

THE ROPSLEY HOARD



EMPERORS & THEIR WIVES REPRESENTED IN THE HOARD



Marc Antony
32-31 BC



Nero
AD 54-68



Galba
AD 68-69



Vitellius
AD 69



Vespasian
AD 69-79



Titus
AD 79-81



Domitian
AD 81-96



Nerva
AD 96-98



Trajan
AD 98-117



Hadrian
AD 117-138



Sabina
AD 117-138



Aelius
AD 136-138



Antoninus Pius
AD 138-161



Diva Faustina
AD 138-141



Marcus Aurelius
AD 161-180



Faustina II
AD 147-175

THE BEGINNING AD 150-152

Sometime, during AD 150-152 in the North Eastern corner of the Roman province of Britannia, a citizen was compelled to bury his hoard of 522 silver denari, equivalent in value to around £12,500 in modern day currency. A substantial amount given that a Roman soldier would have been paid around 300 denari per year.

What compelled him to bury the hoard we can only imagine; was it for safe keeping while he headed to market in nearby Ancaster (Causennis), just a short trip up Ermine street or had he been asked to head north and help with the trouble caused by the Caledonians near Hadrian's Wall? Perhaps they were stolen by a mischievous slave who was then caught, sold and could never return to recover his loot. Who knows but, for certain, these coins were not recovered, at least not in Roman times.

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THE FIND

16TH MARCH 2018

The hoard was found by a Metal Detectorist who was carefully searching a large field in Lincolnshire, after gaining permission from the landowners where some 1,870 years previously these coins had been buried.

The field had been cultivated so the going was heavy but soon he received a signal which was to make it all worthwhile. Digging down the unmistakable sight of a coin, then another and another. On close inspection they were Roman silver denarii and what's more, the outline of a pot could be seen! Although disturbed

by agriculture the pot was reasonably intact and contained a sizeable deposit of coins. Imagine what must have been running through the finder's mind!

The coins were reported in accordance with the Treasure Act and were soon in the safe possession of the British Museum.



First sight of coins



Wider excavation



Coins as found

Here they were studied and subsequently declared as 'Treasure' by a Coroner. This gives The British Museum, or any other museum in the country, the opportunity to acquire the hoard and should they wish to do this the finder and landowner would have been paid a fair market value.

However, on this occasion, there was no interest shown so the hoard was disclaimed and returned to the finder

who decided that it would be best to sell the coins so that he could split the proceeds evenly between himself and the landowner.

This hoard is large when compared to similar finds of this date, silver coin hoards from this period usually contain up to 100 coins.

Here we see the reconstructed vessel and some of the coins. The green circles visible on the inside of the vessel are corrosion imprints from the coins showing that when all

522 denari were placed inside it was literally filled to the brim. Perhaps the owner filled this pot then moved on to another nearby which is as yet undiscovered!



Whilst broken by agriculture you can see that the majority of the grey ware vessel which contained the hoard is present.

With some restoration we can get a good idea of what this would have looked like before being buried. It is a fine example of an Alice Holt ware vessel originating from the New Forest region, in Southern England, dating to the first half of the 2nd Century AD. Note the fine cross hatched decoration to the shoulder.



BACKGROUND TO THE AREA

Lincolnshire was occupied by the Corieltauvi tribe during the Iron Age. During the 1st century AD the Roman way of life was adopted by the native Britons and fortified towns and

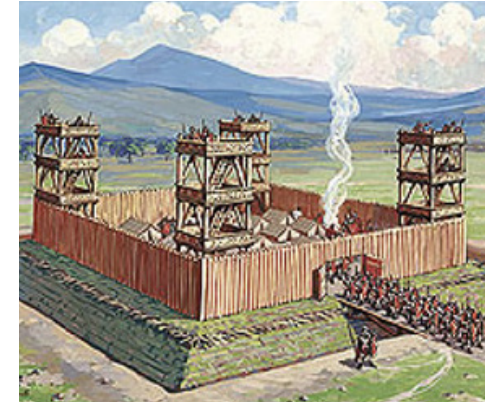
infrastructure including impressive roads were introduced.

The map below shows the main roads and you will see that Ermine Street runs close to this find site.



Just north of the find spot is the Roman town of Ancaster (Causennis), this was a small town by Roman standards but still had a forum, town defences and Roman military presence.

The Romans built a fort over an Iron Age settlement sometime in the 1st century AD. It lay on Ermine Street, a major Roman road heading north from Londinium (London) and, after the army left, expanded rapidly in the early 2nd century into a small town. Not much is known about life in the town, but industry included pottery production and interestingly, coin forgery. There may have been a sculptor's workshop as some fine carvings have been discovered.



Roman Fort



Three Mother Goddesses

This includes a Deae Matres (The Three Mother Goddesses) sculpture and altar from a religious precinct. Excavations have also found a cemetery containing more than 250 Roman burials, including 11 stone sarcophagi suggesting that people of some wealth lived nearby. A dig by archaeological television programme Time Team in 2001 revealed a cist burial partly constructed with a re-used inscription to the god Viridios. The dig also uncovered Iron Age to 3rd-century pottery, a 1st-century brooch and some of the Roman town wall.

THE COINS

Once at the British Museum, the coins were conserved in order that they could be counted and identified. There were 522 silver denari stretching from coins of Mark Antony (32-31 BC) to Faustina II (AD 152), some 184 years of Roman history. All bar the early Legionary issues were struck in Rome.

