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AN EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY INVENTORY OF COTTON'S ANGLO-SAXON COINS

Nederlandse samenvatting

Dit artikel verschijnt ongeveer tegelijkertijd (1995) in een uitgave van The British Library (C.J. Wright (ed.), *Sir Robert Cotton as Collector*, London 1995), die geheel gewijd is aan artikelen over Sir Robert Bruce Cotton (1571-1631). Zijn verzamelingen van manuscripten, boeken, oudheden en munten vormen het oudste bestanddeel van de collecties van het British Museum.

Cotton werd geboren in 1571 in Huntingdonshire als de oudste zoon van een welvarende landeigenaar. Een van zijn kostsschoolleraars was de oudheidkundige William Camden, de auteur van het baanbrekende werk *Britannia* (1586), beroemd in binnen- en buitenland, en vele malen herdrukt. Hierin werd voor het eerst op wetenschappelijke wijze verslag gedaan van onderzoek naar het verre Engelse verleden. Hij was het die Cotton enthousiast maakte voor oudheidkundige studies, en hem introduceerde in de kring van Franse, Duitse en Nederlandse geleerden, met wie hij correspondeerde en die hem bezochten. Via Camden werd hun werk bekend in Engeland, en omgekeerd, het werk van Engelse oudheidkundigen in de Europese geleerde wereld.

Cotton was al jong begonnen met verzamelen. Na zijn studie in Cambridge en een rechtenstudie in de Middle Temple in Londen, werd hij het middelpunt van een kring van historici, oudheidkundigen en politici, die hij adviseerde over historische, heraldische, juridische en politieke vraagstukken. Voor de oplossing daarvan vond hij bewijzen in zijn oude boeken en handschriften. In 1601 werd hij lid van het Parlement, en toen James I koningin Elizabeth in 1604 opvolgde, werd hij in de (lagere) adelstand verheven. Destijds was het de gewoonte dat geleerden, zowel in Engeland als op het vasteland, elkaar boeken en manuscripten leenden of ten geschenke gaven, en ook Cotton was genereus in dat opzicht. Het gebruik dat politici maakten van zijn bibliotheek in hun strijd voor de handhaving van de rechten van het Parlement werd door Koning Charles I en zijn hofklek als een bedreiging gezien. In 1629 werd Cotton gearresteerd, maar door bemiddeling van een invloedrijke vriend spoedig weer vrijgelaten. Erger voor hem was, dat zijn bibliotheek op bevel van de koning gesloten werd. Cotton werd ziek, en stierf, naar men aanneemt van verdriet, in 1631.

Het was zijn bedoeling geweest om zijn collecties aan de natie na te laten, zodat zij door het publiek geraadpleegd konden worden, maar pas in 1700 werden zij door zijn kleinzoon overgedragen. In de tussentijd waren zij op verschillende

Londen, waar hij een aantal geleerden, o.a. Cotton, bezocht. In die tijd moet hij een inventaris hebben gemaakt van Cotton's Angelsaksische munten, die hij in zijn aantekenboek noteerde. Jaren geleden werd die inventaris door mij ontdekt. Door analyse van het materiaal konden 50 nieuwe exemplaren toegevoegd worden aan de lijst van Angelsaksische munten die Cotton eens in zijn bezit had gehad, waarvan 25 in het British Museum gelocaliseerd konden worden. In dit artikel worden o.a. de lotgevallen van Peiresc's twee numismatische notitieboeken behandeld en zijn betrekkingen met Cotton, er worden conclusies getrokken over de samenstelling van Cotton's collectie en over de stand van de kennis van Angelsaksische munten in zijn tijd, terwijl tenslotte de herkomst van enkele individuele munten wordt besproken.

Sir Robert Cotton's cabinet of antiquities contained a large number of coins. He collected Greek and Roman, Ancient British, Anglo-Saxon, Norman and later English coins¹, all very important relics of the ancient world and the English past. Like his manuscripts, they became the property of the nation after the death of his grandson in 1702, and, after several moves, were finally incorporated in the new British Museum in 1753². The fire of 1731 in Ashburnham House does not seem to have damaged them. As no provenances of coins acquired by the museum were recorded before 1837, it is no longer known in the majority of cases which specimens originated from the Cotton collection. In 1954 Michael Dolley, of the Department of Coins and Medals, together with his colleague Mrs Strudwick³, published an article in which they reconstructed the Anglo-Saxon portion of Cotton's cabinet on the basis of an eighteenth-century manuscript catalogue and the illustrations of Anglo-Saxon coins in John Speed's *History of Great Britaine* (1611). They came to the conclusion that the original Cotton collection had comprised at least 160 Anglo-Saxon coins, 125 of which could still be identified in the trays of the British Museum. Since then, an early seventeenth-century manuscript inventory of Cotton's Anglo-Saxon coins has come to light in the Netherlands, which antedates the other catalogue by nearly a century and a half. It enlarges the number of 160 coins identified so far with fifty more specimens, twenty-five of which can be added with some certainty to the 125 already located in the British Museum.

