

The Crowcombe coin hoard of 17th-century coins. One that nearly got away

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THE CROWCOMBE COIN HOARD OF 17TH-CENTURY COINS, ONE THAT NEARLY GOT AWAY

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Prior to 1900 records relating to the discovery of many coin hoards comprise, at best, notes in provincial newspapers or in correspondence at the time. The coins themselves are usually lost without trace and with minimal record. The Crowcombe hoard was found in 1724. None of the coins survive and the discovery came very close to failing to enter the historical record. However, a revelation in 1735 was to change that. Documents held in the care of the South West Heritage Trust (references SHC) and The National Archives (references TNA) shed considerable light upon the circumstances of the discovery and events that followed. Some documents

relate to the hoard whilst, in others, the hoard is featured as part of wider legal proceedings between Thomas Carew, in whose house the coin hoard was discovered, and Thomas Parker, the owner of the hoard.

In March 1724 work began on replacing Thomas Carew's manor house at Crowcombe, Somerset, which had 'grown very much into decay', with a new building which became known as Crowcombe Court. Carew sold six manors to help pay for his new home which, by 1734, had cost £4,122 (SHC, DD/TB/13/1). It wasn't fully completed until 1739. Thomas Parker of Gittisham, Devon, was employed



Fig. 1 Engraving of Crowcombe Court as it appeared in the 1780s by Thomas Bonnor. Thomas Parker was responsible for a significant proportion of the building. (SHC, A/DAS/1/126/4; image courtesy of the South West Heritage Trust)

to design and oversee the construction of the new building as the result of a recommendation by lawyer and Tory politician Francis Drewe of The Grange, Broadhembury, Devon, in about August 1722. Carew had visited Drewe regarding arrangements for his forthcoming marriage to the latter's daughter, Mary. Parker subsequently visited Crowcombe and produced plans for the new building and its grounds which were to include stables, outhouses, gardens and ponds and 'all other conveniences thereunto belonging to a more convenient place within the sd. Manor'. The plans were approved by Carew and work began with the demolition of the old manor house (TNA, C11/1857/13/004).

Contemporary documents variously describe Parker as a joiner, undertaker, surveyor, architect and, in later life, gentleman. The relationship between Carew and Parker appears to have become strained from relatively early on. The problems between them were largely with Carew ultimately believing that he was owed £505-11-6d for over payments, payments not accounted for, a number of errors in the building work and the fact that Parker had 'raised several unnecessary Buildings contrary to the plans agreed' (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26 and TNA, C11/2275/57). Between 1727 and 1731 Parker was rarely at Crowcombe but whilst there on one occasion he was taken ill and remained for a considerable time during which Carew did 'maintayne him at great charge' and 'found him meat and other necessarys or paid for the same' (TNA, C11/1857/13/004). Parker 'made use of very large quantities of wine and cyder and strong liquor'. He was also allowed the use of a clerk to maintain his accounts. The relationship between Carew and Parker deteriorated and the latter was dismissed in 1734. He was replaced by Nathaniel Ireson of Wincanton who completed the works (Fig. 1). The agreement between Carew and Ireson is dated 6 July 1734. Ireson was to build upon the structures already begun by Parker. While in Carew's employ Parker also undertook repairs on properties belonging to the former at Clatworthy, Somerset, and Studley, in the parish of Hemyock, Devon (TNA, C11/1857/13/001).

Parker's responsibilities at Crowcombe included supervising the demolition of the old house and overseeing the recycling of materials such as lead. In June 1724, whilst working in the upper room or chamber at the east end of the manor house, Parker removed a section of wall panelling behind which he found bags containing silver coins. Rather than inform Carew of the discovery, Parker decided to personally from it. He would have succeeded with his plan had it not been for the fact that the man he chose as his accomplice, James Gaylard, became ill eleven

years after the hoard's discovery. Gaylard did not expect to live and decided to assuage his conscience for his involvement in the theft of the coins. He sent a letter (Fig. 2), written in a shaky hand, to Carew on 3 September 1735:

