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# DISCOVERY OF A THIRTEENTH-CENTURY HOARD OF SILVER COINS IN THE CHAPEL OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, SANDWICH

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## SUMMARY

During a routine check of the contents of a small cupboard in the Sandwich Guildhall early in 1991, a small tin was found which contained forty silver coins together with a manuscript note, dated 1882, detailing the circumstances of the discovery of the hoard, unearthed during the second part of a major restoration of the chapel. On submitting these coins to the British Museum for identification they were found to date from between 1180 and 1242.

## INTRODUCTION

The Hospital of St. Bartholomew in Sandwich was founded in 1190 to provide shelter for sixteen poor people of the town, and as a resting-place for travellers and pilgrims. In 1217, following a successful battle against the French fleet off the Goodwin Sands, a large proportion of the booty was set aside for the benefit of the hospital. As a result sixteen separate dwellings for the hospitalians, and a chapel, were subsequently erected.

Although the dwellings were adequately maintained over the centuries, the chapel itself was badly neglected (at one stage being used as a shed for farm implements) until 1821, when some attempt was made to repair the fabric and return it to a place suitable for regular worship. However, these superficial repairs did not sufficiently halt the deterioration of the building and a major restoration, under the direction of the eminent Victorian architect, Sir Gilbert

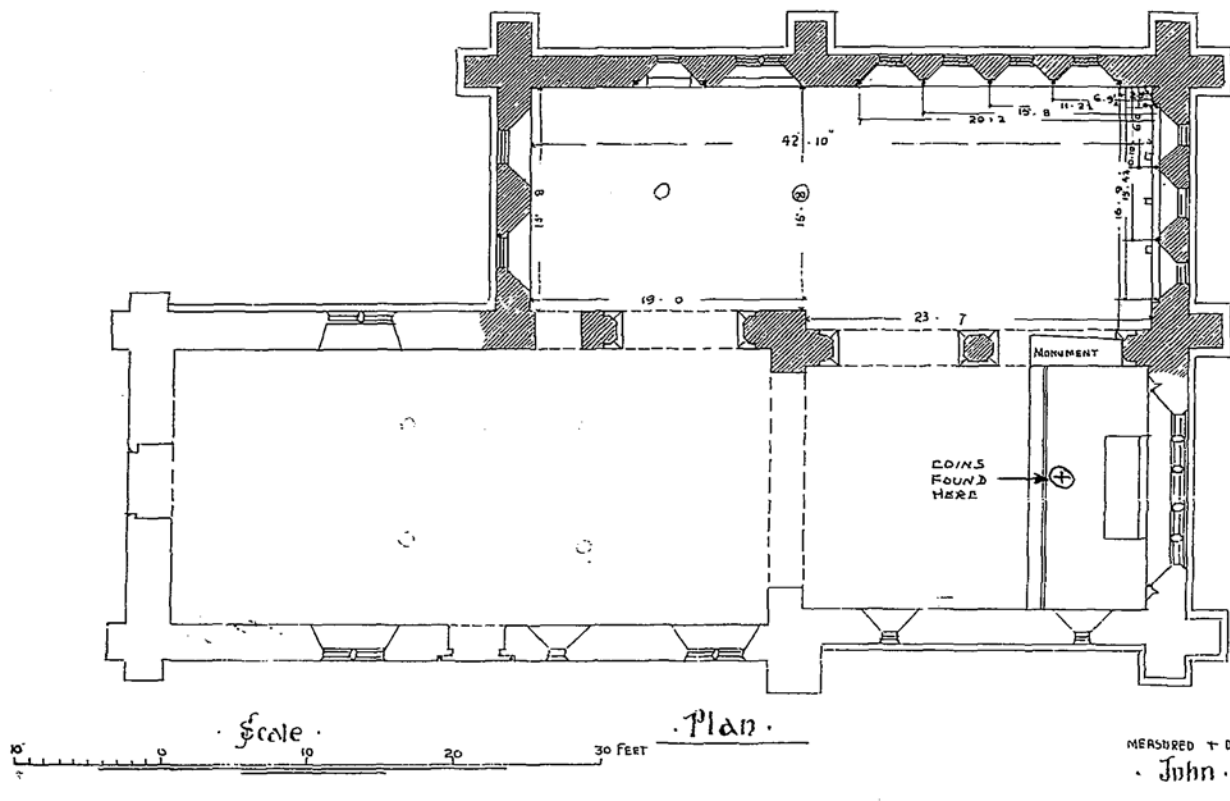
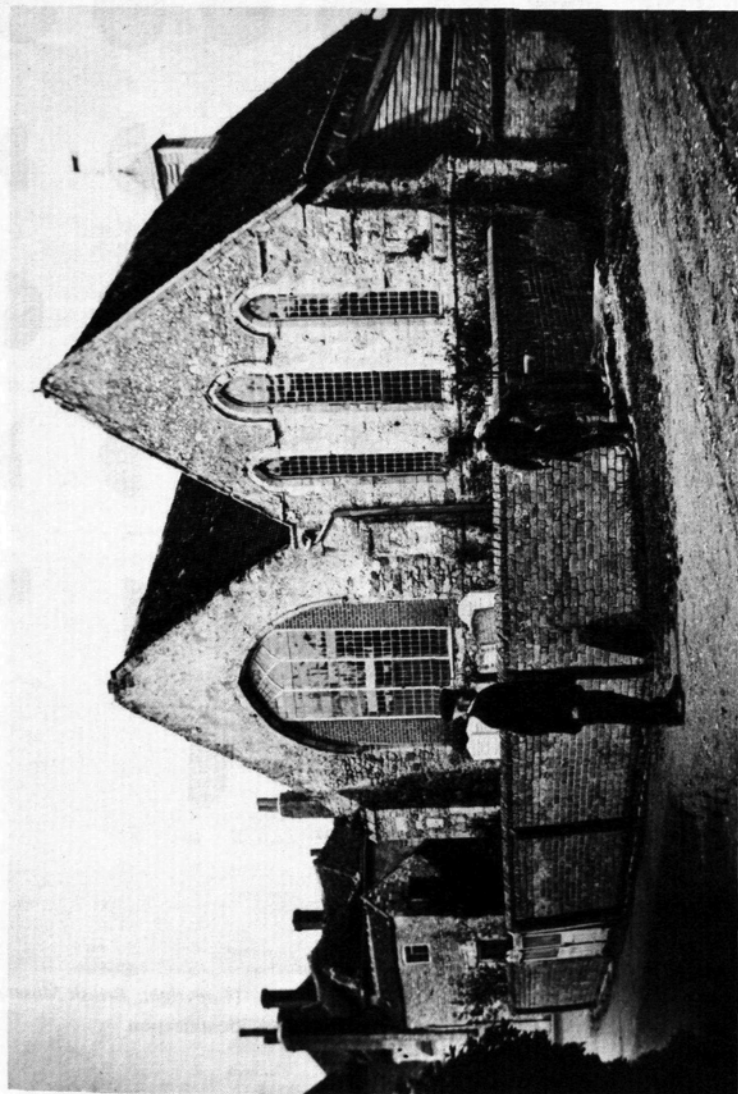


