The Mediaeval Coin-Hoards of Thomond

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The purpose of this note is to suggest that the geographical and chronological incidence of the recorded mediaeval coin-hoards from Thomond is something that the historian should not continue to ignore. If it cannot be pretended that these few paragraphs constitute the definitive study of these finds that will have one day to be attempted, they are offered in the hope that they may provoke the reporting of further discoveries of the same description. The belief of the writer is that over the whole island there are many coin-finds that appear in no central inventory, the reason for local failure to bring them to the notice of the authorities being an unawareness of the material's potential significance rather than any widespread mistrust of the regulations concerning Treasure Trove. If, then, the occasion of the collection of the details here presented was a gratifying, not to say flattering, invitation to address the 1969 Merriman Summer School at Ennis, publication now in rather different format reflects the writer's hope that co-operation by Thomond antiquaries may one day make possible the publication of the totality of the evidence with a greater homogeneity and precision.

The first point to be made is that the whole concept of coinage in the precious metals was one foreign to the native Irish tradition. Until a surprisingly late date, Gaelic Ireland persisted in its reluctance to use coins, and it is yet another indication of how critical was the sixteenth century for our country that it is then and only then that the native chieftains began to recognize the potentialities of a monetary economy for the exploitation of their followers who had been converted into tenants on their own land by the monstrous betrayal implicit in their leaders' acceptance of the Henrician policies of "Surrender and Re-grant." The exception that may be said to prove the rule is, of course, the possibility, now becoming a probability, that there may have been a limited coinage from Clonmacnoise under Turlough O'Connor about the middle of the twelfth century.¹ These highly controversial silver bracteates apart, the first Irish coins properly so described are the Free State issues of 1928, and even here there is room for argument that the distinction is one that ought properly to be reserved for those of 1937 or 1947—or even for coins as yet unstruck. What one looks for in vain, though, is a coin that can be associated with Malachy or with Brian Bóramha—coins just were not made—or even used—by the Irish in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Coins first began to be struck a whole millennium before the heyday of Niall of the Nine Hostages, and the practice spread from its cradle on the western shores of Asia Minor across Europe and as far as Britain. Nor was there any apparent aversion to

¹ Dolley 1968, pp. 142-145.
coinage among the Celtic peoples as such, and on the Continent and in Britain, but not in Ireland, the advance of the Roman legions meant in many cases the supersession of a Celtic series by the massive issues of Rome. Throughout the Roman Empire coin was in everyday use, from Hadrian’s Wall to the edge of the Sahara, and from Finisterre to the borders of Armenia. Ireland, however, lay outside the orbit of Rome, and relatively few Roman coins found their way across the Irish Sea. Most of those that did come, too, were brought as loot in the course of the late fourth and early fifth centuries, and this is reflected in their distribution, the great majority of those in the precious metals being found in the north-east quadrant of this island. Known to the writer is only one instance of a Roman coin authentically brought into Ireland in antiquity being found in Thomond, the 1938 discovery of a copper coin of the middle of the fifth century in the excavations at Lough Gur. The porphyrionic pieces found a century earlier in a rose garden at Newcastle West were the Grand Tour equivalents of Suez postcards and had been discarded by a returned traveller no earlier than the eighteenth century. Admittedly, there are three second-century coins of Antoninus Pius which are alleged to have find-spots in Clare and Tipperary, but in two cases, at least, the proximity of a ‘Big House’ or of British barracks is a cause for more than suspicion, and especially when in one of them the coin was accompanied by a no less common piece struck nearly a century later and of a kind in Britain not normally found in the same context. With the collapse of the Roman Empire even the trickle of Roman coins into Ireland dried up, and for all the numerous and well-attested contacts between Early Christian Ireland and Western Europe the tally of Merovingian coins found in this island stands at precisely two. Of Anglo-Saxon coins struck before the end of the eighth century there are none.