Sir

I desier you wil not discharge Mr Tho. Parker until I have spoken with you or your head steward for I do think in my consience he have wronged you in the year 1724 of several hundred pounds I hope you wil Pardon me for not aquainting you with it sooner if I live to see you or your Chief Steward I wil let you or him the reson why I did not in the meantime don't let Mr Parker know of what I have wrote to you at this time for if you do he wil prevent my discovery any farther to you send me a line or two when you wil send your Steward to me for I can't wait on you my selfe because of my Infirmitie by the Palsie who am your unworthy servt. James Gaylard. (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26)

As a consequence of this letter Parker's life began to unravel. Carew went on to take long-term legal proceedings against Parker for recompense for the loss of the coins and for false accounting with regard to the building of his new house at Crowcombe. This paper focuses primarily on the coins but the two aspects are inextricably linked.

Fig. 2 The confession of James Gaylard made in 1735 which triggered further events relating to the earlier discovery of the Crowcombe coin hoard (1724). (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26; image courtesy of the South West Heritage Trust)

Following the sending of his letter, James Gaylard made a detailed confession before Richard Cridland

and John Lane at the Antelope Inn, Dorchester, his then place of residence, on 12 September 1735 (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26). This document, together with drafts of a submission to the Lord Chancellor for the case to be heard at the Court of Chancery, shed light on events that followed the discovery of the coins (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26 and TNA, C11/2182/5). Gaylard was a plumber whose job was the glazing and plumbing work in the new building at Crowcombe and the recycling of the lead and glass from the old house. Gaylard stated that he had been summoned by Parker to the 'upper Roome in ye east end of ye Hall'. John Hook, a blacksmith, was present. Parker clearly didn't want Hook involved and asked him to attend to an issue elsewhere. Following Hook's departure, Parker removed 'a Piece of board' and showed Gaylard 'severall Bags of money lying in a hollow space in ye wall'. Willingly or unwillingly, Gaylard agreed to assist Parker with their theft. Parker passed the bags to Gaylard through an opening in the partition between the chamber and hall. The coins were contained in 'severall canvas bags and one leather bag'. The bags were placed in a 'hand basket with two handles' and taken to Parker's 'Counting Room or closet' in his lodgings in Crowcombe where they remained for over a week. The bags were opened and found to be 'all full of old Silver coin'. Some of the coins were packed into a portmanteau and taken by Gaylard by horse to Parker's house at Gittisham where they were to be hidden in a chest used to store Parker's tools. On arrival, Gaylard spoke to Parker's wife, Katherine, and her sister, Deborah Rost, who both felt that the chest was not secure, particularly as Parker was for the most part absent. As a result, Gaylard was instructed to take the coins to his 'working shop' at Honiton. Gaylard's usual place of residence was Dorchester but he kept premises at Honiton 'for the better convenience of carrying on the trade of a plumber in the neighbourhood of that place'. Gaylard returned to Crowcombe and reported events to Parker. The latter approved of the storage arrangement and gave Gaylard the remainder of the coins to take to Honiton (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26).

The coins remained at Honiton for or six weeks. In late July or early August 1724 Parker visited Gaylard at Honiton and decided upon the next steps. In August the bags of coins were placed in two wooden boxes made and fastened for that purpose' and taken by Gaylard to Dorchester and thence to London on the 'common road waggon' which ran from Exeter. Gaylard travelled with the coins. He was under strict instructions to dispose of them 'to the best advantage'. Gaylard went to the Black Boy and Sugar Loaf in Thames Street where his brother Joseph, a grocer, lived. The latter assisted with the disposal of

the coins by arranging their sale to a at 5s and 4d per ounce. In his statement, Gaylard records that the money received was in gold coins. An discount was made by the due to some of the coins being of 'bad silver', presumably counterfeits. James Gaylard received money for 'his Journeys, labour and Expenses, etc' but at the time of his confession couldn't remember how much this was. He had seen nothing that indicated who the coins had originally belonged to (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26).

