

From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

A Civil War coin hoard from Weston-sub-Edge, Gloucestershire

by N. Mayhew and D. J. Viner
1987, Vol. 105, 213-222

© The Society and the Author(s)

A Civil War coin hoard from Weston-sub-Edge, Gloucestershire

By NICHOLAS MAYHEW and DAVID VINER

Summary

On 13 July 1981, a hoard of 307 silver and 2 gold coins with a date range from AD 1550–1643 was discovered during building operations at the Hall of Friendship in Weston-sub-Edge, Gloucestershire and was subsequently declared treasure trove at a coroner's inquest in Chipping Campden on 10 September. The hoard was acquired in its entirety for preservation and display at the Corinium Museum, Cirencester.

Discovery and circumstances of the find by David Viner

The village hall in Weston-sub-Edge (SO 125413) was given to the village by its owner in 1930 and has since been administered by a Hall of Friendship Trust. A new hall building was added to the north side during the 1960s and the older building renovated as a village friendship club. Further renovations in 1980–1 included the incorporation of a gamesroom on the first floor and an appropriate strengthening of the structure. It was during these works that the discovery of the hoard was made.¹ The earlier history of the building itself is vague but it seems on structural evidence to have originally been a barn (FIG. 1) with four bays, one of which on the south side has at some time been an entrance. It is clear that the structure has been much altered but we may surmise an original 17th-century date with subsequent conversion into a coach house until its disposal by the Earl of Harrowby in 1926.²

The renovation work undertaken in 1981 by Midvale Building Services of Evesham included the digging of a stanchion pit (2ft 6in square x 2ft 6in deep) centrally placed as shown on FIG. 1, that is at the point where the line of one of the cross-beams of the building crosses the central roof line. The significance of this siting – central and presumably easily memorable in a building with an open and visible roof pattern – will be discussed below, but we should note here how the pure chance of modern requirements led to excavation at this particular point in the floor.³

Whilst digging the pit Mr Harold Middlicott, a partner in the building firm, unearthed a lead pipe buried at a depth of about two feet below the floor surface of the hall, that is in clay soil beneath about eight inches of flooring concrete. The pipe was sealed at both ends and there were no associated finds. Having been put aside overnight, the pipe was prised open at one end to reveal the hoard of coins. These were duly reported in the usual way and the jury at the treasure trove inquest had little difficulty in deciding that the hoard had been deliberately hidden with intent to conceal and subsequently recover.

Indeed, the container itself had been carefully prepared. A section of lead with an approx. thickness of 3mm, it had been joined to form a pipe or lead container with a diameter of approx. 55mm; two circles of lead of 3mm thickness had also been carefully cut and used to seal off the

