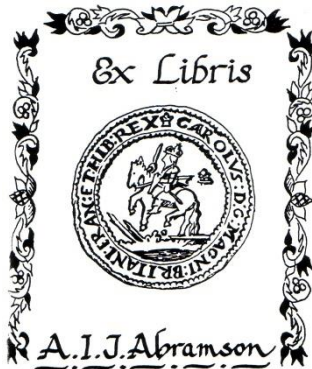


Numismatic Literature on Early English coinage

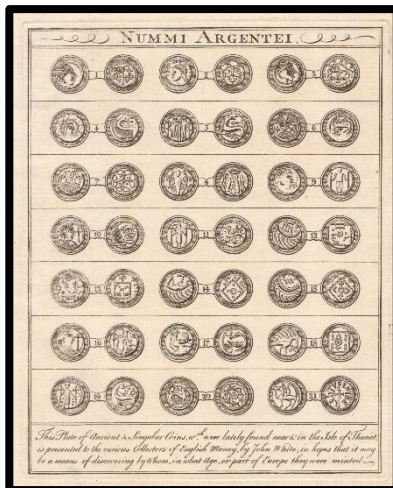
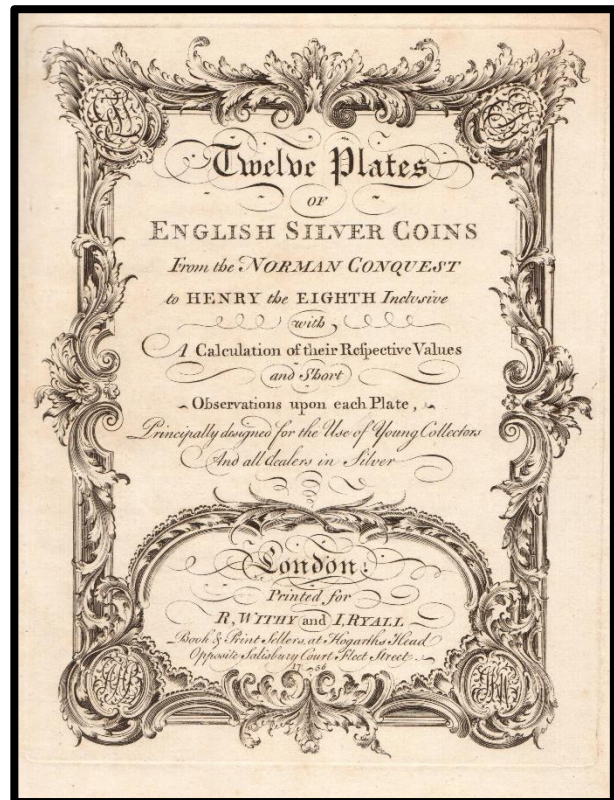


Border design from
John Pym's watch, AD1628, in the V & A

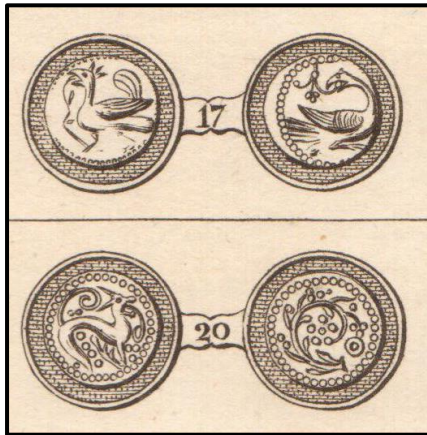
I thought a brief excursion into the literature surrounding the Conversion Period coinage would be helpful for those seeking to put these coins into their economic, social, religious and political contexts, especially as there is so little literature surviving from the period.

Starting with a couple of antiquarian books that can be had for the price of a sceat:

In Withy & Ryall's *English Silver Coins* published in 1756, there is a plate of illustrations entitled *Nummi Argentei*. The book is somewhat tainted by association with John White, the notorious forger. However, the sceats illustrated are faithfully reproduced. Of the 21 sceats there are a few which are still iconic both for their rarity and style.



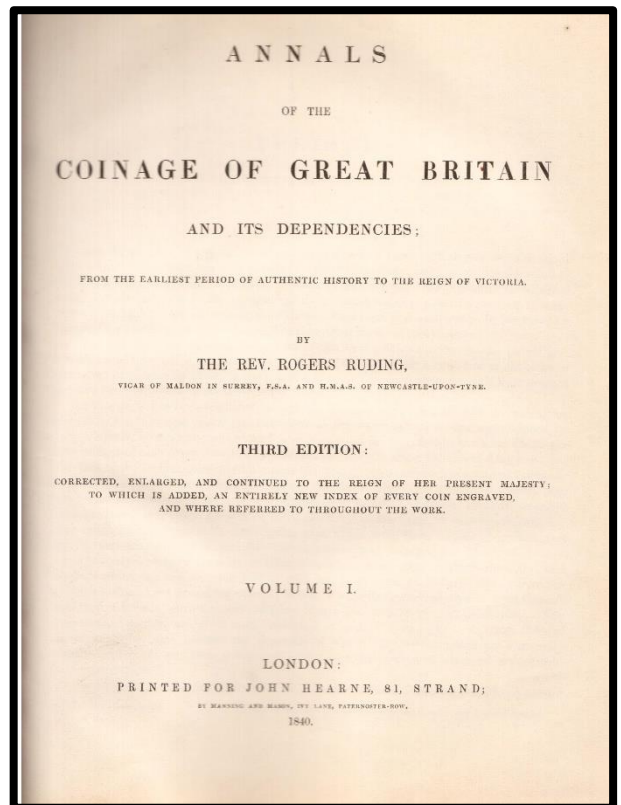
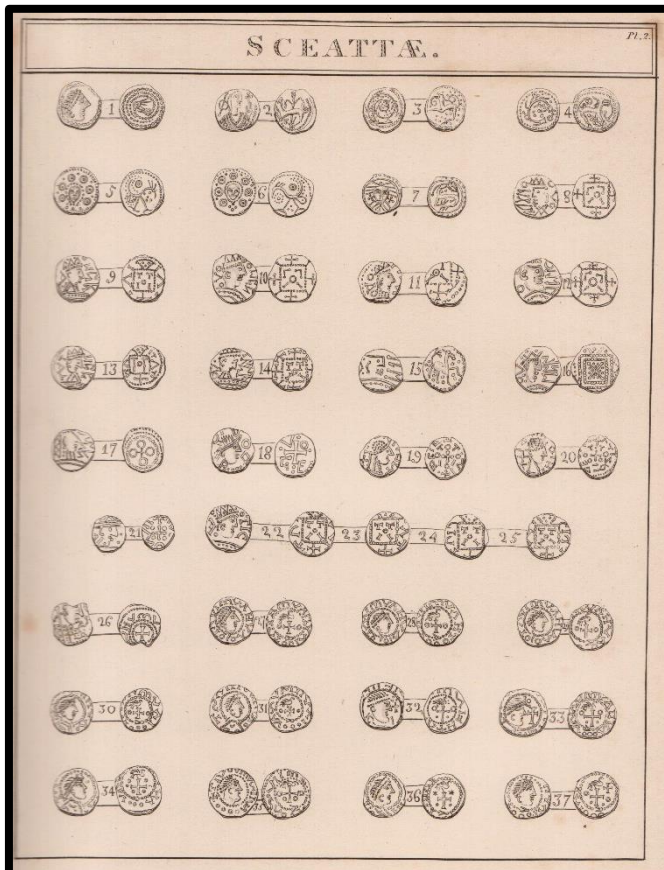
Above (7) is a triquetras type with its elaborate drapery and (8) the Wolf and Twins type. I've always preferred the side showing the songbird elegantly poised on the stalks of barley, flexing in the breeze. Surely a metaphor. The she-wolf with Romulus and Remus also appears on the contemporaneous Franks (Auzon) casket.