The editors are grateful to the editors of The British Library Journal for their permission to republish this article in the Jaarboek voor Munt- en Penningkunde

- 1 Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton 1586-1631* (Oxford 1979), pp. 66-67.
- 2 John Walker, The Early History of the Department of Coins and Medals, *British Museum Quarterly* XVIII (1953), pp. 76-80.
- 3 R.H.M. Dolley and J.S. Strudwick, An Early Seventeenth-Century Collection of Anglo-Saxon Coins, *British Numismatic Journal* XXVII (1954), pp. 302-312; R.H.M. Dolley, The Cotton Collection of Anglo-Saxon Coins, *British Museum Quarterly* XIX (1954), pp. 75-81.

These 210 coins 'can claim to be regarded as the first scholarly collection of Anglo-Saxon coins ever to be put together'⁴. Its reconstruction is important, not only for its intrinsic historical interest, but also because it reveals traces of unrecorded finds and provides evidence of authenticity for coins under suspicion of being forgeries.

In 1954 Dolley and Strudwick had at their disposal a catalogue, compiled in 1748 by the antiquary Samuel Pegge (1704-1796), and preserved in the Department of Coins and Medals. This manuscript lists the 128 Anglo-Saxon Cotton coins that were still together at that time (126 pennies and two unidentifiable sceattas). Pegge's motive for cataloguing them was probably that he knew the collection had been pilfered since Cotton's death, more than a century before. Some ten years later, the Rev. Andrew Gifford (1700-1784), the first numismatist to be officially in charge of the collection, found that nine more coins had disappeared, but, on the other hand, he could round up thirteen strays, which had been found or had been returned to the Museum in the meantime. Afterwards five more coins must have been abstracted.

There was, then, a record of 141 coins which had certainly belonged to Cotton. Pegge remarked that of the thirty-four coins illustrated by Speed only fifteen were left. Though Speed had not claimed explicitly that he had drawn on the Cotton collection alone for his Anglo-Saxon coins, there was a tradition in 1748 that this was, in fact, the case. Dolley and Strudwick, therefore, added the nineteen missing Speed coins to the 141 registered specimens. Of the total tally of 160 coins thirty-five had gone astray⁵. Part of these missing coins could be identified as later acquisitions of the museum, though one can never be absolutely sure that they are the original Cotton specimens. They may be die-duplicates.

The Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum at The Hague possesses two early seventeenth-century manuscript volumes with notes on numismatic subjects⁶. One of them contains notes on Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Jewish coins,

4 Dolley and Strudwick op. cit., p. 302.

5 If one subtracts the nine + five coins stolen after 1748 from the 141 recorded ones, 127 coins are left. Dolley and Strudwick identified 125 of them in the British Museum collection. The remaining two coins were probably sceattas, which were described so ambiguously by Pegge that they cannot now be identified. See Dolley, *The Cotton Collection of Anglo-Saxon Coins*, p. 76.

6 P.C. Boeren, *Catalogus van de handschriften van het Rijksmuseum Meermanno-Westreenianum* ('s-Gravenhage 1979), pp. 90-91, Mss. 10 C 30-31. Nicolas Claude de Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637), *Tomus I: De Nummis Graecorum, Romanorum et Judaeorum. Tractatus de Monetis. Catalogi Rerum Antiquarum* (paginae 1-716). *Tomus II: Nummi Gallici, Gothici, Italici, Britannici, Arabici et Turcici* (paginae 1-391).

and on engraved gemstones, while the second comprises lists of and notes on Merovingian, Carolingian and Arabic coins in various contemporary European collections. Among them, there is an inventory of Sir Robert Cotton's Anglo-Saxon coins, many of them quite unknown to either Speed, Pegge or Gifford. Also of interest are lists of twenty of Cotton's Ancient British coins, later illustrated by Speed, of seven of his Roman coins, and of five coins of William the Conqueror. In the first volume Cotton is mentioned only once, in connexion with some Roman coins which were sent to him in 1618.

These notebooks once belonged to the great French scholar Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637), and most of the notes are in his own hand⁷. He was the eldest son of a country nobleman with large estates in Provence. Like Cotton, at an early age he became interested in old books, manuscripts and antiquities, especially in coins, both ancient and medieval. Like Cotton, he had a share in the political life of his country as a councillor in the Parlement of Aix-en-Provence. He lived in that town for most of his life, though he had travelled extensively in his youth and lived in Paris from 1616 to 1623. Apart from his political work and the management of his estates, he filled his life with study, collecting, and, above all, with writing letters to a large circle of friends in France, England, the Low Countries, Germany and Italy. It is estimated that he wrote in all around 10,000 letters. Fortunately he kept copies of the letters he wrote himself. Many of them have been preserved, but of the letters he received in reply, most were probably destroyed, among them the letters Cotton must have written to him. It seems that after Peiresc's death, when his collections, papers and eighty-one volumes of notebooks were in his brother's house, his nieces used letters and pages of notebooks as wrappers around the cocoons of their silkworms and as hair curlers⁸.

