

THE 1991 KELSO TREASURE TROVE

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THE discovery made late in November 1991 at Wooden Farm, Kelso is one of the largest recorded seventeenth-century coin hoards from Scotland. The find was made in a stubble field by a metal-detector user pursuing his hobby and was contained in a pot. The coins are mainly silver with a small amount of gold. They were declared to be treasure trove and assigned to the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh, with a view to display in the proposed Museum of Scotland.

Discovery

The first coins were found on Tuesday 26 November in a trail leading to a broken pot. The police were promptly informed as were the National Museums of Scotland and the Borders Regional Archaeologist, Mr John Dent, who was present on the following day when most of the coins were recovered. It appears that deeper ploughing, started about five years previously, was responsible for taking off the top of the pot and scattering the contents. The gold coins were at the bottom of the pot which was seemingly covered by three small flat stone slabs. There used to be a row of trees at the spot according to the farmer but otherwise the field is quite bare at present.¹ Wooden Farm is just outwith the town of Kelso to the south-east and the find was made at NGR: NT 740336. The coins were removed to the Royal Museum of Scotland for reporting and cleaning and then sent to the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow University, for sorting and recording.

The container

The wheel-thrown pot has a flat base, slightly swelling body with carination at the top and missing rim. The uppermost fracture surface is eroded suggesting that the top of the pot had been lost or removed at the time of burial while the remaining fractures are fresher and probably the result of plough-damage. The interior only is glazed in a greenish and orange-brown colour with one dribble running down the exterior which is of a reddish-brown appearance. The maximum external diameter is 189 mm with the base 100 mm and the present height 155 mm. It is a typical example of a Scottish seventeenth-century pot and it has been suggested that the interior glazing might indicate a chamber pot.²

The contents

The hoard consists of 1,375 coins of which ten are gold and the remainder silver. One of the gold is a Scottish rider of 1595 issued by James VI to whose English issues as James I the other nine gold pieces belong. Among these is an angel pierced presumably as a touch-piece. The bulk of the silver is made up of 1,163 English coins with only 48 Scottish and 33 Irish pieces. In addition there are 121 European issues half of which were struck in

Acknowledgements. I am grateful to Alison Sheridan of the National Museums of Scotland for much help in dealing with this hoard and to Ian Campbell for assistance in sorting the Tudor and Stuart coins.

¹ See the *Southern Reporter* (Selkirk) for Thursday 5 December 1991, front page.

² I am grateful to Dr Sheridan for the physical description of the pot and to Dr David Caldwell for his comments on its origin and use.

the Spanish Netherlands, the rest being from the United Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Sweden and a single coin from Poland.

A small number of the English coins date back to the reigns of Edward VI, Mary, and Philip and Mary: a mixture of shillings, sixpences and groats. The majority of the Elizabethan issues present are 519 sixpences along with 153 shillings as well as 12 groats and one milled sixpence, which may be a forgery.³ Those of James I consist of 2 half-crowns, 89 shillings and 79 sixpences while the larger denominations further increase for Charles I with 29 half-crowns, 179 shillings and 64 sixpences, all from the Tower mint. Two of these shillings are forgeries. No Scottish silver coin pre-dates 1600 and most belong to James VI's thistle merk coinage of 1601–4 and Charles I's third coinage of 1637–42. All the Irish pieces are of James I struck between 1604 and 1607. Half of the continental pieces are crown-sized patagons, rijksdaalders and talers – with the rest divided between half and quarter-size denominations.

The state of the coins

All the early Tudor coins and the Elizabethan, with few exceptions, are worn. This is also the case with the sixpences of James I and about 70 per cent of his shillings. The percentage of worn coins drops to 20 per cent for Charles I. Most are fairly worn but a number of these especially with the later initial marks show only slight signs of wear. Most of the Irish issues and those of Scotland of James VI are worn while the Scottish coins of Charles I range from worn to mint state. The wear on the continental coins is more mixed but they are mainly fairly worn to slightly worn.

Clipping is evident on approximately 20 per cent of the English coins though the figure runs to 40 per cent with the James I sixpences and is difficult to estimate with the poorly produced Tower issues of Charles I. Two silver coins only are pierced and there are two instances of attempted piercing. A table of average weights of the English coins is given after the catalogue and does not appear to call for comment.⁴ A full record of the weights of the coins in the hoard is on file in the National Museums of Scotland and the Hunterian Museum.