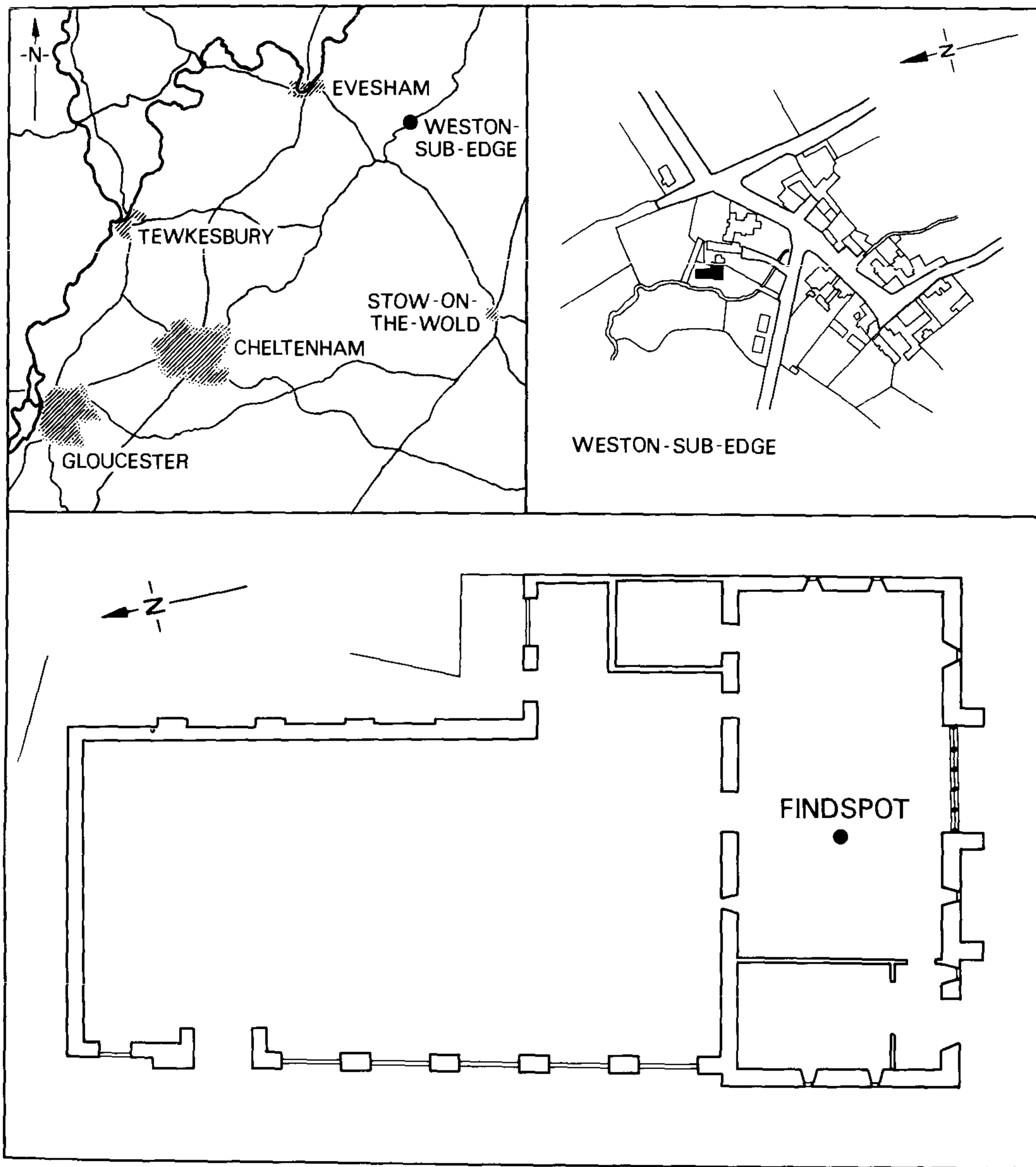


FIG. 1 Location maps and village hall plan.

container at either end, giving an overall length of 270mm. There is no evidence of any inscription or other marking on the exterior of the container.

However, within the container the coins were stacked together and neatly filled the space available, a further indication that the owner not only decided to conceal his coins in this way but made his container exactly to suit the number and thickness of the coins in his possession. Further, he added a note (a scrap of paper 40 x 30mm) which might be interpreted as an indication of the sum total/value of the contents of the container (FIG. 2). The face value of the hoard is £17 13s. 6d. Does the note say 'hoard is £18' as seems most likely? If it does, was the owner's reading correct, did he in fact place the full number of coins in the container (or keep one or two at the last minute); or is the hoard as we now have it intact? These are imponderables, but certainly it is fascinating to consider the state of mind of the owner at the time of the deposition of the container.

We may conclude that the place and position of burial as well as the nature of the container and its contents suggest an intention to hide an individual's hoardings – perhaps the major part, if not the entirety, of his available coinage. Some small coinage which might be expected to appear is absent and this is in line with the other hoards of similar date found elsewhere; hoarders tended to hoard larger denominations of coinage (see below). Further, we may assume that the owner (or person acting on his behalf) was familiar with the building, and in a position to dig a hole and conceal the container without discovery. Was he perhaps the owner of the building or another local person? Contemporary clues do not help, although John Smith's *Men and Armour for Gloucestershire in 1608*⁴ conveniently lists the able bodied men in the village together with their occupations, albeit some 35 years before the hoard was likely to have been concealed. There are several names with which one might speculate, men of some local substance and old enough by the early 1640s to have accumulated some capital. But this must remain only speculation.

