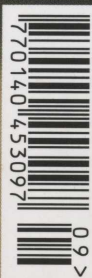


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Figs. 1a & b. Anglo-Saxon gold tremissis found in Essex.



Fig. 2. Obverse of another gold tremissis originally classed as being of Merovingian origins.



Figs. 3a & b. A very similar coin obverse to Fig. 2, found in 1994 at Shalbourne, Wiltshire and classed as Anglo-Saxon.

It has been nearly 20 years since I was lucky enough to make the astonishing find of two Anglo-Saxon gold coins in an Essex field (Figs. 1a & b & Fig. 2). Originally the coin shown in Fig. 2 had been classed as being Merovingian in origin, however another coin found in Shalbourne, Wiltshire and shown in Figs. 3a & b is currently classed as being Anglo-Saxon after the late Lord Stewartby (once Honorary Keeper of Medieval coins at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge) put forward a convincing argument in the *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* (1993). Therefore, with the similarity in reverse designs I believe my second coin is also Anglo-Saxon.

At that time, I had just completed my studies in Field Archaeology at Birkbeck College, University of London, and was keen to apply what I had learned in the classroom out in the real world of the field. The enthusiasm of my Anglo-Saxon course tutor, Dave Beard, to share his vast knowledge and understanding of that period was infectious. In one class, I took particular note when he said that many Anglo-Saxon coin finds are associated with locations by roads, rivers and trackways and that these may have been near to Anglo-Saxon markets or fairs, which made sense. However, at that time there wasn't a lot of information on where these sites might be, or at least that's what I thought. In fact, information on the potential locations of ancient roads, rivers, trackways and many other kinds of ancient sites is all around us in our everyday lives – encoded in the language of our place-names.

Place-Names as Signposts to the Past

Further reading led me to the work of Margaret Gelling and the publications of the English Place-Name Society (EPNS). It was in one of those publications that I came across the

interpretation of the place-name element Chipping as being derived from the Old English *cēping*, 'a market or a market-place'. This word is also associated with *cēpan* (to buy) and *cēap* (to deal). It reminded me of the many times I had got a bargain at the market, something cheap. However, what about the 'ing' part of the Chipping place-name? If that place-name element is associated with an Anglo-Saxon personal name, it would probably mean something

like 'the people of Chipp'. However, being associated with a function (ie market) it is thought to mean either 'place' or small stream. The former seemed the most likely but I did wonder, once I found a promising town, whether I should zoom in on looking for fields close to a small stream too. So, my search centred on finding a place called 'Chipping', with an

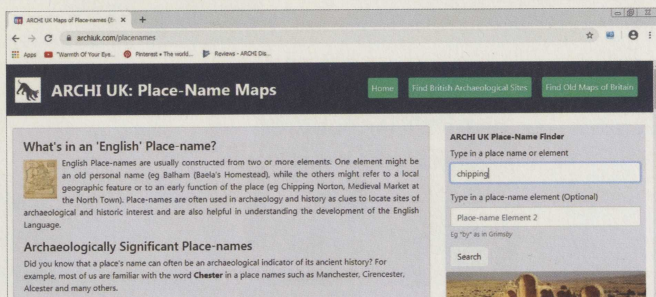


Fig. 4. Using the ARCHI Ancient Place-Name Finder to locate 'Chipping' type names. The ARCHI place-name index (ARCHI Ancient Place Finder) is available for anyone to search at www.archiuk.com/placenames. You can search this place-name index for archaeologically significant place-name elements. The results list shows a list of places containing that place-name element together with links to a modern aerial photograph plus older, 19th century maps. Together, you can use these maps to search for the kind of geographic and landscape features mentioned above which I still use to locate potentially undiscovered sites of archaeological, historic and cultural interest.

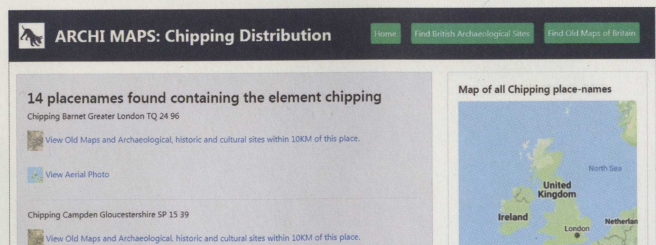


Fig. 5. Results List of a search for the English place-name element 'chipping'. You can use the aerial photography and links to ARCHI to decide which of these places warrant further investigation.



