Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic

The Magic of Coin-Trees from Religion to Recreation

The Roots of a Ritual

Ceri Houlbrook

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Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic
ISBN 978-3-319-75516-8 ISBN 978-3-319-75517-5 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75517-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018934675

Cover illustration: The coin-tree on Ardmaddy Estate, Argyll
Photograph: © Ceri Houlbrook

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer International Publishing AG part of Springer Nature
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thanks go to my colleagues at the University of Hertfordshire, particularly Owen Davies for his endless encouragement and enthusiasm, for his deep ocean of knowledge, and for drawing me into the realm of History.

Heartfelt thanks also go to my Ph.D. supervisory team at the University of Manchester. Tim Insoll, for his staunch support right from the beginning and for inspiring me to research the archaeology of ritual in the first place; Petra Tjitske Kalshoven, for warmly and patiently welcoming a fledgling into Anthropology; and to Mel Giles, for her kindness, infectious enthusiasm and eagerness to share her wealth of ideas.

Last but by no means least, I want to express my gratitude to all my hardy loved ones who braved the British and Irish weather to count copper wishes with me. This book is dedicated to you.

Contents

List of Figures

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Coining the Coin-Tree

A First Encounter

The vast log stretched along the curve of the footpath, remarkable for its size—but more so for the thousands of coins embedded in its bark (Fig. 1.1). They blanketed its surface in uniform lines, faithfully following the log's curves and crevices, forming ripples and waves of copper and silver. The dull, grainy texture of the wood was almost entirely obscured beneath the layer, the armour, the shroud of metal that glimmered brightly in the sunlight. Other trees surrounding it were also embedded with coins, but they were mere satellites; it was the log that grabbed the attention. The footpath was busy: families, like mine, on day trips to the countryside. Nearly everyone who passed the log stopped. Nearly everyone who stopped added their own coin. They pushed them into fissures in the bark, or hammered them in with handy rocks, before going on their way again. My sister and I, aged 12 and 9, asked if we could do the same. Our parents were probably already reaching into their pockets. They handed us each a copper coin and we made our offerings.

The year was 1998 and my family were on an outing to Bolton Abbey, Yorkshire. Surrounding the ruins of the Augustinian Bolton Priory are 12,000 hectares of woodland and riverside paths: a perfect escape from Manchester. It was along one of these paths that I came across my first coin-tree. It would be poetic to claim that this experience set me on

C. Houlbrook, *The Magic of Coin-Trees from Religion to Recreation*,
Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75517-5_1

Fig. 1.1 The Bolton Abbey coin-tree, Yorkshire, England (Photograph by author)

course to undertake a Ph.D. 12 years later. That this one coin-tree site made such an impression on my young mind that I decided, there and then, to one day research this custom. In truth, at the time this experience had little impact on me. I can't recall what purpose I believed the coin-trees had or whether I asked my parents for an explanation; perhaps my mind was on other things as I knocked my coin into the tree. In fact, my whole memory of the day is questionable. It may have been romanticised through the rose-tinted glasses of childhood. Maybe it hadn't even been sunny.

However, the memory—romanticised or not—obviously remained with me on some level. Over a decade later, my MA nearly completed and the idea of pursuing a Ph.D. in British folk customs recently sparked, I was reading E. M. Forster's *Howards End* when I came across the following exchange between Mrs. Wilcox and the novel's chief protagonist Margaret Schlegel:

> "It is the finest wych elm in Hertfordshire. Did your sister tell you about the teeth?"
>
> "No."
>
> "Oh, it might interest you. There are pig's teeth stuck into the trunk, about four feet from the ground. The country people put them in long ago, and they think that if they chew a piece of the bark it will cure the toothache. The teeth are almost grown over now, and no one comes to the tree."
>
> "I should. I love folklore and all festering superstitions."[1]

Reading this, the memory of Bolton Abbey came back to me. Had this been what the coin-tree was: 'folklore' and 'festering superstition'? Had it been some anomalous modern-day survival from an earlier custom? Perhaps it was some discoloured, even diminished, remnant of the same custom described by Forster, which my research identified as a form of 'implantation': plugging, nailing or wedging one object into another in order to effect a cure.[2] In the case of Mrs. Wilcox's wych elm, toothache is transferred from the depositor into the tree via the implantation of a tooth, which represents the disease. The disease is subsequently implanted into the tree.

It turns out that Mrs. Wilcox's wych elm is far from unique. Across Britain and Ireland, a veritable plethora of trees have been employed for similar purposes. Trees from Cornwall to the Highlands of Scotland have been embedded with a variety of objects, such as human hair, nail-clippings, metal nails and pins and human blood, the depositors hoping for cures for ailments ranging from toothache and warts to ague and whooping cough.

However, as widespread as this custom was, the general consensus appears to be that it has ebbed. Implanted trees are viewed in the past tense. Mrs. Wilcox notes, with a sense of melancholy, that the teeth in her wych elm are 'almost grown over now, and no one comes to the tree', whilst Margaret describes the custom as a 'festering superstition'. From this perspective, the wych elm is a decaying manifestation of a faded, forgotten custom. Indeed, twentieth-century scholars adopt similar stances. In 1932, for example, anthropologist Ruth Benedict stated matter-of-factly that 'folklore has not survived as a living trait in modern civilization'.[3] It was her opinion that folkloric customs are not features of modernity, and that any survivals are just that: survivals. Festering superstitions.

Is this true? Are contemporary customs mere remnants; do our ritual landscapes hold nothing more than meagre historical residue? Seeking answers to these questions, I took the Bolton Abbey coin-tree site as my primary case study and began researching its history. I'd expected a long narrative of ritual. Perhaps when the log had stood as a tree it had been like Mrs. Wilcox's wych elm, implanted with objects by sufferers of toothache and other ailments. Perhaps before that tree there had stood another, also subject to ritual activity, and maybe before that there had been a holy well, a Christian hermitage, a sacred grove, a prehistoric burial site. Perhaps the Bolton Abbey coin-tree was the most recent manifestation of magical belief in a long landscape narrative, and when, at the age of 12, I'd hammered a penny into that tree, I'd been helping to preserve a custom backed by centuries, maybe even millennia, of history.

You can imagine my surprise when I contacted the Bolton Abbey Estate and received the following information from the Visitor Manager:

> There is no legend or story associated with our coin trees. The first tree was started about 15 to 20 years ago [c.1992–1997]. The tree had fallen across the path and as is our policy the foresters moved it to the side of the path, made it safe and left it there to naturally breakdown. While doing this the forester found a coin on the floor. He simply picked this up and pushed the coin into the trunk. The rest is history as they say.[4]

I'll admit to a little disappointment. So the Bolton Abbey coin-tree was simply a modern-day anomaly, sparked by the seemingly random act of a single forester. There was no wealth of history behind it. But surely the idea came from somewhere. As all historians know, nothing emerges 'out of the blue'; customs do not simply spring forth from a vacuum. Had this forester read about the custom of tree implantation in a book, maybe even *Howards End* and imitated the practice? Unfortunately, as the forester had retired, I wasn't able to contact him, and I could find nothing in literature searches on contemporary coin-trees. I had reached a frustratingly dead end—until, that is, I looked beyond my primary case study.

Less than twenty miles west of Bolton Abbey is a footpath running through Little Gordale Wood, Malham—a footpath that is also flanked by trees and logs embedded with coins. It turned out that Bolton Abbey is not an isolated site; there are more. But it doesn't stop there. A further fifteen miles west and an even larger cluster of coin-trees adorn the woods of the Ingleton Waterfalls Trail, while twenty miles south of Bolton Abbey are the coin-trees of Hardcastle Crags. There are still

more over the borders beyond Yorkshire: coin-tree sites in Derbyshire, Cheshire, Lancashire, Cumbria, and Northumberland, and then south, in Bristol, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall, Somerset. And still more over the borders beyond England: sites in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The more I searched, the more I found.

The Coin-Tree Catalogue

The coin-tree catalogue began to be compiled (Appendix A). At this stage, online resources were invaluable. Inputting the terms 'coin tree', 'money tree', and 'penny tree' into search engines produced myriad results: online articles, personal blogs, discussion forums and image-hosting websites, all referring to—and many curiously querying—the custom of inserting coins into trees. Utilising data collected from these online resources, the locations of numerous coin-trees were established. Others were identified simply through word of mouth; relatives, friends and colleagues who had either seen a coin-tree or knew somebody who had. The Lydford Gorge coin-tree, for example, was brought to my attention by my doctoral supervisor, having come across it whilst on holiday, while I was informed of the Portmeirion coin-trees by a fellow guest at a wedding.

More data was collected through direct correspondence with park rangers and wardens, heritage officers and archaeologists. In March 2012, a query was placed on the National Trust email forum, *Countryside Chat*,[5] requesting rangers to make contact if they had any information on coin-trees. This engendered seventeen replies. In May 2012, another request was placed in the *Institute for Archaeologists* bulletin, and more responses were received, bringing to light further coin-tree sites. As the research was disseminated, via papers at conferences for example, emails began pouring in from scholars and independent researchers countrywide, identifying other coin-trees.

The coin-tree catalogue currently stands at 40 sites across Britain and Ireland (Fig. 1.2, Appendix A), containing a total of more than 200 individual coin-trees. Of the 40 sites, 37 are active: their coin-trees are still currently being coined. The catalogue does not claim to be complete. Its compilation is an ongoing project and it is likely that more coin-trees will have emerged since fieldwork was conducted, and even likelier that more will emerge in the future. The catalogue presented in Appendix A is therefore not intended as a static archive but as a snapshot of a growing compendium.

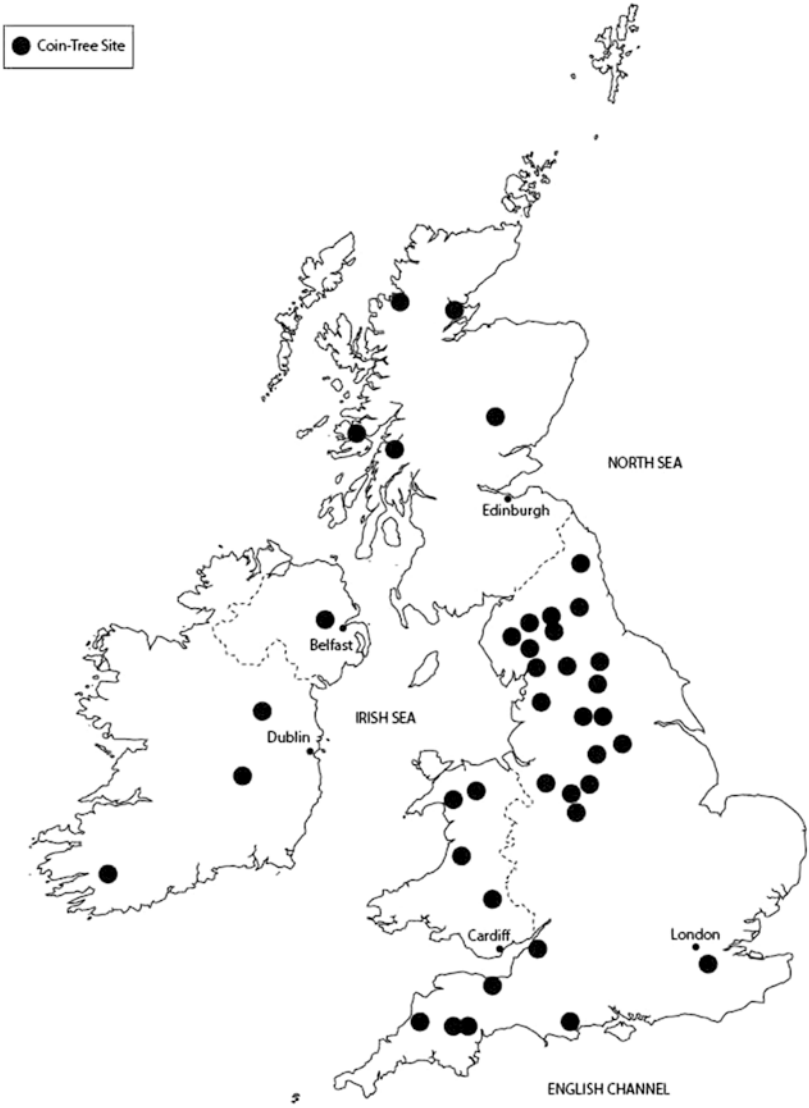

Fig. 1.2 The distribution of coin-trees across Britain and Ireland

Not all the coin-tree sites are as contemporary as Bolton Abbey, ranging in date from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries. However, the majority did emerge during the late 1990s or early 2000s. The coin-tree thus provides the ideal exemplar of a historic custom that has survived into the present. But is 'survive' the right word? Is it a 'festering superstition', a diminished remnant, a piece of historical residue? By taking a microhistoric approach in focusing on the coin-tree, this book intends to address these questions. It presents interdisciplinary research into the *longue durée* of ritual landscapes in Britain and Ireland from 1700 to the present, and the transition from religious practice to recreation.[6] It also aims to contribute to the important debate on the historic relationships between religion, ritual and popular magic in the landscapes of Britain and Ireland.

Thinking with Trees

In 1928, Alexander Porteous averred that 'In this prosaic age too little is thought about trees'.[7] It was his opinion that an inadequate amount of attention had been given to trees in academic literature, as societal symbols, themes in mythology and central aspects of folkloric ritual. Over sixty years later, Edward Milner was making a similar claim in *The Tree Book*, with his assertion that the 'folklore of trees in Britain is still little documented, except as incidental items about country customs or passing references in accounts of cultural history'.[8] While still more recently, Ailsa Hunt began her work on *Sacred Trees in the Roman World* with the lament that 'assumptions about the *weirdness* of sacred trees hamper our ability to engage seriously with their significance in any given culture' (emphasis in original).[9]

In a review of the literature, however, there does not appear to be a reluctance to engage with the history and magic of trees. Douglas Davies' work on the evocative symbolism of trees is one example of such an engagement. Questioning what makes trees so emblematic, Davies contemplates trees' physical, botanical attributes, as well as their established cultural associations, playing with Lévi-Strauss' expression by noting that 'trees are not simply good to climb, they are good to think'.[10] Robert Harrison makes a similar observation, tracing the forest's history as a prominent theme in Western imagination, most notably as a metaphor for 'primeval antiquity'; as the antecedent to, and frontier of, civilisation.[11] He also explores the ways in which forests have the power to

evoke memories, to act as an anchor with the past, and this may indeed explain why trees are used in a contemporary setting to host rituals that are, to modern eyes, invocations of antiquity. Trees can, in a sense, carry us back through time.

The subject of trees as historical anchors is most comprehensively—and rather poetically—explored in Simon Schama's work on *Landscape and Memory*. Schama details how Western society imprints natural landscapes with cultural associations, tracing the long history of 'landscape metaphors' which we have shaped and employed throughout history to the present day.[12] He disputes the widely-held claim that Western culture has lost its nature myths and traditions, averring that they are in fact 'alive and well',[13] embodied in our national identities—for example, the oak as a symbol of England—and our literary and artistic uses of landscapes to represent time, place and emotion. Owain Jones and Paul Cloke have likewise demonstrated how trees can define notions of place and community in their study of 'tree cultures'. Throughout their work, they refer to 'nature-society relations', tracing the ways in which people and communities can feel personal attachment towards trees, as evidenced by the numerous protests in Britain over the felling of trees.[14] Jones and Cloke, however, do not only consider human perceptions and utilisations of the tree, but the tree's agency itself, as a living entity that can, and does, have 'relational agency' with humans, and thus influences our notions of culture and the environment.[15]

Andrew Garner has examined the agency of trees in detail, drawing on material gathered at Hatfield Forest in Essex.[16] Garner examines how trees affect notions of time, place, and identity, investigating how individuals view and utilise trees differently, themes that have been further explored in Laura Rival's collection of essays in *The Social Life of Trees*. These essays demonstrate the great symbolic significance of trees and woodlands, particularly as emblematic of 'collective identity', in a variety of contemporary cultures.[17] Environmental activist Angie Zelter, a contributor to Rival's collection, suggests that trees can be used to heal a society's supposed spiritual ailments, employed as symbols of harmony. She describes how trees are ritually planted in modern-day Britain to express intense feelings, be they trauma, sadness or joy, attesting that trees are particularly suitable for such rituals due to the continuity and stability they represent.[18] A similar tree planting ceremony held at Syracuse University, New York State, is detailed in Philip Arnold and

Ann Grodzins Gold's collection *Sacred Landscapes and Cultural Politics*. Performed in commemoration of the 35 students of Syracuse University who had lost their lives in the terrorist attack at Lockerbie, Scotland, this ritual illustrated the memorialising uses of the tree in Western society, an aspect considered in Chapter 5 of this book.[19]

However, despite the fact that trees have been deemed good to think, this book presents the first academic study of the phenomenon of *coin*-trees. There are brief references to coin-trees scattered throughout scholarship on the history and landscape of Britain and Ireland (detailed in Chapter 2), but they are largely incidental; a brief mention or cursory illustrative example, with no in-depth analysis. Granted, the contemporary resurgence of the custom of coin-trees has been reported in several letters submitted to the London-based *Folklore Society*'s newsletter (*FLS News*).[20] Again, however, the information provided in these letters has, in keeping with the publication, tended to be casually inquisitive rather than academically investigative. Far more attention is given to the contemporary coin-tree on the Internet: online articles, blogs and discussion forums (detailed in Chapter 3).

Is it the contemporaneity of most coin-trees that precludes them from scholarship? It is perfectly possible. After all, even nineteenth-century folklorists had to fight for the right to concern themselves with contemporary customs. Writing in 1885, for instance, folklorist Edwin Sidney Hartland stated: 'I decline to be limited to *survivals*, or to *archaic* beliefs and customs' (emphases in original),[21] contending instead that, 'Tradition is always being created anew, and that traditions of modern origin wherever found are as much within our province as ancient ones'.[22] More recently, Ben Simon has taken a similar stand, noting that works which 'discuss the folk beliefs, uses and symbolism ascribed to plants and trees…tend to view folklore as something practised in the past or unconnected with present society'.[23] Simon contests this approach, drawing on examples from Ireland to substantiate his claim that 'tree traditions' are not merely remnants of the past, but are active features of the present.

That landscapes are the ever-changing products of time goes without saying. Since archaeologist Osbert Crawford first applied the palimpsest metaphor to the 'surface of England', as a 'document that has been written on and erased over and over again', scholars have been employing this imagery in their attempts to decipher landscape.[24] Geographer Donald Meinig observes that 'Every landscape is an accumulation.

The past endures…The landscape is an enormously rich store of data about the peoples and societies which have created it', whilst William Hoskins advocates the study of landscape 'as though it were a piece of music, or a series of compositions of varying magnitude, in order that we may understand the logic that lies behind the beautiful whole'.[25]

It is interesting to note, however, that Hoskins himself does not appreciate this 'beautiful whole'. His aversion to modern developments is overt: 'especially since the year 1914, every single change in the English landscape has either uglified it or destroyed its meaning, or both'.[26] Landscape is the product of change—but some changes are better than others, and therefore worthier of our attention. Is this right? Should we trace the physical and cultural transformations of a landscape only up until a certain point in history, beyond which changes can only uglify or destroy meaning? Can landscapes only be validly ritualised in the past but not in the present? This book proposes answers to these questions by tracing the changing ritualised coin-tree sites from the eighteenth century to the modern day.

History, Folklore and Material Culture

To historicise and contextualise the coin-tree, a rich corpus of sources has been utilised. A small number of publications provided information of varying detail and accuracy regarding individual coin-tree sites, occasionally proffering an invaluable photograph or a specific date. Direct correspondence with the custodians of the coin-trees (rangers, wardens, tourist managers, heritage officers, and private landowners), however, proved far more fruitful, and relatively accurate coining dates for many of the trees could be established. Invaluable insight into how these structures are perceived, presented and managed by their custodians was also gained. Additionally, as detailed in Chapter 3, ethnographic data was gathered through on-site interviews with the custom participants themselves at 33 coin-tree sites,[27] and much evidence cited throughout this book was sourced through these engagements.

However, another aspect of this custom is also considered: the material culture of the coin-trees themselves. What can these physical structures elucidate about the custom? What are they composed of and how are they created? What testimony do the trees, the coins and their environments give? To answer these questions, archaeological methodologies were employed. At each site, the trees were photographed, the

empirical data recorded, such as coin quantities, denominations, and (where visible) dates, whilst at one coin-tree site (Ardmaddy, Argyll), I managed a Heritage Lottery Fund archaeological excavation on the area surrounding the tree (see Chapter 5 and Appendix B).

Material culture plays a prominent role in this book's contextualisation of the coin-tree, as defined by James Deetz as '*that sector of our physical environment that we modify through culturally determined behavior.* This definition includes all artefacts, from the simplest, such as a common pin, to the most complex, such as an interplanetary space vehicle' (emphases in original).[28] It is a field of study which, according to Christopher Tilley, centres on the notion that 'persons cannot be understood apart from things'.[29] We shape our physical world and, in turn, are shaped *by* our physical world. Culture and society are inseparable from the material objects we use, produce, create, consume, modify and destroy. It is this concept which stands at the centre of material culture studies.

Following the 'Material-Cultural Turn'[30] of the 1970s and 1980s, scholars have been exploring the relationships between artefacts and social structures.[31] Since 1996 the *Journal of Material Culture* has been drawing together research in history, anthropology, archaeology, design studies, human geography and museology, demonstrating the range of disciplines that recognise the significance of *things* and have been actively engaging with material culture. Historians, for example, may lean heavily on the written word as their primary source material, but they often combine this with the physical evidence of buildings and artefacts in order to reconstruct narratives of the past.[32] Historian Leora Auslander for one believes that archives and libraries are not wholly sufficient for all historical investigations, arguing for the importance of including material culture within our range of sources: 'because people use things different than words, and because such usages are not fully translatable into words'.[33]

Material culture studies are not, however, limited to investigations into the past. Objects prove just as illuminating in our study of contemporary social structures. In William Rathje's seminal 1979 article, he observes that,

> Most of us have played the game, what will an archaeologist learn about us in 1000 years? A few archaeologists have decided not to wait a millennium for the answer and are taking the question seriously now…Archaeologists are now doing the archaeology of us.[34]

Since 1979, however, these 'few' scholars have multiplied, and a concern with modern material culture now stands at the centre of many studies.[35]

Rathje, for example, advocates the employment of modern material culture studies in the testing, developing and validating of archaeological principles and practices.[36] The aim of this methodology is to ascertain how accurately we can analyse the artefacts and structures of past societies and their relations with human behaviour utilising only the material evidence, by comparing it to the uses of contemporary artefacts and structures. Modern settings are thus employed to evaluate the theories and methods used for reconstructing the past. A study of the contemporary coin-tree, therefore, could be employed to test, develop or validate archaeological principles and practices. By considering how accurately the coin-tree structures correlate with their actual uses, it can be ascertained how illustrative the material evidence is of human behaviour, values and beliefs.

However, despite the obvious benefits of applying modern material culture studies to the testing of archaeological practices, historicising the coin-tree is a valuable endeavour in and of itself.[37] A broader aim of this book is to historicise the coin-tree by considering the social and environmental elements of the past which led to the emergence of this custom. How have both cultural changes in society and physical changes in the landscape altered popular perceptions of trees and their magical properties? This book focuses on the period 1700 to the present, but the research is situated within the broader context of 'tree worship', which is temporally vast and international in scope. Despite assumptions to the contrary, universals cannot be applied to tree worship and ritualised landscapes, and nor should they be presented as static phenomena. They change. But how do they change, and why?

The primary historical source I draw upon to answer these questions falls under the umbrella of folklore.[38] The writings and observations of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century antiquarians and folklorists prove invaluable in demonstrating how popular beliefs, perceptions and practices change over time. To historicise the coin-tree custom and situate it within broader narratives of ritualised landscapes, I combine this corpus of material with the primary data compiled through fieldwork. This combination of material culture studies with folklore is relatively novel within twenty-first-century academia, despite the fact that the two subjects have a long—albeit far from steadfast—history of affiliation.

The relationship between material culture and folklore, which has been extensively examined by Amy Gazin-Schwartz, began as inseparable. The pre-Victorian antiquarians rarely distinguished between the collecting of material relics and the recording of ancient practices and beliefs. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, they both made their move away from antiquarianism—and from each other, with 'archaeology' and 'folklore' beginning to view themselves as separate and distinct professional fields.[39] This academic divorce, however, does not appear to have been entirely mutual; it was the archaeologists who first distanced themselves from folklore. Something better had come along: science.

Scientific techniques and empirical practices were embraced by the discipline. England's first serious excavations began in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, led by men such as Bryan Faussett, James Douglas, William Cunnington and Richard Colt Hoare and complemented by a growing awareness of geological context and strata.[40] The nineteenth century, therefore, saw the emergence of the newly styled archaeologists, who sought to dissociate themselves from folkloric studies most likely because—unlike archaeology—this field had not been established as an academic discipline.[41] Additionally, as is argued by Gazin-Schwartz, archaeologists rejected folklore, viewing its value with scepticism because of its questionable authenticity and accuracy. Often finding that folk tradition and material remains did not correlate, they opted to dismiss the former as inauthentic.[42]

Folklore was slightly less dismissive of archaeology, but from the outset of its development as a separate field in the nineteenth century, it was clear that material culture was not considered central to the study of folklore. Tellingly, in its first publication in 1878, the *Folk-Lore Society* defined its objectives as 'the preservation and publication of Popular Traditions, Legendary Ballads, Local Proverbial Sayings, Superstitions and Old Customs', with no reference at all to material culture.[43] And by the mid-twentieth century, folklorists had become more concerned with the collection and preservation of oral traditions than with the study of artefacts.[44]

Following this divergence was over a century of largely indifferent co-existence, the two disciplines occasionally acknowledging each other but rarely touching. By the end of the twentieth century, folklore's relegation to the fringe of academia was compelling many archaeologists, as well as historians, anxious about their professional legitimacy, to give the subject area a wide berth. Today, this marginalisation of folklore

within academia has resulted in a general ignorance about the subject. Historians and archaeologists who may otherwise have been willing—even eager—to study folklore are probably unaware of its potential simply because it rarely features in their educations.

However, there have been a number of individuals who have attempted to reunite material culture and folklore in their research on Britain and Ireland, some more successfully than others. For much of the twentieth century, studies of the relationship between material culture and folklore in Britain have taken one main form: the collection of folklore concerning archaeological and historic sites, usually compiled by folklorists with an interest in archaeology.[45] The general consensus amongst these scholars was that folklore constituted the remnants—the 'survivals'—of prehistoric beliefs and rituals. Thus folklore was utilised as a resource to contextualise the material evidence, most often prehistoric monuments.

Walter Johnson was one of Britain's first folklorists to apply this theory to the archaeological record in 1908. In his book, *Folk-Memory; or the Continuity of British Archaeology*, he traces folkloric associations and uses of megaliths back chronologically in order to contextualise them: 'Let us go back and pick up the threads of superstition', he proposes, looking, for example, at the healing powers attributed to prehistoric holed stones.[46] He is not, however, under any illusion of direct continuity. While he writes of the endurance of veneration at certain megaliths, from prehistory to the nineteenth century, he warns the reader that most traditions will have been 'grossly perverted',[47] stating that any 'folk-memory' must be 'scrupulously tested'.[48]

Similar methodologies are employed by later scholars, who draw on folklore as a contextualising resource for the understanding of prehistoric monuments, from Stonehenge to the many megalithic stones believed to be 'countless' or to have been formed through the petrification of sinners.[49] Likewise, Janet Bord and Colin Bord, writing in the 1970s, refer to 'race-memory' as the 'only real illumination' onto the significance of the prehistoric sites of Britain and Ireland: standing stones, henges, hill-forts and burial mounds.[50]

In most cases, a degree of scepticism is thankfully maintained concerning the continuity of these folk traditions. They are not presented as unaltered survivals from prehistory but as distorted 'remnants' which, if very carefully interpreted, may yield some truth over the monuments' original purposes. As Bord and Bord maintain, the details of a tradition

will undoubtedly have changed over the centuries, but traditions reflect attitudes, and attitudes are more likely to have been consistently inherited: a site is considered sacred today because it was considered sacred 3000 years ago.[51] Not all scholars, however, accepted these theories of long-term unbroken continuity. Leslie Grinsell, for example, was a little more sceptical.

Grinsell, probably the most widely known scholar of the folklore of British prehistoric sites, was wary of drawing on the oral traditions associated with prehistoric sites in order to contextualise them. Although he offers little in the way of interpretation—the majority of *Folklore of Prehistoric Sites in Britain*, for example, is a simple county-by-county catalogue of prehistoric sites—he does acknowledge that many associated traditions are far more recent in origin than they seem, and he is discerning in his distinction between the older 'remnants' (folklore) and the more recent traditions ('fakelore').[52]

The trend more recently has been to draw on the folklore of prehistoric sites not to attempt to shed light on their origins, but to ascertain how a monument has been perceived and utilised throughout history, including its current employment by local communities. Jerome Voss, for example, acknowledging that contemporary uses and interpretations of monuments differ greatly from their original purposes, focuses on how prehistoric structures serve as focal points within communities, making obvious reference to Stonehenge. In Voss's opinion, material culture and folklore are two distinct, opposing forces. Folklore surrounds a prehistoric site despite—and often in contradiction to—the tangible evidence, and while material culture can provide factual history, folklore offers what Voss terms 'metaphorical history'.[53]

Julia Murphy demonstrates this in her research on the Neolithic dolmen of Pentre Ifan, Wales. She considers how the folkloric traditions associated with the site have coloured contemporary perceptions of it, influencing how people, including scholars, view it.[54] Likewise, Sara Champion and Gabriel Cooney, researching Irish prehistoric and early historic monuments, such as the complex of cairns at Loughcrew, Co. Meath, and the portal tomb at Cleenrah, Co. Longford, ask how the 'meaning' of monuments shifts over time. They also consider how the presentations of such monuments to the public are inherently tied in with the folkloric traditions associated with them.[55] Robert Wallis and Jenny Blain, citing examples such as Stonehenge and Avebury, the stone circles at Froggatt Edge, and the Nine Ladies on Stanton Moor,

are equally concerned with how the contemporary public draw on the traditional folklore of a prehistoric site in their perceptions and uses of it—and, in some cases, employ the folklore to influence heritage site management.[56]

Gazin-Schwartz is one of the most significant scholars to consider folklore's potential in contributing to an understanding of landscapes, monuments and artefacts. In her doctoral thesis, in which she focuses her attention on the folkloric associations of monuments and the ritual purposes of everyday items on the island of Raasay, Scotland, she notes the prominent role played by folklore in the social construction of landscapes, concluding that folkloric customs and beliefs must be considered by any scholar wishing to adequately contextualise the history of a landscape.

Gazin-Schwartz, however, does not aim to correlate folklore with the material record. She does not argue for long-term continuity of folk practices and beliefs, as, for example, Bord and Bord do,[57] but instead examines the ways in which traditional histories are formed and adapted through local folklore. While she stresses that folklore does not provide factual information, she does claim—rightfully, in my opinion—that it offers different ways of thinking, asserting that it prompts new and important questions; 'gives access to many layers of meaning'[58]; and provides the opportunity to 'gain personal connections to the past'.[59]

In an edited volume published in the same year, Gazin-Schwartz and Cornelius Holtorf present a variety of papers which demonstrate the benefits of fostering an interdisciplinary dialogue between material culture and folklore, which they perceive as 'two of the many lenses through which the past is given meaning'.[60] As Robert Layton, a contributor to the volume, stresses, such a dialogue is between two different systems of meaning; material culture and folklore are not partial fragments of the same whole, correlated and combined to reveal a full picture. They are two different modes of representing the past, often providing contradictory accounts of events, landscapes and artefacts.[61] An archaeologist's or historian's employment of folklore should not be to seek factual answers which supplement the material evidence, but to aid in an understanding of the malleability of monuments and landscapes, and the multiplicity of meanings attributed to them. Folklore is not meant to be taken literally. It is primarily symbolic, and therefore should not be resorted to in the search for facts, but in the search for *meaning*.

Clearly the two disciplines of material culture and folklore have not always been paired successfully. The naïve assumption that folklore represents survivals of unbroken traditions since prehistory characterises much of the earlier scholarship concerned with the folklore of sites and landscapes. The scholarly trend, however, has moved away from employing folklore to elucidate much earlier practices and beliefs. It has also recently progressed from the simple objective of composing catalogues of sites and artefacts, with numerous theoretical papers fostering collaboration between archaeology, history and folklore in order to develop new interpretive perspectives.[62]

This book will hopefully contribute to such developments, by drawing on multiple lines of enquiry in the following chapters. The historic literature of antiquarians and folklorists sheds light on what the custom meant to people in the past. The material evidence of the coin-trees themselves and the landscapes they occupy illustrates how the custom has changed and adapted over time. Whilst the ethnographic testimony of the contemporary participating 'folk' elucidates what the custom means to people *today*. The methods of enquiry evidently complement each other and are, together, well equipped to historicise a contemporary practice and situate it within broader narratives of ritualised landscapes.

Notes

1. Forster, E. M. 1910 [2000]. *Howards End*. New York, Penguin Books, 8.61.
2. Hand, W. D. 1966. Plugging, Nailing, Wedging, and, Kindred Folk Medicinal Practices. In Jackson, B. (ed.) *Folklore & Society: Essays in Honor of Benj. A. Botkin*. Hatboro, Folklore Associates, 63–75.
3. Benedict, R. 1932. Folklore. In Seligman, E. R. A. and Johnson, A. (eds.) *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*. Vol. 6. London, Macmillan, 288–293, p. 292.
4. Pers. comm. Moira Smith, Visitor Manager, Bolton Abbey Estate 10/02/2012.
5. Courtesy of Simon Nicholas, National Trust Warden, Dovedale.
6. Cf. Walsham, A. 2011. *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and, Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
7. Porteous, A. 1928. *Forest Folklore, Mythology, and Romance*. London, G. Allen & Unwin, p. 150.
8. Milner, J. E. 1992. *The Tree Book: The Indispensable Guide to Tree Facts, Crafts and Lore*. London, Collins & Brown, p. 136.

9. Hunt, A. 2016. *Reviving Roman Religion: Sacred Trees in the Roman World*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 2.
10. Davies, D. 1988. The Evocative Symbolism of Trees. In Cosgrove, D. and Daniels, S. (eds.) *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 32–42, p. 34.
11. Harrison, R. P. 1992. *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*. Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, p. 1.
12. Schama, S. 1996. *Landscape and Memory*. London, Fontana Press, p. 15.
13. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, p. 14.
14. Jones, O. and Cloke, P. J. 2002. *Tree Cultures: The Place of Trees and Trees in Their Place*. Oxford and New York, Berg, p. 3.
15. The concept of agency is frequently employed in studies of trees and landscapes, and is a term which will be prevalent throughout this book. Definitions I adhere to are the simplest: Tilley's interpretation of 'agency' as that which provides 'affordances and constraints for thought and action' (Tilley, C. 2007. Materiality in Materials. *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1), 16–20, p. 19) and Zedeño's as that which can 'shape human behaviour and influence change' (Zedeño, M. N. 2013. Methodological and Analytical Challenges in Relational Archaeologies: A View from the Hunting Ground. In Watts, C. (ed.) *Relational Archaeologies: Humans, Animals, Things*. London and New York, Routledge, 117–134, p. 121). A consideration of the debates concerning whether or not an object can possess the same agency as a human are beyond the scope of this book (Cf. Hodder, I. 2012. *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships Between Humans and Things*. Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell; Watts, C. (ed.) 2013. *Relational Archaeologies: Humans, Animals, Things*. London and New York, Routledge). However, I should note that I do not find Gell's distinction between 'primary' agents (people) and 'secondary' agents (objects) particularly appropriate as, despite Gell's protestations to the contrary (Gell, A. 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 20), such terminology seems to attribute agency to objects only 'in a manner of speaking'. Instead, I adhere to Robb's distinction between 'conscious agency' and 'effective agency' (Robb, J. 2004. The Extended Artefact and the Monumental Economy: A Methodology for Material Agency. In DeMarrais, E., Gosden, C. and Renfrew, C. (eds.) *Rethinking Materiality: The Engagement of Mind with the Material World*. Cambridge, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 131–139); trees do not have conscious intentionality, but they possess effective agency because they have the capacity to influence and shape human behaviour.

16. Garner, A. 2004. Living History: Trees and Metaphors of Identity in an English Forest. *Journal of Material Culture* 9 (1), 87–100.
17. Rival, L. (ed.) 1998. *The Social Life of Trees: Anthropological Perspectives on Tree Symbolism*. Oxford, Berg.
18. Zelter, A. 1998. Grassroots Campaigning for the World's Forests. In Rival, L. (ed.) *The Social Life of Trees: Anthropological Perspectives on Tree Symbolism*. Oxford, Berg, 221–232, p. 223.
19. Arnold, P. P. and Grodzins Gold. A. (eds.) 2001. *Sacred Landscapes and Cultural Politics: Planting a Tree*. Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing.
20. In 2004 Mavis Curtis reported coin-trees at Bolton Abbey and Hardcastle Crags, whilst further focus has been given in Patten, B. and Patten, J. 2009. Coins Inserted in Trees. *FLS News* 59, 2; Billingsley, J. 2010. Coins Inserted in Trees. *FLS News* 60, 7; Gould, C. 2010. Coins Inserted in Trees. *FLS News* 60, 7; and Shuel, B. 2010. Coins Inserted in Trees. *FLS News* 60, 6–7.
21. Hartland, E. S. 1885. The Science of Folk-Lore. *The Folk-Lore Journal* 3 (2), 97–121.
22. Hartland, 'Science of Folklore', p. 120.
23. Simon, B. 2000. Tree Traditions and Folklore from Northeast Ireland. *Arboricultural Journal* 24 (1), 15–40, p. 33.
24. Crawford, O. G. S. 1953. *Archaeology in the Field*. London, Phoenix House, p. 51.
25. Meinig, D. W. 1979. The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene. In D. W. Meinig and John Brinckerhoff Jackson (eds.) *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays*. New York, Oxford University Press, 33–48, p. 44; Hoskins, W. G. 1955 [1988]. *The Making of the English Landscape*. London, Hodder and Stoughton, p. 20.
26. Hoskins, *Making of the English Language*, p. 238.
27. Freeholders Wood, Yorkshire, was not visited as no remains of the coin-tree have been preserved at the site and no replacement tree adopted.
28. Deetz, J. 1996. *In Small Things Forgotten*. New York, Doubleday, p. 35.
29. Tilley, C. 2006. Objectification. In Tilley, C., Keane, W., Küchler, S., Rowlands, M. and Spyer, P. (eds.) *Handbook of Material Culture*. London, Sage, 60–73, p. 2.
30. It should be noted that 'material culture' has been subject to numerous debates and accusations of ambiguity, most thoroughly examined in Hicks, D. 2010. The Material-Cultural Turn: Event and Effect. In Hicks, D. and Beaudry, M. C. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 25–98; Lucas, G. 2012. *Understanding the Archaeological Record*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. In 2007, Ingold criticised the abstractness of the term 'materiality' and the scholarly trend to fixate on the social contexts of materials in lieu of their

physical properties. He advocates the redirection of attention 'from the materiality of objects to the properties of the materials' (Ingold, T. 2007. Materials Against Materiality. *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1), 1–16, p. 12). In response, Tilley points out that a focus on the brute properties of materials can provoke the neglect of a consideration of their human significance (Tilley, C. 2007. Materiality in Materials. *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1), 16–20), whilst Miller argues that, rather than attributing properties to objects, 'material culture studies' should consider what properties *other peoples* may attribute to them (Miller, D. 2007. Stone Age or Plastic Age? *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1), 23–27). Knappett, on the other hand, argues that limiting focus to a material's physical properties excludes notions of indirect perception: 'Are there not, after all, associations that go beyond the immediate world of materials; what of remembrance of past situations, or imagination of future ones?' (Knappett, C. 2007. Materials with Materiality? *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1), 20–23, p. 22). While I acknowledge these debates surrounding the term 'material culture', I will not shy away from using it. Here, no stringent distinction between brute physicality and social significance will be made. Instead, 'material culture' is defined as a notion employed to address the significance of an object's physical properties in a consideration of its social role.

31. Hicks, 'Material-Culture Turn', p. 49.
32. See for example Weatherill, L. 1988. *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760*. London, Routledge; Burke, P. 2001. *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*. London, Reaktion; Auslander, L. 2005. Beyond Words. *American Historical Review* 110 (4), 1015–1045; Grassby, R. 2005. Material Culture and Cultural History. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35 (4), 591–603; Auslander, L., Bentley, A., Leor, H. Sibum, H. O. and Witmore, C. 2009. AHR Conversation: Historians and the Study of Material Culture. *The American Historical Review* 114 (5), 1355–1404; Harvey, K. (ed.) 2009. *History and Material Culture*. London, Routledge; and Gerritsen, A. and Riello, G. (eds.) 2014. *Writing Material Culture History*. London, Bloomsbury Academic.
33. Auslander, 'Beyond Words', p. 1045.
34. Rathje, W. L. 1979. Modern Material Culture Studies. *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 2, 1–37, p. 2.
35. See, for example, Rathje, 'Modern Material Culture Studies'; Shanks, M. and Tilley, C. 1987. *Re-constructing Archaeology: Theory and Practice*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; Gould, R. A. and Schiffer, M. B. (eds.) 1981. *Modern Material Culture: The Archaeology of Us*. New York and London, Academic Press; Hodder, I. 1987. Bow Ties and Pet Foods: Material Culture and the Negotiation of Change in British

Industry. In Hodder, I. (ed.) *The Archaeology of Contextual Meanings.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 11–19; Graves-Brown, P. M. (ed.) 2000. *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture.* London and New York, Routledge; Buchli, V. and Lucas, G. (eds.) 2001. *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past.* London and New York, Routledge; González-Ruibal, A. 2006. The Past Is Tomorrow: Towards An Archaeology of the Vanishing Present. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 39 (2), 110–125; Tilley, C., Keane, W., Küchler, S., Rowlands, M. and Spyer, P. (eds.) 2006. *Handbook of Material Culture.* London, Sage; González-Ruibal, A. 2008. Time to Destroy: An Archaeology of Supermodernity. *Current Anthropology* 49 (2), 247–279; Harrison, R. and Schofield, J. 2010. *After Modernity: Archaeological Approaches to the Contemporary Past.* Oxford, Oxford University Press; Harrison, R. 2011. Surface Assemblages: Towards an Archaeology *in* and *of* the Present. *Archaeological Dialogues* 18 (2), 141–161; and Holtorf, C. and Piccini, A. (eds.) 2011. *Contemporary Archaeologies: Excavating Now.* Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang.

36. Rathje, 'Modern Material Culture Studies'; Rathje, W. 1981. A Manifesto for Modern Material Culture Studies. In Schiffer and Gould (eds.) *Modern Material Culture.*
37. This practice is advocated in Rathje, 'Modern Material Culture Studies'; Rathje, 'A Manifesto for Modern Material Culture Studies'; González-Ruibal, 'The Past is Tomorrow'; and Harrison, 'Surface Assemblages'. Harrison proposes the development of 'an archaeology *of* the present, *for* the future' (p. 159, emphases in original).
38. Over the last few years I have been advised by more than one colleague to avoid using the word 'folklore'. It appears to have become something of an academic taboo, with alternative terms being recommended instead: 'ritual', 'popular beliefs', 'oral tradition'. However, as 'safer' as these substitute phrases apparently are, none of them successfully encapsulate the range of beliefs, customs, practices, and material manifestations which are included in the broad term 'folklore', for a definition of which I refer to its original coinage. In 1846 William Thoms suggested the term in a letter to *The Athenaeum* as an alternative to 'what we in England designate as Popular Antiquities, or Popular Literature'. He recommended, instead, 'a good Saxon compound, Folklore, – *the Lore of the People*' (1846, 862). 'Folklore' is, therefore, simply the 'Lore of the People', and while there has been much debate in the past (Cf. Folklore: What's in a name?, *The Journal of American Folklore* 1998, particularly Harlow 1998; Bendix 1998; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; and Oring 1998) about who constitutes 'the People', I define them as a group of people united by a common aspect—usually geographic location, but also language, occupation, and even shared hobbies. The customs they practice and the oral narratives and beliefs they share are 'folklore'.

39. Gazin-Schwartz, A. 1999. *Constructing Ancestors: Archaeology and Folklore in Scotland*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Massachusetts, p. 21.
40. Daniel, G. 1981. *A Short History of Archaeology*. London, Thames and Hudson, pp. 50–55.
41. Michell, J. 1982. *Megalithomania: Artists, Antiquarians and Archaeologists at the Old Stone Monuments*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, p. 24; Gazin-Schwartz, A. and Holtorf, C. 1999. 'As Long as Ever I've Known It…': On Folklore and Archaeology. In Gazin-Schwartz, A. and Holtorf, C. (eds.) *Archaeology and Folklore*. London and New York, Routledge, 3–25, p. 9.
42. Gazin-Schwartz, *Constructing Ancestors*, pp. 34–36; Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf, 'As Long as Ever I've Known It…', p. 5.
43. Folklore society 1878, cited in Gazin-Schwartz, *Constructing Ancestors*, p. 22.
44. Cf. Opie, P. 1957. The Present State of Folklore Studies in England. *Folklore* 65, 149–64; O'Sullivan, S. 1957. The Collection and Classification of Folklore in Ireland and the Isle of Man. *Folklore* 68 (4), 449–457; Sanderson, S. F. 1957. The Present State of Folklore Studies in Scotland. *Folklore* 68 (4), 457–466; and Ó Giolláin, D. 2000. *Locating Irish Folklore: Tradition, Modernity, Identity*. Cork, Cork University Press.
45. Gazin-Schwartz, *Constructing Ancestors*, p. 27.
46. Johnson, W. 1908. *Folk-Memory; or the Continuity of British Archaeology*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 174.
47. Johnson, *Folk-Memory*, p. 132.
48. Johnson, *Folk-Memory*, p. 319.
49. Cf. Fleure, H. J. 1948. Archaeology and Folklore. *Folklore* 59 (2), 69–74; Menefee, S. P. 1974. The 'Merry Maidens' and the 'Noce de Pierre'. *Folklore* 85 (1), 23–42; and Menefee, S. P. 1975. The 'Countless Stones': A Final Reckoning. *Folklore* 86 (3/4), 146–166.
50. Bord, J. and Bord, C. 1976. *The Secret Country: More Mysterious Britain*. St Albans, Granada Publishing Ltd.
51. Bord and Bord, *The Secret Country*, pp. 1–2.
52. Grinsell, L. V. 1976. *Folklore of Prehistoric Sites in Britain*. Newton Abbot and London, David & Charles.
53. Voss, J. A. 1987. Antiquity Imagined: Cultural Values in Archaeological Folklore. *Folklore* 98 (1), 80–90, p. 81.
54. Murphy, J. 1999. Archaeology as Folklore: The Literary Construction of the Megalith Pentre Ifan in West Wales. In Gazin-Schwartz, A. and Holtorf, C. (eds.) *Archaeology and Folklore*. London and New York, Routledge, 240–253.

55. Champion, S. and Cooney, G. 1999. Naming the Places, Naming the Stones. In Gazin-Schwartz, A. and Holtorf, C. (eds.) *Archaeology and Folklore*. London and New York, Routledge, 196–213.
56. Wallis, R. J. and Blain, J. 2003. Sites. Sacredness, and Stories: Interactions of Archaeology and Contemporary Paganism. *Folklore* 114 (3), 307–321.
57. Bord and Bord, *The Secret Country*.
58. Gazin-Schwartz, *Constructing Ancestors*, p. 51.
59. Gazin-Schwartz, *Constructing Ancestors*, p. 182.
60. Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf, 'As Long as Ever I've Known It…', p. 3.
61. Layton, R. 1999. Folklore and World View. In Gazin-Schwartz, A. and Holtorf, C. (eds.) *Archaeology and Folklore*. London and New York, Routledge, 26–34, p. 31.
62. See, for example, Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf, *Archaeology and Folklore*; Wallis, R. J. and Lymer, K. (eds.) 2001. *A Permeability of Boundaries? New Approaches to the Archaeology of Art, Religion and Folklore*. BAR International Series 936; Auslander et al. 'Historians and the Study of Material Culture'; and Gerritsen, A. and Riello, G. (eds.) 2014. *Writing Material Culture History*. London, Bloomsbury Academic.

CHAPTER 2

Roots of a Ritual

It's a rare warm and sunny Saturday during the Easter holidays. Unsurprisingly, Portmeirion Village is brimming with visitors. Most are clustered within the village itself, admiring the architecture and perusing the gift shops, but many are exploring the surrounding woodland trails. The main footpath leads north from the iconic Hotel Portmeirion, and it's less than five minutes' walk from here that visitors come across the coin-trees. Here, beside the path, are three stumps, densely embedded with coins.

Having been conducting fieldwork at these coin-trees for over an hour now, I've witnessed many visitors examining them or inserting their own coins. The stumps are particularly conspicuous today; because of the sunshine, many of the coins are lustrous and eye-catching. However, it's my presence that attracts one particular group. An elderly couple with their son, who introduces himself as Peter, have noticed that I'm crouched over one of the stumps, equipped with notepad, camera and photography scale. Curious, they approach to ask what I'm doing.

Peter confidently assumes that the coin-tree was created by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, the architect who designed Portmeirion. He doesn't believe the coin-tree is a contemporary structure—'it must be decades old'—nor does he believe the coins have been added by members of the public. 'Have you ever actually seen anyone inserting a coin?' he asks me doubtfully. When I assure him that less than five minutes earlier a family had done just that, he's taken aback. His parents move further along the path to examine the other coin-trees, but Peter, clearly intrigued, remains with me to continue our discussion.

C. Houlbrook, *The Magic of Coin-Trees from Religion to Recreation*,
Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75517-5_2

He seems particularly interested in the history of coin-trees and what he terms the 'continuation of folklore'. 'Sites in London are used like that all the time,' he informs me enthusiastically, 'sacred places carry on being used but they're used for different reasons'. He applies this process to the coin-trees, which he asserts must be the 'continuation of an old custom'. When I ask him why he believes people participate in this practice, he's now confident in his answer: 'It's in our DNA to do things like this, to carry them on. Like throwing coins into a fountain; something we may not really believe in anymore but we do it just because we've always done it'.

Coin-Trees in History

Peter is not the first person to designate a contemporary practice the 'continuation of an old custom'. I for one assumed the same. Wanting to historicise the coin-tree, I sought precursors. I was not satisfied with the explanations I was receiving. 'There is no legend or story associated with our coin trees', asserted the Visitor Manager of the Bolton Abbey Estate, '…the forester found a coin on the floor. He simply picked this up and pushed the coin into the trunk'.[1] Twenty-five miles away, another coin-tree was created when a woman at Hardcastle Crags 'confessed that she'd pushed two coins into a…sawn-up trunk by the riverside there, while wishing for a job as a dental nurse—and got the job. She now calls it the Wishing Tree'.[2] While nearly 400 miles north, a local business owner in Rosemarkie, the Black Isle, attests that the coin-trees of Fairy Glen were originally coined in the early 2000s when 'a couple of local boys—sons of friends—just decided to knock a few coins into a tree'.[3]

While these three sources do not explicitly state that their respective coin-trees were the first trees to have been created, all three imply a sense of isolation in the emergence of this custom. They suggest that the forester at Bolton Abbey, the dental nurse at Hardcastle Crags, and the local boys at Fairy Glen acted spontaneously; they 'simply' 'just decided' to implant coins into logs. In each case the coin-tree's creation is almost presented as an unprecedented incident; they each emerged out of the blue. However, as stressed in the Introduction, nothing emerges 'out of the blue'; customs do not simply spring forth from a vacuum. But, if not from a vacuum, then where did the rather bewildering custom of inserting coins into the bark of felled trees spring from? This chapter will focus on addressing this question.

Isle Maree, Wester Ross

> Land on that called *Inch-maree*, the favoured isle of the saint, the patron of all the coast from *Applecross* to *Loch-broom*. The shores are neat and gravelly; the whole surface covered thickly with a beautiful grove of oak, ash, willow, wicken, birch, fir, hazel, and enormous hollies. In the midst is a circular dike of stones, with a regular narrow entrance: the inner part has been used for ages as a burial place, and is still in use. I suspect the dike to have been originally *Druidical*, and that the ancient superstition of *Paganism* had been taken up by the saint, as the readiest method of making a conquest over the minds of the inhabitants. A stump of a tree is shewn as an altar, probably the memorial of one of stone; but the curiosity of the place is the well of the saint; of power unspeakable in cases of lunacy. The patient is brought in the sacred island, is made to kneel before the altar, where his attendants leave an offering in money: he is then brought to the well, and sips some of the holy water: a second offering is made; that done, he is thrice dipped in the lake; and the same operation is repeated every day for some weeks: and it often happens, by natural causes, the patient receives relief, of which the saint receives credit.[4]

The above account was published by Thomas Pennant, traveller and antiquarian, in 1775, making this the earliest identified reference to a coin-tree in Britain and Ireland. 'A stump of a tree is shewn as an altar…where [the patients'] attendants leave an offering in money'. Although it is not stated whether coins were embedded into the stump or placed loosely on top, we still have a tree being identified as a receptacle of coins—and later sources reveal that if it was not technically a coin-tree in the eighteenth century, it certainly was by the nineteenth.

Stretching for 12 miles in a north-westerly direction, Loch Maree is the fourth largest fresh-water loch in Scotland and accommodates more than 60 islands. One of these islands shares its name with the loch. Situated 250 miles from the northern shore, Isle Maree is of triangular shape, measuring roughly 200 metres by 170 metres, and although it is one of the loch's smaller islands, it is commonly dubbed the 'most interesting' and the 'most historic'.[5]

The local traditions surrounding Isle Maree are many and varied,[6] centred primarily on the island's reputed connection to the cure of insanity. Romeo-and-Juliet style tales are told of a Viking prince and his bride who, driven by jealousy and madness, took their own lives on Loch Maree and are now buried on the island. Other sources—with

varying degrees of reliability; the Presbytery records, for example, may have exaggerated certain 'pagan' aspects—describe ceremonies supposedly conducted on the loch and island regarding insanity. Folklorist Seton Gordon termed Isle Maree a 'Mecca of innumerable pilgrims', who resorted to the island for a cure to mental illness, purportedly sacrificing bulls on the loch's shore, drinking water from the holy well of St Maelrubha, whom the island (and loch) was named after, and being dipped into the purported healing waters of Loch Maree.[7]

Undoubtedly, Isle Maree is rife with legends, superstitions and local folkloric customs—far too many to detail here. Indeed, in the work of historian and topographer Rev. Thomas Ratcliffe Barnett, penned in 1930, we find a poetic and rather whimsical description of the island akin to the works of Tolkien or C. S. Lewis: 'There, in a little clearing of the wood, we found what we had come to see—the stones of the Dead Lovers, the site of the Hermit's Cell, the Well of Magic Waters, and the Dead Tree'.[8] It is this 'Dead Tree' that most concerns us, but the 'Well of Magic Waters' should come first.

This well was under the sacred custodianship of Saint Maelrubha, also known as Maree (673–722), who travelled from County Down to Ross in the seventh century and is credited with the introduction of Christianity to this region of Scotland. Isle Maree was said to have been his 'favoured isle',[9] and he purportedly consecrated a well there, which stood in the island's south-western corner and was widely believed to cure lunacy. Rituals of a decidedly Catholic colour surrounding this holy well are well documented,[10] and are described (although, as noted above, possibly exaggerated) in local Presbytery records and the *New Statistical Account of Scotland*.[11] The earliest of such records is from 1656,[12] and it appears that the holy well was last resorted to for the cure of insanity in the 1850s. Anthropologist Gertrude Godden believes that the last appeal was made to the holy well in 1857, whilst John Dixon cites a particular example of a woman from Easter Ross having been taken to the island for such a cure in 1858.[13]

By the time Arthur Mitchell, physician and historian, visited Isle Maree in 1863—now more of a tourist destination than pilgrimage site—the well was dry 'and full of last year's leaves'.[14] According to the *Inverness Courier* (4 November 1852), it was believed to have lost its curative powers when a farmer from Letterewe brought his dog to the island and lowered it into the well, hoping to cure it of madness, 'to the sore vexation of the presiding genie, who forthwith revoked his blessing'.[15] It is notable that St Maelrubha is here referred to as a 'genie', whilst Dixon simply writes that this 'desecrating act is

said to have driven virtue for a time from the well', dating the act to 1830.[16] But whether it was a genie or virtue bestowed upon the well by St Maelrubha, the curative powers of the well were believed to have been compromised and by the 1860s it was no longer resorted to for the cure of insanity.

By the 1950s, when the island was visited by travel writer Brenda Macrow, she remarked on how difficult it was to determine the site of this well, and today no trace of it remains.[17] However, it is possible to determine where it once stood judging by the location of Ratcliffe Barnett's 'Dead Tree', as Godden did in the 1890s: 'In the damp ground at the tree's foot is a small dark hole…it is filled up with dead leaves. This is the healing-well'.[18]

The earliest known reference to a significant tree on Isle Maree was given above: Pennant's 'stump of a tree…shewn as an altar'. This tree stump seems to have been held in veneration through its connection with the holy well. In fact, it originally appears to have simply been utilised as a convenient altar on which pilgrims attached their offerings to St Maelrubha after their visits to the saint's holy well. However, while the tree may have initially been ritually used because of its association with this well, it went on to outlive it; indeed, to supplant it. While the healing well of St Maelrubha fell out of use, leaving no visible trace of it behind, the ritual life of the tree continued.

While in 1775 Pennant describes how coins were deposited on a tree stump 'altar', later sources refer to a rag-tree at the site. Hartland describes how pilgrims, seeking a cure from the holy well of St Maelrubha, attached pieces of clothing to the nearby tree, and Barnett reports that they would tie rags or ribbons to its branches.[19] On Mitchell's visit to Isle Maree in 1863, the tree—now specified as oak (*Quercus*)—was apparently studded with nails: 'To each of these was originally attached a piece of the clothing of some patient who had visited the spot'.[20]

At some point during its ritual career, the tree of Isle Maree shed its rags and became predominantly a nail-tree, described in 1863 as being 'studded with nails'.[21] However, the tree on Isle Maree did not remain exclusively a nail-tree for long—if at all. Numerous other metal objects were reported to have been affixed to its bark: buckles, screws, 'rusty iron fragments'.[22] In fact, Dixon reports the belief that 'any metal article' should be attached to the tree, whilst Godden remarks that by the time she visited the island in the 1890s, 'the driving in of a bit of metal is the only necessary act'.[23]

However, by the late 1800s one particular metal votive object had come to the fore: the coin. The sources indicate that, for as long as the tree and holy well on Isle Maree have been ritually employed, coins have been deposited there. When the tree was still predominantly a rag-tree, it appears that the pilgrims would also leave coins as an offering on the well.[24] The coins eventually began to be inserted into clefts and cracks in the bark of the rag-tree itself, rather than left beside the well, and by 1863, Mitchell was observing that 'Countless pennies and halfpennies are driven edge-ways into the wood'.[25]

Another (particularly notable) record of the Isle Maree coin-tree comes from the diary of Queen Victoria, who visited the island on her tour of Scotland in 1877. In an entry dated 17 September, the 58-year-old monarch penned the following:

> At half-past four Beatrice, the Duchess of Roxburghe, and I started on a four-oared rig, steered by Hormsby the landlord, a very nice, quiet, youngish man, and rowed to the Isle of Maree ("Eilan Maree"), which is not visible from the house, being concealed by some of the larger islands. Contrary to what is stated in the *Guide*, it is the smallest of them. It was delightful rowing through these wooded and rocky islands, with the blue, calm loch – not another sound but the oars – the lovely blue and purple distant hills on the one side, and the splendid peaks of Ben Sleach and its surrounding mountains on the other.
>
> The boat was pushed onshore, and we scrambled out and walked through the tangled underwood and thicket of oak, holly, beech, etc., which covers the islet, to the well, now nearly dry which is said to be celebrated for the cure of insanity. An old tree stands close to it, and into the bark of this it is the custom, from time immemorial, for everyone who goes there to insert with a hammer a copper coin, as a sort of offering to the saint who lived there in the eighth century, called Saint Maolruabh or Mulroy. The saint died near Applecross in 722, and is said to have rested under a rock, which is still shown, close to Torridon. Some say that the name of Maree was derived from "Mulroy", others from "Mary". We hammered some pennies into the tree, to the branches of which there are also rags and ribbons tied.[26]

By the time of Queen Victoria's visit to the island, the coin had become the prominent offering. Indeed, by the 1890s it was being referred to by writers as 'the money tree'.[27] By the 1920s, when lieutenant colonel and medical doctor George Edington wrote about his visit to the island,

no pins or nails were visible in the bark of the tree, only coins. So many coins, in fact, that Edington describes the tree as 'covered with metallic scales' (Fig. 2.1).[28] By then it was an indisputable coin-tree.