Peiresc was a truly universal scholar. Among the many disciplines in which he was interested were archaeology, philology, natural history, horticulture,

7 For Peiresc's life and the history and contents of his two numismatic notebooks, see Pierre Gassendi, *Viri illustris Nicolai Claudii Fabricii de Peiresc Senatoris Aquisextiensis Vita* (Paris 1641, 2nd ed. The Hague 1651, 3rd ed. The Hague 1655). My quotations are from the third edition. There is an English translation by W. Rand, *The Mirrour of True Gentility and Nobility. Being the Life of the Renowned Nicolaus Claudius Fabricius Lord of Peiresk* (London 1657); Léopold Delisle, *Un grand amateur français du dix-septième siècle Fabri de Peiresc, Annales du Midi* 1 (1889), pp. 16-34; M. Prou, *Fabri de Peiresc et la numismatique mérovingienne, Annales du Midi* 2 (1890), pp. 137-169; H.J. de Dompierre de Chauffepié, *Un manuscrit de Peiresc du Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum à La Haye, Revue belge de numismatique* 52 (1896), pp. 107-120; idem, *Een groot verzamelaar, Tijdschrift voor Munt- en Penningkunde* 16 (1908), pp. 37-69; P. Humbert, *Un amateur: Peiresc (1680-1637)* (Paris 1933); Linda van Norden, *Peiresc and the English Scholars, Huntington Library Quarterly* 12 (1948-1949), pp. 369-389.

8 L. Delisle, *op. cit.*, p. 33; H.J. de Dompierre de Chauffepié, *op. cit.* 1908, p. 57; P. Humbert, *op. cit.*, pp. 58 and 142.



Portrait of Nicolas Claude Fabri de Peiresc. Frontispiece in his biography by Pierre Gassendi (3rd. ed., 1655)

astronomy, mathematics and oriental cultures. Between 1888 and 1898 Tamizey de Larroque edited part of his letters⁹, but he died before he could finish his project, which would have comprised eleven volumes at least. Many of Peiresc's letters and most of his notebooks are now in the Bibliothèque d'Inguibert at Carpentras, not far from Aix. The British Library possesses a number of letters written by Peiresc to Cotton, Camden, Selden and Spelman,

9 Philippe Tamizey de Larroque (ed.), *Lettres de Peiresc*, vols. I-VII (Paris 1888-1898).

some in Latin, but most of them in French¹⁰. Peiresc's best friend and biographer, Pierre Gassendi, relates how Peiresc met these scholars, when he visited London for a month in 1606¹¹. He was received several times by King James I, and was made very welcome by learned men and collectors, who showed him their manuscripts and antiquities. That must have given Peiresc his opportunity to study and catalogue Cotton's Anglo-Saxon coins. Everyone admired Peiresc's learning and acumen. After his departure he and Cotton exchanged letters until 1622. It has often been assumed that their correspondence came to an end then, because Cotton blamed Peiresc for taking four years to return one of his most precious manuscripts, the Cotton Genesis, after he had lent it to him. However, it was Camden who urged Peiresc repeatedly to send it back, not Cotton himself. The war between France and England, and Camden's death in 1623, were probably the main reasons why they stopped writing to each other¹². Peiresc himself also generously gave or lent books and manuscripts to anyone who needed them for his studies. Like Cotton, he was always ready to help other scholars.

There are some intriguing passages in letters from Peiresc to Camden between 1617 and 1620¹³. On 11 December 1617 he writes that he would like to see a sample of what Cotton has started to have printed of his Anglo-Saxon coins¹⁴. In a letter of 25 August 1618 to a friend, one of the Dupuy brothers, he informs him that he has received from Camden a beautiful book about the seals and coins of the kings of England, but that it is too voluminous to send it to him. In his edition of the letters Tamizey de Larroque noted that, after a long search, in which he was helped by several scholars in London and Paris, he had not succeeded in finding this book¹⁵. In 1619 Peiresc writes to Camden that one of his friends would very much like to have a copy of the book on

10 Tamizey de Larroque states, *Lettres de Peiresc*, vol. I, p. 454, note 4, that there are no copies of letters from Peiresc to Cotton at Carpentras, and that he has not found any letters from Cotton to Peiresc anywhere.

11 Gassendi, op. cit. (3rd ed. 1655), pp. 51-3. In the translation by W. Rand, pp. 99-100.

12 Peiresc had asked for the loan on behalf of a friend, the Jesuit priest Fronton du Duc, who wanted to collate the text with that of other Greek Bible codices. Also, Peiresc had commissioned the painter Daniel Rabel to copy the illustrations. Only two copies were made, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds français 9530, ff. 31,32. It is a pity they were not all copied, as most of the illustrations were lost or damaged in the fire of 1731. Peiresc warned Cotton that such a disaster might happen. See *Lettres de Peiresc*, vol. VII, pp. 766-9, 792, 796, 804, 807, 810-13, 821-3; Sharpe, op. cit., p. 97; G. van der Meer, Sir Robert Bruce Cotton and his illuminated Genesis manuscript, *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 16 (1965) pp. 3-16.

13 *Lettres de Peiresc*, vols. VII, p. 766; I, p. 7; VII, pp. 804-5 and 809.

14 'Je voudrais bien voir quelque eschantillon de ce qu'il a commencé de faire imprimer de ses monnoyes anglo-saxonnes'. *Lettres de Peiresc*, vol. VII, p. 766.

15 *Lettres de Peiresc*, vol. I, p. 7, note 2.

