

**B. 'Lion' seal-dies**

These may be compared with a group of 'lion' seal-dies in the British Museum (Tonnochy 1952, nos. 741-5).

1. From West Caister, co. no. 17950. Pl III. Silver oval seal-die with hexagonal handle with quatrefoil suspension loop. A man's head peers through bushes at a curled up lion. Legend: LE LIVN CREET CAVNT VOVS LE VEET (the lion cries when you see it). Length 22mm
2. From Roudham, co. no. 15907. Pl IV. Copper alloy circular seal-die with hexagonal pierced handle. A curled up lion. Legend: LE LIVN DORT NE LVI ENVEILET (the lion sleeps do not wake him up). Diameter 22mm
3. Thetford, co. no. 17268. Pl V. Copper alloy circular seal-die with hexagonal handle with circular suspension loop. Within a 'star of David' motif, a curled up lion. In the interstices outside the 'star of David', the legend LEVL AMVR (true love). Diameter 17mm

**C. Seal-dies with legends relating to the seal**

1. From Caister by-pass, co. no. 12872. Pl VI. Copper alloy circular seal-die with hexagonal handle with trefoil suspension loop. Grotesque head. Legend: PR DIVESI (a jumbled version of PRIVE SVIS: I am private). Diameter 18mm
2. From Caister by-pass, co. no. 12872. Pl VII. Copper alloy circular seal-die with hexagonal handle with quatrefoil suspension loop. Two birds drinking from a chalice or fountain. Legend: IE SV SEL BON E LEL (I am a seal good and true). Diameter 18mm
3. From Carleton Rode. Pl VIII. Copper alloy pointed oval seal-die with small loop on reverse. Two linked hands. Legend: IE SV SEL DE AMVR LEL (I am a seal of true love). Length 27mm
4. From Gooderstone, co. no. 18179. Pl IX. Copper alloy pointed oval seal-die with small loop on reverse. Bird in hand. Legend: FRANGE LEGE TEGE (Break, read, keep secret). Length 30mm
5. From Thetford, co. no. 17267. Pl X. Copper alloy oval seal-die with hexagonal handle with trefoil suspension loop. St. John in camel skin holding the Agnus Dei. Legend: SCE IOHES ORA PRO ME (St. John pray for me). Length 21mm
6. From Trowse with Newton, co. no. 15788 Norwich Castle Museum 263.980. Pl XI. Copper alloy pointed oval seal-die with small loop on reverse. Bird on a branch. Legend: FRANGE LEGE TEGE (break, read, keep secret). Length 28mm

**Acknowledgements**

My thanks to John Cherry for helpful comments on the text, and for his reading of the legend on seal-die C 1. Photography by Jerry Yardy.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Catalogue of Antiquities*, 1909 Catalogue of Antiquities, Norwich Castle Museum  
 Rigold, S., 1977 'Two common species of medieval seal-matrix', *The Antiquaries Journal* LVII part II 1977 pp. 324-329  
 Tonnochy, A.B., 1952 *Catalogue of British Seal-Dies in the British Museum*

**The Dersingham Hoard (Plate XII)**

by Elizabeth M. James

A silver cup, full of coins, was uncovered in July 1984 by a mechanical digger, working on a housing development site not far from, and to the south of, the Old Hall at Dersingham.<sup>1</sup> The coins were found contained in the cup and therefore appeared to have been buried in it deliberately.

The cup is of sterling silver and is in the shape of a rounded cone, tapering deeply towards the bottom, where it was evidently formerly attached to some kind of footed stem. The bowl is 9cm deep and was originally about 10cm in diameter, before distortion from a circular to an elliptical shape, difficult to measure accurately. It is completely





Plate XII  
The Dersingham Hoard.

plain; there is a deep crack in the rim and the whole is covered with iron deposits from the soil in which it was found. It has been examined and dated by Robin Emmerson of the Art Department of Norwich Castle Museum. Just below the rim are a London hallmark for 1607–8 and a maker's mark. The handiwork, though not the name, of this maker is known from a pair of flagons at the church of All Hallows the Great in London and another pair at Brasenose College Oxford.<sup>2</sup> He was clearly a top quality maker and the cup is thick-walled and heavy. Robin Emmerson suggests that, to judge from the shape of the bowl, it was made as a domestic piece and not for a church, although the former sometimes found their way thither.

The 129 coins which the cup contained are all shillings, ranging in date from a single specimen of 1554–7 to thirteen bearing a mint-mark of 1641–3. They can be summed up as a single coin of Mary I and Philip, thirty-one of Elizabeth I (1558–1603), twenty-five of James I (1603–25) and seventy-two of Charles I (1625–49) up to the years 1641–43. Of these last thirty-seven date from the last three or four years up to that date. After the thirteen of 1641–3 they cease completely.

The latest coins thus date from around the beginning of the English Civil War. This was a period of great uncertainty, especially in West Norfolk, where, alone of the Norfolk towns, Lynn declared for the King in 1643, and the burial of valuables was frequently the only form of safe-keeping available.

