

THE 1987 RYHALL TREASURE TROVE

T. H. McK. CLOUGH AND B. J. COOK

THIS hoard was uncovered on 15 February 1987 in the back garden of a house in the village of Ryhall in eastern Rutland, just north of Stamford. The site is close to the bank of the river Gwash. The finders were engaged in digging a trench in which to plant a hedge for the owners of the land. The authorities were made aware of the discovery on 21 February and the site was examined by TC, though the trench had by then been filled in and the hedge set in place. A search of the site with metal detectors did not indicate the presence of further material.

The coins were transferred to BJC at the British Museum where a report was prepared for the coroner for North Leicestershire. An inquest was opened at Oakham on 23 October and evidence given by the finders and TC. Counsel for the landowners brought up the possibility that the coins might represent an accidental loss, proposing that since the find-spot was within the old flood-plain of the river Gwash, as indicated in early maps, it would have been an unlikely place to bury a hoard. The coroner decided that further investigation would be useful and adjourned the inquest.

An excavation of the site was then made on 12–13 November by Mr P. Clay of the Leicestershire Archaeological Unit, assisted by TC and the Rutland Field Research Group. This resulted in the discovery of more coins and the remains of a rectangular oak box, buried completely within the subsoil. Some coins had been pressed into the wood of the box as it had softened and a mirror image of their designs was visible. The dimensions of the box would have been about 340 × 210 mm in plan, with a minimum height of 80 mm.

This evidence was presented at the resumed inquest on 4 December and BJC gave evidence about the nature of the coins. The jury declared the coins to be treasure trove and named the two original finders as finders of the entire hoard, including those coins discovered during the archaeological excavation.¹

There is no evidence to suggest the identity of the original owners of the hoard. The manor of Ryhall was owned by the Cecil family in the 1640s, but it is not at present known who occupied Water Yard Close and the adjacent farm, the site of the find. Ryhall was also the home of Sir Wingfield Bodenham, an ardent royalist, who was appointed sheriff of Rutland in 1643. He was taken in arms at Burghley in 1644, three miles from Ryhall, and imprisoned in the Tower until 1647, refusing to pay a fine of £1000.

Contents of the hoard

The coins discovered in February 1987 consisted of one gold and 3220 silver pieces. The additional material found in November consisted of forty-two silver pieces. The distribution as between denominations and periods is listed in the catalogue below. The face value of the hoard when deposited was £160 1s., given that the crown of James I had been revalued to 5s. 6d., and including a counterfeit shilling as a full value coin.

The composition of the Ryhall hoard would seem at first glance to be unremarkable for a substantial Civil War deposit. A few coins of Edward VI and Mary accompany a large

Acknowledgements. The authors are grateful to Patrick Clay of the Leicestershire Archaeological Unit and to Marion Archibald, Edward Besly and Christopher Challis for their comments on the hoard.

¹ For more detailed information on the discovery and recovery of the coins see: T. H. McK. Clough and B. J. Cook, 'A Civil War hoard of silver coins from Ryhall, Rutland', *Rutland Record* 9 (1989), 305–11.

amount of Elizabethan silver, sixpences for the most part. No smaller denomination than the sixpence is present, again a characteristic of mid-seventeenth-century deposits. The presence of a single gold coin can be matched against several other such occurrences. However, there are a number of noteworthy features of the hoard. First, there is its size. It is the largest recorded so far this century and there are only a few larger properly-recorded examples known from earlier times, e.g. the East Worlington, Devon, hoard of 1895 (5188 silver coins).²

A second notable feature of the hoard might seem to be the uniformity of its composition. It includes no particular rarities, such as issues of the royalist mints, or any foreign coin, and only contains one solitary counterfeit: an imitation of a shilling of Charles I, initial mark tun (**pl. 29, 1**). The latest coins of the hoard are of the triangle in circle initial mark, 1641–3. In fact the hoard ends extremely strongly, with 1875 coins, well over half the hoard, being of this initial mark, and most of these looking mint-fresh. It would seem highly likely that the hoard was set aside from currency before the end of the triangle in circle period in about April 1643.