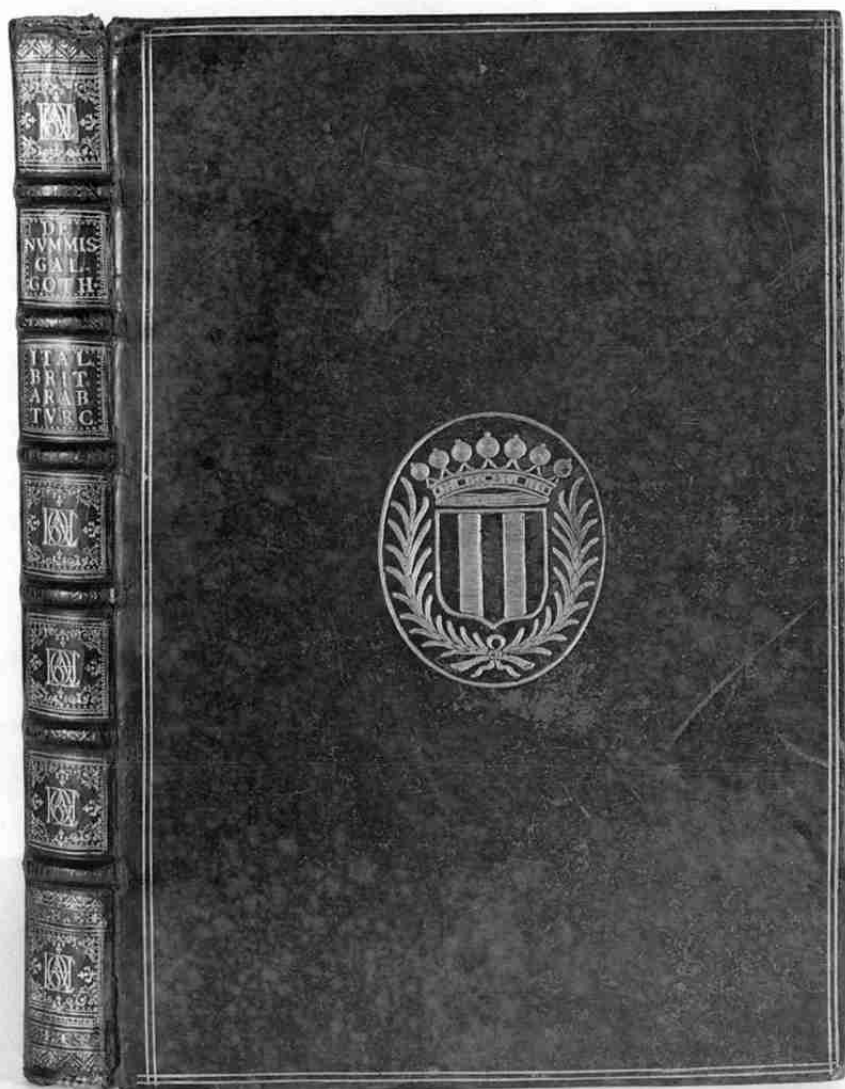
Anglo-Saxon coins which Camden sent him the year before, but that he had told him that it would be difficult to find another copy, as they had only been issued for Cotton's private use. In 1620 he asks Camden to send another two copies. He clearly refers to a recently printed work, not to a written list. So far, no one has been able to identify this book¹⁶.

Peiresc possessed about 18,000 coins, 5000 books, beautifully bound, and 200 manuscripts, apart from his eighty-one notebooks¹⁷. His younger brother, Palamède Fabri de Vallaveze, who was devoted to him, inherited them after his death in 1637. When Vallaveze died in 1647, his son, Claude de Rians, sold Peiresc's collections as soon as he could to various buyers. After some detours, a substantial part of the coins found their way into the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and many of his books and manuscripts were acquired by the same institution. The majority of his notebooks, and other papers that had been preserved, were later brought together in Carpentras. Two notebooks that should have been there are the volumes with numismatic notes which are now at The Hague. Their pedigree can be traced back to the time just after Vallaveze's death. Peiresc's nephew sold part of the coins to Achille d'Harlay, Count of Beaumont. Pierre Gassendi complains in the third edition of his biography (1655) that the two notebooks are in the possession of the buyer of the coins, who had got hold of the volumes by a trick, and that they have lain hidden in the buyer's house for seven years, of service to no one, being consumed by bookworms in the dark¹⁸. This is an exaggeration, for the owner looked after them very well, and had them bound and decorated with his coat of arms and his monogram. Afterwards, two other French collectors in succession owned them (Claude Gabriel de Boze and the Président de Cotte), until they were sold by auction in 1804 to the Dutch collector Pieter van Damme for 410 francs. When van Damme's books were sold in their turn in 1808, the Baron van Westreenen bought the two notebooks for two guilders and two stuivers. After his death the Dutch state acquired his

16 In June 1618 Peiresc writes to Camden that he has heard that there will be a new edition of his *Britannia*. He will be glad to know whether this is true, how much progress Camden is making, whether Mr Cotton's Anglo-Saxon coins will be inserted in it, and when one can expect to see them. However, Camden had to disillusion him. See *Lettres de Peiresc*, vol. VII, p. 783. Kevin Sharpe, *op. cit.*, pp. 42 and 96, gives as his interpretation of the passage in Peiresc's letter of 11 December 1617 to Camden that Cotton 'drew up a table of Saxon monies which was to be included in a revised edition of *Britannia*', but the voluminous book must have been of a different nature. See also Van Norden, *op. cit.*, p. 379, who seems to think that this book actually was a new edition of the *Britannia*.

17 M. Prou, *op. cit.*, p. 143; H. Omont, *Les manuscrits et les livres annotés de Fabri de Peiresc, Annales du Midi* I (1889), p. 317.

18 Gassendi, *op. cit.*, 3rd ed. (1655), p. 296.



Binding on Peiresc's second notebook, stamped with Achille d'Harlay's coat-of-arms.
On the back his monogram and the title: *De Nummis Gal. Goth. Ital. Brit. Arab. Turc.*
The Hague, Rijksmuseum Meermanno Westreenianum, MS 10 C 31

collections, which are now housed in the Museum Meermanno-Westree-nianum. There they were rediscovered at the end of the nineteenth century by French scholars like Delisle and Prou (cf. note 7). However, at the time no one recognized the importance of the inventory of Cotton's Anglo-Saxon coins in the second volume. When I found it in 1961, I had photographs made of the relevant pages, which I showed to Christopher Blunt and Michael Dolley. They set to work at once to study Peiresc's Latin coin descriptions and remarks, and to arrange the coins in the right order. Peiresc lists 175 coins in all. Blunt and Dolley drew up a table in which the page numbers for each coin in Peiresc's notebook were plotted against the numbers in Pegge's catalogue and Speed's *History* respectively. It turned out that 33 of the coins in Pegge's catalogue of 1748 (with Gifford's additions) do not figure in Peiresc's lists. Cotton must have acquired them after Peiresc's visit in 1606. One wonders how many such additions went missing without a trace in the period between Cotton's death in 1631 and Pegge's catalogue. Also conspicuously absent from Peiresc's list, and, for that matter, from Pegge's catalogue as well, are two coins in Speed's book, namely the famous gold coin of the moneyer Pendraed¹⁹ from the time of Offa, and a rare St. Edmund memorial penny. Both are now back in the British Museum as later acquisitions. Cotton probably added them to his collection between 1606 and 1611, and they must have been lost before Pegge's check in 1748. Incidentally, the fact that 33 of the 34 coins illustrated by Speed (the Pendraed coin included) have now turned out to have actually belonged to Cotton, vindicates the old tradition that Speed drew on his collection alone. Of the 175 coins in Peiresc's notebook fifty could now for the first time be given a Cotton provenance.

Blunt and Dolley were able to trace the probable whereabouts of a number of these new specimens. 125 Cotton coins had already been located in the British Museum, and now twenty-five more pieces could be added to that tally with more or less certainty. Other rarities could be traced to the Hunterian collection in Glasgow, a few to the Ashmolean Museum, one to the Fitzwilliam Museum, and one to the Leeds University collection²⁰. Of the rest, no present location could be established with any certainty, because they are common

19 Colin Tite, Sir Robert Cotton and the gold Mancus of Pendraed, *The Numismatic Chronicle* 152 (1992), pp. 177-81. Dr Tite established that this coin was, in fact, owned by Cotton.

20 This is probably the very coin Leeds University acquired in 1954 from Winchester Cathedral Library, to which it had been bequeathed by William Eyre in 1764. In the *Syllogus of Coins of the British Isles*, vol. 21, *Coins in Yorkshire Collections* (London 1975). p. XXVII, Elizabeth J.E. Pirie convincingly argues that this coin (Pl. XXXIV, No. 954) must be genuine, though its authenticity had been questioned. Peiresc's inventory proves that the coin existed in 1606, before the time when forgeries of Anglo-Saxon coins were produced.

specimens. A few coins seem to be unrecorded, such as a penny of Edward the Elder's Hand type of the moneyer Fugel, which was also seen by Pegge in 1748, but cannot now be traced.

In 1961 Blunt, Dolley and I intended to write a paper on the new Cotton material, but for a variety of reasons nothing came of it then. Sadly, Christopher Blunt, Michael Dolley and Mrs Strudwick are no longer alive. However, the material is too interesting to be left unpublished. I shall restrict myself here to general observations about Peiresc's inventory. With the help of the table drawn up by Blunt and Dolley, I hope later to publish an annotated list of the fifty new coins in one of the English numismatic periodicals.

Some interesting conclusions can be drawn from the contents of the inventory. If we assume that Peiresc himself, actually at the time of his visit, noted down the coins which are not in Speed's book, then that means that Speed illustrated only a selection of Cotton's Anglo-Saxon coins, and that his collection was already very substantial in 1606. Dolley remarked in 1954 that, unfortunately, we know of no reference that would warrant our describing it as a sixteenth-century collection²¹. The fact that Cotton owned around 175 Anglo-Saxon coins as early as 1606 adds weight to the supposition that he had begun to collect them in the sixteenth century.

Dolley and Strudwick pointed out that a high proportion of Cotton's coins show a specific geographical pattern²². More than 80% of the 160 Cotton coins they knew then were struck north of the Thames. This led them to the conclusion that, as the Cotton estates were primarily in the Midlands, the cabinet had been built up in the main from local finds. The fifty new coins in Peiresc's notebook seem to confirm this pattern.

Dolley's supposition that the Cotton cabinet drew heavily upon three unpublished finds, most notably a large hoard of pence of Edward the Elder, is also interesting²³. Cotton possessed forty-four pennies of this king, more than a fifth of his whole collection. Thirty-eight of them were still together in 1748, two of which went missing afterwards. Three Edward the Elder coins in Peiresc's list, but not in Pegge's, have since then probably found their way back into the British Museum.

21 Dolley and Strudwick, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 306; Dolley, *The Cotton Collection of Anglo-Saxon Coins* (see note 3), p. 78.