A striking feature of the Kelso hoard is the large number of bent coins present, mainly Elizabethan sixpences. These amount to over 20 per cent among the English coins as a whole. The bending which appears deliberate takes two forms. There is simple bending which ranges from slight to severe and double bending giving an s-shaped profile in the more familiar manner of Georgian sixpences bent twice in opposite directions as love tokens. One hundred sixpences of Elizabeth I and a further 23 shillings may be described as bent to some degree while the total number for James I and Charles I drops to 17 and 6 respectively. A further 50 sixpences and 4 shillings of Elizabeth are double bent with the corresponding numbers for James I being 2 and 3 and of Charles I's issues a single shilling is so treated. In addition a further 50 English pieces may be described as buckled and in many instances this is probably a weak or unsuccessful form of double bending. All 33 Irish coins of James I are bent, 7 being double bent, while among the Scottish element all 13 thistle merks are simply bent as are 5 of Charles I's half marks.

Another noteworthy feature of this hoard is the amount of deliberate scratching. It occurs on 42 of Elizabeth's shillings and 27 of her sixpences. Among the coins of James I, 24 shillings and 4 sixpences are scratched. Two half-crowns and 5 shillings but no sixpences

³ The milled sixpence is rather 'crumpled' in appearance and has several test or peck marks on the surfaces. Examination through a microscope suggested it might be plated but the piece needs further investigation.

⁴ This follows the format devised by E. Besly in *English Civil War Coin Hoards* BM Occasional Paper 51 (London, 1987).

of Charles I are also so treated. Scratching can be seen on 3 of the Irish pieces but is absent from the Scottish coins and also the continental pieces. The scratching is usually on the obverse and, while often nondescript, frequently takes the form of a X, in some instances across the monarch's head. In a few cases it takes the form of a letter, two As, a B and a V being discernible and on one shilling of Edward VI possibly the initials T F.

Date of deposition

Among the latest coins in the hoard are the 13 pieces of Charles I bearing the triangle-in-circle initial mark in use between 1641 and 1643 and ending in April of the latter year. Eight of these are half-crowns of which 6 display slight signs of wear while the remaining 2 may be described as fairly worn. Two of the 4 shillings with this mark are also fairly worn and the other two slightly worn as is the single triangle-in-circle sixpence. The absence of the subsequent initial marks does not necessarily provide a *terminus ante quem* as the situation in England made it more difficult for them to have a wide circulation.⁵ Nevertheless the condition and relatively small number of triangle-in-circle coins in the Kelso hoard would suggest they were buried during their period of issue or very shortly afterwards.

This is reinforced by the two latest continental coins bearing dates, a patagon and half patagon issued by Philip IV in Flanders. Both are dated 1642 and show signs of having circulated for a short time only. Further evidence is provided by the latest Scottish coins produced towards the end of Charles I's third coinage of 1637–42. Two thirty shilling pieces of Falconer's second issue are virtually in unworn condition as is a similar twelve shilling piece while a third thirty shilling piece is only slightly worn. A further thirty shilling piece of Falconer's final anonymous issue appears to be fresh from the mint. A date of deposition in 1643 would therefore seem most likely.

Discussion

This find from Kelso is probably the largest recorded seventeenth-century hoard of coins in precious metal from Scotland.⁶ It seems only to be exceeded by a poorly recorded find from Marnoch, Banffshire, of approximately 2,000 copper turners. Two discoveries from Stirlingshire, from Strathblane of about half the number and Grangemouth with 1,094 coins approach it in size. The more normal figure is between 100 and 300 pieces. Among the fifty hoards from the whole century twenty appear to belong to the period of the civil war. Only one Scottish civil war hoard is known to have included gold, that from Strathblane in Stirlingshire with two English pieces. Otherwise two hoards hidden earlier in the century make up the total of hoards deposited between 1600 and 1700 which possessed a gold content.

Apart from the gold element, Kelso is basically typical of the silver hoards of the first half of the seventeenth century from north of the border. These are dominated by worn shillings and sixpences of Elizabeth I and James I along with half-crowns and shillings of Charles I. Scottish coins make up only a small proportion as do Irish issues while the large denomination is supplied by continental coins especially of the Spanish and United Netherlands and a variety of German talers.⁷ Perhaps noteworthy in this hoard is the greater number of half patagons and half talers as well as quarter patagons.

⁵ Besly, pp. 56–7.

⁶ See R.B.K. Stevenson and J. Porteous, 'Two Scottish seventeenth-century coin hoards', *BNJ* 41 (1972), 136–46 for

a tabulated listing and discussion.