Rutland was at that time the scene of considerable disturbances, several prominent local gentry actively supporting the king. After the battle of Edgehill, 13 October 1642, the nearest royalist rallying points were at Oxford and Newark, whereas parliamentary forces were closer to hand at Leicester and Grantham. There was considerable military activity in Rutland in late 1642 and early 1643. The royalists took Belvoir Castle in January 1643 but this was balanced by the parliamentary capture of Burghley at about the same time, which was thereafter the site of a garrison. Parliamentary forces crossed the county on a number of occasions in early 1643: a detachment of Lord Grey's men from Leicester came to Oakham to secure a store of powder, and troops from Grantham came to Exton and North Luffenham, where they skirmished with local royalists. In February 1643 the parliamentary committee of Rutland was ordered to raise 'money, plate and horses' in the county and later in the year the sequestration of local royalists began.³ There was thus considerable incentive for the hiding of treasure in Rutland at that time, though the Ryhall hoard is the first Civil War deposit to come to light there. Although a number of finds are known from other east midlands counties, they are mostly somewhat later in date and can be associated with the events of the summer of 1645.⁴

There seems to be no precedent for this overwhelming predominance of one initial mark in any other recorded Civil War hoard (the Messing, Essex, hoard of 1975 would seem to be the nearest, with a little over a third of its coins being of the triangle initial mark), although hoards ending in this mark are by no means uncommon: Besly lists thirty-two such.⁵ The bulk of these triangle in circle coins are shillings, 1703 in all. Upon close examination it emerged that most of these shillings were the products of a very small number of dies. Once the dominant dies were identified, this made it possible to assign to this initial mark a large number of coins which otherwise would have had to be classed as uncertain, due to the mark being off-flan or too weakly-struck to be visible.

There are three main obverse dies represented among the triangle in circle shillings.

Obverse die 1. (**pl. 29, 2**), characterised by a very evident striation on the die running from the back of the king's head through the X of the mark of value to the shoulder. This die is represented by 583 coins and is paired with two reverses, with one (**pl. 29, 3**) for 370 coins and with the other (**pl. 29, 4**) for 213.

² H. A. Grueber, 'A find of coins at East Worlington', *NC* 3rd ser. 17 (1897), 115–58.

³ *VCH Rutland* 1, 189–90.

⁴ See E. M. Besly, *English Civil War Coin Hoards*,

British Museum Occasional Paper No. 51 (London, 1987), p. 67.

⁵ Besly, pp. 80–6.

Obverse die 2. (pl. 29, 5), characterised by the G of MAG.BR in the legend encroaching on the inner circle. This is paired with one reverse (pl. 29, 6) for 483 coins and with two other reverses for three coins each (pl. 29, 7 and 8).

Obverse die 3. (pl. 29, 9), characterised by the slant of the triangle in the circle of the initial mark. This is paired with just one reverse for 354 coins (pl. 29, 10).

There are a further 277 coins from a large number of other dies which presumably represent the normal mixture of dies produced by circulation or by storage practices at the mint.

The bulk of the triangle in circle shillings would evidently seem to have come directly from the mint, to have been added to a collection of material extracted from the existing currency, and then been deposited without ever having entered normal circulation. The huge increase in silver minting which occurred at the Tower at this time is well recorded,⁶ but this was echoed by an increase in the level of hoarding stimulated by the events of 1642–3: the withdrawal of the king from London on 10 January 1642 and the raising of his standard at Nottingham on 22 August. The Ryhall hoard would seem to illustrate in a particularly dramatic way the large-scale hoarding which then occurred and how it may have distorted the pattern of the currency, so much relatively high-value, recently-produced coin being removed from circulation.⁷

The entire hoard has been weighed and the record of this remains on file at the British Museum. In the list of the hoard below the approach adopted by E. M. Besly in *English Civil War Coin Hoards* has been followed: i.e. the average weight of each type is given, as is the number of coins weighed and the percentage of the weight-standard used from 1601 onwards. The weights show no indication that the hoard was carefully selected, though neither is it noticeably inferior to other known hoards in the proportion of clipped material.

The die axes of the dominant dies among the triangle in circle shillings were noted to see if this might throw any light on the current manufacturing techniques, but no consistent pattern emerged. The same was done for the triangle in circle half-crowns as the possibility exists of there having been some mechanised contribution to their manufacture.⁸ However, here again there was no consistency or pattern in the resulting information.