23 R.H.M. Dolley, *Some Late Anglo-Saxon Pence*, *British Museum Quarterly* XIX (1954), p. 60. See also *The Cotton Collection of Anglo-Saxon Coins*, *ibid.*, pp. 77-8. Dolley announced a forthcoming paper with a reconstruction of this hoard, but such a paper does not figure in R.H. Thompson, 'The Published Writings of Michael Dolley, 1944-1983', in M.A.S. Blackburn (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History. Essays in Memory of Michael Dolley* (Leicester 1986), pp. 315-60.

INSCRIPTIONES


1. D. Tate collecta ex Anglo-Saxonibus
Antiquis nummis, qui sunt pence
vnde noni. D. Robertus Cottonus (Londini).

247

1. ELEGVNDARHIEP. EIGVNDARHIEP.
2. ELEGVNDARHIEP. EIGVNDARHIEP.

1. EL FRED RE. 

2. EL FR ED REX.  GOD AM.


3. EL FRED REX.  EVDBERHT.

4. ANLAF CVNVLT.  FARHAM MONETA. 

5. ANLAF CANAN.  AADVL MONETA. 

6. BEORHVPF REX.  M. O. H. N. 

7. BEORHVPF REX.  VIGEHEAH. 

8. BVARGED REX.  DVDA MONETA.

9. BVARGED REX.  BERIM MONETA.

10. BVARGED REX.  TATA MONETA.

11. BVARGED REX.  DVDECH MONETA.

12. BVARGED REX.  WINE MONETA.

13. BVARGED REX.  HYTTA MONETA.

14. BVARGED REX.  DMAYLF MONETA.

15. BVARGED REX.  CIALLA MONETA.

16. BVARGED REX.  DVDPINE MONETA.



17. BVARGED REX.  EANYRED MONETA.

18. COENVVLF REX.  DIORTVD TONETA. 

19. COENVVLF REX.  EORBEYTD. 

20. COENVVLF REX.  DEALLA MONETA. 

21. COENVVLF REX.  EPIRTD. 

22. COENVVLF REX.  TIDBEAH MONETA. 

23. COENVVLF REX.  BEORNFRED MONETA. 

24. COENVVLF REX.  EDELMO. 

25. COENVVLF REX.  EDBA. 

First page of Francis Tate's list of Cotton's Anglo-Saxon coins,
with Peiresc's note in the top right-hand corner.

The Hague, Rijksmuseum Meermanno Westreenianum, MS 10 C 31, p. 247

Of the sixty-nine coins that were lost in 1748 (the fifty new ones and the nineteen in Speed) a high percentage are early. The Mercian component had suffered most. For instance, no less than twenty-four coins of Offa, Coenwulf and Burgred, described by Peiresc, were no longer there in 1748. All in all, fifty-seven of the coins struck before Edgar's reform of the coinage of 973 must by that time have been stolen, as opposed to only twelve of the post-reform ones, i.e. nearly five times as many, whereas the ratio of pre-reform to post-reform coins in Cotton's collection was approximately three to one.

Attempts to find out, if any conclusions can be drawn from the provenance of coins probably recovered by the British Museum later on, were unsuccessful. They are so diverse, that it would be impossible to point a finger at any individual culprits.

Dolley was surprised that a now common type like Cnut's Quatrefoil type was not represented in the Cotton collection²⁴. Peiresc's list proves that there was at least one, now apparently lost.

Many of the 175 Anglo-Saxon coins in Peiresc's notebook, in fact 140, occur twice in two different sections. One section consists of a numbered list of four pages, in which the coins are arranged alphabetically under kings' names. This list stops after three coins of Harold I, but the numbers continue for a while, as if the writer intended to go on with his catalogue, but was prevented from finishing it. The king's name which follows in the alphabet after Harold (apart from Harthacnut, whose coins were listed under Cnut) is Offa. His coins are therefore absent from this numbered list. The letter forms of the Latin type descriptions are gothic, but the legends are in Roman capitals. There are a few remarks in English in the margin. Exactly the same list, though much less neatly written, is to be found in Cotton MS Titus B VI, ff. 245r-246v. There it is headed by the caption *De Moneta*, but no mention is made of Cotton²⁵. On the first page of the neat copy of this same list in the notebook, however, Peiresc wrote the following text in his own handwriting:

Inscriptiones ord. alphabet. a D. Tato collectae ex Anglosaxonis antiquis nummis qui sunt penes virum Nobil. D. Robertus Cottonus Londini.

24 Dolley and Strudwick, op. cit., p. 306. In 1777 coins of this type were still rare in English collections. One or more major hoards of Quatrefoil coins must have come to light in the last decades of the 18th century. See R.H.M. Dolley and D.M. Metcalf, Cnut's Quatrefoil type in English Cabinets of the Eighteenth Century, *British Numismatic Journal* XXIV (1958-1959), pp. 69-81.

25 Mr. Hugh Pagan kindly drew my attention to this list. I am grateful to the British Library for sending me reproductions of these pages, and of some letters written by Peiresc, referred to below.

(Inscriptions in alphabetical order collected by Mr. Tate, from the ancient Anglo-Saxon coins, which are at the London house of that noble man Sir Robert Cotton).