It is only in the ninth century that coins again begin to be brought over into Ireland, and in the tenth century they arrive in considerable quantity. The explanation of this new import is a simple one, the arrival of the Vikings on the scene. In Irish folklore these invaders are always the Danes, but as it happens the coin-evidence in itself would be enough to suggest that they were in fact Norwegian and not Danish. The earliest of their coin-hoards is one from Leinster, a small find made nearly a century ago near Blessington and consisting of a handful of Carolingian coins from mints in Aquitaine which had been ravaged by a Viking host which eventually pulled out from France and came to Ireland. It is not until the tenth century, however, that we have any record of a Viking-Age coin-hoard from Thomond. First in point of date of the latest coin is a discovery made c. 1843 at an unknown place in the Co. Tipperary. A total of 19 coins, all from England, ends with four pennies of Edmund who died

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9 O Riordán 1947 cannot be said to have worn well. It may be objected that it fails to take account of as much as half the recorded material, and also that little attempt is made to distinguish objects brought into Ireland in antiquity from those where import in relatively modern times may safely be assumed.

2 O Riordán 1947, p. 75.

3 Dunraven 1865, p. 151; Dolley 1966, p. 12.

4 O Riordán 1947, p. 80, and references shortly to be published by Mr. Donal Bateson of the Queen’s University of Belfast.

5 Dolley 1966, pp. 13 and 14.


7 Thompson 1956, 305; Dolley 1962A; idem 1966, pp. 19, 20 and 48, 6.

8 Thompson 1956, 356; Dolley 1962B; idem 1966, pp. 29 and 50, 82.

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in 946, while the proportions in which the coins of the different reigns occur must favour concealment in or about the year 943. Included in a find from Mungetret were eight Anglo-Saxon silver pennies spanning the years c. 905—c. 950, a rare Viking coin struck at York for one of the Hiberno-Norse kings there c. 942, and seven little ingots of silver. Most of the material is now on loan to the Limerick City Museum. It is clear that the hoard found its way into the ground about the middle of the tenth century, and the fact that these are our earliest Viking coin-hoards from Thomond is a reminder that it was not until quite late that the Norsemen, by now firmly established in Leinster but politically of dwindling importance in Ulster, essayed the military conquest of Munster. It was to be a case of too little and too late. No longer in close rapport with their homeland, the Norsemen had to depend on their own resources, and foolishly they overstretched their resources by attempting a war on three fronts, a defensive war against the Uí Néill, and wars of aggression in Northern England and against Munster. By 954 the Northumbrian campaign had collapsed completely, and in 968 the Dalassenian from East Clare routed the Norse of Munster and their Irish allies and then proceeded to sack Limerick, the chief base of the Vikings in Munster for the past fifty years. In 980, too, all Dublin’s territorial aspirations in Meath were finally dashed to the ground by a great Uí Néill victory at Tara. Thrown up by this conflict was the legendary but also very historical Brian Bórama, ‘Brian of the Tributes’, the younger son of one of the sub-kings from Thomond, who became in 976 King of Munster, replacing the Eoghanachts of Cashel, and in 984 Over-King of the ‘Southern Half’ of Ireland (i.e. of Munster and Leinster). In 1002 he was recognized by Meath and Ulster and Connacht as the first of the true High-Kings of All Ireland, and as such fell at Clontarf on Good Friday 1014 when engaged on putting down a revolt of Leinster backed by what remained of Norse power in these islands. From the 990s onwards he had been in theory at least—and often effectively—the much resented suzerain of the Norse king of Dublin, and it was under his nose, as it were, that there operated from c. 995 onwards a Viking mint at Dublin.

