THE COINAGE OF COOMBE MARTIN, 1647–1648.

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Here is a series of coins having the plumes as directed in the letters patent for the Mint at Aberystwyth and of the same denominations but bearing the mint-mark crown instead of the open book. These points show that they were struck by Thomas Bushell in accordance with those instructions. From the evidence of the coins this issue took place in 1647–8, for the horseman on the half-crown is smaller but similar to that on the half-crowns of the Tower Mint, having the sun and sceptre mint-marks. The head on the shilling is the same as on the later sceptre one (Francis, 5a).

To find the place of mintage it is necessary to know where Bushell was during this time. From No. 18760 of the Harleian Manuscripts it appears that no money was coined at Aberystwyth between March, 1645–6, and February, 1648–9, when a final striking of 8 lb. of silver, £25 16s. od. by tale, took place, so it is necessary to search elsewhere. One of his stipulations for the surrender of Lundy was that 100 tons of his own lead and 100 tons of potters' earth to be brought from his mines in Wales to Bideford for the better discharge of his debts in Devon and the recovery of the deserted mines at Coombe Martin.

After the armistice in February, 1646–7, he crossed over to that place from whence he wrote to Lord Saye and Sele that he understood the conditions of the surrender. The ratification of Parliament did not take place till the following September. He must have been busy there with success, for on 6th October, 1648,

The merchants of Barnstaple and Bideford wrote asking him to make use of their harbours, offering to buy his lead and what they did not want to transport freight free as ballast in any of their ships to any of their ports to which they traded. (B.M. C. 27 Fl. (3) p. 14.)

At the end of May or beginning of June, 1648, he visited London where, in despite of the terms of the surrender of Lundy, he was arrested for debt. He was released on bail but he deemed it safer to leave the country. His surety was arrested and imprisoned, but on representations being made to Parliament he was released and all actions stayed. He apparently remained abroad for some years. In August, 1652, he gave securities to the Council of State for his future good behaviour. He obtained from the Protector a renewal of his lease of the mines royal, and a confirmation of his grant for coining the silver thence extracted. From this it may be presumed that he had been deprived of his former privileges when he fled the country.

From this it may be taken that he spent most of the time between February, 1646–7, and May, 1648, at Coombe Martin. He appears to have had a house at Northam, between Bideford and Appledore. The life of this mint must have been a short one for, as the terms of the surrender of Lundy were not confirmed by Parliament till September, 1647, the Parliamentary authorities at the Tower could not be expected to issue any dies to him till after the confirmation, so he could not have received any till the end of that month or beginning of October, and they necessarily would be of the pre-civil war type. As he left the country in the following June the striking would cease. This leaves a period of some seven months for the coinage. As the mines could not at first produce

1 Since this paper was written Mr. J. W. Gough has published a life of Bushell under the title of “The Superlative Prodigall.” From this it appears that Bushell, after his release on bail in June, 1648, did not go abroad, but remained in Devonshire till June, 1649, when he went into hiding to avoid arrest for corresponding with Charles II. This lengthens the duration of the mint another seven months, till the execution of the King in January, 1648–9, making its life extend to sixteen months.
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much ore there must have been only a small amount of silver available for minting. With the exception of the groat and threepence the other denominations are rare, particularly the three higher natures. These point that the issue must have been a small one.

In workmanship and appearance the coins are inferior to the original Aberystwyth series but are of the same type, viz., that of the Tower series with plume. They are of the following denominations, viz., half-crown, shilling, sixpence, groat, threepence, half-groat and penny. They all have on both sides the crown for a mint-mark and inner circles.

**HALF-CROWN.**

Obverse: A small edition of that on the Tower half-crown with the mint-marks sun and sceptre with Shrewsbury plume behind. Pellet to left of mint-mark. CAROLUS; D; G; MAG; BRIT; FRAN; ET·HI; REX·

Reverse: Oval shield garnished as on the Tower half-crown with a large plume above extending to the edge of the coin. Mint-mark with a pellet each side on the left of the plume, CHRISTO·AUSPICE·REGNO·. (Pl. 1.)

**SHILLING.**

Obverse: King’s head crowned to left, as on the last of the Tower crowns with the sceptre mint-mark, having the hair bulging over the neck; Shrewsbury plume in front and the mark of value XII behind. A pellet each side of mint-mark CAROLUS·D: G: MAG: BRI: FRA: ET·HIB: REX.

Reverse: Similar to that of the half-crown, but the plume does not extend to the outer circle. (Pl. 2.)

**SIXPENCE.**

Obverse: Similar to the shilling, but the bust has more armour showing, there is no puffing of the hair and VI is substituted for XII.

Reverse: Similar to that of the shilling, but a pellet to right of mint-mark only. (Pl. 3.)
Groat.
Obverse: Similar to that of the sixpence, but III for value.
Reverse: Similar to that of the sixpence, but a pellet each side of mint-mark and the plume extends to the outer circle. (Pl. 4.)