Fig. 2.1 The Isle Maree coin-tree, Wester Ross, Scotland (Photograph by author)

Fore, Co. Westmeath

Similar accounts describe a site across the Irish Sea in Co. Westmeath. Fore, a small village twenty miles west of Navan, is known in Irish as *Fobhar Feichin*: Feichin's Spring. It is named after St Feichin, who founded several monasteries across Ireland—such as on Omey Island, Co. Galway, and Termonfeckin, Co. Louth. His monastery at Fore, however, was his first and largest, housing at least 300 monks at the height of its renown. Despite the village's small size, it contains several significant historical and religious sites: a thirteenth-century Benedictine Priory, two towers, two gateways, a fifteenth-century anchorite's cell, the remains of a mill, and a holy well, to name but a few. It is also well known for its 'Seven Wonders', which are listed on a large information board in the village car park: Water which will not boil, wood which will not burn, water which flows uphill, the abbey in a quaking bog, a mill without a race, the anchorite in a stone, and the stone raised by St Feichin's prayers.[29]

It is the first two of these 'Seven Wonders' which are of significance here. 'The water which will not boil' refers to St Feichin's Well, believed to be particularly curative for toothache and headache. There appears to be some confusion over the location of this well. In her work on Celtic sites, Elizabeth Rees describes it as a 'triangular structure, its walls formed by three great stone slabs', located on the path between the car park and the abbey. Elizabeth Healy, however, believes the well to be the circular stone structure in the enclosure beside the car park.[30] According to Healy, the triangular structure, referred to by Rees, is actually 'St Feichin's Bath', a stone-lined vat known as the *Doaghfeighin*. An information plaque beside this vat describes it as follows:

> Beneath an ash tree is Doaghfeighin, a box like structure built of huge stones. The name means St. Feichin's vat or keene. It is about 1.3 m square, and the side walls are each formed of one large stone. It is now dry but formerly contained water in which St. Feichin is said to have knelt in prayer. Delicate children were immersed in the water to obtain a cure through the invocation of St. Feichin.

There appears, therefore, to be two water structures associated with St Feichin: the holy well and St Feichin's vat, both of which were—and apparently still are—invoked for their reputed curative powers. They are also both associated with trees. Located within the actual holy well, now

dry, is both a stump and a living tree, and growing beside St Feichin's vat, some of its roots within the water, is another living tree. All three of these have been, at some point in history, embedded with coins.

'The wood which will not burn' refers to the stump situated within the holy well. It is a common description applied in Ireland to trees associated with holy wells, the water of which will often, according to tradition, not boil.[31] When this particular ash tree was still alive, it traditionally had three branches, representing the trinity and was—according to local belief—resistant to fire.

It is unclear when the practice of inserting coins into this tree began. Photographic evidence from the 1980s shows that the custom was prolific, even after the death of the tree. It fell in the 1990s and was removed by the local council. Local resident and business owner, Jane O'Reilly, was rather cryptic about where the coin-encrusted bole was removed *to*, assuring me that 'it's somewhere safe' and adding, tongue-in-cheek, that 'it wasn't burned'. She admits, however, that it should be on display in her coffee shop, which also acts as the Fore information centre.[32]

The stump of the original Fore coin-tree—the 'wood which will not burn'—still remains today, and on my visit there in 2012 it contained only two coins, both of which must have been inserted since the tree fell, for they date to 1999 and 2006. Growing above this stump—and concealing it—is a young ash tree, which was planted by the local council following the fall of the original, intended as a replacement. Today it is still customary to leave offerings at the tree, but coins are in the minority; affixed to its branches are all manner of objects: strips of fabric, socks, gloves, hair bobbles and clips, bra straps, key chains, baby's bibs, stockings, handkerchiefs, shoelaces, scarves, belts, pieces of string, sweet and crisp wrappers, a piece of tin foil, shoes, earrings and a toothbrush, to name only some examples. To be pedantic, this is not technically a coin-tree, but rather a rag-tree which also contains some coins.

Indeed, on the day of my visit, only seven coins were attached to this tree, and only one of these was actually inserted into the bark. Possibly believing that this tree is too young (and its limbs too narrow) to accommodate coin insertion, the participants have found other ways of attaching their coins. One coin is bound to the tree's trunk by a rag; another is inserted into the knot of a blue sock, which is tied to a branch; and the remaining four coins are contained in plastic bags—one of which is a sandwich bag—which are affixed to the branches.

Similarly, the living tree growing beside St Feichin's vat is not technically a coin-tree. Embedded into its bark, in a random distribution, were approximately 120 coins, but the bulk of the assemblage was made up of a seemingly random collection of objects: strips of fabric, socks, gloves, hair bobbles and clips, key rings, teddy bears, shoes, scarves, earrings, bracelets, a watch, a lighter, shoelaces, belts, rosary beads, pieces of string, a coat hanger, baby's bibs, stockings, sweet and crisp wrappers, bra straps, handkerchiefs, trainers, a broken umbrella, a Primark clothes label, a bridal veil—even insurance documents and a boarding pass from Latvia attached to the tree in a plastic wallet.

Clonenagh, Co. Laois

Less than 100 miles south of Fore is another site with a similar history: Clonenagh, Co. Laois. Three miles north-west of the town of Mountrath stands a sycamore. It perches on a grassy bank a few metres to the side of the R445, a busy road running between Dublin and Limerick. Close by is an interpretation panel set up by Laois County Council, which offers the following information about what it dubs 'St Fintan's Tree':

> This tree was planted 200 to 250 years ago, within the area of the ancient Monastery of Clonenagh.
>
> A well which also venerated the Saint was nearby. When the well was closed, a spring appeared in the fork of the tree and became the focal point for "patterns" (celebrations on the Saint's feast day) for many years.
>
> A custom developed of inserting coins into the bark of the tree, and it became known as the "Money Tree". Because of metallic poisoning and damage to the bark due to this custom, the tree has now gone into decay. But a number of shoots have been salvaged and it is hoped that these might prolong the life of the tree.
>
> Please refrain from inserting any metal into the tree or damaging it in any way.
>
> Saint Fintan pray for us.

This information plaque clearly demonstrates a deep-seated connection between the tree and St Fintan, a sixth- and seventh-century Irish saint who is believed to have founded the monastic community of Clonenagh.

This was a powerful house in the early Middle Ages, but by the twelfth century was probably employed more as a parish church than as a monastery, and today there are no visible remains of the foundation, other than a few mounds.[33]

According to local historian Roe there was once a 'fine spring well' nearby, which was 'always the subject of great veneration among the country people'. This veneration continued until the mid-nineteenth century when it was purportedly filled in by the landowner, a Protestant farmer who was 'annoyed by the number of people who visited this well'.[34] According to local legend, St Fintan subsequently diverted this spring from the farmer's land to a hollow in the nearby sycamore tree: St Fintan's Tree, which became known as the 'Well in the tree'.[35] A photograph taken by Father Francis Browne in 1933 shows a priest sitting in the branches surrounding this hollow, possibly having just made an offering of his own.[36]

The veneration awarded to the Clonenagh tree subsequently led to its employment as a rag-tree. People made wishes with the water from the well and then tied a rag or ribbon to the tree's branches,[37] and this is clearly evident in Father Browne's photographs. It is unclear when the tradition of affixing rags was replaced by the custom of inserting coins, but it must have occurred between the 1930s—no coins are visible in Father Browne's photograph of the tree—and the 1990s, for at the time Harbison was writing his work on pilgrimage in Ireland in 1991, there were apparently 'thousands of coins hammered into the tree by passers-by'.[38] When the tree died and fell in 1994, the practice of coin insertion had become so prolific that the tree is described as having been densely packed with coins to a height of two metres.[39]

Ardboe, Co. Tyrone

Over the border in Northern Ireland, 150 miles north of the Clonenagh tree, is another historic coin-tree. Ardboe, Co. Tyrone, has hosted two trees of cultural significance, one replacing the other. The original, known locally as the 'wishing tree' or the 'pin-tree', was one of several beech (*Fagus*) trees standing within the Old Cross graveyard, in close vicinity to Ardboe High Cross, the tallest cross in Northern Ireland.[40] The original tree had probably been planted in the mid nineteenth

century by Christopher Treanor whose residence stood adjacent to the graveyard. It is both possible, although difficult to prove, that this tree was planted to replace an earlier healing or wishing tree, and that it was planted on the site of a former holy well, both theories proposed by local historian and author Pat Grimes.[41]

This coin-tree was initially a rag-tree. Mr. C. D. Deane, the former Deputy Director of Belfast Museum and Art Gallery, was quoted in the *Mid Ulster Mail* in 1959 as describing the coin-tree as having been originally adorned with rags, which 'were not merely offerings, they were riddances, the putting away of the evils impending or incurred by sin or sickness'. Deane also describes how rainwater would collect in a hole in the tree, in which the sick would bathe their faces hoping for cures.[42]

By the 1940s, local tradition held that warts and lumps could be cured by pricking them with a pin and then inserting that pin into the tree,[43] but many other objects were also inserted. Francis Quinn, the caretaker of the Old Cross of Ardboe—and consequently also the tree—describes the site:

> [The] tree, filled with pins, pennies, nails, buttons, and such things, is called the wishing tree or pin tree. It was there in my father's and grandfather's time. Everybody that comes here puts in a pin or a nail or any such thing and makes a wish.[44]

Eight years later, in an article in the *Mid Ulster Observer*, Francis Quinn was interviewed again concerning this tree: 'When asked if the wishes came true, Francis only smiled and declared that he did not know. He did add that young girls often wished for a husband but he had never heard tell of the tree proving obliging in this respect'.[45] Three years later, when Deane's talk on the Old Cross of Ardboe was broadcast, he described how 'the bark is stained with the rust of a thousand pieces of metal: hairpins, safety-pins, pennies, nails, bolts and even a military badge, the personal offerings of a wishful public'.

Reading 'Superstition' Backwards

As the above cases illustrate, the custom of inserting coins into trees is not a novel one. The Bolton Abbey forester had not instigated an unprecedented custom—and neither had the dental nurse at Hardcastle Crags, nor the local boys at Fairy Glen. Indeed, the practice of using trees as receptacles for coins is at least two centuries old, with Pennant's

1775 account of Isle Maree being the earliest *known* reference. However, even in the 1700s a custom would not simply occur 'out of the blue'. So what factors led to the emergence of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century coin-tree practice?

This is certainly not the first attempt made to unravel an obscure practice or, to use Prudence Jones and Nigel Pennick's term, an 'undeciphered tradition'.[46] Schama writes of how the 'curious excavator of traditions stumbles over something protruding above the surface of the commonplaces of contemporary life. He scratches away, discovering bits and pieces of a cultural design that seems to elude coherent reconstruction'.[47] But when faced with such seemingly undecipherable customs, it can be difficult to know where to begin. How do we unravel a custom's origins?

Archbishop Richard Whately, a theologian writing in the nineteenth century, offered his solution to the problem: 'almost every system of superstition, in order to be rightly understood, should be (if I may so speak) read backwards'.[48] He advised the investigator to cast their gaze rearward, to trace a custom back chronologically. To read the 'superstition' backwards. The assumption here is that a person who participates in a custom will have been influenced by their (conscious or subconscious) awareness of pre-existing practices and beliefs.

'Accessing what and why people believe in certain things is a difficult enough exercise to conduct among the living, never mind the long dead.'[49] Lizanne Henderson's words here sum up one of the historian's greatest challenges. Beliefs are notoriously difficult to write about, impossible as they are to quantify. However, it is possible to measure the externalised expressions of beliefs via their physical manifestations.[50] Ritual or 'magical' objects, and how people engage with them, prove invaluable in our understanding of beliefs. Therefore, to 'read the coin-tree backwards', I turned to their physical structures.

As Robert Friedel observes, 'it is ironic that studies of material culture should so neglect the actual materials that go into creating culture',[51] a criticism repeated by Ian Hodder, who notes 'there is very little detailed description of artifacts in much of the literature dealing with materiality'.[52] The same error will not be made here. Therefore, in order to historicise the coin-tree, these structures will be *excavated*. They will be treated as sites to be unearthed, as artefacts to be dissected and analysed. And a mental dismantling of the coin-tree leaves two distinct, tangible components: the tree and the coin, both of which possess a wealth of ritual and folkloric associations. The next section of this chapter will trace the history of these associations in an attempt to contextualise the coin-tree.

The Tree in Ritual

There is certainly no lack of literature detailing tree rituals worldwide.[53] However, even a cursory review of this would result in a piece of work longer than the book itself, so focus will remain on the customs of Britain and Ireland. There is some material evidence concerning the ritual uses of trees in prehistory, the most significant find being the Norfolk timber circle, popularly known as 'Seahenge', dated to the twenty-first century BC. In 1998, a sub-circular ring of 55 oak timbers, surrounding the roots and base of an oak, buried upside-down, was discovered at Holme-next-the-Sea.[54] Several theories have been proposed for the structure's ritual uses, with particular focus on the significance of the inverted oak. For example, it has been suggested that the structure may have been used as an altar for funereal rites, the inversion of the oak symbolising the inversion of life (i.e. death).[55] Another theory is that by inverting the oak, the original creators of the structure could have intended for the tree's 'life force' to return to the earth, while it has also been suggested that the whole site was created as a shrine to the trees themselves.[56]

We know that trees were central features of Romano-Celtic rituals.[57] The Celtic word *nemeton*, which came to mean 'roofed shrine', has been translated as originally meaning 'grove', and many temples in Roman Britain appear to have been erected around or beside sacred trees.[58] Such ritual uses of trees prove to be highly adaptable and subject to recontextualisation, and nowhere is this more clearly evident than in the rise of Christianity. Michael Bintley, for example, traces the Christian adoption of the symbol of the tree; from the many trees marked with crosses, to the ceremonies of Royal Oak Day and the figure of the 'Green Man' so frequently portrayed in church architecture, Bintley demonstrates that the mutability of tree symbolism is clearly evident in history.[59]

Numerous catalogues of European folkloric customs, dating from the late nineteenth century to the modern day, explore the myriad beliefs and rituals surrounding trees, from the wish-rod to the Christmas tree; from the kissing bough to the Yule log.[60] There are also numerous works that focus entirely on the historic beliefs and rituals of trees in Britain and Ireland, most notably James Wilks' *Trees in Britain and Ireland in History and Legend*. While Wilks does not cite any references, unfortunately providing no primary sources to draw upon, he does present a vast catalogue of examples, detailing the tree's usage in religious ritual, such

as Gospel Oaks under which the parish would congregate whilst passages from the gospel were recited, as well as listing numerous examples of beliefs and customs associated with different tree species.[61]

Geoffrey Grigson also provides information on the folkloric qualities attributed to different species. In his work, *The Englishman's Flora*, which is essentially a botanical encyclopaedia, he details the physical appearance of certain trees, their cultural histories and how they have been variously utilised in Britain and Ireland. The oak (*Quercus robur*), for example, is given three pages of description, which contain details of its use in popular medicine and its perceived sacredness.[62] Also useful for tracing the historical associations and ritual uses of the tree in Britain and Ireland is Keith Thomas' *Man and the Natural World*, a diachronic exploration of the shifting perspectives of British society towards trees. In his chapter on 'The Worship of Trees', he describes how, in the early modern period, trees and woodland were increasingly imbued with symbolic value. From the eighteenth century onwards, they became emblematic of a community's continuity, of the nation's strength and of a family's ancestry.[63]

Throughout the literature, however, the most common use of trees in British and Irish folkloric practices is shown to be remedial. The most widespread practice of using trees for healing is that of the rag-tree: a tree or bush affixed with strips of cloth and other objects. Notably these are more common within Catholic communities, in which votive offerings were (and still are: see Chapter 5) a staple of religious practice. It is probably no coincidence that the early coin-trees detailed above were located in areas where Catholicism remained popular: Ireland and the Scottish Highlands. It is certainly suggestive that no early coin-trees appear to have existed—or at least proliferated—in areas of Protestant dominance.

Rag-trees are usually associated with holy wells, of which there are myriad examples across Britain and Ireland.[64] One practice linking holy wells with rag-trees posits that, once a pilgrim had resorted to a holy well for a remedy, they were then expected to deposit a token of thanks to the well's presiding saint. Trees located within close proximity to the well provided convenient 'altars' upon which the pilgrim could deposit their offering,[65] and were just one example of the many receptacles employed for this purpose, which ranged from beneath stones and within the wells themselves, to purpose-built repositories.[66] In some cases, trees

were used as substitute repositories for earlier altars. Pennant, for example, suggests that the tree stump 'altar' on Isle Maree was 'probably the memorial of one of stone',[67] while at Gougane Barra, Co. Cork, a tree appears to have replaced an earlier cross as a receptacle of offerings.

Substituting the Sacred: Gougane Barra

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, several hundred pilgrims would flock annually to the island of Gougane Barra for the Eve of St John's feast, a pilgrimage described by Irish folklorist Thomas Crofton Croker, who partook in the celebrations there in 1813. He recounted the following scenes:

> It was not without difficulty that we forced our way through the crowd on the shore of the lake, to the wall of the chapels on the island, where we stood amid an immense concourse of people: the interior of the cells were filled with men and women in various acts of devotion, almost all of them on their knees; some, with hands uplifted, prayed in loud voices, using considerable gesticulation, and others, in a less noisy manner, rapidly counted the beads of their rosary, or, as it is called by the Irish peasant, their pathereen, with much apparent fervour… Adjoining the causeway, part of the water of the lake was inclosed and covered in as well, by which name it was distinguished…Within, the well was crowded to excess, probably seven or eight persons, some with their arms, some with their legs thrust down into the water, exhibiting the most disgusting sores and shocking infirmities. When those within came out, their places were as instantly filled by others. Some there were who had waited two or three hours before they could obtain access to this "healing fount." The blind, the cripple, and the infirm jostled and retarded each other in their efforts to approach; whilst women and boys forced their way about, offering the polluted water of the well for sale, in little glass bottles, the bottom of broken jugs and scallop shells, to those whose strength did not permit them to gain this sacred spot…[68]

Croker proceeds to give a detailed account of the nightlong dancing and excessive drinking which invariably followed these rites. He does not reference any custom involving a tree, but he does refer to a wooden pole standing in the centre of the Pilgrim's Terrace, which was apparently all that remained of a large cross that once stood there. Croker describes the popular custom of attaching votive rags and bandages to this wooden

pole, 'by those whose faith has made them whole, intended as acknowledgements of their cure'—and these rags and bandages were affixed to the pole by nails, causing it to be 'braced with many pieces of iron'.

These 'pagan rituals' were banned in 1818 by the Catholic Bishop of Cork, John Murphy. However, this does not appear to have deterred pilgrims from attaching their offerings to the wooden post in the Pilgrim's Terrace, and then to the replacement wooden cross which was commissioned by Fr. Patrick Hurley, the parish priest, in the early 1900s.[69] By this time, the rags and 'many pieces of iron' seem to have been replaced by coins, and as the cross became too densely embedded, people turned to the ash tree which stood in the main cells enclosure—which fell in a storm in 1973 and its remains removed.[70] But the custom continued; seven other trees scattered across the small island are currently being embedded with coins. This method of substitution is certainly not atypical. In many cases, one tree dies and another is adopted as its replacement.[71] Hartland, appearing rather disapproving of this process, notes that 'the reason for the sacredness of many trees or wells has passed from memory; and it has consequently been natural to substitute any tree or any well for a particular one'.[72]

In some cases, depositors have had to be quite imaginative. At Doon Well, Co. Donegal, for example, which was resorted to for cures during the nineteenth century, there was a nearby hazel (*Corylus*) used as a rag-tree. This tree eventually became too heavily adorned with rags to admit new additions, but the well was situated in a largely treeless landscape, so there was no convenient replacement. In answer to this problem, people began embedding crutches (a popular deposit indicating a successful cure)[73] into the ground beside the well, and subsequent visitors began attaching their rags to these instead.[74]

According to these—and many more—examples, trees are presented as incidental to the custom; they were simply convenient structures in close proximity to holy wells.[75] In many cases, however, trees do appear to have developed more significance.[76] Indeed, numerous holy wells were named after trees, such as 'Ash well', 'Holly well', and 'Oak well', and in some cases, the trees do seem to have been essential to the efficacy of the wells.[77] At Easter Rarichie, Ross and Cromarty, for example, there was a well believed to cure tuberculosis so long as a certain tree stood beside it. When this tree was felled the well purportedly lost its power, and the same occurred when two trees fell beside a well near

Perth in 1770.[78] However, trees are more commonly believed integral to this custom due to the protection they offer. Trees were often utilised as apotropaic devices, and several different species, most notably ash, were believed to function as protective agents in the early modern period, planted beside wells as guardians to ward off fairies and witches.[79]

The Rag-Tree

The rag-tree, therefore, was most probably not utilised merely as a convenient recipient of offerings, an incidental companion to the holy well; it was, in most cases, vital to the custom through properties it possessed itself. In some cases, however, the tree was given these properties *by* a holy well, by partaking in its sanctity.[80] This may be literal as well as symbolic; in some cases, the water is believed to have transferred from the well to the tree. At Easter Rarichie, for example, the healing spring known as Sul na Ba flowed through the tree trunk mentioned above, endowing that tree with curative properties,[81] whilst the Clonenagh coin-tree (above) likewise demonstrates this process.

This transference of sanctity from water to tree not only imbues the latter with power, but allows it to establish itself as a ritual structure independent from the holy well, so that it may subsequently outlive it. There is, for example, a site on the River Sullane, the Republic of Ireland, where, despite the holy well having run dry, the surrounding briar bushes are still heavily affixed with rags.[82] The Isle Maree and Clonenagh (and possibly Ardboe) case studies offer examples of rag/nail-trees surviving the loss of holy wells, and thus outliving them. It is also not uncommon for a tree to replace desecrated or polluted holy wells as the objects of people's veneration, thus becoming 'holy wells' themselves.[83]

Just as central to the rag-tree custom is the rag itself. They were not always simple offerings of thanks, deposited by the pilgrims in exchange for the cure they hoped to receive, but were sometimes perceived as integral to the cure. To some it appears that pieces of clothing were fastened to trees in the belief that as the cloth rotted, the pilgrim's ailment would also fade.[84] Another theory holds that the rag, the remnant of an item of clothing still metonymically linked to its wearer, absorbs the curative spirit of the tree and transfers this back to the pilgrim through contact magic.[85]

Regarding the custom in Britain and Ireland, however, it is more popularly believed that a person's clothing contains their ailments, and by attaching parts of them to a tree, that ailment is transferred to the tree. The rag therefore becomes, as Hartland terms it, the 'vehicle of the disease'.[86] This notion is an example of contagious transfer, a subcategory of Frazer's sympathetic magic, whereupon a 'person is supposed to influence vegetation sympathetically. He infects trees or plants with qualities or accidents, good or bad, resembling and derived from his own'.[87]

Additionally, objects were not only attached to trees; they were also inserted into them, in what Wayland Hand describes as a 'more intimate kind of transference, namely, the implantation of disease'. Hand lists three forms of implantation: 'plugging', 'nailing', and 'wedging', all three of which involve physically inserting objects—which he terms *Zwischenträger*; the intermediate agents—into the bark of a tree in order to 'plug' a disease beneath its bark.[88] In the example given by Forster above, the pigs' teeth are the intermediate agents used for plugging toothache into the tree, but other objects were similarly implanted.

Nail-clippings, for example, were used in the remedy for toothache. By wrapping toe- and fingernails in tissue paper and inserting them into a slit in the bark of an ash tree before sunrise, the depositor was assured to never suffer from toothache again.[89] Ague and whooping cough, on the other hand, were cured by plugging a lock of the patient's hair into a hole bored into a tree, whilst another practice involved making a slit in the bark, placing the patient's blood into it, and then wedging the slit closed. If the blood was taken from a wart, for example, then the wart would be cured.[90]

Metal pins or nails, however, were the most popular 'vehicles of disease' in this ritual of implantation. Knocking nails into an oak tree was a well-known remedy for toothache in Cornwall; the toothache was believed to transfer into the tree, from the sufferer, through the nail. Pins were also employed as cures for warts; inserted into each wart, then into the bark of an ash tree, it was believed to transfer the affliction to the tree.[91]

The reason for implanting an object into a tree as opposed to simply affixing it to a branch is fairly obvious; implantation is considered more 'intimate', and as the disease is implanted *into* the tree this probably assures a higher chance of transference. The popularity of metal pins

and nails is also quite obvious; although these objects are less 'intimate' than teeth, fingernails, locks of hair and blood, they are far more easily inserted due to their sharp, narrow points. However, there may be an even more incidental reason for the popularity of pins and nails as vehicles of transference.

In the 1945 edition of the *Folklore* journal, an anonymous contributor describes the 'Beaumont Tree' of Silsoe, Bedfordshire, as follows:

> Until thirty or forty years before (i.e. before 1880–90) people in the district suffering from ague would nail strands of their hair or toe nail clippings to the tree, to effect a cure…Digging about with my pocket knife in the decayed wood I found a number of old square handmade nails deep in the trunk and one with a wisp of hair still wound round it…The other tree was alive and healthy and also had one or two nails in it. They were protruding from the bark and so could not have been knocked in at a very remote date.[92]

In this example, hair and toenail clippings are implanted into the tree, but they are held in place by nails. As the hair and toenails decay over time, the metal nails remain in place until they are the only objects left implanted into the tree. This may influence how later pilgrims participate in the custom; if they see only metal nails inserted into the bark then they may believe that the practice is simply to insert metal nails (such as the later depositors of nails in the tree close to Beaumont's Tree).

The same process may have occurred at rag-trees. On Isle Maree, for example, Hartland describes how the tree was originally 'covered with nails, to each of which was formerly attached a portion of the clothing of an afflicted person'.[93] Metal nails transitioned from being fastenings for rags to being offerings themselves, due to matters of convenience or the simple misinterpretation of a custom. Could this incidental process also account for why, at Isle Maree, Clonenagh and Ardboe, coins eventually became the primary intermediate agents of implantation?

The Coin in Ritual

Robin Osborne, in his article on hoards and votive offerings, laments the generic researcher's 'curious unwillingness to acknowledge the central importance of the dedicated object' in deducing the beliefs behind a custom.[94] This unwillingness, he suggests, stems from three factors: as well

as our apparent reluctance to study what people believed, there is also our supposed privileging of the individual object over the assemblage and the difficulties involved in proving that an object has actually been dedicated rather than simply lost or discarded.

How can one recognise a dedicated object? Ralph Merrifield offers his opinion: the ritual deposit is an object 'deliberately deposited for no obviously practical purpose, but rather to the detriment of the depositor, who relinquishes something that is often at least serviceable and perhaps valuable for no apparent reason'.[95] Another criterion, which aids in the distinction between deliberate deposition and accidental loss, is proposed by Ken Dowden who advocates the significance of quantity.[96] However, specifications designed to distinguish the ritual from the utilitarian are guilty of identifying dedicated objects by default; as Joanna Brück observes in her paper on ritual and rationality, artefacts 'which cannot be ascribed a practical role often come to be interpreted as evidence for ritual practices'. Brück argues that a deposited artefact with a perceived lack of functionality does not necessarily constitute a votive object; functionality is after all, as she asserts, 'always culturally defined'.[97]

Brück, however, is applying this theory to artefacts from the middle Bronze Age. This book, on the other hand, considers largely contemporary objects, which makes a significant difference. Not only are we better equipped to interpret action undertaken in our own times and cultures, but in the case of the contemporary coin-tree, the motives of the depositors can be ascertained through direct engagement with them (see Chapters 3 and 4). Taking all of this into consideration, therefore, there can be little doubt that the coins inserted into coin-trees are 'ritual' deposits. Intentionality is certainly evident. There is no conceivable practical purpose for their insertion into these trees; they are serviceable objects; and there are a multitude (in some cases, tens of thousands) of examples in each tree.

However, the question remains, as asked by Osborne: 'Why did anyone think that depositing this or that particular object or group of objects was an appropriate way of marking or establishing communications with transcendent powers?'[98] Some dedicated objects were obviously designed and crafted *as* dedicated objects—medieval pilgrim badges, for example, or candles adorned with Christian imagery. For other dedicated objects, however, this is not the case, and the coin of the coin-tree falls into this category. It is an object that was made for secular, everyday use and has been converted into an item suitable for ritual.[99]

Why, though, is the coin deemed suitable in such an exchange? This is no doubt in part due to the plethora of other such ritual exchanges for which the coin has been utilised; the coin is, after all, one of history's most popular votive offerings. Coins have been a highly common ritual deposit in Britain since the Roman period, with caches discovered containing hundreds—some even thousands, such as at Lydney, Gloucestershire; Hallaton, south-east Leicestershire; and the sacred spring at Bath—of votive coins.[100] The coin was also an object regularly deposited in springs, lakes and wells, as propitiatory 'sacrifices' to malignant water spirits or as offerings to deities and, later, saints.[101]

The coin's association with luck and good fortune has also enjoyed a long history. A coin of Trajan (r. 98–117 AD), for example, was discovered in the mast-step of a second-century AD Roman boat from Blackfriars, London, probably placed there for luck,[102] while thirty gold and silver coins were found in association with skeletons on the ship *The Mary Rose*, believed to have been carried on board for good luck.[103] Another tradition contended that a coin should always be placed in the pocket of any new article of clothing in order to attract future fortune and in Victorian belief any receptacle for money should always contain at least a halfpenny to prevent the Devil from bringing poverty. These beliefs have evolved today into the custom of never gifting a purse without placing coins inside.[104] Many other coin-related traditions continue to be observed; coins are still employed as talismans and continue to be considered symbols of luck: you are purportedly ensured good luck if you 'find a penny and pick it up'; place a coin in every corner of your house; toss a coin into a fountain; cook a coin in your Christmas pudding, and so on and so forth.

The 'bowed' or 'crooked' coin—a coin deliberately bent—is one of the most widespread coin-centred customs in Britain, and it was utilised for a number of purposes. To fold a penny in half was a popular sickbed rite; accompanied by prayers, coins were often bent while held over a reclining patient.[105] This rite, however, was employed for more than healing; bowed coins were considered good luck charms and apotropaic devices. From the sixteenth century onwards, such coins were carried, worn or given as gifts to protect against bad luck.[106] As Charles Hardwick observes, in folk notions, 'crooked things are lucky things',[107] and this belief is evident in several traditions. During the reign of King Edward I (r. 1272–1307), pennies were ritually bent once a year to ensure the welfare of the king's hawks,[108] whilst in Yorkshire, bowed

coins were utilised as charms against witchcraft; if a dairymaid, for example, was having difficulty churning butter—a difficulty often attributed to witchcraft—she would drop a crooked sixpence into the cream to ward off malevolent forces.[109]

An equally common motivation behind the bending of a coin was the confirmation of a vow. In Thomas Killigrew's seventeenth-century play, *Thomaso*, the main character refers to 'the bowed Two-pence' whilst speaking of a vow, and the fact that this custom was mentioned only in passing implies that it was relatively well known.[110] These vows were usually made during prayers to saints, imploring their help and promising, in exchange for their prayers being answered, to go on pilgrimage to the saint's shrine, taking the bowed coin with them as an offering. The bending of the coin in this case, therefore, is to distinguish it from other coins; the vow-maker has promised to offer that particular coin.[111]

The bending of a coin seems to have derived from the pagan practice of sacrificing an object to be devoted.[112] There is much material evidence for the sacrificing of inanimate objects, recognisable as 'sacrifices' due to a destructive element evinced by the material record.[113] Examples of this include the votive bending of weapons and tools, such as the deliberately broken or bent metal objects deposited during the Iron Age in the lake at Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey and during the early Roman period in the Waltham Abbey hoard, Essex.[114]

The physical destruction of objects is central to the act of offering them, for it makes them irretrievable to the depositor, nullifies their secular value and thus wholly dedicates them to their spiritual cause.[115] Brück also suggests that intentional destruction, which she terms 'fragmentation', can be 'thought to facilitate transformation from one state to another': in the case of a coin, therefore, the act of damaging it may be to aid its transition from secular item to ritual deposit.[116]

The most common folkloric use of coins in Britain was in folk medicine, and another notable example of this was the touch-piece. From the time of Edward the Confessor (r. 1042–66) to Queen Anne (r. 1702–14), English monarchs would ritually 'touch' and purportedly heal patients suffering from scrofula, a form of tuberculosis known as 'King's or Queen's Evil', so named for the belief that only the monarch could cure it. The patient would be presented with a touch-piece, a coin pierced with a hole and hung on a white ribbon, which would be worn by the patient, supposedly effecting a cure. If they removed the touch-piece the disease would return.[117]

Prior to the fifteenth century, a variety of silver or gold coins was used in this ritual, but in 1464 the 'angel' was minted. It was the smallest gold coin in circulation, so named for the image it bore of the Archangel Michael.[118] A pamphlet written in 1686, *The Ceremonies for the Healing of Them that be Diseased with the King's Evil used in the Time of King Henry VII,* describes the ritual in which it was used: 'the king shall be crossing the sore of the sick Person, with an Angel of Gold Noble, and the sick Person to have the same Angel hang'd about his neck, and to wear it until he be full whole'.[119] This ritual is also referred to in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, in which Malcolm describes how 'a golden stamp'—the 'angel'—was used by the king in healing ceremonies: 'The mere despair of surgery, he cures, Hanging a golden stamp about their necks'.[120]

This use of coins as charms is hardly without precedent; there is a wealth of archaeological evidence for the physical modification of coins in order to wear them as amulets and talismans, such as piercing them with holes and hanging them by a cord, from the late-antique period until the twentieth century.[121] During the late Middle Ages soldiers also wore coins for protection on the battlefield, either around their necks or attached to their helmets.[122] Other beliefs imbue coins with what Henry Maguire terms 'extramonetary powers'[123]; coins given at Holy Communion, for example, were believed to cure rheumatism if rubbed on the sufferer's body and worn around the neck as a cure for epilepsy.[124]

In some cases, specific coins were employed in folk medicine. The 'Lockerby Penny' is one example; this was a flat piece of silver owned by a family in Lockerbie, Dumfries and Galloway, which was widely esteemed as a remedy for madness in cattle. The family would loan the 'penny' to other farmers in the area, who would dip the coin into the afflicted animal's drinking water.[125] There was a similar coin in Northumberland, the 'Black Penny', which was a coin or medal owned by a family at Hume-Byers, used to cure madness in cattle and borrowed by farmers across Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire.[126]

Is there a reason coins were so often imbued with these 'extramonetary powers'? Grahame Clark notes that a material 'owes its status to physical attributes', a notion shared by Daniel Miller, who advises that any analysis of an artefact must 'begin with its most obvious characteristic'.[127] Because coins are such ubiquitous, commonplace objects, we tend to not look at them in any great detail. In fact, because coins are largely perceived as denotations of value, they are viewed as currency as

opposed to material objects, and it becomes easy to overlook their physical attributes.[128] However, it may be these physical attributes which give coins what Hall terms their 'amuletic quality'.[129]

Stephen Deng, for instance, believes that it was the coins' combination of metal, royal effigy, and 'magical' inscription that made them suitable for healing rites.[130] Taking his first point, the physical material of a coin plays a large role in its 'amuletic quality'. Certain materials have been widely regarded as special, and the association between metal-making and magic is evident throughout history,[131] with Mircea Eliade dedicating an entire chapter, entitled 'Divine Smiths and Civilizing Heroes', to the privileged positions of smiths worldwide and the sense of mysticism surrounding them.[132]

In Britain and Ireland, metal—particularly iron or steel—was considered apotropaic, often employed to ward off fairies or witches.[133] It was believed that no fairy would steal a child with a steel needle in its cap, while other metal objects were displayed within the home as repellents for malevolent forces: iron nails in the board of a bed; a reaping hook beneath the window; a horseshoe nailed to the wall.[134] It has been suggested that the protective powers of these metal objects stems from the time when iron was a new and mysterious metal, and was thus imbued with supernatural properties.[135]

Iron was also considered remedial. Lucy Broadwood, writing in the late 1800s, considered how pieces of the metal were frequently placed into water because it was believed to give it a tonic property: 'Was the custom of throwing pins, needles, and other metal things into Holy or Wishing Wells originally started with the idea of strengthening the drinker?', she asks and this may indeed have been one reason behind the custom.[136] However, other metals were more widely considered curative.

The touch-piece was a *gold* coin not simply because of the material's monetary value but because gold was widely held to be naturally curative, and the constant contact of the gold touch-piece with the skin of the patient as it hung at the neck may have been a primary factor in the curing of these patients: a form of 'Metallotherapy'.[137] Indeed, there are numerous examples of gold being utilised as a remedy. Roger Bacon, a thirteenth-century Franciscan friar, maintained that the consumption of gold ensured good health and longevity,[138] whilst Paracelsus, a sixteenth-century physician and alchemist, asserted that *aurum potabile*, a formula for drinkable gold, could cure even the Black Death.[139]

Similarly, in nineteenth-century Scotland, water into which a piece of gold had been deposited, known as *Uisge Or* or Long John, was used widely as a panacea, either drunk or applied as a lotion.[140] Also in the nineteenth century, golden rings were popularly used as remedies for a wide variety of ailments, from warts to bacterial infections. According to folklorist William Black, writing in the 1880s, 'the virtues of a gold wedding ring for curts, warts, and styes, are celebrated throughout Christendom'.[141]

The majority of coins deposited in holy wells—and, indeed, coin-trees—however, are not gold but copper. However, like gold, copper is a material widely imbued with apotropaic and remedial properties. Copper amulets were worn for protection against danger and disease, and medieval skeletons have been discovered wearing copper-alloy bracelets believed to reduce swelling, or copper-alloy plates, possibly employed as talismans chosen for their curative properties[142]—curative properties which are, in fact, supported by science.[143] It was possibly because of these properties that Bald's *Leechbook*, an Old English medical text, stipulates the ingredients for numerous remedies should be mixed and stored in brass (a copper–zinc alloy) vessels.[144] This belief most likely led to the popularity of copper as a therapeutic agent, in the form of copper bracelets, during the nineteenth century, a practice which survives to the present day.[145]

The royal effigy engraved on most coins is also considered highly contributive to the coin's 'extramonetary powers' and 'amuletic quality', as a form of image magic.[146] From the classical through to the Byzantine periods, the images of rulers depicted on coins were considered to be protective agents,[147] and the belief that monarchs are endowed with protective, curative powers is a particularly long-standing one. Vespasian (r. 69–79 AD), for instance, was said to have restored sight to the blind and healed the limbs of the lame, and the royal touch continued to be viewed as particularly efficacious far beyond antiquity—as is evident in touch-piece ceremonies.[148]

In England, coinage was imprinted with the royal effigy in recognisable form from the reign of Henry VII (r. 1485–1509), and this effigy—an undeniable connection with a monarch who, by divine right, wielded the power to heal—endowed coins with curative powers. Crowns and half-crowns bearing the effigy of Charles I (r. 1625–1649) were handed down from one generation to the next in the Shetland Islands until the

nineteenth century, believed to be remedies against scrofula; whilst in Scotland, coins minted during the reign of Queen Victoria (r. 1837–1901) were regarded as panaceas simply because they bore the Queen's image.[149]

The coin's preternatural potency, therefore, is in part due to the protective properties of the royal effigy as well as the materials from which it is made. However, whilst an examination of the physical attributes of a coin has been illuminating in the consideration of its 'amuletic quality', I have run the risk of taking a material focus too far. In analysing the coin as a purely material object, we are neglecting the coin's equally significant abstract, representational qualities.[150] 'Money is what money does', remarks economist David Wolman and what money does is declare value.[151] No other object is quite so intrinsically linked with worth and, more importantly, with exchange. Coins are surrendered in exchange for commodities or services, and it is this very purpose which makes the coin a particularly suitable ritual deposit.[152]

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, participation in a ritual tends to imply a desire for something in return—a folk remedy, good luck, future fortune, the protection of a saint, spirit or deity, etc.—and so rituals necessarily follow the same basic, economic rules as secular exchange, as described by Arjun Appadurai: 'one's desire for an object is fulfilled by the sacrifice of some other object'.[153] When engaged in such an exchange, it is surely only natural to sacrifice the object most overtly and intrinsically associated with value and trade: the coin.

'In a commercial age,' writes Merrifield, 'coins tend to play an important part in the minor ritual practised by individuals'.[154] In simple terms, if a person wants something, it is assumed they will pay for it with money, and this modern-day mentality has spread from the secular realm into the spiritual. This exchange mentality is most evident with holy wells, into which coins were often thrown as 'payment' to the presiding spirit or saint. This custom has survived today in the form of the 'wishing well', widespread across Britain and Ireland.[155]

In some rituals, coins are unabashedly used for their financial worth. At holy wells, for instance, offerings were often cast into the wells themselves, but sometimes money was handed instead to the sites' guardians, the local parish priest, or placed in a box in a nearby church, in exchange for the use of the well.[156] Today especially money plays a large role in what John Eade and Michael Sallnow term 'sacred exchanges';

at modern-day pilgrimage sites, such as Lourdes in south-western France, 'cash donations to the shrine custodians, purchases of candles, alms to beggars, indeed all kinds of monetary offerings can be fully incorporated into the religious marketing circuits of the shrine'.[157] Individuals and institutions alike do not overlook the financial value of offerings.

Coins are, in conclusion, employed for such purposes because of their folkloric and historic associations, their physical attributes and their secular, everyday purposes, all of which culminate to produce the ideal object for ritual exchange. However, coins have not always been at the forefront of folkloric customs in Britain and Ireland. Although they are listed as items deposited in holy wells during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,[158] coins are just one type of offering amongst many, including rags, ribbons, beads, buckles, buttons, keys, to name only some.

Indeed, many holy wells appear to have contained no coins at all. In the late 1800s, Hartland described the contents of St Baglan's Well in Llanfaglan, Gwynedd, which was apparently emptied earlier in that century: 'two basins-full of pins were taken out, but no coin of any kind'.[159] Describing another holy well, in Perthshire, Hartland exhibits surprise upon discovering coins deposited there: 'Sometimes [participants] go as far as to throw away their halfpence', he exclaims, demonstrating that the deposition of a coin was perceived as an extreme form of participation in the nineteenth century.[160]

Pins do appear to have been, for a time, the predominant offering in holy wells. Indeed, in Robert Hope's list of English holy wells, pins are described as offerings in twenty cases, several of which are referred to as 'Pin Wells'. Coins, however, are only identified as offerings in five examples, and in such cases, these were coins of low denominations. Writing of St Boswell's Holy Well, Northumberland, Hope for example notes:

> a pilgrim of this present year of grace (1878) had duly paid his votive offering to the sacred spring, in the form of the very smallest current coin of the realm - *one farthing* - and returned home in full faith, apparently, that the cure of a near relative suffering from cancer would be effected…[161] (emphases in original)

An even greater preference for pins is evident in Francis Jones's catalogue of holy wells in Wales, in which 43 are described as containing pins, and only five with coins.[162] There were 'places in the country where pins may

be collected by the handful, particularly at holy wells', and their uses were many and varied: as offerings to the supernatural overseer of the well, for luck, to prophesise the future and for cures.[163]

Likewise, whilst the custom of affixing rags to trees was widespread throughout Britain and Ireland during the 1800s, only one nineteenth-century example of inserting *coins* into trees has been identified: Isle Maree. Indeed, the Isle Maree tree appears to have been employed as a rag-tree for many years prior to its emergence as a coin-tree. Evidently, strips of cloth were deemed more appropriate offerings than coins during this time, and it is not surprising that most nineteenth-century participants (in contrast with twenty-first-century participants) were more willing to part with rags than with coins.

Value is subjective, and although the economic worth of a coin may appear fixed and stable, it is as fluid and mutable as any other object. Factors such as income, gender, social class and personality traits greatly influence how an individual perceives the value of money.[164] Just as the value of money varies from person to person, it is also contingent upon time period. Inflation has meant that a coin's worth will inevitably decrease over time. A study by the Office for National Statistics of the consumer price index from 1750 to 2003 demonstrates that average prices have gradually been multiplied by 140; and as prices increase, the value of a coin decreases. A one decimal penny, for example, would have had greater purchasing power in 1750 than a £1 in the 2000s.[165]

In the past, therefore, coins were more valuable and less ubiquitous, and it is unsurprising that nineteenth-century participants would be less inclined than a modern-day participant to part with a one-penny piece. On the other hand, objects such as rags, nails, pins, locks of hair and fingernails were more readily accessible and disposable than coins, making them far more convenient offerings. And, as mentioned briefly above, convenience plays a large role in rituals of deposition.

In Walhouse's study of rag-trees, he observed that depositors are not always prepared; they may by necessity source their deposit from 'any trivial objects ready at hand—horns, bones, tufts of hair, shreds, and the like'.[166] However, Walhouse was writing in the late nineteenth century about global, historic customs ranging from China to the 'New World'. Horns, bones and tufts of hair may have been 'trivial objects ready at hand' in those contexts, but probably not in modern-day Britain.

Henderson offers an example of certain objects being more convenient than others in a British context. St Mary's Well, Culloden, was visited by pilgrims who believed that drinking water from the well and then depositing a coin ensured good luck for the following year. George Henderson, observing the rites performed at this site in c.1899, describes a group of boys who drank from the well:

> But, alas! the ceremony is left in some degree uncompleted, for on examination it is found that no member of the group possesses a solitary copper. This part of the rule is thereupon brushed aside. But the tying of pieces of cloth on the tree is strictly observed, for, beside costing nothing, it gives each boy an opportunity of indulging in a little tree-climbing…[167]

Tristan Hulse offers another, more contemporary example of convenience playing a large role in the selection of items for deposition. Examining St Trillo's Well, Llandrillo-yn-Rhos, Hulse found that offerings of prayers, which had begun to be left at the holy well since 1992, were a 'spontaneous and imitative gesture'. People visiting the chapel, seeing the past deposits and wishing to add their own, were forced to write their prayers on scraps of paper sourced from pockets and handbags: portions of envelopes, pages torn from diaries, receipts and transport tickets.[168] In many cases, therefore, matters of convenience and improvisation determine the nature of objects deposited. And throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, coins were evidently not, to use Walhouse's words, 'trivial objects ready at hand'.

However, during the last century a reversal has occurred. As a coin's economic value decreased, its utilisation as an object of ritual exchange increased at an inversely proportional rate. Coins became more commonplace to the point where the majority of people usually have some coins in their possession, so that if they wish to participate in a ritual which necessitates the 'sacrificing' of an object, a coin is the most convenient object for that purpose. As one participant in the coin-tree custom at High Force speculated, when asked why he believed people chose to insert coins into the tree: 'maybe because they're just convenient'. Whilst an American participant at Tarn Hows opined that 'it might just be because coins are pretty handy, aren't they? You've always got some'.

The custodian of the St Nectan's Glen coin-trees, Lawrence Barker, demonstrates this reversal in his personal consideration of the custom. At this site, the coin-trees are accompanied by several rag-trees, the

branches of which are primarily affixed with ribbons, and Lawrence believes that the coin-trees were created by 'people who had no ribbons or other offerings but still had a wish to make'.[169] In his opinion, therefore, coins are the substitute deposits. Few people today will have ribbons ready at hand or would be willing to tear off a scrap of their clothing, but it is likely that they will be carrying coins. Henderson's nineteenth-century example at St Mary's Well, where the group of boys could only tie rags to the branch of a tree because they did not have the coins to deposit in the well, is thus inverted.

Coins have not only become more readily available in contemporary society; they have also become more disposable. Coins, particularly one-penny and two-pence pieces, are no longer perceived as embodying much value, to the extent that many people in Britain believe copper coins should be removed from circulation. Guy Dammann, reporting on this decline in value for the *Guardian* in 2012, describes copper coins as 'the useless, practically valueless bits of copper-plated steel which weigh down our pockets and clog up our vacuum cleaners'.[170] Whilst Wolman, observing that pennies offer very little in both the store of value and as a medium of exchange, wryly notes that people no longer even tax themselves by retrieving a penny found on the pavement: 'Economists will tell you that it's not even worth the time and financial hazard involved in stooping down to pick it up, possibly resulting in a back injury'.[171]

Conclusion

In conclusion, the coin's ubiquity and decreased economic worth has meant that it has, over the last century, become a 'trivial' object 'ready at hand'.[172] Combined with its historical ritual significance and continued status as a symbol of exchange, this made it the most appropriate and convenient deposit. This explains why coins replaced rags, nails and other objects at Isle Maree, Clonenagh, Ardboe and Gougane Barra. It may also explain why, despite common lamentations that folkloric customs lost their popularity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see the next chapter), people continue to embed coins into these trees.

The Isle Maree coin-tree is in a pitiful state today. The hundreds of coins inserted into clefts and cracks have no doubt taken their toll on this tree, which is now dead. It was still alive in the 1860s, when Mitchell described how the bark continued to grow over the coins, but Queen Victoria described it as an 'old tree' in 1877, and Dixon observed in

1886 that it was 'nearly dead'.[173] By 1927, when Colonel Edington visited, it was 'evidently dead',[174] and McPherson believed that this 'holy tree shared the fate of the holy well—the devotion of pilgrims has proven its undoing. The coins, hammered in and destroying the bark, have killed the object of their veneration'.[175] Indeed, copper poisoning is assumed to have caused the death of this tree.[176]

The death of the tree, however, has not led to the death of the custom. Indeed, it appears to have proliferated. By the 1950s, as the original tree had become too densely coined, the custom had spread to surrounding, satellite trees.[177] In 2002, when the North of Scotland Archaeological Society conducted a survey of the site, they catalogued nine coin-trees on Isle Maree. However, in the intervening decade between their 2002 survey and my own visit in 2012, this number had increased to fifteen. I was able to identify 1643 British coins embedded into these trees; of these, 733 (45%) were decimal (i.e. minted post-1971), evidence that the custom has far from fallen out of popularity.[178]

The same story can be seen at Gougane Barra. The coin-tree in the main cells enclosure fell in a storm in 1973 and was subsequently removed. But despite custodians of the island actively discouraging the practice,[179] visitors have not been deterred. On my visit to the site in 2012, I counted seven trees and a wooden post embedded with coins, all decimal. Likewise at Clonenagh, the coin-tree died and fell in 1994 but people continued to embed their coins even as it was lying prone.[180] It eventually decayed and was removed but, despite the information plaque requesting visitors to 'refrain from inserting any metal', 92 coins have already been embedded into an offshoot of the original tree—again, all of which (with the exception of two unidentified coins and two from overseas) are decimal.

There are a number of tree-centred customs that can be traced through history to the present day. Royal Oak Day is one example. Established in 1660, this public holiday—also known as Oak Apple Day and Restoration Day—commemorated the restoration of the English monarchy. In reference to the story of Charles II evading his enemies by hiding in an oak tree, celebrations involved the wearing of oak apples and sprigs of oak leaves, and the placing of branches in doorways for luck. Despite this public holiday having been formally abolished in 1859, the custom has retained some significance in local communities throughout the country.[181] As Peter theorised, quoted at the start of this chapter, such customs can be viewed as a 'continuation of folklore'.

However, the majority of coin-trees in Britain did not emerge in the nineteenth or early-twentieth centuries. They were not originally associated with holy wells and did not gradually transition into coin-trees from (or function as replacements of) previous incarnations: rag-trees, nail-trees and so on. Of the 40 coin-tree sites identified, only one (Isle Maree) definitely pre-dates the twentieth century, and only five more definitely predate the 1990s (Ardboe, Clonenagh, Fore and Gougane Barra are discussed above; and Ardmaddy, Argyll, is detailed in Chapter 7). The remaining 34 (85%) are contemporary creations, like the Bolton Abbey tree, having been coined much more recently. The next chapter will explore this apparent renaissance, suggest possible factors behind it—and consider whether 'renaissance' is even the right word.

Notes

1. Pers. comm. Moira Smith, Visitor Manager, Bolton Abbey Estate, 10/02/2012.
2. Billingsley, J. 2005. Coin Trees: A New Tradition, Or a New Artefact? *Northern Earth*. http://www.northernearth.co.uk/cointree.htm.
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81. Bord and Bord, *Sacred Wells*, p. 59.
82. Hull, *Folklore of the British Isles*, p. 108.
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143. The contents of Karcioğlu and Sarper's edited medical volume demonstrate how copper affects the gastrointestinal system; haematology; the cardiovascular system; the nervous system; and dermatology. Copper salts are bactericidal and can be employed as disinfectants, thus making them useful for treating bacterial infections (Karcioğlu, Z. A. and Sarper, R. M. (eds.) 1980. *Zinc and Copper in Medicine*. Springfield, Charles C. Thomas Publishers). See also Cameron, M. L. 1993. *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 118–121; Knüsel et al., 'Evidence for Remedial Medical Treatment', p. 380; Brennessel, B., Drout, M. D. C., and Gravel, R. 2005. A Reassessment of the Efficacy of Anglo-Saxon Medicine. *Anglo-Saxon England* 34, 183–195, p. 184. Additionally, copper's anti-inflammatory effects have made it a popular medicinal ingredient throughout history, with the early cultures of Assyria, Greece, Rome, Egypt, and possibly Native America employing copper remedially (Karcioğlu and Sarper, *Zinc and Copper in Medicine*, p. xiii; Rij, A. M. van, and Pories, W. J. 1980. Zinc and Copper in Surgery. In Karcioğlu, Z. A. and Sarper, R. M. (eds.) *Zinc and Copper in Medicine*. Springfield, Charles C. Thomas Publishers, 535–578, p. 555; and Fox, *A Find of the Early Iron Age*, p. 10).
144. Although Storms opines that this stipulation belonged to the 'sphere of magic' (*Anglo-Saxon Magic*, p. 134), Cameron asserts that it was the copper salts formed in the brass vessels, held to be antibacterial, which motivated the specification (*Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, pp. 120–122).
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159. Hartland, 'Pin-Wells and Rag-Bushes', p. 453.
160. Hartland, 'Pin-Wells and Rag-Bushes', p. 463.
161. Hope, *The Legendary Lore of the Holy Wells of England*, p. 112.
162. Jones, *The Holy Wells of Wales*, pp. 140–218. Note that elsewhere in the book Jones numbers the wells where pins have been offered at 51 (*The Holy Wells of Wales*, p. 93).
163. Hope, *The Legendary Lore of the Holy Wells of England*, p. 14.
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170. Dammann, G. 2012. The Penny Has Dropped: Let's Scrap Copper Coins. *Guardian.co.uk*, Wednesday 1 February. http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/feb/01/penny-dropped-scrap-copper-coins.
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173. Mitchell, 'On Various Superstitions in the North-West Highlands and Islands of Scotland', p. 253; Duff, *Victoria in the Highlands*, p. 332; and Dixon, *Gairlock in North-West Ross-shire*, p. 150.
174. Cited by McPherson, *Primitive Beliefs in the Northeast of Scotland*, p. 75.
175. McPherson, *Primitive Beliefs in the Northeast of Scotland*, p. 75.
176. MacLeish, K. 1968. The Highlands of Scotland. *National Geographic* 133 (3), 420.

177. Macrow, B. 1953. *Torridon Highlands*. London, Robert Hale & Company, pp. 88–89.
178. Based on fieldwork conducted on 14/04/2012.
179. The custom of coin insertion has been discouraged by the custodians of the island who, considering the fate of the original coin-tree, have been attempting to protect other trees from similar copper poisoning (Finbarr Lucey, pers. comm. 24/02/2012). McCarthy informs me that this decision to discourage the custom was made by the local church committee, who 'wished to clean up the site's appearance' (pers. comm. 22/12/2011); they subsequently attached a sign to the current primary coin-tree, stating: 'I AM A TREE; PLEASE DO NOT PUT COINS INTO ME'.
180. Morton, A. 2004. *Tree Heritage of Britain and Ireland*. Marlborough, Airlife Publishing, p. 195.
181. Hutton, R. 1996. *Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 288–294.

CHAPTER 3

The Democratisation of the Landscape

It's a bright day in Cumbria during the May half-term holidays, and the footpath which hugs the shore of Tarn Hows is teeming with walkers. The route around the lake isn't strenuous; a good walk to do with children. Lots of families are passing—and nearly all have stopped to examine the coin-tree. It's a large uprooted stump, resting on a raised earthen bank with one end overhanging the path. It isn't as densely coined as other trees I've seen, but it is particularly striking in the arrangement of its coins. They follow the grain of the bark in such neat, consistent lines that their distribution appears precise and deliberate.

A family of three—mother, father and daughter in her early teens—turn the corner of the path. The parents, walking a little ahead, notice the coin-tree instantly and stop to examine it.

"Look at this," the father gestures to his daughter. "It's full of coins."

The daughter is sceptical. From a distance, the coins don't look like coins at all. But she comes closer and makes a noise of grudging surprise. She wonders, aloud, what its purpose is. The mother thinks it's a sculpture, commenting on the symmetry of the coins; surely they wouldn't be 'allowed' to hammer their own coin in. But the father insists it's made for just that purpose—he'd seen something on the Internet about it—and so they dig into their pockets and purses.

Finding that their lowest denomination is a 10 pence piece, the mother is hesitant to use it. "They're all copper," she gestures to the coins already embedded, "It'll ruin the pattern."

C. Houlbrook, *The Magic of Coin-Trees from Religion to Recreation*,
Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75517-5_3

The father examines the coins more closely, pointing out several five and 10 pence pieces amidst the mass of copper. The mother relents, and so father and daughter clamber up the steep bank to the root-end of the log; they want to make their contribution in a less densely coined area. A moment's discussion ensues about where the best spot is and then, using a rock, the father helps his daughter hammer in their coin. The mother climbs up wielding a camera; her daughter points out "my coin" and she takes several photos of it, before descending again to the path.

At this point, I introduce myself and explain the nature of my research. I learn that they're from Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire and have been holidaying in Cumbria for the last week. They're very curious and ask me as many questions as I ask them. The mother's eager for confirmation that the coin-tree is not an official sculpture.

When I ask what they believe the 'purpose' of the coin-tree is, there's a moment's hesitation before the mother tentatively theorises that the tree is "for wishes…like a wishing well". We speak for a further few minutes about the nature of the site, and when I ask how they would feel if someone were to remove their coin, the mother is instantly incensed, recalling how she'd witnessed people "stealing" coins from a fountain in France. "I think it's cheeky," she replied indignantly. "Things like this, they're almost sacrosanct."

The father's now eager for them to continue their walk and so, snapping a last photo of the tree, they depart. As they disappear around a corner, I hear the daughter smugly announce, "So money does grow on trees." The mother sighs. "I guess I can't use that excuse anymore."