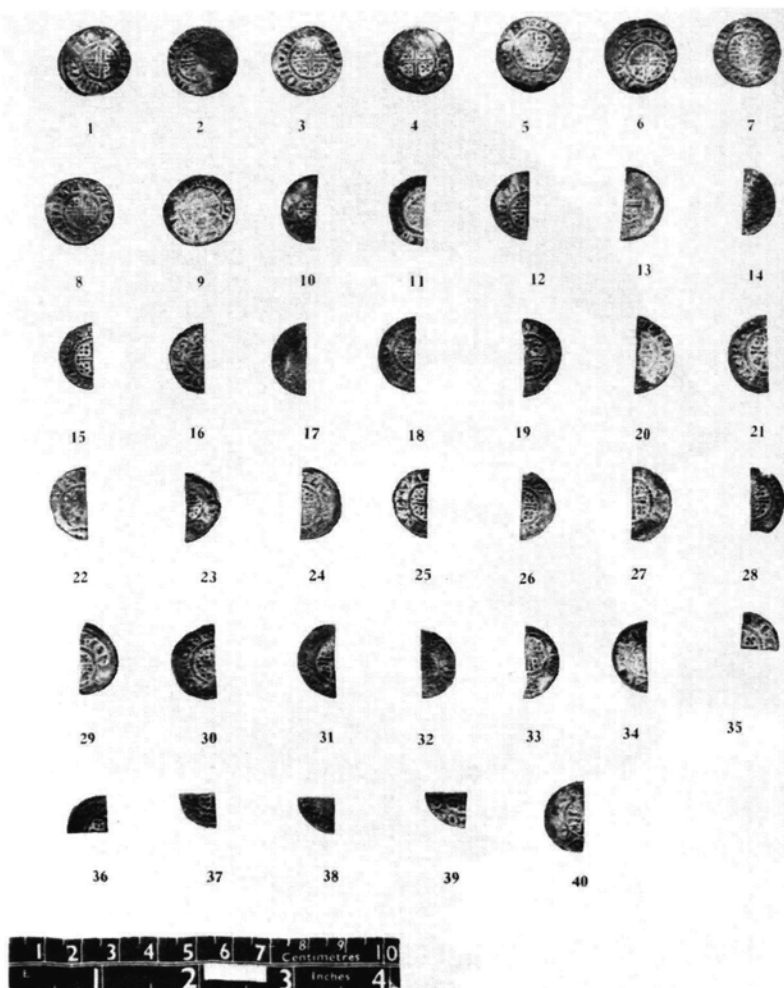
Fig. 1. Architect's plan of chapel, showing site of hoard.

COIN HOARD IN ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL

PLATE I



Photograph, c. 1880, of Saint Bartholomew's Chapel.



(Copyright: British Museum).

Photograph of coins, numbered for easy identification

# COIN HOARD IN ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL

	<u>No.</u>	<u>MINT</u>	<u>MONEYER</u>	<u>PHASE</u>	<u>PERIOD</u>
<u>WHOLE</u> <u>PENNIES</u>	1	Canterbury	Henri	6b	1210 - 1217
	2	Exeter	Iorden	1a 2 or b	1180 - 1189
	3	Lincoln	Andreu	5b	1205 - 1210
	4	London	Abel	5	1205 - 1210
	5	London	Fil Aimer	1b	1180 - 1189
	6	London	Ricard	4b	1194 - 1205
	7	London	Ricard B	5b	1205 - 1210
	8	London	Walter	5c	1205 - 1210
	9	London	Willelm	4b	1194 - 1205
<u>CUT</u> <u>HALFPENNIES</u>	10	Canterbury	Hue	5b or c	1205 - 1210
	11	Canterbury	Ioan Chic (?)	7	1217/18 - 1242
	12	Canterbury	Ioan Chic (?)	7	1217/18 - 1242
	13	Canterbury	Samuel	4b	1194 - 1205
	14	Canterbury	Samuel	5	1205 - 1210
	15	Canterbury	uncertain	1	1180 - 1189
	16	Lincoln	Hue	5b or c	1205 - 1210
	17	Lincoln	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain
	18	London	Alain	1a or b	1180 - 1189
	19	London	Davi	1b or c	1180 - 1189
	20	London	Pierres	1a	1180 - 1189
	21	London	Pierres M	1a or b	1180 - 1189
	22	London	Pierres or Pierres M	1 (?)	1180 - 1189
	23	London	Walter	5c	1205 - 1210
	24	London	Willelm	4b or c	1194 - 1205
	25	London	Willelm or Willelm B, L or T	5b	1205 - 1210
	26	London	Willelm or Willelm B, L or T	5b or c	1205 - 1210
	27	London	uncertain	1	1180 - 1189
	28	London	uncertain	1 (?)	(?)
	29	London	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain
	30	York (?)	Hue	3	1192 - 1194
	31	uncertain	uncertain	1 (?)	1180 - 1189
	32	uncertain	uncertain	5b	1205 - 1210
	33	uncertain	Willelm	uncertain	uncertain
	34	uncertain	uncertain	class 5 or later	1205 -
	35	Canterbury or Carlisle	uncertain	4 (?)	1194 - 1205
	36	(?)	Willelm	1	1180 - 1189
	37	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain
	38	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain
	39	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain	uncertain
<u>SCOTLAND</u> <u>CUT</u> <u>HALFPENNY</u>	40	William I Short Cross	Henri le Rus	B	c1205 - c1230

