

COIN HOARD

Unique ID: HAMP-E4E185

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Awaiting validation

A hoard of 7,083 coins, all probably contemporary copies of a 30 denier piece of Louis XIV of France (r. 1643-1715 AD), all dated 1711, all 'Lyon' mint (cf. KM# 378.2). These coins have suffered significantly from corrosion with many concreted together. They do not appear to be very worn. That is, the main areas of wear seem to relate to the upright of the left hand 'L' (obverse) and the lower part of the cross (reverse), rather than the inscriptions. The fact that this wear pattern is repeated suggests wear to the dies rather than wear through circulation.

The 30 deniers was a silver-washed billon coin (in this case an alloy of four-fifths copper and one-fifth silver) struck specifically at the mints of Metz and Lyon for export to the French colonies (Canada and Louisiana). As a result they would be unexpected as site finds in this country; no coins of this denomination have been recorded on this database to date amongst the many coins of Louis XIV now recorded by the PAS. They were struck between 1709 and 1713, although all of these examples are dated 1711 and bear the mintmark of 'D' for Lyon. For those coins examined the same dies appear to have been used.

Obverse description: Back-to-back 'L's with crown above; fleur-de-lis to each side and one below

Obverse inscription: LVD . XIII . FR . ET . NAV . REX

Reverse description: Outline cross with three pellets arranged in a triangles at tip; fleur-de-lis in each angle

Reverse inscription: . PIECE . DE . XXX . DENIERS . D (legend begins between 6 and 7 o'clock)

Die axis measurement: 6 o'clock

The hoard was in a corroded condition, found under the floorboards of a shop in Bishop's Waltham, Hampshire. Analysis was made difficult by the corroded state of many of the coins, and it is a credit to Paul Wragg (University of Winchester student placement) that he persevered to record a 10% sample of c. 700 coins. Under the guidance of Rob Webley (Hampshire FLO) Paul sought coins where he could read the date or, a more easy task, the mintmark. This confirmed that where it was legible (593/702 cases) the mintmark was consistently 'D' for Lyon. It also confirmed that where it was legible (429/702 cases) the date was consistently 1711. In 324/702 cases both elements could be read. Whenever the die axis relationship could be measured accurately (482/702 cases) it proved consistently to be 6 o'clock.

Beyond this apparent consistency some important inconsistencies started to reveal themselves. A random, control sample of 100 coins were examined by John Naylor (Medieval and Post-medieval Coins Advisor). The vast majority of the coins have diameters between 24.5 and 25.5mm, although the average was 24.65mm. This is due to a number of coins with small flans, one as small as 17.58mm. Excluding the highest and lowest 10% of coins the average diameter was 24.89mm. There was more variability in the weights. The vast majority had weights between 3.2 and 4.0g; the mean average was 3.59g. Excluding the highest and lowest 10% of coins the mean average weight was 3.64g. Two coins had weights under 2g. This relative variability can be seen in the graph that

compares weights with diameters, with small flans generally accounting for the low weights; the high weights possibly relating to accretions.

The main sample worked on by Paul was selected on the basis of legibility rather than at random. This notwithstanding, the results were very similar to those of the random sample. The vast majority of the coins have diameters between 24.5 and 25.8mm, although the average was 25.1mm. Excluding the highest and lowest 10% of coins the average diameter was 25.14mm. Although some coins of small flan size (three between 19 and 20mm) were included, the sample tended towards larger pieces where perhaps more of the inscription had survived on the flan. As with the random sample, there was more variability in the weights. The vast majority had weights between 3.3 and 4.0g; the mean average was 3.61g. Excluding the highest and lowest 10% of coins the mean average weight was 3.63g. Two coins in this sample also had weights under 2g. The shape of the curve was similar but more defined: an elongated 'S' with a more defined tail at the light end.

To summarise, the results from the control group (the random sample) back up those coming from the larger, main sample. The two groups came up with similar variations in diameter for the majority of the coins: 24.9mm +/- 0.78mm max. (variation from median in random sample for middle four-fifths), 25.15mm +/- 0.50mm max. (variation from median in main sample for middle four-fifths). The two groups also came up with similar variations in weight for the majority of the coins: 3.63g +/- 0.41g max. (variation from median in random sample for middle four-fifths), 3.64g +/- 0.39g max. (variation from median in main sample for middle four-fifths). Such margins of variability in diameter and weight are 'allowable', that is on all representative monies that are hammered rather than milled slight variations in flan sizes can be expected, manifesting themselves graphically in a shallowly inclined straight line. What is unusual are the curving tails on our graphs, and in particular the small flan coins.

Ultimately it is a close examination of the coins themselves that build on hints in the graphed data to demonstrate that this is an abnormal collection of coins. Within the two samples we have found examples of cut flans, blank flans, flans of irregular shape, coins with numerous incuse concentric arcs, obverse brockages and off centre strikings, as well as the small flans already picked out. A few coins bearing a silver wash stand out as exceptions rather than the norm. What we would seem to have, therefore, is sufficient evidence to suggest that this was a group of counterfeit coins, although the general consistency of flan size and weight and the consistency of die axis measurement hints at a sophisticated operation, probably from official dies. Specific examples of counterfeiting 30 denier pieces are known from Mardore and Aspremont, France (Pilon 2008, 54), the latter prosecuted in 1718 (*ibid.*, 57; note 10).

We move into the realms of conjecture when it comes to why they were deposited in Bishops Waltham. Were they captured in transit from Lyon to North America at Southampton and buried on the realisation that they were of little worth? Were they the product of an English attempt to infiltrate the French colonial economy that failed?

This group was published in Ochota (2013, 153-154).

Find of note status

This is a find of note and has been designated: Regional importance

Subsequent actions

Subsequent action after recording: Returned to finder

Chronology

Broad period: POST MEDIEVAL

Period from: POST MEDIEVAL

Period to: POST MEDIEVAL

Date from: Exactly AD 1711

Date to: Exactly AD 1711

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 7083

Personal details

This information is restricted for your access level.

Other reference numbers

Other reference: E2721

Materials and construction

Primary material: Copper alloy

Manufacture method: Struck or hammered

Completeness: Complete

Spatial metadata

Region: [South East](#) (European Region)

County or Unitary authority: [Hampshire](#) (County)

District: [Winchester](#) (District)

Parish or ward: [Bishops Waltham](#) (Civil Parish)

Spatial coordinates

4 Figure: SU5517

Four figure Latitude: 50.949819

Four figure longitude: -1.218419

1:25K map: SU5517

1:10K map: SU51NE

Grid reference source: From a paper map

Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 1000 metre square.

Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector

Discovery circumstances: Bricks were lifted and a metal detector scan conducted. The coins were found in a clump below c. 18 inches of clayey soil.

General landuse: Other

Specific landuse: In use as a building

Pilon, F., 2008 [La fabrication de fausses pièces de 30 deniers dites "mousquetaires" à Mardore \(Rhône\)](#) Paris: Societe d'etudes numismatiques et archaeologiques 54, 57 , 10

finds.org.uk