

Four Early Modern Coin Hoards from Norway

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[PLATE X]

Metal detecting is an increasingly popular hobby in Norway, and has been responsible for a significant growth in the number of ancient and historic coins unearthed in the country in recent decades.² In accordance with the 1978 Cultural Heritage Act (*Kulturminneloven*), all finds of coins predating 1650 are designated as state property, and detectorists are obliged to report discoveries to their regional archaeologist before transfer to the relevant university museum for conservation, cataloguing, and permanent inclusion in the collections.³ This article publishes four recent finds of early modern coin hoards unearthed by Norwegian detectorists, which now form part of the collections of the Coin Cabinet of the Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo.

1. Guåker Søndre, Stange, Innlandet, 2020.

Dep. 1565 or later

3 Bil.

Disp.: Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo

In March 2020 a small hoard of sixteenth-century coins was found by a detectorist investigating farmland at Guåker Søndre, Stange, Innlandet. The hoard consists of three billon *klippings* – hastily-produced coins struck on irregular square flans⁴ – which are corroded together in a small stack weighing 3.43g. The two coins at either end of the stack have their reverses facing outwards, and can be identified as Danish 2-skilling of Frederick II dated 1564 and 1565. The middle coin is not visible, but is of similar size and fabric, and must certainly be another 2-skilling of the period 1564–6.

The coins found at Guåker Søndre are typical examples of the lower-value coins that circulated as part of the Danish-Norwegian currency union of 1537–1814, and belong to a large emission of roughly 3 million marks worth of 2-mark, mark, 4-skilling, and 2-skilling *klippings* struck by Frederick II during the Northern Seven Years' War. These coins were hurriedly produced over a 15-month period, and were so noted for their poor execution and low silver content that the king was obliged to issue a proclamation on 7 May 1564 instructing his Norwegian subjects to accept and use them.⁵ The arrangement of the coins in a loose stack suggests that they originally lay side-by-side in a leather or textile container, probably a purse or small bag, that has since decayed in the soil. The composition and size of the hoard closely resembles the 1910 find of six sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Danish and Norwegian 4-skilling, 2-skilling, and skillings from Søndre Ullershov, Nes, Akershus, which might also represent the contents of a lost purse.⁶

Catalogue

Frederick II of Denmark and Norway (1559–88)

1. 2-skilling, 1564; Hede 16; obv. not visible; rev.: I[I] / SKIL[LI] / 64; Copenhagen or Frederiksborg mint; dia. 17mm; wear ?/3; corrosion ?/2; broken; UMK 3238; M151207; pl. X, no. 1.

¹ Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo.

² Gundersen, Rasmussen, and Lie 2016; Skre 2016; Gullbekk and Sættem 2019, 91; Gullbekk *et al.* 2019; Boros forthcoming.

³ Gullbekk and Roland 2016.

⁴ Skaare 2007.

⁵ Skaare 1995, p. 104.

⁶ Holst 1936, 20, no. G3; Holst 1944, p. 167.

2. 2-skilling, 1565; Hede 16; obv. not visible; rev.: II / SKILLI / 65; Copenhagen or Frederiksborg mint; dia. 17mm; wear $\frac{?}{3}$; corrosion $\frac{?}{3}$; UMK 3238; M151207; pl. **X**, no. 2.

3. 2-skilling, 1564–6 (?); Hede 16; obv. and reverse not visible; dia. 17mm; UMK 3238; M151207.

