

TREASURE ACT 1996

A ROMAN COIN HOARD FROM TREFEURIG COMMUNITY, CEREDIGION (Wales 18.14)

The finding of 69 copper alloy coins in Trefeurig Community, Ceredigion was reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS Cymru) in three batches between 4th October 2018 and February 2019. The coins were transferred to Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales for report to H.M. Coroner for Ceredigion.

Circumstances of discovery

The coins were found by Mr Thomas Middlehurst between 8th September and 24th December 2018 while metal detecting on pasture land in Trefeurig Community, Ceredigion owned by Mr J. R. Hughes. The NGR and addresses of interested parties are given on the Treasure Receipt Form. The coins were discovered on a grassy field at depths of approximately 5 inches within an area of about 6m². Satellite imagery indicates that parts of, if not the whole of the field has been ploughed in the past.

The coins are the second group of Roman coins to have been discovered in this field. In 1998, a scattered group of 48 radiates, known as the Salem Hoard (**Welsh Treasure 98.3**), was discovered at the same location on ground that had recently been disturbed by the excavation of a pipe trench. The coins in the Salem Hoard date to the period AD 260-274, except for a coin of Carausius dating to AD 286-293. Edward Besly (former Numismatist at Amgueddfa Cymru) suggested that the hoard was buried in c. AD 290.

Description of Find

The hoard discovered in 2018 consists of 69 Roman radiates dating from AD 260-274. The coins have been carefully cleaned to remove soil that was obscuring details, but the coins are in a poor condition with corrosion covering much of their surface. Several of the coins were fused together by corrosion product, but have been carefully separated to enable better identification. The surface patina that would preserve much of the detail of the obverse and reverse designs has been damaged or is completely missing on many of the coins, so it is not possible to date about half of the coins more precisely than this 24 year period. The presence of two contemporary copies of official coins of the deified Claudius II could indicate a deposition date of c. AD 275-285, when contemporary copies were produced in very large numbers. However, the apparent lack of other contemporary copies or official coins from post-AD 275 rulers does not rule out an earlier deposition date.

The very close proximity of the 1998 Salem coin hoard, the similar condition of the coins (including coins fused together), the very similar composition and the scattered nature of the two finds indicates that they were originally buried together as one hoard.

(A fragment of a post-medieval shoe buckle from the late-17th/early-18th century was reported with the coins. It was found in a neighbouring field and is not related to the coin hoard.)

Summary:

Central Empire

Gallienus (sole reign AD 260-268) 3

Claudius II (AD 268-270) 3

Gallic Empire

Victorinus (AD 269-271) 8

Tetricus I (AD 271-274) 13

Tetricus II (AD 272-274) 2

Uncertain Gallic Emperor (AD 260-274) 3

Uncertain Ruler

Uncertain ruler (probably AD 260-274) 35

Irregular

Divus Claudius (c. AD 270) 2

Total 69

Metal content

Radiate coinage of this period typically contains very little silver. During Gallienus' reign, the silver content of radiates was reduced from around 20% at the beginning of his reign to about 6% at the end. The radiates issued by the Gallic Emperors represented in this hoard typically contain about 3% silver or less.

Treasure Act considerations

As ten or more copper alloy coins over 300 years old when found, the 69 radiates qualify as Treasure if they were originally associated in the ground. All the coins represented in this group are known to have been in circulation at the same time and coin hoards with similar compositions have been reported from across England and Wales, e.g. Welsh Treasure Case 2015.22 from Llanarth, Monmouthshire. The close concentration of coins, as well as the fact that several were stuck together, is a good indication that they were deposited together, and the proximity and similarity of the coins with those in the Salem Hoard, suggests that the two hoards are associated.

Recommendation

It is my opinion that as ten or more base metal coins containing, associated in the ground and more than 300 years old when found, these coins qualify as Treasure under Section 1(1)(a)(ii) of the Treasure Act 1996 (see The Treasure Act 1996 Code of Practice (2nd Revision 2003), paragraphs 7, 14 and 15).

Declaration of Interest

Ceredigion Museum

Alastair Willis – Uwch Curador: Niwmismateg ac Economi Cymru / Senior Curator:
Numismatics and the Welsh Economy, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales

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