Whoever buried the hoard did not return to reclaim it, or was prevented from doing so, and herein lies something of the fascination of this period of civil unrest and turmoil during the first civil war from 1642–6. Gloucestershire in general – and this part of the Cotswolds in particular – was certainly subject to the movement of troops across the countryside, to enforced billeting and seizure of property and possessions from local people by both sides in the conflict. Prince Rupert captured Bristol in July 1643. In August the royalists laid siege to Gloucester which was only

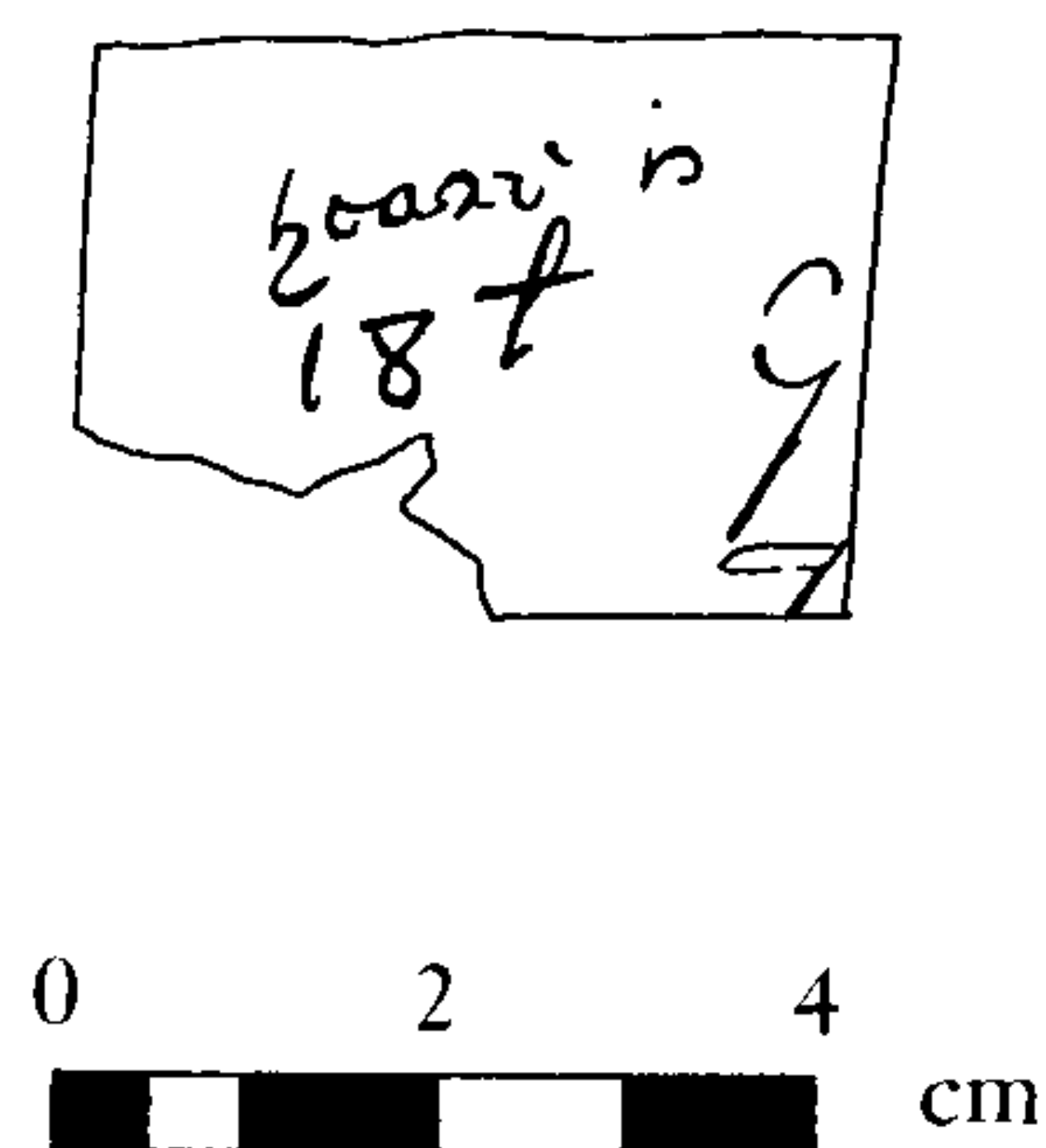


FIG. 2. Note found in container.