For roughly seventy-five years, from c. 920 until c. 985, the Norsemen of Leinster had been bringing into Ireland considerable quantities of English coin, and there are known something like two dozen coin-hoards composed of these silver pennies and concealed within these limits, and only a very few are not from Leinster. As already observed, the native Irish had no taste or use for coin. For some reason the resumption of the Danish attacks upon England towards the end of the tenth century led to a drying up of the source of this imported coin, and so to the establishment c. 995 of a mint at Dublin to meet the needs of the Hiberno-Norse of Leinster. Again, coin-hoards from Thomond mirror neatly Irish attitudes towards the Norse. The Viking base at Limerick had been stormed and sacked thoroughly in 968, but there was no genocide, and once they had disgorge their accumulated plunder the Vikings were allowed to retain their town and were something more than merely tolerated as merchants and as mercenaries. One consequence is that we have two coin-hoards from the vicinity of Limerick which may be supposed to have been concealed early in the second half of the eleventh century, one found in the early 1830s near Limerick itself,  

10 Thompson 1956, 277; Dolley 1960; idem 1966, pp. 31, 32 and 50, 58.
and one which came to light at Adare in 1839. Both hoards seem to have been composed entirely of the Hiberno-Norse coins of Dublin which were now so inferior in weight to the English coins they had always imitated that they could not circulate outside Ireland and the Isle of Man. From the same general period, too, come the two Dublin pennies which were found in the course of Professor M. J. O'Kelly's 1961 excavations at Beal Boru just north of Killaloe, the traditional Kinragh. These are apparently the only Hiberno-Norse coins to have been found west of the Shannon, and it is perhaps worth remarking that the tally of Viking-Age coins found in Connacht amounts to no more than a single Anglo-Saxon penny of c. 920 found at Rathcroghan. Of the two coins from Beal Boru, the later has a reverse that is clearly modelled on that found on the pennies of the last issue of Edward the Confessor in England, and so is to be dated not earlier than the autumn of 1065, though for a variety of reasons we may think it unlikely that the date is even as late as 1070.

There are, then, five places in Thomond where Viking-Age coins brought in from Dublin or from England have been found in varying quantity, Adare, Mugret, in or near Limerick itself, Beal Boru, and an unknown spot in Co. Tipperary. To be stressed is the circumstance that four at least are from the Shannon-side, and all five conceivably from what might be termed not too anachronistically the cantred of the Ostmen of Limerick, the territory in the immediate vicinity of the Viking colony which lies under the heart of the modern city of Limerick. A glance at the accompanying map should suffice to show just how great is the contrast between this very localized pattern and that which is presented by the find-spots of the sixteen coin-hoards which we may suppose to have been concealed between the beginning of the thirteenth century and the end of the sixteenth. As a first step to the understanding of this second pattern which is inevitably a much more complex affair, it is probably as well to review the hoards in the chronological order of their concealment.

Earliest—and also the largest—of these sixteen finds is the great hoard of approaching 2,000 coins which came to light in 1942 in Drummoher townland, near Corofin, Co. Clare. The coins which came to the National Museum of Ireland may be categorized as follows:

- 1041 Anglo-Irish halfpence of Prince John struck between 1189 and 1199
- 14 contemporary imitations of the above
- 3 Anglo-Irish halfpence of John de Courcy struck c. 1200
- 1 Anglo-Irish farthing of de Courcy struck perhaps a little later
- 2 Anglo-Irish farthings of Prince John struck between 1194 and 1198
- 1 Anglo-Irish penny of King John struck between 1204 and 1210
- 14 Anglo-Irish halfpence from the same period
- 2 Anglo-Irish farthings again from the same period
- 2 English pennies of Henry II and Henry III struck c. 1185 and c. 1218.