Parker and Gaylard were in touch with each other while the latter was in London but only one, probable, letter between them survives. It was written by Parker while he was at Gittisham and is dated 17 August 1724. It was in response to a letter that he had received. The recipient of Parker's letter is simply addressed as 'Sir'. Parker carefully avoided making reference to the recipient's reasons for being in London thereby removing any risk of incriminating himself. The letter states that the recipient was in demand for work, including by Sir John Trevelyan of Nettlecombe Court, but that he should his 'busniss' before returning. Whilst the letter adds little to knowledge about the coin hoard, three references in it make it almost certain that it was sent to James Gaylard. The latter was certainly in London in August 1724 when he was disposing of the coins. The person receiving the letter had been having dealings with their brother with whom there had been some undisclosed of opinion. Parker also provided details of books in which he was interested (see below) and gave the go-ahead to buy them providing they did 'not com to much mony'. He hoped that the letter's recipient would soon be able to arrange a date for coming back and that they should contact Parker upon return. Parker signed himself as 'your most sicear (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26).

Parker instructed Gaylard, while in London, to purchase for him 'two brace of Pocket Pistols, a Case or two of Drawing Instrumts, a Book of Architecture, severall Plans for buildings, a Stone Ring, one Silver Antegugler' (a wine strainer). The remaining money was placed inside one or two tin canisters which were to the top with The canisters and items purchased were placed inside a box and Gaylard travelled with them 'in ye Waggon' to his residence in Dorchester. Two or three days later, still in the month of August 1724, Gaylard delivered everything to Parker's house at Gittisham. Gaylard retained the canisters and for the purpose of selling the latter. Gaylard doesn't record the amount raised by the sale of the but he was instructed to use some of it to buy one or more rings and one or more boxes for Parker's use which were handed to his wife and her sister, along with an number of milled

silver coins and 'old silver coin' that had not been disposed of. Gaylard stated that, after deductions for these purchases and his own expenses, Parker received £500 (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26). Although unrecorded, presumably Joseph Gaylard also received payment for the role that he played.

Following Gaylard's disclosure an Inquisition 'making Inquiry of certain Treasure Trove lately found within the late mansion house of Thomas Carew of Crowcombe' was held before coroner George Cary and 20 jurors on 19 September 1735 at Crowcombe. It was common in this period for inquests to be held on or close to where the matter under consideration had occurred. The jury determined that Parker, described as a 'joyner', had concealed the discovery of the coins since 1724 and that Thomas Carew, Lord of the Manor of Crowcombe, was the rightful owner. The coins were described as 'amounting together in the whole to the value of seven hundred pounds and upwards sterling or current money of this Realm'. The document states that Parker was to face trial at the next Devon assizes (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26). As Parker 'contemptuously refused' to 'Pledges or Sureties for his appearance at the next Assizes' he was to be held in the county gaol until his trial. A summary of the case with the order that Parker be arrested and held in Exeter gaol was sent to the constables and tithingmen of Gittisham and the 'Keeper of his Majestyes high Gaol' for Devon (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26). Raymundo Putt, a Devon Justice of the Peace and Lord of the Manor of Gittisham, who lived at Combe House, apprehended Parker and questioned him. Sometime afterwards, Parker was released from gaol and placed on bail (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26). Parker clearly knew Putt as both lived in Gittisham and Parker leased a number of properties from him. It is not entirely clear why Carew began seeking justice through Treasure Trove rather than having Parker prosecuted for theft. One possibility is that his case against Parker was strengthened by the fact that as Lord of the Manor of Crowcombe he had the rights to any Treasure found there. The draft submission to the Lord Chancellor dated 10 January 1735 (see below) states that the house had been in Carew's possession and that of his ancestors 'time out of mind' and that the coins therefore belonged to him. Carew was clearly unaware of the existence of the coins prior to Gaylard's statement.

Details of the coins discovered are sparse. They are usually described as 'old silver' or 'old silver moneys'. The draft documents prepared for the Lord High Chancellor (see below) show that Carew had asked Parker on a number of occasions to produce copies of his communications with Gaylard whilst the latter was in London and of Gaylard's responses

but they were never provided. Nor had he provided a record of the weight, number or denominations of the coins or the sum raised by their sale. The suspicion was that all such records had been destroyed. The coins are described as '...£100 & upwards of King Charles the 2nd his Silver coin (milled mony) And also 20 Bags & upwards of old Silver coin or old Silver' (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26). The distinction between 'milled mony' and 'old silver coin' indicates that the latter were hammered coins. This demonstrates that the hoard was concealed before the reform of the coinage in 1696 when hammered coins ceased to be legal tender and explains why the 'old silver moneys' were sold for their bullion value. There is no reference as to what happened to the milled coins of Charles II other than the brief reference above. As they were still legal tender in 1724, they were presumably retained and spent rather than melted down.