The Hen and Swan type (17) ranks alongside the Archer and Animal Mask varieties for its style and rarity - all iconic examples of the engravers' art.

Also, here we have a specimen of Series M (20) with the less sinuous creature – now more evidently the pascal lamb suggested by the art historian Anna Gannon.

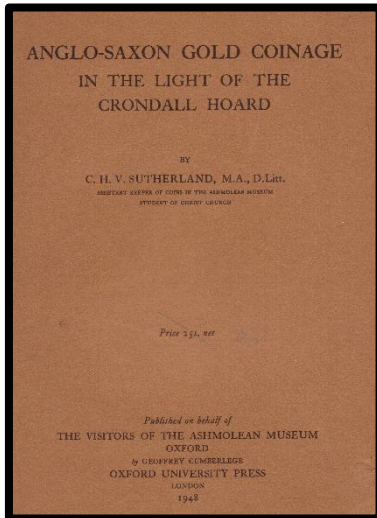
Next, is Reverend Rogers Ruding's (third edition of) *Coinage of Great Britain*, published in 1840, which includes this plate of 37 sceatts.



Again, there are plenty of varieties that remain elusive. Just taking the first two coins (1&2 below), the Series J with the spiral of two serpents is one that I've never handled, though the sale catalogue (Part I, 138) includes one Series N/J mule showing this spiral motif on the reverse.



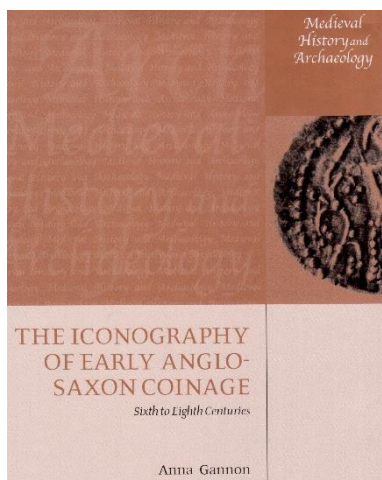
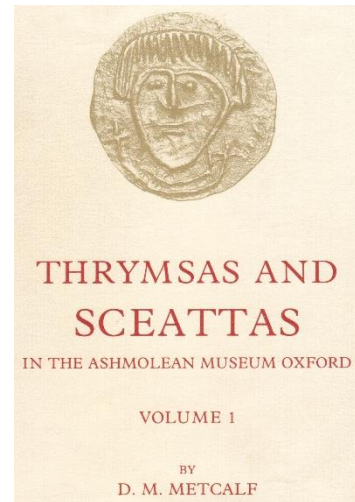
Next, we have a portrait the equal of any in early Anglo-Saxon art, given the tiny module, backed by the animal, Gannon suggests a panther, rounding a bush bearing low-hanging fruit.



Coming into the modern era, Humphrey Sutherland's 1948 *Anglo-Saxon Gold Coinage* waits to be superseded. It focusses on the Crondall hoard of 1828. Let's hope that the future rate of numismatic progress doesn't remain so glacial. After 62 years, most of which is in the digital era, with its wealth of metal-detector finds, a successor is well overdue.

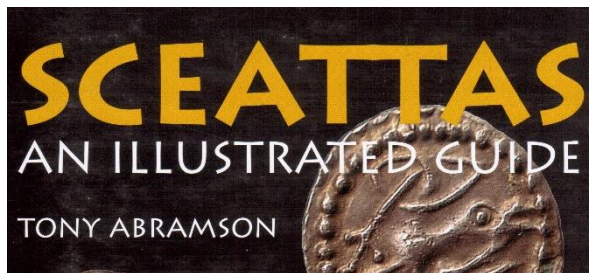
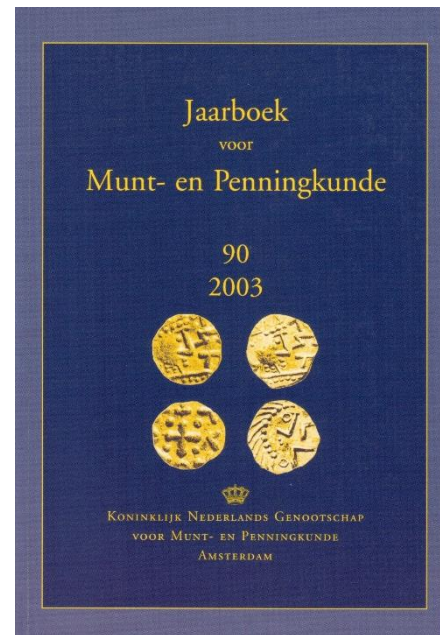
Stuart Rigold contributed two pivotal articles to the *British Numismatic Journal*, the first, in 1960, covered the pale gold and primary sceatts. The second, in 1977, was a paradigm of brevity, setting out the entire serialisation of early pennies in a mere eleven pages.