relieved by Parliamentary troops crossing the Cotswolds from London the following month. Such momentous events should perhaps be set against a background of muddled conflict, sporadic raids and skirmishing at a local level.⁵ Here a context for the concealment of the Weston-sub-Edge coin hoard may be found, its owner perhaps concerned to conceal his valuables as an insurance against their seizure or even himself involved as a soldier in the conflict. Was he even a local person, or somebody passing through and concealing his savings in a place which he might reasonably expect to find again?

Content and numismatic significance of the hoard by Nicholas Mayhew

All hoards are samples of currency, reflecting more or sometimes less accurately the currency of the time when they were hidden. Periods of warfare, for example in Scotland in the 14th century or England in the 17th century, have left behind dramatically increased numbers of hoards. Obviously concealed with the intention of recovery which for some reason – perhaps the death of the owner – never took place, hoards were thus more likely to be hidden, and more likely not to be recovered, in times of danger. Thus is a general context established for the concealment of the Weston-sub-Edge hoard.

It has been noted that the absence of smaller denominations, below sixpence, accords with many other hoards of the period. The presence of gold and silver is slightly unusual, although the fact that the gold coins are of James I reflects the relative output of the two metals in James' reign. Because of changing gold-silver ratios, in favour of gold, James struck less silver and more gold than was usual before or after.

All the coins were struck at London, apart from the two Scots coins, and the few civil war issues from the royalist mint at Oxford. There is much interest in the Oxford coins of the civil war. The legend on the reverse – 'May God rise up and his enemies be scattered' – was full of contemporary relevance, as was the royalist declaration of war aims which appear across the field on the reverse. Charles asserted his defence of the Protestant religion, the laws of England, and a free Parliament, which neatly summarised also the objectives of his opponents. The Oxford mint was situated in New Inn Hall Street, and Antony Wood's contemporary description of the arrival of the mint equipment in Oxford, and the well-known donations of college plate to the royalist cause all add glamour to the story of the royalist coinage. This hoard however confirms the message of numerous other finds from all over the country: despite its considerable numismatic interest, the royalist coinage was quantitatively negligible, and its contribution to the cause insignificant. The bulk of royalist business must have been conducted in ordinary coin from the Tower mint in London.

Parliament seized the Tower mint on 10 August 1642 and continued to strike coin there with designs essentially unchanged – that is having the king's portrait and titles – right up to the execution of Charles I. The currency of the civil war was thus almost entirely the coinage of the Tower mint. The issues of the 16th century were however plentifully represented in this, and in most civil war hoards. The earliest coin found at Weston-sub-Edge was the debased shilling of Edward VI, initial mark martlet, 1550. The debasement was of course a legacy from Henry VIII, which Edward's government attempted to rectify with a fine issue, 1551–3, at 11oz, 1dwt. The fine shillings in the Weston-sub-Edge hoard are interesting because of the silver rims mounted on them. The resulting weights of these coins remain varied, so that we may assume that the rims were not added for metrological reasons. They were probably specially adapted in this way as shovel-board shillings.⁶

There are three issues of Philip and Mary in the find, but it is really only the coinage of Elizabeth which made a lasting Tudor contribution to the civil war currency. It was Elizabeth's