Debunking the 'Disenchantment'

It was outlined in the introduction that folklore is often not believed to have survived the transition into modernity. Historically, folk customs have been perceived as fragile, tenuous, and endangered phenomena, and the processes of urbanisation and industrialisation are often held accountable for this 'disenchantment'. According to anthropologist George Foster, writing in the 1950s, industrial economies 'are not conducive to the continuation of folk culture. Hence, it can be assumed that folk cultures will disappear in those places where a high degree of industrialization develops',[1] whilst for William Bascom, it was technological developments that led to this supposed decline: 'folklore has decreased as…mechanical devices such as phonographs, radios, moving pictures and television have developed'.[2]

Harry Redner took a similar stance 50 years later, attributing the purported loss of local, native culture to 'cultural homogenization…which we now describe by that ominous term "globalization."'. The Western world has become a 'monoculture', in which no local traditions or customs can survive.[3] Redner and his predecessors paint a rather dour picture, and while not all folklorists agree with this perspective,[4] the general consensus appears to be that folklore is far less prolific in the Western world than it once was.

It is certainly true that some customs have fallen out of use. Returning to the wych elm embedded with pigs' teeth in Forster's *Howards End*, Mrs. Wilcox dolefully notes that the 'teeth are almost grown over now, and no one comes to the tree', to which Margaret Schlegel replies, 'I should. I love folklore and all festering superstitions'.[5] This exchange indicates that by the early twentieth century, such practices had declined and were considered 'festering superstitions'. However, can the coin-tree custom be conceived of us as such? The last chapter revealed that several coin-trees in Britain and Ireland have long histories of ritual associations. This chapter will show that the majority do not. Most are contemporary structures, the products of participation by large numbers of modern-day practitioners.

The testimonies of the coins are useful for determining when a coin-tree has been engaged with, branded as they are with their year of mint, and so fieldwork at each site involved careful cataloguing of the coins. Years of mint were recorded where possible, while in the frequent cases of a coin's year being illegible or obscured, most could still be identified by their size and design. This method does have its drawbacks though. With the density of the coins, older issues may have become engulfed by the newer ones—or even by the tree itself if still alive—and so could not be catalogued. And of course when a year of mint is legible, it does not indicate the year of deposition; it can only give us the earliest possible date (its *terminus post quem*). A coin minted in 1971, for example, could have been inserted into a coin-tree in 2017. It could not, however, have been inserted prior to 1971. It is therefore significant that of the identifiable coins catalogued, the vast majority were decimal, and therefore cannot have been deposited earlier than the 1970s.

For example, of the c.14,000 identifiable coins embedded into the trees at Bolton Abbey, all were decimal.[6] The same applies at Tarr Steps, Somerset, with the site's c.10,100 identifiable coins,[7] and at Aira Force, Cumbria, with its c.27,000.[8] Even at the most heavily coined site,

Fig. 3.1 The Ingleton coin-tree, Yorkshire, England (Photograph by author)

Ingleton in Yorkshire (Fig. 3.1), of the c.55,000 coins catalogued, only two were pre-decimalisation (and these could well have been added after they were removed from circulation).[9] This does not necessarily mean that the custom was not active prior to decimalisation in 1971; what it does mean is that since 1971, around 55,000 people have added coins to the Ingleton coin-trees.

As detailed in Chapter 2, of the 40 coin-tree sites identified, only six (in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland) predate the late twentieth century. The remaining 34 sites (85%), all in Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland), are probably contemporary creations, having been coined much more recently. By speaking with the sites' custodians (landowners, rangers, foresters), a vague chronology of 24 of these sites has been established, and their testimonies support the evidence given by the coins (Fig. 3.2).

Four sites are believed to have begun in the mid-late 1990s (Bolton Abbey, Yorkshire; Malham, Yorkshire; Lydford Gorge, Devon; and Tarr Steps, Somerset), and 14 in the 2000s. The remaining six sites have probably emerged since 2010. The coin-trees at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Claife Station in Cumbria and Corfe Castle in Dorset began to be coined in 2010, while the Property Manager of The Hermitage, Dunkeld, states that their coin-tree only 'really got going' in 2014.[10] The coin-tree at High Elms Country Park, Greater London, is believed to have begun in December 2015, while staff at the Visitor Centre at Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Aberystwyth, informed me at the start of 2017 that their coin-tree 'hasn't been there very long, I think we first noticed coins in this particular stump sometime last summer'.[11] This would make the creation date of this site as recent as 2016.

Most coin-trees boast little history. They are largely contemporary creations, and there is little evidence to suggest that they occupy sites of historic ritual significance. While the Isle Maree coin-tree and those in Ireland replaced earlier sites of ritual deposition, such as holy wells and rag-trees, those in England and most in Wales and Scotland, appear to have been the first in their areas. Although many are close to historical sites and monuments, from a Bronze Age barrow to an Augustinian priory, there is no literary or archaeological evidence identifying past practices of ritual deposition at these sites. The two possible exceptions to this are the trees of St Nectan's Glen, Cornwall, explored in Chapter 5 and Patrishow, Powys.

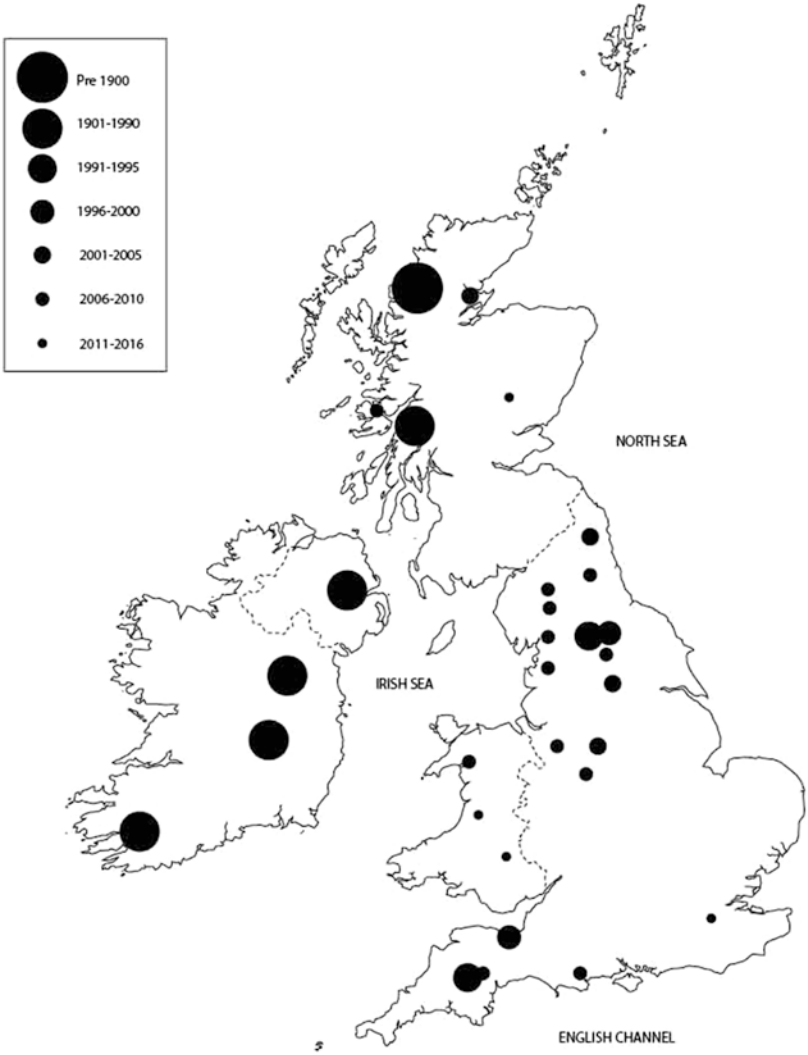

Fig. 3.2 The distribution of coin-trees across Britain based on their age

An Exception to the Norm: Patrishow

The Patrishow coin-tree stands close to the holy well of St Issui. The life of this saint—also known as Ishow, Ishaw or Isho—is little known, but he is often described as a holy man living a secluded life in a hermit cell beside Nant Mair, or Mary's Brook. Close by was his well, which contained niches in which offerings could be left. Legend tells of a traveller who turned on the hermit after receiving hospitality from him, stole the offerings and murdered him. St Issui was subsequently canonised, his hermit cell became a place of pilgrimage, and his well a site of healing. A later legend tells of a French pilgrim whose leprosy was cured by the well. In gratitude, he left a sack of gold, which was used to build the earliest part of the nearby eleventh-century church.[12]

The well that occupies the site now is a Grade II designated structure and is, according to Cadw, the Welsh Government's historic environment service, probably an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century rebuild.[13] Fed by a shallow spring, the well is surrounded on three sides by stone walls and covered by a stone slab. In 1804, Welsh topographer Richard Fenton visited the well and described it as 'a very scanty oozing of water, to which, however, was formerly attributed great Virtue, as within the building that encloses it are little Niches to hold the Vessels they drank out of and the offerings they left behind'.[14] By the nineteenth century, therefore, this site was still a place of ritual deposition, and indeed it continued to be one throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first. A photograph in Siân Victory's *The Celtic Church in Wales* shows how the well still contained niches for offerings in the 1970s.[15] And on my visit to the site in 2017, there was a vast variety of objects deposited around the well, from makeshift crosses and candles to jewellery, semi-precious stones and children's toys.

There was also, a few feet away, a tree encrusted with coins. We might assume then that this is another historic coin-tree, akin to those in Ireland and on Isle Maree. However, this tree does not seem to boast the well's antiquity as a receptacle for offerings. None of the identified sources describing ritual deposition at the site, which range in date from 1804 to 2011, mention a tree.[16] Granted, an absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence, but none of the coins embedded into the Patrishow tree appeared to be pre-decimal. In fact, many of them

were new, one at least dating as recently as 2017. The likeliest explanation therefore is that the spread of attention from the well to the tree is recent, probably contemporary with the late twentieth/early twenty-first-century rise of the coin-tree custom.

Although not a historic coin-tree per se, the Patrishow tree is clearly part of a much longer narrative of ritual deposition at this site. This tree, however, is an exception rather than the norm. The majority of coin-trees are unanchored to the past—geographically at least—and their contemporaneity surely calls into question the claims that industrialisation, urbanisation, globalisation, and technological advancements have resulted in the 'disenchantment' of Britain.

There can be no definitive answer to the question of which contemporary coin-tree was coined first, nor why. However, while circumstances surrounding the inauguration of the coin-tree renaissance may remain obscure, the rapid rate of dissemination that soon followed is clearly evident in Fig. 3.2. The dissemination is also rather sporadic. Whilst the 'historic' (i.e. pre-1990s) coin-trees are clearly exclusive to Scotland and Ireland, the spread of the contemporary coin-trees provides neither a clear point of origin nor an obvious pattern of distribution. Both older and newer contemporary coin-trees are present in the north of England as well as the south. This suggests that the dispersion of coin-trees was the result of numerous nexuses and simultaneous networks of dissemination, rather than a single, linear thread originating from one point.

Not only does this complex network of dissemination make following Whately's advice to 'read superstition backwards' more difficult, it also indicates that the reasons behind this modern-day renaissance were not region specific, but were applicable to many areas of Britain. What contemporary countrywide factors, therefore, could account for the successful revival of the coin-tree custom? Has the landscape changed? Or are people engaging with it differently now? This chapter aims to answer these questions.

Our Natural Point of Vantage

'We cannot, in general,' writes Alfred Gell, 'take up a point of view on the origination of the artefact which is the point of view of the artefact itself. Our natural point of vantage is that of the originating person, the artist, because we, also, are persons'.[17] In other words, an understanding of an object necessitates an understanding of people's perceptions of,

and motivations in creating, that object. A consideration of how and why an artefact was made should be central to any analysis or interpretation of it, and this chapter aims to address these questions in relation to the coin-tree.

The coin-tree however is not simply an artefact; it is an accumulation, the production of which is an ongoing process. Coin-trees are not created at one fixed time by a single 'originating person, the artist' and then subsequently used by other persons. Instead, the producers are the users; the users, the producers, and the crafting of a coin-tree is the result of a large quantity of 'artists' making their contributions over a long period of time. In the case of the coin-tree, participation is production. In understanding these structures therefore our 'natural point of vantage' is that of the thousands of people who have added their coins to these structures, thus creating the coin-trees in the process. Fortunately, these producers/users still currently produce/use these coin-trees, and are thus available to question. So they were.

As well as one-hour observations at each coin-tree site noting how people interact with these structures—monitoring, for example, how many stop to examine the coin-tree, to photograph it or to insert a coin—over 200 members of the public were interviewed as part of this study.[18] These interviews were conducted across 22 different coin-tree sites, and were representative of the variety of people seen engaging with coin-trees. The majority (82%) were domestic tourists, with fewer (10%) international tourists, the majority of whom were from Europe, and even fewer (8%) local residents.[19] There was no notable gender bias, and a wide range of ages were represented. There were lone hikers and local dog walkers; couples, young and old; large groups of friends; and a sizeable proportion of family groups with young children. Few of these had prior knowledge of coin-trees, with only 17% of participants having come across other coin-trees before the day of their interview. For most people, therefore, this was their first encounter with this custom.

Throughout this book, this ethnographic data is drawn together with material sourced from online blogs and forum threads (see below),[20] to gain understanding of what the coin-tree means within the twenty-first-century landscape. In this chapter, however, it is drawn on primarily to consider the opposite: what the twenty-first-century landscape means to the coin-tree. Landscapes, both as natural environments and cultural constructs, are mutable. They adapt to the changes experienced

by the communities who inhabit and use them, and are thus famously described by William Hoskins as palimpsests, upon which generations of history are inscribed.[21] However, Alexandra Walsham stresses the importance of viewing landscapes not as passive and inert subjects of change, but as *agents* of change.[22] Just as landscapes are altered by society, they can play significant roles in altering society. What role, therefore, did the landscape play in the renaissance of the coin-tree custom? What cultural and physical changes is the coin-tree renaissance responding to? And is 'renaissance' even the right word?

Access

As customs go, the coin-tree is fairly undemanding. People need access to only two things to participate: a coin and a tree. The former has already been explored in the previous chapter. Inflation, causing a decrease in the subjective value of coins and a consequent increase in their ubiquity and dispensability, led to their popularity as deposits. Certainly by the 1990s, pennies were a common feature in many people's pockets and purses; by the 2000s, they were largely seen as having negligible value. The accessibility of coins at this time may therefore have led to the rise of the coin-tree custom. But what of the tree?

We may say, without hyperbole, that trees have featured in the landscapes of Britain and Ireland for a significant stretch of time. For as long as there have been people with pennies in their pockets, there have been trees to put them in. However, as constant as our landscapes seem, social and environmental factors mean that they are always changing, and so is our access to them. As detailed above, most people who insert a coin into a coin-tree are domestic tourists on short breaks or day trips. This is unsurprising considering that most coin-trees can be found alongside footpaths at natural heritage sites, such as those managed by the National Trust and the Forestry Commission.[23] People who come across coin-trees tend to be visiting these sites, often in family groups, for leisurely walks along well-maintained woodland byways (Fig. 3.3). However, people's access to these rights of way has not always been a given.

Although the tourist industry was well established in Britain by 1940,[24] it was not until the 1960s that mass tourism developed, and holidays became a common feature of people's lives, regardless of social class.[25] Since then, cultural and heritage tourism in Britain have been

Fig. 3.3 Most coin-trees are beside well-traversed footpaths (Photographs by author)

increasing. There are a number of reasons for this: disposable income, an increase in leisure time, and the advent of paid holiday leave.[26] Transportation is another, with the mobility of a personal car bringing what geographer John Allan Patmore terms 'incomparably greater freedom to recreational travel', allowing drivers far more choice in where and when they went.[27] Car ownership in Britain has been multiplying rapidly since the pre-war years: 109,000 in 1919, one million in 1930, two million by 1939, four million in 1950—to over 34 million in 2010. In 1951, 14% of households had access to a car. This figure had risen to 75% by 2010.[28]

This increased mobility has given people greater opportunity to escape the cities and towns, and explore areas of natural heritage, which may otherwise have been inaccessible.[29] My own fieldwork at the coin-tree sites illustrates this. Only four of the sites visited were easily accessible from a city using public transport: Hardcastle Crags, Padley Gorge, Marbury Park and Arnside Knott. Other sites would have required multiple train and bus journeys, as well as many hours in transit, and so I opted to use a car. It is easy to appreciate why people are more inclined, or able, to visit sites of natural heritage now that more than 75% of households have access to a vehicle.

Land ownership is another contributing factor to level of accessibility. Historically, much of the land in Britain has been privately owned, with little being accessible to the public.[30] This has gradually been changing throughout the twentieth century, no doubt due to the realisation that heritage tourism had developed major economic value for Britain. In 1949, the 'National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act' was passed, creating many public rights of way. In 1972, the *Woodland Trust* was created to safeguard forests, and the launch of the *National Lottery* in 1994 resulted in prodigious increases in funding for the conservation of natural heritage sites. By 2000, the new 'Countryside and Rights of Way Act' had shifted the balance of rights from the landowners in favour of public accessibility.[31] Well-maintained woodland byways had become a given and access to the British countryside had been democratised.[32]

However, even once a person is at a natural heritage site with a penny burning a hole in their pocket, they may not have access to a suitable tree. Note the word 'suitable'. It appears that certain types of tree are more popular than others in this custom. However, while I had assumed that species would play a significant role in a tree's suitability (given the wealth of species-specific folklore in history), this is not the case. A wide range of species is represented in the coin-tree custom.[33] In fact, few of the people interviewed could even identify the species of the tree into which they were inserting their coin. They did not seem to mind whether it was native or non-native, softwood or hardwood, deciduous or evergreen. What people did seem to have a preference about was the condition of the tree.

The remains of fallen trees far outnumber living trees in this custom.[34] The most popular (i.e. most densely coined) coin-trees are logs, large in both length and girth, such as the examples at Ingleton, Bolton Abbey,

Aira Force and Tarr Steps. The question of why is easily answered. Many people interviewed, both land custodians and custom participants, are concerned that inserting coins into a living tree would harm it; a tree already fallen does not warrant the same concern. But surely fallen trees have featured in the British landscape for as long as living trees have? Not so—because, until the start of the twenty-first century, it was common policy for forest management to actively remove and dispose of logs (what they term coarse woody debris: CWD).[35]

Back in 1996, woodland ecologist George Peterken wrote that the aim of forest management was 'to utilise the timber and wood, not to allow it to decay'. This was because:

> accumulations of fallen wood are regarded as breeding grounds for beetles, which might then infect living trees…dead wood is not allowed to accumulate, because it is 'untidy'…Typically, therefore, managed woods contain unnaturally small amounts of CWD…[36]

Up to and including the 1990s, therefore, logs were not left in situ—and, consequently, were not readily available for the coin-tree custom. In 2002, however, this policy changed. It was now recognised that deadwood could provide benefits to the natural environment,[37] and so the Forestry Commission published a guide recommending *against* the removal of fallen trees and advocating instead that decaying timber should be left in place.[38]

Circulating the benefits of leaving deadwood in situ to forest wardens and rangers countrywide resulted in the wide availability of logs, which could then be used for the coin-tree custom. Indeed, Chris Moseley, a ranger at Marbury Park and custodian of its coin-tree, cited the 2002 Forestry Commission guide as the reason for why they had left the coin-tree log in situ rather than removing it once it had fallen, as they would have done a decade earlier.[39] This recent change in Forestry Commission policy probably does not account for the initial revival of the custom, if the coin-tree custodians are correct when they estimate creation dates in the late 1990s for a few sites. However, the remaining (dateable) contemporary coin-trees were purportedly all coined from 2002 onwards, directly coinciding with the reversal of forestry policy. This reversal therefore may be the primary reason for why the 2000s witnessed such a rapid resurgence of the coin-tree custom.

Availability does not guarantee a coin-tree though. A custom requires something more than its stage and props; it requires willing participants. In this case, it needs people who are inclined to hammer one of their coins into the coin-tree they stumble across whilst walking in the countryside. Before this, however, it needs people who are inclined to actually go walking in the countryside—and such people have not always been so numerous.

As Pat Yale observes, 'Although the appeal of the countryside seems obvious at the start of the twenty-first century, this has not always been the case'.[40] At the beginning of the 1900s, the concept of walking as a pleasure pursuit was largely confined to the upper classes, and—unlike today—there is little evidence of a widespread inclination to take children on regular trips to the countryside.[41] This changed over the twentieth century. 1908 saw the establishment of the Boys Scouts Association, for example, while in 1930 the Youth Hostel Association, founded in Germany, arrived in England and Wales.[42] In the economic boom following the Second World War, and as Britain became increasingly urban, the popularity of the countryside as a holiday destination rose in tandem. Across many European countries, people from all classes became eager to escape the cities, if only for a day.[43] Jeremy Boissevain believes that industrialisation, and people's negative reactions to it, actually led to a revalorisation of rural lifestyles and the natural environment,[44] and since the 1970s, the public's appreciation of the countryside has been steadily increasing. Consequently, walking has become Britain's most popular outdoor activity, as well as a common feature of domestic tourist trips within Britain, 70% of which now involve recreational walks.[45]

Short breaks to the British countryside are evidently increasingly appealing. Since the 1990s, there has been a rise in 'secondary' holidays, with many people taking a domestic trip as well as holidaying abroad.[46] And with the growing ease with which people can access natural heritage sites, such trips easily fit into a single day, resulting in the increasingly popular day trip. A survey conducted by *Visit England, Visit Scotland* and *Visit Wales*, for example, reveals that during 2012, the British took a total of 1712 million day trips to tourist sites, an increase of 11% from 2011,[47] and as the majority of day trippers tend to head for the countryside, it is unsurprising that coin-tree sites have been experiencing high volumes of visitors. Did this democratisation of the British landscape, now accessible to most, lead to the rise in the coin-tree custom?

The presence of large numbers at a coin-tree site, however, does not guarantee participation. You can take a person to a coin-tree, but you can't make them add a coin. What is needed is the inclination to participate in a folk custom—and this apparently has been on the increase in Europe and North America since the 1960s and 1970s, with festival tourism, public rituals and—most pertinent to the coin-tree—re-enchanted environmentalism purportedly on the rise.[48] The question of how we reconcile this with the common assumption that Britain has been growing increasingly secular will be addressed in the following two chapters.

Communication

Physically, the custom of the coin-tree needs only a few things: coins, trees and willing participants. For the custom to spread, however, something more is needed, and that is public awareness. Unless the emergences of these coin-tree sites have been entirely isolated events (highly unlikely), people need to know about the custom in order for it to travel from one site to another. They need to be aware that this custom exists, but it is also a matter of communication. Folklore and customs survive because they are communicated, not only passed down from one generation to the next, but also from one community to another. They are not static, but can travel, sometimes great distances. This is nothing new. As early as 1893, Andrew Lang was proposing his driftwood theory, observing that tales can be swept 'like a piece of driftwood' from one place to another, even across oceans.[49]

But is there something about the 2000s that could have increased the rate of communication and therefore of dissemination? The British landscape is being increasingly democratised and, with improved public transport and the surge in personal car ownership, most people are able to access sites of natural heritage, and consequently able to access coin-trees. But this accessibility is not only physical. The British landscape has been compressed, even its most remote corners made reachable through a medium that is very much characteristic of contemporary society: the Internet. So how has this modern-day channel impacted the rate and scale of the coin-tree custom?

It has already been noted that folklorists predicted the loss of folklore as a result of the rise of mass culture and technology.[50] However, such predictions appear unfounded; technological developments do not

seem detrimental to the survival, transmission, creation and performance of folk culture—but are actually beneficial to these processes. Trevor Blank, for example, asserts that 'folklore flourishes on the Internet'.[51] He believes that new media technology—from laptops and tablets to mobile telephones—is now so deeply integrated into our communication practices that it has become an instrumental 'conduit of folkloric transmission'.[52]

There are certainly enough similarities between face-to-face and computer-mediated communication to support the theory that vernacular expression transmitted online could constitute folklore.[53] This evinces the flexibility with which 'folklore' must be approached. I defined 'folklore' above as traditional customs, beliefs and legends *transmitted orally*, but oral transmission has come to include web-based communication, thus altering—and greatly extending—the definitional parameters of 'folklore'. It also alters the scale of such transmissions. As early as 1996, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett was noting the Internet's efficacy for transmitting folklore,[54] and in 2005 Dundes asserted that 'folklore continues to be alive and well in the modern world, due in part to increased transmission via e-mail and the Internet'.[55] Tok Thompson, who describes online folklore as 'Folkore 2.0', likewise states that 'folklore is enjoying a tremendous renaissance online'.[56]

It is unsurprising, therefore, that the coin-tree custom is well represented on the Internet, in the form of online articles, forum threads and personal blogs. These tend to follow a similar pattern: the author (or instigator of the thread) writes a post or article about a particular coin-tree site, and comments are added by people who have read the piece and wish to inform the author of other coin-tree sites they have come across. On the online British wildlife and environment forum *Wild About Britain*, for example, a forum post in 2007 concerning the Dovedale coin-trees elicited seven responses, two of which refer to other coin-trees: 'I've seen this at the Fairy Glen RSPB reserve near Rosemarkie on the Black Isle' and 'I came across a similar feature at Bolton Abbey in Yorkshire a couple of years ago'.[57] Likewise on *Amusing Planet*, an online compendium of articles on interesting sites worldwide, a post about coin-trees led to six comments referring to other sites.[58] The Internet therefore functions as a convenient conduit for the exchange of information regarding the locations of coin-trees. People who may have been aware of one coin-tree site can learn of many others, and in some cases, specific directions are given to these sites so that the readers can locate them.

A particularly illustrative example of the disseminating powers of the Internet is a thread on the *Sheffield Forum* entitled 'How can I find the money tree on Wadsley Common?'. The creator of the thread claims that she and her children heard of the Wadsley coin-tree (also known as the Loxley coin-tree) but have 'been looking for a year now and can't find it anywhere!' She appeals to her fellow forum members for advice, and is not disappointed: as well as comments regarding other coin-trees, three forum members respond with directions. One person sent a link to *Google Maps* on which the coin-tree's location has been pinpointed, whilst another person wrote:

> i know where it is! if you park in the top car park and walk down the path onto the big field carry on down to the bottom and turn right towards the woods when ur into the woods its [sic] on the little hill just before it drops down to the other side bang in the middle of the path, hope u find it![59]

This forum thread also elicited responses from others who were hoping to locate the Loxley coin-tree themselves. Some were successful, such as the thread's instigator, who announced two weeks after her original post: 'Thank you, thank you all who helped! We finally found the tree today by combining all the helpful tips'. Others, however, were not successful; another forum member declared, 'Spent 4 hours looking for the damned thing. None of the dog walking locals had heard of it either. So, we made our own!'. In both cases the custom of the coin-tree has been perpetuated via the Internet: in one case, the contribution to the existing coin-tree and in another, the creation of a new one. Computer-mediated communication is clearly facilitating the transmission and dissemination of folklore.

In some cases, the readers of these posts and forum threads are not familiar with coin-trees, and it is therefore the Internet which provides them with the knowledge. In the Loxley coin-tree thread on the *Sheffield Forum*, one member states, 'I know the common very well, and never heard of this story. ill [sic] certainly be on the look out next time im [sic] up there!'. Likewise, on the *Sheffield Wildlife* forum, an entry about the Padley Gorge coin-trees led to one commenter exclaiming, 'I'll certainly keep my eyes peeled when I'm out in Derbyshire again'.[60] A person commenting on the entry on *Amusing Planet* similarly declares that, 'I have lived in England all my life walked in many woods and trails…and have never come across these trees before, but sure will do some research and post a definitive guide on my blog'.[61]

The video-sharing website *YouTube* also features the custom.[62] A recent search yielded 18 uploaded videos of coin-trees and people adding their own coins, often as part of travel or hiking vlogs (blog posts in video form). One such vlog, uploaded in January 2017, features US traveller TheTravellingClatt at the Ingleton coin-tree, sharing the belief that if you lick the coin-tree (which he does, after inserting one of his own coins) it will ensure good luck.[63] Another video, this one uploaded in September 2014, features a family with young children using rocks to hammer coins into the Tarr Steps coin-tree, entitled 'Money really does grow on trees'.[64] This had over 10,000 views.[65]

This posting of photographs and videos of coin-trees online demonstrates the significance of another contemporary innovation: the mobile camera phone. First introduced in 2000, camera phones have become a staple product of everyday life. In 2017, 85% of adults in the UK owned smartphones; many of these use the camera applications on their devices, with 39% of teenagers taking photographs and/or videos every day.[66] The ubiquity of this device not only means that most people, regardless of age or camera literacy, are able—and inclined—to spontaneously photograph or record their encounters with coin-trees, but they are also able to share them instantaneously via multimedia messaging and social media platforms.[67] 'Camera phones,' observes sociologist Penny Tinkler, 'are heralded as shifting photographic practices.'[68] It appears they are also shifting ritual practices.

The combination of camera phones and the Internet provides ideal conditions for the transmission and dissemination of folklore and customs for two primary reasons. Firstly, it offers a rapid and effective 'distribution mechanism', digitally-mediated communication allowing for the quick (indeed, instant), widespread, and easy exchange of information;[69] the 'instantaneous 'computime' of nanoseconds'.[70] Secondly, it is not restricted geographically. Smartphones and the Internet have altered not only how the 'folk' communicate and transmit folklore, but also what constitutes the 'folk'.[71] Because of the global discourse of the Internet, cultural identity is no longer necessarily equated with geography and therefore a 'folk group' has no need for a geographical base.[72] A person can be sitting at their computer exchanging information about the coin-tree custom with someone in a different county, country or even continent.

The rapid, geographically unbound distribution mechanism of the Internet may therefore account for the seemingly sporadic patterns of dissemination witnessed across Britain. As explored above, Fig. 3.2

illustrates that the coin-tree custom did not disperse in a logical pattern from one focal point, spreading from north to south or east to west, but that it appears to have emerged almost simultaneously at locations as distant as Yorkshire and Devon. This is probably due in part to the increase in domestic travel. It is, for example, not unlikely that a person could have visited Bolton Abbey one year and then visited Lydford Gorge the next, disseminating the custom over 300 miles south of where they originally witnessed it. However, it is probably also due to the Internet.

The Internet became an increasingly staple feature of many households during the 2000s, with the percentage of UK households boasting Internet access rising from 9% in 1998 to 42% at the start of 2002, and escalating from there.[73] It is probably no coincidence that this coincides with the rapid early twenty-first-century dissemination of the coin-tree custom. If the 'folk' of the twenty-first century are no longer restricted by geography then the dissemination of twenty-first-century folklore is not either, and the coin-tree custom was able to spread rapidly and widely across Britain via computer-mediated communication.

In conclusion, the contemporary coin-tree has not prospered *despite* the modernity of its environment, but *because* of it. The twenty-first century, with its democratised countryside, mass domestic tourism, and boom in technologically-mediated communication, proves to provide the ideal environmental conditions under which folk customs can, and do, flourish. The contemporary British landscape has thus proven conducive to the renaissance of the coin-tree custom—but, as previously asked, is 'renaissance' the right word?

Patinating the Coin-Trees

When Archbishop Whately advised that 'almost every system of superstition, in order to be rightly understood, should be…read backwards', he assumed a neat, linear progression, leading the researcher back from the present day to a specific point of origin. Likewise, when Peter at Portmeirion described the coin-trees as a 'continuation of folklore' and claimed that the custom is 'something we may not really believe in anymore but we do it just because we've always done it' (quoted in the last chapter), he also implied that while the beliefs and notions behind a custom may evolve over time, the physical custom itself has a traceable continuity.

Certainly, the general assumption seems to be that the coin-trees boast antiquity. Many people, when studying the coin-trees, have looked for 'old pennies', and several have asked me if I have discovered any. One young boy at Bolton Abbey even asked if I had come across Roman coins. It is not difficult to understand why the age of this custom is misconceived as much greater than it is. Often when people find what they describe as 'old pennies' they are in fact looking at two pence pieces which have been weathered beyond easy recognition—a process which takes surprisingly little time. Coins that are damaged and heavily worn may appear 'old', but closer examinations reveal their years of mint to be very recent. Other coins exhibit signs of verdigris, the green compound which affects copper or bronze upon over-exposure to air.[74] These coins cannot have been inserted into coin-trees prior to 2008—evidenced by their years of mint or their coat-of-arms designs—and yet in a few more years they may be unrecognisable.

Even the custodians appear to overestimate the ages of their coin-trees.[75] For example, a volunteer ranger at Marbury Park, Cheshire, seemed to believe that the custom was a long-standing one in the park. Accompanying me to the coin-trees in August 2012, he proudly stated that many of the coins were 'very old' and pointed out several 'old pennies' that were in fact well-worn two pence pieces. Upon closer inspection, none of the coins were pre-decimalisation, and in fact the park warden, Chris Moseley, does not believe that the custom far predates 2008 or 2009.[76]

A misrepresentation of age is evident at other coin-tree sites. On High Force's *Facebook* page, for instance, they claim that their coin-trees, which have 'been here for many years', stem from an 'old Yorkshire custom'. The text does not specify how many years exactly, nor does it give any relative notion of the word 'many', but it does imply a certain level of antiquity. However, this implication is interestingly misleading; the ranger Steve Gillard estimates that the site's first coin-tree began in c.2006,[77] six years before the text and photograph were added to the *Facebook* page. The term 'many years' may be subjective, but it surely does not accurately apply to six.

Similarly in the Yorkshire Dales National Park magazine, *The Visitor*, an article was run in 2011 entitled 'Wood yew be-leave it!', in which it describes the Malham coin-trees: 'People have hammered copper coins into this dead tree trunk near Janet's Foss waterfall for good luck for many years, and if you look closely you may find some very old

pennies'.[78] The ambiguous term 'many years' features again; subjective enough to avoid accusations of inaccuracy, but certainly implying antiquity. However, despite this implication, area ranger Catriona Kilner estimates that the custom only began in Malham in the late 1990s or early 2000s.[79] The vague but suggestive term 'many years' is also used on the interpretation panel at Becky Falls: 'local legend has it that many years ago…', while at Ingleton, the interpretation panel challenges the reader to find 'old coins' in the tree. A fuller consideration of these examples can be found in Chapter 6.

Are the custodians of coin-trees innocently mistaken in their dating of the coin-trees, or are they deliberately overestimating their ages, applying an artificial patina to stage antiquity?[80] If the latter, it is not difficult to understand why; they probably believe their visitors would be more interested in an older structure. Certainly people appear disappointed to discover that there are no 'old pennies' and that the coin-trees themselves are relatively recent structures, obviously preferring the illusion of age. This desire is not uncommon. Antony Gormley notes that the 'English national psyche has been a victim of the past, binding us to a reverence for the old things', whilst Beverly Butler writes of 'a nostalgia for authenticity' and David Lowenthal of 'nostalgic affliction', an affliction characterised by the high demand for antique shops, vintage clothing and period dramas.[81]

The coin-tree custom is certainly not the only British 'tradition' which appears far older than it is. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger note how many 'traditions'—from ceremonies of the British monarchy to Christmas carols—'appear or claim to be old [but] are often quite recent in origin'.[82] A custom will feel more firmly established if it is bestowed with a sense of age. In this way, age authenticates; it 'lends it status'.[83] Objects wear their patinas as badges of pride because they are viewed as evidence of antiquity,[84] and value is attributed to age, from collectors' items to ordinary, everyday objects which eventually find their way into museum displays simply because of their antiquity.[85] As Sefryn Penrose observes, 'the older something becomes the more important it tends to be thought'.[86] The same applies to customs, which appear to be viewed by many as only interesting insofar as they are seasoned; insofar as they are 'survivals'.[87]

Renegotiating the Renaissance

Many late modern and contemporary practices have been labelled 'survivals', with scholars such as folklorist Porteous and botanist Thiselton-Dyer presenting tree customs as throwbacks to the 'primitive faith of mankind'.[88] Eliza Gutch, one of the founding members of the Folklore Society in 1878, described certain customs in late nineteenth-century Yorkshire as evidence that 'some lingering notion of veneration due to trees hung on', and—in a self-deprecating tone—claimed that she had 'more than once made spoil of what is interesting as mere survival'.[89] Bord and Bord likewise present contemporary rag-trees as residual, as relics of ancient tree worship, while Francis Jones describes the late modern well cult as a 'mangled survival'.[90] Hope views holy wells in a similar light, asserting that 'Age and repute are the parents of veneration, and veneration, in process of time, frequently degenerates into superstition'.[91] This echoes novelist E. M. Forster's characterisation of tree implantation in the early twentieth century as a 'festering superstition'.[92] Here and elsewhere, 'superstition' is a negative term used to describe beliefs and customs that are degenerated, discoloured, diminished versions of their predecessors.

Even when it is recognised that a custom is contemporary, it is generally assumed to be, if not a survival, then a revival. In his work on 'revitalised' European rituals, Jeremy Boissevain lists many forms of this process: revivals, reanimations, restorations, resurrections, revalorised, innovations ('often borrowed'), revitalisations ('having new energy injected into it'), and retraditionalised ('restructured and made more authentic').[93] I would add to this list a word I have been applying to the coin-tree custom: renaissance, referring to a revival or renewed interest.

Such approaches run the risk of following in Frazer's well-known—some might say infamous—footsteps. *The Golden Bough* is littered with assumptions that modern customs, such as those practised on May Day, are survivals or revivals, to be traced back to the tree rituals of the Druids, the ancient Germans, the Greeks or the Romans. Frazer comments on such customs' 'remarkable persistence',[94] asserting that, 'Traces of this reverence for the tree long lingered among the people'.[95] This perspective, however, is overly simplified. As James Clifford observes, 'Metaphors of continuity and "survival" do not account for complex historical processes of appropriation, compromise, subversion, masking, invention and revival'.[96]

Ronald Hutton has commented on the ahistoricity of this theory of survivals, noting that it depends on the (clearly erroneous) assumption that people and cultures are 'sealed and static', and that their customs do not change over time.[97] The perception and portrayal of customs as lingering debris from a pagan past characterised much of the work of Victorian folklorists and their successors, and was not really revised until the 1970s, when scholarship began questioning this Frazerian interpretation.

Alexandra Walsham is one scholar who advises against it. In her seminal work *The Reformation of the Landscape*, she asserts that it is misguided to view customs as 'remnants' or 'the 'debris' of pagan mythologies that had defiantly survived from distant antiquity into modern times in a state of arrested development'.[98] Joshua Landy and Michael Saler, considering 'secular magic' in contemporary society, likewise reject this binary notion that 'any lingering enchantment within Western culture must of necessity be a relic, a throwback'.[99]

Is it misguided, therefore, to interpret the contemporary coin-tree as a 'survival', 'relic' or 'debris' from the past? Is the term 'renaissance' too reductionist, too Frazerian? But if the coin-tree is not a survival or revival, then what is it? In their work on contemporary festivals, David Picard and Mike Robinson distinguish between customs that have been 'rediscovered' and those that have been 'created'.[100] Likewise Marlene Hugoson uses the term 'instant tradition', applying it to the Swedish Easter tree, which does not appear to predate the 1990s but has been widely accepted as a 'tradition' because it draws on traditionary symbolism.[101] But to claim that the coin-tree custom is a contemporary creation, an 'instant tradition', is to shift too far to the other extreme.

Hutton believes that the late twentieth-century turn from the theory of pagan survivals ironically led to a greater gulf between the disciplines of history and folklore. The survival theory had grown unfashionable, and so folklorists shifted their attention away from the origins of customs and focused instead on their most recent forms. Hutton proposes a compromise that sees the interests and methods of folklorists and historians reunited; one that allows for early origins of certain customs without designating them simple survivals. The approach Hutton takes is to trace the progress of customs that stem from the pre-Reformation period and still existed, in some form, by the late twentieth century.[102]

One example is the Palm Sunday consecration which featured prominently in the medieval religious calendar. This custom involved parishioners gathering branches of palm (or sallow or willow) in memory of those strewn before Jesus as he entered Jerusalem. They would carry the foliage in procession around the churchyard before crafting them into small wooden crosses, at which point they would be blessed by the priest with incense and holy water. The parishioners would use them as protective charms, fixing them over doorways or carrying them on their persons, to keep the devil away. This custom was banned in the sixteenth century but we find various versions of it in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century popular customs, particularly in the north-east of England, where twigs adorned buttonholes, hats and homes on Palm Sunday as late as the twentieth century.[103]

Another example is the modern-day hot cross bun, which can be traced back to the Good Friday custom of enclosing a consecrated wafer, together with a crucifix, in a casket and placing them in the sepulchre of a church as the embodiment of Christ. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this custom was perpetuated in most areas of England, where people would bake flat pieces of bread or biscuits marked with a cross, which were imbued with certain magical qualities. They were, for example, said to never go mouldy, to possess medicinal powers, to prevent shipwreck if taken to sea, to protect a house from fire, and to avert evil if hung over a doorway. This custom eventually became the commercialised hot cross bun we know today, sweet and spiced but still bearing both the cross on top and its blatant connection with Easter.[104]

As was stated above, a custom does not simply spring forth from a vacuum, and the coin-tree is no exception; it undoubtedly stems from far earlier beliefs and customs, as detailed in Chapter 2. The roots of this ritual stretch far into the past, and it cannot be denied that people today are enacting the same custom as people over a century ago. Queen Victoria wrote in her diary, 'We hammered some pennies into the tree'.[105] 140 years later TheTravellingClatt uploaded a vlog onto *YouTube* digitally capturing himself doing exactly the same thing in Cumbria.[106] The coin-tree custom is not a contemporary creation, but neither is it a simple survival or revival. Queen Victoria and TheTravellingClatt may have participated in identical practices, but their reasons behind participation will surely not have been the same.

This distinction is too often overlooked. In her work on late nineteenth-century Yorkshire folklore, Eliza Gutch claimed that she had included maypoles and garlands in her study, even though 'Maypoles have degenerated into painted spars, and Garlands are, for the most part, paper…because we ought to regard them as symbols of the living things they were in the beginning'.[107] In her opinion, therefore, contemporary customs are interesting only insofar as they symbolise their predecessors. I would argue that they are interesting in and of themselves—and also that they are not symbols of what 'they were in the beginning'. They are something new.

I have looked previously at the processes of ritual recycling; how a mundane object can become sacred or magical once it has lost its secular purpose.[108] However, ritual recycling is a term that can also apply to a custom that has, like the object, become redundant. It drops out of use but then is taken up again and reformed into something new, like the works of modern art sculpted from piles of rubbish; the egg cartons and empty bottles turned into alligators and rockets by schoolchildren; or the 'recycled chic' products on sale in our high streets, from messenger bags crafted out of truck tarpaulin to photo frames made from old circuit boards. Such repurposing is nothing new.[109] As part of their exhibition 'Transformations: The Art of Recycling' (held 2000–2002), the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, displayed a range of earlier examples: a coconut scraper from the Solomon Islands crafted out of a canoe paddle and spearheads made from bottle glass by Australian aborigines, to name only a couple.[110]

A particularly pertinent example of ritual recycling is that of Shropshire's Arbor Tree. This is a black poplar growing in Aston-on-Clun, which is annually adorned with flags—ranging from the Union Flag to flags of the armed forces.[111] This annual event is held on the closest weekend to Royal Oak Day, 29 May, which celebrates the role of the Boscobel oak as Charles II's hiding place (see more about this in Chapter 7). There is little certainty over the custom's origins. Although written records only go back as far as 1898, it is locally believed to date to 1786, when the tree was decorated to commemorate the wedding of local squire John Marston to Mary Carter. The bride was so taken with the decorations that it became an annual event that has survived into the twenty-first century—although it is a custom that has adapted to the many sociocultural changes of the centuries.

In 1955, for example, a pageant was introduced that ultimately led to the event becoming known worldwide. The annual dressing of the tree became accompanied by prayer, hymns, maypole dancing, morris dancing and the new custom of local brides being given cuttings from the tree. The pageant involved local residents playing various characters: the 'bride and groom', representing John Marston and Mary Carter, the Celtic goddess of fertility, a shepherd with his bride, a Roman soldier and St George, to name but a few. The goddess of fertility was viewed as relevant to the custom because, as ecologist John Box observes in his study on the history of the event, some local residents believe that the decoration of the tree is a 'relic' of the prayer flags associated with Brigit, the Celtic goddess of fertility. While this is unlikely, there being no evidence of a connection between Brigit and the black poplar,[112] in the second half of the 1950s the custom became linked to fertility rites.

Members of the public began requesting cuttings—which the local rector took issue with. An anonymous report in the *Daily Mail* in 1959 describes how Rev. T. S. D. Barrett admonished the custom:

> To my horror I have had letters from childless women from many parts of the country and even Italy and America, asking for twigs from the tree.
>
> Someone has spread this vile superstition around to bring publicity and commercialise what was to my mind a pleasant piece of tradition.
>
> It is disgusting, unchristian, and cruel to the simple-minded woman to believe this rubbish…The whole thing sounds like witchcraft.
>
> Some of the women who have written to me think they have only to stand in the shade of the tree and they would have babies. The Church wiped out these pagan superstitions centuries ago.[113]

Following this, the parish council decided to terminate the pageant, retaining only the annual flag dressing, which continued throughout the following decades. However, in September 1995 the tree fell. A local resident who, having played the 'bride' in the pageant as a young girl, had been gifted a rooted cutting of the tree, which was ceremoniously replanted in Aston-on-Clun in December 1995. This young tree is too small to support the flagpoles that had adorned its predecessor, but flags are still attached via four posts around the tree, and the annual event continues.

Bishops Castle Tourism publicises the Arbor Tree dressing, encouraging visitors to attend the event, and the parish council continue to be responsible for the care and pollarding of the tree. Waning local interest amongst the younger generation, however, threatened the future of this custom—until attempts were made by the Arbor Tree Festival Group, comprised of six local residents, to rekindle this interest. Local artist Kirsty Stevens has worked with the group since 2014 to engage local schoolchildren in the event, running workshops to design flags for the tree, which are then incorporated into the dressing ceremony.[114] Plans are also in place to augment the site of the tree with a new picnic bench and artwork.[115] In this way, the custom itself—as well as the tree—has been ritually recycled, in keeping with the shifting views and levels of interest of the local parish and people.

The base material of a recycled object is the same, and its original form may still be discernible—like an under-layer of Hoskin's landscape palimpsest—but it has been restructured to fulfil an entirely different purpose. Is it therefore the case that the contemporary coin-tree is neither a revival nor a creation, but a ritually recycled *re*creation? Both old and new at the same time; an inveterate innovation? As anthropologist Marshall Sahlins maintained back in the 1990s, 'The old conceptual oppositions on which scientific ethnography was founded are dissolving: we discover continuity in change, tradition in modernity, even custom in commerce'.[116] Is the coin-tree tangible evidence of this? The following two chapters, focused on unravelling the meaning of the coin-tree to people today, attempt to answer this question.

Notes

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3. Redner, H. 2004. *Conserving Cultures: Technology, Globalization, and the Future of Local Cultures*. Lanham and Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, p. 2.
4. See, for example, McKelvie, D. 1963. Aspects of Oral Tradition and Belief in an Industrial Region. *Folk Life* 1, 77–94; Dundes, A. and Pagter, C. R. 1975. *Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire*. Austin, American Folklore Society; Dorson, R. M. 1976. *Folklore and Fakelore: Essays Toward a Discipline of Folk Studies*. Cambridge, MA and London, Harvard University Press.

5. Forster, E. M. 1910 [2000]. *Howards End*. New York, Penguin Books, 8.61.
6. Based on fieldwork conducted at the site on 26/02/2012.
7. Based on fieldwork conducted at the site on 5/04/2013.
8. Based on fieldwork conducted at the site on 2/06/2012.
9. Based on fieldwork conducted at the site on 22/09/2012.
10. Pers. comm. Ben Notley, Property Manager, the National Trust for Scotland, 19/04/2017.
11. Pers. comm. Sarah Parry, Bwlch Nant yr Arian Visitor Centre, Natural Resources Wales, 10/01/2017.
12. Baring-Gould, S. and Fisher, J. 1891. *The Lives of the British Saints: The Saints of Wales and Cornwall and Such Irish Saints as Have Dedications in Britain*. In four volumes. Volume 3. London, The Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, pp. 321–323; Jones, F. 1954. *The Holy Wells of Wales*. Cardiff, University of Wales Press, p. 145; Pemberton, C. 1999. *Soulfaring: Celtic Pilgrimage Then and Now*. Harrisburg, Morehouse Publishing, p. 190; and Jones, A. 2002. *Every Pilgrim's Guide to Celtic Britain and Ireland*. Norwich, Canterbury Press, pp. 68–69.
13. Jones, *Every Pilgrim's Guide*, p. 68; de Waal, E. 2011. *Living on the Border: Reflections on the Experience of Threshold*. Norwich, Canterbury Press, p. 73.
14. Fenton, R. 1917. *Tours in Wales (1804–1813)*. John Fisher (ed.). London, Bedford Press, p. 26.
15. Victory, S. 1977. *The Celtic Church in Wales*. London, SPCK, Plate IV (a).
16. Fenton, *Tours in Wales*, p. 26; Jones, *Every Pilgrim's Guide*, p. 68; de Waal, *Living on the Border*, p. 73.
17. Gell, A. 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, pp. 67–68.
18. Interviews were often unstructured, consisting of informal conversation guided by a basic set of questions. Recording participants' responses in a notebook was considered less obtrusive than using audio equipment, and so during and immediately after each interview I noted down people's responses, quoting certain interesting phrases verbatim. These interactions were later typed up as accurately as possible.
19. Local residents are defined here as living within 20 miles of the site.
20. Miller notes that the Internet offers a veritable 'treasure trove' of ethnographic data. However, she also remarks on the 'muddy ethical field' of Internet research (Miller, M. 2012. Face-to-Face with the Digital Folk: The Ethics of Fieldwork on Facebook. In Blank, T. J. (ed.) *Folk Culture in the Digital Age: The Emergent Dynamics of Human Interaction*. Logan, Utah State University Press, 212–232, p. 228), considering

what protections are necessary, whether consent should be obtained and how, and noting the ambiguity between private and public space online. These factors lead her to question whether the Internet is a suitable forum for academic research into human subjects. However, as the Association of Internet Researchers stress, 'rather than one-size-fits-all pronouncements, ethical decision-making [in Internet research] is best approached through the application of practical judgment attentive to the specific context' (Markham, A. and Buchanan, E. 2012. *Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research Version 2: Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee*. Association of Internet Researchers, p. 4). The contexts of the forums and blogs referred to in this book do not, in my opinion, necessitate a great deal of ethical delicacy. They are all publicly accessible, with none requiring online membership, and the contributors do not appear to view the subject matter as sensitive. However, due to the nature of discussion forums—with many contributors using aliases, and with many discussion threads having 'timed out' due to inactivity—I shall refer to these online contributors anonymously.

21. Hoskins, W. G. 1955 [1988]. *The Making of the English Landscape*. London, Hodder and Stoughton, p. 20.
22. Walsham, A. 2011. *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 4.
23. Van den Eynden, studying plant-centred rituals in contemporary Scotland, opines that such customs are perpetuated primarily by curious tourists rather than local residents (Van den Eynden, V. 2010. Plants as Symbols in Scotland Today. In Padro-de-Santayana, M., Pieroni, A. and Puri, R. K. (eds.) *Ethnobotany in the New Europe: People, Health and Wild Plant Resources*. Oxford and New York, Berghahn Books, 239–245, p. 243).
24. Tinniswood, A. 1998. *The Polite Tourist: Four Centuries of Country House Visiting*. London, National Trust, p. 159.
25. Barton, S. 2005. *Working-Class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840–1970*. Manchester, Manchester University Press.
26. Markwell, S., Bennet, M. and Ravenscroft, N. 1997. The Changing Market for Heritage Tourism: A Case Study of Visits to Historic Houses in England. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 3 (2), 95–108; Barton, *Working-Class Organisations and Popular Tourism*.
27. Patmore, J. A. 1972. *Land and Leisure*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, p. 12.
28. Department for Transport. 2011. Vehicles. *Transport Statistics Great Britain: 2011*.

29. Cf. Tinniswood, *The Polite Tourist*, p. 160.
30. Yale, P. 2004. *From Tourist Attractions to Heritage Tourism*. Huntingdon, Elm Publications, 9.25.
31. Patmore, *Land and Leisure*; Yale, *From Tourist Attractions to Heritage Tourism*.
32. Vaccaro, I. and Beltran, O. 2010. Turning Nature into Collective Heritage: The Social Framework of the Process of Patrimonialization of Nature. In Roigé, X. and Frigolé, J. (eds.) *Constructing Cultural and Natural Heritage: Parks, Museums and Rural Heritage*. Girona, ICRPC, 63–74, pp. 67–69.
33. Oak (*Quercus*), Beech (*Fagus*), Ash (*Fraxinus*), and Pine (*Pinus*) are the most common coin-trees, but several other species have been recorded. It should also be noted that, due to the heavy decay of many coin-tree logs, their species are unidentifiable.
34. Oliver Rackham estimates woodland history to begin in the British Isles c.10000 BC, following tree recolonization after the Ice Age (Rackham, O. 1976. *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape*. London, J. M. Dent Ltd., p. 6).
35. Cf. Historic England. 2011. *Landscape Advice Note: The Treatment of Dead Wood in Historic Parks and Gardens*. English Heritage.
36. Peterken, G. F. 1996. *Natural Woodland: Ecology and Conservation in Northern Temperate Regions*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 396.
37. The promotion of deadwood stems from the benefits it provides in the natural environment. As well as playing key roles in carbon storage, soil nutrient cycling and hydrological processes, deadwood left in situ also provides support and shelter for a wide range of species (Harmon, M. E., Franklin, J. F., Swanson, F. J., Sollins, P., Gregory, S. V., Lattin, D., Anderson, N. H., Cline, S. P., Aumen, N. G., Sedell, J. R., Lienkaemper, W., Cromack Jr., K. and Cummings, K. W. 1986. Ecology of Coarse Woody Debris in Temperate Ecosystems. *Advances in Ecological Research* 5, 133–302; Packham, J. R., Harding, D. J. L., Hilton, G. M. and Stuttard, R. A. 1992. *Functional Ecology of Woodlands and Forests*. London, Chapman & Hall; Hodge, S. J. and Peterken, G. F. 1998. Deadwood in British Forests: Priorities and a Strategy. *Forestry* 71 (2), 99–112; and Forestry Commission. 2002. *Life in the Deadwood: A Guide to Managing Deadwood in Forestry Commission Forests*. Edinburgh, Forest Enterprise).
38. Forestry Commission, *Life in the Deadwood*.
39. Pers. comm. Chris Moseley, Park Ranger, Marbury, Cheshire, 16/08/2012.
40. Yale, *From Tourist Attractions to Heritage Tourism*, 9.1.

41. Patmore, *Land and Leisure*, p. 11; McCulloch, John. 1992. 'The Youth Hostels Association: Precursors and Contemporary Achievements.' *Journal of Tourism Studies* 3 (1), 22–27, p. 23. Although note that Alexandra Walsham traces an increase in the appreciation of rural aesthetics during the early modern period with the 'evolving cult of sublime nature' (*Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 553).
42. McCulloch, 'The Youth Hostels Association', pp. 23–24.
43. Vaccaro and Beltran, 'Turning Nature into Collective Heritage'.
44. Boissevain, J. (ed.) 1992. *Revitalizing European Rituals*. London and New York, Routledge, p. 8.
45. Ramblers' Association. 2010. *Walking Facts and Figs. 2: Participation in Walking*. London, Ramblers, p. 1.
46. Prentice, R. 1993. *Tourism and Heritage Attractions*. London and New York, Routledge, p. 3.
47. 2012 Great Britain Day Visits Survey. 2013. *The GB Day Visitor: Statistics 2012*. Visit England, Visit Scotland, Visit Wales, p. 46.
48. Boissevain, *Revitalizing European Rituals*; Partridge, C. 2005. *The Re-Enchantment of the West*. Vol. 2. London and New York, T&T Clark International; Picard, D. and Robinson, M. 2006. Remaking Worlds: Festivals, Tourism and Change. In Picard, D. and Robinson, M. (eds.) *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds*. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 1–30; and Testa, A. 2017. 'Fertility' and the Carnival 1: Symbolic Effectiveness, Emic Beliefs, and the Re-Enchantment of Europe. *Folklore* 128 (1), 16–36.
49. Lang, A. 1898. *Custom and Myth*. London, Longmans, Green and Co., p. 417.
50. Bascom, W. R. 1965. Four Functions of Folklore. In Dundes, A. (ed.) *The Study of Folklore*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 279–298, p. 296.
51. Blank, T. J. 2009. Introduction: Toward a Conceptual Framework for the Study of Folklore and the Internet. In Blank, T. J. (ed.) *Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World*. Logan, Utah State University Press, 1–20, p. 13.
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55. Dundes, A. 2005. Folkloristics in the Twenty-First Century (AGS Invited Presidential Plenary Address, 2004). *The Journal of American Folklore* 118 (470), 385–408, p. 406.
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58. Anonymous. 2009. *The Strange Money Trees of England*. Amusing Planet. http://www.amusingplanet.com/2009/10/strange-money-trees-of-england.html.
59. Anonymous. 2009. How Can I Find the Money Tree on Wadsley Common? Sheffield Forum. http://www.sheffieldforum.co.uk/showthread.php?t=504017.
60. Anonymous. 2008. *Wish Trees*. Sheffield Wildlife. http://sheffieldwildlife.wordpress.com/2008/11/27/wish-trees/.
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62. *YouTube* has been recognised by UNESCO as a repository of intangible cultural heritage, as a user-generated archive of rituals and performances as they occur in lived circumstances, with *YouTube* videos featuring on their online intangible heritage lists. Cf. Pietrobruno, S. 2013. YouTube and the Social Archiving of Intangible Heritage. *New Media & Society* 15 (8), 1259–1276; Pietrobruno, S. 2016. Between Narratives and Lists: Performing Digital Intangible Heritage Through Global Media. In Daugbjerg, M., Eisner, R. S. and Knudsen, B. T. (eds.) *Re-Enacting the Past: Heritage, Materiality and Performance*. London and New York, Routledge, 62–69.
63. *TheTravellingClatt*. 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnPMexWbpLk.
64. *Natures Way Home Education*. 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxXBDgS94_M.
65. I have detailed only a small sample of the forums, blogs and online articles detailing coin-trees, illustrating that the largest written resource for this custom is on the Internet. While these pieces of literature may not claim to provide accurate information about the coin-tree, nor in-depth

analysis of the custom, they represent the only attempts made to compile (albeit unofficial) catalogues of these structures. They have consequently proved invaluable sources for the identification of coin-tree sites; they also represent a body of ethnographic material (i.e. netnography) that is draw upon throughout this book, Cf. Kozinets, R. V. 2010. *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. London, Sage.