This opened a window on this arcane coinage, enabling the seventh Oxford Symposium of 1984 (BAR 128) to focus on the early penny. Michael Metcalf was Keeper of the Heberden Rooms at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and in 1993-4 published his indispensable 3-volume *magnum opus* on the museum's collection, which includes the majority of the Crondall hoard.



The next contribution, from Anna Gannon in 2003, was remarkably innovative, looking at sceatts from the art-historical perspective and casting fresh light on the meaning of the enigmatic and varied designs.

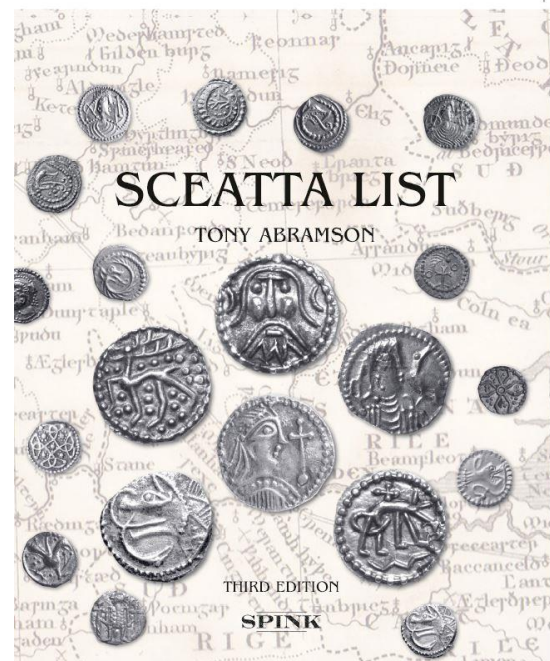
The scene was now set for more detailed surveys of individual series – a primary aim of the biennial symposia in early medieval coinage. A model study - the first of two by Michael Metcalf and Wybrand Op den Velde analysed the Low Countries' Series D (*Jaarboek* 2003). The second followed in 2009-10, bravely attacking the almost impenetrable Series E.