Coin hoard summary list

6 Edward VI	1s.	Base coinage, 1550	(1)
		Fine coinage, 1551–3 rims mounted with silver bands	(4)
	6d.	Fine coinage	(1)
3 Philip and Mary	1s.		(2)
	6d.		(1)
107 Elizabeth	1s.	Early issues (1558–61)	(20)
		Later issues (1582–1602)	(29)
	6d.	1561–82	(43)
		1583–1602	(15)
36 James I	Unite	2nd coinage	(1)
	Double Crown	2nd coinage	(1)
	1s.	1st coinage	(9)
		2nd coinage	(12)
		3rd coinage	(2)
	6d.	1st coinage	(5)
		2nd coinage	(6)
157 Charles I			
Tower Mint	2s. 6d.		(33)
	1s.		(108)
	6d.		(10)
		including one Briot issue (anchor)	
Oxford Mint	2s. 6d.	1642	(3)
	1s.	1642	(1)
Scots	6s.	Briot issue	(1)
	12s.	Falconer issue	(1)

Charles I, Tower Mint privy-marks

	Castle	Feathers	Harp	Portcullis	Bell	Crown	Tun	Anchor	△	*	⊕
2s. 6d.	–	–	1	4	1	1	2	1	4	5	14
1s.	1	2	3	4	14	10	16	3	8	16	31
6d.	–	–	–	–	1	1	3	2+1	1	–	1

government which showed the necessary will to put through the unpopular, though generally regarded as necessary, recoinage in 1560. This was necessary because of the continued circulation of earlier base issues, and the unpopular conversion of base coin to fine necessarily involved a dramatic reduction in the amount of coin returned to the owner. The whole process would presumably also have been fiercely deflationary, and may have contributed to the serious problem of Tudor unemployment. However, Dr Christopher Challis has kindly warned me that there is no contemporary evidence of deflation arising from the recoinage. Such deflationary impact was ultimately off-set by the very large quantities of bullion struck in the course of the

reign. The plethora of small denominations which characterised the Elizabethan monetary system leaves no impression on the hoards, but the substantial issue of sixpences does. Elizabethan coins account for 25% by value of the silver in the Weston-sub-Edge find, a figure which is broadly confirmed by other hoards. The percentage of Elizabethan coins usually rises or falls in accordance with the denominational structure of each hoard, those dominated by the large denominations, 2s. 6d. or 1s. being less weighted towards Elizabethan issues than those with a larger representation of sixpences in which the Elizabethan element was usually much larger.

This huge output of Elizabethan silver (she struck £4,541,109 in silver between 1560 and 1603) partly reflects the influx of newly mined bullion from the Americas to Europe – a flow which continued well into the 17th century. Whether this influx was the basic cause of the long-term inflation of the 16th and 17th centuries, or whether this inflation is better explained in terms of rising population is a matter of much dispute. What is less controversial is that the value of silver was falling relative to that of gold. This truth is reflected in the series of adjustments made to the mint valuations of the two metals in the reign of James I. While the pound of silver stood constant at £3 2s. 0d., the pound of 22 carat 'crown' gold rose in value from £33 10s. 0d. in 1601, to £37 4s. 0d. in 1604, to £40 18s. 4d. in 1611 and to £41 in 1619. The high and rising valuation of gold stimulated the flow of that metal to England; merchants where possible chose to settle debts in England in the preferred metal.⁷ Gold coinage under James I therefore became more plentiful relative to silver, and it is no coincidence that the gold coins found at Weston-sub-Edge were James I's issues. It is reassuring that the somewhat recherché theory of bimetallic bullion flows should find such homely and tangible confirmation.

One aspect of the inflation of the 17th century is the shift in the denominational structure towards larger denominations. Because hoarders tend to favour larger denominations, hoards cannot be regarded as a faithful indicator of denominational structure. Nevertheless in its broad outlines, the message of the Weston-sub-Edge find, that under Elizabeth the sixpence bore the brunt of the work, while under Charles I the shilling and even the halferrown were circulating more and more, is substantially true.

The likely date of deposit for the find is the summer of 1643. The vast majority of these coins have no dates on them, but they are marked with an initial mark which effectually dates most of them to within a year. During the reign of Charles I samples of the mint's output were regularly put aside for quality control. This testing, known as the Trial of the Pyx, dates back at least to the time of Edward I, but was at its most regular under Charles. The trial took place more or less annually, and the coins of each issue were distinguished by a particular initial mark which was changed after each trial. Detailed records of these trials survive which effectively date the changes of initial mark.⁸ In the confusion attendant upon the outbreak of war no trial was held in 1642, and the mark in use since the summer of 1641, a triangle within a circle, continued until the trial of 19 May 1643. The next mark, (P), does not occur in the Weston-sub-Edge find, so that it is clear that the latest coin in the find was struck before the end of May 1643. The triangle in circle mark is very fully represented in the find suggesting that this issue may have been nearing completion when the hoard was closed. A date in the summer of 1643 for the concealment of the hoard would correspond with the local military history.