⁷ Stevenson and Porteous, pp. 136–7.

More unusual is the large number of bent and scratched coins present. These are features which have not been especially noted in relation to the Scottish currency in the past. However, they do appear more often in finds from England.⁸ The simple bending among the Kelso coins is probably best regarded as testing while the double bending, surely too elaborate for the latter purpose, should be looked on as being akin to that of the later love tokens or amulets. Some of the scratching seems to be deliberate defacement on political, or perhaps religious, grounds.

The high proportion of poorer quality coins would perhaps indicate that this is not a savings hoard. Equally it does not appear to be one made up entirely out of the prevailing currency. It may therefore be from a mixture of sources gathered together, perhaps scraped together, in an effort to provide much needed funds at a time of great unrest. The bent Irish coins and more especially the bent thistle merks of James VI may have come from England along with the more recent issues of Charles I. The bulk of the Tudor and Stuart coins may represent the circulating medium as may the continental pieces. The gold and some of the silver could be savings. The bent coins could represent an official or private culling over a period of time and pressed into use in the then current emergency. They might possibly have a religious source. If the doubly bent coins are love tokens and if these had sentimental, as well as not a little economic, value they may even represent a sacrifice on the part of the ladies of Kelso for a good cause – in the way that wedding rings have so often been given up.

The value of the hoard was around £70 sterling or £840 Scots, which in military terms might have kept ten horsemen in the field for two months.⁹ However, if this was a hoard collected together as a result of fund raising for one of the factions in the civil war then for some reason it never reached its destination. If such be the case, the faction is more likely to have been Royalist for though Kelso was occupied by the Scottish Presbyterians in 1639 and again in 1645 under Leslie, father and son respectively, in between times it witnessed Royalist activity, notably in 1643 instigated by the Marquis of Hamilton.¹⁰

CATALOGUE

The English coins are listed with reference to J.J. North's *English Hammered Coinage*, vol. 2 (London, 1975) while the Scottish are to E. Burns, *The Coinage of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1887).

A. Gold coins

SCOTLAND

James VI

rider	B. 954(7)	1595	1
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ENGLAND

James I/VI

angel	N. 2081	book	1
unite	N. 2085	cinquefoil (1), tun (1)	2
double crown	N. 2088	tower (2), book (1)	3
half crown	N. 2093	lis	1
quarter-laurel	N. 2119	trefoil	2

⁸ Besly, p. 66.

⁹ Based on a Royalist recruiting poster's offer of 17s 6d (sterling) per week as quoted by Besly, p. 63, n. 12.

¹⁰ See pp. 109–12 of A. Molat, *Kelso: A History of Kelso from Earliest Times* (Edinburgh, 1985) and personal communication from Alison Sheridan.

B. Silver coins

ENGLAND

Edward VI

shilling	N. 1937	Y (1), tun (3)	4
sixpence	N. 1938	Y (1), tun (2), uncertain (2)	5

Mary

groat	N. 1960		16
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Philip and Mary

shilling	N. 1967	1554 (2), undated+XII (2)	4
sixpence	N. 1971	1555	1
groat	N. 1973		4

Elizabeth I

shilling	N. 1985	lis (5), cross crosslet (26), martlet (30)	61
	N. 2014	bell (9), A (19), escallop (12), crescent (3), hand (3), tun (12), woolpack (19), key (7), one (4), two (3), uncertain (1)	92
sixpence	N. 1997	pheon 1561 (25), 1562 (9), 1563 (5), 1564 (12), 1565 (8), uncertain (7)	66
		rose 1565	8
		portcullis 1566	18
		lion 1566 (7), 1567 (7)	14
		coronet 1567 (22), 1568 (21), 1569 (24) 1570 (2), uncertain (2)	71
		castle 1570 (7), 1571 (18)	25
		ermine 1572 (18), 1573 (9)	27
		acorn 1573 (15), 1574 (1)	16
		eglantine 1574 (11), 1575 (27), 1576 (9) 1577 (1), uncertain (3)	51
		plain cross 1578 (25), 1579 (15), uncertain (1)	41
		long cross 1580 (13), 1581 (6)	19
		sword 1582	15
		bell 1582	4
	N. 2015	bell 1582 (2), 1583 (9)	11
		A 1583 (5), 1584 (13)	18
		escallop 1584 (1), 1585 (5), 1586 (4), uncertain (1)	11
		crescent 1587 (2), 1588 (4), 1589 (2), uncertain (1)	9
		hand 1590 (9), 1591 (7), 1592 (3)	19
		tun 1592 (16), 1593 (16), 1594 (2)	34
		woolpack 1594 (6), 1595 (6)	12
		key 1595 (3), 1596 (4), 1598 (2)	9
		anchor 1599	1
		cypher 1600	1
		one 1601	5
		two 1602	11
		uncertain (mark and date)	3
groat	N. 1986	cross crosslet (4), martlet (4), uncertain (4)	12
milled sixpence	N. 2027	star 1562 (? forgery)	1

