

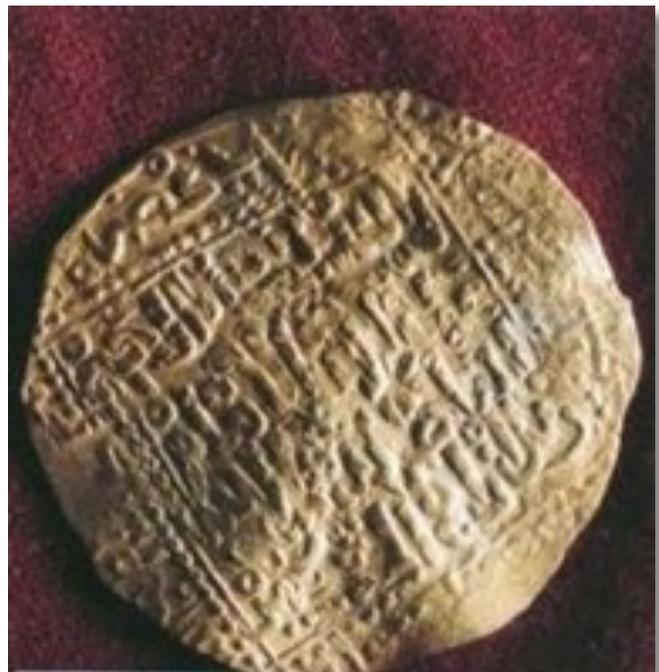
Shipwrecked Pewter

The Worshipful Company of Pewterers recently bought some of the pewter recovered from the wreck of a Spanish galleon off the coast of Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic 450 years ago. This pewter is on display at the Company's Hall in the City. But that ship is not the only one to have gone down carrying pewter; and In Chapter 13 of his latest book, called: *Shakespeare's Restless World*, Neil MacGregor mentions, though just in passing, pewter.

In the course of talking of piracy in the Mediterranean, as Venetian, Turkish, Genoese and Moroccan fleets fought for supremacy, he mentions that in 1585, during the reign of Elizabeth I, the Barbary Company was established to facilitate trade between England and Morocco.

One ship from Morocco came to northern Europe carrying a hoard of 450 Moroccan gold coins. It appears to have sunk amongst strong currents in a treacherous part of Salcombe Bay and to have come to rest in a deep gully. It was found there in 1994 by the South-West Archeological Group.

The ship may have been owned by the Moroccan ruler, Ahmad al-Masur who, in 1591, had conquered gold-rich Timbuktu. In the hoard found in the wreck were large quantities of sixteenth century coins, gold ingots,



One of the gold Dinars, struck in Marrakech in the 1600's.
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earrings, pendants - all from Morocco, “along with other artefacts and debris: lead weights, pewter tableware, ceramic fragments and decomposing iron”.

What was *pewter tableware* doing on a Moroccan ship? Was it cargo (in which case where was it made?). Was it part of the ship's stock? Was it being traded? Had it been picked up in, say, Spain *en route* for England (coals to Newcastle?); or had the ship already traded in England, picked up the pewter ware here, and then had sunk on the way home?

Local Dorset award-winning author, Nigel Clarke's recently-published new edition of the *Shipwreck Guide to Dorset and South Devon* shows that the coast of Dorset and South Devon has one of the greatest densities of shipwrecks in Europe. The age and variety of wrecks, he writes, encompass every period of our maritime history.

Alan Williams

Shakespeare's Restless World (an unexpected history in twenty objects), by Neil MacGregor; Penguin Books, ISBN: 978-0-718-19570-0

British Museum: <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/2012/05/02/the-salcombe-bay-treasure/>

South West Maritime Archeological Group: <http://www.swmag.org/index.php/moroccan-gold-coins>

One of the gold Dinars, struck in Marrakech in the 1600's. © South West Maritime Archaeological Group 2014

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