

The Fourth-Century Coin Hoard from Tingrith

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INTRODUCTION

A hoard of over 2,000 copper alloy coins was discovered at a sand quarry at Tingrith (TL 009331) on 20th June, 1961. The coins had been buried in a pottery vessel about 1 m below the ground surface. Many of the coins and the fragments of the pottery vessel were recovered by the site foreman, Mr Charles Bunker. However, an unknown quantity of coins was collected and taken away by the workmen removing the sand. The coins and pottery fragments were donated to Luton Museum by the quarry owners, Inns and Company Ltd (accession number LTNMG 73/62). The coins were cleaned and initially identified by Mr Tom Gardner. An unspecified number of coins disintegrated through corrosion whilst being cleaned, and were therefore lost before they could be identified.

In 1990, Mr A. Quinlan of Welwyn, Herts., showed a further 684 coins from the Tingrith hoard in his possession to Mr Tony Rook of the Welwyn Archaeological Society. These coins were presumably recovered from the sand quarry in 1961 by one of the workmen.

THE HOARD

The coins had been placed in a pottery vessel. Another vessel had been inverted over the neck of the first pot to exclude earth. Only 22 base and body sherds from both vessels were recovered (LTNMG 1=2/73/62); however, sufficient survives to show that both vessels were shell-tempered with mottled grey and orange surfaces. The acidic nature of the ground in which the hoard had been buried had dissolved the shell on the surface of the pottery vessels, giving them a corky texture. The interior of the vessel containing the coins had been stained green by the corrosion products of the coins in contact with the surface of the vessel.

The pottery vessels containing the coins had been placed in a small pit dug to a depth of about a metre; a lozenge-shaped marker stone (LTNMG 3/73/62), about 25 cm by 25 cm in size and consisting of a 3 cm thick slab of ironstone, appears to have been placed on the surface of the backfilled pit. About a metre from the hoard, and on what was interpreted as the

old ground surface, Tom Gardner recorded the remains of a pottery vessel associated with burnt soil, charcoal flecks and fire-stained stones. Only the base of the pottery vessel survives (LTNMG 6/73/62), consisting of a sand-tempered bowl or jar with a grey external surface and an orange internal surface. He interpreted these remains "as evidence of a meal of sorts at the time of burial" (Gardner 1964, 28).

THE COINS

Tom Gardner's initial identification and analysis of the coins was based on a total of 2,024 (Gardner 1964). According to the accessions register in Luton Museum, 1,995 coins were accessioned in 1962 (accession number LTNMG 7/73/62). Of these, 1,985 have been reanalysed by Martin Deacon (Table 1).

The coins in Mr Quinlan's possession have been identified by Kris Lockyear (Table 2). This table is a preliminary set of figures and, although none were obvious, there are likely to be unrecognised copies in this part of the hoard: this awaits further work. In both tables, where date ranges cross the brackets used here, the numbers have been split more or less evenly between them. The coins classified "as RIC" have been counted into the mint used for the "as" classification: the early coin of Siscia is an example of this.

DISCUSSION

The Tingrith hoard is only one of a large number of hoards of similar date discovered in Britain. Comparable examples include Salisbury Plain (318-330), 1,565 coins from 13 mints; Woodeaton I (337-340), 1,397 coins from 14 mints; Cranfield (337-340), 975 coins from 12 mints; and Bloomsbury (330-335), 656 coins from 13 mints.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The reassessment of the coins from the Tingrith hoard in Luton Museum was first suggested by Dr Robin Holgate, Principal Keeper at Luton Museum, who provided the notes on the discovery of the hoard. We are also grateful to both Mr A. Quinlan and Mr Tony Rook for bringing the previously unrecorded coins from the hoard to our attention. Martin Deacon

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Gardner, T.H., 1964; "Some general observations on the Tingrith hoard", *The Manshead Magazine*, 13, 28-30.

Table 1
Summary of the coins from the Tingrith hoard in Luton Museum

Year	Mint													Unidentified	Total	
	London	Trier	Lyons	Arles	Siscia	Ticinum	Aquileia	Rome	Heracula	Thessalonica	Cyzicus	Antioch	Nicomedia			
306-310	1	1														2
311-315		1														1
316-320	80	31		2	14	11	2		1	4						145
321-325	851	504	70	21	22	13	2	8	1	4	1	1	1			1499
326-330		116		9				1	1	3		1				131
331-335		64	13	14	1				1	1	2		1			97
336-340		8		1												9
Undatable	11	12	5	3	4	2						1		36		74
Totals	943	737	88	50	41	26	4	9	4	12	3	3	2	36		1958

Table 2
Summary of the coins from the Tingrith hoard in Mr A. Quinlan's possession

Year	Mint										To be done	Total			
	London	Trier	Lyons	Arles	Siscia	Ticinum	Aquileia	Rome	Heracula	Thessalonica					
296-300					?										1
301-305															0
306-310	1														1
311-315	1	1													2
316-320	34	12		1	5	6	3		1	7	17				86
321-325	230	157	22	13	12	7	3	4		5	39				492
326-330		52	2	4	2	1			1	2	4				68
331-335		21	4	3	1			1							30
336-340		4	2												6
341-345															0
346-350		2													2
Totals	266	249	30	21	21	14	6	5	2	14	60				684