James I

half-crown	N. 2122	trefoil (1), lis (1)	2
shilling	1/2	thistle (10), lis (12)	22
	2/3	lis (13), rose (7)	20
	2/4	rose (11), escallop (14), grapes (3), coronet (1), uncertain (2)	31
	2/5	coronet (6), key (2), trefoil (5)	13
	3/6	thistle (1), lis (2)	3
sixpence	1/1	thistle 1603	6
	1/2	thistle 1603 (9), 1604 (2); lis 1604 (6)	17
	2/3	lis 1604 (8), 1605 (5), uncertain 1604 (1); rose 1605 (12)	26
	2/4	rose 1605 (8); escallop 1606 (5), 1607 (2); coronet 1608 (5); key 1609 (1); bell 1610 (1); cinquefoil 1614 (1)	23

	3/6	rose 1621(1); thistle 1622 (1), 1623 (1); lis 1623 (1), 1624 (2), uncertain (1)	7
Charles I			
half-crown	I/1	lis	1
	II/2	plume (1), harp (2), portcullis (2)	5
	III/1	bell (2), crown (3), tun (2)	7
	III/2	anchor (3), triangle (1)	4
	III/3	triangle	1
	IV	star (3), triangle-in-circle (8)	11
shilling	N. 2216	lis (5), cross calvary (1)	6
	N. 2218	cross calvary	1
	N. 2220	castle	1
	N. 2221	plume (2), rose (2)	4
	N. 2223	harp (13), portcullis (10)	23
	N. 2225	bell (13), crown (26), tun (33)	72
	N. 2226	crown	1
	N. 2227	tun	3
	N. 2228	tun	5
	N. 2229	tun (2), anchor (7)	9
	N. 2230	anchor (15), triangle (1)	16
	N. 2231	triangle (14), star (16), triangle-in-circle (4)	34
	uncertain		4
	forgery	?tun (1), ?anchor (1).	2
sixpence	N. 2235	cross calvary 1626	1
	N. 2236	cross calvary 1626	2
	N. 2238	rose	1
	N. 2240	harp	5
	N. 2241	bell (8), crown (11), tun (14)	33
	N. 2242	tun	3
	N. 2243	tun	2
	N. 2244	anchor	8
	N. 2246	triangle (1), star (6), triangle-in-circle (1)	8
	uncertain		1
SCOTLAND			
James VI			
thistle merk	B. 943(1)	1601	4
	B. 943(2)	1602	7
	B. 943(5)	1603	1
	uncertain		1
half thistle merk	B. 944(2)	1602	2
quarter thistle merk	uncertain		2
twelve shillings	B. 985(15)	1609–25	1
Charles I			
thirty shillings	B. 997(2)	first coinage 1625–34	1
half merk	B. 1001(1)	second coinage 1636	3
forty pence	B. 1002(2)		4
half merk	B. 1010(11)	third coinage 1637–42 I. Briot's issue	8
forty pence	B. 1020(13)		1
	B. 1013(14)		2
twelve shillings	B. 1017(24)	III. Falconer's first issue	1
forty pence	B. -(28)		2
	B. -(30)		2
	B. -(31)		1
thirty shillings	B. -(38)	IV. Falconer's second issue	1
	B. -(39)		1
	B. uncertain		1
twelve shillings	B. 1020(42)		1
thirty shillings	B. 1023(51)	V. Falconer's anonymous issue	1

IRELAND

James I

shilling	S. 6512	bell	6
	S. 6513	bell (2), martlet (8)	10
	uncertain		2
	S. 6515	martlet (2), rose (3), escallop (1), uncertain (1)	7
	S. 6516	rose (1), escallop (1)	2
	uncertain		1
sixpence	S. 6514	bell (2), martlet (3)	5