66. Deloitte. 2017. *Global Mobile Consumer Survey 2017: UK Cut*. London, Deloitte.
67. Cf. Kindberg, T., Spasojevic, M., Fleck, R. and Sellen, A. 2005. The Ubiquitous Camera: An In-Depth Study of Camera Phone Use. *IEEE Pervasive Computing* 4 (2), 42–50; Gye, L. 2007. Picture This: The Impact of Mobile Camera Phones on Personal Photographic Practices. *Continuum* 21 (2), 279–388; David, G. 2010. Camera Phone Images, Videos and Live Streaming: A Contemporary Visual Trend. *Visual Studies* 25 (1), 89–98.
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71. Thompson, T. 2012. Netizens, Revolutionaries, and the Inalienable Right to the Internet. In Blank, T. J. (ed.) *Folk Culture in the Digital Age: The Emergent Dynamics of Human Interaction*. Logan, Utah State University Press, 46–59; McNeill, L. S. 2009. The End of the Internet: A Folk Response to the Provision to Infinite Choice. In Blank, T. J. (ed.) *Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World*. Logan, Utah State University Press, 80–97; and McNeill, L. S. 2012. Real Virtuality: Enhancing Locality by Enacting the Small World Theory. In Blank, T. J. (ed.) *Folk Culture in the Digital Age: The Emergent Dynamics of Human Interaction*. Logan, Utah State University Press, 85–97.
72. Thompson, 'Netizens, Revolutionaries, and the Inalienable Right to the Internet', p. 55.
73. Office for National Statistics. 2010. *Internet Access—Households and Individuals, Historical Internet Access*. http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access—households-and-individuals/historical-internet-access/index.html.
74. Sharpe, D. W. A. (ed.) 2003. *The Penguin Dictionary of Chemistry*. London, Penguin Books, p. 419.
75. There is, for example, some dispute over the age of the Padley Gorge coin-trees amongst the wardens and rangers. Chris Millner, Longshaw Senior Warden, estimates that the custom began in the late 1970s or

early 1980s (pers. comm. 15/12/2011). Tom Lewis, Area Ranger, however, does not remember the coin-trees being there when he worked at the site in the 1990s (pers. comm. 14/11/2011).

76. Pers. comm. Chris Moseley, Park Ranger, Marbury Park, 16/08/2012.
77. Pers. comm. Steve Gillard, Ranger, High Force, 09/09/2012.
78. Yorkshire Dales National Park. 2011. Wood Yew Be-Leave It! *The Visitor*, 10–11.
79. Pers. comm. Catriona Kilner, Area Ranger, Malham, 20/10/2011.
80. Cf. Holtorf, C. and Schadla-Hall, T. 1999. Age as Artefact: On Archaeological Authenticity. *European Journal of Archaeology* 2 (2), 229–247, p. 236; Kalshoven, P. T. 2010. Things in the Making: Playing with Imitation. *Etnofoor: Imitation* 22 (1), 59–74, pp. 68–69.
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82. Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds.) 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 1.
83. Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, p. 265. See also Holtorf and Schadla-Hall, writing of 'age-value' ('Age as Artefact', p. 232). But for a critique of the notion of authenticity in relation to customs see Kevin Meethan, who stresses that it is 'predicated on a false dichotomy between the non-modern, viewed as the authentic, and the modern, viewed as the inauthentic' (Meethan, K. 2001. Tourism in Global Society: Place, culture, consumption. London, Palgrave, p. 91).
84. Goffer, Z. 1980. *Archaeological Chemistry: A Sourcebook on the Applications of Chemistry to Archaeology*. New York, Wiley, p. 264.
85. Cf. Spooner, B. 1986. Weavers and Dealers: The Authenticity of an Oriental Carpet. In Apparudai, A. (ed.) *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 195–235; Macdonald, S. 2002. On 'Old Things': The Fetishization of Past Everyday Life. In Rapport, N. (ed.) *British Subjects: An Anthropology of Britain*. Oxford and New York, Berg, 89–106.
86. Penrose, S. (ed.) 2007. *Images of Change: An Archaeology of England's Contemporary Landscape*. Swindon, English Heritage, p. 13.
87. See, for example, Alessandro Testa's ethnographic exploration of carnivals in Europe today, which are given (largely false) historical roots: 'One can explain the emic usage of adjectives like 'very ancient', 'antique', 'pagan', or even 'prehistoric': The equation at work is that

the more remote the evoked past is, the more 'authentic'' (Testa, A. 2017. 'Fertility' and the Carnival 2: Popular Frazerism and the Reconfiguration of Tradition in Europe Today. *Folklore* 128 (June 2017), 111–132, p. 124). It should, however, be noted that this tactical adaptation of customs and age is not regarded in modern-day scholarship as a necessarily negative process. See Chapter 6.

88. Porteous, A. 1928. *Forest Folklore, Mythology, and Romance*. London, G. Allen & Unwin; Thiselton-Dyer, T. F. 1889. *The Folk-Lore of Plants*. London, Chatto & Windus, p. 28.
89. Gutch, Eliza. 1901. *County Folk-Lore: Examples of Printed Folk-Lore Concerning the North Riding of Yorkshire and the Ainsty*. Vol. 2. London, David Nutt, p. 54.
90. Bord, J. and Bord, C. 1985. *Sacred Wells: Holy Wells and Water Lore in Britain and Ireland*. London, Paladin Books, p. 98; Jones, *The Holy Wells of Wales*, p. 1.
91. Hope, R. C. 1893. *The Legendary Lore of the Holy Wells of England: Including Rivers, Lakes, Fountains, and Springs*. London, Elliot Stock, p. 13.
92. Forster, *Howards End*, 8.61.
93. Boissevain, *Revitalizing European Rituals*, p. 7.
94. Frazer, J. G. 1900. *The Golden Bough*. Vol. 1. London, MacMillan & Co., p. 224.
95. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p. 169.
96. Clifford, J. 1988. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, p. 338.
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98. Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 474.
99. Landy, J. and Saler, M. (eds.) 2009. *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, p. 3.
100. Picard, D. and Robinson, M. 2006. Remaking Worlds: Festivals, Tourism and Change. In Picard, D. and Robinson, M. (eds.) *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds*. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 1–30, p. 2.
101. Hugoson, M. 2006. "Instant Tradition": The Introduction of the Swedish Easter Tree. *Folklore* 117 (1), 75–86.
102. Hutton, 'The English Reformation'.
103. Hutton, 'The English Reformation', pp. 98–100.
104. Hutton, 'The English Reformation', pp. 101–104.

105. Duff, D. (ed.) 1968. *Victoria in the Highlands: The Personal Journal of Her Majesty Queen Victoria: With Notes and Introductions, and a Description of the Acquisition and Rebuilding of Balmoral Castle*. London, Frederick Muller, p. 333.
106. *TheTravellingClatt*. 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnPMexWbpLk.
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108. Houlbrook, C. 2013. Ritual, Recycling, and Recontextualisation: Putting the Concealed Shoe in Context. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 23, 99–112. The example used in this paper is the concealed shoe: A shoe loses its secular purpose once it becomes too old or damaged to be worn, and then it is ritually recycled by being hidden within the fabric of a building for possible magical purposes.
109. Cf. Congdon, K. G. 2000. Beyond the Egg Carton Alligator: To Recycle is to Recall and Restore. *Art Education* 53 (6), 6–12.
110. Nicholson, J. 2002. 'Transformations—The Art of Recycling' at the Pitt Rivers Museum. *Journal of Museum Ethnography* 14, 74–83.
111. Box, J. 2003. Dressing the Arbor Tree. *Folklore* 114 (1), 13–28.
112. A likelier origin for the custom are the rag-trees so prominent across the British Isles, as suggested by Box, 'Dressing the Arbor Tree', pp. 23–24. However, in the absence of any evidence for this, it is certainly possible that the 'long tradition' of the Arbor Tree is not actually that old.
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114. Pers. comm. Kirsty Stevens, 10/11/2017.
115. Pers. comm. R. Brassington, Arbor Tree Festival Group, 12/11/2017.
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CHAPTER 4

Contemporary Engagement

The Ingleton coin-tree is immense. It stretches across the footpath in a graceful arch, tall enough to walk beneath, encrusted with so many folded coins that barely an inch of its bark remains visible. I'd arrived early that morning to take my photographs and measurements, and so far it's been quiet. But it's a sunny Saturday and the coin-tree arcs over the main footpath of the popular Ingleton Waterfalls Trail. It doesn't stay quiet for long.

The first to approach the coin-tree is a group of four men in their thirties, one of whom literally stops mid-stride as he spots the coins. Exclaiming something in German, he approaches the tree and the others follow. They lean over the coins, scrutinizing them. Two of them move away after a few moments, but the remaining pair are sorting through their pockets for change. They've found a handy-sized rock perched conveniently on the coin-tree, and begin hammering their coins in, taking it in turns to photograph each other as they make their contribution. Finished, they lay the rock back in the exact spot they'd found it.

Before they move on, an elderly couple appear from the opposite direction. They don't add their own coins but the man does pose for a picture, standing under the coin-tree's arch. The first group have continued along the path, but another pair approaches: a younger couple who pause only briefly to comment on the coins, immediately followed by a woman and a teenage girl, who stop long enough to run their fingers across the surface of the embedded pennies. Close on their heels is a further group, this one much larger. Three sets

C. Houlbrook, *The Magic of Coin-Trees from Religion to Recreation*,
Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75517-5_4

of parents and, between them, eight children: the oldest a pre-teen and the youngest strapped into a baby hiking carrier. The young boy running ahead notices the coin-tree first and shouts back that he's "found the money tree".

What follows is a cacophony of noise as the group disperse around the tree, the children all badgering their respective parents for coins. In the clamour I pick up only snippets of conversation and activity, but I see they're all focused on the coin-tree.

"Not the 50p."

"Help me find the right spot."

"It's the Magic Wizard Tree."

"No, don't pull the coins out!"

Most of the children have been congregating at the root-end of the tree, closer to the ground, easier to examine. They run their hands along it, lean on it, clamber up to sit on it. One boy goes further and crawls along the top of it, reaching the apex of the arch before declaring, "Dad, I'm stuck!"

A couple of the adults roll their eyes and begin to move on. A man mutters in exasperation as he stands beneath the arch, directs the boy to climb down onto his shoulders and then lowers him to the ground. The group filter slowly away, disappearing down the path as a separate couple hunch over the tree for close-ups of the coins with their hi-tech cameras.

Encountering the Coin-Tree

Most participants in the coin-tree custom do not seek these sites out by design; they stumble upon them by chance. This is evidenced by the lack of planning and preparation involved. Of the 200 plus people witnessed inserting coins into these trees, not a single one had come prepared with a hammer in order to make the task easier. Instead, they either inserted coins into pre-existing cracks or employed handy objects as makeshift tools of percussion: most often nearby rocks (Fig. 4.1), but a pocketknife and a hiking boot have also been employed for such a purpose.

Some practitioners, however, do appear to have planned their participation prior to their visit, and this is evidenced by the nature of some of the deposits. For example, at Aira Force, Cumbria, two metal plates engraved with names have been screwed to the bark of coin-trees. It is unlikely that the depositors of these plates just happened to be carrying engraved metal plates and a handful of screws. It is more likely that they came to the site prepared to make their contribution, as did the depositor of a red candle on Isle Maree. Similar examples of foresight were

Fig. 4.1 A child hammers a coin into a coin-tree at Bolton Abbey, Yorkshire, using a rock she found on site (Photograph by author)

rife at St Nectan's Glen, where a variety of objects not likely to have been fortuitously carried by the participant have been deposited (albeit most left by the waterfall as opposed to on the coin-tree): semi-precious stones, a rubber duck, memorials of deceased pets in plastic wallets, painted pieces of slate and candles (Fig. 4.2).

The nature of these clearly premeditated deposits—termed here 'planned deposits', in contrast to the 'casual deposits' of coins—indicate that some practitioners have come upon these sites by design. Indeed, at St Nectan's Glen three interview participants explained that they had brought items deliberately to deposit: a pair of women had come prepared with ribbons to attach to the nearby rag-tree, while another woman had brought and deposited a candle the previous year. However, overtly planned deposits are clearly in the minority, suggesting that so too is planned participation. The 'casual' deposits of coins and other objects (plastic tokens, hair accessories, jewellery, clothing, a receipt, a feather, a flower) likely to have been carried or sourced on site (totalling 166,046

Fig. 4.2 Various deposits at St Nectan's Glen, Cornwall, England (Photographs by author)

at all coin-tree sites) far outnumber their planned counterparts (metal plaques, a candle, a semi-precious stone) (totalling five), as well as ambiguous objects, which are not obviously one category or the other (nails, screws, bolts, ribbons, string, a drawing pin, a battery, a beer bottle cap) (totalling 106).

If the majority of practitioners have no prior intention to view or contribute to a coin-tree, why then do people not simply walk past? Why do so many put their activity—recreational walking—on hold in order to examine structures which they know little to nothing about? What is it that draws whole congregations of people to these coin-trees? One word is particularly important here: congregations. People *congregate* around coin-trees. They converge, assemble, crowd. And in doing so, they attract more people. Both observations and interviews revealed that people were far more likely to approach a coin-tree if another group had already gathered around it. As a result, groups and individuals stopping to examine coin-trees tended to be clustered together, often overlapping and attracting still more groups in a snowball-like effect.

The same is true of inserting coins. If a group of visitors witnessed another group inserting a coin, then the chances were much greater that they too would insert coins. This also worked in reverse. Peter at Portmeirion (described in Chapter 2), who had seen no other group interacting with the coin-trees, seemed sceptical when told that the coins had been inserted by members of the public. Not having witnessed anybody participate in this custom himself, Peter did not seem to believe that the coin-trees were products of public participation, and was therefore reluctant to participate himself.

Other visitors have doubted the public nature of these structures, querying whether the coin-trees were official pieces of art. At Dovedale, three groups believed the primary coin-tree was the work of a single artist or a piece of 'community art', whilst at Tarr Steps, one woman described the coin-tree as 'folk art'. Similarly in Cumbria, six people admitted to originally perceiving the coin-trees as sculptures, possibly sponsored by the National Trust, and were unsure whether or not they would be 'allowed' to insert a coin of their own—an opinion also expressed by a couple at Ingleton. One woman claimed to not 'even know if we should touch it'. Unsurprisingly, all of the individuals and groups who viewed the coin-trees as official pieces of art had not witnessed fellow walkers insert coins.

This desire to legitimise action by noting how others have acted is certainly not atypical in human behaviour.[1] It is a form of imitation, and imitation has always played a prominent role in our learning processes.[2] As children we learn through imitating the actions of others, and we continue to do so as adults, to the extent that imitation is what social psychologist Ap Dijksterhuis has termed 'default social behaviour'.[3] We do it without thinking about it, relying on social validation to dictate the terms of what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.

Social validation is behind the vast majority of examples of collective behaviour: religious revivals, fashions and fads, political choices, consumer preferences and mob violence. Consciously or subconsciously—rightly or wrongly—people trust the majority, and so they follow suit. And, in doing so, they add to that majority, encouraging others to follow suit in a snowball-like effect.[4] In their research on fashions and customs, Sushil Bikhchandani, David Hirshleifer and Ivo Welch term the basis of this model 'information cascades'.[5] People infer from the participation of others the potential benefits for themselves, whether this is choosing what brand of mobile to buy or getting involved in a riot.[6]

This is how innovations are diffused.[7] This is how the custom of the coin-tree appears to have spread across Britain, despite the fact that many of its participants admit to not knowing the 'purpose' of the custom. An individual observes a group congregating around a coin-tree, which immediately piques their curiosity. They then witness other individuals insert coins and so, taking their cue from their peers and submitting to the emotional contagion of their environment, they imitate and insert a coin themselves.[8] Thus is the nature of accumulation, which archaeologist Clive Gamble describes as having a 'magnetic-like effect'.[9] Deposits attract more deposits, often at an exponential rate.

As evident as imitation is at the coin-tree sites, this theory is not based solely on observations. Many of the custom's participants admitted to imitation being their primary motivation, explaining that they had only done so 'because other people had done it'. At Tarn Hows, an American couple claimed that they had seen another group insert coins and had 'wanted to know what all the fuss was about', an answer identical to one given by a man at Dovedale. One man, also at Tarn Hows, believed that the participants are 'just copying, adding to it…I don't think there's any deeper reason than that', a sentiment shared by many other participants. Another man termed this process of imitation 'the queue mentality'. He explained that if 'you see enough people doing something then you join in, and you don't really ask why'.

Imitation also seems to influence *how* people participate in this custom. For example, the woman from Staffordshire at Tarn Hows (see Chapter 3) was reluctant to insert a ten pence piece, despite it being her only coin, because she believed the other coins inserted were all copper; she did not want to 'ruin the pattern'. Likewise, another woman chose to insert a penny because she 'didn't want to spoil the pattern'. Imitation also influences where the coins are inserted. In many of the coin-trees a repetitive pattern of coins is clearly visible; most often in longitudinal distributions, following the grain of the wood (Fig. 4.3), but radial formations, wave- or ripple-like patterns, diagonal, and annular arrangements are also evident (Figs. 4.4 and 4.5). This imitative placement reveals the participant's desire to 'follow the pattern'; a desire to adhere and contribute to the uniformity of a larger design.

Lynne McNeill's theory on serial collaboration applies neatly to this. Like cairns on mountains or rag-trees, coin-trees are what McNeill terms 'serial collaborative creations', which she describes as having four primary characteristics:

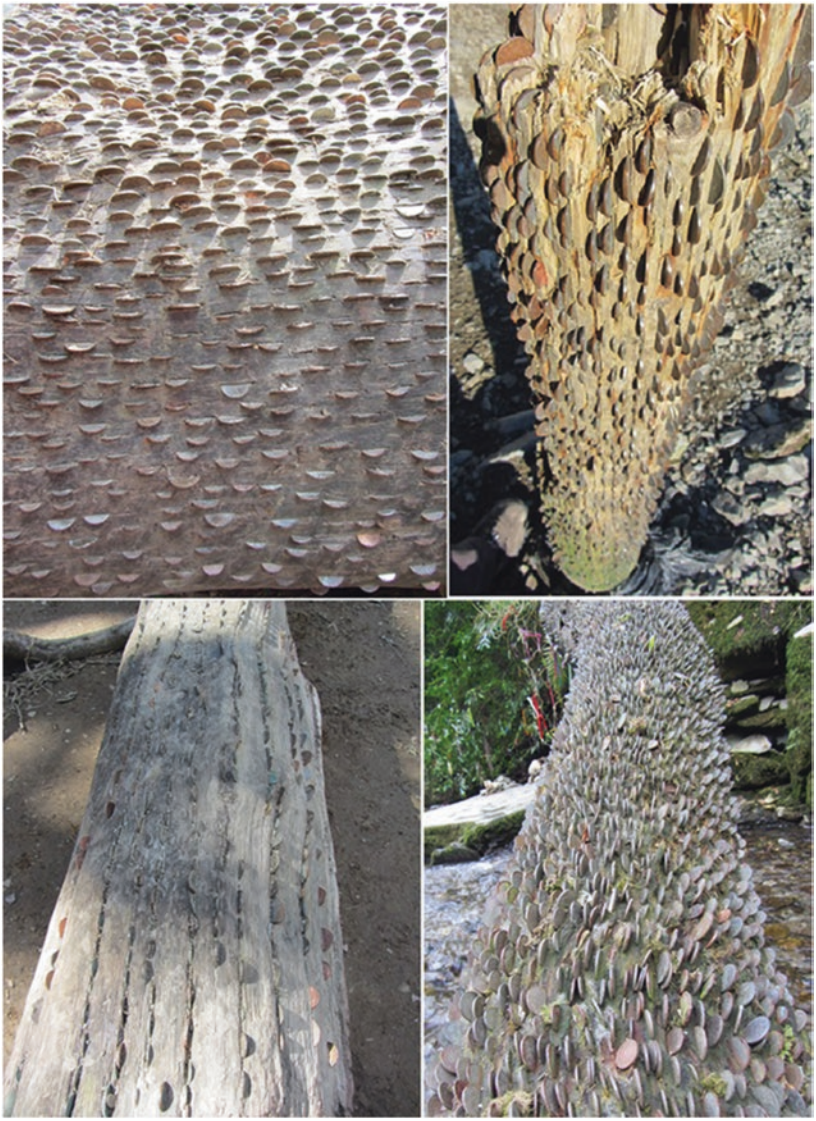

Fig. 4.3 The longitudinal distributions of coins in coin-trees, following the grain of the wood (Photographs by author)

Fig. 4.4 A radial pattern of coins at Portmeirion, Gwynedd, Wales (Photograph by author)

1. People come into contact with objects through geographical movement. Either the objects are passed from person to person (type A) or the people pass by the objects (type B).
2. People involved contribute to the object, either by adding to its physical form or by continuing its journey through some sort of personal effort.
3. Multiple people interact with the object, but they do it one at a time or in small, sequential groups.
4. Those who interact with the object individually (or in small groups) are aware of others' involvement with the object's existence, though they may not interact with them directly. This awareness is expected and necessary; the object, by virtue of being a chain object, implies the presence of past and future participants.[10]

Fig. 4.5 A wave-like pattern of coins at Aira Force, Cumbria, England (Photograph by author)

Another form of serial collaboration that has proliferated in the twenty-first century is the love-lock. Customarily, couples write their names or initials onto padlocks and then attach them to public structures, most often bridges, such as the Ponte Milvio, Rome or the Brooklyn Bridge. They then throw the keys into the river below to symbolise their commitment to each other. In Moscow, metal tree-like structures have been erected specifically for this purpose on Luzhkov Bridge, whilst on the Pont des Arts in Paris, the accumulation of love-locks reached such quantities that one of the bridge's railings collapsed under their weight in June 2014.[11]

The origins of this practice are unclear but residents of Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia, claim that their assemblage on the Most Ljubavi ('Bridge of Love') dates back to the First World War. However, it gained popularity following Italy's adoption of the custom in the 2000s, triggered by Federico Moccia's 2006 romantic novel *Ho voglia di te (I Want You)*, in which a character attaches a padlock to the Ponte Milvio. The

subsequent dissemination of this practice was rapid and geographically unbound, with love-lock accumulations emerging in locations as distant and varied as New York and Seoul, Paris and Taiwan, Melbourne and Moscow. As with the coin-tree, this clearly demonstrates a custom's capacity for construction, growth and widespread dissemination without the impetus of authoritative agents.[12]

Serial collaboration is no doubt at the basis of how and why both customs have spread. However, just as creation proves to be mimetic, the opposite is also true: imitation can be creative.[13] Simulation, contrary to the word's definition, forges something new. Depositors not only imitate, they contribute. Every time a coin is added to a coin-tree, no matter how imitatively done, it alters that coin-tree. Every contribution supplements and changes, causing patterns to form; and every attempt to maintain a pattern causes it to grow, spread and transform. And this leads to the next section of this chapter: a consideration of aesthetics.

Aesthetics and Captivation

Most coin-trees have striking physical appearances, as has been observed by a wide variety of participants at many of the sites. The coin-trees have been described as 'pretty', 'beautiful', 'lovely', 'striking', 'impressive', and many passers-by have photographed the structures, either alone or with people posing in the shot, some photographers even climbing above the structures to capture them at different angles (see the discussion on mobile camera phones and the digital way in which people engage with this ritual in Chapter 3). In fact, photography was viewed as inadequate by one woman at Tarn Hows, who said that a picture would not 'do it justice'. Clearly an appreciation of the coin-trees is very deeply rooted in their physical qualities.

Granted, not all coin-trees would be considered aesthetically striking. Those with only a small number of coins are not particularly arresting, primarily because it is coin density and patterning which are generally considered attractive or compelling. The decision of a depositor to start a new coin-tree—or add to a peripheral one—is probably due to a desire to distinguish their deposit from others (as discussed in greater detail below). However, it may also still be aesthetically motivated. People may be prompted by the confidence that a fledgling or satellite coin-tree will eventually become as densely coined and patterned as the primary

coin-tree, bound to gradually transform into a piece of 'art'—a notion which may be all the more attractive when the depositor considers that they will have personally instigated it.

Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton, in their work on *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, note that the ''artness' of the object sometimes seems to be of secondary importance after their political or symbolic roles'.[14] In the analysis of an object—both in anthropology and archaeology—its aesthetic qualities are sometimes sidelined in favour of its practical or symbolic purposes. However, as Gell stresses, 'the distinction we make between 'mere' decoration and function is unwarranted; decoration is intrinsically functional, or else its presence would be inexplicable'.[15] In other words, the 'artness' of the coin-tree has a function. Indeed, it appears to have several.

The appearance of the coin-trees plays a primary role in attracting participants in the first place. Their striking physicality draws people in, enticing them. Gell terms this process 'captivation', using the Trobriand Islanders' utilisations of their elaborately adorned canoe prow-boards as 'psychological weapons' as an example of the 'bewitching effect' of art.[16] From observations, the coin-trees do appear to have such a 'bewitching effect' on those who pass by, the majority of whom stop in their tracks at first sight of the trees and approach to examine them, making exclamations such as 'how fabulous' and 'bizarre'.

What is it, however, that causes this captivation? Gell, asserting that the causes are deeper than simple aesthetic pleasure, writes of the 'technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology',[17] maintaining that it is an observer's failure to understand the technical processes of an object's manufacture—what he terms 'cognitive stickiness'[18]—that reels the observer in. Simply put, we are attracted to objects that we do not understand; it is 'their becoming rather than their being' that entices and confuses us.[19] Gell believes, therefore, that the elaborately designed prow-boards of the Trobriand Islanders' canoes are designed to be impressive not (entirely) for their aesthetics, but because of the magical skill that is believed to have crafted them. Art historian Malcolm Baker is in agreement, claiming that observers of a piece of art are 'lured by the narratives of making'.[20]

The enigmatic object is the captivating object. And what is more enigmatic than a tree embedded with thousands of coins for reasons beyond the observer's comprehension? That the coin-trees are disorienting is evidenced by the sheer numbers of passers-by who have physically halted

at their first sight of a coin-tree, and have then needed to approach it in order to ascertain if what they *think* they are seeing coincides with what they are *actually* seeing. Dacher Keltner and Jonathan Haidt term this reaction 'awe', while Greenblatt dubs it 'wonder'; the near-paralysing 'startle reflex' exhibited in reaction to that which 'cannot be understood, that can scarcely be believed'.[21] A large number of people have exhibited disbelief when first encountering a coin-tree or when told by their companions that the trees are clustered with coins. Some, having only glanced at the coin-trees, have initially assumed that the coins were fungi, rot or fissures in the bark. Upon realising that the trees are indeed embedded with coins, their next question is invariably 'why?'

It is, therefore, the mystery of the coin-tree which seems to attract most people. Indeed, if the same coin-tree was an official installation in an art gallery, having been crafted by a single artist, accompanied by an information plaque detailing that artist's use of materials and the symbolism they had hoped to convey, would it evoke the same reactions?[22] Would it captivate its observers to the same extent? Probably not, for it is the enigmatic nature of the coin-tree which appears to draw people in.

The aesthetic qualities of coin-trees do more than reel their observers in. They play a prominent role in people's appreciation of them. Colonel Edington, who visited the Isle Maree coin-tree in 1927, observed that the visual effect of the clustered coins made the tree appear to be 'covered with metallic scales. The scaly covering forms armour something like what is depicted on a dragon'.[23] Over 80 years later, a woman used the same analogy to describe the primary coin-tree at Ingleton to her young daughter: 'it's scaly, like a dragon'. Similarly, a teenage girl at Dovedale compared the coin-tree to a crocodile, observing the scale-like appearance of the coins; at Bolton Abbey a young girl compared the texture to that of a fish; and a boy at Snowdon described the coin-tree as a 'cactus'. One man, also in Dovedale, observed that the lustrous metal of the coins contrasted against the rough surface of the trees created a 'nice effect', making the structure 'nice to look at', while a woman at Tarn Hows expressed an almost identical opinion, asserting that 'it's quite effective having the metal of the coins against the wood of the tree. Quite a stunning contrast'.[24]

Many other participants commented on the colours of the coins, two different groups at Portmeirion, for example, excitedly pointing out the 'shiny gold coin' (a Polish grosz) inserted into one of the stumps. Indeed, certain coins do appear to have been inserted for their colours, as opposed to their denominations. One family at Grizedale, one at

Snowdon and a young girl at Becky Falls, for example, chose to insert silver coins because of their lustre, just as two other participants specifically chose 'shiny' copper coins to insert.

This preoccupation with colour and lustre is not atypical, and certainly not insignificant.[25] Colours can animate objects by evoking space, energy and light, and they play a key role in an object's ability to fascinate and captivate us.[26] A recent special issue of *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* was dedicated solely to 'shimmering magic', which presents a range of ethnographic material from North America, Asia, and Africa focusing on the popularity of lustrous objects, from mirrors and coins to silk and sequins, in ritual. Raquel Romberg and Claire Fanger, exploring cross-cultural aesthetic, moral and mystical significances of reflective items, note the predominantly positive values ascribed to such objects in ritual contexts.[27] From Hindu ritual garments to the Conjure magic of African-American communities, the shimmering object tends to have generative effects, increasing personal health, wealth and everything in between. It is believed to achieve these myriad effects either through embodying a beneficent spiritual presence or deflecting a malevolent one.[28]

Andrew Jones and Gavin MacGregor believe there to be two primary aspects of colour which cause neurophysiological effects. Firstly, 'the material qualities of the coloured object, its relative degree of sparkle, brilliance or shininess' and secondly, the 'effect of colour on patterning', made all the more striking if bright colours are juxtaposed against dull ones.[29] Both of these effective aspects of colour are present in the coin-trees. The copper colour of the coins, for example, has a long history of being considered aesthetically pleasing,[30] and the contrast of the luminous metal against the dull bark of the wood creates an even greater dazzling effect, this juxtaposition playing a large role in Gell's 'technology of enchantment'.

Jones and MacGregor, however, point out that colour is a temporal component of the environment, influenced by the level of sunlight, the time of day and the season.[31] This temporality is highly evident in coin-trees, which are much more striking (and hence much more captivating) in the sunlight, with the light reflecting from the coins, making the contrast between the brilliant shine of the metal and the dull surface of the tree much more pronounced.[32] In damp weather, on the other hand, the colours of the coins are dulled and the bark of the tree is made slippery and shiny, causing the contrast between the two materials to become much more subdued. The coins are far less distinguishable from the surface of the trees, and the coin-trees become less noticeable.

The placements of the coins, which—as noted above—often appear to follow geometric patterns (see above), also contribute to people's aesthetic appreciation. Gell writes that 'Patterns by their multiplicity and the difficulty we have in grasping their mathematical or geometrical basis by mere visual inspection' causes what he terms 'unfinished business', slowing perception down so that the observer can never fully grasp the observed.[33] Upon seeing a coin-tree for the first time, many people are awed by the sheer volume of coins which have been moulded into vast, repetitive patterns. The key role evidently played by physical appearance reveals that coin-trees are not simply passive objects to which people react. They are active subjects which, through the power of their aesthetic qualities, have the agency to draw people in and prompt them to contribute.

Interactivity

If coin-trees are so greatly appreciated for their aesthetic qualities, does it follow that they are awarded the same levels of protection as the paintings and sculptures that sit in art galleries across the world? It would appear not, for with the exception of the Ardmaddy coin-tree, protected behind a fence to deter cattle (see Chapter 7), every other coin-tree in Britain and Ireland has been left unprotected, from both nature and the sites' visitors, as discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 6.

With no measures being taken to either discourage or encourage the custom of the coin-tree, it is interesting to observe how the public respond to these structures. With no fences or grim-faced security guards to deter people from approaching the trees, visitors tend to engage with coin-trees in a very different manner than they would a piece of art in a gallery, where observers primarily do what their title suggests: they observe. That is, after all, the activity which art galleries and museums are primarily intended to foster. They are oculacentric spaces, dominated by the gaze.[34]

Most museums and art galleries, however, do not simply foster visual experience; they actively discourage touch. Whilst some practices have been implemented to offer tactic engagement (see below), such as tactile replicas,[35] it is usually with objects of lesser quality or 'value', and is viewed as a special activity.[36] Generally, museums and galleries stymie and stigmatise physical contact, keeping the more 'valuable' objects behind glass cases and beyond reach, marshalling people's experiences to the point where sight is the only sense associated with gallery and museum environments.

Coin-trees, however, are not in gallery or museum environments, and evidently people are not inclined to adhere to the same etiquette. They perceive the coin-tree as a structure not to be simply looked at but to be interacted with, and it is this interactive nature that appears to appeal to many people; the fact that the public can approach, touch and contribute to—rather than simply observe—what is essentially a piece of communal art. To understand an object, attention must be paid to how people physically engage with it: what they touch and *how* they touch.[37] For the coin-tree, it appears that very little is off-limits.

People view these structures as something to sit on. Indeed, the coin-trees at Brock Bottom and Corfe Castle were originally intended as benches,[38] although, as one teenage boy at Dovedale remarked, coin-trees do not make particularly comfortable seats. People climb on these structures to photograph them at different angles. In Ardboe, Northern Ireland, local resident Pat Grimes recalled how he and his friends would climb the coin-tree as children.[39] At Corfe Castle, a young child walked along the coin-tree. At Tarn Hows, a teenage boy scrambled beneath the coin-tree, just to see if he could fit. At Ingleton, as described above, the primary coin-tree was climbed on by several children (Fig. 4.6), and two different groups claimed it was 'lucky' to walk under the archway formed by the tree. At Dovedale, a man used the coin-trees to scrape the mud from his hiking boots, and at Snowdon, one of the coin-tree posts is often employed as a helpful support-structure, with many walkers gripping it for balance as they ascend or descend the rocky steps (Fig. 4.7)—whilst for a dog, the coin-tree was a convenient post against which he could empty his bladder.

Simple touching, however, appears to be the prominent mode of physical interaction with the coin-trees. One woman at Tarn Hows commented on how the greatest appeal of the coin-tree is the freedom to just 'go up to it, touch it, feel it. It makes it fun, interactive', whilst another person asserted that the 'best thing about these trees is that the kids can just come up to them, touch them.' Indeed, even people who did not insert a coin still stopped at the trees to touch them, often running their hands along the edges of the coins and commenting on how 'weird' it felt. A mother and daughter at Dovedale, for instance, seemed to find great pleasure in trailing their fingers over the surface of the coin-tree, feeling the contrast of the smooth, cold bumps of the clustered coins against the warm, grainy texture of the tree. Other parents at Ingleton, Malham and Tarr Steps also encouraged their children to 'feel the coins'.

Fig. 4.6 Children climb on the Ingleton coin-tree, Yorkshire, England (Photograph by author)

Why do these people so often employ haptic perception in their engagements with coin-trees? Psychologist Tiffany Field would claim that it is a symptom of 'touch-hunger', a term she coined in her work on our society's prevailing 'look but don't touch' attitude.[40] Since the late twentieth century, museums and art galleries have attempted to rectify this attitude by introducing tactual education in their exhibitions and events, hoping to foster more intimate engagements with objects. Touch exhibitions, such as Nicholas Bourriaud's *Touch: Relational Art from the 1990s to Now*, a 2002 exhibition at the San Francisco Art Institute, have provided haptic access to the public,[41] and have gone some way in highlighting the benign, even reparative, nature of touch. Likewise, the *Touch Me* exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 2005 and the *Tactical Explorations* exhibition in the Northlight Gallery, Huddersfield in 2006 were designed to emphasise the vital importance of touch in our perceptions of objects.[42] The co-curator of the *Touch Me* exhibition, Hugh Aldersey-Williams, claims that we live in a 'touch-starved society', and he wished to prove that 'How things feel is critical to our response to them'.[43]

Fig. 4.7 A climber uses the coin-tree post for support on his descent of Mt Snowdon (Photograph by author)

That we do live in a 'touch-starved society' is a concept affirmed by the events following Robert Morris' 1971 exhibition at the Tate Gallery. Morris created numerous exhibits in which the design was for visitors to interact with the structures on display; to touch, climb and balance on them. After a mere five days the exhibition was closed, not because of a lack of popularity but because it had become too popular. Visitors engaged with the exhibits so exuberantly that the structures suffered from excessive wear and tear, and several of the visitors were injured through their overly enthusiastic physical interaction.[44]

Evidently, when given an inch people will take a mile, and if this example reveals one aspect of human psychology, it is that society's stigma of touch has caused people to want to touch all the more—and rightly so. Touch is used from infancy to gain information about the environment, playing a key role in learning and development.[45] Through touch we can learn about an object's material qualities: weight, texture, temperature, density, strength and stability, providing a much more intimate knowledge of an object and subsequently 'unlocking' it.[46] Evidently this is what the participants of the coin-tree custom crave.

Subculture of the Young

Although a wide variety of people engage physically with the coin-trees, one group proves particularly touch-oriented: children. It will probably come as no surprise to read that a group travelling with children is far more likely to insert a coin into a coin-tree than a group travelling without children. One woman told me that she could not 'imagine just walking past one of these trees, especially not with children', whilst a father claimed, 'I don't think the children would let me walk past without putting coins in'.

Many of the groups with children claimed to have only inserted coins for the benefit of the children: 'because the boys wanted to'; 'my daughter wanted to'; 'for the kids' sake', and so on. It is not surprising that the custom of the coin-tree appears to be very much oriented towards the entertainment of the younger generation. As folklorists Opie and Opie observe, 'it is the nature of children to be attracted by the mysterious',[47] and they maintain that children are 'tradition's warmest friends… they are respecters, even venerators, of custom'.[48] Indeed, the majority of widely-practised folkloric traditions in contemporary Britain are observed for the benefit of children: Father Christmas, Easter egg hunts, trick-or-treating.

The child's centrality to such customs is not an entirely modern phenomenon, but it has certainly been on the increase since the late nineteenth century. For example, in his 1893 catalogue of holy wells in England, Robert Charles Hope describes a number of rituals and ceremonies conducted exclusively by young people and children.[49] It was 'children' who mixed water from the well with sugar before drinking it at Belper and Tideswell in Derbyshire; 'the youth of both sexes' who assembled at St Boniface's Well, Bonchurch, Hampshire to decorate it with flowers; 'girls' who dropped coins and pins into St Philip's Well, Keyingham, Yorkshire, in exchange for wishes.[50]

Francis Jones, in his catalogue of holy wells in Wales, likewise lists numerous well rituals observed primarily or exclusively by 'young people', 'children', 'lasses', 'local maidens', 'young folk' and 'young couples'.[51] Hutton describes another example. Tracing the history of the Palm Sunday consecrations, which involved the blessing of branches and twigs subsequently used as protective charms throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (described in Chapter 3), Hutton observes that 'not until the early part of the twentieth century did the custom decline into one observed only by children'.[52]

Alexandra Walsham cites myriad other examples of popular rituals from this period that were practised almost exclusively by the youth of a parish, writing that:

> The prominent part played by young people in popular rituals linked with the landscape was hardly novel, but there is much to suggest that these customs were increasingly migrating into the realms of childhood. They were steadily ceasing to be performed by adults but they remained a vital part of the subculture of the young.[53]

Children have not always been central to folkloric customs. This is not to agree with such historians as Edward Shorter and Lawrence Stone, whose assertions that prior to the nineteenth century there was little sentimentalisation of childhood have been heavily contested. As Linda Pollock convincingly demonstrates, children did play significant roles in family culture historically.[54] However, they were not central to a family's ritual life. Evidence suggests that adults partook in both public and private rituals as much as, if not more than, children. After all, prior to the 1870s Father Christmas was more associated with adult merrymaking than children and gift giving.[55] But as belief in and adherence to such

rituals waned amongst adults during the twentieth century, children continued to partake. Moreover, they were actively encouraged to partake. Why would this be?

It has been argued that childhood has been increasingly perceived as a period of honoured innocence, and certainly much effort today goes into maintaining this innocence for as long as possible.[56] The ability of the coin-tree custom to address the contemporary parent's desire to cater to children's cultural and educational needs was demonstrated in several participant interviews. Parents believe that participation in the coin-tree custom will be 'exciting', 'interesting', and 'entertaining' for their children, with four groups expressing the opinion that it is important to encourage children's involvement in nature, art, and culture and to provide them with unique experiences. They believe that coin-trees offer such opportunities. The desire to maintain children's innocence was also evident. A woman at Bolton Abbey with two children—a 12-year-old girl and 15-year-old boy—admitted to being disappointed that her teenage son no longer wanted to participate in the coin-tree custom: 'They just grow out of it, don't they?' she lamented. Her son's disinterest, however, appeared to make her more determined to encourage her daughter's participation.

Likewise, when a couple at Ingleton pointed out the coin-trees to their seven-year-old daughter, she replied, to her parents' bemusement: 'But it's a waste of money'. Her surprisingly jaded response seemed to motivate her parents into participation: they helped her insert a coin and assured her that it was not a 'waste of money', but was 'for making wishes'. As Rosemary Wells asserts in her study of the tooth fairy, many parents feel that such beliefs are 'absolutely necessary for the development of imagination in children, and that adults should do everything in their power to encourage belief'.[57] The coin-tree, therefore, provides an ideal vehicle for broadening a child's cultural outlook, by offering them the chance to engage with a structure that combines elements of nature, art and folklore, whilst simultaneously (in the opinions of some parents at least) maintaining their innocence by giving them the opportunity to playfully participate in a rather whimsical ritual.

Tad Tuleja, also considering the child-centred tooth fairy, notes that such practices grew in Britain at a rapid rate from the mid-twentieth century. He believes that one of the primary reasons was this rise of a child-directed family culture, which he terms the 'Cult of the Child'.[58] This mid twentieth-century shift may likewise have contributed to the

contemporary rise in the coin-tree custom. Because fewer adults would earnestly observe such a practice in the twentieth century than they would have done in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries (a factor explored in the next chapter), there were no ideally situated contemporary producers and consumers of the coin-trees—until children came to the forefront of ritual play and participation.

'Tagging' Trees

The interactive nature of the coin-trees extends beyond touching, sitting on and climbing over; at the centre of this custom seems to be a sense of collective effort. A person who stumbles upon a coin-tree can be more than an observer. They can be a contributor. They do not simply look at the coin-tree; they *add to it*. Indeed, it seems to be the sense of contribution that motivates participation. People are attracted to the idea that they are contributing something of their own—their coins—to a communal piece.

At Aira Force, for instance, one woman stated that inserting a coin is 'leaving something of yourself for others to see'. Another woman likened the custom to graffiti—'only artistic graffiti' she hedged—while at Portmeirion, one man claimed that inserting a coin into a coin-tree is 'a nice way of saying 'I've been here'. Like graffiti, carving your name into a tree'. These customs, he maintained, 'are about leaving your mark', an expression also used by participants at Ingleton, Tarr Steps and St Nectan's Glen, where one woman declared that 'you can't come to a place like this and not leave your mark'.

It appears that the psychology behind graffiti, that innate need to proclaim 'I was here' by embellishing the environment, is also at the basis of the coin-tree custom.[59] People wish to collectively adorn public places with items and images that were not originally designed to be there, from coins in a tree to spray-painted images on a wall, in order to create a communal (and slightly defiant) public monument. There are examples of this from across the world and throughout history.[60]

The Berlin Wall is a particularly illustrative example of collective embellishment motivated by imitation. This 4.5 metre-high, 166-kilometre wall was swathed in graffiti, the product of thousands of people making their contributions, adding their pattern or image to the collective whole. But the 'artists' were not just the hooded youths we stereotypically associate with graffiti; everybody was contributing, and as Hermann Waldenburg observes:

> By 1987 the Wall was full…Everyone had something to say to everyone now: the early pensioner, the late migrant, the neighbourhood kids, the anonymous alcoholic and the famous artist…huge numbers allowed themselves to be jerked out of their role as passive recipients to become active participants. (1990: 14)

These passive recipients became active participants through imitation, just as the participants of the coin-tree custom make the transition. They observe others contribute to a collective embellishment and they follow suit, and as with coin-trees, graffiti evinces the dynamic nature of imitative action. Cassidy Curtis's online project, 'Graffiti Archaeology', for example, presents graffiti as an animative and protean form of cumulative practice.[61] By creating time lapse collages of photographs of graffiti-embellished walls over a number of years, Curtis demonstrates that such pieces of human expression are not simply added to, but are constantly changing, with graffiti artists competing, collaborating, and submerging each other's work, creating something new each time. Similarly imitative yet dynamic collective embellishments can be found on love-lock bridges, as discussed above.

It is unsurprising that trees should be similarly utilised for graffiti. People have been carving names and initials into trees for centuries, with the practice dating back to at least the mid-1800s on Isle Maree, when Mitchell described the trees surrounding the sacred well as:

> covered with initials. A rude *M*, with an anchor below it, tells of the seaman's noted credulity and superstitious character. Two sets of initials, with a date between, and below a heart pierced by an arrow, probably record the visit of a love-sick couple.[62]

The practice continues today at many coin-tree sites: 'JEM', 'LOTTIE', 'A4T', 'DC 4 ZW 4EVA'.[63]

To an extent, these people are participating for the sake of the larger work. Their additions constitute only very small portions of the greater picture. Their contributions are anonymous and merely one of many. As Macrow described Queen Victoria's contribution to the coin-tree on Isle Maree: 'It is now without doubt as tarnished and bent as the rest – it may even be one of those which have fallen on to the ground beneath. So Time, the great leveller, treats alike the gifts of princes and paupers'.[64] Queen Victoria's coin is indistinguishable from the rest. Conducting fieldwork at the site, for example, there is no method that could ascertain which of the coins she inserted.

In their collective anonymity, the coins—in the case of Macrow's description—have come to represent equality. Indeed, economist Wolman asserts that 'many people see cash's anonymity as an almost sacred virtue',[65] whilst McNeill believes that anonymity is not simply the result of serial collaborations, but a desirable quality.[66] It is the very nature of coins that they cannot be traced to their previous owners; they are alienable, indistinguishable, thus constituting the archetypal anonymous deposit. This is, however, only one way of viewing the coin as a deposit.

Returning to the analogy of the Berlin Wall, it is true that each individual addition is, in the strictest sense of the term, anonymous—unless, of course, the 'artist' has signed their full name beneath their contribution. However, graffiti actually has the opposite purpose, which Susan Stewart has termed 'a matter of individuation'.[67] These contributions to collective embellishments, therefore, are not designed to uphold anonymity, but to defy it. When a teenager spray paints their 'tag'—their signature, pseudonym or monogram—on public property, that tag represents their identity. Likewise, the scratched initials in a library desk or on the wall of a public toilet are manifestations of people's desire to leave their individual mark, their handprint.[68] In such a way can material things act as metaphors for, and constructions of, 'the self'.[69]

As discussed above, this desire to leave one's mark is a key factor in people's participation in the coin-tree custom. The participants do not view their coins as wholly anonymous deposits but as personal objects. They are contributing *their* coin amongst other people's coins, and many of them seem concerned with remembering which coin is theirs. At Portmeirion, a couple from London hoped that they could return in ten years and still be able to identify their coins, whilst at Tarr Steps, a father told his young daughter to 'remember which ones are yours for next time'. At Dovedale, a couple from Birmingham, who had visited the site the year before, hoped to identify the coins they had inserted previously; they were unsuccessful, despite having deliberately bent their coins in order to distinguish them.

Other participants at Dovedale tried similar tactics. Two young boys bent their coins over during insertion to recognise them on their return journey along the path (in this case, they were successful). A young girl from Kidsgrove inserted a ten pence piece specifically so that it would be distinguishable from the many copper coins; another girl from Bakewell chose to insert a shiny 20 pence piece for the same reason. At Malham, a woman identified the coin she had inserted on her visit in 2011: a 20 pence piece. Choosing to insert silver or particularly lustrous copper

Fig. 4.8 One of the coins in the Fairy Glen coin-tree stands out from the crowd, the Black Isle, Scotland (Photograph by author)

coins is a clear defiance of the anonymity Macrow discussed with regards to the Isle Maree coin-tree.[70] These people intend for their deposits to be distinguished from the majority. As one woman on Snowdon admitted, she had inserted a five pence piece because she had wanted to be 'different'—and as Jones and MacGregor observe, 'Colour is powerful in the construction of difference'.[71]

The royal colours of purple and red offer an example of colour having been historically used to distinguish one from many. This may have been the reason behind the deposition of a two pence piece at Fairy Glen which had been painted red, and was clearly distinguishable from the surrounding coins (Fig. 4.8). Red obviously possesses various strong metaphorical associations,[72] and while it is impossible to deduce the specific reason this colour was chosen (as a visual metaphor, a favourite colour, or simply lack of other options), it is reasonable to assume that the choice to alter the colour of the coin was a method of demarcation. Likewise, one lustrous copper coin will be easily demarcated from hundreds, even thousands, of dull coins—although as the coin will tarnish over time, this is only a temporary method of distinction.

The choice to insert higher denominations, such as one and two pound coins (25 £1 coins have been recorded and one £2 coin), may simply have been the result of the depositor having no other options. However, it is also possible that the participants wished to differentiate their deposits, and thereby themselves, from the masses. As one participant at Aira Force exclaimed upon noticing a £1 coin inserted into the tree, 'someone's rich!' Such examples of conspicuous consumption are certainly not without precedent in ritual contexts.

Richard Bradley considers the role of prestige—'the common currency of non-market societies'[73]—in ritual deposits of the Late Bronze Age, when lavish offerings presented to deities were intended to lend themselves to 'the quest for personal prestige'.[74] The same can be seen in the ritual deposits of Archaic Greece, which were motivated by competitive self-display.[75] There was a social role to votive offerings just as there was a religious role, and dedicants aimed to project their status by dedicating particular objects. However, it is not only the elite who aim to distinguish their deposits from others'. Smaller, more modest objects could equally be personalised.

At the watery deposition site of Fiskerton in Lincolnshire, for example, 152 objects dating from the Iron Age to the later Roman period (plus three objects probably from the medieval period) have been discovered, ranging from military items, such as swords and spearheads; workers' tools, such as hammerheads; and items which possess what excavators Mike Parker Pearson and Naomi Field have described as 'feminine associations', such as a jet ring, amber beads and a copper-alloy bracelet.[76] A person's gender and occupation, therefore, could be reflected in their deposit. The fact that many of these objects also appear to have been used before their deposition, exhibiting signs of wear, indicate that they bear traces of their users/depositors—and are hence all the more personalised.[77]

However, surely there are difficulties in personalising a deposit that is the same as hundreds, even thousands, of others at the same site.[78] When adding one coin to thousands (think of the 48,000 at Ingleton and the 26,000 at Aira Force)—an action which is performed more often than not through *imitation*—surely a sense of homogeneity and anonymity prevails. And yet, just as people defy the uniformity of their offices, desk spaces and school lockers with personalised adornments, people defy homogeneity by utilising objects as assertions of their individuality.[79]

Accumulations provide the ideal opportunity for this construction of identity.[80] For example, the practice of affixing padlocks to love-lock bridges and structures (as discussed above) may not seem to offer the ideal opportunity for making assertions of individuation and personality, for most padlocks are relatively similar: small rectangular bodies with metallic shackles. And yet the depositors have discovered creative methods of not only distinguishing their padlocks from the rest, but of utilising the padlocks as metaphors of their identities. Not only are the padlocks engraved with the depositors' initials, but many have been elaborately decorated. They have been painted, adorned with patterns, embellished with stickers and textiles (Fig. 4.9). Some have been wrapped in knitted 'jackets', suggesting a high level of planning. In other cases a clear display of conspicuous consumption is evident in the form of particularly ostentatious and impractically large padlocks, obviously having been commissioned for this specific purpose; a boast that the depositors' love for each other is 'bigger and better' than that of other depositors? Likewise, if the depositor of a coin wishes to distinguish their coin from others', then they must find ways to differentiate it.

The selection of particularly lustrous coins is one obvious method, as is the decision to insert coins of higher denominations—an obvious (albeit possibly subconscious) claim of status. The insertion of coins into hard-to-reach places, such as particularly high on a living tree, is another method. The family of three who clambered up the steep bank to the root-end of the primary coin-tree at Tarn Hows (see Chapter 3) specifically wanted their coin to be inserted in a less 'heavily populated' area of the tree. Contributing to a new or satellite coin-tree tree is possibly another example of a participant wishing to distinguish their deposit from others, whilst depositing a different kind of object altogether, from screws and nails to jewellery and semi-precious stones (Fig. 4.10), is the most obvious method of differentiation.[81] Were these objects deposited to declare the depositor's individuality?

This may also explain why initials accompany several coin offerings (Fig. 4.11). For example, a two pence piece inserted into a coin-tree at Dovedale has the letter 'R' written on it in silver pen; was the coin's depositor (whose name presumably begins with 'R') hoping to identify *their* coin on their return journey? Likewise, on the coin-tree in Brock Bottom arrows have been scratched into the tree (one of which is labelled 'E'), pointing

Fig. 4.9 The homogenous padlock becomes personalised as it is employed as a love-lock (Photograph by author)

Fig. 4.10 Depositing a different kind of object altogether, from hair accessories to a candle at Isle Maree, Wester Ross, Scotland (Photographs by author)

towards certain coins. At Snowdon, 'MB' may have been scratched onto a coin-tree for a similar reason. An identical method is evident at High Force, while at Ingleton, the initials 'R & L' have been imprinted onto a two pence piece, and 36 coins have been distributed in a pattern to form the initials 'A.B.' (or 'B.B.'), encased within a rectangle of coins.

This method of personalising coins through the use of graffiti is not unique to coin-trees, nor to modern-day Britain. The practice is evident in twelfth-century AD Corinth, where a hoard of 30 gold *nomismata* of Manuel I (1143–1180) was uncovered in the 1938 excavations of Old Corinth, buried in the fill of a road. Of these coins, 14 had graffiti scratched onto their surfaces, including letters such as 'K', 'T', and 'H', and Josephine Harris, who published the find, suggests that this graffiti may have been used as identification marks.[82] By physically associating the coin with the person, the coin essentially becomes that person's 'tag', their expression of identity and individuation.

Since antiquity, ritual deposits have been ideally associated with the depositor's identity, such as model limbs and personal items, from clothes and jewellery to locks of hair.[83] These objects are not designed

Fig. 4.11 Deliberate attempts to personalise coin deposits in coin-trees (Photographs by author)

to simply represent the depositor; they are designed to *be* the depositor. As archaeologist Chris Tilley writes, the 'thing is the person and the person is the thing'.[84] This is Gell's 'objectification of personhood', which leads to 'distributed personhood', whereby the deposit becomes a detached part—a 'spin-off'—of the depositor.[85] The artefact is

personalised through its assimilation with its creator, and such a process is evident in the dedication of objects throughout history.[86]

Money and Metonymy

According to this concept of the objectification of personhood, when a person inserts a coin into a coin-tree, they are leaving a part of themselves behind. Coins, however, are not particularly personal items. We do not craft our own coins and, although many of the coin-tree deposits have been actively personalised, the vast majority of them have not. When viewed *en masse*, a coin-tree would still be considered a largely anonymous accumulation; coins are after all, as outlined above, often valued for their anonymity. However, they are not only viewed as anonymous objects, but as transient.

Whatever coins we have in our purses and pockets are only temporary residents there. The owner of a coin only represents a brief, inconsequential stage in the biography of that coin and vice versa: the coin will no doubt pass in and out of the owner's possession swiftly and casually, and once it is out of that owner's possession, it will retain no link with them. They share only a nugatory and easily severed relationship, one which will no doubt be repeated many more times in both the person's and the coin's biographies. In this sense, the coin is an alienable object, in that it can be easily divorced from its possessor, as opposed to an inalienable object, which is metonymically linked with its producer/possessor.[87]

However, as Nicholas Thomas asserts, a thing 'is not immutable'.[88] An object must be analysed for what it has become—how it has been appropriated and recontextualised—not simply for what it was made to be. Just as a person's biography can take an unpredicted turn, so too can an object's. And in this case, it is the coin's biography which suddenly veers down an unfamiliar path. When a person, standing before a coin-tree, takes a coin from their pocket or purse, that coin is an alienable object. However, the divide between alienability and inalienability can be crossed in certain circumstances, and it is through performance that the coin inserted into the coin-tree makes this transition.[89]

Performance can transform objects.[90] Through the action of inserting the coin into a coin-tree, the properties of the coin are altered. It has been removed from the realm of secular exchange and has been recreated as a ritual object—and as a *personal* object. It is through this recreation

that the depositor becomes inalienable from the deposit. And although the depositor will likely walk away and never see this coin again, it is *their* coin now, in a way that it never was before. Prior to their encounter with the coin-tree, their possession of the coin was purely physical. After the encounter, however, the tie between them has become metonymical. Ironically, it is only through relinquishing the coin that they gain any significant possession of it.

People's desires to return to the coin-tree site at a later date in order to see their coin is a nostalgic sentiment, endowing the coin with the status of a memento, defined as an object serving as a reminder.[91] In a sense, the coin also fits Susan Stewart's term: the 'souvenir'.[92] Physically, the coin is the antithesis to the souvenir or the keepsake in that it is not taken or kept, but is deliberately *left*. However, it is still an object which, through the action of deposition, elicits the memory of a place and an experience. There is a metonymical link between object and event/experience, a link which certainly applies to the coin in a coin-tree, which acts as a snapshot of the depositor's engagement with that site, as an object which is intended to evoke a future memory of a past event.

In this sense, the coin as memento fits one of Gell's most basic binary relations between the artist (the depositor) and the index (the deposit): the index responding as patient to the artist's agency. 'The index is,' Gell writes, 'in these instances, a congealed 'trace' of the artist's creative performance'.[93] An object absorbs part of its creator, becoming a snapshot of their creative experience; a 'congealed residue of performance and agency in object-form'.[94] Likewise, the coin becomes a physical trace of the participant's experience at the coin-tree site.

The performance of the coin-tree custom removes the coins from a secular realm of monetary exchange, but where does it move them *to*? Suddenly, not only are these coins personalised, inalienable objects, but they are inviolable and, to an extent, sacred. Participants at Aira Force and St Nectan's Glen, for example, described the inserted coins as 'offerings', whilst the woman from Staffordshire at Tarn Hows (from Chapter 3) explained why she believed people should not remove coins from either coin-trees or fountains: 'I think it's cheeky. Things like this, they're almost sacrosanct.' Indeed, there does appear to be a certain taboo surrounding the removal of coins.

It is interesting to note that few people would feel any guilt over pocketing a coin they find on the pavement, and yet at most coin-tree sites parents have been heard chiding their children for trying to remove

Fig. 4.12 Coins nailed to the coin-tree at Ingleton, Yorkshire, England (Photographs by author)

coins. A father at Tarr Steps admonished his son for removing coins by telling him that he was 'stealing people's wishes', and various groups have actually returned other people's coins that had fallen to the floor to their original slots. Several participants have made an effort to secure their coins, ensuring that they would not easily fall/be pulled out, one woman admitting that she had not 'wanted somebody else to come along and take it.'

A man in Malham, not convinced that his coin was secure, used his penknife to create a deeper slit and then hammered his coin in once more. When another man asked me if I would remove the coins during my fieldwork in order to check their years of mint, his wife seemed appalled by the notion, exclaiming 'surely you wouldn't do that'—to which I assured her I would not. And at Ingleton, seven coins have actually been nailed to the tree (Fig. 4.12). This demonstrates not only a desire to prevent their removal, but also a greater level of intentionality, illustrating that not all coins necessarily represent casual deposition.

There are certainly exceptions to this notion of inviolability. One man at Portmeirion appeared to have removed a five pence piece, but upon seeing me quickly returned it. He claimed that it had fallen into his hand and he was returning it so as not to attract 'bad luck', but the wry comments of his partner indicate that he was simply embarrassed to have been caught red-handed. At Hardcastle Crags, the original coin-tree was stolen in its entirety in 2008,[95] while at High Force, County Durham and Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Aberystwyth, coin-trees have been left bare by

people prying out all of the coins.[96] These are points explored in greater detail in Chapter 6.

