

The Emneth Hoard

BY

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Late in October, 1941, a ploughman working between Emneth Station and Long Lot Crossing, Norfolk, turned up and broke an earthenware vessel. A platelayer, Mr. G. C. Wilson, working near, picked up the fragments and found that it had contained a hoard of over 650 Roman coins. He disposed of these to Mr. G. L. Francis of the Nook, Terrington St. Clement. It is hoped that they may pass ultimately to the Castle Museum, Norwich. Though it had been summarily decided by the local Police that the coins were not Treasure Trove, "because they were not of gold or silver," they were sent to the British Museum for inspection, and it is thus possible to publish the following account of them.

SUMMARY OF THE HOARD.*

DENARII.		VALERIAN I.	34
SEPTIMIUS SEVERVS	2	GALLIENVS	64
SEVERVS ALEXANDER	2	SALONINA	30
IULIA MAMAEA	1	VALERIAN II.	22
	5	SALONINVS	8
	—	CLAUDIUS II.	21
		QVINTILLVS	10
ANTONINIANI.			189
GORDIAN III.	5		
PHILIP I.	4		
PHILIP II.	5	POSTVMVS	302
TRAJAN DECIVS	2	MARIVS	6
HERENNIA ETRVSCILLA	2	VICTORINVS	133
HERENNIVS ETRVSCVS	1	TETRICVS I.	5
DIVVS AVGVSTVS	1		
TREBONIANVS GALLVS	2		446
VOLVSIAN	1		
AEMILIAN	1		
	24		
	—	Grand Total, 664	
		(+ two or three broken coins).	

The hoard contained few coins of individual note or interest, but attention may be called to the VENVS VICTRIX of Salonina with a variety of rev. type, to the FELICITAS

*A detailed list of the coins, for which room cannot be found here, may be consulted in the Castle Museum, Norwich.

AVGG. of Saloninus as Augustus, hitherto only known for him as Caesar, to the P.M. TR.P.COS.II.P.P. of Postumus, with a rev. type which, though not clear, seems certainly to be new, and to the SAEC.FELICITAS of Victorinus, struck at the unidentified Gallic mint of Marius, a type hitherto recorded for Marius only. The interesting variant of the common PAX AVG. of Victorinus, showing a small branch low r. in field on reverse, seems so far to have escaped attention, but, as it occurs on a number of specimens here, it is hard to believe that it can really be new.

The interest of hoards, however, consists less in their individual pieces than in their general composition, and here the Emneth Hoard has its lessons to teach and its problems to raise. The metal of the coins in the hoard was, on the whole, very poor. Only some 75 coins showed appreciable traces of silver on the surface and even that is no sure evidence of a high silver content. The hoard represents, then, the debased silver of the mid-third century, not quite at its lowest, but rapidly dropping towards that point. Yet these Antoniniani can hardly have been tariffed below the metal value of the best of them: otherwise, those best pieces should have been driven to the melting pot. The odd five denarii may have ranked as equal in value to the later Antoniniani: Trajan Decius struck Antoniani on old denarii. The value of the debased Antonianus in relation to gold is unknown.*

What is certain is that it was still officially a member of the silver series. Is it not time that our Coroners took account of this certainty, when they hold their inquests?

A study of the hoard in its successive periods will raise some questions of interest:

Period I.—A.D. 253. Only 29 coins, scattered over a number of reigns—26 of the mint of Rome, 1 of Laodicea (Septimius Severus), 2 of Mediolanum (Trebsonianus Gallus).

Period II.—A.D. 253-258. Accession of Valerian I. to revolt of Postumus. 131 coins—19 of Rome, 5 of Mediolanum, 107 of Lugdunum.

Period III.—A.D. 258-268. Revolt of Postumus to his death, and the short reign of Marius. 307 coins of Gallic mints, 188 of Lugdunum, 116 of Cologne, 3 of an uncertain mint.

17 coins of Rome, 10 of Mediolanum
(+ 1 of Postumus issued at that mint).

Period IV.—A.D. 268-270-1. Victorinus to Tetricus I. 137 coins of Gallic mints, 59 of Lugdunum (or a neighbouring mint), 77 of Cologne, 1 of an uncertain mint. 1 barbarous coin of Victorinus.

