

Historic coin finds in Toft

The fourteen Toft Time Team archaeological test pit digs in 2013 surprisingly only produced one coin amongst its finds - a George III copper penny of 1799; it was discovered initially by a metal detectorist, buried just beyond the curtilage of Test Pit 7. It would have been missed entirely without the auxiliary aid of the detector, and thereby hangs a moral regarding the limitations of test pit excavations. This test pit was sited on the ancient Lot Way, along the southern edge of what has subsequently (and appropriately) been given the title of Lot

Meadow, the land recently acquired by the Parish Council as community green space adjacent to the High Street.

This find in particular, I like to think, gave a slight credence to the object of the test pits in this location - to uncover evidence of the historic route formerly traversing the village along the contours of the Bourn Valley (a bit thin I grant you) on the basis that it would be more likely to be a traveller than a worker in the field to be walking about carrying coinage.

This find was followed sometime later, in 2014, when the Ellis-Evans family discovered a similar copper penny bearing the same date of 1799, digging around in the front garden of their cottage at Bottom End on the opposite side of the High Street. Rather more affected by the ravages of time and insufficiently legible for the reproduction of an image, nevertheless, to the naked eye, it bears the eroded but unmistakable images of King George III, with Britannia, mounted on the waves, on its reverse side. Illustrations from *Wikipedia commons* provide an idea of what these coins would have looked like in their original state.

In 1988, the late Colin Ward (past chairman of the Society) discovered an 1828 George IV copper penny in the garden/orchard in front of his house in Brookside. This time the coin was, if not in mint condition, when cleaned up bore engraved features pretty much intact. Perhaps this goes to show that all-in-all the Georgians in Toft were a pretty loose lot with their small change.

The other coin Colin found in his back garden some time previously, a Romano-British copper (no pun intended) coin with a head on the obverse side, which dimly resembles that of Antonius Pius, Roman Emperor AD138-161. However, this coin is too badly eroded, particularly the reverse side, to identify other than of its Roman origin. Again, comparison with coins of the same vintage shown in the *Wikipedia commons* give an idea of what this coin would have looked like.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) records a hoard of over 100 Roman coins, uncovered amongst other artefacts, on a site in Comberton (date of find not recorded). This indicates that Romano British folk were a little more circumspect than the Georgians when it came to caring for their spare cash; and given the evidence, amplified by the 2013 Toft Time team dig, of considerable Roman activity in this area during the occupation, it suggests that there ought to be more of the stuff around in the Bourn Valley waiting to be discovered (and recorded). And similarly for coins of Anglo Saxon, Viking and other periods, for which we have no reported finds other than an Edward VI shilling found by a metal detectorist located on the site of the Meridian Golf Club.

These notes are penned in the hope that it might encourage those on the dog walk in the fields around Toft and



when digging the garden, to keep a watchful eye on the ground. If you should be lucky to find a historic coin make a careful note of the location of discovery, its depth and date of discovery, and get in touch with a member of the History Society so that it can be documented and photographed for the Toft archive.

Colen Lumley

A George III Penny (Wikipedia Commons)