Not the least of the problems presented by the hoard is that one of the coins, the second of the English pence, belongs nearly a decade later than anything else in the whole treasure, and it is, to say the least, curious that 1061 of the coins should have

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13 Thompson 1968, 6; Dolley 1986, pp. 40; 52, 162, and 69.
13 Dolley 1982C.
14 Ibid., p. 18.
KEY TO THE MAP

Δ Hoards concealed c.900-c.1200 (nos. 1-4)
□ Hoards concealed c.1200-c.1350 (nos. 5-11)
○ Hoards concealed c.1350-c.1600 (nos. 12-20)

Δ 1. 'Co. Tipperary'
2. Munagret
3. 'Limerick'
4. Adare

□ 5. Corofin
6. Clondegad
7. Kilaloe
8. 'Co. Clare'
9. Ennis
10. Muckinish
11. Ballykinvarga

○ 12. Rathkeale
13. Athea
14. Roscrea
15. Kilmurry
16. Kilmallock
17. Askeaton
18. Limerick City
19. Knockaboul
20. Ennis

N.B. Nos. 1 and 8 are localised to county only and their position as marked on the map is arbitrary.
escaped the melting-pot which ought to have been their fate between 1205 and 1208 when they were supposed all to have been demonetized. Probably indicative, too, of the relative unimportance of the Anglo-Norman mints which seem to have operated at Limerick c. 1196-c. 1198 and even more ephemeraUy c. 1210 is the circumstance that no more than 10 of the coins in the find were struck at Limerick only thirty miles or so from the place of finding. It has been surmised with fair plausibility that the occasion of the concealment of the hoard was some incident in the 1220s when the whole area west of the Shannon was in turmoil as a consequence of the dismemberment of the O'Connor lands by the great Norman lords who saw in the minority of Henry III a heaven-sent opportunity for their self-enrichment at the expense of the native Irish. At the other end of the scale is the apparently unpublished Shannonside find from Clondegad, a few miles to the southwest of Ennis. An entry for the year 1899 in an old antiquities register in the National Museum of Ireland records the discovery there of five coins, four Long-Cross pence of Henry III and a contemporary sterling from Brabant. They may be supposed to have been concealed quite soon after the middle of the thirteenth century.

The next three of our hoards have one remarkable feature in common. All are composed exclusively of Scottish coins, and they appear to be the only thirteenth-century hoards from the whole of Ireland where Scottish coins are not accompanied by pieces from the Anglo-Irish and/or English series—the predominantly Ulidian groat-hoards from the end of the fourteenth century come in quite another category. Earliest—and smallest—of the Thomond finds is a little group of coins from the graveyard at Killaloe which came to light c. 1200 when a detachment from the British army—presumably stationed there against the Whiteboys—happened to be digging a grave for one of the soldiers who had died. The coins numbered no more than a dozen, and all seem to have belonged to an issue in the name of Alexander III which there is reason to think had been pretty effectively demonetized within a year or two, at most, of 1280, though there is no reason to think that the coins from Killaloe had not been lost rather earlier than that. The second of our finds is composed predominantly of the same type of coin, but its larger size probably explains why there are also present some earlier pieces in the name of William the Lion but struck probably under Alexander II. It was discovered c. 1385 at some unknown spot in the Co. Clare, and seems to have amounted to some fifty or sixty coins. Latest—and largest—of these three finds is one from Ennis itself which was discovered about 1840. Present were perhaps a hundred and fifty of the silver pennies which Alexander III put out between 1280 and 1285, and the absence of the parallel issues of Edward I from his Anglo-Irish and English mints must suggest a date for the concealment of the hoard as soon after 1280 as may be thought to take account of the time necessary for the coins to reach Co. Clare from their mints in Scotland. From the decade c. 1275-c. 1285, then, we have from Thomond, and indeed from one county in Thomond, three coin-hoards which are composed exclusively of Scottish coins, and it may not be altogether a coincidence that in 1276 Thomas de Clare was granted by Edward I