24 coins of Rome, 3 of Mediolanum
(+ 4 of Claudius II., uncertain, probably of Rome).

* The Antoninianus originally seems to have been a double denarius. Trajan Decius may have reduced its value to a single one. The "reform" coin of Aurelian seems to have been a double denarius once more.

The hoard is at once seen to be predominantly Gallic, in all over 83 %. In Period II. it is 81.6 %, in Period III. nearly 92 %, in Period IV. 81.5 %. If we exclude the stragglers of Period I., a hoard of some 635 coins covers a period of some 17 years, an average of about 37 coins a year. In Period II. the average is about 26, in Period III. about 33, in Period IV. about 56; the figures can only be approximate, as the Periods are only loosely defined.

If one thinks of the hoard as built up little by little over a long term of years, one will place its foundation about A.D. 254 and note a gradual increase in the rate of accumulation down to A.D. 270-271. If, on the other hand, one prefers to regard it as a sample of the money in circulation at that later date, withdrawn at one stroke from the market, one will value it as evidence of the persistence of some of the older issues in spite of the gradual and insistent intrusion of the later ones.* No doubt what actually happened was often something between these two: a man would have some old deposits by him, but would suddenly increase them under the stress of some imminent danger. In any case the date of burial cannot be before the accession of Tetricus I.—late A.D. 270. In view of the fewness of his coins, of the absence of any coins of Aurelian, and of the general composition of the hoard, it is unlikely that it was very much later.

Coins from the Italian mints are scarce in Period III., during the reign of Postumus. This is natural and only what one must expect from the history. But they are not plentiful in Period II., and are on about the same level in Period IV.: that is to say (a) under Valerian I. and Gallienus the needs of Gaul were largely supplied from its own mint (Lugdunum) and (b) under Victorinus, Italian coins reached Gaul as freely as under Valerian I. and Gallienus. It is noteworthy that Quintillus, despite his very short reign, is represented by 10 coins—a comparatively large number.

The natural conclusion—which needs further testing—is that there was fairly easy communication between Italy and Gaul if not in A.D. 268-270, at least in 270 itself. In a paper read to the International Numismatic Congress in 1936† I examined the legionary issues of Victorinus and noted that he includes legions of Illyricum and the East, but omits legions of Italy, Rhaeta and Noricum—precisely those that must have been immediately under the control of Quintillus. That observation seems to need no revision, but the conclusion that I drew from it may. Perhaps Victorinus was not in league against Quintillus with Aurelian and the Palmyrenes, but with him against them. In that case the legionary coins of Victorinus would mean a bid for the support of legions, hostile to him, and it would be his "Concordia" with Quintillus that caused the omission of the latter's legions from the list.

* The coins in the hoard were to a large extent seriously corroded. It is hard to say whether they were much worn. Some at least of the early ones showed little sign of circulation.

† TINC. 1938, pp. 214 ff.

In a study of the Amlwyth Hoard,* Mr. J. W. E. Pearce and I have tried to come more to an understanding of those many hoards of debased third-century silver that are found so frequently both in France and England. In our analysis we noted the extraordinary variations in composition both as regards the proportion of Italian to Gallic issues, and also of the individual Emperors to each other in each group, and concluded that these hoards must cover a considerable period of time. If the Emneth Hoard is brought to comparison with the Diagrams of Hoards in our article, it will be seen that it comes very near the left of the page, among hoards that may actually have been buried while the Gallic Empire still stood. Compare the following percentages:

	Springhead	Selsey	Pucknoll	Emneth
Valerian I. and family	9	25	5	23.8
Claudius II. and Quintillus	0	1	2	4.7
Postumus, Marius, etc.	69	57	52	46.4
Victorinus	20	14	37	20.1
Tetricus I.	2	0	4	.7

It seems reasonable to expect that further analysis of hoards on these lines will lead to a fuller understanding of their meaning. In particular, a fresh study of the Gallic evidence is required. It is already patent that M. Adrian Blanchet's theory of a feverish burying of hoards under the terror of barbarian invasion will not cover the facts. The terror in Gaul could not extend so immediately to Britain, nor could any variations in the strain and stress endured by the Gauls themselves explain the extraordinary variations of composition in the hoards that they were moved to put away.

* University of Wales, Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, 1938, pp. 168 ff.