We may assume, therefore, that it was Cotton's friend Francis Tate who composed this list. Peiresc knew him, for in his biography Pierre Gassendi mentions Tate as being present when Peiresc discussed some etymological questions with Camden²⁶.

Both the rough draft and the neat copy are written in the same hand. It seems plausible that the rough draft was made first, as several words were crossed out and corrected. The neat version was copied from it, but some new mistakes must have been made in the copying, for instance in the name of king Beorhtwulf, where the L was left out.

The second section, comprising seventeen pages, contains more elaborate descriptions of the same coins (but clearly not copied from Tate's list), and of thirty-one additional coins, ranging from Offa to William the Conqueror, in Peiresc's own handwriting. On several pages there are references to Cotton. It is difficult to decide which inventory was composed first. Probably Tate listed Cotton's coins some time before Peiresc's visit, while Peiresc made his own catalogue, and also received a copy of Tate's earlier list. Four of the coins Tate described apparently were not seen by Peiresc. However, if Tate's list were made after 1606 and sent over to Peiresc, it is difficult to explain how Peiresc could have noted down thirty-one more coins than Tate.

As for the correctness of the attributions to kings, Tate did not assign the kings to any kingdoms. With the exception of Archbishop Plegmund, who heads the list with two coins, they are arranged in a strictly alphabetical order. Peiresc probably would not have been able to identify Cotton's Anglo-Saxon coins better than Cotton himself. He must have derived his identifications from Cotton's own notes, as Tate and Speed must also have done²⁷. On the other hand, Camden, in the revised edition of *Britannia* of 1607, referred to Peiresc as the most noble, and as far as the antiquity of coins is concerned, by far the most learned and shrewd young man²⁸. Of course numismatic knowledge in the field of Anglo-Saxon coins was still in its infancy in the early seventeenth century. Dolley has pointed out that Pegge, in 1748, was still unable to distinguish

26 Gassendi, op. cit., 3rd. ed. (1655), p. 52.

27 It is now accepted that Cotton was in fact the editor of Speed's History, see David Howarth, Sir Robert Cotton and the Commemoration of Famous Men, *The British Library Journal* 18, (1992), p. 26, note 38.d

28 W. Camden, *Britannia* (London, 1607), p. 70. See also Gassendi, op. cit., 3rd ed. (1655), p. 53.

the coins of Æthelstan of East Anglia from those of Æthelstan of All England²⁹. Tate also mixed them up in his list. Peiresc recorded eight coins of Æthelstan and one of Eadmund, both kings of East Anglia, on a separate page under the heading *Nummi Saxonici*, with the remark that it had been difficult to put them in the right order, because the letter forms were much older than one would expect for the century in which the English kings Æthelstan and Eadmund ruled. But the coins which were really struck for Æthelstan and Eadmund of All England, he listed in the right place, after those of Edward the Elder.

Peiresc assigned king Æthelweard of East Anglia to Mercia as a predecessor of Offa, with 714 as the alleged initial year of his reign, with the comment that it was not quite certain that these coins could be attributed to this king. One coin, however, of the same Æthelweard, of the same type, was entered under the heading *Ex Regno Nordanhimbrorum*, though with some doubt.

It is true that he gave four coins of Edward the Confessor to Edward the Martyr, who is not otherwise represented in the collection, but Peiresc did see the difference between those and the coins of Edward the Elder.

Of course moneyers' names were often misread, both by Tate and Peiresc, though not always the same ones. It is clear, in any case, that a lot of thought was given to the identification of the kings who had struck the coins. No effort was made yet to identify the mints.

In 1983 David Sturdy published drawings of five Anglo-Saxon coins which he had found in another manuscript that had once belonged to Peiresc, namely a volume containing notes on England, now at Carpentras³⁰. These drawings were made by Peiresc's brother, Palamède Fabri de Vallavez, who visited England and the Low Countries in 1608. Before he left Paris, Peiresc sent him from Aix a long list of instructions, telling him whom he should visit and what he should do when he got there. One of these persons was of course Sir Robert Cotton³¹. Peiresc asked his brother to hand him a letter from himself, together with some *médailles* (i.e. Roman coins). He should ask Cotton to write to him, and should try to obtain, with Cotton's help, a coin of Carausius, one of Allectus and one of Laelianus, either in silver or in copper, for some of his friends, and he should try to get impresses of some English seals. Among the notes Vallavez made in England, Sturdy found the drawings of the five Anglo-Saxon coins, one of Cuthred of Kent, three of Offa, and one of Beornwulf of Mercia.

29 Dolley and Strudwick, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

30 David Sturdy, N.C. Fabri de Peiresc and Five Early Anglo-Saxon Pennies in the Cotton Collection, *Drawn c. 1608*, *Numismatic Chronicle* 143 (1983), pp. 224-7.

31 *Lettres de Peiresc*, vol. VI, Appendice, p. 674.

He suggested that Cotton might have drawn Vallavez's attention to these, as recent finds, which Peiresc had not seen two years before. However, four of them are in Peiresc's own inventory of the coins he saw in Cotton's collection. The fifth is a coin of Beornwulf of Mercia, struck in East Anglia by the moneyer Eadgar³². It must have been added to Cotton's collection between 1606 and 1608, and it was still there when Pegge wrote his catalogue in 1748.