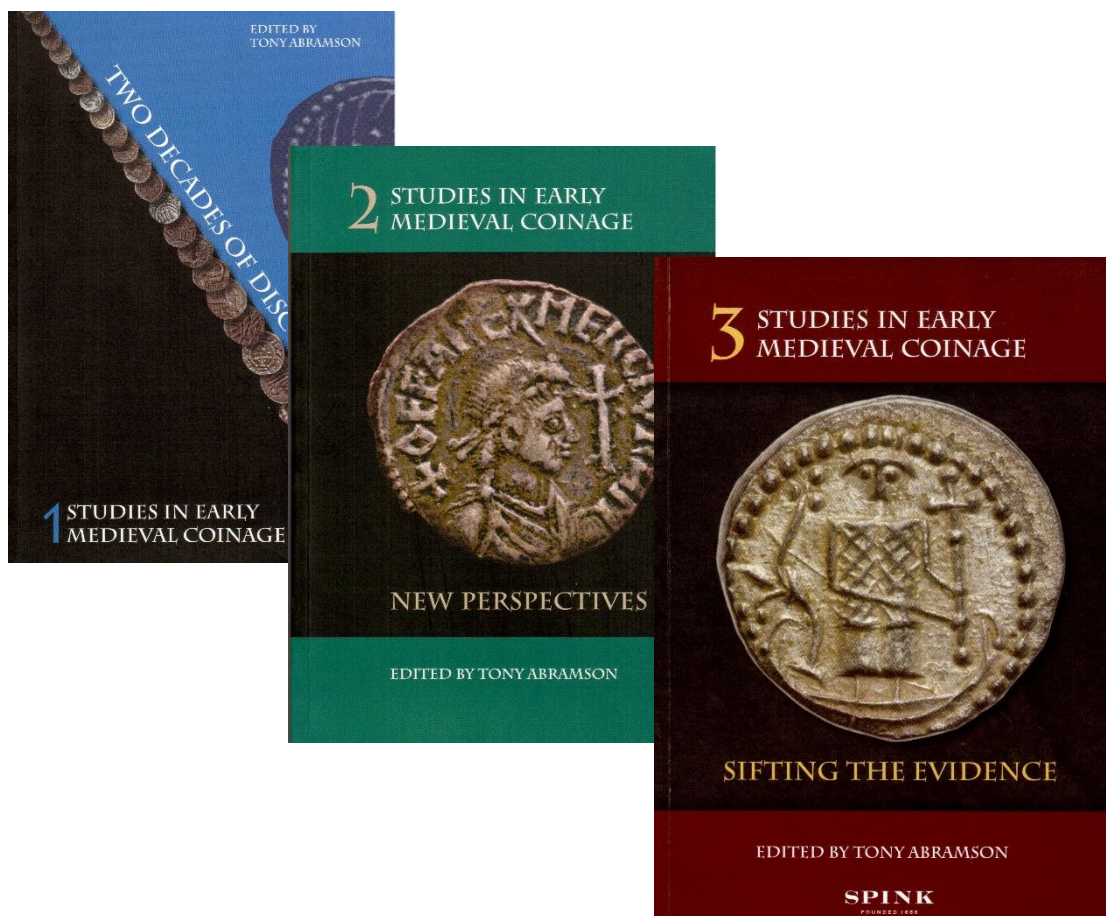


The next contribution did not have the academic gravitas of much of the literature but may have had wider impact. My *Sceats: An Illustrated Guide* was originally a personal *aide memoire* for visually navigating the diverse imagery. I found it so useful, I had it published to help others.

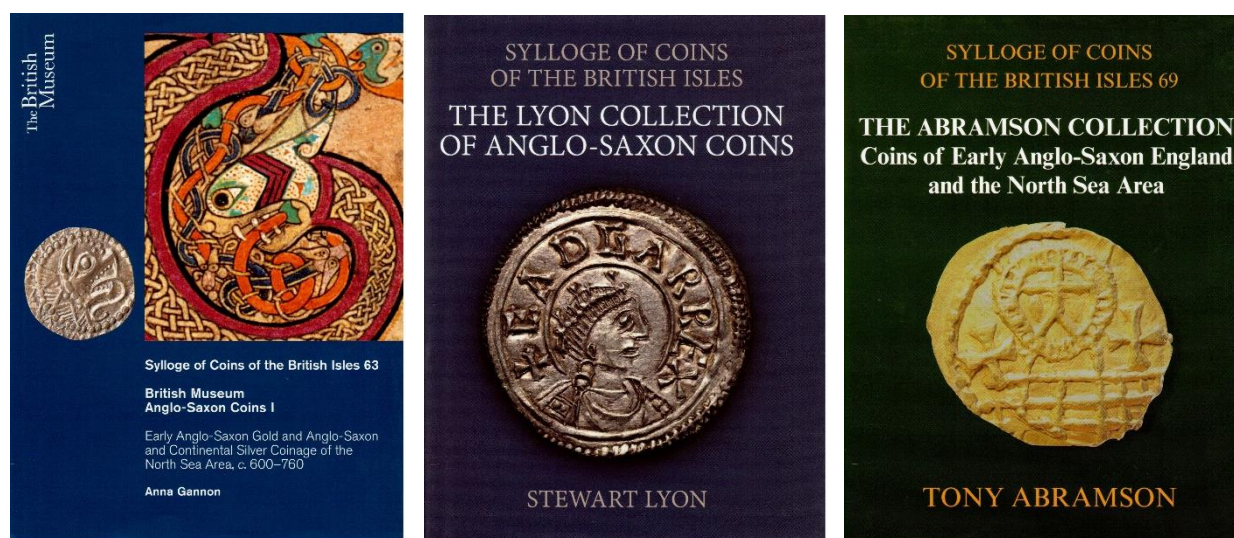
This evolved into *Sceatta List* as the need to revise the classification became more acute. The large, heavily-illustrated format has been helpful. My expansion of the early Anglo-Saxon section of Spink's *Coins of England* in 2011, also improved access to this complex series.