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the whole of Thomond'. The grant was, of course, at the expense of the O'Briens who were hopelessly divided among themselves, but Turlough at least put up a spirited defence of his patrimony, and there now began a forty-year war which ended in a triumph for the Irish when Turlough's worthy son Murcettagh cut to pieces a Norman army at Dysert O'Dea. Until the second half of the thirteenth century the Norman knight had been supreme, but with time the Irish learned to give battle only on favourable terrain, and in 1258 there appeared for the first time in Irish history a most satisfactory answer to some of the tactical problems posed by the Norman knight, the gallowglass, a professional foot-soldier from the Scottish Isles who was both trained and equipped to withstand a cavalry charge. One suggestion of this paper is that these Co. Clare finds composed of Scottish coins may reflect the introduction into Thomond of the first of these mercenary Scotto-Vikings, anonymous precursors of the later Sheehys. Certainly some such stiffening of the O'Brien ranks would go far to explain how it was that Turlough was able to beat off the initial assault of the de Clare.

Mention has been made of the battle of Dysert O'Dea fought on 10 May 1318, and the rout of the Englishry on that occasion could well be the underlying cause of the deposit of the sixth of the Anglo-Norman finds from Thomond, an ill-recorded little find which came to light some thirty-five years ago at Muckinish, near Inagh, in the general area of the actual battlefield. The find could well represent the looted purse of one of the luckless de Clare knights or men-at-arms—the coins recovered being all apparently English pennies of Edward I and/or Edward II. The seventh of our finds, though, was a later and very much more substantial affair, though it is only in the last year or so that we have been able to determine with accuracy its size and composition, for all that it was found as long ago as 1872. Unlike many if not most later nineteenth-century discoveries, it was reported to the Academy, but no action appears to have been taken to secure its recovery, and one has more than a suspicion that this was because the coins had been shared out among the petty gentry while the actual finders were local children without influence. The number of coins could have been as high as five hundred, and the great majority of them appear to have been English pence of Edward I, II and III, with only a handful of Anglo-Irish, Scottish and Continental sterlings of the same general type. The hoard came to light at Ballykinvara near Killenaora, and the hiding-place seems to have been a crevice in one of the limestone components of the prehistoric chevaux-de-frise which is so well-known a feature of the fort in question. When the coins were concealed is not too clear, but it was probably about the middle of the fourteenth century. This is, of course, the period of the Black Death and of its aftermath, though the incidence of the actual pestilence does seem to have been relatively light where the native Irish were concerned, but it is also the period when once again the O'Briens were divided among themselves with the English as ever exploiting such dissension to the full.

The first two centuries of Norman penetration into Thomond, then, have left behind them a total of at least seven finds, all of them from Co. Clare and all of them in consequence from north and west of the Lower Shannon. However, for all but two of the

remaining nine hoards we go across the river. In 1846 more than a thousand silver coins of Edward III—or perhaps we should say coins attributed at that time to Edward III—came to light at Rathkeale. They seem not to have been seen by any competent numismatist, and today we can no more than guess at their true identity. It is, though, at least a possibility that the hoard represents part of the spoils from the great O’Brien victory in 1370 at Monasteranenagh, near Croom, in Co. Limerick when the Geraldines of Munster were trounced as they had not been since Callan more than a century before. Less sensational numismatic testimony to the Irish victory—but more sure—is a little find of eight silver coins found at Athea, also in Co. Limerick, almost exactly forty years ago. The worn condition of the English half-groat and Scottish groat which are the best preserved and latest of the coins only serves to emphasize the deplorable state of the Irish currency in the second half of the fourteenth century. Insufficient attention has been paid to the fact that from the whole period 1302-1461 there are known only four Anglo-Irish coins struck in Ireland, two halfpence from an abortive issue of c. 1339 and two pennies from a no more successful coinage of c. 1425. England, of course, was interested in Irish minting only when the precious metal could be obtained locally and the great bulk of the new coins shipped at once out of Ireland. This particular silver goose, however, had been well and truly killed by a century of systematic exploitation which culminated in the extortions of the Fulbourns, episcopal brothers who merit a place in any history of the art of peculation, and of Sir John Wogan, Edward I’s justiciar who finally bankrupted the Irish economy in the course of his strenuous mobilisation of all the colony’s resources for the Scottish wars. By the second half of the fourteenth century England was locked in battle with France, and the English in Ireland had to endure an unprecedented and chronic shortage of coined money. Virtually none of the new gold and only a trickle of the new groats found their way over to Ireland, and the Anglo-Irish currency tended more and more to consist of worn and clipped English money, leavened with inferior Scottish pieces and with a whole crop of forgeries of both. This neglect of Anglo-Irish interests is well-exemplified by a little hoard, only recently published, which was found nearly forty years ago in the area of Roscrea in the Co. Tipperary. Concealed at the very end of the fourteenth century, it contained none of the groats and half-groats that were the staple of the English coinage from 1351 onwards, but included in it were a number of worn English pennies, going back to the time of Edward I, beside the odd new London and York pennies of Richard II brought over presumably on the occasion of his visits to Ireland in the 1390s.