2. Smerød, Sandefjord, Vestfold og Telemark, 2016

Dep. 1596 or later

11 AR

Disp.: Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo

In September 2016 a hoard of sixteenth-century coins was found by a detectorist on farmland at Smerød, Sandefjord, Vestfold og Telemark. The hoard consists of 11 English silver shillings of Elizabeth I, which were struck during the two principal phases of Tower shilling output in the Second Coinage of 1560–1 and the Sixth Coinage of 1583–1601.⁷ The latest coin is a slightly-worn shilling (no. 11) bearing the initial mark key (1596–9, pyxed 7 February 1599), which suggests that the hoard was deposited sometime in the late 1590s.⁸ The contents therefore span a period of nearly four decades, a pattern that is in keeping with the shilling contents of silver hoards from Elizabethan England: the 594 shillings in the Cheadle High Street (Staffordshire, *tpq* 1602) hoard, for example, span roughly 50 years from the reign of Edward VI to Elizabeth I, while the small sample of three shillings from the Thornton Abbey (Lincolnshire, *tpq* 1587) hoard cover more than three decades from the reigns of Philip and Mary to Elizabeth I.⁹ In its home context the hoard would have been worth 11*s. Od.*, around a week and a half's wages for a skilled labourer in London in *c.* 1600,¹⁰ and in Norway its size, weight, and silver content would have made it roughly equivalent to 11 Danish-Norwegian marks.¹¹

The Smerød hoard is a major new addition to the corpus of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English coins found in Norway, a small but growing dataset that otherwise consists mostly of single finds of Elizabethan sixpences unearthed in the south of the country.¹² These coins are generally thought to have entered Scandinavia by means of trade, particularly in the major Norwegian export commodities of iron ore, fish, and timber, the latter of which was especially sought-after by shipbuilders in both England and Scotland.¹³ Significantly, the Smerød find is the first example of a Norwegian hoard of this period to consist exclusively of English coins, rather than a combination of English and other foreign denominations as seen in the hoard from Skjærhalden, Hvaler, Østfold (*tpq* 1598).¹⁴ This suggests that the coins entered Norway directly from England rather than indirectly from Germany or the Netherlands, whose thalers would play a major role in commercial exchange in the North Sea area throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁵ If this is indeed the case, the hoard was almost certainly assembled before 1601, by which time Norwegian trade was dominated by England's Dutch rivals, and very likely before 1598, when an English ban on shipborne traffic to

⁷ Brown, Comber, and Wilkinson 2019, pp. 5–12.

⁸ For wear stages, see Frey-Kupper, Dubuis, and Brem 1995.

⁹ Allen 1941; Rigold 1966.

¹⁰ Rappaport 1989, p. 407.

¹¹ See Hede 1978, p. 13, no. 19, and p. 24, no. 69.

¹² Previous Elizabethan coin finds from Buskerud, Innlandet, Møre og Romsdal and Østfold are listed in Holst 1939a. Several more recent Tudor finds are held in the collection of the Museum of Cultural History, but are as-yet unpublished.

¹³ Gullbekk 2014, pp. 140–1. The Scottish interest was so important that the timber trade was known colloquially as 'Skottehandelen': Lillehammer 1999.

¹⁴ Holst 1939b, p. 192.

¹⁵ Holst 1940; Skaare 1995, pp. 115–18.

Iberia through the English Channel led to a direct conflict with Christian IV of Denmark and Norway, who pledged to blockade the Øresund and capture English merchant ships until the ban was lifted.¹⁶

Catalogue

Elizabeth I of England (1558–1603)