Fig. 6. Distribution Map of the 'chipping' place-name element. Is there a place with a historically-significant place-name element near you?

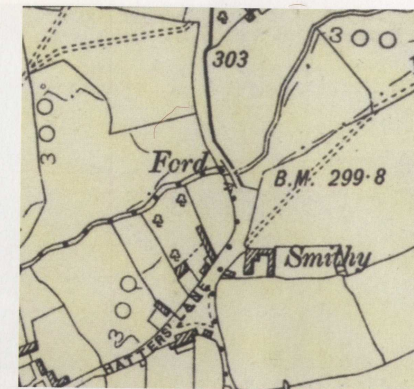


Fig. 7. Old Map showing the location of a ford close to a place containing the 'chipping' place-name element. I like to look at the oldest maps I can because later maps don't often show where the old fordable parts of rivers were.

ancient long-distance track leading to it, a watercourse at one or more of its boundaries and fingers crossed, fields close by that I could gain permission to search on. The hope was that an original Anglo-Saxon market site was in a field just outside of what was now the main town. Even if it wasn't, there would still be fields by the side of the roads and trackways leading to the town where traders may have stopped off or camped the days before a market was held.

It wasn't too difficult for me to find

places with the place-name element 'Chipping', because at that time I was building my ARCHI database and I had already compiled a large list of English place-names from the indexes of numerous road atlases (Figs. 4-8) as part of the search engine. There were a few Chipping place-names within a couple of hours drive of my home. For obvious reasons, Cheapside in the City of London would not be a contender. Chipping Hill, Witham, Essex seemed like a good possibility because I had read that there might have been

an Anglo-Saxon mint there. When I looked at the map of the area I could see the main road leading to Chipping Hill crossed the River Brain, which was a good sign, but the location of the fields of interest were urbanised with houses and shops. Even if I had been given the opportunity to detect on someone's back garden in that area, I would have probably politely declined because we all know what an absolute nightmare urban gardens are to detect.

Geography of Medieval Markets and Fairs

It was common in the medieval period for traders to stay in a field just outside of the main gates of a town or village prior to market day. If the town had a river at its boundary, that would be



Fig. 8. Zoomed-in view of the fields of a 'Chipping' place. Clearly seen to the left of this photograph are the remains of a medieval ridge and furrow field system. The field system appears to overlay an earlier enclosure, possibly suggesting the town's significance even before the Anglo-Saxon period.

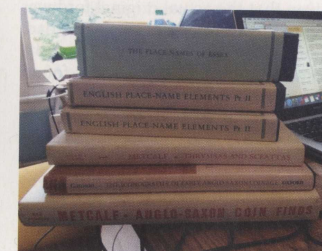


Fig. 9. Preliminary paper-based research material for place-name analysis and location plus suggested background reading on Anglo-Saxon coinage.



Figs.17 & 18. Medieval silver spoon handle from Ford Field and close up detail of its terminal.



Fig.19. Tithe Map from 1869 showing very promising fields at the intersection of a major ancient trackway and a possible ancient ford. This track / ford / river geographic arrangement had yielded Anglo-Saxon to mid-medieval finds at other locations I had previously searched.

ploughed soil at the edge of the field. I had been avoiding this area for reasons obvious to most detectorists, so slowed right down. It seemed like thankless work going in and out of the furrows and I was starting to believe that the first coin was in fact just a casual loss. Then suddenly, a lovely clear, round sound reverberated through my head.

I knelt down on the ground in a state of reverence as I broke open the clod of earth and was greeted with the golden symbol of an archaic Christian cross on a second ancient gold coin, as mentioned previously and shown in Fig.2.

After a long while just sitting there, I pulled myself back into reality. Maybe these coins weren't just casual

losses? Maybe, just maybe, there were more lying beneath the ground under my feet, wishing also that I could free them from the darkness in which they had lain for the past 1,300 years. However, those coins would have to wait nearly 20 more years before they too would see the light. I will tell the story of their rebirth in my next article.



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