James Gaylard kept at least one of the coins from the hoard which he gave to William Gill when they met sometime between the inquest on 19 September 1735 and the writing of a letter by Gill to John Glass, a solicitor of Carey Street, near Lincolns Inn, London, on 1 November 1735 (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26). Gill was an Attorney at Law based at Honiton and acting on behalf of Carew. The coin is described as 'a Milled Crowne piece of King Charles the Second Coin with the date 1662'. The concealment of the coins can therefore be dated to between 1662 and 1696. If, as stated, the milled coins were all of Charles II, their concealment is likely to have occurred between 1662 and 1685, indicating that they belonged to Thomas Carew, who died in 1662 or John Carew, who died in 1684. However, Thomas Carew, who died in 1691, is also a possibility although coins of James II are also likely to have been present. William Gill in his letter of 1 November 1735 concludes, on the basis of the date of the surviving coin, 'I dare say the Deposition was in Monmouth's Rebellion'. The attribution of the hoard to the Monmouth Rebellion is understandable but highly unlikely as the Carew family was not involved in the events of 1685. Prior to banks, many coins would have been held together in what, if found today, would be classed as hoards. Coins were commonly concealed for security reasons. The vast majority, though, would have been taken from their place of hiding and spent. Those that didn't re-enter circulation and remained hidden are the exceptions. A unique story lies behind each one but, as in the case of the Crowcombe hoard, it is rare to be able to access this.

A letter to John Glass in London dated 6 October 1735, written by William Gill when at Crowcombe, in the presence of Thomas Carew, summarises the events relating to the discovery and disposal of the

coins and shows that Parker had tried to discredit Gaylard as a witness: 'his [Gaylard's] Character is called in question – Parker and his friends wd. have him be a madman, or what is worse, and that what he has sworn intirely false and without any foundation. But as I said before his Information will be supported by a great many Circumstances and persons of Credit.' (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26). Gill, who visited Joseph Gaylard two or three times in London, gave his personal assessment of James Gaylard who 'has to my knowledge the Character of a very honest man.' He had no doubt that Joseph Gaylard would endeavour to remember all that he could because his brother's character was being called into question. Gill asked Glass to visit Joseph Gaylard and go with him to the who bought the coins with a view to examining his 'Debt Book' for the year 1724 in order to establish the Character of a very honest man and the sum raised. In the event, Joseph Gaylard was able to provide the amount raised from his own records (see below). There is no reference to the number of coins involved. Indeed, as they were being sold for their bullion value there was nothing to be gained by counting them. Gill emphasised, on behalf of Carew, that Joseph Gaylard would not face any consequences for providing information. Carew's aim was simply to gain recompense from Parker for his loss following the outcome of the Inquest. The date of the letter shows that Glass was employed by Carew very shortly after the Inquest.

Parker responded to the outcome of the Inquisition and Carew's determination for justice by referring the matter of the disagreement between himself and Carew over the costs of building works at Crowcombe to the Court of Chancery. He submitted a bill of complaint outlining his case (TNA, C11/1857/13/001). The document is undated, but an instruction attached to it seeking a response from Carew to the issues raised is dated 4 November 1735 (TNA, C11/1857/13/002). As Carew failed to answer the issues raised by Parker, the Court gave authority for any two or three of Henry Lockett (vicar of Crowcombe and, on occasion, Carew's estate agent), Richard Cridland (Under of Somerset who lived at Combe Florey), Richard Cridland junior (gentleman of Milverton), Trevillian Ceely, Robert Harris, Thomas Tucker, James Townsend, John Bennett and George Bradson to question Carew under oath to get his response which was to be 'Distinctly and Plainly wrote upon Parchment' (SHC, DD/TB/27/4). Carew answered Parker's bill in considerable detail in a document dated 12 December 1735 (TNA, C11/1857/13/003-007). It includes complaints relating to Parker's work on his houses at Clatworthy and Studley, although these are minor compared with the issues at Crowcombe.