The biennial symposia, commencing in 2006, resulted in the publication of three journals containing both the proceedings of the symposia and additional papers full of interest. Each volume also featured a major assemblage.



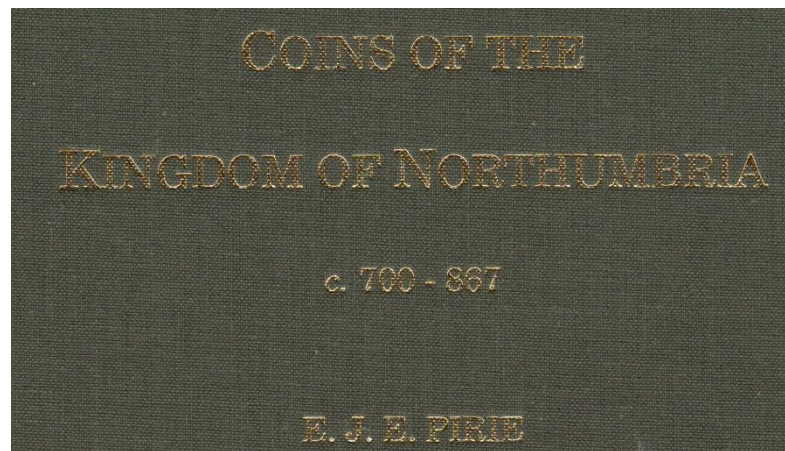
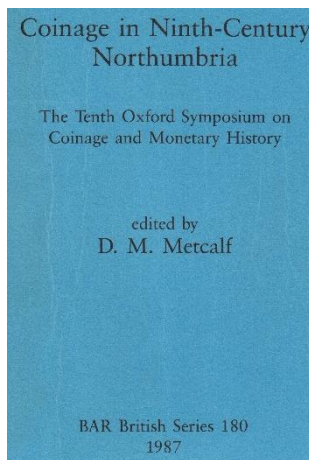


However, more formal presentations of institutional and private collections of gold shillings, early silver pennies and Northumbrian *stycas*, can be found in the *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles*, specifically volumes 63, 68 and 69, respectively Anna Gannon's volume on the British Museum's collection, containing much hoard material especially from Aston Rowant, Stewart Lyon's volume, rich in *stycas*, and my own collection.

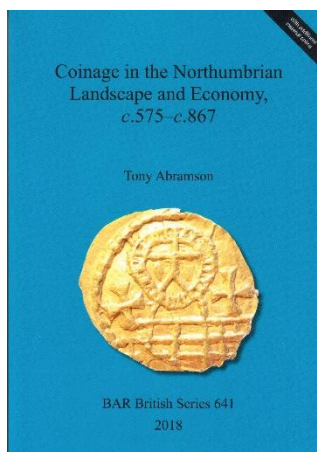


Turning specifically to the Northumbrian coinage, Stewart Lyon's seminal paper in *BNJ* 1956-7 remains a classic. Thirty years later, the tenth Oxford Symposium was dedicated to discussion

of the styca (BAR 187) with much energy devoted to dissuading the doughty Elizabeth Pirie from pursuing her opaque classification. She was not so easily discouraged, despite Metcalf's entreaties and diplomacy.



