between two rocks	first half of 10 th c.	none	none	none	silver fibulae and torque	none	none	Graham-Campbell 1992: 109, Graham-Campbell 1989: 54, Cramp 1964
Scotby, Cumbria		c. 935-40	around 100; Anglo-Saxon	1 complete ingot, 5 ingot fragments, 4 rod fragments	none	none	none	none	Edwards 1992, Kruse 1986, Blunt 1974

Sevington, Kent		c. 850	nearly 70: Anglo-Saxon - many of the coins are defaced and fragmented	bronze ingot	none	most undecorated or crudely: silver spoonfork, bronze gilt fragment, bronze-gilt disc, bronze strapend, bronze blank for strapend, 2 silver blank for strapend, 2 fragments of bronze blank, fragments of silver blank, bronze buckle plate	3 claystone spindle-whofts, perforated piece of jet of lignite, a rough agate and a cake of wax	Blunt 1972, Wilson 1964: 167-71
Talnoyre, Kirkcudbrightshire		c. 875	11: 5 strapas, 4 Anglo-Saxon, 1 Carolingian denier, fragment of dirham	none	none	Anglo-Saxon strap-end, pair of disc-headed pins, scale weight	none	Brooks and Campbell 1986: 109, Graham-Campbell 1992: 111
Terney, Lincolnshire		c. 970	AS and V	none	none	2 silver tags	none	Blackburn and Pagan 1986, Wilson 1964: 178
Trewhiddle, Cornwall		c. 875	115: Anglo-Saxon, 2 French	1 gold ingot	none	4 mounts, 2 strap-ends, 1 chalice, 1 box-like object, pin, scourge and bead, silver brooch, 2 belt-loops, bronze buckle and buckle plate, 2 silver rings, 1 gold pendant, torque	none	Blunt and Dolley 1959: 222, Wilson and Blunt 1961, Wilson 1964: 179-91