However, most visitors do appear to view the coins as 'sacrosanct', to the extent that when one young man from China reached out to touch the coins, his companion sharply admonished him. He did not think touching 'would be allowed', and his friend quickly withdrew his hand. The coins, therefore, have been removed from the realm of the secular and the 'everyday', and are now—to some—perceived as precious and inviolate. Through the performance of the coin-tree custom, the coins have transitioned from being alienable and profane objects, and have become inalienable, almost sacred, deposits. This highlights the fluid, mutable nature of value.[97] It also highlights the importance of considering the material biography of coins,[98] which, according to Mark Hall, 'frees us from understanding objects only in terms of their original purpose and allows us to explore their contingent, performative roles'.[99]

It has already been demonstrated that coins, particularly one penny and two pence pieces, are no longer perceived as embodying much value. Monetarily they are worth very little. However, once they are embedded into a coin-tree, their value is no longer ascribed economically, but spiritually or metaphorically. They transition from disposable loose change to inviolable ritual deposits. The same transition occurs with the tree itself, although to a lesser extent. A few participants have exhibited a similar respect for the tree, some people fearing causing damage to it. At Tarn Hows for example a mother advised her daughter to insert her coin into a pre-existing crack, not wanting to damage the bark further, whilst another mother scolded her teenage son for climbing on a coin-tree whilst posing for a photograph. In Portmeirion, a couple from China described the tree as a 'special place', as did a woman at Fairy Glen and several people at St Nectan's Glen, while another man described it as a 'sacred tree'.

However, on the whole, the tree does not enjoy the same revered status as the coins with which it is embedded. While there is a taboo surrounding the removal or damage of the coins, no such taboo appears to apply to the actual tree. As discussed above, people interact very physically and freely with these structures, sitting on them, climbing on them, scrambling under them and so on. This suggests that the trees are not generally perceived as sacred or inviolate structures.

The irrelevance of the tree itself is highlighted by the evident inconsequence of the trees' species, as noted above, a theory credited by the sheer variety of coin-tree species (numbering 11).[100] Species appears to have no bearing on the decision to insert a coin into a particular tree. Only one participant has correctly identified the species of a coin-tree—an ash tree at Dovedale—and even they were only hazarding a guess based on the species of the surrounding trees. Many incorrect guesses have been made, and all the participants seemed to consider any question about species irrelevant to the discussion. Species is clearly not a fundamental element of this custom.

The condition of the tree appears to be slightly more relevant. As explored in Chapter 3, a greater quantity of logs and stumps were employed than living trees, but this may be due to practical rather than spiritual or metaphorical reasons. Fewer branches and foliage, as well as their generally lower height, make the coins inserted into logs and stumps more visible. Additionally, people may be reluctant to insert their coins into living trees, aware of the damage they may cause. It appears, therefore, that people coin whichever trees are most convenient, based on condition, size, level of decomposition, visibility and proximity to a well-traversed footpath. It is unsurprising, therefore, that oak would be most popularly employed as a coin-tree, for it is also the most common tree in the British Isles, with ash (another popular species of coin-tree), coming a close second.[101]

If convenience is the primary factor in the selection of a given log or stump, then perhaps the trees are more akin to incidental receptacles than important ritual features. This was, after all, the first function of the earliest known coin-tree; Pennant writes of how, on Isle Maree, a 'stump of a tree is shewn as an altar'.[102] Trees make particularly appropriate 'altars' because, in many cases, they are physically pliant—a coin can be inserted into its bark with relative ease—and they provide a sense of permanence. Once a person's coin is inserted securely into the bark, it gives the impression (not taking into account opportunists with pliers) that it will remain there.

This apparent insignificance of the tree emphasises the transformative abilities of the custom. The coins are perceived as inviolate and, to an extent, sacred, not because they are embedded in an inherently 'special' tree or viewed in the context of a sacred site, but because the depositors themselves have imbued the coins with spiritual or metaphorical significance. The participants have forged something new. Their imitative actions have created a sacrosanctity that was not there before, illustrating the transformative powers of ritual performance.

Conclusion

By observing and interviewing participants of the coin-tree custom, a much greater insight has been attained into how members of the public engage with these structures, and subsequently how the ongoing process of their creation is maintained with little or no impetus from a driving agent or organisation. Although everyone's encounter with this custom will be different to some degree, the themes outlined in this chapter will colour many people's experiences: an absence of prior knowledge; an attraction to the coin-tree through curiosity, even captivation; the impulse for physical interactivity with the structures; and the appreciation of aesthetics.

Another notable aspect of people's engagements with the coin-trees was an inclination to imitate paired with the desire to individuate, two impulses proven to be far from mutually exclusive. What has also been illustrated in this chapter is the transformative power of ritual performance. The coin, an alienable, anonymous and disposable object, is constructed as both a metaphor of identity and as an inviolable deposit through the simple act of inserting it into the bark of a tree. This construction demonstrates that physical imitative action (inserting the coin) can create something both personal and new. The accumulation of the coins viewed *en masse* may imply homogeneity, but each coin is different: it was inserted by a variety of people for a variety of reasons. Every deposit represents a different depositor, who chose to participate (and chose *how* to participate) for their own personal reasons. This malleability is the focus of the next chapter.

Notes

1. Indeed, it is a form of behaviour that has been explored by numerous cognitive scientists, sociologists, and economists, and is a phenomenon which has been variously (and sometimes derogatively) labelled 'social learning theory' (Bandura, A. 1977. *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall; Rogers, E. M. 1995. *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York, Free Press); 'the bandwagon effect' (Granovetter, M. 1978. Threshold Models of Collective Behavior. *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (6), 1420–1443; Anderson, L. R. and Holt, C. A. 1996. Classroom Games: Information Cascades. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 10 (4), 187–193); 'herd instinct' (Trotter, W. 1916. *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*. London, T. Fisher Unwin); 'herd behaviour' (Banerjee, A. V. 1992. A Simple Model of Herd Behavior. *The Quartlery Journal of Economics*

107 (3), 797–817); and 'social contagion' (Raafat, R. M., Chater, N. and Frith, C. 2009. Herding in Humans. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 13 (10), 420–428).

2. As Meltzoff observes, a 'wide range of behaviours – from tool use to social customs – are passed from one generation to another through imitative learning' (Meltzoff, A. N. 2005. Imitation and Other Minds: The "Like Me" Hypothesis. In Hurley, S. and Chater, N. (eds.) *Perspectives on Imitation: From Neuroscience to Social Science. Volume 2: Imitation, Human Development and Culture.* Cambridge, MA and London, MIT Press, 55–77, p. 55).
3. Dijksterhuis, A. 2005. Why We Are Social Animals: The High Road to Imitation as Social Glue. In Hurley, S. and Chater, N. (eds.) *Perspectives on Imitation: From Mirror Neurons to Memes.* Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 207–220, pp. 207–208.
4. Markus, M. L. 1987. Toward a "Critical Mass" Theory of Interactive Media: Universal Access, Interdependence and Diffusion. *Communication Research* 14, 491–511; Roger, *Diffusion of Innovations*, p. 333.
5. Bikhchandani, S., Hirshleifer, D., and Welsh, I. 1992. A Theory of Fads, Fashion, Custom and Cultural Change as Informational Cascades. *Journal of Political Economy* 100 (5), 992–1026; Bikhchandani, S., Hirshleifer, D., and Welsh, I. 1998. Learning from the Behavior of Others: Conformity, Fads and Information Cascades. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 12 (3), 151–170.
6. Cf. Gravonetter, 'Threshold Models of Collective Behavior', p. 1424; Banerjee, A. V. 1992. A Simple Model of Herd Behavior. *The Quartlery Journal of Economics* 107 (3), 797–817, p. 797; Lohmann, S. 1994. The Dynamics of Informational Cascades: The Monday Demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany, 1989–1991. *World Politics* 47 (1), 42–101; and Bikhchandani et al., 'Learning from the Behavior of Others', pp. 151–152.
7. Bandura, *Social Learning Theory.*
8. Hartfield, E., Cacioppo, J. T., and Rapson, R. L. 1994. *Emotional Contagion.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 2.
9. Gamble, C. 2007. *Origins and Revolutions: Human Identity in Earliest Prehistory.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 122.
10. McNeill, L. 2007. Portable Places: Serial Collaboration and the Creation of a New Sense of Place. *Western Folklore* 66 (3/4), 281–299, pp. 285–286.
11. Cf. Houlbrook, C. Forthcoming. Lessons from Love-Locks: The Material Culture of the Contemporary Assemblage. *Journal of Material Culture.*

12. Love-locks have featured in academic research from a variety of perspectives. Art historian Cynthia Hammond focuses on the love-lock assemblage in Pécs, Hungary, which dates to the 1980s, illustrating how it can be perceived as representative of control and dissent in the city (Hammond, C. I. 2010. Renegade Ornament and the Image of the Post-socialist City: The Pécs 'Love Locks', Hungary. In Kovacs, T. (ed.) *The Present of the Recent Past: Reinterpretations of Socialist Modernism in East Central Europe*. Böhlau Verlag, 181–195). Urban scenographer Jekaterina Lavrinec dubs the custom an 'urban ritual', considering the emotional and bodily experiences of love-lock deposition (Lavrinec, J. 2011. From a 'Blind Walker' to an 'Urban Curator'. *Limes: Cultural Regionalistics* 4 (1), 54–63; Lavrinec, J. 2013. Urban Scenography: Emotional and Bodily Experience. *Limes: Borderland Studies* 6 (1), 21–31). Engineer Christian Walloth, describing love-locks as 'emergent [i.e. unplanned and in principle unpredictable] qualities', explores the influence they have on urban planning and development (Walloth, C. 2014. Emergence in Complex Urban Systems: Blessing or Curse of Planning Efforts? In Walloth, C., Gurr J. M. and Schmidt, J. A. (eds.) *Understanding Complex Urban Systems: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Modeling*. Springer). Artist Lachlan MacDowell considers love-locks within the context of street art, exploring deposition through the theory of stigmergy, whereby 'urban practices cluster spatially, without direct coordination' (MacDowall, L. 2015. Graffiti, Street Art and Theories of Stigmergy. In Lossau, J. and Stevens, Q. (eds.) *The Uses of Art in Public Spaces*. Routledge, New York and London, 33–48, p. 41). While social scientist Kai-Olaf Maiwald adopts an objective-hermeneutic approach in his investigation into the symbolic meaning of 'padlocking' in Cologne (Maiwald, K. 2016. An Ever-Fixed Mark? On The Symbolic Coping With the Fragility of Partner Relationships by Means of Padlocking. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 17 (2)).
13. Cf. Ingold, T. 2007. Materials Against Materiality. *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 (1), 1–16.
14. Coote, J. and Shelton, A. (eds.) 1992. *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 3.
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24. Keltner and Haidt, in their work on aesthetic emotion, note that people often 'feel awe in response to objects with infinite repetition…including fractals, waves, and patterns in nature' ('Approaching Awe', p. 309).
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29. Jones, A. and MacGregor, G. (eds.) 2002. *Colouring the Past: The Significance of Colour in Archaeological Research*. Oxford and New York, Berg, p. 14.
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31. Jones and MacGregor, *Colouring the Past*, p. 10. See also Tilley, C. 2004. *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. Oxford and New York, Berg.
32. This produces what Saunders terms the 'aesthetics of brilliance' (Saunders, N. J. 1999. Biographies of Brilliance: Pearls, Transformations of Matter and Being, c. AD 1492. *World Archaeology* 31 (2), 243–257).
33. Gell, *Art and Agency*, p. 80.
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39. Pers. comm. Pat Grimes, 07/04/2012.
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41. Candlin, *Art, Museums and Touch*, pp. 152–186.
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50. Hope, *The Legendary Lore of the Holy Wells of England*, pp. 53, 60–61, 76, 199.
51. Jones, F. 1954. *The Holy Wells of Wales*. Cardiff, University of Wales Press. See for example pp. 136, 144, 151, 158, 169, 197, 198, 201, 203, 216.
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57. Wells, 'The Making of an Icon', p. 431.
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60. Cf. Reisner, R. 1971. *Graffiti: Two Thousand Years of Wall Writing*. New York, Cowles Book Company.
61. Curtis, C. 2005. *Graffiti Archaeology*. http://grafarc.org/main.html; Patel, S. S. 2007. Writing on the Wall. *Archaeology* 60 (4).
62. Mitchell, A. 1863. On Various Superstitions in the North-West Highlands and Islands of Scotland, Especially in Relation to Lunacy. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 3, 251–288, p. 253.
63. At Bolton Abbey and Claife Station there are prominent examples of trees being utilised in this way, and at Aira Force, Dovedale, Brock Bottom, Fairy Glen, Malham, Ingleton, High Force, Corfe Castle, Becky Falls, St Nectan's Glen, and Snowdon there are trees/posts which are adorned with both graffiti *and* coins. The granite cliffs at High Force were also covered in graffiti, and at St Nectan's Glen hundreds of pieces of slate, balanced on the cliff face behind the primary coin-tree, have been engraved with names, initials and messages. I witnessed a slightly different tradition at Hardcastle Crags; wads of clay had been fixed to the bark of a tree and faces carved into them—a slightly more creative method of saying 'I was here'.
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65. Wolman, D. 2012. *The End of Money: Counterfeiters, Preachers, Techies, Dreamers—And the Coming Cashless Society*. Boston, Da Capo Press, p. 7.
66. McNeill, 'Portable Places', pp. 294–295.

67. Stewart, S. 1988. Ceci tuera cela: Graffiti as crime and art. In Fekete, J. (ed.) *Life After Postmodernism: Essays on Value and Culture*. London, Macmillan Education, 161–180, p. 165. See also Abel and Buckley, who describe graffiti as 'announcements of one's identity, a kind of testimonial to one's existence in a world of anonymity' (Abel, E. L. and Buckley, B. E. 1977. *The Handwriting on the Wall: Toward a Sociology and Psychology of Graffiti*. Westport and London, Greenwood Press, p. 16).
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69. Brück, J. 2004. Material Metaphors: The Relational Construction of Identity in Early Bronze Age Burials in Ireland and Britain. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 4 (3), 307–333; Brück, J. 2006. Fragmentation, Personhood and the Social Construction of Technology in Middle and Late Bronze Age Britain. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 16 (3), 297–315.
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72. Myrber, 'The Colour of Money', p. 98.
73. Bradley, R. 1990. *The Passage of Arms: An Archaeological Analysis of Prehistoric Hoards and Votive Deposits*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 137.
74. Bradley, *The Passage of Arms*, p. 188.
75. Day, J. W. 2010. *Archaic Greek Epigram and Dedication: Representation and Reperformance*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 182.
76. Parker Pearson, M. and Field, N. (eds.) 2003. *Fiskerton: An Iron Age Timber Causeway with Iron Age and Roman Votive Offerings: The 1981 Excavation*. Oxford, Oxbow Books, p. 176.
77. Parker Pearson and Field, *Fiskerton*, p. 176.
78. Snodgrass, A. 2006. The Economics of Dedication at Greek Sanctuaries. In Snodgrass, A. (ed.) *Archaeology and the Emergence of Greece: Collected Papers on Early Greece and Related Topics (1965–2002)*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 258–268, pp. 265–266.

79. Harris, D. 1991. What Do Office Workers Place on Their Desks and in Their Offices? *Salmagundi* 92, 202–210, p. 203.
80. Gamble, C. 2007. *Origins and Revolutions: Human Identity in Earliest Prehistory*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 116.
81. Screws were found inserted into coin-trees at Aira Force, Bolton Abbey, Grizedale, Ingleton, Isle Maree and Malham. Nails were found inserted into coin-trees at Aira Force, Bolton Abbey, Dovedale, Grizedale, Hardcastle Crags, Ingleton, Isle Maree, Malham, Snowdon. A drawing pin at Stock Ghyll; hair clips, an earring, a necklace and a badge at Isle Maree; a metal token and metal plaques engraved with names at Aira Force; semi-precious stones, ribbons and a beer-bottle cap at St Nectan's Glen.
82. Harris, J. 1939. A Gold Hoard from Corinth. *American Journal of Archaeology* 43 (2), 268–277, p. 273.
83. Cf. Dowden, K. 2000. *European Paganism: The Realities of Cult from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. London and New York, Routledge, p. 176.
84. Tilley, C. 2006. Objectification. In Tilley, C., Keane, W., Küchler, S., Rowlands, M. and Spyer, P. (eds.) *Handbook of Material Culture*. London, Sage, 60–73, p. 63.
85. Gell, *Art and Agency*, p. 104.
86. Dedicatory statues presented at temples, in ancient Greece and the Near East for example, were often designed to represent the dedicant—and subsequently 'stand in' for them, as a simulacrum or substitute (Cf. Keesling, C. M. 2003. *The Votive Statues of the Athenian Acropolis*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press). Stieber believes that the majority of ancient votive images were 'intended as surrogates for their dedicants' (Stieber, M. 2004. *The Poetics of Appearance in the Attic Korai*. Austin, University of Texas Press, p. 39), and Napier asserts that this personalisation of votive objects was believed to greatly aid in the establishment of relationships between dedicants and the object's otherworldly recipients (Napier, A. D. 1986. *Masks, Transformation and Paradox*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, p. 46). A similar mentality may be evident in the plethora of votive portraits dedicated to the shrines of saints across fourteenth—and fifteenth-century Europe, such as the numerous silver and gold effigies commissioned by Charles the Bold (1433–1477), each presented to shrines in fulfilment of a vow. Van der Velden opines that votive portraits were intended to evoke 'the presence of an individual rather than testifying in anonymity' (van der Velden, H. 2000. *The Donor's Image: Gerard Loyet and the Votive Portraits of Charles the Bold*. Brepols Publishers, Turnhout, p. 239).

87. Weiner, A. B. 1992. *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving*. Berkeley, University of California Press; Brück, 'Material Metaphors', p. 313; Fowler, C. 2004. *The Archaeology of Personhood: An Anthropological Approach*. London and New York, Routledge, p. 58.
88. Thomas, N. 1991. *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, p. 28.
89. Fowler, *The Archaeology of Personhood*, p. 59. Cf. Houlbrook, C. 2015. Possession Through Deposition: The "Ownership" of Coins in Contemporary British Coin-Trees. In Hedenstierna-Jonson, C. and Klevnas, A. M. (eds.) *Own and Be Owned: Archaeological Approaches to the Concept of Possession*. Stockholm Studies in Archaeology, Stockholm University, 189–214.
90. Mitchell, J. P. 2006. Performance. In Tilley, C., Keane, W., Küchler, S., Rowlands, M. and Spyer, P. (eds.) *Handbook of Material Culture*. London, Sage, 384–401, p. 385.
91. "souvenir, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2017. Web. 17 October 2017.
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93. Gell, *Art and Agency*, p. 33.
94. Gell, *Art and Agency*, p. 68.
95. Pers. comm. Andrew Marsh, National Trust Warden, 27/09/2011.
96. Pers. comm. Steve Gillard, Visitor Attraction Manager, High Force 14/07/2012; pers. comm. Sarah Perry, Natural Resources Wales, Bwlch Nant yr Arian, 07/07/2017.
97. Thompson, M. 1979. *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value*. Oxford, Oxford University Press; Mackenzie, M. A. 1991. *Androgynous Objects: String Bags and Gender in Central New Guinea*. Chur and Reading, Harwood Academic Publishers, p. 21.
98. Myrberg, N. 2010. A Worth of Their Own: On Gotland in the Baltic Sea, and Its 12th-Century Coinage. *Medieval Archaeology* 54 (1), 157–181; Kemmer and Myrberg, 'Rethinking Numismatics'.
99. Hall, M. 2012. Money Isn't Everything: The Cultural Life of Coins in the Medieval Burgh of Perth, Scotland. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 12, 72–91, p. 74.

100. Species of coin-trees include alder, ash, beech, Douglas fir, hawthorn, holly, larch, lime, oak, pine and sycamore. This is not a comprehensive list of every coin-tree species. In the majority of cases, only the living or recently felled coin-trees were identifiable; consequently, there may be even greater variety amongst species.
101. Forestry Commission. 2003. *National Inventory of Woodland and Trees: Great Britain*. Edinburgh, Forestry Commission, p. 35.
102. Pennant, T. 1775. *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides, MDCCLXXII*. Vol. 2. Dublin, A. Leathley, p. 330.

CHAPTER 5

The Mutability of Meaning

"When did I first see the coin-trees? Let me think…"

Jane is a woman in her sixties who has recently been to Ambleside in the Lake District for a holiday with her son, daughter-in-law and young grandchildren. During their trip they'd encountered a cluster of coin-trees. Having heard about my research, Jane had offered to be interviewed, and so we're sitting in a bustling university café with a notepad and an audio recorder, talking about her experience. We may only be eighty or so miles away from where Jane encountered the coin-trees, but the environment is so jarringly different that she admits it takes her a moment to get into the right frame of mind.

Jane begins by describing the location of the coin-trees, explaining that there were a number of them distributed along a path at Stock Ghyll, just outside the town of Ambleside. She has a vivid image of them stored in her mind, and describes them in some detail. She'd never seen or heard of coin-trees before, but her son had and he pointed them out to the group as they passed. It was Jane herself who suggested they insert coins. Her grandchildren eagerly agreed, requesting shiny silver coins rather than copper; they wanted their offerings to be distinguished from the many one- and two-pence pieces already in the trees. Jane deliberately chose a couple of ten pence pieces. She explains that they were of low enough value that people wouldn't later remove them. "It seemed important that it stayed in, for some reason," she recalls. "You know, it didn't seem that you wanted somebody else to come along and take it."

C. Houlbrook, *The Magic of Coin-Trees from Religion to Recreation*,
Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75517-5_5

I ask Jane why they inserted coins and she offers a shrug. "It was just that there were so many coins in it already, and it seemed like a nice thing to do…There was no kind of top of the head reason apart from that." After a moment of thought though, she explains that her primary reason for inserting the coins was actually to entertain her grandchildren. She likes to encourage them to get involved in interesting customs and environmental activities, but when the children had asked her what the coins were for, she'd had to think on her feet. Sifting through possible interpretations in her head, she'd decided she didn't like the idea that the custom was "about supernatural forces, and you are trying to appease them". In fact, she states that if somebody had suggested this reason to her, she certainly would not have inserted the coins. The theory she drew on instead to explain the custom was "more of a child's kind of fairy tale". The coin-trees, she suggested, are where the tooth fairy sources the coins she then places beneath children's pillows. She made this up there and then, she admits with a laugh, "But it could be, couldn't it?"

Introduction

As John Skorupski claims, 'to explain a ritual is to explain why it is performed'.[1] A folk custom can only be contextualised with an understanding of why the practitioners, the 'folk' themselves, participate in it. Granted, beliefs are notoriously difficult to write about; they are elusive and impossible to quantify.[2] However, it is possible to measure a belief's physical manifestations.[3] The coin-tree, as a product of the ritual action of inserting coins into trees, is surely the external expression of belief. So what belief does the coin-tree manifest?

If Pennant's 1775 reference to Isle Maree's 'stump of a tree…shewn as an altar'[4] indicates that people have been depositing coins in or on trees since the eighteenth century, then this practice is over two centuries old. Physical participation in it has changed little over time, and even less across space. Whether it is the eighteenth century or the twenty-first, whether it is the Highlands of Scotland or England's southern coast, the custom is the same: a person inserts a coin into the bark of a tree. Participation in this custom proves, like many others, to offer little variation. It is imitative, formulaic, homogenous. Physical actions are often uniform, and physical structures, analogous. Are we to infer,

therefore, that the beliefs behind this practice are equally uniform and analogous?

Too often, assumptions are made by ethnographers, folklorists and historians, concerning the homogeneity of beliefs and fixed 'meaning'.[5] But folklore is not fixed. Folktales and traditions are malleable. They have a tendency to change over time, and many scholars have focused on this element of mutability, exploring how traditional folktales and customs have been gradually acclimatised to modern culture, from Donald McKelvie's survey of folkloric survivals in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and John Niles' review of the modern modifications undergone by traditional fairy tales, to Ronald Dore's consideration of how traditional practices have persisted in the world's largest metropolis, Tokyo.[6] And just as folklore changes over time, it also varies in the present.

In 1985, Lauri Honko posed the following questions:

> Our concept of meaning is derived from a linguistic stereotype maintained by dictionaries, according to which meaning is conceived of as verbal, clear-cut and stable. But is it so? What if meaning were something totally different, namely, to a large extent non-verbal, amorphous, changing…and of relatively short duration…?[7]

'Meaning' is presented here as a mutable, transient and varied aspect of folklore. This is partly because, as Victor Turner notes, the symbols of which folklore and folk customs comprise can stand for many things at one time. 'Technical terms for this capacity,' Turner writes, 'are: *multivocal* (literally "many voiced"), "speaking" in many ways at once; *multivalent*, having various meanings or values; and *polysemous*, having or being open to several or many meanings' (emphases in original).[8]

Any endeavour to deduce a single meaning of a custom—*the* meaning—is therefore both misguided and misleading. When a custom is observed by multiple participants, in numbers ranging from several to several million, how can one single motivation be ascribed to every individual? Granted, physical participation can be widely imitated, but humans are emotionally heterogeneous creatures, and thus the reasons behind participation and the 'meanings' ascribed to the custom will be as diverse as the participants themselves.[9] The primary objective of this chapter is to consider the variegated contemporary interpretations of the coin-tree custom.

Applying Purpose

A discussion of the contemporary folkloric purposes of the coin-tree may seem overdue. It has waited until now because any assigning of purpose occurs surprisingly late in a person's engagement with a coin-tree. Indeed, it perhaps would not occur at all if the participants were not prompted in their interviews to consider what the purposes of the custom might be. Unless a participant is with a child or a child themselves (an element explored below), then unprompted they are not likely to discuss what they believe the purpose of the coin-trees to be. Indeed, when asked why they had participated in the custom, many appeared nonplussed. Despite having inserted coins into a coin-tree mere seconds before my question, they could not offer me a firm reason for why they had done so. In these cases, has the custom become something of a 'blind motif', to use a term employed by folklorists to describe a practice observed without knowledge of its significance?

Many of the participants also seemed disconcerted or embarrassed by my attention, and they were eager to stress that they had not participated in the custom because they were 'superstitious' but simply because others had done so. Some seemed to believe that any purpose assigned to the coin-tree was incidental. It was the pleasing aesthetics and the interactivity fostered by the coin-tree that had appealed to them. For many of the participants, therefore, the themes discussed in Chapter 4—imitation, art and aesthetics and interactivity—are the primary motivations behind participation. There were, however, other purposes proposed for the coin-trees.

When asked to suggest a purpose, many participants proposed that the custom stemmed from some form of 'superstition' or 'folklore', to use their words, but they could only guess at the origins or specific meanings. Indeed, the words 'my guess is…', 'I'm guessing…', and 'I have no idea, but…' littered people's responses, and many answered my questions with tentative questions of their own: 'is it a good luck thing?'; 'is it a wishing thing?'; 'is it some sort of folklore?' Their lack of solid knowledge, however, did not deter them from making spontaneous, *ad lib* judgements regarding the purpose of the custom, often drawing upon more widespread and familiar traditions as analogies.

Occasionally, older traditions were drawn upon. Three people at Portmeirion and one at Fairy Glen associated the custom with paganism,

asking if it is 'some pagan thing?' One man believed the custom to be some form of 'folklore throwback' to the Roman practice of 'giving value back to the earth'. One woman connected the custom to the tradition of touching wood, which she described as the pagan custom of acquiring 'good luck from the tree spirits'. Another woman opined that the custom was about 'leaving an offering. Like when we used to throw coins into springs'. One person at Portmeirion and another at Tarr Steps compared the custom to 'blowing out candles: it's for good luck or making wishes'.

Humour was also widely employed in people's interpretations. Six different people, on their first encounter with a coin-tree, exclaimed 'so money does grow on trees', with one woman drolly saying, 'I want one of them in my garden but I bet it wouldn't grow'. A man at Corfe Castle, upon hearing that the older coin-trees were probably employed for healing, remarked, 'it'd heal piles if you sat on it'—and then hastily apologised for his 'crude sense of humour'. The ranger at Marbury Park made the pun that a coin-tree is a 'branch of the TSB', and another pun was made on Snowdon when a coin fell and a witness noted wryly, 'the penny's dropped'.

Other humour-related interpretations involve the coin-trees' economic worth. A local business owner in Malham considers the nearby coin-trees to be his 'retirement fund'. Other people jested that they should take the coins for themselves; a man at Malham told me, 'we're waiting for you to clear off so we can take them [the coins], we've got bills to pay'. Another man at Portmeirion admitted that if he was researching a coin-tree, he would be tempted to 'take a chainsaw to it and get the coins', whilst a teenage boy at Lydford Gorge joked that he and his family should carry the coin-tree home, burn the wood and use the coins to pay for their next holiday.

The Wishing-Tree

Although interpretations of the coin-trees varied widely, there were some analogies which were drawn upon more frequently. The most notable was that of the wishing well or fountain. Over thirty different groups made this comparison: 'it's like throwing coins into a wishing well'; 'I'm guessing people do it to make wishes, like in a wishing well'; 'I always thought it was like wishing wells or fountains, which I guess go back to

sacred springs and paganism', and so on. Indeed, this does appear to be the prevailing analogy used.

When asked why they had inserted coins into the coin-trees, wishing was a particularly popular answer. In addition to the 35 references to wells and fountains, a further 32 people opined that coins are inserted into a coin-tree 'for making wishes', and 18 groups termed the coin-tree a 'wish-tree' or 'wishing-tree'. Also evident was the notion that the coins were physical manifestations of wishes. At Ingleton, a mother told her children that 'each coin is a wish' and the purpose of the coin-tree is 'for putting wishes in'. Another mother at Ingleton scolded her young son for removing a coin: 'you can't take other people's wishes', while at Tarr Steps, as mentioned above, a father discouraged his son from pulling out coins by claiming that he was 'stealing people's wishes'.

The coin-tree custom was also widely associated with luck, with 52 participants making this connection: 'it's for luck', 'I assume it's for luck', 'maybe it's a good luck thing'. Five people termed the coin-tree a 'luck/lucky/good-luck-tree', and five more associated the custom with 'good fortune'. Generally, this association is made because of the connection between coins and luck. One person noted that 'pennies are meant to be lucky', two others said that 'finding a penny is lucky', and three people recited the jingle, 'find a penny, pick it up and all day long you'll have good luck'. Two separate groups recalled the belief that a coin minted in your year of birth is particularly lucky.

Theories of exchange were drawn on by some participants. At Snowdon, one person suggested that 'you give something up and you get something in return', a notion shared by others at Dovedale, Ingleton, and Hardcastle Crags: 'if you give [the tree] a coin, you'll get a wish'. At Malham, one young girl asserted that the higher the denomination of coin, the more wishes you can make. Her parents did not take the bait. Also at Malham, when one man asked his companion if he could borrow a coin, he was drolly told that 'if it isn't your coin, you don't get the luck'.

It is interesting to note that these people who, by their own admission, do not *know* the purpose of the coin-tree, were still able to offer illuminating answers. They did this by creating impromptu connections between the coin-tree and customs with which they are more familiar, such as the wishing well and the concept of lucky pennies. This strategy of improvising an explanation for the custom was particularly evident when children are involved.

'A Child's Kind of Fairy Tale'

As explored in Chapter 4, children are the primary participatory group of the coin-tree custom. They are also, in many cases, central to interpretations of it. Many adults described the purposes of these trees by drawing on child-friendly concepts and inventing improvised traditions on the spot, often for the benefit of their children. Indeed, an adult's interpretation of the coin-tree was often dependent upon whether or not a child is present.[10]

One couple at Dovedale believed that participation in the custom was motivated entirely by imitation, but they admitted that, if questioned by their children, they would probably claim that the coin-trees are 'for good luck'. Also at Dovedale, a couple from Birmingham had visited the previous year without their young son and had apparently inserted a coin only because 'everyone else was doing it'. On this trip, however, in the presence of their son they claimed that the custom was 'lucky'.

Other ideas and imaginative theories concerning the coin-trees appear to have been hastily concocted by parents. One man told his son that 'the tradition is, if you can carry the whole log home, you can keep the coins', while a man at Portmeirion pointed a coin-tree out to his young son and informed him that 'this is where pennies come from; they grow on penny trees'. A father at Ingleton told his daughter not to touch the tree because 'it's not ready yet. When it's ready, it'll fall down and all the money will come out. We'll have to come back for that'.

Fairies played a prominent role in child-focused interpretations of the coin-trees. One pair of grandparents at Aira Force told their granddaughter that the coin-tree was a 'fairy-tree'; people leave their coins in the tree for the fairies in exchange for wishes. This notion was repeated by families with young children at Fairy Glen, Malham and Hardcastle Crags, while at Becky Falls, three families claimed that the coins are left for pixies. In the interview that introduced this chapter, one grandmother made an impromptu connection between coin-trees and the tooth fairy for the benefit of her grandchildren, playfully querying if the tooth fairy sources her coins from the tree. This was 'more of a child's kind of fairy tale', which is why she had chosen it.

It is hardly surprising that fairy-centred traditions are employed in interpretations of the coin-tree custom. The amorphous, mutable nature of the term 'fairy' itself makes it easily adoptable and adaptable for a range of customs, while in modern times a 'fairy' is a child-friendly

concept, which makes it particularly appropriate for a practice primarily observed by, or for the benefit of, children.[11] Simon Young observes in his study of contemporary fairy belief that children today are particularly inclined to associate fairies with trees, much more so than flowers or other plants. A connection could be made between the historic belief in tree spirits, but it is more likely the size and, as Young notes, very real presence of trees that has led to their prominence in children's fairy beliefs.[12]

Fairies, however, are not the only supernatural creatures associated with coin-trees. At Ingleton, one family described the coin-tree as a 'magic money-tree' created by a wizard, while in other cases it was the children themselves who fostered connections between coin-trees and supernatural beings. A pair of sisters at Becky Falls, for example (described in the next chapter), invented the 'tradition' that if you throw your coin at the tree and it lands on it, the pixies will grant your wish. Likewise, a young girl at Dovedale improvised an explanation for the coin-trees, drawing on the mythological tradition of securing safe passage across dangerous terrain by paying a fee—embedding a coin into the coin-tree—to some overseeing supernatural power. It was her mother, however, who suggested that it was 'trolls' who were guarding this point along the path, no doubt drawing on the well-known tale of the Three Billy Goats Gruff. Another young girl, on Snowdon, told her parents that participation in the custom is 'for luck so we don't fall off the mountain'.

It is unsurprising that such fairy-tale motifs are employed in explanations of the coin-tree custom. Children are able to quickly invent, reinvent and disperse folk tales and customs.[13] Through their vast exposure to fairy tales in popular culture, they become adept at applying a fairy-tale-like structure to objects and events in the real world.[14] And it is this ease with which children relate to fairy tales that motivates adults to draw upon them in their own explanations.

However, the coin-tree is not simply 'children's folklore'. As Richard Bauman writes:

> There is a large corpus of folklore which is often classified as children's lore, though its performance almost inevitably involves people who are beyond the age of childhood, suggesting that this lore might be more productively considered as structuring the interaction between members of different age categories…The lore is shared in the sense that it constitutes

> a communicative bond between participants, but the participants themselves are different, the forms they employ are different, and their view of the folklore passing between them is different.[15]

The example Bauman gives of this shared lore is the nursery rhyme, which is typically taught by adults to children for the purposes of entertainment or instruction. It is neither wholly 'children's lore' nor 'adult's lore'. Instead it is both, because it is taught *by* adults *to* children. However, the children and adults engaged in this sharing of lore do not necessarily share the same levels of belief. There are after all different grades of belief. It is not necessarily a case of either full credence or incredulity; people can experience anything on the wide scale between the two. Most participants are probably experiencing something more akin to suspended disbelief.[16] They are playing at the custom rather than earnestly participating. The grandmother who tells her granddaughter that a coin-tree is a 'fairy-tree' probably believes this less than her young granddaughter.

Children and adults therefore will not interpret the 'traditions' of the coin-tree with equal earnestness, just as they do not play identical roles in the transmission of coin-tree lore, although they each contribute symbiotically to the sharing. The role of an adult guardian is to fabricate a 'tradition' that will interest or entertain a child, and the role of a child is to provide an excuse for their guardians to suspend their disbelief, if only for a moment, and permit themselves to indulge in some whimsical ritual participation. It is particularly telling that adults who have inserted a coin for the benefit of children exhibited little embarrassment when I approached them, while adults without children appeared awkward and slightly defensive when asked why they had participated.

The Mutability of Meaning

Evidently there is not one single interpretation of the coin-tree custom, but a myriad. This is due in part to a lack of official written doctrine. Oral traditions, or customs which are passed on through simple observational imitation (as the coin-tree largely appears to be), can easily be tailored to any given audience simply because they are not written down.[17] Granted, there are numerous articles, discussion forums and personal blogs on the Internet which explore the custom of the coin-tree, but there is no official piece of writing which states definitively the purpose

of all coin-trees. Hence the 'meaning' of the custom is subject to personal interpretation.

If the man at Portmeirion believes that the coin-tree is a 'folklore throwback' to the Roman practice of giving value back to the land, then it is. If the girls at Becky Falls believe that if your coin lands on the coin-tree the pixies will grant your wish, then this has become the tradition. And if the grandmother at Stock Ghyll tells her grandchildren that the coin-tree is where the tooth fairy sources her coins, then this, too, becomes the tradition. With the coin-trees, the consumers are the producers. The custom therefore 'means' whatever they want it to 'mean' in that particular moment.

This evident multiplicity is compatible with Honko's theories. Honko maintains that the 'meaning' of a folkloric text or custom is not 'clear-cut, and stable' but is 'amorphous, changing…and of relatively short duration'.[18] 'Meaning' is situational, and we cannot (or, at least, should not) make any definitive assertions about the meaning of the coin-tree custom. Additionally, a clear distinction must be made between collective belief and individual belief.[19] It cannot be stated that the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland believe that inserting a coin into a coin-tree will result in the fulfilment of their wishes. It can only be stated that certain individuals claim to believe this, with emphasis on the words 'individuals' and 'claim'.

The prevalence of ambiguity in ritual is clearly evident in numerous anthropological studies, in which multiple practitioners have been shown to observe a custom or perform a ritual in homogeneity, and yet interpret both the ritual and their participation quite differently. For example, when James Fernandez interviewed members of the Bwiti cult of the Fang peoples of northern Gabon, it soon became apparent that identical ritual actions do not necessarily indicate identical ritual perceptions or motivations. Despite the night-long ritual, which Fernandez studied, being intended to promote the unity—or *nlem-mvore*, 'one-heartedness'—of the cult, there were vast discrepancies within the various personal interpretations of the ritual's key symbols and actions.[20]

This 'variation in the individual interpretation of commonly experienced phenomena', as Fernandez terms it,[21] is clearly noticeable in numerous other anthropological studies. Edmund Leach's work on the rituals of the Burmese, the Shans, and the Kachins of the Hukawng Valley reveals a similar superficial facade of unity of intent and interpretation, as does David Jordan's work on the Taiwanese Jiaw, a large,

ceremonial supplication to the deities, in which 'there is not a single theological justification given for the event by all informants'.[22]

World religions are equally subject to divergent perspectives. Peter Stromberg's analysis of the perceptions of religious symbolism among Swedish Protestants clearly highlights the extent to which personal backgrounds and characteristics can influence an individual's interpretation of ritual and doctrine, as does Glenn Bowman's study of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, presenting contrasts in the behaviour and motivations of pilgrims, which are repeated in Michael Sallnow's examination of pilgrimages in the South American Andes and in Ian Reader's description of a Japanese pilgrimage to the Buddhist temples on the island of Shikoku.[23]

Evidently, factors such as personality, age, gender and levels of knowledge result in individuals maintaining different beliefs. Equally, what the coin-tree 'means' is dependent upon who the participant is, their social role and who they are with.[24] It is also influenced by such unpredictable determinants as emotional moods. For example, if a child is immersed in a tantrum, a teenager is despondent or a parent impatient or flustered, then a family may well ignore a coin-tree as they pass. There are also external factors such as the weather. In poor weather, fewer people are likely to engage with coin-trees, and those who do probably spend less time participating in the custom, as has been witnessed on particularly cold or wet days.

Modernising Meaning

The coin-tree custom proves to be entirely situational, inclusive, ambiguous and mutable—essentially so, for as Alan Dundes stresses, 'folktales must appeal to the psyches of many, many individuals if they are to survive'.[25] However, despite this vast variety of interpretations and analogies, some were far more popular than others, while some were absent entirely. Considering for example how widely employed coins and trees were in folk-remedies in Britain and Ireland (explored in Chapter 3), I had assumed that people today would draw on connections between the coin-tree and healing. However, of the participants interviewed (more than 200), only two made any reference to healing or folk medicine in their interpretations of the coin-trees (in connection with clootie wells, discussed below).

Initially this surprised me, especially considering that the Isle Maree coin-tree, the earliest known surviving manifestation of this custom, was

originally concerned specifically with healing. However, on further consideration it became clear that the participants' disinclination to associate the custom with folk remedies is not anomalous. It is in fact entirely consistent with the processes involved in the continuation, diffusion and adaptation of folkloric customs.

Folkloric customs and structures are not static. The fact that the Isle Maree coin-tree was at some point employed for its supposed curative properties does not necessitate all other coin-trees to be connected with healing. Richard Bradley, advocating the importance of contextual archaeology in his consideration of Bronze Age and Roman votive deposits, asserts that the interpretations of a ritual artefact can change over time.[26] Indeed, this change is central to a custom's continuity; a continuity which, according to Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold, 'is due not to its passive inertia but in its active regeneration'.[27]

This takes us back to Chapter 3's consideration of the theory of survivals. Alexandra Walsham advises against viewing folklore as collections of 'cultural fossils' or 'dead' artefacts, but as an 'evolving organism'.[28] The same is true of the coin-tree. However, it is not the coin-trees themselves that have changed. Generally, all coin-trees share the same physical properties—trees embedded with coins—regardless of when and where they were produced. It is the producers themselves who have changed. After all, customs are not self-sustaining; they require people to participate and perpetuate them.[29] If they change, it is because human actors have adapted and modified them, and they survive because of their capabilities for adaptation.[30] A person can mimic the essential elements of a custom, the actual insertion of a coin into a coin-tree, but for the custom to be relevant to *them* it must be malleable enough for the participants to shape and colour it to their liking. Indeed, malleability is imperative if a custom, old or new, is to survive. Ideas which are compatible with contemporary society are successfully disseminated. Ideas which are not, fail.[31]

For a custom to retain its appeal over time, it must therefore be receptive to numerous recreations.[32] Take for example the Grimms' fairy tales which have been highly commodified and modernised since their first incarnations. The Grimm brothers themselves altered the tales between 1819 and 1857 to make them more instructional and moral for their younger readers, while Disney adapted them still further to suit a modern audience. In the tale of Snow White, for instance, Disney transformed the 'evil mother' into the 'evil stepmother', and had her meet

her end by falling from a cliff rather than dancing to death in heated iron shoes.[33] Likewise the tale of Jack and the Beanstalk has been modified to a modern American audience, with one version altering what items Jack stole from the giant: the harp and the hen that lays the golden eggs become a knife and a gun.[34]

Just like a tale, a custom survives if it can be made relevant to modern participants. The folkloric associations of coins and trees with healing, for example, are no longer relevant to contemporary British society. This is unsurprising. Illness and premature death were a much greater concern in the past than they are today,[35] and scientific and technological developments have meant that in most cases those concerned for their health are more likely to visit a medical centre than participate in a folkloric custom.[36] There are many examples in Hope's catalogue of English holy wells that had, by the late nineteenth century, lost their reputations as curative because of people's growing scepticism. Writing of Holy Well at Gulval, Cornwall, for instance, Hope observed that 'suspicions of its magical virtues appear to be daily increasing'.[37] And when a custom begins to be given less credence this usually results in its attenuation, unless it is suitably adapted.

If folk medicine is no longer widely relevant to contemporary British participants, therefore, then what has risen to replace it? As explored above, the coin-tree is particularly relevant to modern-day society because it caters to children, providing them with the opportunity for ritual play. However, it is not only children who participate in this custom. Also, while the continuation of a custom necessitates a propensity for adaptation, there must also be a degree of retention and familiarity. A custom must adapt if it is to survive, but while participants require it to be relevant to contemporary society, they also desire some sense of antiquity (a notion explored in greater detail below). They therefore, either consciously or subconsciously, seek out interpretations of the coin-tree which address both needs.

To do this, the coin-tree custom is recreated by drawing analogies with other traditions. The success of a new custom may depend on its similarity to older ones.[38] Folklore 'feeds on other matter'.[39] A more dominant or familiar tradition is imprinted onto the new (or recreated) custom. It is unsurprising, therefore, that such a high number of participants drew on analogies with wishing wells and fountains, with wish fulfilment and notions of luck being central to their interpretations. These notions are ideally suited to the task of acclimatising the coin-tree,

because they are compatible with contemporary ideas and customs—wishing wells and lucky pennies—whilst simultaneously being deeply enough rooted in the past to boast a certain sense of antiquity.

This modernisation of the 'meaning' of the coin-tree is clearly traceable in interpretations of the Isle Maree coin-tree. As outlined in Chapter 3, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the tree was employed in healing rituals, and closely associated with the holy well of St Maelrubha. However, with the loosening grip of the Church and the declining faith in the power of saints and holy wells the traditions needed adapting to retain their popularity. By the late nineteenth century, the tree had become a 'wishing-tree'.[40] It was now believed that a 'wish silently formed when any metal article was attached to the tree, or coin driven in, would certainly be realised'.[41] No longer associated with healing, the tree became imbued with the power to grant wishes or to ensure good luck, the only traditions that local residents associate with the custom today. The tree has therefore shed its curative properties and became a wishing-tree instead, a custom much more inclusive.

This same process is evident at many ritual sites across the British and Irish landscapes. Numerous holy wells and springs have shed their religious names and associations over time. St Lawrence's Well, Norwich, was known as Gybson's Well by the sixteenth century; St Agnes's Well, Crook, had become 'Anna's' by the seventeenth; and a spring dedicated to St Helen in Yorkshire was known as 'Stelling' by the nineteenth.[42] Despite gradually losing their saintly patrons, many wells continued to be associated with healing but the customs enacted at these sites changed. 'Prayers were pared down to simple wishes,' observes Walsham, 'and votive offerings lost their original instrumentality and became lucky tokens'.[43] Throughout the modern period, we witness religious practice and ritual slowly being transformed into recreational activity, and the coin-tree is a prime example of this. Perhaps the custom has not become entirely secular, but it is certainly more about pleasure and pastime than spiritual supplication, in England at least.

Coin-Trees and Healing

While participants of the coin-tree custom in England associate the coin-trees with vague notions of wishes and luck, the sites of Ireland and some in Scotland and Wales maintain strong connections with an established tradition: rag-trees and clootie wells, the history of which was traced in

Chapter 2. It is probably no coincidence, for example, that the Fairy Glen coin-trees are a mere six miles away from the famed rag-trees surrounding St Boniface's well, Munlochy, believed to predate the seventh century (Fig. 5.1).[44] This is a site which pairs together the historic customs of depositing coins in water and of adorning trees with personal objects, intended to represent (or stand in as substitute for) the depositor. The coin-tree, therefore, is particularly compatible with these two established traditions because it can be viewed as an amalgamation of them; as the most recent incarnation—the product of ritual recycling—of two long-standing traditions.

Indeed, several groups at Fairy Glen spoke of a connection between coin-trees and clootie wells, drawing on a custom with which they were probably more familiar. A man claimed that the coin-tree is probably 'the same thing as clootie wells, leaving offerings for healing or prayers', while one woman specifically connected the coin-trees to the clootie well of Munlochy, claiming that if rag-trees are used for healing then 'maybe coin-trees are too'. And it is probably no coincidence that the only two interview participants who referred to healing in their interpretations of coin-trees were at the same site—a site close to a clootie well still in use today. Folk remedies are evidently not entirely redundant.

In Ireland, the customs of rag-trees, clootie wells and coin-trees appear to be even more closely interconnected. As was demonstrated in Chapter 2, many coin-trees in Ireland would be more accurately

Fig. 5.1 The rag-trees and Holy Well of St Boniface, Munlochy, the Black Isle, Scotland (Photographs by author)

described as rag-trees, with other objects deposited alongside coins. Strips of cloth and ribbons are the most common, but a vast range of items are offered: jewellery, hair accessories, paper documents, toys, toothbrushes. However, during fieldwork at the Irish sites, I did not witness anybody make a deposit. Having asked Jane O'Reilly, local business owner in Fore, Co. Westmeath, who she believes makes the deposits, she admitted that she too had never actually seen anybody doing it. 'And yet every time I go there,' she added, 'more things have been attached'. Her theory is that the participants of this custom are mainly 'the Travelling people', who 'still believe in the traditional ways of healing'. According to Jane, many Irish Travellers visit Fore believing that the water from St Feichin's vat, located beside a rag-tree also embedded with coins, is curative. She has heard that they bathe their children in the vat, then attach an offering to the nearby tree. Not wishing to be seen by the local residents they conduct these rituals at night.[45]

Jane's theory connecting rag-trees with Irish Travellers is supported by opinions and tales recounted by other local residents. The owners of a guesthouse in Abbeyleix, Co. Laois, for example, claimed that customs such as rag-trees are upheld predominantly by 'the Travellers', an opinion also expressed by two local residents in the city of Limerick, who asserted that Travellers attach rags to trees before leaving an area. If the rag blows away, it is taken as an indication that the depositor will not return to the site. And in Doon, Co. Limerick, a local business owner spoke of a tree in Ireland—she could not remember its exact location—which 'the Travellers' visit to cure warts.

Perhaps these accounts should be taken with a pinch of salt, considering the stereotyping and prejudice to which the Irish Travellers are often subjected. However, the customs recounted are certainly in keeping with the literature on the subject, which offers many examples of the Travellers' beliefs in symbolic transference and their veneration of holy wells and associated rag-trees.[46] Sociologist Michael Delaney, for example, recounts being told by Traveller children that 'their families travel across Ireland to go to healers and visit holy wells for cures', while Kevin Griffin presents an account by Traveller children in Co. Wexford of their annual pilgrimage to holy wells: 'We go to holy wells in the summer and in the winter. We go to pray for other people and for ourselves'.[47]

The customs surrounding the holy wells of Ireland evidently blur the lines between 'religion', 'magic', and 'folk-medicine'.[48] Irish coin-trees, therefore, may still be employed for healing, in contrast to most in

Scotland, such as Isle Maree, which appear to have shed their folk-remedy associations, whilst those in England do not seem to have ever had such associations. However, the customs of affixing rags and inserting coins prove not to be entirely identical. Jane O'Reilly, describing the rag/coin-trees at Fore, explained that the custom involves affixing an object that will 'deteriorate quickly, something close to you' onto the branches of the trees.[49]

These designations allude to a belief in sympathetic magic, whereby an object which was 'close to you' is employed to represent the depositor's malady, and as the object degrades, the malady is also believed to deteriorate, leaving the depositor cured.[50] The ephemeral, transient nature of these deposits is central to their roles in this custom, which is why, as Jane explained, pieces of fabric are preferred over more durable objects. Jane used 'tinfoil' as an example of the type of material which people would not deposit on these trees, specifically because of its durability.

Ironically, however, tinfoil *was* found on one of the trees at Fore: a compact piece of tinfoil attached to a rag on one of the trees. Although the piece of tinfoil was probably a convenient deposit ready at hand (likely having been brought to the site as part of a picnic), this seemingly mundane material does have ritual significance in other contexts. It is used, for example, by some members of African-American communities in the sacred assemblages of Hoodoo or Conjure. Alongside polished silver dimes, liquid mercury and the shavings from the backs of mirrors, tinfoil is colloquially referred to as 'quicksilver' and is used in a variety of rituals, from those that curse to those that protect. As Stephen Wehmeyer remarks, in his study of African-American vernacular magic:

> That the selfsame sorcerous virtues accorded to the substance of silver – and to the exchange value of silver coin – should accrete to a flimsy piece of ephemera like the silver used to keep tobacco products dry suggests that it is really the shared aesthetic property of *reflection* and *shimmer* that is of importance here. (emphases in original)[51]

Of course, Fore is not an African-American community, and the tinfoil at this site may have been selected simply for convenience rather than for the ritual potency of shimmer. However, this is not the only example of diuturnal materials being deposited on these trees, with metal hairclips, bracelets, earrings and keyrings adorning the trees' branches in

high numbers. Coins, however, are the most obvious example of durable deposits, contradicting the belief that objects are chosen for their temporality, and suggesting that, although coin-trees may be employed for healing in Ireland, they may, like the coin-trees in Britain, have been ritually recycled to fulfil another purpose.

Coin-Trees and Memory

Recently, Catholic holy wells have developed what Ronan Foley terms 'new meanings around grief, hope and memorial, exemplified by left offerings marking premature death, serious illness and loss'.[52] The holy wells and their respective rag-trees, therefore, are no longer solely the destinations of pilgrims seeking cures. They have also become memorials for those whom the pilgrims have lost. At St Bridget's Well and rag-tree in Liscannor, Co. Clare, for example, the narrow stone passageway leading to the holy well is lined with hundreds of letters, photographs, photo frames, statues and rosary beads, amongst numerous other offerings, many of which were clearly deposited in memoriam. As Rackard et al. aptly note:

> Some holy wells look like shrines to recycling, with discarded fire-grates, bedsteads and even parts of washing machines framing the tokens of the devotion. This most modest sort of holy well is not a dump, however… it is just the opposite, for the rags, damaged statues and rusting metal are consigned not to oblivion, but to memory…[53]

A different kind of deposit is required for this new role of holy wells and rag-trees: the durable kind. Participants in the custom of affixing objects to trees may no longer be choosing specifically ephemeral deposits so that their maladies fade at the rate of the deposit's decay. Instead, objects may be deposited in memoriam for a lost loved one, chosen specifically for their durability; their ability to crystallise an act of remembrance.[54] Metal objects such as coins would certainly fit this new requirement.

Trees likewise provide suitable memorials. There is an aspect of durability to them, but more importantly they can represent cycles of birth, death and regeneration.[55] A relatively recent development in memorialisation involves mourners planting trees in honour of the deceased, a more eco-friendly custom than erecting headstones. The website *Life for a Life*, for example, offers mourners the chance to plant a tree in a

'Memorial Forest' for a minimum donation of £495.[56] This illustrates the fluid and flexible nature of trees, which through the performance of commemorative ceremonies can shift from natural structures to monuments of memorialisation, a process which is evident at the Munlochy clootie well, where a large piece of cloth adorned with the words 'R.I.P SCOTT' had been attached to a tree.[57]

Trees in roadside memorials have likewise become ritualised mnemonic devices.[58] To an extent, these trees 'shift from site to surrogate', to use a phrase coined by religious studies researcher Marion Bowman.[59] For example, in North Radstock, Somerset, where a tree was adopted as a memorial site for a young boy who had died in a car accident, there were impassioned protests when plans emerged to remove the tree to ease traffic congestion. On a ribbon attached to the tree was written 'losing this tree would be like losing [the victim] all over again', illustrating the extent to which the tree had come to represent the victim.

An anecdote from my fieldwork demonstrates that coin-trees can also become monuments of memory. While at the coin-trees in Fairy Glen, the Black Isle, I observed three middle-aged women lingering on the bridge overlooking the waterfall and coin-trees, taking photographs of them for several minutes. Concerned that I was intruding in their photographs, I stepped away from the coin-trees. Immediately, as if they had been waiting for me to leave, the three women approached. They clearly wanted privacy, and there was an air of solemnity as two of the women hung back and the third moved forward, silently hammering pennies into two of the coin-trees with a rock.

I lingered on the sidelines for a moment, waiting for the women to turn back towards the bridge before I approached them. I aimed my questions at the woman who had hammered the coins in, and she seemed more than happy to answer them. She told me that she and her husband had visited Fairy Glen nearly every year for the past decade and had always inserted coins into the tree. However, since their last visit her husband had died, and so she had returned this year with friends to continue their tradition 'in honour of him.'

This example is illustrative for a number of reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates the performative and ritualised actions common to commemorative ceremonies: the solemn atmosphere as the woman stepped forward, her friends lingering behind and the respectful silence as she inserted the coins into the trees. Secondly, it reveals another aspect, another 'meaning', of the coin-tree: its ability to act as a monument of memory.

The coin is a durable mnemonic device embedded into a structure (the tree) which can be used to represent seasonal cycles, as well as decay and regeneration. And thirdly, it clearly illustrates the mutability of meaning.

For the last decade, this woman and her husband had visited Fairy Glen and inserted coins into the trees for a very different reason: to make wishes. Apparently they had originally thought the custom was associated with magic, believing the Black Isle to have a long history of witchcraft. However, following her husband's death in 2011, she returned to Fairy Glen and embedded more coins into the coin-trees, not to make wishes but to act 'in memory' of her husband; 'in honour' of him. As a wife, she had perceived the coin-tree custom very differently than as a widow. The 'meaning' of the coin-tree, therefore, proves to be vague, mutable and highly situational, not only variously interpreted by different people in different locations, but also by the *same* person in the *same* location, though at different stages in their life.

Conclusion

Coin-trees are not diverse structures. Granted, some are logs while others are stumps, and some are still fledglings, containing only a few coins, whilst others are well established monuments, affixed with thousands. But essentially they are all alike: they are trees adorned with coins, and the custom of deposition is similarly homogenous. Even the historical examples of coin-trees, such as Isle Maree, are united with the contemporary sites through the similarities of their appearances and the uniform methods of participation.

Physical evidence of homogeneity in how a structure is utilised or treated, however, does not constitute uniformity of motive. The very nature of coin-trees, as unofficial and enigmatic structures often stumbled upon by chance, encourages great variation in the *why* of participation. To return to Queen Victoria, in the nineteenth century she was claiming that it was customary on Isle Maree 'to insert with a hammer a copper coin, as a sort of offering to the saint who lived there in the eighth century, called Saint Maolruabh or Mulroy'.[60] How many people today would explain the custom similarly? Probably very few. Of the 200 modern-day participants interviewed, not one of them claimed to be making an offering to a saint. They were making generic wishes, or just doing what others had done, or leaving their mark, or keeping the kids happy. What was once observed for religious purposes has now become recreation.

This mutability, however, is not only contingent upon time. The same coin-tree on the same day may 'mean' a hundred different things, depending upon who the participants are, who they are with—whether alone, in a group of peers, with children—their emotional mood at the time, and at what stage in their life they encounter the coin-tree. This custom has not one 'meaning', but a myriad. This situational aspect of folklore is not incidental, but often integral to its survival. Because customs and symbols (such as the coin and the tree) are multivocal, individuals can ascribe the ideas, purposes and motivations that are more suited to their position at the time of participation.[61] They thus become broadly inclusive; anybody can participate if they wish. The coin-tree, therefore, acts as what John Eade and Michael Sallnow term a ritual 'void', a space which, (usually) free from authoritative prescription, can accommodate diverse meanings and practices.[62] It is for this reason that ambiguity and mutability are often essential to a folkloric custom and the processes of ritual recycling.[63] Its participants must be permitted the freedom to perceive and interpret it as they choose, otherwise they may not participate at all.

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CHAPTER 6

Manipulating Meaning

It's a bitterly cold day in Dartmoor National Park, Devon and light snow is falling intermittently. But it's Easter Sunday and so people are out braving the weather. Becky Falls Woodland Park is particularly popular, perhaps because as well as woodland trails and a scenic waterfall the park also offers an indoor theatre, a children's craft centre and a reptile house, all welcome respites from the cold. But still many families are venturing onto the circuitous woodland trail.

The cluster of coin-trees is particularly conspicuous. Coin-trees are situated either side of the footpath and the largest, a y-shaped log propped up against a boulder, is highly visible, with a large volume of coins both inserted into the bark and distributed loosely on top. Labelled 'Money Trees', the cluster is pinpointed on the map distributed to visitors, and there is an interpretation panel—the supporting wooden post of which is also embedded with coins—standing directly in front of the main coin-tree. It states the following:

> Nobody knows the exact origin of the Money Tree, but local legend has it that many years ago, this path was the main route from the Moor to Bovey Tracey. It is said that a huge serpent lived in the brook and ate the occasional unsuspecting traveller. In order to ensure safe passage, the pixies would apply an invisibility charm to any traveller, so long as they paid a small toll by placing a coin in the tree. This ensures safe passage. However,

C. Houlbrook, *The Magic of Coin-Trees from Religion to Recreation*,
Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75517-5_6

if you take a coin from the tree you will incur the wrath of the pixies. You have been warned!

