

A CIVIL WAR COIN HOARD FROM WEST HATCH

In December 1990, the existence of a small, previously unknown, hoard of 17th century coins, on sale at Monarch Antiques, Glastonbury, was brought to the writer's attention. The fifteen silver coins were accompanied by a note written shortly after the time of their discovery which gives some background information:

Silver coinage found near West Hatch, Somersetshire by Matthew Cridge, Farmer in 1874 and purchased by the Reverend H.G. Tierney for 2 Guineas.

Unfortunately, no more precise details are given concerning the provenance of the hoard and the circumstances of its discovery, or whether fifteen was the total number of coins present.

The 1871 census reveals that Matthew Cridge, aged 64, lived in Higher Road, West Hatch, with his wife Charlotte (62) and children Matthew (30) and Mary Ann (19). Cridge is described as a 'farmer of 67 acres'. The location of his land is not known. *Kelly's Directory* of 1874 shows Cridge to have had another source of income, describing him as a 'farmer and limeburner'. The Revd H.G.T. Elton was vicar of West Hatch. Born at Clifton, Bristol, he spent time in Dorset, where his children were born, before moving to West Hatch.

The hoard comprised:

James I (1603–1625)

	REF.	PRIVY MARK	WEIGHT (gm)
Shilling	N 2101	Key	5.56

Charles I (1625–1649)

	REF.	PRIVY MARK	WEIGHT (gm)
Halfcrown	N 2214	Star	14.77
	"	Triangle in circle (2)	14.40; 14.45
Shilling	N 2223	Portcullis (2)	5.93; 5.96
	N 2225	Crown	5.85
	"	Tun	5.60
	N 2226	Crown	6.03
	N 2230	Anchor	5.92
	N 2231	Star	5.47
	"	Triangle in circle (3)	6.27; 6.14; 5.55
	N 2232	P in brackets (1643–4)	6.03

(N = North, J.J., 1960. *English Hammered Coinage*, 2.)

The coins all derive from the Tower mint. Characteristically, the coins of Charles I are on irregular flans and poorly struck, but are unclipped and have seen little circulation. On the basis of the coins present, the hoard was deposited in or immediately after 1643–4, since the (P) mark was discontinued in the spring of 1644.

As already mentioned, it is uncertain whether fifteen coins represents the total size of the hoard as found. The two guineas purchase price demonstrates that the hoard was small. However, the tendency at the period of the transaction was for such coin hoards to sell for a price approximating to their face value. With a face value in this case of 19s 6d, Elton was either generous in his offer to Cridge or the hoard was originally up to twice the value of the portion examined (E. Besly *pers. comm.*). The content of the hoard argues for their having been more coins. Although the hoard is small, making statistical comparisons dangerous, it is worth noting the very small number of pre-Charles I coins, just the one shilling of James I (6.7% of the total). Coins, particularly shillings and sixpences, of Elizabeth I and James I would normally form a significant proportion of a hoard of this period. The combined average of these earlier coins for hoards closing with the (P) mark is 46% (Besly 1987, 56). While a small hoard such as that from West Hatch need not conform exactly with the average, it is markedly atypical. A hoard of fifteen coins found in 1981 at Roundhouse Roundabout, Sturminster Marshal, Dorset, for example, included five coins of Elizabeth I (Besly 1987, 5). This does lend weight to the suggestion that the hoard was originally larger.

The West Hatch hoard joins eight other Civil War period coin hoards from the historic county of Somerset. The nearest of these finds to West Hatch is the Taunton hoard which also closed with the (P) privy mark (Minnitt 1981).

The West Hatch hoard was purchased by Somerset County Museums Service at auction in April 1991 (Acc. No. TTNCM 46/1991). Between the original recording of the hoard and its acquisition, one of the coins had gone astray. The piece concerned was the Charles I shilling with tun privy mark.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

- Besly, E., 1987. *English Civil War Coin Hoards* (British Museum Occasional Papers, 51).
Minnitt, S., 1981. 'Civil War Coin Hoard from Taunton', *PSANHS*, 125, 121-3.

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