

TREASURE ACT 1996
SILVER BELL FROM STACKPOLE & CASTLEMARTIN, PEMBROKESHIRE
[TREASURE CASE 19.18]

Introduction

A small silver bell was found in Stackpole & Castlemartin Community by Layton Davies and Howard Gooding whilst metal detecting between the 28th and 29th July 2018. The object was reported to the Department of History & Archaeology at Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales (AC-NMW) and retained for identification, on behalf of the H.M Coroner for Pembrokeshire.

Circumstances and context of discovery

The bell was found by Layton Davies and Howard Gooding at a depth of 7cm, with the aid of a metal detector, on ploughed land. Full details of the find spot, finder and landowner, including OS grid reference for the findspot are provided in the Treasure Receipt form.

Object description

This object is a silver ‘rumbler’ bell. It is formed of two hemispheres with silver band around the waist circumference, which looks to be formed from folding down the top hemisphere edge. The bell is flattened with its original shape distorted but it was likely sub-spherical. There are very faint vertical nicks irregularly spaced across the band, possibly remnants of original cabling patterning or damage. The penannular suspension hoop at the top of the bell is formed of wire, round in cross-section. The slot at the bell base is misshapen but consists of a single line, each end terminating in a circular hole, possibly sound holes. The pea has not survived.

Overall height: 18.7 mm, width: 16.7 mm, thickness: 5mm
Suspension hoop height; 4.5mm, width: 4.8 mm
Weight: 1.4 g

The bell has not undergone any cleaning or conservation.

Metal content

To judge from its colour and weight, and visual comparison with silver rings and jewellery items in the collections of the Department of Archaeology & Numismatics, the bell is silver (over 10%).

Discussion and conclusion

Many bells of comparable form have been reported through the Treasure process. Silver examples of late-medieval to early post-medieval date include from Bletsoe, Bedfordshire (BH-537099), Combpyne Rousdon, Devon (SOM-C1BF3D) Ash, Kent (KENT-CA83D8) and Emneth, Norfolk (NMS-2C2226). Many, like the Stackpole example, are plain.

Decorated examples of a similar form are also known, such as from Watlington, Oxfordshire (SUR-6F7D69) and Church Eaton, Staffordshire (WMID-FF4AA2).

The dating of bells of this type can be difficult. Egan and Pritchard (1991, p336) note the use of small 'rumbler' bells as dress accessories between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, but notes they are indistinguishable from those used on the collars of dogs and cats (ibid p 337). Small bells of similar form are sometimes associated with falconry, such as the copper alloy example from Awliscombe, Devon (DEV-EA52F2) and the example above from Church Eaton, both dating to between the fifteenth- to seventeenth centuries. Oggins (2004, p. 155) notes that bells of gold and silver relating to hawking are listed in the Inventory of Henry VIII, compiled in 1547.

These types of bell are indistinguishable and therefore a broad late medieval to early post medieval date range is suggested. Redknap suggests the cable twist decoration present on many examples is similar to that on other sixteenth century dress accessories, such as dress hooks (see NMGW-4EF0A2).

In my opinion the piece consists of more than 10% precious metal and is more than 300 years old, it thus qualifies as Treasure under the terms of the *Treasure Act 1996*.

If declared treasure, Tenby Museum & Art Gallery have expressed an interest in acquiring this artefact.

References

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