The main coin-tree is difficult to miss, and when a family turns the corner of the footpath they notice it instantly, stopping to read the interpretation panel. The mother and father are in their forties, their two daughters aged between nine and twelve. They tell their daughters that the coins are 'for the pixies'. They're polite with me, answering a few brief questions—such as confirming that they had never seen a coin-tree before and telling me that they're from south Wales, on holiday in the area for a week—but the temperature seems to be dropping and they're impatient to be on their way. When their daughters ask for coins, they give them each a penny and then move on, leaving the girls to add their coins alone.

The older girl immediately takes charge. "The tradition is," she explains to her sister, "that if you throw your penny and it lands on the tree then the pixies will give you a wish." The younger girl is eager to follow her sister's instructions; standing on the footpath she tosses her coin, but it lands on the ground between the two limbs of the coin-tree. Her older sister takes aim and follows suit. Her coin hits the tree but ricochets off it, also dropping to the ground. The girls glance at each other, hesitating, at which point their mother calls back to them. They give the coin-tree one last dispirited glance before breaking into runs and disappearing down the footpath.

Five minutes pass and light snow begins to fall. Another family group approaches: grandparents in their sixties and a granddaughter aged eight, from Wiltshire. They notice the main coin-tree instantly, but it quickly becomes clear that they'd not stumbled upon it by chance. "Is this the pixie-tree?" the granddaughter excitedly asks, striding purposefully towards it. The grandmother explains to me that they had visited Becky Falls four years before without their granddaughter, and had described the coin-tree to her on their journey here today; they'd promised to take her to see it. The grandmother reads the interpretation panel aloud, elaborating a little by claiming that it is "lucky" to insert a coin. Her granddaughter subsequently asks for one, specifically requesting a five or ten pence piece because "pixies like shiny things". Her grandparents oblige, fishing out a five pence piece, but when she asks to hammer it into the tree, it's clear they're eager to keep moving. "Leave it on top," the grandfather suggests, already moving on along the footpath. He assures her that people will not steal it; "the pixies will keep it safe".

Coining the Coin-Tree: What's in a Name?

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the lack of official doctrine concerning the coin-tree has resulted in a lack of uniform 'meaning'. It has also resulted in a lack of official title. Consequently, the name of these structures can be changed at will. In this book, they have been dubbed 'coin-trees' because this is the most basic, neutral description of them. Others, however, use different terms for these structures, which invariably indicate how they are perceived. As philosopher Jacques Derrida observes, 'when a name comes, it immediately says more than the name'.[1] It communicates information about the thing being named.[2] And not only does a name reveal how we perceive an object, it also influences it.[3]

Some names for these structures refer simply to their physical components: 'coin-trees', 'money-trees', 'penny-trees'. Names often draw upon description, especially when the namer is otherwise unfamiliar with an object.[4] However, other popular names also indicate a perceived purpose, such as 'wishing-tree' and 'good-luck-tree', which in addition aid in making the custom more compatible with other traditions.[5] For example, when Dixon described the coin-tree on Isle Maree as 'the wishing-tree' in the 1880s, he was doing more than simply naming the structure. He was establishing a 'meaning' for it.[6]

Evidently names are flexible and arbitrary, and they can be changed depending upon who, and to whom one is speaking. As Roger Brown notes, 'each thing has many equally correct names', and these different terms are employed depending upon the situation.[7] For example, when speaking to a child, simpler and shorter names may be used, reserving longer or more specific titles for adult conversation: a 'tree' to a child may become a 'sycamore' to an adult and an 'Acer pseudoplatanus' to a botanist. Likewise, an adult may refer to a coin-tree as a 'wishing-tree' when speaking to a child, but as a 'money-tree' when conversing with a peer—or being interviewed by a researcher.

Names may be fluid, but they also have the capacity to become fixed. To refer to a coin-tree as 'a coin-tree' is to employ an adjectival name for reference, using a term at first designed to describe an object's empirical content. It is 'a coin-tree' because it is a tree with coins embedded in its bark. However, to refer to a coin-tree as '*the* coin-tree' indicates a change in context. The use of the word 'the' suggests a certain level

of establishment. As John Macnamara notes, as 'a first approximation, *the* has the force of suggesting that everyone in the conversation knows precisely what is being referred to' (emphasis in original).[8] '*The* coin-tree' refers to a specific coin-tree, one with which the speaker is familiar. 'Coin-tree' is no longer an adjective but a noun.

Again, when Dixon referred to Isle Maree's coin-tree as '*the* wishing-tree' (emphasis added), he was not only naming the structure and ascribing a purpose to it; he was also acknowledging a level of establishment.[9] Some contemporary participants have done the same. Nine people described a coin-tree as '*the* money-tree', two as '*the* pixie-tree', one as '*the* wishing-tree', and another as '*the* fairy-tree'. Not only does the use of 'the' in these contexts indicate a sense of familiarity with the structures, it also implies that the namers perceive them as individual, unique and enduring.[10]

The use of capital initials further establishes the term 'Coin-Tree' as a *proper* noun, which designates something as particular and unique.[11] When 'a coin-tree' becomes 'The Coin-Tree' it has undergone a further level of establishment. At Ingleton, Becky Falls and Bolton Abbey, for example, the main coin-trees are labelled 'The Money Tree' (see below). Such examples suggest that these particular trees have come to be perceived as established, familiar, important and unique as individual structures.

The presence of coin-tree labelling on maps, interpretation panels, and in visitor leaflets has the potential to cement names and meanings (Fig. 6.1). This process is clearly evident at Clonenagh, Co. Laois, where the coin-tree is accompanied by an information panel erected by Laois County Council. This interpretation panel clearly places the coin-tree in a Christian context, matter-of-factly linking it with St Fintan and the holy well which once stood nearby. The *Ireland* Lonely Planet guide repeats this information in its entry on Clonenagh: 'Its claim to fame is St Fintan's Tree, a large sycamore; the water that collects in the groove in one of its lower branches is said to have healing properties'. A later edition refers to the tree by St Feichin's Well as an attraction in Fore as 'the tree that will not burn', although it does note that 'the coins pressed into it are a more contemporary superstition'.[12]

Another example of this fixing of meaning is evident at Ingleton, where an interpretation panel, supported on a wooden post also embedded with coins, accompanies the main coin-tree (Fig. 6.1), which it has dubbed 'The Money Tree'. It offers the following information:

Fig. 6.1 The presence of coin-tree labelling on maps and interpretation panels (Photographs by author)

> Does money really grow on trees? Most of the coins in this tree are 2p pieces. Can you find any very old coins in the tree? Some people say pushing a coin into the tree trunk will bring you good luck.

This does not necessarily tell the reader anything they could not have decided for themselves, and yet these four short sentences have a striking effect on how people perceive and engage with the Ingleton coin-tree. They are told that this structure is called 'The Money Tree'. So while for most coin-trees an assortment of names are given, when 22 groups at Ingleton were asked what they would dub the structure, all replied a 'money-tree', with only one group embellishing it a little by naming

it the 'magic money-tree'. In fact, when one man asserted that it is a 'money-tree' and his companion asked him how he knew, he responded by pointing to the interpretation panel and answering, quite simply, 'because it says it is.'

The sentence, 'Most of the coins in this tree are 2p pieces', also greatly influences the way people participate in this custom, with several participants expressing the opinion that their coins needed to be two pence pieces. One woman, having read the panel, requested a two pence piece from her companion. When asked if it had to be that specific denomination, she replied firmly, 'yes, it says so'. The meaning of the custom has also lost some of its malleability through the printing of the words, 'Some people say pushing a coin into the tree trunk will bring you good luck'. What is a rather diffident comment is often interpreted as unequivocal fact, with participants reading the interpretation panel and then stating matter-of-factly that the custom is intended to ensure good luck. Granted, other explanations were drawn upon, such as the coin-tree having been created by a wizard. However, every participant who read the panel repeated the information written there, as if the printing of words has the power and authority to fix meaning. The custom has become almost canonical at Ingleton.

This canonisation was also evident at Becky Falls, where the primary coin-tree was similarly accompanied by an interpretation panel (described at the beginning of this chapter). According to this panel, 'local legend' avers that to avoid being eaten by a serpent, people would place a coin on the tree as a 'small toll' to the pixies, who would ensure the depositor's safe passage in exchange. When questioned about this panel, a retired member of staff at Becky Falls explained that,

> The information was given to us by a man who worked at Becky Falls when we took over and he had been involved with the site for many years. He said it was an "old tale" so we had a sign made as a bit of fun.[13]

This 'local legend' or 'old tale' may have been relayed to visitors as a 'bit of fun', but it clearly influences public interpretations of the coin-tree. Two groups called it 'the pixie-tree', three groups explained they were depositing their coins 'for the pixies', and one young girl (described above) claimed that if she and her sister successfully threw their coins onto the tree, the pixies would grant their wishes.

This book itself is equally responsible for the fixing of meaning. By simply researching and writing about coin-trees, I am constructing meaning. Firstly, I have chosen to label them 'coin-trees', which may well influence what others name them. Secondly, by choosing to research them I am declaring them a subject 'worthy' of research. This clearly has an impact on how this custom is perceived by both custodians and members of the public, who are often initially surprised by the academic attention these structures are receiving and then, as if inspired by this attention, begin to consider the custom in a different light. As already observed above, people often do not consider the custom's meaning until questioned about it. The fact that there is an academic researcher asking them about 'meaning' may lead most people to believe there must necessarily *be* a meaning.

Evidently interpretations of the coin-trees are not simply dependent upon personal inclination. They can be greatly influenced by the beliefs and assertions of others, who either incidentally or deliberately foster particular interpretations of the custom. This chapter explores this process of manipulating meaning, and begins with the illustrative case study of St Nectan's Glen, Cornwall.

Case Study: St Nectan's Glen

At the site of St Nectan's Kieve,[14] the River Trevillet, having run tranquilly through the woodland of St Nectan's Glen, becomes a sixty-foot waterfall. This cascades down into a surprisingly placid pool below, enveloped by granite cliffs and a rocky shore, which are bedecked with myriad deposits. Candles, some bearing Christian imagery, sit amidst scattered coins, hair accessories, beaded bracelets and a rubber duck. The surrounding trees are festooned with brightly coloured ribbons, frayed strips of cloth, handwritten messages, hair bobbles, jewellery, shoelaces, keyrings, pendants, a prism and a car air-freshener. One branch is tied with a lock of somebody's hair, another has a Polo mint slipped onto it. One tree—a log, propped up against a cliff-face—contains over four thousand coins, running in neat longitudinal lines with the grain of the bark: the St Nectan's Glen coin-tree.

This site is clearly a melting pot of various depositional practices, some boasting long histories—the deposition of coins, candles, hair, rags—and others entirely novel, such as the rubber duck and the Polo mint. Not only was the diversity of deposits noteworthy, so too were their

quantities. If each individual deposit signifies an individual depositor, more or less, then the material evidence of St Nectan's Glen attests to a significant and significantly diverse set of people who have considered it appropriate to deposit objects at this site.

St Nectan's Glen is privately owned, purchased in 2012 by Guy Mills and placed under the management of Lawrence 'Loz' Barker. Despite local concern that new ownership would restrict public access, Mills asserted in the *Cornish Guardian* newspaper in March 2012 his intention to keep the glen 'a place of inward reflection and self-realisation for everyone to enjoy'.[15] Most of the glen remains open to the public, while an entry fee is charged for admittance to the waterfall. To reach this, visitors must pass through a quaint tearoom and gift shop. With the proceeds contributing to the maintenance of the site, Mills stated his desire to 'achieve a balance between nature conservation, respect for beliefs and expectations of all visitors and the commercial opportunity'—a commercial opportunity which no doubt benefits from the site's saintly association. But how accurate is this association, and how much history as a ritual landscape does this site boast?

Although it is unclear when the practice of deposition first began at this site, it was probably no earlier than the 1970s. A scene in Peter Redgrove's 1975 novel *The Glass Cottage* takes place in St Nectan's Glen, to which the author devotes four pages describing the aesthetic and geological properties of in great detail.[16] He does not, however, mention any evidence of deposition at the site, and neither do any earlier sources which describe the glen.[17] The earliest known reference to the practice of deposition at St Nectan's Glen is Varner's 2002 online article 'Sacred Sites – St Nectan's Glen', and even this does not refer to coin-trees, but to deposits of rags and ribbons. Indeed, judging by a photograph of the primary coin-tree taken by a visitor in 2006, the custom of coin insertion does not appear to have been prolific in the mid-2000s, suggesting that this coin-tree does not far predate the 2000s. Contrasting the 2006 photograph with the coin-tree today, it is clear that coin density has increased greatly since the 2010s. Ritual deposition at this site does not, therefore, appear to boast much antiquity. But what about its spiritual associations?

Relatively little is known about the glen's namesake, and most of our information—accurate or not—comes from a series of (probably) twelfth-century records written anonymously at or for the church of Hartland in Devon, where St Nectan is most strongly associated. These

records recount the saint's life, telling of how he was the eldest of 24 sons and daughters of Broccannus (Welsh Brychan), a legendary prince of Brycheiniog in Wales. Having crossed the Bristol Channel, Nectan settled in a hermitage at Stoke in Hartland, which became his principal cult centre, while the church at Welcombe, Devon, was also dedicated to him. Nectan is said to have been martyred on 17 June (year unknown) when two robbers, whom he had sought to convert to Christianity, beheaded him, whereupon Nectan picked up his head and carried it back to his hermitage. His body was apparently rediscovered in the tenth or eleventh century, when it was enshrined within the church of Hartland.[18]

It would not be a stretch to claim that St Nectan, most strongly associated with Devon, crossed into Cornwall at some point in his life, and his association with St Nectan's Glen is clear. As the glen's visitor website claims, St Nectan is believed to have sited his hermitage within the glen, specifically above the waterfall, and this belief is testified to in earlier sources. In Redgrove's *The Glass Cottage*, the author describes how 'St Nectan's Hermitage' was located in the glen, and this was 'where the Cornish Saint had lived and prayed and healed'.[19] In 2008, J. Gordon Melton simply recounts the life of St Nectan in his encyclopaedia entry on the glen: 'he lived by himself and built a small church near the spring'.[20] Clearly the association between St Nectan's Glen and St Nectan, intrinsic in the name, is a primary contributing factor to perceptions of the site as ritually or spiritually significant.

However, it must be remembered that language is malleable and names are flexible. It is easy to assume that because St Nectan's Glen is now called St Nectan's Glen, it has always been known as such, but this is not necessarily the case. Neither is it necessarily the case that the site has always been associated with St Nectan. St William's Well in Ashover, Derbyshire, for example, was known as *Sir* Williams's Well in the seventeenth century; St Chad's Well in Chadwell, Essex, was simply Chawdwell in the sixteenth century; and St Tabitha's Well in Painswick, Gloucestershire, was Tony's Well under the reign of Henry VIII. These sites accrued their Christian associations during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, probably largely due to the misinterpretation of place names.[21]

Likewise, it is unlikely that St Nectan had any connection at all with the glen which bears his name, a theory strongly posited by antiquary and topographer Sidney Joseph Madge, who dedicated a monograph

to the history of the site.[22] While St Nectan was venerated in Cornwall, such as at Launceton and at Lostwithiel and Newlyn where chapels were dedicated in his honour under his alternative name St Nighton,[23] the saint's *Life* makes no mention of his having settled in Cornwall, let alone at the site concerned.

The first known reference to this site was made in the 1799 edition of Thomas Gray's *Traveller's Companion*, in which it was not described as 'St Nectan's Glen', but as 'Nathan's Cave'.[24] 'Cave' may have been a misunderstanding, or variant spelling, of the Cornish term 'kieve', which refers to the bowl-shaped basin at the foot of the waterfall. As for 'Nathan', Madge believes that this name may simply have been connected to two graves in the nearby churchyard of Tintagel: Nathan Williams, 1712, and Nathan Cock, 1762.[25] Perhaps these were figures of prominence in the area, or had been named after one. Either way, in the absence of a local saint by the name of Nathan, it seems likely that the glen's early name was entirely secular.[26] Evidently it did not remain so. However, there was no one point at which the site's name shifted abruptly from 'Nathan's Cave' to 'St Nectan's Kieve'. Rather, it underwent various changes before reaching its current incarnation, and this chain of re-articulations is most illustratively presented in the work of poet Robert Stephen Hawker.

Hawker was a nineteenth-century poet, vicar and antiquarian, born in Plymouth in 1803. He lived most of his life in Cornwall, as vicar of Morwenstow, and is so well known in the county that the stretch of coastline on which he lived is referred to locally as 'Hawker Country'.[27] His poetry reflects a great interest in the history of his home county and the legends attached to it, and in the preface to his collection of poems, *Records of the Western Shore*, he writes:

> The simple legends connected with the wild and singular scenery of my own County, appear to me not undeserving of record. These, which I have published were related to me, in the course of my solitary ramblings in the West they were 'done into verse' also, during these my walks and rides…[28]

Hawker was particularly attracted to stories concerning local saints, of which there were myriad.[29] In Hawker's poem 'The Cornish Fathers', the poet observes that these saints 'had their lodges in the wilderness, / Or built their cells beside the shadowy sea; And there they dwelt with angels like a dream'.[30] According to Hawker, Nectan was one

such saint, dwelling above a waterfall in a wooded glen near Tintagel. Hawker had previously described the structure that he would later associate with Nectan as 'four walls matted with ivy and overgrown by gorse' situated on 'the brink of the rock from whence the stream leaps into the glen below'.[31] This is undoubtedly a description of the modern-day St Nectan's Glen. It is unsurprising that Hawker should have been familiar with this site, a mere 30 or so miles away from his parish in Morwenstow. It was and still is a place of natural beauty, and appears to have been admired for this in Hawker's time.[32]

Unsurprisingly, Hawker was inspired to pen a poem about the site—inspired, no doubt, by the beauty of the waterfall and nearby ruins, but also, purportedly, by the folklore already attached to them. In 1864, Hawker wrote that there was 'a local legend linked with this ruined abode, which was told me on the Spot'; a local legend, relayed to him by an 'Old Man' who had, in turn, been told it by 'his Grandsire dead'. Hawker claims to have reproduced this legend, this snippet of local folklore, in the poem he published in 1832. This poem, entitled 'The Sisters of the Glen', recounts the tale of two 'ancient' sisters, who mysteriously appeared one day in the glen, their origins unknown. 'Their speech was not in Cornish phrase', reports Hawker; 'Their garb had marks of loftier days'. They lived in the glen in the 'reliques of a human cell' until they died, the mystery of who they were and where they had come from left unresolved.[33]

In the first edition of this poem Hawker begins by describing the glen, and his opening line reads, 'It is from *Nathan's* mossy steep…' (emphasis added).[34] This is in keeping with Gray's secular designation of the site as 'Nathan's Cave'.[35] However, in another publication of the same year, the site was being given saintly associations; in their *Cornwall Illustrated*, John Allom Britton and Edward Wedlake Brayley referred to it as 'St Knighton's Kieve'.[36] Knighton is probably an alternative spelling to Nighton, a name which was interchangeable with St Nectan.[37] So by the time Hawker was publishing his poem, the glen was already associated with St Nectan.

Three years later Letitia Elizabeth Landon published a poem entitled 'St Knighton's Kieve'.[38] In this, the kieve is the site of a 'gloomy well' which contains magical treasure in the form of a 'golden cup' carved by the fairies. Seven years after this, a painting by Irish artist Daniel Maclise showing a girl standing at a waterfall was entitled *Waterfall at St Nighton's Kieve, near Tintagel* (1842).[39]

It did not take Hawker long to adopt this saintly association, albeit drawing on a different saint. When he republished his poem fourteen years after the original in *Echoes from Old Cornwall*,[40] the title had been altered to 'The Sisters of Glen-Neot'. The glen's name had thus been changed to foster an association with the ninth-century St Neot, said to have been a monk of Glastonbury Abbey who, seeking a life of solitude, later lived in a hermitage in Cornwall[41]—presumably, in Hawker's belief, in the 'human cell' later inhabited by the sisters of his poem. The opening line of this slightly altered poem thus reads, 'It is from *Neot's* sainted steep…' (emphasis added).[42]

The site did not retain its link with St Neot for long. In Hawker's 1864 reprint of the poem, the glen's name had been changed once more, referring back to the site's earlier association with Nighton/Knighton: the poem, now entitled 'Saint Nectan's Kieve', opened with, 'It is from *Nectan's* mossy Steep…' (emphasis added).[43] Hawker claims, in his accompanying note to the 1864 version of the poem, that the waterfall 'has borne for Ten Centuries the Name of St Nectan's Kieve'.[44] An ironic statement considering that a mere eighteen years before he had referred to it as 'Glen-Neot'.[45]

Over a period of 32 years, therefore, both the name of the glen and its saintly associations had changed: from Nathan, to St Knighton, to St Neot, to St Nectan. While this process of change was not exclusively the result of Hawker's poem, his work no doubt contributed to the site's association with St Nectan, which appears to have been accepted by the latter half of the nineteenth century. In Robert Hunt's *Popular Romances of the West of England*, for example, the site is described as 'St Nectan's Kieve'—although Hunt does acknowledge in a footnote that it is 'called indifferently Nectan, Nighton or Knighton's Kieve'.[46] However, by 1882 it was named only as 'St Nectan's Kieve' in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's novel *Mount Royal*, and has continued to be referred to as such throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.[47]

Was this final transferral to St Nectan precipitated by Hawker? Hawker himself admitted to some poetic licence, claiming in the note to the latest version of his poem in *Cornish Ballads*: 'I invented it myself'.[48] His adaptation may have stemmed from a change in personal circumstance. While penning the first two versions of this poem, Hawker had been the vicar of Morwenstow, but in 1851 he was given also the parish of Welcombe, just over the county border into Devon. Interestingly Hawker's new church was dedicated to St Nectan, purportedly because

the saint was said to have lived in a cell on the site of the church,[49] but more likely because Welcombe was a daughter church of Hartland, St Nectan's cult centre. Was Hawker's adaptation of the glen's name, therefore, a result of the poet's newly acquired parish?

St Nectan's hermitage, widely accredited to have been built above the waterfall, appears to have been as romanticised over time as the glen itself. Despite Hawker having described it in 1832 as simply 'four walls matted with ivy and overgrown with gorse',[50] he ascribes it Christian origins in his 1864 edition: 'the outline of an Oratory, or the Reliques of a Hermitage'.[51] Already in 1842 Cyrus Redding had described the structure as 'four walls covered with vegetation, the roofless remnant of the abode of some hermit in times gone by, who resided there to pray for the souls of shipwrecked mariners'.[52] While in 1865, Hunt was describing the structure as 'the little chapel of the good St Nectan',[53] suggesting that it had been associated with the saint for some time, whether as a result of Hawker's poetry or not.

Baring-Gould and Fisher, in their *Lives of British Saints*, are wary of using Hawker as a source in their entry on St Nectan—'Mr. Hawker was a man of lively imagination, and the story may be merely *ben trovato*'—but they still accept without question that the structure above the waterfall was connected with St Nectan: 'S. Nighton's (Nectan's) Kieve is a waterfall at Trethevy where was his chapel'.[54] Later works continue to make this connection between structure and saint. Janet and Colin Bord, for example, claim that Nectan 'lived in a sanctuary above the waterfall'.[55]

Madge, however, posits a much more secular purpose for this structure, which he notes 'had no ancient and, above all, no ecclesiastical features'. He claims instead that the structure was an eighteenth-century grotto or pleasure-house built by the owners of the Trevillet estate.[56] Indeed, the earliest known reference to this structure, Charles Sandoe Gilbert's 1820 *Historical Survey of the County of Cornwall*, describes it as 'the remains of a small temple, or summer-house, erected most probably, by the family of Wood [owners of the Trevillet estate]. It measures twenty feet six inches by twelve feet, and has one window'.[57] He then describes the 'gratifying perspective' provided by this window, overlooking the glen, which would probably explain the motives behind building a summer house at that particular site.

This would not necessarily invalidate the structure's classification as a 'hermitage'. There was an eighteenth-century trend for the grounds

of an estate to house an ornamental and secular hermitage, designed for seclusion and ideally accommodating a resident hermit.[58] The structure in St Nectan's Glen may well, therefore, have been classed as a hermitage. That it was once the hermitage of St Nectan however is very unlikely. However, the probable secular origins of this structure appear to be little known. Even the public body Historic England, which cares for England's historic environment, seems to have accepted this tradition. On their website *PastScape*, which catalogues England's archaeological and architectural heritage, there is an entry for the site of this structure (Monument No. 431919), which it describes as the 'alleged site of the Medieval chapel of St Nectan'.[59]

Madge asserts that Hawker 'laid the foundation for all the "legends" that have kept poets, guides and tourists busy ever since'.[60] While this is not entirely true—the site's association with St Nighton or St Nectan appears to predate Hawker's work—the poet did play a part, alongside other such cultural figures as Landon, Maclise and Braddon, in perpetuating and probably precipitating this gradual conversion of the site's namesake from an unknown Nathan to a Christian saint, and its eighteenth-century summer house into a hermit's cell. The site's connection with St Nectan is based less on historical fact than on the imaginations of poets, writers and artists exercising their creative licences. Despite this, however, the saint is central to the site's current commercial identity.

On their website, the owners of the glen recount the belief that St Nectan had built his hermitage there, and in the 'Your Views' section, site manager Barker assures visitors that they will be 'astounded by the natural beauty and amazing feeling given off by the sacred energy of the waterfall'. This does appear to be the case, judging by many of the visitors' online comments.[61] These are claims that have clearly led visitors to view the glen as a 'sacred' or 'magical' site. One woman asserted that 'you can't come to a place like this and not leave your mark', while another woman compared the insertion of a coin into the coin-tree to 'leaving a part of yourself in a sacred place, like lighting a candle in a church'. The words 'sacred' and 'spiritual' featured heavily, one visitor from Spain describing the glen as a 'sacred place'; another visitor, a 'beautiful, spiritual place'; while another described it as 'really special', explaining that she is not ordinarily 'spiritual', but 'it's easy to get carried away in a place like this'. Site management is maintaining a narrative that imbues this landscape with a greater historical and spiritual significance

than reality may support—a significance that will appeal to the public (see Chapter 3) and draw more (paying) visitors.

Manipulating Meaning

The case study of St Nectan's Glen demonstrates that interpretations of the coin-trees are not simply dependent upon personal inclination. They can be greatly influenced by the beliefs and assertions of others—even others such as poets who visited the site nearly 200 years ago. However, more often it is the beliefs and assertions of others *today* that colour people's interpretations. In some cases, for example, the coin-tree custodians publicly offer their own interpretations, sometimes presenting them as fact. These interpretations draw on analogies not only with established traditions, but with traditions specific to that geographic location. There is usually one common motivation behind this: tourism.

As folklorist Venetia Newall observes, often what we perceive as a continuation of a tradition actually proves to be a 'deliberately inserted renaissance'. Customs which may appear old are, in many instances, actually the result of recent and conscious invention.[62] Christmas carols, national anthems, the clan tartans of Scotland, the ravens at the Tower of London: these are all 'invented traditions',[63] and folk customs are subject to a similar ambiguity of 'authenticity'. Their malleability, so vital to their survival, consequently makes them all the more susceptible to appropriation, modification and recontextualisation, often for commercial reasons.

With landscapes being intrinsically connected to the identity of a place, it is unsurprising that they are so often drawn upon in tourism as a resource to display that identity.[64] However, landscapes are not static. They can be constructed and reconstituted to support tourism.[65] The folklore of a landscape—such as the custom of the coin-tree—is suitably pliable for this function, and can easily be adapted or manipulated for commercial reasons.

Numerous scholars have examined how tourism has impacted and modified folk traditions worldwide. John Creighton, for example, considers the impact 'nostalgia tourism' has on the folk traditions of Japan. Gabriela Muri, focusing on a tourist attraction in the Montafon valley, Austria, considers how central tourism is to the process of imparting and interpreting folk traditions. Whilst Helaine Silverman studies how archaeological tourism has influenced contemporary constructions of

history and traditions in Peru.[66] Britain likewise draws on local legends for the sake of tourism. In 1975 the British Tourist Authority produced an information sheet listing the haunted hotels and inns of England and Wales,[67] whilst the *Dungeon* tours of Edinburgh, London, Blackpool and York recount local horror stories, offering tourists the 'ultimate thrill-filled journey through [the city's] murky past - perfect for a day out with your mates!'.[68] These are all examples of the conscious reutilisation of folklore and the deliberate adaptation of tradition, a phenomenon employed most often for commercial purposes. Coin-trees have been similarly utilised.

In some instances, coin-trees are simply presented as features of interest at tourist sites. At Aira Force a 'Money Tree' is pinpointed on the map displayed at the start of the route, and included in its key, just as 'money trees' are labelled on the map given to visitors at Becky Falls. Similarly, a photograph of a young girl studying a coin-tree features in the Bolton Abbey visitors leaflet, accompanied by a brief entry which reads: 'Money Tree: Can you begin to guess how many pennies there are?' (Fig. 6.1). And on the Bolton Abbey website, 'The Money Tree' is listed amongst the site's 'highlights':

> Follow the path from the stepping stones bridge up stream through the woodland. Along this path you will pass three fallen trees all laden with coins. Who pushed the coins in the tree and how did they do it? Can you pull them out?[69]

In the National Trust online magazine, *Things to see and do in South Lakes*, there is a brief reference to 'the "money tree"' at Tarn Hows in the 'Look out for…' section, alongside views of the Coniston Fells and Belted Galloway cattle.[70] Photographs of coin-trees are displayed on tourist websites for Isle Maree, Ardmaddy and St Nectan's Glen—indeed, when I visited the latter, I was asked by the manager to upload some of my photographs onto their website. These are all examples of coin-trees being presented as features of interest or tourist attractions.

However, other examples demonstrate overt contextualisation of the coin-trees, with site managers and landowners sharing their own interpretations of the custom. The Malham tourism website for example presents a photograph of a coin-tree alongside the description: 'On the footpath to Janet's Foss a couple of tree stumps have become home to hundred's [sic] of lucky pennies, add a coin and make a wish with Jennet

the queen of the fairies…'.[71] As detailed in Chapter 3, in the Yorkshire Dales National Park magazine, *The Visitor*, an article describes the Malham coin-trees: 'People have hammered copper coins into this dead tree trunk near Janet's Foss waterfall for good luck for many years, and if you look closely you may find some very old pennies'.[72] Can this really be the case when the custom is estimated to have only begun in Malham in the late 1990s or early 2000s?[73] Similar levels of interpretation are presented on panels accompanying coin-trees at Ingleton and Becky Falls, the latter referencing a 'local legend'—despite the Becky Falls coin-tree being estimated to have begun no earlier than 2008.

As described in Chapter 2, the Clonenagh coin-tree, Co. Laois, is accompanied by an interpretation panel detailing the history of the tree: 'A well which also venerated the Saint was nearby. When the well was closed, a spring appeared in the fork of the tree and became the focal point for "patterns" (celebrations on the Saint's feast day) for many years'. This information was repeated in the 2009 *Ireland* Lonely Planet guide: 'Today, the local place of pilgrimage is the 6th-century monastery of St Fintan at Clonenagh…Its claim to fame is St Fintan's Tree, a large sycamore; the water that collects in the groove in one of its lower branches is said to have healing properties'.[74]

At Portmeirion, an article from *Wales Online*, entitled 'Putting coins in trees rooted in superstition', is displayed in the lodge where visitors pay their entrance fees. It quotes estate manager Meurig Jones as claiming that 'an old tradition…says that any illness you are suffering will leave you when you force money into wood'.[75] When tourists enquire about the coin-trees, they are shown a printed copy of the article. While at High Force, information on the coin-tree presented on the site's *Facebook* page, explored in Chapter 3, claims that 'Visitors push money into the bark of the tree that fell in a storm for good luck. Apparently it's an old Yorkshire custom'.[76]

The Coin-Tree as Fakelore?

Some of these interpretations clearly have less historical basis than others. They would probably fall under the category of 'invented tradition', and eminent American folklorist Richard Dorson would have viewed them with a suspicious eye. In 1950, Dorson lamented that the study of folklore 'has been falsified, abused and exploited and the public deluded with Paul Bunyan nonsense and claptrap collections'. Aiming to establish

folklore as an academic and scientific discipline in North America, he wanted to differentiate 'authentic' folklore from 'the presentation of spurious and synthetic writings under the claim that they are genuine folklore', and so he coined the neologism 'fake lore'—later 'fakelore'.[77] In Dorson's opinion, folklore is that which is transmitted orally; fakelore, in print. Would the written interpretations of coin-trees constitute fakelore then? From Dorson's perspective, yes. However, scholarship has long since moved beyond this view.

It is recognised now that oral traditions and the written word have been intertwined throughout much of human history, and it is unhelpful—maybe even impossible—to study the two in isolation.[78] Just as spoken folklore frequently becomes penned, the reverse can occur. A tale, legend or custom can be written down and then take on a life of its own, changing and adapting as people begin communicating it in diverse ways. A folk custom does not need centuries of exclusively oral transmission behind it in order to be an authentic folk custom.

Furthermore, the tactical adaptation of folklore is not regarded in modern-day scholarship as a necessarily negative process. Folklorists acknowledge that folk 'traditions' are fluid and malleable, and that the employment and adaptation of folk customs for commercial reasons can, and often does, have positive effects. Bendix asserts that changes are not made to traditions only in order to encourage tourism, but to maintain the traditions which are at threat *because of* tourism. Expressing a similar sentiment, Muri, in her consideration of tourism's impact on Austrian folk traditions, advocates that mass media has 'been instrumental in preserving traditions'. While Creighton, in her study of the marketing of tradition in the Japanese travel industry, asserts that in some cases tourism has provided Japanese villages with the economic means to remain intact and retain their traditions. 'One may bemoan the loss of tradition to commercialisation,' she writes, '…but in some cases these forces have also brought about the means to keep traditions bemoaned as lost from disappearing altogether'.[79]

The coin-tree custom may similarly benefit from economically motivated adaptations. If members of the public are more likely to be interested in a coin-tree if they believe it to be associated with local legends and traditions, or to be older than it is, then these fostered interpretations will probably incite their participation, and thus contribute to the continuation of the custom.

Landscape Traditions

The harnessing of a site or landscape's established traditions in the interpretation of a coin-tree custom is not always actively fostered by the coin-tree custodians. It can also be an organic process instigated by the participants themselves. It has already been demonstrated that the coin-tree custom has been adapted to time, its 'meanings' modernised. The custom has not, however, only been subject to temporal acclimatisation, but to geographic adaptation also, location greatly influencing how people view and treat the coin-trees.

Place names are one significant factor. As was discussed above, names are highly instrumental in colouring people's perceptions of a place, thing or practice, and this is clearly evident when the name of a coin-tree site fosters an association with local legend. The Malham coin-trees, for example, are located along a trail which passes Janet's Foss, a waterfall which, according to local legend, is the home of the queen of the fairies, Janet or Jennet. Consequently at Malham five groups of visitors—all of whom claimed to have not read about the coin-trees, and had therefore not been influenced by commercial adaptation of local folklore—referred to 'fairies' whilst discussing the custom. One father told his son that, by inserting a coin, you are 'making a wish to the fairies'; a grandfather told his grandchildren the same. One man, impatient to be on his way after his companion had inserted a coin, said, 'come on, we're losing time watching the fairies', whilst a woman told her companion that people insert coins to make wishes to 'Janet, the fairy queen'. To this her companion sceptically replied, 'the queen of the fairies is called *Janet*?'

Fairy Glen on the Black Isle is another example of the name of a site influencing participants' interpretations of the coin-tree custom. One mother assured her two children that if they inserted a coin the fairies of the glen would grant their wishes, while another woman opined that the custom was about 'making wishes, especially with it being called *Fairy* Glen'. The perceived history of an area can also impact personal interpretations. One woman, for instance, described how she had originally regarded the custom as pagan, believing the Black Isle, an area 'full of myths and legends', to have a long history of witchcraft.

The physical environment of the coin-tree can also influence perceptions of the custom. At Snowdon, for example, three groups referred, with varying levels of earnestness, to their safety on the mountain as a central aspect of the custom. One man from Australia jokingly queried

if the coins are deposited as 'an offering to the mountain gods'; a young girl claimed that coins are inserted to ensure the climber's safety; whilst a male student from UCL suggested that people participate as a 'celebration for surviving the climb; a kind of "thank you, mountain"'. This notion is comparative with cairn building: the deposition of a stone onto a cairn in mountainous areas for good luck on the climb, and it is notable that several such cairns were located on the same route up Snowdon.

Alternatively, at Gougane Barra, participants drew on the Christian nature of the site, with one person theorising that the deposition of a coin was 'a way of making an offering to the saint of a place'. Another opined that the custom was 'like putting money in collection at church'. At Portmeirion, on the other hand, the architectural heritage of the site—an Italian-styled village-cum-holiday resort built between 1925 and 1975—resulted in more secular interpretations, with one man suggesting that the town's architect, Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, had created the coin-tree and a woman querying if it was an art project. Likewise at Grizedale, Cumbria, where many sculptures adorn the woodland, several people believed that the coin-trees were simply more official pieces of art.

Conclusion

As this and the previous chapter have demonstrated, the very nature of coin-trees, as unofficial and enigmatic structures often stumbled upon by chance, encourages great variation in the *why* of participation. How an individual interprets a coin-tree can be dependent upon a number of personal factors: who they are with, their age, their personality and emotional mood, and at what stage in their life they encounter a coin-tree. This custom has been shown to have not one 'meaning', but a myriad.

However, meaning can also become manipulated. Establishing a name is one method, from the neutral 'coin-tree' to the suggestive 'wishing-tree', from the objective 'money-tree' to the subjectively dubbed 'St Fintan's Tree'. These names not only evince how people view coin-trees; they also influence it. Interpretations of coin-trees can therefore be greatly coloured by the beliefs and assertions of others, who either incidentally or deliberately, for a variety of reasons, foster particular narratives around the custom. Returning to St Nectan's Glen, this 'sacred' site was shown to be an artificial construction, sparked by the malleability of folklore and precipitated by the imagination of a local writer exercising

his poetic licence and, later, commercialisation. Elsewhere, interpretation panels and visitor leaflets have the same affect.

This susceptibility to manipulation reveals much about the coin-tree custom: its propensity for adaptation, its situational element and its inherent malleability. Not even the apparent cementing of name and meaning in an interpretation panel is permanent. Those panels will not last forever. They, like the landscape, are palimpsests upon which various layers of meaning will be inscribed over time. And this elucidates much about the nature of folklore itself, which, despite being presented in the past as fixed and immutable, is often by necessity quite the opposite. Does this make the contemporary coin-tree custom an example of fakelore? Dorson probably would have thought so, but this denies the very nature of folklore as a malleable and multivocal entity.

Notes

1. Derrida, J. 1995. *On the Name*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, p. 89.
2. Pearce describes the name as a 'medium for the communication of information' (Pearce, S. M. 1992. *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*. Leicester and London, Leicester University Press, p. 123).
3. Lindsay, P. H. and Norman, D. A. 1972. *Human Information Processing: An Introduction to Psychology*. New York and London, Academic Press, p. 438.
4. As Soames writes, words 'stand for objects and the properties we take them to have…What it is for language to be meaningful is for it to have this representational capacity' (Soames, S. 2005. *Reference and Description: The Case Against Two-Dimensionalism*. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, p. 7).
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25. Madge, *The "Chapel," Kieve and Gorge of "Saint Nectan," Trevillet Millcombe, Tintagel*, p. 32.
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31. Hawker, *Records of the Western Shore*, p. 31.
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with admiration and delight…The beauty and solemnity of this charming cascade, is greatly heightened by the solitude of the situation, the grandeur of the rocks, and the numerous wild plants, which shoot out their foliage from the opening fissures.' (Gilbert, *An Historical Survey of the County of Cornwall*, pp. 586–587.)

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CHAPTER 7

Green Monuments and Their Heritage

It's a dry, mild Thursday in June and I'm at the site of the Brock Bottom coin-tree, Lancashire. I've arranged to meet Greg Robinson, a Countryside Ranger for the Wyre Council who patrols the area, in the visitors' car park. Greg greets me enthusiastically, eager to show me the coin-tree. He leads me down to the River Brock, where we follow a narrow but well-maintained path through the forest. He's curious about my project and as we walk asks questions about the coin-tree custom: he wants to know about other sites and where this custom originated. Apparently he's been asked these questions by visitors in the past, but is never sure what to tell them.

It's an easy walk, flat but a little muddy, and we follow the river for just over five minutes before reaching the coin-tree. I fail to notice it at first. The log itself is large and easily visible, its northern end jutting out onto the path, but not quite enough coins have been inserted to make it immediately noticeable. Greg leads me to it, declaring, "Here it is," with the gusto of a proud custodian, before proceeding to point out the features he finds most interesting. He notes the numerous examples of graffiti scratched into the tree's bark, predominantly people's initials and remarks on the number of coins that have been bent over during insertion, querying if this was incidental or an aspect of the custom itself. He asks if other coin-trees are similar.

Greg can't stay with me for long. A secondary school class are coming for a fieldtrip and he has to prepare for a lesson on how the forest has been affected by human activities. He notes that the coin-tree would be a perfect example of this, and he warns me that they'll be stopping to look at it. Soon

C. Houlbrook, *The Magic of Coin-Trees from Religion to Recreation*,
Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75517-5_7

enough, 30 or so students are led around the corner by their teacher, who points out the coin-tree. One girl asks, nonplussed, why anybody would want to put their money into a tree, while a group of boys quip about dragging it to a bank and depositing the coins. As the group moves away, one boy sits on the coin-tree and imitates riding a horse.

When asked his personal opinion of the custom, Greg replies that it "seems a fun idea", and adds that, over time, as the coin-tree becomes older and certain coins drop out of service, it will become even more interesting. Visitors apparently stop to examine the different coins, looking for pre-decimal examples. "It has created a bit of an attraction," Greg remarks. However, as far as he's aware, Wyre Council have not advertised the coin-tree as an attraction in any form, and while he doesn't believe that the custom should be discouraged, neither does he think that measures should be taken for its protection. He stresses the interactive nature of the coin-tree as its most important feature, claiming that, "It's there for people to sit on and clamber about on. It will eventually rot away," he adds with a regretful shrug. "But not for many years."

The Mortality of the Coin-Tree

So far, this book has been concerned with coin-trees in the past and present tenses. It has considered the historical customs and beliefs which may have led to the coin-tree custom, and it has examined how the practice has manifested itself in the present day; how people interpret and engage with these contemporary structures. For a fuller contextualisation, the tense shifts in this chapter and the focus turns instead to the coin-trees' future.

Wood is perishable.[1] This may seem an obvious point but it is a fact frequently forgotten. Trees appear to be such permanent features in our landscapes that we often overlook their mortality, but all trees eventually succumb to gravity, and their remains—stumps, logs, branches—are equally susceptible to the ill effects of the passing of time. They decay, losing mass through respiration, leaching, and fragmentation, until there is little remaining of them.[2] Indeed, this process has already reached a later stage in some of the coin-trees, which may be little more than fragments of woody debris within the next few years.

Some coin-trees will last longer than others. This is a simple fact based on current age, physical condition, size, species, location and density of coinage. Obviously those which are living trees will have a longer life expectancy than logs, stumps or fragments and certain species will outlive others. The coined Douglas fir at Cragside Estate, for example, will likely

survive to see the passing of another century, as might the coined oaks, sycamores, Scot's pines, hollies and limes at Clonenagh, Gougane Barra, Isle Maree, Marbury Park and High Force. However, storms, diseases and human intervention may all prematurely shorten a tree's expected lifespan. Also, living trees only account for a minority of coin-trees. The most common form is the log, and the survival of (non-living) wood over long periods of time is rare.[3]

Although the decomposition of the coin-trees is inevitable, it cannot be predicted with any certainty how long the process will take. Many variables influence the rate of decay. Size is one significant variable; the larger the log, the longer it will last, and the species of a tree can also determine how susceptible it is to rot and decay.[4] Studies conducted by Mattson et al. suggest that the density loss of logs, caused by decay, varied by more than 10-fold among tree species. However, a study by Swift et al. demonstrates that weight loss varied more considerably between individual branches than they did, overall, between species.[5]

Numerous factors cause this variety. A higher percentage of heartwood in the bole causes slower rates of decay. Logs in plots with south and east aspects have a higher rate of decay than those with west aspects. Certain organisms will cause decay at a faster rate than others. Branches and boles on the ground have a faster rate than those off the ground.[6] The quantity of coins may also determine the speed of decay. Boles with damaged or absent barks, which can be caused by the insertion of many coins, will decay far more rapidly than boles with their barks intact. Heavily coined coin-trees may therefore decompose at a faster rate than those with fewer coins. However, as situational and unpredictable as the rates of decay are, it appears inevitable that the majority of coin-trees will have deteriorated by the next century.

The coin-trees, however, are not only threatened by the natural processes of the passage of time, but by human activity. The freedom to interact with these structures may be the basis of their appeal (see Chapter 4), but it also threatens their longevity. Actions such as touching, sitting on and climbing over the coin-trees may seem harmless, but they can cause erosion and damage, as well as eliciting fears from the coin-tree custodians who are anxious to ensure their visitors' safety. The coin-tree log at Freeholders Wood, Yorkshire, for example, was removed by the forest rangers in c.2006 because, as Phillip Hibbs, Trees and Woodlands Officer, notes, 'it was in a dangerous condition (and people were climbing higher and higher up the tree to knock in the coins)'.[7]

Elsewhere, damage and destruction through human intervention is even more explicit. At High Force, County Durham, the primary coin-tree was destroyed in early 2012, and by the time fieldwork was conducted on the site in September 2012 there was nothing left of the coin-tree bar fragmented woody debris. Steve Gillard, Visitor Attraction Manager for High Force, however, does not believe that the coin-tree's disappearance was the result of natural causes: 'The coins disappeared, so I presume the visitors took them. I am under the impression that the destruction of the branch had some human intervention, which is a great shame'.[8]

Similar events occurred at Clonenagh, Co. Laois, where little remains of the original coin-tree bar a coin-less fragment, a scattering of woody debris and five coins distributed on the ground close to the present coin-tree. Considering how prolifically the original tree had been coined, it appears that a high volume of coins have been removed from the site. Likewise at Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Aberystwyth, the young coin-tree has been left bare by people prying out all of the coins (Fig. 7.1).[9] At Hardcastle Crags, Yorkshire, this was taken one step further. Andrew Marsh, National Trust Warden, describes how the site's main coin-tree 'was stolen a couple of years ago by some adventurous types who dragged it across the river and up a very steep bank (I hope it was worth the effort)'.[10]

Fig. 7.1 Left: The coin-tree at Bwlch Nant yr Arian, Aberystwyth, January 2017 (Photograph courtesy of Sarah Perry); Right: The coin-tree in July 2017 (Photograph by author)

Special trees have been subject to such treatment for centuries. During the early modern period, mementoes were taken in the form of broken off boughs, leaves, bark and slips for replanting, by pilgrims to trees of cultural, religious and historical significance. Trees such as the Glastonbury Thorn, the hawthorn which supposedly grew from Joseph of Arimathea's staff when he visited Glastonbury with the Holy Grail; the Boscobel Oak, under which Charles II hid from his enemies; and the mulberry tree in Stratford-upon-Avon linked with William Shakespeare. Visitors to these sites were also known to carve their initials into the trees, with evidence from the seventeenth century indicating that the Glastonbury Thorn for example was by that time covered in graffiti.[11] It appears that the desire to leave one's mark, as discussed in Chapter 4, did not emerge only in recent years; special trees have long suffered from the attention of pilgrims, as coin-trees do today.

Despite the obvious vulnerability of these structures, few measures have been taken to ensure their preservation and, judging by engagements with their custodians, no plans are in the pipeline to slow the rates of decay or prevent damage caused by visitors. The Ardmaddy coin-tree, Argyll, which is the focus of the concluding chapter, is the only coin-tree to be protected within a wooden enclosure (Fig. 7.2), but the fence was erected to deter cattle rather than people, who can still access the coin-tree via a stile.

On the whole, the coin-tree custodians exhibit rather resigned attitudes towards the eventual destruction of the coin-trees, believing it to be inevitable. Ranger Greg Robinson (see above) admitted that the coin-tree at Brock Bottom 'will eventually rot away, but not for many years', an opinion shared by Graeme McVittie, Woodland Officer of Tarr Steps, who sees no point in protecting the coin-trees in his custodianship because they will 'decay over time'.[12] Likewise, one visitor in Cumbria opined that 'there's no point protecting it; you can't stop the tree from decaying. It's just the cycle of life'.

However, some heritage professionals have exhibited concern over the protection and preservation of coin-trees. An external affairs consultant working for the National Trust informed me that the main coin-tree at Aira Force has been 'raising some interesting questions in terms of management and protection'.[13] Whilst the Director of Kilmartin House Museum was enthusiastic about my recording of the Ardmaddy coin-tree: 'we have been quite concerned about the tree and the deposits in and around it as it slowly dies. It's a very well loved tree'.[14] Evidently the preservation of these structures is a concern for some.

Fig. 7.2 The Ardmaddy coin-tree, Argyll, Scotland, protected from cattle within a wooden enclosure, accessible to people via a stile (Photograph by author)

This division of opinion leads to the question of whether the eventual destruction or disappearance of the coin-trees should be accepted as inevitable, or should we be actors rather than witnesses; actors with the opportunity or even obligation to implement and promote preservation practices? The answers to these questions are not clear-cut, dependent as they are upon a number of factors, not least how *effective* preservation attempts might prove to be. However, the foremost determinant is whether coin-trees are considered 'worthy' of protection.

Green Monuments

In Britain and Ireland, just as trees have a long history of being damaged by the zeal of pilgrims, as noted above, they also have a long history of being valued and protected.[15] The Royal Oak at Boscobel, Shropshire, is a case in point. According to tradition, it was in this tree that Charles II hid during his flight from the Battle of Worcester in 1651. Immediately

following Charles' Restoration in 1660, the tree was dubbed the Royal Oak and began to be celebrated as a symbol of the monarch's defiance and delivery, hence the celebration of Oak Apple Day. It was honoured in John Wade's 1660 poem 'The Royal Oak':

> These two wandred into a Wood
> Where a hollow Oak there stood,
> And for his precious lives dear sake
> Did of that Oak his palace make…[16]

The seventeenth century saw a plethora of visitors to this tree, many of whom took away souvenirs by hacking off boughs, and by 1680 the owners of Boscobel, the Fitzherberts, were forced to build a brick wall around it for protection. Regardless of this, the oak died in the early 1700s and a young offshoot was adopted as its successor. In 1817 the brick wall was replaced by tall iron railings, which are still in place today, but while these can deter souvenir hunters, they could not protect against the elements. In October 2000, under the guardianship of English Heritage, the Royal Oak was struck by lightning; a large section was torn off and a rotten core revealed. English Heritage ploughed much into the tree's recovery, undertaking successful remedial tree surgery. Today it remains healthy and protected within its iron fence.[17]

Many other trees in Britain and Ireland are today being venerated and safeguarded by their local communities and heritage organisations. For example, the most recent 'incarnation' of the Glastonbury Thorn is today protected behind a fence (Fig. 7.3, see below), while the Arbor Tree, described in Chapter 3, was vehemently protected in the 1970s by the local population when it was declared a traffic obstruction and threatened with removal.[18]

The Major Oak of Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire, is another example (Fig. 7.4). Since antiquarian Major Hayman Rooke commented in the eighteenth century that this oak was so large and so old that it could have been there at the time of Robin Hood, this tree has been dubbed the Major Oak and has been, both romantically and commercially, associated with the legendary figure of Robin Hood.[19] Although both its size and age probably discredit the theory, the Major Oak became the historic hideout of the outlaw in popular belief, and from the nineteenth century onwards, it was established as a national attraction, a feature on postcards, an effective tourist hook and later as a corporate symbol of Nottinghamshire County Council.[20]

Fig. 7.3 The Glastonbury Thorn, Somerset, protected within a metal enclosure (Photograph by author)

Fig. 7.4 The Major Oak of Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire, propped up for longevity and fenced off for protection (Photograph by author)

While the interpretation panels set up in Sherwood Forest acknowledge that this tree would not have been the original oak of Robin Hood, the council and the forest reserve continue to implicitly connect the Major Oak with the legendary outlaw. The annual Robin Hood Festival, for instance, hosts recreations of the battle between the hero of the tales and the Sheriff of Nottingham at the site of the tree, along with lessons in longbow archery. This is a prime example of an 'invented tradition', as explored in Chapter 6. However, regardless of whether the Major Oak's association with Robin Hood constitutes 'fakelore', as an undoubted economically motivated adaptation, the tree is no less culturally significant. And with cultural significance comes protection. Hence the erection of a wooden fence around the tree in 1976; the use of telegraph poles and later metal props to support the aged boughs;

the daily monitoring of the tree by the forest rangers; and the external arboricultural specialist survey conducted every 18 months. In 2015 the forest reserve commissioned Forest Research to conduct soil and foliage samples; the subsequent report was acted on in 2017, when the top 10 cm of soil was removed to increase the penetration of nutrients to the roots.[21] This tree is clearly considered a monument worthy of preservation.

Likewise in Wales, the inhabitants of Carmarthen have carefully preserved an old oak stump in concrete and enclosed it behind railings for protection, local legend asserting that 'when the oak falls down, then sink the town', and there was great concern when plans to improve Carmarthen's central road threatened the removal of this stump.[22] Other communities have also rejected council plans that have endangered 'special' trees. In Ireland especially, myriad trees are stoutly protected by the local populace at the expense of road development because of their association with fairies.[23]

In Ireland, such trees are listed on the online *Heritage Tree Database*, a list which has been added to by members of the public following the online plea: 'We all want our heritage and ancient trees to survive as long as possible and to do this we need to protect them. The only way we can do this is to know where they are…'[24] So far, over 1300 'heritage trees' have been added. Included amongst these are the coin-trees of Gougane Barra, Fore and Clonenagh, which are clearly well established structures in their local areas. In fact, the original Clonenagh coin-tree is well enough established to have been listed as a registered historical site on the *National Monuments Service* website, labelled the 'Holy Tree' (SMR No. LA017-003004).[25]

Less official and standardised attention, however, appears to have been given to trees of England and Wales. The British Tree Council launched its 'Green Monuments Campaign' in 2003 when it outlined the shortcomings of tree preservation in a letter to Tessa Jowell, former Secretary of State at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. On their website, they state the following:

> The value of trees of historical, cultural or ecological importance is already formally recognised in many countries. This is not the case in the UK.
>
> In contrast to historic buildings, there are no legal safeguards specific to ancient trees or others of heritage significance. Many of them could be felled tomorrow without penalty.[26]

In order to rectify this, the Tree Council are attempting to compile a list of 'heritage trees' in Britain and Ireland, and are campaigning for 'safeguards for green monuments'; 'encouragement for custodians to look after them', and 'support and advice on their care'. A condensed list of these 'green monuments' is presented in Stokes and Rodger's *The Heritage Trees of Britain and Northern Ireland*, which describes the Ardmaddy coin-tree in Scotland (see Chapter 7), but does not refer to any of the English or Welsh coin-trees.[27] The vast majority of coin-trees are therefore not recognised as 'green monuments' in need of protection or preservation.

It appears to be the coin-trees' ambiguity that excludes them from the remit of the leading English heritage organisations. English Heritage, a charitable organisation set up in 1983 to care for and champion England's historic places, would not be responsible for the preservation of coin-trees unless they were listed structures, but the designation coordinators at English Heritage do not designate natural features such as trees.[28] Natural England, the government's advisory public body for England's natural environment, would perhaps be a more appropriate heritage organisation. However, because Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are only applied to living trees, the majority of coin-trees—the logs and stumps—fall outside their remit. They are instead therefore the responsibility of individual landowners. However, individual custodians are often either indifferent about preserving their coin-trees or unsure how to—and, in some cases, they actively discourage the practice, viewing the coins as 'ritual litter'.

The 'Ritual Litter' Debate

Robert Wallis and Jenny Blain employ the term 'ritual litter' to encompass objects deposited by Neo-pagans at historical sites and structures. These objects include 'flowers and other offerings, candlewax and tealight holders…the insertion of crystals, coins and other materials into cracks'.[29] Phillip Lucas, in his work on contemporary nature spirituality at megalithic sites in Western Europe, similarly lists coins amongst the offerings which he terms, 'ritual litter that can become piles of trash over time'.[30] Kathryn Rountree, however, notes the derogatory connotations of the term 'ritual litter', claiming that those who tend to apply it to contemporary deposits are 'those inclined to disapprove of their deposition'.[31]

For example, not all visitors to St Nectan's Glen (detailed in Chapter 5) respond positively to the modern-day practice of deposition there. In an article written for *Meyn Mamvro*—tellingly entitled 'St Nectan's Kieve Abused'—Shane Gary describes his reaction to the site in 2002:

> It looked as though a refuse tip had been scooped up and dropped on the site. Every available branch had been covered in vast quantities of hideous rubbish, we assume trying to pass for clouties…The rubbish we found garrotting the branches of the Kieve were made up of such things as plastic ribbons, necklaces of plastic beads, plastic and metal key-rings, plastic bags, cigarette lighters on pieces of string, plastic and glass bottles, broken sunglasses, and the list went on…There was even a computer printed cartoon figure of a penguin in a plastic A4 sleeve with an empty plastic tissue bag clipped to it with a plastic bulldog clip! One wonders at the mentality behind such 'offerings'…[32]

St Nectan's Glen has evidently become a contested site, entering the 'ritual litter' debate and demonstrating how central such deposits can be to the broader, political issues of a landscape's ritual identity.

It is not, however, only how contemporary coin deposits are termed and perceived that demonstrate negative attitudes, but also how they are treated. As Wallis and Blain note: 'So-called "ritual litter" is an increasing problem at many sacred sites'.[33] This 'problem' stems from the perceived negative impact these deposits have on the physical and aesthetic nature of the sites. Certain offerings, such as flowers and liquid libations, are viewed as less 'intrusive' because they are biodegradable or transient. However, diuturnal material deposits such as coins are more controversial because they can often prove detrimental to the physical preservation of the site.

Some custodians of coin-trees do not view the custom favourably, exhibiting anxiety over the practical consequences of the custom spreading to other trees. A National Trust Ranger at Aira Force, for example, views the main coin-tree as a 'lovely sculpture' and does not believe the custom should be discouraged. However, he adds, 'We are starting to get coins knocked in at other areas like tops of posts, wooden gates and on standing live trees which we do not want'.[34] Another National Trust Ranger at Tarn Hows repeats this sentiment, claiming that their main coin-tree 'is a feature that I would personally like to keep, as it provides some intrigue and entertainment for visitors'. However, he adds that he would 'not like to see lots of coin trees being created around the tarn, as [a] bit of metal pushed into trees can be dangerous if you ever had to cut them up with a chainsaw in the future'.[35]

In other cases, coin deposits are actively discouraged. At Gougane Barra (detailed in Chapter 2), the custom of coin insertion has been discouraged by the site managers since the death and decay of the original coin-tree. The custodians of the island, attempting to protect other trees from similar copper poisoning and wishing 'to clean up the site's appearance',[36] attached a sign to the current primary coin-tree, stating: 'I AM A TREE; PLEASE DO NOT PUT COINS INTO ME'. The site managers are similarly hoping to discourage the deposition of coins into the holy well of St Finbarr, situated at the causeway to the island. Above the holy well is a sign requesting: 'NO MONEY IN HOLY WELL PLEASE. BOX IN PILLAR FOR SAME'. Visitors are referred to a donation box in a stone pillar a few feet away, and are encouraged to leave their offerings in that instead. In some cases, however, coin deposits are not only discouraged by site managers—they are actively removed by them.