The system of initial marking not only permits us to establish a likely date of deposit for these undated coins, but also enables us to compare the chronological profile of the Weston parcel with the output figures of coin leaving the mint. In other words, one can compare what the mint made and issued with the samples of actual currency in use, as revealed by the hoards. For example, heavy expenditure abroad in war, diplomacy or trade might cause a disparity between what the mint issued and what was available for use in England a few years later.

Table 1 gives a breakdown of the Charles I coins in the Weston-sub-Edge hoard by initial mark,

which in effect means by chronological groups, in shilling units,⁹ and as a percentage of the whole. *Table 2* gives the mint output figures for the corresponding periods, as absolute figures, and as percentages for the whole.¹⁰ A glance at the two tables reveals a remarkable correspondence between the proportion of the different marks present in Weston-sub-Edge and the proportion of the original mint output.

This close correspondence between the circulating medium and the mint's original production is in fact rather more unusual than it might first appear. Calculations below suggest that somewhere between one half and one third of the original Elizabethan mint output had disappeared from circulation by 1643. Similar rates of disappearance affected James I's coinage. Yet the implication of this hoard is that, at any rate from the early 1630s, a very large and constant proportion of the silver coming into England for coining at the Tower mint seems to have remained in the English circulation. If this impression is confirmed by the analysis of other hoards of the period,¹¹ the suggestion that silver brought to the English mint in the 1630s and

Table 1 Shilling 'units' in Weston-sub-Edge hoard by mint mark

		%	
Castle 1627-8	1	0.51	] ——— 1.53%
Plume 1630-1	2	1.02	
Harp 1632-3	5½	2.81	] ——— 49.86%
Portcullis 1633-4	14	7.16	
Bell 1634-5	17	8.69	] ——— 48.60%
Crown 1635-6	13	6.65	
Tun 1636-8	22½	11.51	] ——— 48.60%
Anchor 1638-9	7	3.58	
Triangle 1639-40	18½	9.46	] ——— 48.60%
Star 1640-1	28½	14.58	
⊙ 1641-3	66½	34.02	
Total	195½		

Table 2 Charles I silver output, Tower mint

	£	%	
1.4.25/31.3.26	72323	1.41	] ——— 2.86%
1.4.26/31.3.27	52355	1.02	
1.4.27/31.3.28	9924	0.19	
1.4.28/31.3.29	4833	0.09	] ——— 49.31%
1.4.29/31.3.30	3360	0.06	
1.4.30/31.3.31	5050	0.09	] ——— 47.75%
1.4.31/31.3.32	67544	1.31	
1.4.32/31.3.33	153996	3.00	] ——— 47.75%
1.4.33/31.3.34	189686	3.69	
1.4.34/31.3.35	273077	5.32	] ——— 47.75%
1.4.35/31.3.36	131495	2.56	
1.4.36/31.3.37	401679	7.83	] ——— 47.75%
1.4.37/31.3.38	525100	10.24	
1.4.38/31.3.39	370312	7.22	] ——— 47.75%
1.4.39/31.3.40	417549	8.14	
1.4.40/31.3.41	497510	9.70	] ——— 47.75%
- 4.41/ - 7.41 est.	166666	3.25	
- 8.42/ - 5.43	1784242	34.80	
Total:	5126701		

1640s for the most part seems to have remained within the English circulation will call for a revision of current historical thinking on this topic.