1. Shilling, 1560–1; Second Coinage (North 1985), i.m. cross-crosslet; obv.: ELIZABETH D G ANG FRA ET HIB REGINA, crowned bust l.; rev.: POSVI DEV AD IVTORE M MEV, square armorial shield on long cross fourchée; Tower mint; die axis 30°; wgt. 5.89g; dia. 34mm; wear 3/2; corrosion 1/1; UMK 2590-1; M150321; pl. X, no. 3.
2. Shilling, 1560–1; Second Coinage (North 1985), i.m. cross-crosslet; obv.: ELIZABETH D G A[NG F]RA ET HIB REGINA, crowned bust l.; rev.: POSVI DEV AD IVTORE M MEV, square armorial shield on long cross fourchée; Tower mint; die axis 180°; wgt. 5.97g; dia. 32mm; wear 3/3; corrosion 1/1; UMK 2590-2; M150322; pl. X, no. 4.
3. Shilling, 1560–1; Second Coinage (North 1985), i.m. martlet; obv.: ELIZABETH D G AN FRA ET HI REGINA, crowned bust l.; rev.: POSVI DEV AD IVTORE M MEV, square armorial shield on long cross fourchée; Tower mint; die axis 270°; wgt. 5.89g; dia. 31mm; wear 2/2; corrosion 1/1; Z-shaped bend; UMK 2590-3; M150323; pl. X, no. 5.
4. Shilling, 1560–1; Second Coinage (North 1985), i.m. martlet; obv.: ELIZABETH D G ANG FRA ET HI REGINA, crowned bust l.; rev.: POSVI DEV AD IVTORE M MEV, square armorial shield on long cross fourchée; Tower mint; die axis 300°; wgt. 5.67g; dia. 32mm; wear 2/2; corrosion 1/1; UMK 2590-4; M150324; pl. X, no. 6.
5. Shilling, 1560–1; Second Coinage (North 1985), i.m. martlet; obv.: ELIZABETH D G ANG FR ET HIB REGINA, crowned bust l.; rev.: POSVI DEV AD IVTORE M MEV, square armorial shield on long cross fourchée; Tower mint; die axis 150°; wgt. 5.53g; dia. 32mm; wear 2/2; corrosion 1/1; UMK 2590-5; M150325; pl. X, no. 7.
6. Shilling, 1583; Sixth Coinage (North 2014), i.m. bell; obv.: ELIZAB D G ANG FR ET HIB REGI, crowned bust l.; rev.: POSVI DEV AD IVTORE M MEV, square armorial shield on long cross fourchée; Tower mint; die axis 300°; wgt. 6.02g; dia. 32mm; wear 2/1; corrosion 1/1; UMK 2590-6; M150326; pl. X, no. 8.
7. Shilling, 1583–5; Sixth Coinage (North 2014), i.m. A; obv.: ELIZAB D G ANG FR ET HIB REGI, crowned bust l.; rev.: POSVI DEV AD IVTORE M MEV, square armorial shield on long cross fourchée; Tower mint; die axis 240°; wgt. 5.91g; dia. 34mm; wear 2/2; corrosion 1/1; cutmarks on reverse; UMK 2590-7; M150327; pl. X, no. 9.
8. Shilling, 1583–5; Sixth Coinage (North 2014), i.m. A; obv.: ELIZAB D G ANG FR ET HIB REGI, crowned bust l.; rev.: POSVI DEV AD IVTORE M MEV, square armorial shield on long cross fourchée; Tower mint; die axis 210°; wgt. 6.18g; dia. 33mm; wear 2/2; corrosion 1/1; UMK 2590-8; M150328; pl. X, no. 10.
9. Shilling, 1590–2; Sixth Coinage (North 2014), i.m. hand; obv.: ELIZAB D G ANG FR ET HIB REGI, crowned bust l.; rev.: POSVI DEV AD IVTORE M MEV, square armorial shield on long cross fourchée; Tower mint; die axis 60°; wgt. 6.03g; dia. 32mm; wear 2/2; corrosion 1/1; UMK 2590-9; M150329; pl. X, no. 11.
10. Shilling, 1592–4; Sixth Coinage (North 2014), i.m. tun; obv.: ELIZAB D G ANG FR ET HIB REGI, crowned bust l.; rev.: POSVI DEV AD IVT[ORE] M MEV, square armorial shield on long

¹⁶ Cheney 1929; Murdoch 2003, pp. 30–1.

cross fourchée; Tower mint; die axis 300°; wgt. 6.14g; dia. 32mm; wear 2/2; corrosion 1/1; UMK 2590-10; M150330; pl. X, no. 12.

11. Shilling, 1596–9; Sixth Coinage (North 2014), i.m. key; obv.: ELIZAB D G ANG FR ET HIB R[EX], crowned bust l.; rev.: POSVI DEV AD IVTORE M MEV, square armorial shield on long cross fourchée; Tower mint; die axis 180°; wgt. 6.19g; dia. 32mm; wear 2/1; corrosion 1/1; UMK 2590-11; M150330; pl. X, no. 13.