The Neolithic chambered long barrow of Wayland's Smithy, Oxfordshire, for example, has been subject to coin deposition for the last fifty years at least, with coins being lodged into the monument's rocks by modern visitors.[37] This custom is believed to stem from a much earlier tradition, recounted in a letter by the wife of a local clergyman in 1738:

> At this place lived formerly an invisible Smith, and if a traveller's Horse had lost a Shoe upon the road, he had no more to do than to bring the Horse to this place with a piece of money, and leaving both there for some little time, he might come again and find the money gone, but the Horse new shod…[38]

Modern-day visitors may similarly leave coins at Wayland's Smithy only to 'come again and find the money gone'. However, they will not have been taken by an invisible Smith, but by the National Trust rangers who are tasked with the removal of deposits. On-site ranger Andy Foley regularly checks for and removes coins, donating them to local charities, and informed me that English Heritage recently altered the site's interpretation panel to deliberately exclude information about the traditional custom of coin deposition.[39]

The Glastonbury Thorn is another historical site subject to contemporary deposition. This is a hawthorn (*Crataegus*) growing atop Wearyall Hill, Somerset, which is said to be England's 'most celebrated sacred tree'.[40] Its mythological associations are rich. Historically it is associated with the figures of St Dunstan and King Arthur, but the most well known—albeit later, not appearing until the thirteenth century—tradition

identifies the tree as the offspring of the original Holy Thorn, which sprang from St Joseph of Arimathea's staff, thrust into the ground on the saint's visit to Britain in the first century AD. Together with its offspring, it purportedly blossomed annually at Christmas in commemoration of Christ's nativity.[41]

There are currently several 'Holy Thorn' offshoots within Glastonbury. One is most widely associated with the original because it is said to stand where St Joseph thrust his staff into the ground. This tree was planted in 1951 by members of Glastonbury Town Council but was vandalised in 2010, with unknown vandals cutting down its branches. New shoots began to grow and tourists continued to visit it, but its popularity is believed to put this fragile tree at risk, with visitors threatening its recovery by making ritual deposits at the site.[42]

The vandalised Glastonbury tree now stands protected within a metal fence (Fig. 7.3), but this does not deter deposition. Several coins have been inserted into the tree, and ribbons adorned with names and messages are affixed to the fence. They are not left there though. Former mayor of Glastonbury, John Coles, visits the site periodically to remove these deposits. He explains that the ribbons, when densely clustered, prevent sunlight from reaching the tree, and he is concerned that the copper of the coins will kill it, so he dislodges them with a knife. There have been other deposits which he has felt inclined to remove: pieces of paper with what he terms 'pagan or atheist obscenities' written on, as well as a number of rather obscene items, such as condoms.

Had the coins been left in the Glastonbury tree, the trend elsewhere suggests that they would soon have multiplied. This most recent incarnation of the Glastonbury Thorn would thus potentially become a coin-tree—one with a particularly interesting biography of religious and political appropriation and reinterpretation, and indisputable historical roots, as traced by Walsham.[43] As such, however, it has not been permitted to become a coin-tree, and has therefore not (yet) entered a different stage in its ritual life. This demonstrates how concern over preservation can, rightly or wrongly, stymie the custom of deposition and fossilise the ritual identity of a site.

Age, Authenticity, and the Heritage Debate

The National Trust, a charity founded in 1895 to preserve the natural and built heritage of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, is the largest custodian of coin-trees, managing 13 coin-tree sites (amounting

to at least 90 individual coin-trees). However, none of these are protected. Although rangers and wardens are beginning to consider the conservation of coin-trees (see above), the National Trust have not yet implemented any strategies of preservation. As a major custodian of British trees generally, managing nearly 25,000 hectares of woodland in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, they claim to take the responsibility of tree custodianship very seriously. As Watkins, writing for the *National Trust* magazine, rightly asks, 'is it not strange that if…ancient trees are as much a gateway into the past as a historical castle, they do not share the same legal protection?' He advocates a resolution, put before the National Trust AGM in 2000, which proposed that 'trees should be given as much care as old houses and landscaped gardens'.[44] However, as promising as this resolution was, the National Trust's assurance to value and protect their trees has evidently not stretched to include *coin*-trees.

The discrepancy between what was proposed by the National Trust and what is actually being done to protect these structures may be due to a matter of perception of value. One word used by Watkins is highly illustrative of this, implying that a certain category of trees is valued over others: that word is 'ancient'. This clearly indicates that Watkins is referring to trees which boast a certain antiquity. Only a minority of the coin-trees would fit this requirement. However, if we perceive age to be an authenticating virtue, does its absence necessarily denote *in*authenticity? Does a lack of antiquity designate an object or structure unworthy of protection and heritage status? To some, it would appear so.

Victorian art critic John Ruskin, writing of architecture, opined that the 'greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, nor in its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness'. In Ruskin's opinion, it is a structure's antiquity rather than its physical or cultural virtues that merits attention.[45] The same is said of the landscape. It is interesting, for example, to note how Hoskins, who wrote of the English language as a changing surface that should be studied as a palimpsest, is overtly averse to modern changes: 'especially since the year 1914, every single change in the English landscape has either uglified it or destroyed its meaning, or both'.[46]

In recent years, however, heritage professionals have begun to challenge this time-centred criterion for attention. Contemporary archaeologist and heritage specialist John Schofield, writing of 'Modern Times' for the *Conservation Bulletin*, poses the following questions:

> Is there consensus on what we allow into the heritage 'club' and what are the rules of admission? What do we leave at the door because it is thought to be too new or too everyday – and often both? How and when should its definition be extended into modern times, a period for which we have an abundance of site types, perceptions, experiences and sources?[47]

Perhaps in response to such questions, English Heritage has broadened their definition of 'heritage'. They have begun to, as Sefryn Penrose writes, challenge 'the current orthodoxy within the heritage industry that places value, or assigns sites a designated protective status, only once a respectable "cut-off" period of at least 30 years has passed'.[48] In the early 2000s they began to advocate progressive forward planning and established an English Heritage programme entitled 'Change and Creation', which addressed the question of whether aspects of the British landscape from 1950–2000 can be considered as part of our 'heritage' and should thus be protected.[49]

If we begin to record and preserve the monuments of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries now, then we can address our own heritage and legacy while it still survives. As Schofield notes: 'Today's landscapes have the potential to become tomorrow's heritage'.[50] The heritage industry, therefore, has begun to view modern-day structures and landscapes in a different light; as not only worthy of preservation, but in some cases in need of it. The coin-trees' modernity should therefore not exclude them from the heritage industry's attention. The question remains, however, whether we *should* actively protect them: 'should time and nature be allowed to decide what our legacy is?'.[51] And if actions were taken to protect and preserve the coin-trees, what forms could they take?

Removing the Coin-Tree

Removal has become a major method of historical salvage.[52] The coin-trees could be removed from their natural, accessible and consequently destructive environments and transported to museums or other centres for conservation. There are instances of coin-trees and coin-tree sections having been removed for storage by custodians. However, the success of these conservation attempts either remains to be seen or is ambiguous at best.

At Freeholders Wood, as described above, the forest rangers removed the coin-tree, anxious for their visitors' safety, and, as ranger Phillip Hibbs explained, the 'majority of the stem was taken away to one of our nearby workshops, but has since disappeared!'.[53] Another example of coin-tree removal involves an attempt made by a local resident; a section of the original Ardboe coin-tree, which fell during the winter of 1973–1974, was salvaged by Pat Grimes. However, nearly four decades later the wood has decayed so completely that nothing remains of the section itself bar 79 coins, which Pat stores in a cup beside his front door.[54] No doubt the same fate awaits another five salvaged sections, two of which are from the later Ardboe coin-tree, which fell during a storm in 1997. One is now stored in a garage behind Coyle's Cottage, the home of the Muintirevlin Historical Society, whilst another is contained within a cardboard box and held in store at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum (ACNR 346-1998) (Fig. 7.5).

Fig. 7.5 Left: a section of the Ardboe coin-tree now stored in a garage behind Coyle's Cottage, the home of the Muintirevlin Historical Society. Right: another section contained within a cardboard box and held in store at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum (ACNR 346-1998) (Photographs by author)

Certain methods can be employed to conserve wood, which involve creating environments which restrict the activities of wood rotting fungi or bacteria. In the timber industry, for example, wet storage is employed for conserving boles. This method involves keeping wood moisture at a high level by artificial irrigation, denying the input of oxygen to the timber.[55] However, this method involves high investment costs and monitoring input, and is therefore probably unfeasible for the preservation of coin-trees—not to mention possibly destructive to the coins themselves. While wet storage may conserve the wood, it will have a different effect on the metal.

This is a problem often encountered with the conservation of wood-metal composite objects.[56] Waterlogged wood, for example, is often impregnated with polyethylene glycol (PEG) for preservation, but PEG solutions are acidic and would corrode the coins. And while there are certain solutions which can treat waterlogged wood while minimising corrosion of the metal,[57] it is clear that the presence of metal in coin-trees (central to their designation as coin-trees) would complicate conservation processes.

Even if removal of the coin-trees could ensure the preservation of both the wood and the coins, there are still numerous disadvantages. The most grievous, in Lowenthal's words, is 'the loss of environmental context'.[58] Attempts, however, can be made to recreate this environmental context. Lynn Museum, Norfolk, for example, have produced a replica of the boles and inverted stump of Seahenge (see Chapter 2), advertising on their website that, as a visitor, you can: 'Step back in time as you walk into a life size replica of Seahenge'. Although such a recreation is by its very nature static and artificial, and a museum environment is a far cry from the salt marsh it originally occupied, efforts have been made to simulate experience and physical engagement.[59]

It is not, however, only an artefact's environment which changes during removal; the artefact itself is altered. It is inevitable that an object, removed from its place of production and stored in a museum, will take on a different role.[60] For example, the original Seahenge boles, preserved with PEG and vacuum freeze-dried, are now viewed statically within glass cases; whilst every effort has been made to preserve their physical structures, their sociocultural context has been dramatically altered.

A museum environment sanctifies an object: 'such is the magic-conferring power of these institutions'.[61] This process has been termed the 'museum effect', whereby objects become 'enshrined' by their museum environments.[62] Objects are perceived differently if viewed through the glass of a museum cabinet; they have certain virtues, whether spiritual or intellectual, bestowed upon them because of their environment.[63] They enter another stage in their biographies.

The fragment of the Ardboe coin-tree at Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, for example, has entered another stage of its biography. It is no longer a tree to be touched, climbed on (as local resident Pat Grimes and his friends did as children),[64] and embedded with coins. It is a historical artefact, to be looked at, studied and handled with care—if at all. Indeed, upon my visit to the museum it struck me how differently I engaged with this coin-tree section than I have done with others. Although always careful with tactile examinations, I was particularly hesitant to touch this section, concerned that it would fragment, and I handled it gingerly, with an almost reverential care.

However, 'museumizing' objects does more than 'sanctify' them. It also anchors and ossifies them in a process of 'museumification'. The location of the Ardboe coin-tree section—in the store of a museum—not only prohibits it from being actively engaged with by members of the public, but prevents it from being *seen* by them. Only my academic credentials privileged me this engagement with the section. As Peter Gathercole observes, some objects 'are at the core of museum scholarship, locked away in store-rooms, revealing their secrets only to the initiated'.[65] Therefore another effect of museum acquisition is the fostering of a (real or perceived) sense of inaccessibility.[66]

As Sharon Macdonald asserts, museums 'remove [objects] from daily use and transaction. A museum, for most objects, is a final resting place – a moment frozen in time for future contemplation'.[67] Although placing an object in a museum will probably extend its material life, it is no longer a 'living' object.[68] A coin-tree or fragment no longer plays a role in the coin-tree custom once it has been stored away in a box, a shed, a museum. It has become an artefact rather than an agent in a folkloric custom, simply because people can no longer insert coins into its bark. It is clear therefore that, if the desire is to conserve the social life of a coin-tree as well as its material existence, preservation should be performed in situ.

Preservation in Situ: Fencing and Fossilising

Landscapes and monuments are altered during the processes of preservation, and there are many difficulties involved in safeguarding heritage that is part of a 'living' culture without 'fossilising, freezing or trivializing it'.[69] The heritage industry aims to achieve a delicate balance between preserving a physical site whilst simultaneously allowing the continuation of the associated intangible cultural heritage, but they do not always succeed.

Education and interpretation are potential management strategies.[70] These methods have been adopted at Hadrian's Wall, which has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1987. In managing the Hadrian's Wall Path, an 84-mile national trail that was opened in 2003, heritage professionals acknowledge that they have two primary aims: to conserve the site but also to make it available for public enjoyment and education. They advocate displaying conservation messages at key areas along the wall, communicating the fragility of the site and appealing to visitors' consciences by reminding them that their actions could determine whether the site will be preserved for future generations. For this purpose, a code of conduct was issued entitled *Every Footstep Counts*, which advises visitors on how they should behave on Hadrian's Wall's National Trail, not forbidding certain behaviour but explaining the damage it can cause.[71]

Through similar use of displays, exhibits and printed brochures, the public could be made aware of the dangers posed to the longevity of the coin-trees. Information boards erected beside the coin-trees could request that visitors do not climb on the structures, explaining the damage caused. However, as physical engagement is central to the custom of the coin-tree, and as some custodians recognise this—such as Greg Robinson at Brock Bottom—they may not wish to implement such restrictions, recognising that they would change the nature of the sites themselves.

Preservation attempts have transformed sites, not necessarily for the better, across the globe. Anthropologist Ahmed Skounti demonstrates this by considering the heritage of Place Jemaâ El Fna, a market square in Marrakech. This square has been an open area of performance and trade for much of Marrakech's 1000-year history. However, twenty-first-century preservation attempts limited access to the square, consequently compromising the intangible cultural heritage of the site. The individuals bound up in this cultural heritage, from henna artists to snake charmers, were denied the freedom to utilise the site as they had done previously, and many locals complained that the square had 'lost its nature'.[72]

Another useful comparative case study for issues of preservation is Stonehenge, access to which has been a contested subject for over a century now. Prior to the twentieth century, the prehistoric monument of Stonehenge in Wiltshire was accessible to all, as the coin-trees are today. However, unlimited accessibility led to increasing damage, the nineteenth century seeing visitors regularly chipping away at the stones for souvenirs, chalking and carving marks onto them, and leaving mounds of litter at the site. Guards and police were employed to attend the stones over the years, but their presence was not enough and in 1900 two of the stones fell. Incensed by this damage, in 1901 the custodian of the site erected a fence to enclose the monument and began charging a shilling for admission.[73] Stonehenge became 'caged and tamed as never before'.[74]

In 1978, a further step was taken to prevent damage: another fence was erected, this one preventing even paying visitors from walking amongst the stones. Instead visitors could only view Stonehenge from the path to the west of the monument. Today, a circular route has been constructed together with a viewing platform, but the monument remains physically inaccessible to anybody without the proper academic credentials—or the money—to arrange private viewings, except for one day a year, the Summer Solstice, when visitors are temporarily permitted to walk amongst the stones.[75]

The monument of Stonehenge is now well protected, but at what cost? The landscape of Stonehenge 'has become ossified and roped off'.[76] Accessibility, however, is not always the issue. Most visitors, past and present, seem more concerned with the aesthetically crippling effects of the fences. Following the erection of the first enclosure in 1901, a group of archaeologists led by Flinders Petrie protested against the 'artistic' debilitation of the fence. In a letter to *The Times* on 7 February 1901, Petrie contended:

> To do anything to break the marvellous effect of the lonely plain and great masses of stone would be cruel. The sight is the most impressive in England, and on no account should it be destroyed by a hideous iron railing.[77]

Almost a century later, archaeologist Barbara Bender makes a similar complaint, proclaiming that, 'Roped off, fenced in, set in their polite green sward, the stones today are viewed by the visitor in isolation'. They have been removed from the surrounding landscape, designated a 'museum piece' rather than a 'living site'.[78]

The negative effects of the enclosure are even recognised by experts in sustainable tourism. In 2006, *National Geographic* interviewed a panel of 419 experts on 94 World Heritage destinations. Stonehenge did not rate highly, one expert observing that 'the site is protected by fencing to discourage defacing the structures, but the visual sightlines are disrupted', while another remarked that 'overregulation has made the visitor's experience rather disappointing, charm is gone'.[79] Granted, efforts have recently been undertaken to improve the infrastructure of the site, by relocating the visitor centre and decreasing the level of fencing,[80] but a rope barrier still prevents visitors from walking amongst the stones.

As Lowenthal observes: 'Protection can debase the ambience of antiquities even when their fabric remains intact'. Protection keeps the structures standing, but it does not keep them 'alive'.[81] Enclosing the coin-trees within fences is therefore not an ideal solution. As interview participants at the coin-tree sites have opined, protection of the structures should not be undertaken at the expense of the custom. Many people fear that protecting the coin-trees behind fences might detract from the aesthetics, making them 'eyesores', as suggested by one woman in Cumbria. Barriers would also prevent or at least discourage people from inserting their own coins, a concern expressed by several of the participants. The general consensus appeared to be that the coin-trees should 'definitely be kept accessible' to the general public, with one teenage girl from Dovedale asserting that protecting the coin-trees behind fences would 'defeat the object' of them.

In conclusion, the erection of fences would prove almost as restrictive as removing the coin-tree entirely. All methods of preservation thus appear to pose problems, either removing the coin-trees from their environmental contexts or from their sociocultural contexts. At the centre of the coin-tree custom is the public's freedom to participate, and there appears to be no method suitable for protecting the structures of the coin-trees without simultaneously suppressing the custom and designating the coin-trees relics of the past rather than 'living sites', freezing them at one particular point in time.[82] As Dawson Munjeri, Zimbabwe's Deputy Secretary-General for UNESCO, maintains, 'intangible heritage does not survive under overly interventionist and or restrictive conditions'.[83]

'Freeing' Not 'Freezing': Intangible Cultural Heritage

If there is no solution for preserving the physical structures of the coin-trees without suppressing the custom, perhaps doing the opposite is in order: preserving the custom at the expense of the structures.[84] Cultural processes are just as important as the resultant artefacts or monuments created, and in order to preserve them, we should free rather than freeze the conditions under which the custom exists.[85] Too many restrictions and prescriptions smother a custom, and so rather than enforcing censorships in order to protect the tangible heritage, perhaps attention should be given instead to the intangible cultural heritage.

UNESCO defines intangible cultural heritage as 'the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage'.[86] A widespread concern for the preservation of the intangible aspects of cultural heritage is a fairly recent phenomenon, and the heritage industry is still endeavouring to identify the most appropriate means of securing its safeguard.[87]

This search was officially begun in 2003, when the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (hereafter ICHC) was established as a counterpoint to the 1972 World Heritage Convention, which privileged the world's grand and aesthetic sites and monuments over its intangible cultural expressions. It was adopted by UNESCO's General Conference in 2003 and entered into force in many countries (notably excluding the UK) in 2006.[88] Its primary purpose was to 'safeguard the intangible cultural heritage', which involves 'measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage'.[89]

The ICHC cannot *ensure* the viability of intangible cultural heritage, but it can and should provide the opportunity for cultural practices to survive, and maybe even flourish.[90] In order to aid the cultural practice of the coin-tree, therefore, the opportunity for participation in the custom must be maintained, which would certainly not involve enclosing

or removing the coin-trees, and the materials required, the coins and the trees, must retain their accessibility. So long as participants can source trees and coins, there will be viability for the continuation of this custom.

In cases where custodians wish to prevent widespread dissemination of the custom, such as some National Trust rangers (see above), certain methods could be effective. For example, preventative measures are being considered at Dovedale, but only with regard to coin insertion into *living* trees.[91] Logs, stumps and wooden posts, on the other hand, are freely available for the custom, and—unlike at Gougane Barra, where, despite the custodians' best efforts, seven of the eight coin-trees are living trees—at Dovedale this figure is only one of 14. This demonstrates the benefit of ensuring that alternative 'canvases' are available for the custom's participants. If a site's managers do not wish living trees to be utilised, they should provide logs or stumps for the practice, which would shift the (potentially destructive) ritual attention away from living trees.

Similar heritage management strategies are undertaken at sites such as Chartres Cathedral and Versailles, where the principle of dispersion is adopted.[92] To alleviate the physical pressures on one site, management direct tourists' attention to an alternative area through the use of brochures and information boards. This disperses the concentration of visitors. Such measures could be adopted at coin-tree sites where living trees predominate. Policies of strategic dissemination could be encouraged and employed. Logs could be tactically placed and referred to in brochures or pinpointed on maps in order to entice visitors' attention away from a ritually employed living tree to bear the brunt of the custom instead. Perhaps signs could be erected requesting that visitors insert their deposits into particular trees.

If living trees are threatened, therefore, alternatives should be provided: logs and stumps, which could act as deflectors. This should not be difficult to ensure, following the Forestry Commission's 2002 guide advocating that deadwood be left in situ (detailed in Chapter 3). The relative certainty of the enduring presence of logs and stumps along Britain's popular rural footpaths, therefore, signifies that the tree component of this custom will continue to be accessible, for the foreseeable future at least. However, what of the other key component of the coin-tree: the coin?

De-Coining the Coin-Tree

Today, coins are even more ubiquitous than trees. It was proposed in Chapters 3–4 that coins grew to dominate the ritual-deposition arena in Britain and Ireland because of their prevalence. While most people who stumble across a coin-tree will not be carrying rags or nails, their pockets or purses will probably contain some loose change, making coins a far more convenient deposit. However, while coins may boast a c.2000 year history in Britain,[93] their future accessibility is likely to be far more modest.

Copper coins have already lost much of their value, and the realm of economics is rife with predictions that, as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) posit, 'money's destiny is to become digital'.[94] The Payments Council of the UK are making similar claims, noting the expensive and environmentally costly process of distributing hard cash, together with the rise of electronic spending—debit cards, the Internet, mobile payments—as core reasons for why hard cash is decreasingly being used in UK monetary transactions.[95] For the purpose of his research, economist Wolman eschewed physical money for 12 months and reportedly encountered very few difficulties, illustrating a departing dependence on hard cash, the advent of 'immaterial money', and the so—called 'e-money revolution'.[96]

Not everybody is convinced that Britain is destined to become a cashless society. Kevin Clancy, director of the Royal Mint Museum, (unsurprisingly) argued in an interview with the BBC that 'coins have an enduring appeal and will stay for some time yet', citing convenience and familiarity as reasons for their endurance.[97] However in 2015, a report by the British Retail Consortium revealed that cash is no longer the dominant method of payment, accounting for 47.15% of transactions and likely to continue decreasing.[98] This decline in the use of physical cash will probably occur at a slower rate in certain environments, such as rural areas, which suggests that while a modern-day practitioner may not carry coins whilst perusing the shops in a city centre, they will probably ensure they have some cash handy when visiting the countryside. Similarly, a tourist, either domestic or foreign, may be more inclined to carry coins when visiting an unfamiliar area, rather than relying wholly on electronic methods of payment.

It is probable, therefore, that coins will continue to be incidentally carried to coin-tree sites for the near future; the Payments Council predict that cash is unlikely to disappear entirely. However, they also maintain that by 2050, using physical money for market transactions may have become a minority activity.[99] This may mean that in fifty or so years, the chances of a person carrying loose change may be as slim as the chances of them carrying nails or rags. They will therefore be unable to contribute a coin to a coin-tree if they happen to come across one. Obviously the custom of the coin-tree cannot be sustained in the absence of coins—however, this may not mark the demise of the intangible cultural heritage. As has been illustrated frequently throughout this book, a custom can be adapted. As Wolman asks, 'If we close the book on pennies…What will people throw into wishing wells?'.[100] The answer: something else.

The safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage should not consist of freezing the conditions of a custom.[101] In fact, it often necessitates the acceptance that the custom will change; in the ICHC, UNESCO recognises that intangible cultural heritage 'is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment'. It is not a permanent fixture, but is fluid and malleable.[102] Safeguarding efforts should be more concerned with encouraging creation and recreation rather than attempting to preserve traditions which, if not given the freedom to change, will become stagnant and alienated from their living sociocultural environments.[103]

It is the very mutable nature of intangible cultural heritage which makes it far more resilient than the tangible heritage.[104] While a coin-tree may decay, the custom which surrounds it will sustain itself through its propensity for adaptation. If in the future coins are no longer widely carried, then participants will employ other objects as deposits. Just as coins replaced rags and nails in this practice because they became the more convenient offering (see Chapter 2), another category of objects will, in turn, be adopted as substitutes for coins.

It is unlikely that immaterial (i.e. electronic) money will replace hard cash in this context, although there is some potential for it to work in other ritual settings. In 2014, for example, attempting to remedy a countrywide coin shortage in Sri Lanka, Nivard Cabraal, Governor of the Central Bank, urged Buddhist temples to accept electronic payments from worshippers in a 'tap-and-pray' system. 'That way, God will also know who offered what,' Cabraal noted at a press conference.[105] The success of this proposal has yet to be seen, but regardless, it is highly unlikely that such a system would be adopted at coin-trees. Not only is there little

potential for electronic payment systems to be put in place at these sites, but the aspects of the custom that motivate participation (as explored in Chapter 4) would be lost with the intangible touch of a debit card.

Coins will probably not be replaced by e-payments but with some other category of material object. Without the precognitive powers to know what objects will occupy the common pocket of the average twenty-second-century individual, it cannot be predicted what form these substitute deposits will take, but they will likely be small, low in economic value, relatively disposable, but also symbolic. Whatever objects are adopted as replacements, once again the custom will re-acclimatise itself, demonstrating that its indomitability does not stem from any preservation attempts, but from its ability to conform to a changing environment.

In conclusion, while little can be done to preserve the tangible cultural heritage of the coin-trees, perhaps little *should* be done to preserve the intangible heritage, rather than risk ossifying the custom. Perhaps action should be taken to discourage active suppression of the custom, which includes removing the coin-trees (unless they pose a danger), erecting enclosures which deny access and any measures which deter participation. In cases where custodians are anxious for the health of their living trees, policies of strategic dissemination—tactical placement of logs, for example—could be employed, which may ensure the custom persists with little threat to living trees. However, nothing can be done to secure the future wide accessibility of coins, and although the intangible cultural heritage of the coin-tree may not diminish, it will inevitably change. Many years from now the coin-tree will have become a distant, mysterious ancestor of the custom's most recent incarnation—whatever that may turn out to be.

Strategic Recommendations

As of yet, no organisation has attempted to record either the tangible or intangible cultural heritage of the coin-tree custom. Surely, however, the knowledge that the structures of the coin-trees will eventually be lost and the custom will inevitably change incites the need to begin recording. The ICHC lists identification and documentation as the first two measures taken to ensure the viability of intangible cultural heritage.[106] These, therefore, should perhaps be the primary two measures taken to ensure the preservation of the coin-tree custom. Strategies which include the cataloguing of coin-trees and recording details of the custom should be implemented.

Fortunately, the cultural significance of contemporary ritual deposits is being increasingly recognised worldwide at a variety of sites. In 1997, archaeologist Christine Finn examined how Chaco Canyon, a prehistoric complex in the Southwest US, had become a focus for New Age ceremony and deposition. Considering the contemporary objects deposited there, which ranged from crystals and shells to wooden imitations of native American ritual objects, Finn questioned whether these deposits should be considered "junk' or archaeological objects of meaning and value'. LoPiccolo, curator of the site, viewed them as the latter, claiming that these modern-day deposits 'were of value as signifiers of continued use of the Chaco Canyon site'.[107] Believing it to be his responsibility to collect these objects for the future archaeological record, rather than simply disposing of them LoPiccolo catalogued them, entering their details into a database.

Finn clearly approves of LoPiccolo's actions, and proposes that others should follow his lead. 'What should be classified as 'junk'', she writes, 'and how we deal with it at a time of broader acceptance of 'other' practices are issues that archaeologists and those involved in heritage management should, I suggest, be considering'.[108] Nearly ten years later, Blain and Wallis, examining Neo-pagan uses of prehistoric sites in Britain, also advocate greater academic attention given to contemporary ritual deposits: 'Whatever form this material culture takes, it is clearly worthy of serious study, not only for issues of site conservation, but also in terms of the construction and performance of identity'.[109]

The curatorial team at the New-York Historical Society, for example, have begun a seminal and successful initiative in which they mobilise to collect and preserve contemporary urban deposits, such as artefacts left in memorial for 9/11, marriage equality celebrations, the Stonewall Inn vigil for the Orlando nightclub shooting victims, and the 'Subway Therapy' post-it notes written by members of the public in reaction to the 2016 presidential election. Their mandate is to acquire and preserve significant items of American cultural history to hold in trust for New Yorkers.[110]

In Italy, these strategies of documentation and preservation began much earlier. The letters of heartbreak deposited at the supposed burial site of Juliet Cappelletti (of Shakespeare fame) near Verona's San Francesco Church, have been collected and archived for nearly a century now. In the 1930s, Ettore Solimani was appointed by the city of Verona as the custodian of Juliet's tomb, and he began collecting—and even responding to—the letters that were being left there by visitors,

designating himself 'Juliet's secretary'. In 1972, the Il Club di Guilietta (Juliet's Club) was set up as a non-profit cultural organisation run by volunteers, dedicated to collecting and replying to the many letters deposited at the site, and still to this day, as their website states, 'Thanks to Juliet's secretaries each letter is read, translated, answered and then kept in our one-of-a-kind archive, that contains thousands of love stories and countless words of love'.[111]

All deposited material, whether old or new, contributes to the ritual narrative of a site. Coins in trees are no exception. Andy Foley, National Trust ranger at Wayland's Smithy, recognises this: the collection of the deposited coins 'forms a large part of the backbone of interpretation over what Wayland's actually is and what is myth/legend'.[112] Other custodians of coin-trees make similar acknowledgements. Contemporary deposits are integral to the contextualisation of a site, and it is our responsibility to ensure that whatever can be done to catalogue these deposits before they are lost, stolen, donated or disposed of, *should* be done.

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CHAPTER 8

Concluding Thoughts

It hasn't stopped raining all day and the dirt track has turned to mud. I'm painfully aware of how ill equipped I am as I slog through the cold quagmire in my trainers and jeans. Summer back home means something very different to summer along the coast of Argyll, Scotland. At least I know my sodden search for the coin-tree on the Ardmaddy Estate won't be in vain; this is a well-documented site and I'm confident I'm on the right track.

I first became aware of this site a year before when reading Heritage Trees of Scotland, *which lists the 100 specimens awarded the accolade of 'Heritage Tree' in 2002. Amongst this list, and given a two-page spread, is the 'Wishing Tree of Argyll', described as follows:*

> This lone, wind-blasted hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna) growing in the wilds of Argyll is one of the few known 'wishing trees' in Scotland. It is encrusted with coins that have been pressed into the thin bark by generations of superstitious travellers over the centuries, each coin representing a wish. Every available space on the main trunk bristles with money, even the smaller branches and exposed roots. This magical tree provides a living connection with the ancient folklore and customs of Scotland…[1]

There's further information about this coin-tree in a tourist pamphlet at the self-catering cottage I'm staying in, on the Ardmaddy Estate. Alongside a photograph of the coin-tree, the pamphlet offers the following explanation:

C. Houlbrook, *The Magic of Coin-Trees from Religion to Recreation*,
Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75517-5_8

> In Celtic culture, the Hawthorn is a sacred tree and you made your wish or prayer at the tree and then placed a coin in the bark. Another offering is a ribbon of cloth tied to a branch. These offerings were for the tree spirits and fairies who would grant your wish if they saw fit.

I also know exactly where the coin-tree is. Not only is it pinpointed on the Ordnance Survey map, but I've also recently passed an arrowed signpost alongside the track declaring 'Wishing Tree 2.2 km'. But it feels much further than 2.2 km on this wet, uphill climb through farmland and moorland, and other than the sheep and pheasants, there's nobody in sight. It's difficult to believe that anybody—let alone 'generations of superstitious travellers'—has passed this way recently.

The ascent gets steeper. I can see the grey, mottled surface of Loch Melfort way below on the right, but the view disappears as I turn into a pass. There's a reason it's known as Bealach na Gaoithe (the 'pass of the winds'); cold blasts from the Atlantic gust through, buffeting me as I enter. I look ahead and catch my first glimpse of what I've trudged here to see.

The Ardmaddy coin-tree sits within a wooden enclosure just to the side of the track. It's accessible via a stile—the enclosure is to protect against livestock rather than people—so I clamber over and take stock of this 'magical tree'. Having fallen in the 1990s, it lies gnarled and forlorn in the grass, battered by the wind and blackened by the rain. Heavily decayed, whole limbs have fallen off and the whole tree looks too fragile to touch, let alone hammer coins into. But that's exactly what people have done—hundreds of them, if the quantity of coins is anything to go by. Verdigris has turned most of them bluish green, making it difficult to judge which are old and which are simply weathered, and many have spilled from the crumbling bark. They now lie scattered in the grass, half buried.

Some coins are new though, many minted in the 2000s. There is foreign currency as well: some Euro cents, a French franc, a South African rand. And it isn't only coins attached to the tree. A few ribbons, strips of cloth and a wad of wool are wrapped around its branches. A white shell sits atop the main bole. Two horseshoes—one modern, the other less so—have been inserted into the main fork of the tree, the older one swallowed by the bark. A note, addressed 'Dear Wishing Tree' and expressing the desire for a romantic partner, handwritten on the reverse of a Czech pharmacy receipt and dated to 13.12.12, is neatly folded and held in place on the tree by some coins.

I catalogue what I can but the rain is only getting heavier, and my waterproof jacket is turning out to be not so waterproof. So I pack up and head back down, this time taking a slightly different route to Ardmaddy Castle, which was originally built in the fifteenth century as a tower house by the Macdougalls of Raera. I pass not a single soul on my descent, but when I reach the castle I'm met by Charles Struthers, who inherited the estate in the 1960s. Before I leave, he has a few things he'd like to show me. Firstly, three coined limbs that have fallen from the coin-tree and been brought to the castle, where they're now on display in the games room and on a ledge beside the castle's main entrance, amidst plant pots, buckets and geological curiosities. Secondly, a wooden trophy inscribed with the words 'Scotland's Heritage Trees 2002: Wishing Tree', which Charles proudly displays for me to photograph.

The Ardmaddy Coin-Tree

The above describes my first encounter with the Ardmaddy coin-tree in 2012, but a second, more in-depth study soon followed in 2013 when a Heritage Lottery funded, minimally intrusive excavation was conducted at the site (see Appendix B for the full excavation report).[2] The fragile, fragmented condition of the tree, together with the high winds it is often subjected to, resulted in a high volume of coins becoming dislodged, falling to the ground and being buried over time. To recover these coins—and hopefully determine the length of time the coin-tree custom had been observed at this particular site—a small team of archaeologists from the University of Manchester investigated six test pits in close proximity to the tree, excavating a total of 703 small finds.

The history of the Ardmaddy coin-tree, located on the Degnish Peninsula in Argyll, exemplifies many of the points made throughout this book. Firstly, it recalls our attempt in Chapter 2 to read 'superstition' backwards; to trace the roots of a ritual by exploring the historical customs and beliefs that resulted in the contemporary coin-tree. These customs and beliefs are embodied in the variety of objects deposited at the Ardmaddy site: not only coins but also rags, ribbons, horseshoes, a shell and a handwritten note. Further items were excavated around the tree, which may have once been attached to it: two pieces of string knotted to form loops, a shoelace, a bent hand-cut nail and a piece of blue, plastic-coated wire.

Such variety of deposits is found at many other coin-tree sites, and they testify to what Walsham describes as 'sediments of meaning' whereby the landscape (in this case, the coin-tree) is 'a porous surface onto which each generation inscribes its own values and preoccupations without ever being able to erase entirely those of the preceding one'.[3] They also testify to the fact that the origins of the coin-tree are far too complex and convoluted to simply 'read backwards'. Rather than a successive line of evolving customs, the coin-tree is more an amalgamation of numerous strands of traditions, beliefs, and substitutions: the tree's history of ritual employment and its relationship with the holy well; the rag-tree, nail-tree and the notion of contagious transfer; the perceived apotropaic powers of coins, as well as their status as symbols of value and exchange, in both the secular and sacred realms.

Secondly, exploring the age of the Ardmaddy coin-tree evokes the stories traced in Chapters 3–5. Rodger et al.'s *Heritage Trees of Scotland* claims that this tree 'is encrusted with coins that have been pressed into the thin bark by *generations* of superstitious travellers *over the centuries*' (emphases added).[4] However, Rodger et al. reference no sources, providing no insight into how they came to the conclusion that this coin-tree is 'centuries' old. Mairi MacDonald's 1983 hiker's guide, *Walking in South Lorn*, makes a similarly vague reference to the coin-tree's antiquity, stating that it is 'of considerable age'.[5] Likewise, MacDonald offers no further information on how she has determined its maturity, and, despite both claims that the Ardmaddy coin-tree is of significant age, MacDonald is the earliest identified literary source which refers to the site.

MacDonald's description of the coin-tree and the 'traditional' practice of coin-insertion suggest that this custom was well established at the time she was writing in the 1980s. Another source proves that the custom was earlier: an Ordnance Survey map from the 1970s pinpoints the coin-tree's location and labels it 'Wishing Tree', while the coin-tree's custodian, Charles Struthers of Ardmaddy Estate, believes that the custom may date to the 1920/1930s: 'When I was a boy here in the 50s the tree was prolific and could well have been 20–30 years old then'.[6]

Is this evidence of the Ardmaddy coin-tree's antiquity, or of the process outlined in Chapter 3: the *projecting* of antiquity? Certainly, most people assume that coin-trees boast long histories. They look for 'old coins' in the trees and often mistake heavily corroded decimal coins (clearly identifiable upon closer inspection) for pre-decimal. As outlined in Chapter 3, it is not difficult to understand why the age of this custom

is often misconceived as much greater than it is, nor why even custodians appear to, either consciously or accidentally, overestimate the ages of their coin-trees. People like old things; we are generally, as a nation, victims of 'nostalgic affliction'.[7]

So, while the sources testify to the Ardmaddy coin-tree's relatively early establishment, they do not prove that it is 'centuries' old. In fact, data from the excavation suggests that the custom had not gained popularity at this site until the late twentieth century. Granted, older coins may have been engulfed by the growing tree when it was still alive, but of those that were excavated only a minority were pre-decimal (pre-1971). Of the 558 excavated coins with years of mint still legible, 17 were pre-decimal, ranging in date from 1914 to 1970, and a further seven were identified as pre-decimal based on their size and design. This does not, however, necessarily mean that the coins were deposited prior to 1971; they could have been placed in the tree after removal from circulation. The year on a coin can only give us the earliest possible date of deposition, not the latest. With this evidence, though, we can know that the vast majority of the coins, being decimal, had to have been deposited after 1970. The decade which produced the highest quantity of deposited coins was the 1990s. A large volume was also issued in the 2000s, demonstrating that the practice did not cease with the fall of the tree, whilst the presence of coins from the 2010s reveals that the custom is still active today.

Granted, there are problems with using coins to determine time frames of deposition. It should not be assumed that the coins excavated at a site represent every coin ever deposited there. Perhaps a greater number of older coins were removed from the site, by either natural or human means, or are buried at different distances from the tree, or indeed at greater depths than this small-scale excavation had opportunity to uncover. The coins recovered may therefore only represent a sample of those initially inserted into the coin-tree, and perhaps the custom does date much earlier than the material evidence suggests. Certainly, it had to have been well established by the 1970s at least, due to the coin-tree's inclusion on the Ordnance Survey map.[8]

However, whilst the Ardmaddy coin-tree may well date to the early twentieth century, it is also very much a contemporary site of ritual deposition, with a substantial quantity of deposited coins dating to the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. As outlined throughout this book, most coin-trees boast little history. They are largely contemporary creations, and there is little evidence to suggest that they occupy sites of historic ritual

significance. While the Isle Maree coin-tree and those in Ireland replaced earlier holy wells and rag-trees, those in England, Wales and most in Scotland appear to have been the first in their areas. Although many are close to historical sites and monuments, there is no literary or archaeological evidence identifying past practices of ritual deposition at these sites. Their contemporaneity therefore calls into question the claims that industrialisation, urbanisation, globalisation, and technological advancements have resulted in the 'disenchantment' of Britain.

The number of foreign coins—23 in total[9]—deposited at the Ardmaddy coin-tree coincides with the statistics given in Chapter 3: ten per cent of participants interviewed were international tourists. This is certainly more a practice for tourists and day trippers rather than local residents, a trend that is unsurprising considering most coin-trees can be found alongside footpaths at natural heritage sites. People who come across coin-trees tend to be visiting these sites, often in family groups, for leisurely walks along rural byways. In Chapter 3 it was suggested that the late twentieth-century rise in mass tourism in rural locations—brought about by increased disposable income, leisure time, mobility and access to areas of natural heritage—contributed significantly to the contemporary emergence of the coin-tree custom.

The Ardmaddy coin-tree also testifies to the mutability, modernisation and manipulation of meaning, as explored in Chapters 5 and 6. The custom of implanting an object into a tree stems from healing practices and supplications to saints, but this coin-tree, like many others, is identified as a wishing-tree. It is pinpointed on the Ordnance Survey map as 'Wishing Tree'; it is signposted on the track as 'Wishing Tree'; and the deposited note handwritten on the back of a pharmacy receipt is addressed 'Dear Wishing-Tree'. Likewise, the description of it in the information pamphlet at the nearby holiday cottage refers to early beliefs in 'tree spirits and fairies who would grant your wish'. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, the fairy is a particularly popular tradition to draw on in interpretations of the coin-tree custom, probably because today it is seen as a child-friendly concept.

The transition from curative and supplicatory to generic wishing is clearly traceable in interpretations of the Isle Maree coin-tree (detailed in Chapter 2). This tree was employed in healing rituals in association with the holy well of St. Maelrubha during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but by the late nineteenth century had become a 'wishing-tree'—a concept more inclusive in a time of declining faith in the power of saints and folk cures. For a custom to retain its appeal over time, it must continue

to be germane to modern participants, and generic wishing is clearly more relevant to people today. Coin-trees therefore testify to the historical trend in Britain of religious practice being gradually transformed into pleasurable pastime, ritual into recreation, over the modern period.[10]

The Ardmaddy coin-tree is not only being interpreted as a wishing-tree; it is being marketed as one. By being labelled 'Wishing Tree' on the Ordnance Survey map and on the walker's signpost, its meaning has become fixed, as outlined in Chapter 5. The descriptions of the tree in the information pamphlet and *The Heritage Trees of Scotland* (and now in this book also) further fix the meaning of the tree, with the interpretations of site custodians and historians presented as fact, no doubt influencing other people's interpretations. The use of capital letters—Wishing Tree rather than wishing-tree—also establishes the name a *proper* noun, designating it an established and unique structure, as well as a feature of interest for tourists.

This site is particularly interesting in light of Chapter 7's consideration of green monuments and their heritage. Ardmaddy is unique amongst coin-trees in its protection within a wooden enclosure, designed to prevent livestock from damaging it. However, the inclusion of a stile to permit *human* access to the tree strikes a good balance, demonstrating an awareness of how central interactivity is to this custom. Despite a level of protection, the custom has not been fossilised because people are still able to add their own deposits, but the fence itself perhaps discourages more exuberant engagement with the fragile tree.

Also unlike the majority of coin-trees, the Ardmaddy coin-tree has been awarded heritage status. Designated a 'Heritage Tree of Scotland' by a panel of judges in 2002, it is listed in Rodger et al.'s *Heritage Trees of Scotland*, and its custodian, Charles Struthers, was presented with a wooden trophy, notably inscribed with the words 'Wishing Tree'. This recognition awards the tree a certain level of protection; not only the wooden fencing, but also the removal of a number of fallen coined limbs, stored for safekeeping in Ardmaddy Castle.

However, as with the coin-tree fragments retained from Ardboe (Chapters 2 and 5), it is unlikely that they will remain intact for long. Even protected from the elements and further coin-insertion, they are not adequately stored to greatly delay the rate of decay. And the Ardmaddy coin-tree itself will continue to decay and fragment, regardless of the protective enclosure, and will probably only survive in its current state for a limited number of years. So, what can and should be done about this tree's inevitable degeneration—if anything?

In Chapter 7, it was argued that all deposited material, whether old or new, contributes to the ritual narrative of a site—and therefore deserves some form of heritage protection. However, it was also concluded that any attempts to preserve such structures would lead to a loss of environmental and sociocultural context, and a consequent fossilising of the intangible cultural heritage. The strategic recommendation offered was that the degeneration of these sites should instead be pre-empted by systematic recording. It is our responsibility, this book has stressed, to ensure that whatever can be done to record these sites and catalogue their deposits before we lose them, *should* be done.

Following this recommendation, in 2013 the Ardmaddy Wishing-Tree Project was instigated, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Catherine Mackichan Trust and the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology. The fact that three funding bodies were supportive of this project demonstrates an increasing recognition of the heritage value of such sites, and their support funded a small-scale excavation at the Ardmaddy coin-tree. Methods employed were relatively simple: without interfering with the tree itself, six small test pits were opened. Following five days of excavation, 703 small-finds were recovered; of these, 691 were coins. Each find was assigned a small-finds number in the field, which was later transferred to a digital Excel spreadsheet. All artefacts were stored appropriately according to type and condition, and then transported to the University of Manchester, where they were cleaned, weighed, measured and photographed to provide a visual record. Further details of the artefacts—their denominations, years of issue and their conditions—were then added to the spreadsheet.

Excavation reports were produced and distributed to Archaeology Scotland and the West of Scotland Archaeology Service, through whom they are currently available and would be valuable to any future researcher attempting to trace the ritual narrative of this site. The excavation report is also reproduced in Appendix B of this volume. All coins were returned to Ardmaddy Estate; they are currently stored in Ardmaddy Castle, and questions still surround their next destination. Some are earmarked for local museums, whilst the rest may be donated to charity, displayed at the castle or returned to their original place of deposition: the site of the coin-tree.

Without altering the coin-tree itself, the Ardmaddy Wishing-Tree Project successfully addressed most of the measures outlined by the ICHC for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage: identification,

documentation, research, promotion and transmission.[11] This was, however, only a small-scale project, and is intended as a starting point with the aim that leading heritage organisations will recognise the need for, and benefit of, preserving the intangible cultural heritage of coin-trees. Further archaeological excavations could be undertaken. Larger scale projects, which would allow researchers to excavate both deeper and over greater areas, would in all likelihood proffer invaluable information about the chronology of the coin-tree custom and the various forms it has taken.

Isle Maree would offer a particularly interesting and insightful site for such investigations. The North of Scotland Archaeology Society began archaeological examinations and analysis of the island in 2002 but no excavation was undertaken. If feasible, a full-scale excavation at this site is recommended, in order to determine if the time frame of deposition suggested by the material evidence coincides with literary records, as well as to ascertain the location of the holy well, which is no longer visible but features prominently in literary sources.

Contemporary coin-tree sites would also benefit from future archaeological excavations, especially in cases where coin-trees have been removed or destroyed, such as at Freeholders Wood, Hardcastle Crags and High Force. Additionally, our understanding of sites for which the literary and ethnographic evidence suggests a detailed and interesting chronology, such as St. Nectan's Glen and Patrishow, would benefit from excavations. Such projects—which would pose minimal interference with the coin-trees themselves—could consider the archaeological implications of these modern sites, further fostering an important dialogue between archaeology, history and folklore.

Coin-Trees: A New Layer

At its most basic form, this is a tangible layer; a layer of cultural artefacts—coins—quite literally blanketing natural features of the landscape. It is tangible in that we can see and touch these trees that are still being embedded with coins; still being layered. And in being so layered, these trees become a layer in themselves. The modern-day rural landscape is strewn with these physical structures that were not there a century—or, in some cases, even a decade—ago. And these structures alter the landscapes in which they are found, transforming space into place and becoming the loci of attention.

It is also a conceptual layer in that it demonstrates both continuities and changes in how we engage with our landscapes—and in how landscapes are agents of change themselves.[13] The democratisation of the countryside, with the introduction of laws that increased access and the growing ease of travel, heralded a change in how people viewed and engaged with their rural landscapes. While the rise of mass tourism and the boom in technologically mediated communication have altered how people view and engage with the world at large, making it easier for customs and ideas to spread across long distances. The contemporary coin-tree has been shown to have prospered not *despite* the modernity of its environment, but *because* of it, with the developments of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries providing the ideal environmental conditions under which folk customs can and do flourish.

While not everyone may approve of the coin-tree custom, anyone who has viewed these striking structures must surely disagree with Hoskins's assertion that 'since the year 1914, every single change in the English landscape has either uglified it or destroyed its meaning, or both'.[14] When most people encounter a contemporary coin-tree—when they first engage with this new layer of meaning on the landscape—their initial reaction is not one of distaste and criticism. Instead it is often of curiosity, admiration, even enchantment.

Coin-Trees: An Inveterate Innovation

The coin-tree was used as a microhistoric exemplar of a contemporary custom that has roots in the past. Although the 'traditional' uses of coin-trees, most notably folk-remedial, are no longer largely observed and have been replaced by purposes more relevant to contemporary society, the coin-tree stands as proof that Ruth Benedict was incorrect in her assertion that 'folklore has not survived as a living trait in modern civilization'.[15] The coin-tree custom, like many others, has survived urbanisation, industrialisation and post-industrialisation, emerging into the twenty-first century as a popular custom observed by thousands of modern-day participants. But does this make it a 'survival'?

As explored in Chapter 3, many late modern and contemporary practices have been deemed throwbacks to the 'primitive faith of mankind', as residual relics, mangled survivals and degenerated, discoloured, diminished versions of their predecessors.[16] Even when it is recognised that a custom is contemporary, it is generally assumed to be, if not a survival,

then a revival.[17] Such approaches however were shown to be overly Frazerian in approach. To repeat a quote of Clifford's: 'Metaphors of continuity and "survival" do not account for complex historical processes of appropriation, compromise, subversion, masking, invention and revival'.[18]

However, as has been stressed throughout this book, a custom does not simply spring forth from a vacuum. The coin-tree is no exception, undoubtedly stemming from far earlier beliefs and customs: holy wells, rag-trees, pin-trees, ritual implantation, coins as charms, touch-pieces and so on. The roots of this ritual evidently stretch far into the past, and it cannot be denied that people today are enacting the same custom observed by Queen Victoria on Isle Maree in 1877.[19] The coin-tree custom is therefore not a contemporary creation.

Neither, however, is it a simple survival or revival, for such a theory depends on the erroneous assumption that people and cultures are 'sealed and static', and that their customs do not change over time.[20] People today may participate in a seemingly identical practice as Queen Victoria—embedding a coin into a tree—but their reasons behind participation are probably not the same. What was once observed for religious purposes, as offerings to local saints, has now become recreational wish making and play. It is not a renaissance or a rediscovery then, for it is, beneath the surface, a different custom today than it was a century ago. Is it therefore the case that this custom is neither a revival nor a creation, but a *re*creation?

The conclusion is that the coin-tree is not a 'festering superstition', to use Margaret Schlegel's term from Forster's *Howards End*. It is not a decaying tradition, clinging to survival. It is animate, prevalent, and very much a feature of contemporary society that has come to us via the processes of ritual recycling. Tradition is, indeed, always being created anew.[21] The coin-tree attests to this. It also attests to Marshall Sahlins's assertion that, 'The old conceptual oppositions on which scientific ethnography was founded are dissolving: we discover continuity in change, tradition in modernity, even custom in commerce'.[22] The custom of tree-implantation may be an old one, but every contemporary coin-tree recreates the tradition as an inveterate innovation; something with the base material of an older custom but an entirely different purpose. Every process of substitution, adaptation or recycling imbues it with new meaning, creating a fresh layer to the ritual narrative of the landscape. This is not an inert, fossilised tradition; it is an active, dynamic,

fluid custom. The coin-tree thus proves that while folkloric practices may ebb as they become irrelevant to contemporary society, they are well equipped to adapt, acclimatise and re-emerge.

To return to Mrs. Wilcox of Howards End:

> There are pig's teeth stuck into the trunk, about four feet from the ground. The country people put them in long ago, and they think that if they chew a piece of the bark it will cure the toothache. The teeth are almost grown over now, and no one comes to the tree.[23]

Indeed they do not, Mrs. Wilcox. For they are all hammering pennies into coin-trees instead.

Notes

1. Rodger, D., Stokes, J. and Ogilvie, J. 2003. *Heritage Trees of Scotland*. London, Tree Council, p. 25.
2. The excavation report is available through Archaeology Scotland and the West of Scotland Archaeology Service.
3. Walsham, A. 2011. *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 6.
4. Rodger et al., *Heritage Trees of Scotland*, p. 25.
5. MacDonald, M. 1983. *Walking in South Lorn: The Area Between Oban and Craignish*. West Highland Series No. 5. Oban, Oban Times, p. 9.
6. Charles Struthers, pers. comm. 21/12/2011.
7. Lowenthal, D. 1985. *The Past Is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 10.
8. As Anne Patrick, Research Coordinator, Ordnance Survey, clarified: 'Single named trees are shown [on maps] when they are prominent landmarks' (pers. comm. 03/10/2013).
9. The 23 foreign coins were Euros and currency from the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, France, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Greece, Denmark, Germany, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, Canada and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.
10. Hutton, R. 1995. The English Reformation and the Evidence of Folklore. *Past & Present* 148, 89–116; Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*.
11. UNESCO. 2003. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Paris, UNESCO, 2.3.

12. Hoskins, W. G. 1955. *The Making of the English Landscape*. London, Hodder and Stoughton, p. 20.
13. Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 4.
14. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape*, p. 238.
15. Benedict, R. 1932. Folklore. In Seligman, E. R. A. and Johnson, A. (eds.) *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*. Vol. 6. London, MacMillan and Co., 288–293, p. 292.
16. Hope, R. C. 1893. *The Legendary Lore of the Holy Wells of England: Including Rivers, Lakes, Fountains, and Springs*. London, Elliot Stock, p. 13; Thiselton-Dyer, T. F. 1889. *The Folk-Lore of Plants*. London, Chatto & Windus, p. 28; Porteous, A. 1928. *Forest Folklore, Mythology, and Romance*. London, G. Allen & Unwin; Jones, F. 1954. *The Holy Wells of Wales*. Cardiff, University of Wales Press, p. 1; and Bord, J. and Bord, C. 1985. *Sacred Wells: Holy Wells and Water Lore in Britain and Ireland*. London, Paladin Books, p. 98.
17. Boissevain, J. (ed.) 1992. *Revitalizing European Rituals*. London and New York, Routledge, p. 7.
18. Clifford, J. 1988. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, p. 338.
19. Duff, D. (ed.) 1968. *Victoria in the Highlands: The Personal Journal of Her Majesty Queen Victoria: With Notes and Introductions, and a Description of the Acquisition and Rebuilding of Balmoral Castle*. London, Frederick Muller, p. 333.
20. Hutton, 'The English Reformation and the Evidence of Folklore', p. 92.
21. Hartland, E. S. 1885. The Science of Folk-Lore. *The Folk-Lore Journal* 3 (2), 97–121, p. 117.
22. Sahlins, M. 1993. Goodbye to Tristes Tropes: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History. *The Journal of Modern History* 65 (1), 1–25, p. 25.
23. Forster, E. M. 1910 [2000]. *Howards End*. New York, Penguin Books, 8.61.

Appendix A

Coin-Tree Catalogue

Coin-tree site	*County, Country*	*Quantity of coin-trees*	*Estimated date of first coining*	*Site custodianship*
Aira Force	Cumbria, England	7	c.2002	National Trust
Ardboe	Co. Tyrone, Northern Ireland	n/a	Pre-1940s	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
Ardmaddy	Argyll, Scotland	2	Pre-1950s	Ardmaddy Estate
Arnside Knott	Cumbria, England	1	Post-2007	National Trust
Becky Falls	Devon, England	16	c.2008	Dartmoor National Park
Bolton Abbey	Yorkshire, England	12	c.1992–1997	Bolton Abbey Estate
Brock Bottom	Lancashire, England	1	c.2007	Wyre Council
Bwlch Nant yr Arian	Ceredigion, Wales	n/a	c.2016	Natural Resources Wales
Claife Station	Cumbria, England	1	c.2010	National Trust
Clonenagh	Co. Laois, Ireland	1	Pre-1990s	Laois County Council
Corfe Castle	Dorset, England	1	c.2010	National Trust
Cragside	Northumberland, England	1	Post-2002	National Trust
Dovedale	Derbyshire, England	13	c.2002	National Trust
Dunkeld	Perthshire, Scotland	4	2012–2014	National Trust for Scotland
Fairy Glen	Ross-shire, Scotland	5	c.2005	Private ownership
Fore	Co. Westmeath, Ireland	n/a	Pre-1980s	Westmeath County Council

(continued)

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Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75517-5

Coin-tree site	*County, Country*	*Quantity of coin-trees*	*Estimated date of first coining*	*Site custodianship*
Freeholders Wood	Yorkshire, England	n/a	Unknown	Woodland Trust
Gougane Barra	Co. Cork, Ireland	8	Pre-1970s	Private ownership
Grizedale	Cumbria, England	5	Unknown	Forestry Commission
Hardcastle Crags	Yorkshire, England	6	Pre-2004	National Trust
High Elms	Greater London, England	2	2015	Bromley Council
High Force	County Durham, England	9	c.2006	Raby Estate
Ingleton	Yorkshire, England	29	Unknown	Private ownership
Isle Maree	Wester Ross, Scotland	15	Pre-nineteenth century	Private ownership
Leigh Woods	Bristol, England	1	Unknown	National Trust
Loxley	Yorkshire, England	1	Unknown	Sheffield Council
Lud's Church	Staffordshire, England	2	2008	Peak District National Park
Lydford Gorge	Devon, England	12	c.1997	National Trust
Malham	Yorkshire, England	23	c.1997	National Trust
Marbury	Cheshire, England	2	c.2009	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Padley Gorge	Derbyshire, England	3	Unknown	National Trust
Patrishow	Powys, Wales	1	Unknown	Private ownership
Portmeirion	Gwynedd, Wales	13	2006	Ymddiriedolaeth Clough Williams-Ellis Foundation
Rydal	Cumbria, England	3	Unknown	National Trust
Sailean nan Cuileag	Highland, Scotland	4	c.2007	Forest Enterprise Scotland
Snowdon	Gwynedd, Wales	2	Unknown	Snowdonia National Park
St Nectan's Glen	Cornwall, England	5	Unknown	Private ownership
Stock Ghyll	Cumbria, England	8	Unknown	South Lakeland District Council
Tarn Hows	Cumbria, England	22	c.2008	National Trust
Tarr Steps	Somerset, England	14	Pre-1998	Exmoor National Park
Yorkshire Sculpture Park	Yorkshire, England	1	c.2010	Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Appendix B

The Ardmaddy Wishing-Tree Excavation 2013

Summary

This report presents and discusses the results of a small-scale excavation led by the University of Manchester and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, at the site of the Ardmaddy 'Wishing-Tree', Argyll, Scotland. The project forms part of a doctoral thesis, entitled 'Coining the Coin-Tree: Contextualising a contemporary British custom' by postgraduate researcher Ceri Houlbrook.