Twenty years was to pass before I digitised Pirie's corpus of stycas and published it online. It formed the evidential basis of a thesis on northern monetization.

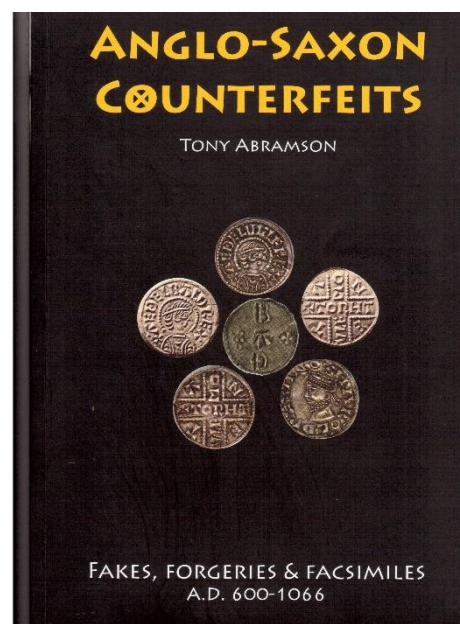


Recent archaeological research published in *Anglo-Saxon Graves and Grave Goods* (eds. by John Hines and Alex Bayliss) and *Alpine Ice-Core Analysis*, by Chris Loveluck *et al*, has facilitated a recalibration of the commencement of early pennies, pushing back the demise of gold by a couple of decades earlier than thought.

However, the duration of the gold coinage is unaltered as the commencement date of the English coinage has been reconsidered. In my 2019 *BNJ* article, I argue that the Roman clerics sent in 601 in support of Augustine's mission, specifically Mellitus and Paulinus, are likely to have initiated Anglo-Saxon minting of gold shillings. Anna Gannon

and, a century earlier, Gerard Baldwin-Brown, have both suggested this previously.

Withy & Ryall illustrate what is undoubtedly a York shilling, but the inscription had been misinterpreted, which spawned a crop of replicas. Indeed, modern fakes are a growing impediment to collecting this series. My catalogue of *Anglo-Saxon Counterfeits* may save the unwary from financial embarrassment.



THE YORKSHIRE NUMISMATIST

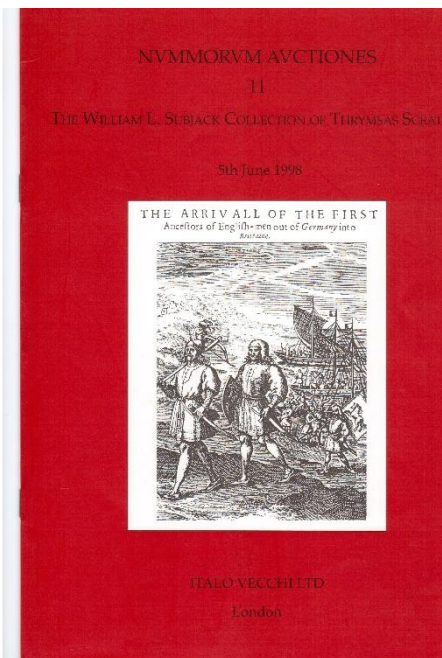
4



Two other resources are available. First, *The Yorkshire Numismatist*, published by the local society, runs to four volumes with many articles addressing the Northumbrian coinage.

Second, there has been only a small number of significant auction sales of sceats in the modern era, starting with the Subjack sale of 121 lots in 1998. In May 2007, CNG offered 117 lots in the 'Beowulf' sale. In the same year, the Fitzwilliam Museum acquired the Wim de Wit collection of 481 early pennies, which Künker published in the form of an auction catalogue, albeit in de Wit's unorthodox arrangement.

Part I of Lord Stewartby's 'academic' collection, in 2016, included 65 coins of the period and in 2020, CNG's feature auction 114 included 72 coins from the Robertson collection. In all, these major sales totalled 375 coins.



 KÜNKER



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ANGLO-SAXON AND NORMAN COINS

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