Carew's statement was made before Richard Cridland senior and junior and James Townsend. Neither Parker's bill of complaint or Carew's response refer to the coins as the two issues were being dealt with separately at this point.

There are two drafts for a bill of complaint to the Lord High Chancellor by Carew against Parker. One is undated; the other is recorded as having been on 10 January 1736. The former was presumably slightly earlier than the latter. They show that whilst Carew was proceeding with an Action of Trover at Common Law with regard to the coins, the case was yet to be heard. The draft bearing the date of was prepared by Samuel Cruwys, a barrister based in London who was also Lord of the Manor of Cruwys Morchard in Devon. Parker was at the time held on 'special bail therein by virtue of a special Order for that purpose And your Orator [Carew] intends to proceed to Tryal thereon' (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26 and TNA, C11/2182/5). Having an action at Common Law did not prevent a also seeking equity by other means, in this case by going to the Court of Chancery. Often in their bill of complaint to the Lord Chancellor the would give a reason why they could not get justice at Common Law. In this instance it was because Carew believed that the Gaylard brothers and other witnesses due to give evidence at the Action of Trover were not expected to live for long because they were 'aged and & weak & may happen to dye before any such Tryal can be had and yor Orator hath no method to preserve their Testimony but by the aid & assistance of this honorable Court.' Although the Inquest had found in Carew's favour regarding the ownership of the coins, the submission to the Lord Chancellor shows that Parker was still denying any involvement with their discovery and removal and that, if coins had been discovered during demolition of the manor house, it was by another person or persons employed in the demolition who were unknown to Parker and who had since died. The bill of complaint makes a brief reference to the fact that Carew was pursuing another legal case against Parker related to expenditure on the building of Crowcombe Court. The two issues were separate, but that was to change.

James Gaylard might not have been quite so ill as suggested. The National Burial Index for England and Wales records the burial of a James Gaylard at Dorchester on 17 October 1739, which was probably him. Gaylard had certainly died by 1742 (TNA, C11/2275/27).

The drafts for the submission to the Lord High Chancellor recount events. The undated version states that Carew 'hath several times by himself & Agents applied unto the sd. Parker for an Amount of

the sd. Mony and of the sd. Silver Coin and of the neat produce thereof and to have a Satisfaction for the same hereby to allow there out unto the sd. Parker what shall be reasonable for the sd. Gaylards Journey to London in disposing of the sd. old Silver Coin.’ (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26). Carew ‘well hoped the sd. Parker would readily have complied therewith as in all Equity & good conscience he ought to have done.’ The documents go on to question why Parker, his wife and Gaylard were unable to produce any documentation relating to the money received from the sale of the coins.

Although no record of the outcome of the Court of Chancery case has been traced it is clear that Parker lost both it and the Action of Trover. The date of the Action of Trover hearing is unknown but was probably in the half of March 1736. Richard Cridland names 23 jurors who were ‘marshalled & settled by the Master & in a document dated 14 March 1736, which may well have been for the Action of Trover. The case concerned was certainly between Carew as and Parker as defendant and is described as a ‘plea of Trespass’ (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26).

A one-page document, presumably prepared shortly after the Action of Trover hearing, summarises Parker’s debt to Carew and requires Parker to acknowledge the amount and to explain how and when payment will be made (SHC, DD/TB29/10/1). The document combines Carew’s losses due to Parker from the coin hoard with those incurred on work on his new house. The total owed by Parker was £1460-3-1½d, comprising £512-11-1½d relating to issues with the building works and £947.12.0d for money made from the theft of the coins. The relating to the building works represents 12.5% of the total expenditure of £4122. Parker’s debt excludes Carew’s ‘costs in Chancery & at Comon Law which Mr Carew insists upon having secured to him’. Parker appeared to accept liability: ‘Honrd. Sir you know I tolde you but now I would Give you Security for ye mony you and Mr Cridland says there is due to you and pay it Midsumer next which is £1012-11s-1½d. Raymundo Putt Security for me for my mony which shall be in a week’s time as for ye surpluss I hope you will be so good as to waive ye determination of ye gentlemen agreed on between us....’. These words were in Parker’s own hand. His signature appears at the end of the document together with the date 16 March 1736. The dates of the list of jurors and the commitment made by Parker to pay the debt might imply that the Action of Trover took place on 15 March 1736 but this would give a very short time for the preparation and signing of the latter document and therefore is unlikely to be the case.