One consequence of this dearth of money is that we have very few coin-hoards from Ireland where the first half of the fifteenth century is concerned. Quite exceptional is a hoard which is supposed to have come to light c. 1720 at Kilmurry, near the coast south of Miltown Malbay, Co. Clare. The coins seem all to have been English groats of Henry VI struck at Calais some three hundred years before, sales of wool at the staple of Calais having assumed such proportions in the early fifteenth century that it was advantageous for England to convert into coin there the foreign specie

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tendered in payment. Why, however, there should be a hoard of this description from so remote a part of Ireland is something that does not admit of easy explanation, and it could well be that the coins derive from some wreck of a merchantman which had failed to make Galway and which had been despoiled by the dwellers on the Clare coast. This was very much O’Brien’s country, and the authority of the administration in Dublin was as remote as ineffectual.

In the second half of the fifteenth century the finances of the colony were put on an entirely new footing by a bold decision of the Anglo-Irish magnates who had decided that the time had come for the interests of the colony to be put before those of the English Crown. There was authorized a coinage which would at once prove a stimulus to cross-channel trade and be difficult for the king of England to siphon out of the island. The device was the simple one of striking silver coins with very distinctive types but weighing only three-quarters as much as their English equivalents which, in turn, were revalued upwards. Thus, an English groat worth fourpence in England passed for fivepence in Ireland, while an Irish groat was worth only threepence when exported to England, and the result was that English silver flooded into Ireland, and there followed a very large coinage at a number of flourishing Irish mints including Limerick.

Unfortunately for our present purpose, the new prosperity of the colony was accompanied by a dramatic increase in internal stability, and one consequence of this is that coin-hoards are again relatively few and far between. It was in times of disturbance that mediaeval man was wont to consign to the earth his hoarded wealth. In the 1330s, though, one very large treasure did come to light near Kilnaboy, Co. Limerick, though regrettably it was dispersed without adequate record. It does seem, however, that it was concealed early in the reign of Henry VII, at a time when the Geraldines were extricating themselves with a certain agility from the premature backing which they had given to the Yorkist pretender Lambert Simnel, crowned in Dublin as Edward VI of England. In contrast, we are singularly well-informed concerning a discovery made in September 1554 just outside Askeaton, Co. Limerick. There is good reason to think that 86 silver coins now housed in the National Museum of Ireland represent the whole of the hoard as concealed. All but one of the coins are English, and the latest belong not much after 1530. The solitary Anglo-Irish coin is a piece of Henry VIII, known from its reverse type as a ‘half-harp’, and recent research has established conclusively that a crowned ‘A’ on the reverse was intended as a compliment to Anne Boleyn. This luckless lady with Irish connections was Henry’s wife for little more than three years, and it can be shown that the hoard from Askeaton was committed to the soil in or about the year 1535. This was just the period when internal dissensions prevented the Desmond Geraldines from throwing their weight behind the revolt of Silken Thomas, so fatal, in the event, to the cause of their Kildare cousins.