The site is located half a mile south of Ardmaddy Castle, Argyll, in a pass known as Bealach na Gaoithe: the 'pass of the winds'. The 'Wishing-Tree' is a dead hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), lying beside a track leading from Ardmaddy Bay to Degnish Peninsula. It is known as the 'Wishing-Tree' because local custom avers that inserting a coin into the tree's bark will entitle the depositor to a wish, a custom widely observed by local residents and tourists alike.

A preliminary visit to the site in September 2012 revealed that a minority of the coins within the tree are pre-decimal, but the decayed state of the tree has caused many of the coins to fall onto the ground and subsequently become buried. It was one aim of this project, therefore, to

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Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75517-5

determine the scale of coin-burial and, in dating the coins, a time frame of deposition. Another aim was to determine whether other forms of votive objects have been deposited at the site.

This project involved an excavation undertaken from 30 August to 5 September 2013. A team of five archaeologists from the University of Manchester investigated six test pits in close proximity to the tree, ranging in size from 1.5 m × 0.5 m to 0.8 m × 0.8 m. A total of 703 small finds were recovered and recorded.

Introduction

This report provides an account of the Ardmaddy Excavation, conducted at the site of the Ardmaddy 'Wishing-Tree', Argyll, Scotland. This site was selected for excavation as part of a doctoral thesis, entitled 'Coining the Coin-Tree: Contextualising a contemporary British custom', by postgraduate researcher Ceri Houlbrook. Her thesis considers the contemporary resurgence of the British custom of inserting coins into trees—producing what she terms 'coin-trees'—and the site of Ardmaddy was selected for this project due to its purported age. While the majority of coin-trees in Britain do not predate the 1990s, the Ardmaddy 'Wishing-Tree' is believed to boast greater antiquity.

The landowner, Charles Struthers of Ardmaddy Estate, estimates that the coin-tree fell in the 1990s, but believes that the custom of coin insertion far predates this, probably to the 1920s and possibly earlier (pers. comm. 04/09/2013). Rodger et al.'s *Heritage Trees of Scotland* (2003) suggests that the custom is older still, describing the Ardmaddy coin-tree as follows:

> This lone, wind-blasted hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna) growing in the wilds of Argyll is one of the few known 'wishing trees' in Scotland. It is encrusted with coins that have been pressed into the thin bark by generations of superstitious travellers over the centuries, each coin representing a wish. Every available space on the main trunk bristles with money, even the smaller branches and exposed roots. This magical tree provides a living connection with the ancient folklore and customs of Scotland… (2003: 25)

However, despite its status as a 'heritage tree' of Scotland and the claim that this custom has been practised at the Ardmaddy coin-tree 'by generations…over the centuries', only one other literary source has been

identified which references it. Mairi MacDonald's 1983 hiker's guide, *Walking in South Lorn*, briefly describes the tree as a feature on the 'Degnish Peninsula' route:

> an incredibly gnarled and twisted hawthorn of considerable age, the growth of which is said to have been irrevocably stunted by the traditional custom of embedding votive coins in its venerable bark (1983: 9)

Although this description reveals that the custom of coin insertion was well established by the 1980s, nothing more appears to be known about it. It was hoped that an excavation of the site would yield more information on the length of time the coin-tree custom has been observed at this particular site, and what forms it has taken.

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, a team of five Archaeology postgraduates from the University of Manchester undertook a small-scale excavation of the site. Without disturbing the coin-tree itself, five test pits were investigated inside the coin-tree's protective enclosure, and, for comparative purposes, a sixth test pit outside the enclosure.

The excavation took place between Saturday 31 August and Thursday 5 September 2013.

Previous Fieldwork

The Ardmaddy coin-tree is referred to in Rodger et al.'s *Heritage Trees of Scotland*, and the brief—and unreferenced—information presented there is reproduced in Stokes and Rodger's *The Heritage Trees of Britain and Northern Ireland*.[1] However, no previous attempt has been made to determine a chronology of deposition at the site, nor any previous archaeological excavations within the tree's vicinity. Only one other coin-tree in Britain and Ireland has been subject to archaeological attention. The site of Isle Maree, Wester Ross, Scotland, of which there has been significantly more written, was surveyed by the North of Scotland Archaeology Society in 2002. However, their results were not published and no excavation was undertaken.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the project were to identify any above and below ground archaeological features within close proximity to the Ardmaddy coin-tree. This was undertaken in order to determine the following:

- The level of tree decay and coin-burial at the site.
- Utilising the dates of the any coins recovered in order to construct a chronology of deposition.
- To ascertain if there is evidence of any other forms of deposit by recovering and recording any non-coin objects.

Location

The site is pinpointed on the 2013 Ordnance Survey Map as 'Wishing Tree' (coordinates 178871 715191). It is located half a mile south of Ardmaddy Castle, Argyll, in a pass known as Bealach na Gaoithe: the 'pass of the winds'. The Ardmaddy 'Wishing-Tree' (referred to hereafter as the coin-tree) is uprooted and lies prone within a wooden enclosure, 1.2 m east of a rough track. The enclosure was erected during the 1990s, following the tree's fall, and is designed to deter livestock rather than people; on the enclosure's eastern side, there is a stile providing access.

The track, open to pedestrians and authorised vehicles only, cuts across land privately owned by Ardmaddy Estate, and leads from Ardmaddy Bay to Degnish Peninsula. It is a popular hiker's route, detailed for example in MacDonald's *Walking in South Lorn* (1983: 9), and there are several 'footpath' signs indicating the route, one of which informs walkers that they are *en route* to the 'Wishing Tree'.

The coin-tree is 528 ft above sea level, situated between two steep slopes in a high pass between two valleys. The site offers a good vantage point towards Ardmaddy Bay and Ardmaddy Castle to the north. Grid reference: NM 78880 15191.

Methodology

On the initial field trip in September 2012, the empirical data of the coin-tree itself was recorded. A photographic record of the tree was compiled, and the condition and measurements of the tree were recorded. The coins and other objects still attached to the tree were catalogued: their object type and, for coins, their denominations and years of issue were recorded. Consequently, the objects still attached to the coin-tree were not included in the investigations of the 2013 excavation, which was concerned with those objects which had become dislodged from the tree and buried.

On the 2013 excavation, a site survey was made employing a Leica TC407, surveying the location of the Ardmaddy coin-tree, any significant loose branches, the wooden enclosure, and the track. Photographs were taken of the coin-tree, both close-ups and within the wider landscape. The area within the enclosure and an area of one metre wide outside the enclosure were metal detected employing a C-Scope 990XD. Areas which produced high detection levels were marked and surveyed.

The locations of test pits were decided based on three criteria: high concentration of metal detected 'hot spots', close proximity to the coin-tree whilst simultaneously considering their safety and practicality in relation to the tree and the enclosure. Areas were also chosen so as to ensure minimal disturbance to the coin-tree and any significantly sized loose branches; consequently, the size and shapes of the test pits were irregular. Six test pits were chosen: five within the fence and, for comparative purposes, one outside. The corners of each test pit were surveyed.

The top of each test pit was metal detected and any identified 'hot spots' were fingertip searched. Any finds on the surface were 3D recorded and labelled, listing the site code (AWT13), the test pit number, and an assigned small finds number (x1, x2, x3…). The test pits were then de-turfed; the reverse of the turf was metal detected and fingertip searched, and any finds were labelled with a test pit number, context number, and a 'turf' number (t1, t2, t3…) but not 3D recorded. Context numbers were assigned in the order spits were uncovered amongst all test pits.

The first 10 cm spit of each pit was excavated by hand, employing the use of trowels, keeping the spits level with surface to maintain constant depths. All finds were 3D recorded as they were uncovered. The spits were recorded, photographed and drawn, and excavation and recording were repeated for the next 10 cm spits. Stratigraphic profiles were not undertaken because there were no archaeological features and very little natural stratigraphy to record. The excavation of each test pit continued until a spit was reached which produced no finds; the pit would then be backfilled and re-turfed by hand.

Each find encountered was assigned a small-finds number in the field using a paper record which was later transferred to a digital Excel spreadsheet. All small-finds, both coins and non-coin objects, were stored appropriately according to their type and condition, and then returned

to the University of Manchester, where they were cleaned; weighed; measured; and photographed to provide a visual record. The details of the artefacts were later added to the spreadsheet: their denominations, years of issue, and their conditions, which included noting whether they showed signs of damage through percussion and assigning them a corrosion level from 1 to 4. Level 1 showed no signs of corrosion; level 2 exhibited discolouration and patination; level 3 exhibited signs of corrosion and rust; and level 4 were deformed due to high levels of corrosion and rust.

Excavation Results

Test Pit 1

Test Pit 1 was 0.8 m × 0.8 m, and was located within the enclosure, between the two primary limbs of the coin-tree and the eastern fence of the enclosure. It was also situated directly beside the stile designed to allow access into the enclosure. The first spit was assigned the context number 001; it consisted of stone, sand and soil, and was dark, slightly grey-brown in colour, with patches of mid-orange brown. The north-east corner of the spit was dominated by roots. One coin and one piece of string were discovered on the surface; 43 coins were recovered from the turf (and therefore not allocated small-finds numbers or 3D recorded); and 27 were unearthed within the first spit. The majority of these were located to the south of the pit, at the edge closest to the main limb of the coin-tree.

The second spit (context number 008) consisted of stone, soil, and sandy silt, and was mid-orange brown in colour. There were high concentrations of small stones in the north-west and north-east corners, possibly the result of tree roots. 2 coins were unearthed, one of which was a pre-decimal one penny, both located at the top of the spit in the south-western corner; the closest corner to the coin-tree's primary limb.

Test Pit 1 produced one pre-decimal coin; this was excavated in the south-western corner, closest to the coin-tree.

The third spit produced no finds or archaeological features. Having reached a depth of 30 cm, Test Pit 1 was backfilled and re-turfed.

Test Pit 2

Test Pit 2 measured 1 m × 1 m and was located immediately south-west of the coin-tree, between the tree's root-end and the south-west corner of the enclosure. The first 10 cm spit (002) consisted of stone and soil, and was dark brown in colour. Twenty coins were recovered from the turf, and 98 finds (including a section of pipe, an unidentified piece of metal, and a metal ring pull as well as coins) were unearthed within the pit. The majority were located along the northern section, along the edge closest to the coin-tree.

The second 10 cm spit (007) consisted of soil, stone and gravel, and was dark brown in colour. 76 small finds were recovered, including a large, bent nail in the centre of the pit's northern edge. The majority of the coins were found throughout the context along the northern edge, with high concentrations in the north-west corner, closest to the coin-tree, but diminishing towards the lower level of the spit.

The third 10 cm spit (011) consisted of soil and stone, and was also dark brown in colour. One coin was recovered in the north-west corner at the lowest level of the spit. The fourth 10 cm spit (013) consisted of soil, stone and gravel, was also dark brown, and produced no finds or archaeological features. At a depth of 40 cm, Test Pit 2 was backfilled and re-turfed.

There appears to be no significance to the distribution of coins according to their years of issue.

Test Pit 3

Test Pit 3 measured 1.5 m × 0.5 m, filling the narrow space between the coin-tree and the enclosure's western edge, running alongside a large loose branch. Due to the restrictive nature of this test pit's layout, this was the last to be excavated.

Test Pit 3 consisted of stone, dark brown soil, and a high concentration of red-brown fragments of wood. Seventy-one finds were recovered from the turf, and 110 were unearthed within the first spit (context number 015). The majority of the finds were post-decimalisation coins, but 11 were pre-decimal. The high concentration of coins and the large quantity of wooden fragments within Test Pit 3 are probably due to a branch having fallen into that area from the coin-tree and subsequently having decayed. The south-east corner of the pit could not be excavated due to a large section of branch within the turf.

The first spit of Test Pit 3 proved to be the most fruitful but, despite the high quantity of finds it produced, it was not fully investigated due to time constraints. The first spit (context number 015) was taken to various levels before it required backfilling due to a shortage in time.

There appears to be no significance to the distribution of coins according to their years of issue.

Test Pit 4

Test Pit 4 measured 1 m × 0.8 m and was located in the south-east corner of the enclosure. Overhanging the northern edge of the pit was a raised limb of the coin-tree, on which there was a high quantity of coins.

The first 10 cm spit (context number 003) consisted of soil, stone and clay, and was orange-brown in colour. Thirty finds were recovered from the turf, and 50 unearthed within the pit; these were slightly concentrated along the north edge of the pit, beneath the overhanging branch of the coin-tree; probably a result of many coins having fallen from it.

The second 10 cm spit (006) also consisted of soil, stone and clay, but was grey-blue in colour. Five coins were unearthed in this spit, all of which were close to the western edge of the pit, with three clustered in the north-west corner beneath the overhanging branch.

The fourth 10 cm spit (012), which again consisted of soil, stone and clay, produced no finds or archaeological features. At a depth of 30 cm, Test Pit 4 was backfilled and re-turfed.

There appears to be no significance to the distribution of coins according to their years of issue.

Test Pit 5

Test Pit 5 measured 1 m × 0.8 m and was located in the northern section of the enclosure, immediately north of the coin-tree. There was a high level of decayed wood in the turf along the south edge of the pit.

The first 10 cm spit (context number 009) consisted of stone, gravel, sand, soil, and roots, and was mid-brown in colour with pale brown sandy patches around the roots. Fifty-two finds were recovered from the turf, and 90 were unearthed within the pit. A seashell, a piece of glass, and plastic-coated wire were found amongst the coins. At the level

immediately below the turf, the finds were widely distributed across the pit. However, at the base of the spit they were concentrated in the south-west corner and south edge, where a high quantity of decaying wood was also present.

The second spit (014) consisted of stone, gravel, sand and soil, and was mid-brown in colour with yellow sandy patches. Seven finds were recovered from this spit, clustered in the south-west corner at the base of a piece of decayed wood, and only in the top levels of the spit.

The third spit (016) also consisted of stone, gravel, sand and soil, but had high levels of grey-brown silt; the mixed nature of the context was probably due to root activity. This spit produced no finds or archaeological features, and so at a depth of 30 cm was backfilled and re-turfed.

There appears to be no significance to the distribution of coins according to their years of issue.

Test Pit 6

Test Pit 6 measured 1 m × 0.8 m and was the only test pit located outside of the enclosure. It was north-east of the enclosure and the coin-tree, below the stile. This area was selected because it was one of the few areas outside the enclosure which was identified as a potential 'hot spot' by the metal detector.

The first 10 cm spit (004) consisted of soil and stone, and was dark black-brown in colour. Two coins and a shoelace were recovered from the turf, but none were unearthed within the pit. The second spit (005) consisted of soil and silty sand with gravel patches, the mixed nature of the context probably due to root activity. It produced no finds or archaeological features, and at a depth of 20 cm, Test Pit 6 was backfilled and re-turfed.

Discussion

The aim of this project was to identify any above and below ground artefacts and archaeological features in close proximity to the Ardmaddy coin-tree. This was undertaken in order to establish a time frame of deposition and to determine if the custom of coin insertion post-dates—or was practised alongside—a different form of deposition.

The Distribution of the Coins

Test Pit 1 produced a total of 73 coins and one piece of string. Test Pit 2 produced 191 coins, a fragment of clay pipe, a piece of metal, a ring pull, and a nail. Test Pit 3, 180 coins and a piece of metal (possibly a button); Test Pit 4, 81 coins and a piece of string; and Test Pit 5, 146 coins, a seashell, a piece of glass, and blue plastic-coated wire. Test Pit 6, however, produced only two coins and a shoelace, and these were both recovered from the turf. It is likely that it was Test Pit 6's location outside the enclosure which resulted in the low quantity of finds.

The results demonstrate that closer proximity to the coin-tree yielded more finds. In Test Pit 1, the majority of the coins recovered were located to the south of the pit, particularly in the south-west corner, in the section closest to the main limb of the coin-tree. In Test Pit 2, the majority of coins were uncovered along the northern section, along the edge closest to the coin-tree. In Test Pit 4, the coins were concentrated along the north edge of the pit, beneath an overhanging branch of the coin-tree. Likewise, the coins recovered from Test Pit 5 were concentrated in the south-west corner and along the south edge, closer to the coin-tree, where a high quantity of decaying wood was also present.

These results clearly affirm the coin-tree as the focal point of the custom of deposition. Coins do not appear to have been deposited randomly throughout the enclosure, but specifically within/on the coin-tree itself. It is notable that context 015 in Test Pit 3 produced the most finds but also produced the highest concentration of woody debris, as well as 26 coins still embedded within fragments of wood, suggesting that many of the coins uncovered from this pit were from a fallen and decayed branch. Indeed, the results suggest that the majority of all coins uncovered were initially deposited in/on the coin-tree, and were dislodged before burial, as opposed to having been originally deposited on the ground.

The Dates of the Coins

The majority of the coins uncovered were in poor condition; they were either heavily worn or badly corroded, some suffering from verdigris. However, most of them were datable, with only 133 coins proving too worn or corroded to reveal their years of issue.

The earliest datable coin was a one penny issued in 1914. Sixteen more coins were datable as pre-decimal, ranging from 1921 to 1970, whilst a further seven were identified as pre-decimal based on their size and design. The vast majority of the coins (649), however, were decimal; the most common year of issue was 1971, but as Graph 1 illustrates, the decade which produced the highest quantity of deposited coins was the 1990s. The large volume issued in the 2000s also demonstrates that the custom of coin deposition did not cease with the fall of the tree, whilst the presence of coins from the 2010s—a 2011 one penny in the first spit of Test Pit 4, along with a 2013 five pence observed within the coin-tree itself—reveals that the custom is still active.

The Denominations of the Coins

Only eight of the coins recovered were unidentifiable; for the vast majority, their denominations were easily deducible. As Graph 2 illustrates, the highest denomination group was the decimal one penny, closely followed by the decimal two pence; following these, the numbers sharply decline. This demonstrates that a coin's popularity as a deposit is inversely proportionate to its economic value.

Although the majority of coins were British, there were 14 examples of foreign currency. Representative countries were the Netherlands, the United States of America, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, France, the Republic of Ireland, the Czech Republic, Canada, Switzerland, Greece, Denmark and Germany. This would suggest that foreign tourists have also been participating in the custom.

The low denominations of these coins, illustrated in Table B.1, are in keeping with those of the British coins deposited. Likewise, their dates are not dissimilar, ranging from 1968 to post-2002 (the two Euro cent).

Table B.1 The non-British currency excavated

Country	*Denominations*	*Years of issue*
Netherlands	5 guilders	1985
USA	1 cent	Unknown
	1 cent	1980
	1 dime	1996
	1 dime	1986
Trinidad and Tobago	25 cents	1976
The Republic of Ireland	1 penny	1971
The Czech Republic	20 haleru	Unknown (1993–2003)
Canada	1 cent	1979
France	5 centime	1973
Switzerland	10 rappen	1968
Greece	5 drachma	1984
Denmark	25 ore	1996
Germany	2 pfennig	Unknown
Unknown (Europe)	2 Euro cent	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

Non-coin Deposits

Of the 703 small finds recorded, 12 were not coins, and they are detailed in the following table:

Of these, four were of pliable material: the two pieces of string, the shoe/bootlace and the pieces of blue, plastic-coated wire. As there was a high volume of pieces of cloth—ribbons, string, rags—currently tied to the coin-tree's branches, it is possible that these four finds were, likewise, initially affixed to the tree's branches. Other non-coin deposits may have been originally inserted *into* the coin-tree: the large bent nail and the piece of glass.

The remaining non-coin finds are more ambiguous, and may or may not have been intended as deposits: the seashells, the possible metal button, the metal ring pull and the piece of clay pipe. These objects were possibly deposited at the site in lieu of coins; however, viewed out of context this would be pure speculation, and it is also possible that they were waste products, accidental losses, or, in the case of the seashells, deposited via natural processes.

Small finds number	*Trench*	*Context*	*Object*	*Description*	*Measurements*
x2	1	001	String	One piece of off-white string knotted to form a loop	Length: 312 mm
x5	2	002	Pipe	Fragment of dark brown, glazed clay pipe	89 mm × 67 mm
x33	2	002	Piece of metal	Heavily corroded unidentifiable piece of metal	10 mm × 8 mm
x134	2	002	Ring pull	Metal ring pull showing some signs of corrosion	26 mm × 20 mm
x197	2	007	Nail	Rusty, bent hand-cut nail with squared head	Length: 77 mm Head: 16 mm × 15 mm
x268	5	009	Plastic wire	Two pieces of blue plastic-coated wire, originally wound around each other, showing little sign of corrosion	Lengths: 250 mm and 346 mm
x305	5	009	Glass	Jagged, clear glass fragment	18 mm × 11 mm
x314	5	009	Seashell	Fragment of white dog cockle (*Glycymeris*), common in the British Isles	20 mm × 16 mm
x410	3	015	Possible button	Heavily corroded piece of metal, possibly a button	11 mm × 10 mm
t222	4	003	String	Piece of frayed, cream-brown string, knotted to form a loop	Length: 250 mm
t223	6	004	Shoelace	Black, mud-coated shoe/bootlace, with one knot	Length: 395 mm
t224	2	002	Mussel shell	Fragmented blue and white mussel shell (*Mytilus edulis*), common in the British Isles	28 mm × 21 mm

Small Finds Database

Test Pit Dimensions

Test pit	*Dimensions*
1	0.8 m × 0.8 m
2	1 m × 1 m
3	1.5 m × 0.5 m
4	1 m × 0.8 m
5	1 m × 0.8 m
6	1 m × 0.8 m

Context Register

Context no.	*Context type*	*Trench*	*Recorded by*	*Checked by*	*Date*
1	Top Spit	1	EM	LB	01/09/2013
2	Top Spit	2	JN	LB	01/09/2013
3	Top Spit	3	JP	LB	01/09/2013
4	Top Spit	6	CH	LB	02/09/2013
5	2nd Spit	6	CH	LB	02/09/2013
6	2nd Spit	4	JP	LB	02/09/2013
7	2nd Spit	2	JN	LB	02/09/2013
8	2nd Spit	1	EM	LB	02/09/2013
9	Top Spit	5	LB	LB	02/09/2013
10	3rd Spit	1	EM	LB	03/09/2013
11	3rd Spit	2	JN	LB	03/09/2013
12	3rd Spit	4	JP	LB	03/09/2013
13	4th Spit	2	JN	LB	03/09/2013
14	2nd Spit	5	EM/LB	LB	04/09/2013
15	Top Spit	3	LB	LB	04/09/2013
16	3rd Spit	5	LB	LB	04/09/2013

Small Finds

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x1	1	1	Coin: 20p	1988	5.0	23 mm	n/a	No	2
x2	1	1	1 Piece of string	n/a	1.2	Length 312 mm with one knot making it circular	n/a	n/a	n/a
x3	2	2	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.9	21 mm	n/a	No	4
x4	2	2	Coin: 1p	1979	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x5	2	2	Fragment of clay pipe	n/a	186.4	Length 89 mm, width 67 mm	n/a	n/a	n/a
x6	2	2	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x7	2	2	Coin: 1p	1990	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x8	2	2	Coin: 2p	1980	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x9	2	2	Coin: 2p	1987	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x10	2	2	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x11	2	2	Coin: 1p	1996	3.1	21 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	4
x12	2	2	Coin: 5p	2001	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x13	2	2	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x14	2	2	Coin: 2p	1971	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x15	2	2	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p	1939	9.0	31 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x16	1	1	Coin: 50p	1997	7.8	27 mm	n/a	No	2
x17	1	1	Coin: 10p	1992	6.3	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x18	1	1	Coin: 5p	2006	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x19	1	1	Coin: 1p	2000	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x20	1	1	Coin: 20p	1982	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x21	1	1	Coin: 2p	1999	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x22	1	1	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x23	1	1	Coin: 50p	1997	8.0	27 mm	n/a	No	2
x24	2	2	Coin: 1p	1997	3.3	21 mm	n/a	No	3
x25	2	2	Coin: 10p	1992	6.5	24 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x26	2	2	Coin: 2p	1971	7.2	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x27	2	2	Coin: 2p	1979	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x28	2	2	Coin: 1p	1971	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x29	2	2	Coin: 2p	2000	6.7	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x30	2	2	Coin: 5p	1990	3.3	18 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x31	2	2	Coin: 5p	1990	3.2	17 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x32	2	2	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x33	2	2	Piece of metal	Unknown	0.1	10 mm × 8 mm	n/a	n/a	n/a
x34	2	2	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.6	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x35	2	2	Coin: 1p	1986	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x36	2	2	Coin: 2p	1994	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x37	2	2	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.7	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x38	2	2	Coin: 1p	1989	3.5	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x39	2	2	Coin: 20p	2005	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x40	2	2	Coin: 1p	1999	3.3	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x41	2	2	Coin: 1p	2000	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x42	2	2	Coin: 2p	1971	6.7	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x43	4	3	Coin: 1p	2003	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	1

x44	4	3	Coin: 2p	1971	7.3	26 mm	n/a	No	1
x45	4	3	Coin: 1p	2006	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	1
x46	4	3	Coin: 1p	2011	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	1
x47	4	3	Coin: 2p	2008	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x48	4	3	Coin: 2p	1976	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x49	4	3	Coin: 2p	1990	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x50	4	3	Coin: 2p in wood	2001	7.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x51	1	1	Coin: 1p	2000	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x52	1	1	Coin: 10p	2006	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x53	1	1	Coin: 2p	1981	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x54	1	1	Coin: 1p	2006	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x55	1	1	Coin: 1p	1993	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x56	1	1	Coin: 1p	2000	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x57	1	1	Coin: 1p	1976	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x58	1	1	Coin: 5p	2000	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x59	1	1	Coin: 2p	1981	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x60	2	2	Coin: 2p	1997	6.8	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	4
x61	2	2	Coin: 1p	1980	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x62	2	2	Coin: 5p	1990	3.2	17 mm	n/a	No	2
x63	2	2	Coin: 5p	1999	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x64	2	2	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.4	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x65	2	2	Coin: 1p	1999	3.3	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	4
x66	2	2	Coin: 1p	1974	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x67	2	2	Coin: 5p	2003	3.3	17 mm	n/a	No	2
x68	2	2	Coin: 20p	1982	4.9	22 mm	n/a	No	2
x69	2	2	Coin: 1p	1977	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x70	2	2	Coin: 5p	1990	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x71	2	2	Coin: 2p	1988	7.1	25 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x72	2	2	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.2	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x73	2	2	Coin: 1p	2004	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x74	2	2	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.5	21 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x75	2	2	Coin: 1p	1987	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x76	2	2	Coin: 1p	2001	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x77	2	2	Coin: 1p	1984	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x78	2	2	Coin: 5 Netherland guilders	1985	3.4	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x79	2	2	Coin: 20p	1987	4.8	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x80	2	2	Coin: 50p	1997	7.7	27 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x81	2	2	Coin: 20p	1990	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x82	2	2	Coin: 2p	200-	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x83	2	2	Coin: 2p	1994	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x84	2	2	Coin: 2p	1997	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x85	2	2	Coin: 1p	1990	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x86	2	2	Coin: 10p	2004	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x87	2	2	Coin: 5p	1996	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x88	2	2	Coin: 5p	1996	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x89	2	2	Coin: 5p	1990	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x90	2	2	Coin: 2p	1981	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x91	2	2	Coin: 20p	1997	5.0	21 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x92	2	2	Coin: 10p	2004	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x93	2	2	Coin: 5p	1991	3.2	17 mm	n/a	No	2
x94	2	2	Coin: 5p	2006	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2

x95	2	2	Coin: 2p	1996	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x96	2	2	Coin: 20p	2000	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x97	2	2	Coin: 1p	1971	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x98	4	3	Coin: 5p	1990	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x99	4	3	Coin: 5p	1990	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x100	4	3	Coin: 10p	2001	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x101	4	3	Coin: 20p	2002	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x102	4	3	Coin: 2p	2003	6.7	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x103	4	3	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.3	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x104	4	3	Coin: 2p	2000	6.3	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x105	4	3	Coin: 1p	Unknown	2.4	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x106	4	3	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p	1967	9.2	31 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x107	4	3	Coin: 2p	1999	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x108	4	3	Coin: 1p	1986	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x109	4	3	Coin: 1p	1988	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x110	4	3	Coin: 2p	1981	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x111	4	3	Coin: 2p	1986	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x112	4	3	Coin: 2p	1988	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x113	4	3	Coin: 1p	2001	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x114	4	3	Coin: 2p	1997	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x115	4	3	Coin: 10p	1997	6.6	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x116	4	3	Coin: 1p	1988	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x117	4	3	Coin: 1p	1997	3.2	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x118	4	3	Coin: 1p	1971	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x119	4	3	Coin: 5p	2001	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x120	4	3	Coin: 1 US cent	Unknown	2.3	19 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x121	4	3	Coin: 10p	2000	6.6	24 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x122	4	3	Coin: 2p	2000	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x123	4	3	Coin: 1p	2004	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x124	4	3	Coin: 2p	1990	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	1
x125	4	3	Coin: 2p	1993	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x126	4	3	Coin: 1p	2003	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x127	4	3	Coin: 5 US cents	Unknown	4.7	21 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x128	4	3	Coin: 1p	Unknown	2.9	21 mm	n/a	No	4
x129	4	3	Coin: 2p	1987	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x130	4	3	Coin: 2p	1988	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x131	4	3	Coin: 2p	1971	6.7	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x132	4	3	Coin: 1p	1987	3.6	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x133	VOID								
x134	2	2	Ring Pull	n/a	0.6	26 mm × 20 mm	n/a	n/a	n/a
x135	2	2	Coin: 10p	1997	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x136	2	2	Coin: 2p	1971	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x137	2	2	Coin: 2p	2002	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x138	2	2	Coin: 1p	1979	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x139	2	2	Coin: 1p	1985	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x140	2	2	Coin: 1p	1986	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x141	2	2	Coin: 1p	1984	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x142	2	2	Coin: 5p	1991	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x143	2	2	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x144	2	2	Coin: 2p	1971	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x145	2	2	Coin: 5p	1999	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2

x146	2	2	Coin: 2p	1990	7.2	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x147	2	2	Coin: 1p	1999	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x148	2	2	Coin: 2p	1980	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x149	2	2	Coin: 2p	1980	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x150	2	2	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x151	2	2	Coin: 25 Cents Trinidad and Tobago	1976	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x152	2	2	Coin: 2p	1978	6.7	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x153	2	2	Coin: 2p	1971	6.8	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x154	2	2	Coin: 50p	1997	8.0	27 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x155	2	2	Coin: 2p	1971	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x156	2	2	Coin: 2p	1977	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x157	2	2	Coin: 1p	1975	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x158	2	2	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x159	2	2	Coin: 2p	1971	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x160	2	2	Coin: 1p	1974	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x161	2	2	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p	Pre-dec.	8.8	31 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x162	2	2	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.7	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x163	1	1	Coin: 1p	1973	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x164	1	1	Coin: 1p	1971	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x165	1	1	Coin: 2p	1986	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x166	1	1	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x167	1	1	Coin: 2p	1978	6.5	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x168	1	1	Coin: 2p	2008	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x169	1	1	Coin: 2p	2003	6.3	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x170	4	3	Coin: 50p	1997	7.8	27 mm	n/a	No	2
x171	4	3	Coin: 5p	1994	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x172	4	3	Coin: 5p	1990	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x173	4	3	Coin: 20p	2001	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x174	4	3	Coin: 20p	1983	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x175	4	3	Coin: 5p	2007	3.3	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x176	4	3	Coin: 1p	2002	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x177	1	1	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x178	1	1	Coin: 2p	2005	6.8	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x179	1	1	Coin: 50p	1997	7.7	27 mm	n/a	No	2
x180	4	6	Coin: 2p	1971	6.7	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x181	4	6	Coin: 5p	1991	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x182	4	6	Coin: 2p	1995	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x183	2	7	Coins: 1p × 2	Unknown	7.0	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x184	2	7	Coin: 2p	1971	6.7	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x185	2	7	Coin: 1p	1987	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x186	2	7	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x187	2	7	Coin: 2p	Unknown	5.8	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x188	2	7	Coin: 2p	1971	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2

x189	2	7	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x190	2	7	Coin: 2p	1988	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x191	2	7	Coin: 1p	1971	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x192	2	7	Coin: 1p	1998	3.2	21 mm	n/a	No	4
x193	2	7	Coin: 1p	1989	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x194	2	7	Coin: 1p	1988	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x195	2	7	Coin: 2p	1977	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x196	2	7	Coin: 20p	1998	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x197	2	7	Coin: Crooked hand-made nail	n/a	21.2	Length 77 mm; head 16 mm × 15 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked	3
x198	2	7	Coin: 2p	2000	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x199	2	7	Coin: 1p	1985	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x200	2	7	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x201	2	7	Coin: 1p	1987	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked	2
x202	2	7	Coin: 10p	1996	6.3	24 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x203	2	7	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.8	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x204	2	7	Coin: 5p	1990	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x205	2	7	Coin: 5p	1990	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x206	2	7	Coin: 20p	1999	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x207	2	7	Coin: 1p	1992	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x208	2	7	Coin: Halfpenny	Unknown (1971–1983)	1.6	17 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x209	2	7	Coin: 1 US cent	1980	3.0	18 mm	n/a	No	2

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x210	2	7	Coin: 1p	1995	3.6	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x211	2	7	Coin: 10p	1992	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x212	2	7	Coin: 2p	200-	6.7	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge and crooked	3
x213	2	7	Coin: 1p	1976	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge and crooked	2
x214	2	7	Coin: 1p	1988	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x215	2	7	Coin: 2p	1988	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge and crooked	2
x216	2	7	Coin: 1 Eire penny	1971	3.0	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge and crooked	2
x217	2	7	Coin: 10p	1992	6.3	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x218	2	7	Coin: 1p	1991	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x219	2	7	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.3	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x220	2	7	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x221	2	7	Coin: 1p	1971	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x222	2	7	Coin: 5p	Unknown	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x223	2	7	Coin: 2p	1971	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x224	2	7	Coin: 1p	1996	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x225	2	7	Coin: 2p	1988	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x226	2	7	Coin: 1p	2001	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x227	5	9	Coin: 2p	1988	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x228	5	9	Coin: 1p in wood	Unknown	12.7	20 mm	62 mm	Yes—edge	2
x229	5	9	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p in wood	Pre-dec.	25.1	30 mm	66 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2

x230	2	7	Coin: 2p	2001	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x231	2	7	Coin: 20p	1996	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x232	2	7	Coin: 1p	1971	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x233	2	7	Coin: 1p	2000	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x234	2	7	Coin: 2p	1991	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x235	2	7	Coin: 20p	1989	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x236	2	7	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	4
x237	2	7	Coin: Pre-dec. Halfpenny	Pre-1971	5.3	25 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked	3
x238	2	7	Coin: 1p	1986	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x239	2	7	Coin: 2p	1971	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x240	2	7	Coin: 1p	1991	3.6	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x241	2	7	Coin: 2p	1988	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x242	2	7	Coin: 1p	1990	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x243	2	7	Coin: 2p	1978	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x244	2	7	Coin: 2p	1971	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x245	2	7	Coin: 2p	1979	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x246	2	7	Coin: 1p	Unknown	4.3	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x247	2	7	Coin: 1p	1979	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x248	2	7	Coin: 1p	1989	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x249	2	7	Coin: 1p	1981	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x250	2	7	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x251	2	7	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p	1936	7.7	30 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x252	1	8	Coin: 2p	1997	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x253	1	8	Coin: Pre-dec.	1921	4.3	25 mm	n/a	No	2
x254	2	7	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p	1914	8.8	31 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x255	2	7	Coin: 2p	2000	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x256	2	7	Coin: 10p	2001	6.4	24 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x257	2	7	Coin: 20 Czech haleru	Unknown (1993–2003)	0.7	17 mm	n/a	No	3
x258	2	7	Coin: 1p	1988	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x259	2	7	Coin: 1p	1971	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x260	2	7	Coin: 1p	1977	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked	2
x261	2	7	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.0	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x262	2	7	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.0	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x263	2	7	Coin: 1p	1975	3.3	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x264	4	3	Coin: 1p	1979	3.1	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x265	4	3	Coin: 1p	1998	3.4	21 mm	n/a	No	3
x266	4	6	Coin: 1p	1980	3.2	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x267	4	6	Coin: 2p	1978	6.5	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x268	5	9	2 pieces of blue wire	Unknown	0.1 and 0.8	250 mm and 346 mm	n/a	n/a	n/a
x269	5	9	Coin: 1 Canadian cent	1979	3.2	19 mm	n/a	No	2
x270	5	9	Coin: 1p	2002	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2

x271	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x272	5	9	Coin: Half Franc	1970	2.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x273	5	9	Coin: 1p	1996	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x274	5	9	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.5	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x275	5	9	Coin: 5p	1990	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x276	5	9	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x277	5	9	Coin: 1p	1989	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x278	5	9	Coin: 5p	1992	3.3	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x279	5	9	Coin: 5p	2004	3.3	18 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x280	5	9	Coin: 1p	1988	3.6	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x281	5	9	Coin: 2p	1994	6.7	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x282	5	9	Coin: 10p	1996	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x283	5	9	Coin: 1p in wood	Unknown	4.9	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x284	5	9	Coin: 2p	1995	6.6	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x285	5	9	Coin: 50p	2002	8.1	27 mm	n/a	No	2
x286	5	9	Coin: 2p	1971	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x287	5	9	Coin: 1p	1991	3.5	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x288	5	9	Coin: 1p	1989	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x289	5	9	Coin: 2p in wood	1978	8.1	26 mm	43 mm	Yes—edge	2
x290	5	9	Coin: 2p	1986	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x291	5	9	Coin: 2p	20–	6.2	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x292	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.3	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	4
x293	5	9	Coin: 1p	1988	3.6	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x294	5	9	Coin: 5p	Unknown	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x295	5	9	Coin: 10p	1992	6.3	24 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x296	5	9	Coin: 2p	1987	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x297	5	9	Coin: 10p	1999	6.3	24 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x298	5	9	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p in wood	1946	12.8	30 mm	43 mm	Yes —bent	2
x299	5	9	Coin: 2p	1971	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x300	5	9	Coin: 2p in wood	Unknown	23.5	26 mm	63 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x301	5	9	Coin: 2p	1988	6.7	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x302	5	9	Coin: 2p	1998	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x303	2	11	Coin: 5p	1999	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x304	5	9	Coin: 1p	1981	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x305	5	9	Fragment of glass	n/a	1.2	18 mm × 11 mm	n/a	n/a	n/a
x306	5	9	Coin: 2p	1994	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x307	5	9	Coin: 2p	1976	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x308	5	9	Coin: US dime	1996	2.2	17 mm	n/a	No	2
x309	5	9	Coin: 1p	1988	3.3	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x310	5	9	Coin: 1p	1997	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x311	5	9	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x312	5	9	Coin: 10p	1992	6.3	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x313	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	4.2	21 mm	n/a	No	4
x314	5	9	Seashell	n/a	0.6	20 mm × 16 mm	n/a	n/a	n/a

x315	5	9	Coin: 20p	2000	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x316	5	9	Coin: 1p	1993	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x317	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	2.8	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x318	5	9	Coin: 5p	1997	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x319	5	9	Coin: 2p	1986	6.8	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x320	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x321	5	9	Coin: 1p	1986	3.9	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x322	5	9	Coin: 2p	1971	6.5	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x323	5	9	Coin: 2p	1980	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x324	5	9	Coin: 2p	1989	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x325	5	9	Coin: 5p	Unknown	3.2	18 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x326	5	9	Coin: 2p	1989	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x327	5	9	Coin: 5p	1992	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x328	5	9	Coin: 5p	1990	3.0	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x329	5	9	Coin: 5p	1994	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x330	5	9	Coin: 2p	200-	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x331	5	9	Coin: 2p	1988	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x332	5	9	Coin: 20p	1993	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x333	5	9	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x334	5	9	Coin: New 5p in wood	1975	8.1	23 mm	37 mm	Yes—edge	2
x335	5	9	Coin: 2p	1986	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x336	5	9	Coin: Halfpenny	1971	1.8	17 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x337	5	9	Coin: 2p in wood	Unknown	14.2	26 mm	46 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x338	5	9	Coin: Half-penny in wood	1971	1.6	16 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x339	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x340a	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	6.1	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x340b	5	9	Coin: 2p	2002	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x340c	5	9	Coin: 2p	2002	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x340d	5	9	Coin: 10p	2000	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x341	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	4.4	21 mm	n/a	No	4
x342	5	9	Coin: 2p	1971	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x343	5	9	Coin: 1p	1971	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x344	5	9	Coin: 2p	1971	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x345	5	9	Coin: 5p	2000	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x346	5	9	Coin: 2p	1971	6.6	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x347	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x348	5	9	Coin: 1p	1979	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x349	5	9	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x350	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x351	5	9	Coin: 2p	2002	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x352	5	9	Coin: 1p	1989	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x353	5	9	Coin: 20p	1982	4.6	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x354	5	9	Coin: 1p	1987	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x355	5	9	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.5	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked	2
x356	5	9	Coin: 1p	2000	3.7	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3

x357	5	9	Coin: 1p	1997	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x358	5	9	Coin: 1p	2005	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x359	5	14	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x360	5	14	Coin: 2p	2003	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x361	5	14	Coin: 5 French Centime	1973	1.9	18 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x362	5	14	Coin: 5p	1990	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x363	5	14	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x364	5	14	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.5	21 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x365	5	14	Coin: 1p	1991	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x366	3	15	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p in wood	Pre-1971	14.6	30 mm	63 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x367	3	15	Coin: 1p	1997	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x368	3	15	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p 1927	1927	9.0	31 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked	2
x369	3	15	Coin: 2p	1989	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x370	3	15	Coin: 2p	1971	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x371	3	15	Coin: 5p	1990	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x372	3	15	Coin: 10 Swiss Rappen	1968	2.9	19 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x373	3	15	Coin: Ship Halfpenny	1944	5.4	25 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x374	3	15	Coin: 2p in wood	Unknown	11.7	26 mm	51 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x375	3	15	Coin: 1p in wood	Unknown	6.6	20 mm	45 mm	Yes—edge	2
x376	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.8	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x377	3	15	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x378	3	15	Coin: 2p	1975	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x379	3	15	Coin: 2p	1992	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x380	3	15	Coin: 2p	1992	7.3	26 mm	n/a	No	1
x381	3	15	Coin: 20p	2005	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x382	3	15	Coin: 2p	2001	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x383	3	15	Coin: 2p	2000	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x384	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x385	3	15	Coin: 2p	1979	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x386	3	15	Coin: 1p	1997	3.3	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	4
x387	3	15	Coin: 5 Greek drachma	1984	5.4	23 mm	n/a	No	2
x388	3	15	Coin: 1p	1979	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	1
x389	3	15	Coin: 1p	1988	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x390	3	15	Coin: 1p	1999	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x391	3	15	Coin: 2p	2000	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x392	3	15	Coin: 2p	1981	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x393	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.8	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x394	3	15	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x395	3	15	Coin: 2p	1999	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	4

x396	3	15	Coin: 1p	1991	4.0	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x397	3	15	Coin: 1p	1973	3.3	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x398	3	15	Coin: 2p	1971	6.8	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x399	3	15	Coin: 2p	1999	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x400	3	15	Coin: 2p in wood	1980	10.7	26 mm	50 mm	Yes—edge	2
x401	3	15	Coin: 5p	1998	3.3	18 mm	n/a	No	2
x402	3	15	Coin: 2p	2000	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x403	3	15	Coin: 10p	1992	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x404	3	15	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x405	3	15	Coin: Halfpenny	1945	5.2	25 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x406	3	15	Coin: 25 Danish Ore	1996	2.8	17 mm	n/a	No	2
x407	3	15	Coin: 2p	1986	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x408	3	15	Coin: 20p	1983	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x409	3	15	Coin: 2p	2000	6.8	27 mm	n/a	No	3
x410	3	15	Button?	n/a	0.5	11 mm × 10 mm	n/a	n/a	n/a
x411	3	15	Coin: 2p	1997	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x412	3	15	Coin: 10p	1973	10.8	28 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x413	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x414	3	15	Coin: 1p	2004	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x415	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x416	3	15	Coin: 2p	1980	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x417	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x418	3	15	Coin: 2p	1978	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x419	3	15	Coin: 10p	2005	6.6	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x420	3	15	Coin: 1p	1991	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x421	3	15	Coin: 2p	1999	5.8	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x422	3	15	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p	Pre-1971	15.4	30 mm	55 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	3
x423	3	15	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p	Pre-1971	13.7	31 mm	42 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x424	3	15	Coin: 2p	1981	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x425	3	15	Coin: 2p	1980	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x426	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.9	21 mm	n/a	No	4
x427	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x428	3	15	Coin: 10p	2000	6.4	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x429	3	15	Coin: 1p	1971	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x430	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	4
x431	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.7	21 mm × 18 mm	n/a	No	4
x432	3	15	Coin: 2p	1989	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2
x433	3	15	Coin: 1p	1988	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x434	3	15	Coin: 1p	1997	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x435	VOID								
x436	3	15	Coin: 1p	1973	3.3	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x437	3	15	Coin: 1p	1990	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x438	3	15	Coin: 2p	2001	6.8	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x439	3	15	Coin: 2p	1989	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes -edge	2
x440	3	15	Coin: 1p	2002	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	3

x441	3	15	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p in wood	Pre-1971	22.6	30 mm	76 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x442	3	15	Coin: 2p	1975	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x443	3	15	Coin: 10p	2002	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x444	3	15	Coin: 2p	2004	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x445	3	15	Coin: 2p	1977	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x446	3	15	Coin: 5p	1990	3.0	18 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
x447	3	15	Coin: 1p	1990	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x448	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	5.3	26 mm	n/a	No	4
x449	3	15	Coins: 2p and 5p	2000 and 1990	7.4 and 3.3	26 mm and 18 mm	n/a	No	4 & 3
x450	3	15	Coin: 1p	1984	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2
x451	3	15	Coin: 20p	1982	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x452	3	15	Coin: 1p	1990	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x453	3	15	Coin: 1p	1988	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x454	3	15	Coin: 1p	1971	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x455	3	15	Coin: 2p	2002	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x456	3	15	Coin: 2p	1996	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
x457	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.6	21 mm	n/a	No	3
x458	3	15	Coin: 20p	1995	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x459	3	15	Coin: 2p	1971	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x460	3	15	Coin: 1p	unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
x461	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x462	3	15	Coin: 2 German pfennig	Unknown	2.4	19 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked	3
x463	3	15	Coin: 2p	1987	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x464	3	15	Coin: 10p	2005	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
x465	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x466	3	15	Coin: 1p	1988	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x467	3	15	Coin: 1p	1997	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
x468	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.6	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x469	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x470	3	15	Coin: 2p	1971	6.8	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
x471	3	15	Coin: 20p	1982	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	2
x472	3	15	Coin: 2p	1981	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x473	3	15	Coin: 1p	1978	3.6	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x474	3	15	Coin: 20p	1982	4.9	21 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
x475	3	15	Coin: NEW 5p	1975	5.5	23 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	3
x476	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3

Small Finds in Turf

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
t1	6	4	Coin: 2p	1993	5.7	27 mm × 25 mm	n/a	No	4
t2	6	4	Coin: 5p	2005	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t3	1	1	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.7	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t4	1	1	Coin: 2p	2000	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t5	1	1	Coin: 2p	1971	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t6	1	1	Coin: 2p	2005	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t7	1	1	Coin: 2p	1999	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
t8	1	1	Coin: 2p	1989	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t9	1	1	Coin: 2p	2001	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t10	1	1	Coin: 20p	1989	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
t11	1	1	Coin: 1p	2007	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t12	1	1	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.9	25 mm × 26 mm	n/a	No	4
t13	1	1	Coin: 2p	1971	6.8	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t14	1	1	Coin: 2p	2001	6.8	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t15	1	1	Coin: 1p	1995	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t16	1	1	Coin: 1p	2003	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t17	1	1	Coin: 2p	2001	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t18	1	1	Coin: 2p	1993	6.6	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t19	1	1	Coin: 1p	1979	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t20	1	1	Coin: 5p	1990	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t21	1	1	Coin: 5p	2000	3.3	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t22	1	1	Coin: 2p	2004	6.3	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t23	1	1	Coin: 10p	2004	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t24	1	1	Coin: 20p	1996	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	2

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
t25	1	1	Coin: 1p	2006	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t26	1	1	Coin: 1p	2003	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t27	1	1	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t28	1	1	Coin: £1	1994	9.4	22 mm	n/a	No	2
t29	1	1	Coin: 10p	1992	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t30	1	1	Coin: 5p	1994	3.3	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t31	1	1	Coin: 2p	1980	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t32	1	1	Coin: 1p	2003	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t33	1	1	Coin: 2p	1994	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t34	1	1	Coin: 1p	2008	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t35	1	1	Coin: 1p	1998	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t36	1	1	Coin: 2p	2000	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t37	1	1	Coin: 20p	1982	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	2
t38	1	1	Coin: 5p	1990	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t39	1	1	Coin: 1p	1991	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t40	1	1	Coin: £1	1983	9.4	22 mm	n/a	No	2
t41	1	1	Coin: 20p	1982	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	2
t42	1	1	Coin: 20p	1982	4.9	21 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t43	1	1	Coin: 1p	1988	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t44	1	1	Coin: 5p	2002	3.3	18 mm	n/a	No	3
t45	1	1	Coin: 5p	1990	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t46	5	9	Coin: 2p in wood	Unknown	11.5	26 mm	64 mm	Yes—edge	2
t47	5	9	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p in wood	1922	21.7	Unknown	76 mm	Yes—edge	2
t48	1	1	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t49	4	3	Coin: 2p	2002	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	3

t50	4	3	Coin: 10p	1992	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t51	4	3	Coin: 2p	2000	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t52	4	3	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t53	4	3	Coin: 2p	1971	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t54	4	3	Coin: 2p	1998	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t55	4	3	Coin: 2p	2003	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
t56	4	3	Coin: 2p	1971	6.8	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t57	4	3	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t58	4	3	Coin: 2p	2003	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t59	4	3	Coin: 2p	2000	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t60	4	3	Coin: 10p	1992	6.2	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t61	4	3	Coin: 10p	1996	6.3	24 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t62	4	3	Coin: 10p	2001	6.3	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t63	4	3	Coin: 10p	2000	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t64	4	3	Coin: 1p	1985	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t65	4	3	Coin: 1p	2001	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t66	4	3	Coin: 1p	2001	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t67	4	3	Coin: 1p	1996	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t68	4	3	Coin: 1p	1979	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t69	4	3	Coin: 1p	1999	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t70	4	3	Coin: 1p	198-	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t71	4	3	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t72	4	3	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t73	4	3	Coin: 1p	2003	3.2	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t74	4	3	Coin: 1p	1998	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t75	4	3	Coin: 5p	2000	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t76	4	3	Coin: 1 US Cent	1986	2.5	19 mm	n/a	No	3

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
t77	4	3	Coin: 20p	2003	5.0	21 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t78	4	3	Coin: 20p	1989	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	2
t79	2	2	Coin: 10p	1996	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t80	2	2	Coin: 2p	2000	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t81	2	2	Coin: 2p	1980	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t82	2	2	Coin: 2p	1981	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t83	2	2	Coin: 2p	2000	6.8	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t84	2	2	Coin: 10p	1992	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t85	2	2	Coin: 2p	2001	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t86	2	2	Coin: 1p	1996	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t87	2	2	Coin: 1p	2000	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t88	2	2	Coin: 20p	1983	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
t89	2	2	Coin: 1p	1994	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t90	2	2	Coin: 1p	2004	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t91	2	2	Coin: 1p	1986	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t92	2	2	Coin: 1p	1989	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t93	2	2	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t94	2	2	Coin: 1p	2005	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t95	2	2	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t96	2	2	Coin: 5p	2001	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t97	2	2	Coin: 5p	2001	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	3
t98	2	2	Coin: 1p	2002	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t99	3	15	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p	1936	9.1	31 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t100	3	15	Coin: 2p	1971	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t101	3	15	Coin: 2p	1997	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t102	3	15	Coin: 2p	1997	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3

t103	3	15	Coin: 2p	1993	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t104	3	15	Coin: 10p	1996	6.5	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t105	3	15	Coin: 1p	2005	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t106	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t107	3	15	Coin: 1p	200-	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t108	3	15	Coin: 1p	1971	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t109	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t110	3	15	Coin: 1p	2004	3.7	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t111	3	15	Coin: 1p	1990	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t112	3	15	Coin: 5p	1997	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t113	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.7	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t114	3	15	Coin: 2p in wood	Unknown	28.6	26 mm	90 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t115	3	15	Coin: 2p	1991	6.4	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t116	3	15	Coin: 10p	2005	6.5	24 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t117	3	15	Coin: 20p	1982	4.8	21 mm	n/a	No	2
t118	5	9	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.8	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t119	5	9	Coin: 2p	1999	6.7	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t120	5	9	Coin: 2p	200-	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t121	5	9	Coin: 2p	1987	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t122	5	9	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t123	5	9	Coin: 2p	1975	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t124	5	9	Coin: 2p	1981	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t125	5	9	Coin: 2p	2004	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t126	5	9	Coin: 2p	1996	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
t127	5	9	Coin: 2p	2006	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t128	5	9	Coin: 2p	2001	7.2	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t129	5	9	Coin: 2p	1994	6.8	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t130	5	9	Coin: 2p	1971	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t131	5	9	Coin: 2p	1971	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t132	5	9	Coin: 2p	2004	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t133	5	9	Coin: 2p	1976	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t134	5	9	Coin: 2p	1978	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	1
t135	5	9	Coin: 2p	1987	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t136	5	9	Coin: 2p	2002	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t137	5	9	Coin: 2p	1971	6.9	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t138	5	9	Coin: 2p	1980	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	2
t139	5	9	Coin: 1p	1990	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t140	5	9	Coin: 1p	1990	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t141	5	9	Coin: 1p	2000	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t142	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.0	21 mm	n/a	No	4
t143	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t144	5	9	Coin: 1p	1998	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t145	5	9	Coin: 1p	1996	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t146	5	9	Coin: 1p	2005	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t147	5	9	Coin: 1p	2002	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t148	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	4.0	21 mm	n/a	No	4
t149	5	9	Coin: 1p	2005	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t150	5	9	Coin: 1p	1988	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t151	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.0	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t152	5	9	Coin: 1p	1990	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t153	5	9	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.5	21 mm	n/a	No	3
t154	5	9	Coin: 1p	1980	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2

t155	5	9	Coin: 1p	1980	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t156	5	9	Coin: 1p	2000	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t157	5	9	Coin: 5p	2004	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t158	5	9	Coin: 20p	2003	4.9	21 mm	n/a	No	3
t159	5	9	Coin: 10p	2006	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t160	5	9	Coin: 10p	2001	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t161	5	9	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	3
t162	5	9	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t163	5	9	Coin: 10p	1992	6.4	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t164	5	9	Coin: 10p	1992	6.3	24 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t165	5	9	Coin: 2 Euro cent	Unknown	3.0	19 mm	n/a	No	3
t166	5	9	Coin: 1 Canadian cent	2002	2.1	19 mm	n/a	No	3
t167	5	9	Coin: 5p	1992	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t168	5	9	Coin: 5p	1990	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t169	5	9	Coin: 5p	1992	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t170	3	15	Coin: 2p	1971	7.0	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t171	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.2	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t172	3	15	Coin: 2p	1971	7.4	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t173	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.4	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t174	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t175	3	15	Coin: 1p	2002	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t176	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.2	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t177	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	3

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
t178	3	15	Coin: 1p	1989	3.3	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t179	3	15	Coin: 1p	2003	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t180	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t181	3	15	Coin: 5p	1991	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t182	3	15	Coin: 5p in wood	1971	7.3	18 mm	79 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t183	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.0	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t184	3	15	Coin: 1p	1995	3.2	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t185	3	15	Coin: 1p	1971	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t186	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	6.8	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t187	3	15	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p in wood	Pre-1971	12.7	31 mm	53 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t188	3	15	Coin: 2p	Unknown	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t189	3	15	Coin: Halfpenny	Unknown	1.6	17 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked	2
t190	3	15	Coin: 2p	1971	6.9	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t191	3	15	Coin: 2p	1979	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t192	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.2	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t193	3	15	Coin: 1p	1989	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t194	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.4	20 mm	n/a	No	3
t195	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.6	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t196	3	15	Coin: 1p	1999	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	4
t197	3	15	Coin: 1p in wood	Unknown	5.7	20 mm	40 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2

t198	3	15	Coin: 5p	1990	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t199	3	15	Coin: 5p	1997	3.1	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t200	3	15	Coin: 5p	2002	3.2	18 mm	n/a	No	2
t201	3	15	Coin: 20p	1983	5.0	21 mm	n/a	No	2
t202	3	15	Coin: Halfpenny in wood	Unknown	7.4	24 mm	30 mm	Yes—crooked	2
t203	3	15	Coin: 1p	1979	3.6	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t204	3	15	Coin: 2p	1981	7.1	26 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t205	3	15	Coin: 2p	1981	7.2	26 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	2
t206	3	15	Coin: 2p in wood	1980	11.6	26 mm	48 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t207	3	15	Coin: 2p in wood	Unknown	11.1	26 mm	52 mm	Yes—edge	2
t208	3	15	Coin: 1p in wood	1976	22.0	20 mm	112 mm	Yes—edge	2
t209	3	15	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p in wood	1938	14.9	30 mm	46 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t210	3	15	Coin: Unknown coin in wood	Unknown	19.0	Unknown—engulfed in wood	60 mm	Yes—crooked	2
t211	3	15	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p in wood	1964	13.1	30 mm	47 mm	Yes—crooked and edge	2

(continued)

S. F. no.	*Trench*	*Context*	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter*	*Length of wood*	*Sign of percussion*	*Level of corrosion*
t212	3	15	Coin: 1p in wood	1978	9.3	20 mm	36 mm	Yes—edge	2
t213	3	15	Coin: 1p in wood	Unknown	9.3	20 mm	36 mm	Yes—edge	2
t214	3	15	Coin: 10p	2000	6.2	24 mm	n/a	No	2
t215	3	15	Coin: 2p in wood	1971	42.7	26 mm	117 mm	Yes—edge	2
t216	3	15	Coin: 1p in wood	Unknown	42.7	20 mm	117 mm	Yes—edge	2
t217	3	15	Coin: 2p	1999	7.1	26 mm	n/a	No	4
t218	3	15	Coin: 2p	1993	6.7	26 mm	n/a	No	3
t219	3	15	Coin: 1p	1973	3.5	20 mm	n/a	No	2
t220	3	15	Coin: 1p	1971	3.4	20 mm	n/a	Yes—crooked and edge	2
t221	3	15	Coin: 1p	Unknown	3.5	20 mm	n/a	Yes—edge	3
t222	4	3	Piece of string	Unknown	0.1	Length: 250 mm with one knot making it circular	n/a	na	N/a
t223	6	4	Black bootlace	Unknown	3.0	Length: 395 mm with one knot	n/a	na	N/a
t224	2	2	Seashell	Unknown	3.1	28 mm × 21 mm	n/a	na	N/a

Unstratified Finds

S. F. No.	*Description*	*Year of issue*	*Weight (g)*	*Diameter (mm)*	*Length of wood*	*Signs of percussion*	*Level or corrosion*
u1	Coin: Pre-dec. 1p	1963	8.4	30	n/a	Yes—edge	2
u2	Coin: 2p	1989	7.2	26	n/a	No	2

Note

1. Rodger, D., Stokes, J. and Ogilvie, J. 2003. *Heritage Trees of Scotland*. London, The Tree Council; Stokes, J. and Rodger, D. 2004. *The Heritage Trees of Britain and Northern Ireland*. London, Constable & Robinson Ltd.

Index

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