Historians have rightly explained the dramatic increase in the quantity of silver struck at the Tower in the 1630s in terms of an Anglo-Spanish agreement which provided for the shipping of enormous quantities of Spanish New World bullion to England, partly for coining there but ultimately for transfer to Spanish merchants in the Low Countries. The English role as middle-man and shipper was necessitated by the state of war in Europe affecting Spain, with her possessions in the southern Low Countries, and France, Holland, and the German states embroiled in the Thirty Years War. The price of the English agreement to act as neutral middleman between technically hostile trading partners was that a proportion of the Spanish bullion should be coined in London. The Spanish were ultimately to receive this part of the bullion either in English coin, or as bills of exchange issued by London merchants payable in Antwerp.¹²

Given this as the source of bullion, it is particularly surprising that so little of the output of the Tower mint in this period should apparently have left the country. The implication is either that English earnings abroad were sufficient to settle the outstanding debts in Antwerp, or that the very high rates offered for gold, particularly in France, encouraged English merchants to meet their obligations abroad in gold whenever possible. A third factor, which may also have played a part, particularly with reference to the exceptionally high levels of mint output in 1641–1643 which occurs in the Weston-sub-Edge hoard in the shape of coin with the triangle in circle initial mark, may be that shipments of silver from London to Antwerp were disrupted by the onset of war.

However, whatever the cause, the mint output figures, in conjunction with the evidence of the Weston-sub-Edge hoard, suggest that silver was particularly plentiful at the Mint, and with the merchants of the city in the early 1640s. This liquidity enjoyed by Parliament's paymasters may well have made a significant contribution to the ultimate outcome of the war.

Comparison of known mint output with actual circulation as revealed by this hoard also suggests a rough estimate of the likely total circulation in 1643. Since the 66.5 shilling units of the triangle in circle issue represent 21.45% of the sample, and correspond to £1,784,242 of the original output, the total circulation may be estimated at *c.* £8,318,144.¹³ It is important to stress that this sort of estimate can only be approximate, but there is some other evidence in favour of a total circulation in the region of £8 million.

The total original silver output over the whole period 1560–1693 is known to be £15.6 million, of which only about £10 million was available for recoinage in 1696 when all the surviving old coin was called in.¹⁴ Something like one-third had gone. The total original silver output 1560–1643 was £11.4 million. If about a third of this sum had also been lost, worn or carried abroad, a figure of something under £8 million again emerges.

It will be noted that the figures given are only of the most approximate nature. However, working on an assumption of a total circulation of *c.* £8 million in 1643, we may estimate the relative representation of Elizabeth, James and Charles in the currency of 1643 on the basis of the Weston-sub-Edge hoard:

	Elizabeth	James I	Charles I
proportions in Weston-sub-Edge	25.16%	9.19%	63.06%
in circulation as a whole	£2,012,800	£735,200	£5,044,800
compared with original output of	£4,541,109	£1,724,097	£5,126,701

On this basis the hoard suggests that almost none of the original output of Charles I had been lost, although loss of coins of Elizabeth and James was quite severe. However, it is important to

recognise that this hoard may not be a representative sample of the currency as a whole. All the calculations and estimates offered in this paper need to be seen in the light of that proviso. However, it is surprisingly difficult to judge how far any hoard of this period is representative. Although civil war hoards are relatively plentiful, reports of earlier hoards now dispersed do not always provide the information required¹⁵ while recent or fully recorded hoards show a good deal of diversity. This diversity reflects local or chronological variations, a denominational bias on the part of the hoarder, or the possibility that the hoard was put together over a long period of time rather than being taken from circulation at any given moment.

Nevertheless, despite such complications, a review of other hoards of this period¹⁶ suggests that the Charles I element in the Weston-sub-Edge find may overstate the Charles content in the circulation as a whole in 1643. It may be that 50% might be a more representative figure for Charles' share of the currency in 1643, in which case the corresponding approximate figures might be:

proportions in general circulation (assuming £8m total circulation)

Elizabeth	38%	£3,040,000
James	12%	£960,000
Charles	50%	£4,000,000

This estimate would suggest that the loss of coin was rather more evenly spread. However, even with £1 million of Charles' coin lost, it remains clear that far less than half of the Spanish bullion brought to the Tower mint was in fact sent on to the merchants in the Spanish Netherlands. If this picture is substantiated by the study of other hoards, it would appear that we need to adjust our perception of the flow of silver into England and give more thought to the impact this bullion may have had if, as seems likely, it remained in the country during the civil war.