The triangle in circle shillings in the hoard illustrate with great clarity the collapse of manufacturing standards at the Tower at this time. The weight standards of the coins were maintained and there has never been any suggestion that fineness suffered, but the coins have a remarkably inferior appearance when compared to earlier issues in the same hoard. A large proportion of them have cracked or frayed edges, are very weakly struck and off-centre (rarely is all the legend visible on-flan, let alone decently struck) and are of very irregular shape, many being virtually square or rectangular. A distinct characteristic, observable on the coins illustrated on the plate, is the frequent appearance of an irregular bulge or notch in the edge, this presumably reflecting the way in which the blanks were being prepared for striking. The triangle in circle half-crowns also have a frequently occurring feature: the obverses are often slightly convex, the bulge being roughly square in shape. This may reflect the way in which the coins were struck, a small number of blows coming from different angles to impress all parts of the dies in as economical a manner as possible.

A full photographic record of the hoard exists in the Department of Coins and Medals,

⁶ Besly, pp. 54–7; J. P. C. Kent, 'Coinage at the Tower Mint', in *SCBI 33 The John G. Brooker Collection. Coins of Charles I (1625–1649)*, edited by J. J. North and P. J. Preston-Morley (London, 1984), pp. xxi–xxiii.

⁷ Besly, p. 57.

⁸ See E. M. Besly, 'Rotary coining in England', in *Metallurgy in Numismatics 3*, edited by M. M. Archibald and M. R. Cowell (forthcoming).

British Museum. The British Museum has acquired twenty-four coins from the hoard, principally examples of the predominant dies, but also including the counterfeit shilling, and the Leicestershire Museums Service has acquired eighty-nine coins, including the gold crown, to fill gaps in its collection.

CATALOGUE

The coins are listed with reference to J. J. North's *English Hammered Coinage*, vol. 2 (London, 1960), though a listing of the shillings of Charles I according to Sharp's classification is also included.⁹

A. Gold coins

James I

crown		coronet	1
-------	--	---------	---

B. Silver coins

Edward VI

shilling	N. 1937	Y (2), tun (1)	3
sixpence	N. 1938	tun	4

Philip and Mary

shilling	N. 1967	Full titles, 1554 (3), undated (3)	6
	N. 1968	English titles, 1555	1
sixpence	N. 1970	Full titles, 1554	1
	N. 1971	English titles, 1557	1

Elizabeth I

shilling	N. 1985	lis (4); cross crosslet (22); martlet (28)	54
	N. 2014	bell (2); A (13); escallop (1); crescent (2); hand (3); tun (18); woolpack (7); key (4); anchor (2); one (5); two (10); uncertain (3)	70
sixpence		pheon 1561 (34), 1562 (13), 1563 (1), 1564 (8), 1565 (7), uncertain date (5)	68
		rose (1565)	5
		portcullis 1566 (17), 1567 (1)	18
		lion 1566 (4), 1567 (10)	14
		coronet 1567 (23), 1568 (19), 1569 (31), 1570 (8), uncertain (3)	84
		castle 1570 (8), 1571 (20), uncertain (1)	29
		ermine 1572 (25), 1573 (8), uncertain (1)	34
		acorn 1573 (17), 1574 (5)	22
		eglantine 1574 (19), 1575 (33), 1576 (14), 1577 (4), 1578 (1), uncertain (4)	75
		plain cross 1578 (28), 1579 (6), uncertain (4)	38
		long cross 1580 (15), 1581 (6)	21
		sword 1582	16
		bell 1582 (13), 1583 (16), uncertain (1)	30
		A 1583 (8), 1584 (6), uncertain (1)	15
		escallop 1584 (2), 1585 (6), 1586 (5), 1587 (1), uncertain (2)	16
		crescent 1587 (5), 1589 (2)	7
		hand 1590 (4), 1591 (8), 1592 (4)	16
		tun 1591 (1), 1592 (14), 1593 (10), 1594 (3), 1595? mule (1)	29
		woolpack 1594 (10), 1595 (7)	17
		key 1595 (1), 1596 (7)	8
		anchor 1599	1
		cypher 1600	1
		one 1601 (6), 1602 (1)	7
		two 1602	4
		uncertain marks 1572 (1), 1580 (2), 1581 (1), 1582 (1), 15- (1)	6

⁹ M. B. Sharp, 'The Tower shillings of Charles I and their influence on the Aberystwyth issue', *BNJ* 47 (1977), 102-13.