Events moved quickly. On 20 March 1736 an indenture or bond was prepared between Carew and Parker ‘for the further and better securing the Paymt. of the sum of One Thousand four hundred and Sixty Pounds Three Shillings and one Penny halfpenny’ showing that Gaylard’s for the sum received of £500 for the bullion value of the coins had been rejected (SHC, DD/TB/29/10/1-26). The document cites a number of messuages, tenements and lands owned by Parker in the parish of Gittisham and others that were rented by him. Parker committed to paying the sum owed on or before 25 March 1736 but he failed to do so. As a consequence, Carew ‘brought a Bill in the High Court of Chancery to redeem or to foreclose him the said Thomas Parker of the Equity of Redemption of the lands and premises contained in the said mortgage to which Bill the said Thomas Parker did appear and put in his answer thereto.’ (TNA, C11/2473/10). Parker responded and ‘... a commission was Issued out of the High Court of Chancery for the Examination of Witnesses’. Several witnesses were examined and depositions were taken. ‘.... the Debt or Demand of the said Thomas Carew on the mortgaged premises and the Execution of the said Mortgage and Bond.... were fully proved’.

In April or May 1736 Parker to France. There are no details as to where he went or how he paid his way while there, but his stay lasted for about 13 months. This left Katherine Parker in fear of being evicted from her house and her husband’s ‘goods, plate & valuable things’ being taken from her by Carew. In order to avoid this Parker told his wife to transfer ‘his household goods, plate & valuable things’, including his house and two pieces of land to Deborah Rost, Katherine’s sister, using a Bill of Sale. The transfer of ownership took place (TNA, C11/2190/33).

Although none survive, it is clear that Carew wrote several letters to Parker while the latter was in France, showing that his whereabouts was known. Their purpose was to encourage Parker to return home. A note in Carew’s diary for 31 July 1736 (A/AJB) records one made to Parker: ‘Mr Turner came [and] proposed that on condicon Parker came home and released me of all demands both on his own & Mrs Parkers acct [.....] and he & Mrs P joyn in a for sale of all the Est at Git [.....] I would settle [£]18 a year on Mrs P for her life & perhaps might give TP to in case he outlives her but in case it shall appear that he hath any there I am not to pay the annuity.’ According to Parker the letters contained reassurances that ‘All matters Should be Settled to the Liking and Satisfaction’ of himself. Persuaded, Parker returned to Gittisham on or about 31 May 1737. Within three weeks he was arrested and taken to the Fleet Prison for debtors in London (TNA, C11/2473/10).

Being imprisoned for debt did not prevent a person being a defendant in a lawsuit. The advantage of being in a debtor's prison was that people could come and visit freely during daylight hours so there was no legal action between Carew and Parker continued while the latter was in Fleet Prison. Parker issued a bill against Carew in October 1741 (TNA, C11/2275/27) to which the latter responded in June 1742 (TNA, C11/2473/10). Parker claimed that his signature on the indenture or bond of 20 March 1736 came about by unfair means 'at a time when this Defendant by the particular Direction and Contrivance of the said Claimant was by Excessive Drinking made incapable of Understanding or knowing what he said or Did and that this Defendant was Grosly Imposed upon therein not being thoroughly or any wise apprised of the Contents and Import thereof.' He went on to say that, had he had been in possession of his senses, he would not have signed. Parker claimed that the debt was non-existent and that Carew had his account book with regard to Parker's work at Crowcombe. He went on to say that his income from rents and from his properties in Gittisham, then in the hands of Carew as a result of the bond or mortgage, had been £100 per year and that as he was innocent of any wrong-doing he wanted recompense.