Acknowledgements

Particular thanks are due to several people who gave valuable assistance following the discovery of the hoard. PC Roger Box FRNS (then stationed at Northleach) produced a preliminary list of the hoard's contents and made all the appropriate contacts between the coroner's office and the Corinium Museum at Cirencester. David Faulkner, H.M. Coroner for the Cotswold district, officiated at the inquest and throughout expressed great interest in the nature and significance of the find. The purchase of the hoard by Cotswold District Council at the valuation of £5,926 was made possible by a 50% grant from the Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund. Thanks are also due to Dr J.P.C. Kent of the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum for his good offices throughout the procedure of identification, valuation and allocation of the hoard. The summary coin list upon which this article is based has been provided by Dr Kent, and the British Museum reserves the right in the usual way to publish full numismatic details in due course.

Notes

1. Reported in *Evesham Journal*, 16 July 1981; see also *ibid.*, 17 Sept 1981; summary note in *TBGAS* 100 (1982), 266.
2. Information from notes kindly provided by PC Vaughan of Weston-sub-Edge; only further and detailed research in the muniments of the Earl of Harrowby at Sandon Park in Staffordshire will throw further light on the history of this building.
3. FIG. 1 has been kindly drawn by Nick Griffiths from a copy of the original site drawings prepared by Patrick J. Burton Dip. Arch., ARIBA, Chartered Architect, 62 High Street, Evesham (ref. 907:1A, Jan 1980). Mr Burton kindly made this drawing available and contributed his own thoughts on the history of the building. FIG. 2 has been kindly drawn by Anna Cuss.

4. John Smith, *Men and Armour for Gloucestershire in 1608* (facsimile reprint of 1902 edition, Gloucester 1980), 93 for Weston-sub-Edge.
5. For a summary of the local context, see R.W. Jennings, *The Cotswolds in the Civil War* (Corinium Museum, Cirencester 1976).
6. See J.J. North, 'A Tudor Gaming Piece', *Numismatic Circular* (April 1975), 149, where a similar piece, though with a wider rim, is illustrated and references in the contemporary literature discussed.
7. By the 1630s France had come to outbid England for the yellow metal. See F.C. Spooner, *L'Économie Mondiale et les Frappes Monétaires en France 1493–1680* (1956).
8. See H. Symonds, 'Charles I: The Trials of the Pyx, the Mint-Master, and the Mint Accounts.' *Numis Chron* 4.10 (1910), 393 for a table of pyx dates and their corresponding marks.
9. 6d. = $\frac{1}{2}$ shilling unit; half-crown = 2.5 units.
10. For mint output figures see J.D. Gould, 'The Royal Mint in the Early Seventeenth Century', *Econ Hist Rev* 2.5 (1952), 248, supplemented after 1640 by figures generously made available to me by C.E. Challis. For a complete review of mint output in this period see Challis, *A History of the Royal Mint* (Cambridge, forthcoming).
11. Edward Besley is currently addressing himself to this very topic.
12. On this whole subject see J.S. Kepler, *The Exchange of Christendom: the International Entrepot at Dover 1622–1651* (Leicester 1976). I am most grateful to C.E. Challis for drawing my attention to this work and for a number of other helpful comments. The errors which remain however are my own.
13. It is important to base this sort of estimate on the most recent issue. Severe distortion occurs if the sum is based on earlier issues which will have suffered greater wastage. Mr Edward Besley however has pointed out to me that there may be a case for using the penultimate issue which may have been more completely distributed without suffering too much wastage.
14. Sir John Craig, *The Mint* (Cambridge 1953), 193.
15. Future students of this hoard may well wish to ask questions which this and other reports do not answer. For them the preservation (and display) of the entire hoard in the Corinium Museum will be especially valuable (acc. no. 1984/7/1–311).
16. For this review, whose findings this paper can in no sense prejudice, students should await Mr Besley's definitive study.

December 1985