Fig. 2. List of coins, numbered as Plate II above, with full details of mints, moneyers, dates, etc.

Scott, was commenced in 1877. By 1879, the first half of the restoration, mainly to the north aisle, had been completed with the aid of a generous donation from Thomas Dorman, one of the trustees of the hospital. The final stages of the work were delayed because of lack of funds, but works recommenced early in 1882. On the tenth of July of that year, two feet below the ground and sited in front of the altar, the hoard of forty silver coins was unearthed. Somewhat surprisingly, little interest would appear to have been aroused by this discovery, but, fortunately, Thomas Dorman wrote a short note detailing the circumstances of the find and placed it, together with the coins, in a small tin box which eventually found its way to the Sandwich Guildhall where it lay until early in 1991.

## DISCUSSION

A study of the coins found in the chapel leads to the almost inevitable conclusion that they were deposited in the second quarter of the thirteenth century. All are dated between 1180 and 1242, and all references to the history of the hospital indicate the mid-thirteenth century as the likely date of construction of the chapel.

On the 24th August, 1217, a large French fleet, commanded by Eustace the Monk, was defeated by the English and vast amounts of booty were collected from the captured ships and from the ransoms of the thirty-two knights who survived the battle. Being considerably outnumbered, the men of Sandwich had sworn an oath to St. Bartholomew that, if he would grant them victory, much of the spoils would be devoted to the development of the hospital, founded originally in 1190, on the outskirts of the town. William Boys, historian of Sandwich in 1792, records that the booty was so large that 'every man was well satisfied, thinking that he had fared better than his neighbour, and so large was each share that the money was handed round in porringers.' It can, therefore, be deduced that the share of money set aside for the hospital would have been ample to re-build the dwelling houses, and to provide a chapel for Christian worship for the hospitalians and travellers. Although no records of this work now exist, the chapel would certainly have been finished in the second quarter of the thirteenth century.

Further, the Customal of Sandwich, written in 1301 by Adam Champneys, Town Clerk of Sandwich, records that 'every Brother of the Hospital receives one penny, four times a year, for the offertory'.

The overall value of the hoard, consisting of nine whole pennies, twenty-six cut half-pennies, and five cut quarter-pennies, totals twenty-three pence. As there were sixteen brothers and sisters

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resident in the hospital and there would undoubtedly have been a number of travellers and /or pilgrims temporarily receiving shelter at any one time, it would seem reasonable to suggest that this twenty-three pence might well be the first collection made in the chapel at the time of its consecration, the money then being buried in front of the altar as a thank-offering to the saint after whom the hospital is now named and who was, according to the belief of the times, responsible for the victory which had made the building of the chapel possible.

Given that this assumption is correct, then the hoard is without doubt one of the oldest *provenanced* artifacts in Sandwich, authenticated as it is by Thomas Dorman's manuscript notes of its discovery – which makes all the more inexplicable the fact that it aroused so little interest at that time.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Mr David Kelly, formerly of the Maidstone Museum, whose advice following the discovery of the coins was instrumental in their being taken to the British Museum, where Miss Marion Archibald and Dr Barry Cook of the Coins and Medals Department carried out a detailed investigation and identification of the hoard.