After years, Parker was released from the Fleet Prison under the terms of the 1742 Act for the Relief of Insolvent Debtors (SHC, DD/TB/28/5/10). The *London Gazette* for 23 July 1743 gave notice of his petition for release. Debtors were released on the basis that they made a commitment to settle their debts. Parker provided Miles Man, Clerk of Peace for the City of London, with 'a schedule of all his estate and at a Sessions of the Peace held in London on 25 October 1743. A report in the *London Gazette* for 19 November 1743 shows that he had been released from Fleet Prison by that date. The *London Gazette* also announced that a meeting of Parker's creditors was to be held at 5.00pm at the Golden Lyon Tavern in Fetter Lane on 29 November. The meeting's purpose was 'to chuse an Assignee or Assignees of the said Thomas Parker's Estate and Man 'conveyed or assigned the Equity of Redemption of the said premises unto William Pyne, Thomas Hancock and William Huck.' William Pyne was a smith living in Old Street, St Luke, Middlesex, Hancock was a 'tide waiter' (a customs who boarded ships and observed the landing of goods) of Red Lyon Street, Holborn, and Huck was a gentleman of Fetter Lane, London (TNA, C11/2190/33).

The transfer of his possessions to Deborah Rost seems to have provided the required protection for Parker's wife and made the lives of the assignees very

A Bill of Complaint dated 3 April 1744 was submitted by the assignees to Philip, Lord Hardwicke, who had become Lord Chancellor in 1737, in order to take the case to the Court of Chancery (TNA, C/11/2190/33). They demanded that Parker hand over to them books, accounts, deeds, papers and other documents relating to his properties in Gittisham, which he failed to do. The assignees thought it highly likely that the paperwork had passed to Deborah Rost following the transfer of items belonging to Parker into her name. They therefore asked Rost to provide the records which she also failed to do. They then demanded that she hand over Parker's goods and that had been transferred to her. Again, she failed to comply. Rost claimed to have sold or disposed of the items but didn't reveal anything about the circumstances, although she said that disposal was to cover the costs incurred in an action against her by Parker. No evidence for legal action between Parker and Rost was found by the assignees. The assignees concluded that any 'Deed or Deeds of Conveyance [relating to the house and land] hath since been obliterated, Defaced, Altered or Destroyed.' They felt, quite understandably, that Parker and Rost were endeavouring to deny them of their rights and in 1744 Pyne, Hancock and Huck took action against them. The outcome is uncertain.

Parker died in 1745. After almost ten years of pursuit, his debt to Carew remained largely unpaid. It continued to accrue after his death and by 1748 it had risen to £2372-15-11½d due to the addition of interest, with a further £127-17-8d added as a result of costs incurred making a total of £2500-12-7¼d. However, the was reduced to take account of the income that Carew had received in rent on the land and property belonging to Parker at Gittisham that had passed to him in about July 1736. This was estimated at £840 and thereby reduced the outstanding debt to £1660-12-7¼d. The assignees were responsible for this debt and were ordered to pay this sum on 20 September 1748 at the 'Chapple of the Rolls' in Chancery Lane. The three assignees failed to comply and as a consequence were 'absolutely debarred and of & from all Rights Tithe, Interest, Equity and of Redemption of in and the said Mortgaged premises.' The indenture ultimately shows that Carew received £900 of the debt when he sold land and property formerly belonging to Parker to Raymundo Putt. The remainder of Parker's estate lay in Carew's possession (SHC, DD/TB/28/5/10).

Beyond the documents relating to Parker's concealment of the discovery of the coin hoard and dispute with Carew over the building works at Crowcombe, relatively few sources shed light upon other aspects of Parker's life or those of his close

relatives. The marriage banns were read at Gittisham for Thomas Parker and Katherine Rost on 9 June 1706. Their wedding took place at Honiton on 12 August 1706 (DHC 1639A/PR/1/7). The marriage register records Parker's residence, at the time, as 'Culliton' (Colyton). Katherine was from Gittisham. There is a survival of Thomas Parker's activity in Crowcombe in the form of the wooden screen in the Church of the Holy Ghost, for which he was paid £73-10-0d in 1729, a sum that also included and wainscoting the Altar' (SHC, D/P/crow/4/1/1). Thomas Parker was buried at St Michael's church, Gittisham, on 3 March 1745. The entry in the burial register describes him as a gentleman which, at that time, meant someone who was no longer working due to their age.