James I

half-crown	N. 2098	lis	1
shilling	1/1	thistle	4
	1/2	thistle (12); lis (10)	22
	2/3	lis (9); rose (11)	20
	2/4	rose (15); escallop (7); grapes (10); coronet (7)	39
	2/5	coronet (5); key (1); mullet (1)	7
	2/6	tower (1); trefoil (1); tun (2)	4
	3/6	lis	5
	uncertain		2
sixpence	1/1	thistle 1603	3
	1/2	thistle 1603 (2), 1604 (6); lis 1604 (7); uncertain (1)	16
	2/3	lis 1604 (3), 1605 (7); rose 1605 (3)	10
	2/4	rose 1605 (3), 1606 (3); uncertain 1606 (5); escallop 1606 (3); grapes 1607 (4); coronet 1607 (3), 1608 (3), uncertain (1); key 1610 (1); mullet 1611 (1)	27
	3/6	thistle (1); lis 1623 (3), 1624 (1); trefoil 1624 (5)	10
Charles I			
half-crown	I/2	cross calvary	1
	II/2	plumes (1); harp (2); portcullis (4)	7
	III/1	bell (3); crown (9); tun (12); uncertain (1)	25
	III/2	anchor (7); triangle (2)	9
	III/3	triangle (11); star (1); uncertain (1)	13
shilling	IV	star (9); triangle in circle (146); uncertain (3)	158
	N. 2216	lis (6); cross calvary (2)	8
	N. 2220	anchor	1
	N. 2221	plume (2); rose (4)	6
	N. 2222	rose	2
	N. 2223	harp (15); portcullis (17)	32
	N. 2225	bell (14); crown (31); tun (32); uncertain (3)	80
	N. 2226	crown	1
	N. 2227	tun	3
	N. 2228/5	tun	1
	N. 2229	tun (3); anchor (11)	14
	N. 2230	anchor (21); triangle (8)	29
	N. 2231/0	triangle	4
	N. 2231	triangle (50); star (73); triangle in circle (1713); uncertain (10)	1846
	forgery		tun
shilling (Sharp's classification)			
	A2/1	lis (6); cross calvary (2)	8
	B4/2	anchor	1
	C2/1	plume (2); rose (2)	4
	C2/3	rose	2
	C2/6	rose	2
	D1/1	harp	6
	D2/1	harp	2
	D3/1	harp	1
	D4/1	harp (6); portcullis (14)	20
	D5/1	portcullis	2
	D6/1	portcullis	1
	E1/1	bell	11
	E2/2	bell (3); crown (27)	30
	E2/3	crown	5
	E2 and 3/2	tun	32
	E5/2	tun	1
	F1/1	tun	10
	F2/1	tun	3
	F3/1	tun (3); anchor (11)	14
	F5/1	anchor (21); triangle (4)	25

	F5/2	triangle	4
	F6/1	triangle	4
	F6/2	triangle	48
	G1/2	star	73
	G1/2	triangle in circle	1713
		uncertain	13
forgery		tun	1
sixpence	N.2235	lis 1625	1
	N.2236	cross calvary 1626 (2), uncertain (1)	3
	N.2237	heart 1630	1
	N.2240	harp (5); portcullis (5)	10
	N.2241	bell (6); crown (11); tun (14)	31
	N.2243	tun	8
	N.2244	anchor	10
	N.2245	triangle	3
	N.2246	triangle (16); star (17); triangle in circle (16); uncertain (3)	52

Weight (in grams)

Column 1 gives the average weight of all specimens found.

Column 2 records the number of specimens in the hoard.

Column 3 expresses the average weight of the specimens found as a percentage of the official weight standard.

		Sixpences			Shillings			Half-crowns		
		1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Edward VI		2.76	(4)	92.0	5.84	(3)	97.0			
Philip and Mary		2.55	(2)	85.0	5.42	(7)	90.0			
Elizabeth I	-1561				5.01	(54)	83.2			
	1561-82	2.67	(442)	89.0						
	1582-1603	2.74	(139)	91.3	5.66	(70)	94.0			
James I		2.77	(69)	92.3	5.7	(103)	94.7	14.75	(1)	98.0
Charles I	lis-tun	2.94	(54)	98.0	5.84	(144)	97.0	14.71	(33)	97.7
	anchor-star	2.97	(46)	99.0	5.94	(165)	98.7	14.91	(31)	99.1
	triangle-in-circle	2.88	(16)	96.0	6.03	(1712)	100.2	15.0	(149)	100
	forgery				4.62	(1)				



1



2



3



4



5



6



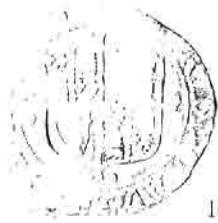
7



8



9



10

CLOUGH AND COOK : RYHALL TREASURE TROVE