3. Åkrann, Tynset, Hedmark, 2017.

Dep. c.1648–99

10+ Bil.

Disp.: Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo

In June 2017 a metal-detectorist found a clump of partially melted billon coins on farmland at Åkrann, Tynset, Hedmark. The clump (Plate X, no. 14) weighs 10.76g, and consists of at least 10 coins fused together in a loose stack. The diameters of the visible coins (c.16mm), coupled with the average weight of 1.08g, suggests that they are all Danish-Norwegian skillings of Frederick III or Christian V, and are likely to have been assembled and deposited sometime in the second half of the seventeenth century.

While the Åkrann hoard is of limited numismatic potential, its archaeological condition is of some interest, and invites comparison with four English finds of semi-melted stacks of medieval silver coins from Beachamwell, Huggate, Marchwood, and the Kings Lynn area.¹⁷ Like the Åkrann find, these four hoards were all found on cultivated fields, and must have been subjected to temperatures of over 961.8°C to reach their current state. Since soil is a particularly effective thermal insulator, these transformations are unlikely to result from post-depositional actions, such as stubble burning or woodland fires. However, suitable temperatures have been recorded during experimental burnings of reconstructed timber-framed buildings, which have many parallels with English and Norwegian medieval and post-medieval vernacular architecture.¹⁸ It is possible, therefore, that these finds were all originally deposited in houses that subsequently burnt down, and later found their way onto cultivated fields when the burned timbers were cleared and reused for wood ash manure.

4. Kure Søndre, Rygge, Østfold, 2018.

Dep. 1668 or later

3 Bil.

Disp.: Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo

Between August and September 2018 a metal detectorist found five Danish-Norwegian coins on a small area of farmland at Kure Søndre, Rygge, Østfold. Three of these coins have similar patinas, and form a discrete group of 2-skilling and skilling pieces of Frederick III. However, the other two coins – a 1524 søsling of Frederick I and a 2-skilling *klipping* of Frederick II dated 1564–5 – have different patinas and are noticeably earlier. While it is difficult to be certain, it seems quite likely that the three coins of Frederick III represent all or part of a small hoard deposited after 1668, while the coins of Frederick I and Frederick II are probably unrelated single finds. Like the hoard from Guåker Søndre

¹⁷ Andrews 2019, p. 198.

¹⁸ For the temperatures of experimental house burnings at Lejre, see Christensen *et al.* 2007, 68. On English and Norwegian vernacular architecture, see Barley 1987; Holan 1990.

(see above), the coins from Kure Søndre are typical of the everyday currency of Norway during the seventeenth century, and might have been drawn from the contents of a lost coin purse.

Catalogue

Frederick III of Denmark and Norway (1648–70)

1. 2-skilling, 1664; Hede 133b; obv. [FR]IDERIC 3 D [G DAN], crowned armorial shield; rev.: NOR VAN [GOT REX 166]4 / II / SKILI / NG DA / NSK, value in four lines; Copenhagen mint; die axis 180°; wgt. 0.68g; dia. 20mm; wear 2/2; corrosion 2/2; broken; UMK 2971-3; M150911.

2. 2-skilling, 1668; Hede 70e; obv.: FRIDERIC III D G DAN, arms of Norway; rev.: NOR VAN GOT REX 1668 / II / SKILL / ING DA / NSK, value in four lines; Christiania mint; die axis 0°; wgt. 0.77g; dia. 18mm; wear 3/3; corrosion 2/2; broken; UMK 2971-5; M150913.

3. Skilling, 1668; Hede 71c; obv.: FRIDERIC III D G DAN, arms of Norway; rev.: NOR VAN GOT REX 1668 / I / SKILL / ING DA / NSK, value in four lines; Christiania mint; die axis 120°; wgt. 0.68g; dia. 15mm; wear 2/2; corrosion 2/2; UMK 2971-4; M150912; pl. X, no. 15.

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