The other notebook in the Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum (MS 10 C 30), with notes mainly on coins from the ancient world, contains only one reference to Cotton. At the top of p. 243, which shows a list of twenty-one Roman coins, Peiresc wrote that he had sent these coins to Cotton as a present in July 1618. There is a letter dated 4 July 1618 in the British Library³³, in which Peiresc tells Cotton that he is sending him twenty-five or thirty coins of Antoninus Pius, Commodus, Severus and Caracalla, which will further Cotton's plans to assemble everything which the Romans made after their British conquests. Some of them are only casts, because he has not been able to find any originals, which he would much rather have sent him than these impressions. If he finds that they do not displease Cotton too much, he will take courage and get some more together.

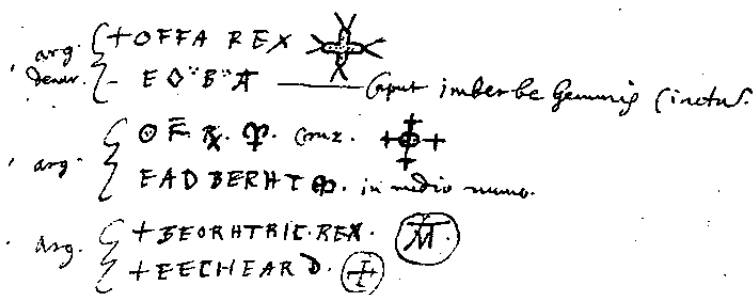
Only one Anglo-Saxon coin features in this notebook (on p. 352), but without any mention of Cotton, in a list of Roman and Byzantine coins. It is a penny of Offa, struck by the moneyer Alred, not recorded by Speed or Pegge. The British Museum acquired a similar specimen in 1896³⁴, but whether it is the very coin Peiresc described is not certain. It is possible that he saw it in a French collection, and the same is true for three other pennies listed in the other volume, with the medieval coins (10 C 31), on a separate page (p. 69), inserted behind some pages describing Celtic coins in a French collection. One of them is a very rare coin of king Beorhtric of Wessex, of the moneyer Ecghard. Speed illustrated a similar coin of this king, therefore from Cotton's collection, now apparently lost. However, the specimen in Peiresc's notebook is a little different, and it also differs from the three other specimens known so far, all from attested finds³⁵. This must be a fifth example, probably found in France, and now lost.

32 Formerly attributed to Ceolwulf I: H.A. Grueber and C.F. Keary, *A Catalogue of English Coins in the British Museum, Anglo-Saxon Series*, vol. II (London 1887), no. 104.

33 Cotton MS. Julius C III, f. 211.

34 B.M. Acq. 16, ex Montagu sale 1896. See also C.E. Blunt, 'The Coinage of Offa', in R.H.M.D. Dolley (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Coins* (London 1961), p. 57, no. 48. It is still the only specimen known with this spelling of the moneyer's name.

35 C.E. Blunt, 'XVII-XIX Century Manuscript Material on Anglo-Saxon Coins', in Harald Ing-holt (ed.), *Centennial Publication of The American Numismatic Society* (New York 1958), pp. 129-31.



Page from Peiresc's notebook, with three coins probably seen by him in
 (a) French collection(s)

The Hague, Rijksmuseum Meermanno Westreenianum, MS 10 C 31, p. 69

The two other coins on this same page are pennies of Offa, of the moneyers Eoba and Eadberht respectively, not known to Speed or Pegge. The Eoba coin is registered on two other pages as well, once on p. 101, with Merovingian and Carolingian coins in a French collection, and once on p. 271, with a description of impresses of seals of king Edgar and king Offa. Peiresc had seen these in the Abbey of St. Denis in Paris, attached to official Anglo-Saxon documents³⁶. In the margin of that page, Peiresc remarks that the Eoba coin was found in Gallia Narbonensis, i.e. in the region of Narbonne in the South of France. Metcalf has pointed out³⁷ that an exceptionally large proportion of the

36 Sulphur casts of these seals are in the British Museum. See W. de G. Birch, *Catalogue of Seals in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 1 (London 1887), p. 1, nos. 1 and 3. Miss Marion Archibald kindly gave me this reference.

37 D.M. Metcalf, Offa's Pence Reconsidered, *Cunobelin, The Yearbook of the British Association of Numismatic Societies*, 9 (1963), pp. 37-52 (at p. 38).

coins of this moneyer have been found on the routeways leading through the Alpine passes towards Italy. He did not mention France, but travellers may have sailed to Bordeaux, made their way to Narbonne, and taken a ship to Italy from there.

The three Offa pennies of the moneyers Alred, Eoba and Eadberht must therefore probably be subtracted from the total of 210 registered Cotton coins³⁸. It is possible, however, that Peiresc was able to get hold of them and send them to Cotton. In his letter to Cotton of 4 July 1618³⁹ the last line on the first page is intriguing. He writes:

Les monoyes d'Offa et de Beorhtricus, je les ay tant demandées
qu'enfin....

However, we shall never know what the next line was, unless Peiresc's own copy of this letter turns up, for the page is damaged, and the rest of the sentence has disappeared. Similar coins are in the British Museum now as later acquisitions, but they may not be the ones described by Peiresc.

38 The Beorhtric coin remains included in the total of 210, because, when Blunt and Dolley drew up their table, they supposed it to be the coin illustrated by Speed, which has now turned out to be a different specimen.

39 Cotton MS. Julius C III, f. 211.