As usual with finds like this the older coins were in the poorest condition, as can be seen to the right, understandable given that they had been in circulation for 184 years. The latest dated coins in the hoard were much as struck having seen very little wear through circulation.

184 years of history represented in one hoard is pretty remarkable – this would have been five generations (the average Roman life expectancy was 37 years). This is comparable to having coins in circulation today from AD 1834 showing the bust of King William IV!

This gives an insight into the times and perhaps shows a lack of importance of what was actually on the coins but more significance in the material value.

The earliest coins in the hoard are struck during the reign of Mark Antony and are Legionary issues. These were struck at travelling mints and each coin bears the number of its legion. To the right, is a nice example of a coin struck by the mint travelling with the V (fifth) Legion.



Marc Antony
32-31 BC



Faustina, wife of
Marcus Aurelius
AD 147-175



Mark Antony,
Legion V

We then see a mix of coins from the 1st Century AD including famous names like Nero and Galba, the latter being known as one of the less successful Roman Emperor's reigning for just seven months in AD 68-69.



Nero
AD 54-68



Galba
AD 68-69

To view coins for sale
from the hoard, visit
www.silburycoins.com

The 2nd Century AD sees a greater emphasis on dynasties. Coins are struck showing emperors wives; then in the late 2nd and 3rd Centuries, daughters, sisters and mothers are also featured portraying the Emperor's as family men – something which must have been increasingly popular with the Roman citizens.

EMPEROR'S WIVES



Sabina
AD 117-138



Faustina
AD 138-141



Faustina II
AD 147-175

Continued...

THE COINS CONTINUED



Many of the coins in the hoard are struck during the reign of Emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138). This time was mostly peaceful as Hadrian worked hard to maintain his adopted empire rather than expand it. Trouble from the Picts in unconquered Caledonia (Scotland) led to the building of Hadrian's Wall to protect the northern frontier of Britannia around AD 122.

REVERSE TYPES

There are a huge variety of reverse types for silver denari, most show gods and goddesses but some celebrate triumphs of engineering, architecture and military campaigns. Some show wild

animals which have been 'discovered' by the Emperor's troops in faraway lands which most citizens will probably have never set eyes upon – what a great place for propaganda!



Ceres,
goddess of crops
and agriculture



Concordia,
goddess who embodies
agreement in marriage
and society



Felicitas,
goddess of good
luck and positivity



Hilaritas,
goddess of rejoicing,
often depicted on coins
to celebrate the birth of
a child to the emperor



Moneta,
goddess of memory,
prosperity, finances
and money



**Commemorating
the Via Traiana,**
a 205 mile Roman
road built in AD 109



Elephants
were used by the
Roman army



Peacock representing
paradise, renewal,
and spring

CONSERVATION

When these coins were removed from the ground, there were extensive green corrosion products meaning they were not legible.

Initial cleaning to aid identification was carried out at the British Museum during which fragments of charcoal were recovered and identified as being from a willow tree by the department of scientific research. How this burned wood came to be buried with these coins is a mystery, perhaps the coins were being counted by their owner

close to a spitting fire before their final concealment or perhaps even a charcoal pencil was used to keep a tally of exactly how many coins were being hidden!

While the coins were now identifiable they still required further conservation to remove the corrosion products. Luckily, at Silbury Coins, we know specialist conservators who knew exactly what to do with them. Careful work to remove the encrustation, but not damage the coins themselves, took place over a number of months and the results are clear to see.

AFTER MUSEUM CONSERVATION



AFTER SILBURY COINS CONSERVATION



Note; we do not recommend that anyone without professional knowledge tries to clean coins, instead please contact us.

CONCLUSION

A BIG thank you to the finder for his hours of searching to locate this buried treasure and for his careful excavation. Thank you also to the landowner for allowing him to search the land which led to this hoard being discovered and to everyone else involved in getting this exciting find to this point.

It has been a pleasure to be involved with another amazing Treasure find, from the beginning to the end of the process it is always enjoyable and something we are very passionate about. Now it's our turn to pass this enjoyment on to you, the collector, and give you an opportunity to own the coins from a real Roman Treasure find.

If hearing about this exciting find has made you want to go searching for your own buried treasure then get in touch with *Leisure Promotions* who will be able to supply you with everything you need to get started.

www.lpmetaldetecting.com





BACKGROUND TO SILBURY COINS

Silbury coins is a well-known and respected name in the numismatic world. Director John Philpotts has been handling coins and antiquities for 30 years. With a great team around him, Silbury Coins provides a professional service, whilst still retaining the personal touch. Driven by a passion for hands-on history ever since being given his first Roman coin by his father at the age of 6 John remains just as passionate today, as does his father who regularly attends numismatic events with the company. When buying from Silbury Coins you will be dealing with expert numismatists and receive all the benefits of their years of knowledge and experience.

As members of the BNTA we adhere to their strict code of conduct as a start but we like to take it further than that. As well as offering nothing but genuine, correctly described stock we ensure that our prices are fair both to the buyer & seller. Dealing with Silbury Coins you will find honesty and integrity is of foremost importance in their day to day business. If you choose to deal with us then you will be treated as we would want to be treated ourselves.

As well as offering a wonderful and vast selection of coins for sale we provide much information for collectors starting out and are happy to assist those who've spent a lifetime collecting coins.

The best place to browse our stock is on our website, or if you'd prefer, you can get in touch to arrange a meeting.

We are always looking to replenish our stock, if you would like to sell single coins or a collection/hoard then get in touch.

To discuss buying or selling you can contact us using one of the following ways:

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