It was only about the middle of the sixteenth century that it became normal for a proportion of English—and Anglo-Irish—coins to bear a date, and the innovation was

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25 Dolley 1969, pp. 52-55.
28 Dolley and Hackmann 1969.
one which makes the task of the numismatist very much easier, inasmuch as the
detail is one likely, if not certain, to be recorded in a report drawn up by an antiquary
without specifically numismatic expertise. In 1921, for example, there was found at
Limerick, near the St. John’s Hospital, a score or so of Anglo-Irish and English coins
of which the latest is dated 1573. Concealment of a hoard of this description is un-
likely to be later than the 1580s, and could well be as early as 1575, so that the new
hoard almost certainly reflects the age of Fitzmaurice, and the first attempt to estab-
lish a community of interest between native Irish and Old English in resistance to the
pretensions of the Tudor monarchy. A second hoard from the same county seems
certainly associated with the plantation that was the price of the last revolt of the
Geralines. This is the still not fully published hoard discovered in 1943 at Knock-
aboul, just outside Abbeyfeale. One parcel of 117 coins reached the National
Museum of Ireland, but perhaps as many coins again are thought to have remained
in private possession. Of the coins surrendered, the latest is an English sixpence of
1585 which evidences very little wear, and it is unlikely that the hoard was concealed
more than a year or two after that date. The reason for the concealment and non-
recovery of this very substantial sum of money remains for the present a mystery. It
could be that it reflects the proceeds of a raid on the planted lands to the east by some
precursors of the raparces, but one cannot quite discount the possibility that the
owner of the coins could have been a dispossessed Anglo-Norman from the plain of
Limerick who had been squeezed out by the plantation and driven westwards into
the mountains between Newcastle West and the River Feale. These were the years
when Gaeil and Old English were finding common ground in a common cause, and on
this hypothesis we need not look for a particular historical event to have occasioned
non-recovery. The death of the owner at any time after the concealment of his nest-
egg would be sufficient explanation in those troubled times.

Finally, mention should be made of an 1855 discovery at Ennis, Co. Clare. The
‘many coins of Elizabeth’ may be presumed to be the fine silver pieces of the English
series, but one can only guess from the overall pattern of Irish coin-hoards at this
period that the date of concealment belongs presumptively to the 1570s or 1580s,
rather than to the 1590s. The lack of precision is unfortunate, but does not conceal
the fact that after the middle of the fourteenth century hoards from north of the
Shannon are as rare as in the previous two centuries they had been comparatively
common. There is reason to suspect that this phenomenon reflects the basic fortunes
of the O’Briens and of the Munster Geralines. After the Battle of Dysert O’Dea, the
integral O’Brien territory was secure, and in the sixteenth century this relative tran-
quility was enhanced when the Earls of Thomond generally supported the English
interest. In contrast, the Fitzgerald hold on Co. Limerick, already eroded at Monaster-
anenagh and riven by internal dissension from the fifteenth century onwards, finally
collapsed in the sixteenth century when Fitzmaurice rallied Desmond to the Irish
cause.

Some support for the view that in the mediaeval period hoarding of coin is an index
of tension and insecurity may seem to be afforded by the geographical incidence of

30 Carruthers 1866-77, p. 50; Dolley 1970 A, p. 69, 23; idem 1070 C, 34.
the twenty coin-hoards considered in this paper. Nine are from Co. Limerick, nine from Co. Clare, but only two from Co. Tipperary. In the Viking period there are few records of penetration of Tipperary by the invaders, while the Anglo-Norman interest was supreme there almost from the first, and was never really shaken by disputes between the principal grantees who were headed—significantly—by the Butlers, whose cardinal attachment was ever to the English Crown. It is, indeed, to be pondered that the fortunes of the Earldoms of Desmond, Ormond and Thomond are so neatly mirrored in numismatic evidence which at first sight might seem to be of purely antiquarian significance.

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