The only other possible reference to Katherine Parker is the burial of a Catherine Parker at Ottery St Mary on 12 May 1740 (DHC 180A/PR/1/33). She may well have been Thomas Parker's wife. Parker at the time was still in the Fleet Prison and Katherine certainly died while he was imprisoned there.

Deborah Rost was born in Colliton in 1707 and the year of her probate was 1745. Little is known about her beyond the references in the Crowcombe hoard proceedings and the fact that she lived in Gittisham, was a spinster and was amongst a list of signatories who swore the three loyalty oaths required under the 1723 Oath Act at the Dolphin Inn, Honiton, on 2 October 1723 (DHC QS17/2/3/2a).

Whilst there is no record of the number of hammered coins discovered in the hoard the price per ounce and the sum received from their sale for melting down, based upon the of £947.12.0d, provides a clue. Assuming that the coins were shillings, the most common denomination at the time, there would have been at least 16,500 of them, allowing for some weight loss due to wear and clipping. There could well have been some crowns and halfcrowns but the number of bags suggests that shillings predominated. This makes it the largest hoard of 17th-century coins to have been found in Somerset.

Many coin hoards will have been found over the centuries for which no record exists. The surviving records relating to the Crowcombe hoard, whilst limited in terms of the information they provide about the coins, do reveal a considerable amount about events following their discovery. One aspect that comes across very strongly is the determination of the two protagonists to win their side of the dispute. Parker went to great lengths to avoid reimbursing Carew, a route that led to his ruin.

POSTSCRIPT

The case of the Crowcombe hoard was considered in legal terms as it was still being cited in guidance for coroners over 100 years later. The publication to feature it was *Lex Coronatori, or The Office and Duty of Coroners* by Edward Umfreville published in 1761 (pp. 536-38). The text is a summary of the case heard on the 19 September 1735 (see below). Umfreville and Carew were clearly in direct communication over the case. Umfreville's guidance was revised by Joseph Baker Grindon in 1822 who reused the 1761 summary word for word. This was followed by the *Treatise on the Law of Coroner with Copious Precedents of Inquisitions and Practical Forms of Proceedings* by Richard Clarke Sewell in 1843 which again used Umfreville's words. In each of these publications the Crowcombe hoard serves as the sole case relating to Treasure Trove. The text reads as follows:

TREASURE TROVE

Somerset to wit – An inquisition indented, taken at Crowcombe in the County aforesaid, on Friday the 19th of September, in the 9th year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George the Second, by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. and in the year of our Lord 1735, by and before me, George Cary, Gent. one of the Coroners of our said Lord the King, within and for the said county upon making inquiry of certain treasure trove, lately found in the said mansion-house of Thomas Carew, of Crowcombe aforesaid, Esq. within the manor of Crowcombe Bickham, in the said county, by virtue of my office, and of the statute in that case and provided, upon the oaths of (nineteen jurors) good and lawful men of the county aforesaid, who being charged upon their oath, and heard evidence upon oath, produced to them, do say, that in about the month of June, in the year of our Lord 1724, Thomas Parker, of Gittisham, in the county of Devon, joiner, in pulling down the said late mansion-house of Thomas Carew, Esq. aforesaid (he, the said Thomas Parker, being employed by the said Thomas Carew therein) did then and there, hidden in a vacant place in the wall of the said late mansion-house, certain parcels of old silver coin or monies, contained in several bags, amounting together, in the whole, to the value of £700, and upwards sterling or current monies, of this realm, and that the said Thomas Carew is the reputed Lord of the said manor, and as such intitled to the several royalties thereof, as appears

by several ancient records and court rolls, to the said coroner and jurors produced in evidence. And the said jurors do further say, that the said Thomas Parker then and ever since, to the time of this inquisition, concealed his finding of the taking of this inquisition, concealed his finding of the taking of the said silver coin, or old silver monies, from knowledge of the said Thomas Carew, and the said jurors do further say, that the said Thomas Parker is now in full life, and living at Gittisham aforesaid, in testimony whereof, as well as I, the said coroner, as the jurors aforesaid, have hereunto severally set our hands and seals, day, year and place, first above mentioned.

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