SPANISH NETHERLANDS

Albert and Isabella (1598–1621)

patagon	Brabant	(Antwerp) 1612 (1), 1617 (1), 1620 (1), nd (4)	7
half patagon	Brabant	(Antwerp) 1616 (1), 1618 (1), 1619 (1), nd (1) (’s – Hertogenbosch) nd	4 1
	Tournai	nd	1
quarter patagon	Brabant	(Antwerp) nd (Brussels) nd	9 1
	Flanders	nd	11
	Tournai	1616 (1), nd (6)	7

Philip IV (1621–1665)

patagon	Brabant	(Antwerp) 1623 (1), 1626 (1), 1627 (1), 1633 (1), 1636 (2), 1638 (1) (Brussels) 1625 (1), 1635 (1)	7 2
	Flanders	1642	1
	Artois	1634	1
	Tournai	1623 (1), 1633 (1)	2
	Burgundy	1623	1
half patagon	Brabant	1633 (1), 1636 (1)	5
	Flanders	1631 (1), 1642 (1)	2
	Tournai	1631	1
quarter patagon	Brabant	(Antwerp) 1624 (1), 1626 (1), 1628 (1) (Brussels) 1631 (1)	3 1
Flanders		1632	1

UNITED NETHERLANDS

rijderdaalder	Gelders	1582	1
rijksdaalder	Friesland	1606	1
	Overijssel	1620	1
	West Friesland	1621	2
	Zeeland	1623 (1), 1624 (1), 1629 (2)	4
half rijksdaalder	Gelders	1625	1
	Holland	1629	1
	West Friesland	1611 (1), 1625 (1)	2
	Zeeland	1619 (1), 1623 (2), 1629 (2)	5

AUSTRIA

HRE Ferdinand I	taler	1561 (Vienna?)	1
HRE Rudolf II	taler	1605 (Kutenberg)	1
HRE Ferdinand II	taler (60)	1621 (Joachimstal)	1
	taler	1624 (Prague)	1
	taler	1624 (Vienna)	1
	half taler	1624 (Prague)	1
Archduke Ferdinand (1564–95)	taler nd	(Hall)	2
Archduke Karl II (1564–90)	taler	1584 (Klagenfurt)	1
Salzburg (Archbishop of)	Paris Von Lodron	taler 1620	1

IMPERIAL CITIES

Brunswick	taler (24)	1624	1
Deventer	Arendsrijksdaalder	nd	1

Hamburg	reichstaler (32)	1608, 1636	2
Kempen	Arendsrijksdaalder	nd	1
Lübeck	$\frac{1}{2}$ taler (16)	1627 (over 6?)	1

GERMAN STATES

Brunswick-Lüneburg,	Christian	taler 1624; $\frac{1}{2}$ taler 1623	2
	George of Calenburg	taler 1639	1
Halberstadt, Bishop Heinrich Julius		taler 1597	1
Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, Friedrich Ulrich		$\frac{1}{2}$ taler 1614	1
Brunswick-Lüneburg-Harburg, Wilhelm		taler (Moisburg) 1622	1
Saxony (Albertine), Johann George I and August		taler 1612	1
Stolberg, Ludwig II (of Königstein)		taler 1546 (Augsburg)	1

SWEDEN

Charles IX

4 marks		1607 (1), 1609 (1)	2
2 marks		1606	1
1 mark		1606 (2), 1607 (2)	4
$\frac{1}{2}$ mark		1607	1

Gustavus Adolphus

4 marks		1614 (1), 1618 (1)	2
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POLAND

Sigismund III

half taler		1628	1
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Weight (in grams) of English silver

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.

	<i>Sixpences</i>			<i>Shillings</i>			<i>Half-crowns</i>		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Edward VI	2.77	(5)	92.4	5.58	(4)	93.0			
Philip and Mary	2.42	(1)	80.7	5.42	(4)	90.4			
Elizabeth I—1561				5.50	(61)	91.7			
1561—1582	2.68	(375)	89.4						
1582—1603	2.74	(144)	91.4	5.67	(92)	94.5			
James I	2.73	(79)	91.0	5.70	(89)	95.0	13.78	(2)	91.9
Charles I lis-tun	2.93	(47)	97.7	5.78	(118)	96.4	14.72	(13)	98.1
anchor-star	2.90	(15)	96.7	5.80	(53)	96.7	14.79	(8)	98.6
triangle-in-circle	2.94	(1)	98.0	6.00	(4)	100.0	15.02	(8)	100.1