The site of the find was formerly part of the nearby Dersingham Hall estate, which was owned at this time by Sir Valentine Pell (1586–1658) High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1645. He and his family were staunch Parliamentarians<sup>3</sup>. In the autumn of 1642, when the Parliamentary Deputy Lieutenants were weeding out suspect militia officers, Sir Valentine was put in charge of a foot company, formerly under the control of his father-in-law James Calthorpe, who had been promoted to Colonel in place of the Royalist Sir Nicholas L'Estrange<sup>4</sup>. Whether his company was present at the Siege of Lynn under the Earl of Manchester a year later I have not been able to ascertain; R.W. Ketton-Cremer says that he was later succeeded in his charge by John Coke of Holkham, but does not



say when. It will be noted that all these above events coincide with the latest date of the shillings.

That the cup represents money buried by Sir Valentine in the troubled period leading up to the siege seems unlikely; the sum is not very large for a prosperous landowner, though considerable in general for that era, and Robin Emmerson has pointed out that the cup appears to have been damaged severely before deposition, and it is unlikely to have been a prized piece from Sir Valentine's household in that condition. If it had been, it would be surprising that he never recovered it; he was on the winning side and lived until 1658. In passing, however, it may be noted that Parliament were soliciting subscriptions of money and plate for funds from 1642 on<sup>5</sup>, and a damaged piece, for scrap silver, together with a sum of money, could have constituted a reasonable subscription.

Robin Emmerson also suggested that the find represents loot, perhaps damaged in the taking, or divided with another party who took the cup-stem and foot, hastily buried by the looter and never recovered. Lynn submitted honourably at the end of the siege and it is unlikely that much looting took place there as a result. However a contemporary account states that at Gaywood, where Manchester's forces were quartered, the inhabitants fled at the approach of the military<sup>6</sup> and remote houses elsewhere may have been left temporarily unoccupied. The coins might be military back pay, rather than loot, but enquiries into pay rates at this time have not proved fruitful.

Despite the cup's apparently domestic character, in view of the proximity of the church possible connection with the latter has also been examined. Spoliation of churches and priests' houses during the rooting out of insufficiently puritan clergymen, from 1644, is not exhaustively documented, and nothing certain is recorded about such happenings at Dersingham. The puritan Pells did not own the living and the incumbent may not have been a puritan, but no significant change of rector occurs at this time. A private cup and money just may have been looted from the parsonage, but the high quality of the cup should be borne in mind. The church plate seems to have survived any iconoclasm unscathed<sup>7</sup>, as it includes a communion cup of 1561 and a Lynn-made paten of 1638, the latter given by Katharine Pell, presumably Sir Valentine's daughter of that name<sup>8</sup>. Also listed is a flagon, believed possibly to be a domestic piece, bearing the arms of Pell and Calthorpe. It shows the way a domestic piece sometimes reached the church, but the hallmark of 1656 precludes any association with the cup of 1607-8, by then apparently already buried. In any case the church already had a satisfactory Elizabethan communion cup; its inscription 'The Towenshyp of + Dasyngham' is contemporary with it. It is therefore unlikely that a second cup was added in the first half of the 17th century, or that the cup of coins has any connection with the church.

The find was declared treasure trove in October 1984 at an inquest in King's Lynn, and in the spring of 1985 was purchased for the Lynn Museum with the aid of a grant from the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>9</sup>

- 1 County site no. 21109
- 2 Sir Charles J. Jackson, *English Goldsmiths and Their Marks* (1921) quoted in a letter from Robin Emmerson.
- 3 Francis Blomefield *History of Norfolk* Vol VIII (1808) and booklet *The Great Flood of Dersingham Tercentenary Festival 1671-1971* on file at Lynn Museum.
- 4 R.W. Ketton-Cremer *Norfolk in the Civil War* (1969)
- 5 *Ibid.*



- 6 *A Briefe and True Account of the Siege and Surrender of King's Lyn to the Earl of Manchester* (c. 1643)  
Colman and Rye Local History Collection, Norwich Central Library.
- 7 Listed in *Norfolk Archaeology* Vol XVIII Part III (1913)
- 8 Katharine Pell married John Calthorpe, son of Martin Calthorpe of Hickling and presumably a member of her mother's family, in 1640. Blomefield, Vol. IX p.305.
- 9 Accession no KL88.985

**List of the coins**

<i>Sovereign</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Mint-mark</i>	<i>Quantity</i>
Philip and Mary I	1554-7	—	1
Elizabeth I	1558-60	Lis	1
	1560-1	Cross crosslet	4
	1560-1	Martlet	6
	1582-4	Bell	1
	1582-4	A	2
		Scallop over A	2
	1584-7	Scallop	1
	1590-2	Hand	3
	1592-5	Tun	4
	1594-6	Woolpack	1
	1601	1	4
	1602	2	2
		TOTAL	31
	James I	1603-4	Thistle
1604		Lis	1
1604-5		Lis (different bust)	4
1605-6		Rose	1
1606-7		Scallop	2
1607		Grapes	2
1607-9		Coronet	1
1609-10		Key	1
1611-12		Mullet	1
1620-1		Rose	2
1621-3		Thistle	1
1623-4		Lis	2
1624		Trefoil (plumes on obverse)	1
		TOTAL	25
Charles I	1625-6	Cross calvary	1
	1629-30	Heart (plumes on reverse)	1
	1630-1	Feathers	1
		Rose over feathers	1
	1635-6	Bell	4
	1635-6	Crown	11
	1636-8	Tun	8
	1638-9	Anchor	6
	1639-40	Triangle	14
	1640-1	Star	11
	1641-3	Triangle in circle	13
		Uncertain, triangle or triangle in circle	1
		TOTAL	72