

A Wolvercote Coin-Hoard of the Time of the Civil Wars

By C. H. V. SUTHERLAND

THE Ashmolean Museum has recently acquired nine silver coins which are said to represent the total contents of a hoard found during the demolition of an old, brick-built barn at Wolvercote, to the north of Oxford. The coins, with their privy-marks, are as follows :—

1 ELIZABETH

Sixpence (1566) Portcullis.

8 CHARLES I

TOWER MINT¹

- 2 Half-crowns : Eye (1645); Sun (1645-6).
- 3 Shillings : Cross (1625-6) (FIG. 22B, no. 1); Triangle-in-circle (1641-3) (2 examples).
- 2 Sixpences : Anchor (1628-9); (?) Crown (1635-6) —similar in style and execution to the Tower sixpence of 1636-8 illustrated by Morrieson in *Brit. Num. Journ.*, 1913, pl. II, 9.

OXFORD MINT

- 1 Shilling : 1643,—dies D (*obv.*) and 7 (*rev.*) of Morrieson, 'The Coinage of Oxford, 1642-1646,' in *Brit. Num. Journ.*, 1921-2, pp. 155 ff. (FIG. 22B, no. 2).

The coins are, on the whole, in an indifferent condition. The sixpence of Elizabeth has lost all trace of the Queen's bust from the obverse. Of the coins of Charles, the best preserved is the shilling of 1625-6,—part of a light issue,² which for that reason may not have circulated freely; but all have suffered, in greater or less degree, from clipping; this, combined with their originally imperfect striking and the subsequent deterioration in their surface while they were hoarded, has robbed the coins of much of their pristine beauty. The Oxford coin, in particular, is a poor production.

¹The privy-marks and the dates of the Tower issues are summarized by Morrieson, *British Numismatic Journal*, 1925-6, pp. 159 ff. : cp. Brooke, *English Coins*, p. 211.

²Brooke, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

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The burial of this little hoard (if we may assume it to be intact) probably occurred in or just after 1646 ; and it is natural to connect it with the surrender of Oxford to the forces under Fairfax in the middle of that year ; doubtless, that event brought temporary insecurity to a district which, for three and a half years, had served as the chief royalist base. Some surprise may be felt that the Oxford mint—which worked continuously throughout that period—is only represented in this Wolvercote hoard by a single shilling, and that of the first year. Evidently, the Parliamentary productions of the Tower mint (which, until Charles' execution in 1649, continued to bear the king's effigy and name) were relatively far more common than the issues of any other mint.

This deposit belongs to what is, in the numismatist's eyes, almost the last age of historical hoarding. Looking back though it does, by its inclusion of the Elizabethan sixpence, to the days of the Tudors, it also looks forward to a period of domestic tranquillity, which was greatly to reduce the risk of an owner's being unable to recover his hidden treasure. Henceforth, only very few hoards were destined to await accidental discovery in later times.



FIG. 22B

SHILLINGS OF CHARLES I FROM THE SUPPOSED
WOLVERCOTE HOARD.

1. Tower Mint, 1625-6. 2. Oxford Mint, 1643.
(Ashmolean Museum).