Threepence.
Obverse: There are two dies, one has no pellets and the other has one each side of the mint-mark. The bust is not quite the same as on the sixpence and groat, otherwise like the groat but III for value. The legend is abbreviated CAROLUS·D:G: MAG: BR: FR: ET·HI: REX.
Reverse: Similar to that of the groat. Hawkins No. 540. (Pl. 5.)

Half-Groat.
Obverse: Crowned bust in armour to the left, no plume in front and II behind. Pellet each side of mint-mark, and legend CAROLUS·D:G: MA: BR: FR: ET·HIB·REX.
Reverse: Large plume with ICH DIEN (incuse) on the band, all in an inner circle; pellet each side of mint-mark, and legend JUSTITIA·THRONUM·FIRMAT. Hawkins No. 547. (Pl. 6.)

Penny.
Obverse: Bust as on the half-groat, no plume in front and I behind, no pellet by mint-mark; legend, CAROLUS·D:G: M:B:F: ET H. REX.
Reverse: Large plume, pellets by mint-mark. JUSTITIA·THRONUM·FIRMAT. (Pl. 7.)

There is a half-crown dated 1645, with the royal arms and supporters on the reverse, Hawkins uncertain No. 31 (508) which is often called the Coombe Martin. Perhaps it may be made of silver from that place, but otherwise it can have no connection. That
year Bushell was at Lundy striking coins of the Declaration type, and certainly he would not have allowed any other not bearing a plume to be struck in any place belonging to him. Maybe they were struck in some neighbouring town, like Appledore, Bideford, or Barnstaple, under licence from Sir Richard Vyvian.

So little is known of the Coombe Martin mines beyond the fact that they were worked by Bushell, that the question arises whether the ore was refined on the spot or taken to an adjacent port such as Barnstaple or Bideford for that purpose and for convenience of export, and where the refinery was there in all probability the mint would have been. It has been pointed out that both these places were interested in the mines as a means of increasing the prosperity of their harbour. Without definite intimation it is best to take it that all the work was done on the spot.

In 1652 he applied for permission to return to England from Antwerp, where he was then living, which was sanctioned by the Protector in February, 1653. In 1654 letters patent dated 16 February granted to Bushell and his coadjutors full power and authority to search for all mines royal in the Commonwealth, and also ratified to him the former power he had to coin all such silver that he should find out of the ore of the aforesaid mines royal. Of this last privilege he does not appear to have availed himself though he states that he had a mint at Wells (Footnote 5, Ruding, vol. ii, p. 239), but there are no coins that can be attributed to him as being struck there.

What he did with himself after his return till 1657, whether he worked the mines at Aberystwyth and Coombe Martin, is unknown. In that year he proceeded to work the ancient lead mine in the Mendips, hence it may be presumed he had his headquarters at Wells. His prospecting does not appear to have been profitable, as in 1660 he published a scheme (Medallic Illustrations, vol. i, p. 467) for raising money to carry on his works, giving specimens of a medal in gold (Pl. 8, 9, 10) of the value of five pounds, the receiver in return giving a written undertaking that for every one pound in value received in medals he would pay to certain trustees five
pounds if Thomas Bushell within eighteen months raised the value, five hundred pounds per week in copper, tin or lead mixed with silver; the payment was to be doubled if the ore raised was doubled. This scheme was not successful, principally owing to labour troubles, and he was involved in difficulties.

The description of these medals, which were struck in silver and copper as well as gold, is as follows: mint-mark star and the stops are stars on both sides.

Obverse: Bust of Bacon almost full face with hat, ruff, robes of office, riband for medal, and a book in his hand. Legend, FRA. BACON. VICECO. S. ALBAN. ANGLÆ. CANCEL.

Reverse: A miner standing amid rocks holding a pickaxe and a piece of ore. Legend, DEVS. EST. QUI. CLUSA. RECLUDIT. THO. BUSHELL; size 1.65 inches, Med. Ill., No. 67. It had a ring for suspension. (Pl. 8.)

There were two other dies, one slightly different from the above (Med. Ill., No. 69) (Pl. 9). The other had a rose for mint-mark on obverse; a slight variation of the legend on the obverse, and THOMAS in full on the reverse; size 1.75 inches (Med. Ill., No. 68) (Pl. 10).

He had financial difficulties in 1659 and had to appeal to Parliament through Lord Fairfax for protection. On the restoration of Charles II he petitioned for a repayment of moneys spent in the royal-cause amounting to many thousands of pounds. The petition was referred to a committee of the Privy Council which reported in his favour, but he was never paid. Charles I appears to have promised Bushell an English Barony for his services, but the letters patent were never signed so he reaped no advantage. The details of his claim are contained in Harleian MS. No. 6833.

He died in 1674, aged 80, and was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey.