# THE LITTLE BUSBY HOARD

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#### **EMPERORS & THEIR WIVES REPRESENTED IN THE HOARD**



Marc Antony 32-31 BC



**Nero** AD 54-68



**Galba** AD 68-69



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



Antoninus Pius AD 138-161



Diva Faustina AD 138-141



Marcus Aurelius AD 161-180



Faustina II AD 147-175



Lucius Verus AD 161-169



Lucilla AD 161-169



Commodus AD 177-192



Crispina AD 177-192



Pertinax AD 193



Septimius Severus AD 193-211



Julia Domna AD 193-211



Clodius Albinus AD 195-196



**Caracalla** AD 198-217



**Geta** AD 209-212

## THE BEGINNING AD 202-204

Sometime during AD 202-204, in the North Eastern corner of the Roman province of Britannia, a citizen was compelled to bury his hoard of 392 silver denari, equivalent in value to around £9,500 in modern day currency. A substantial amount given that a successful 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 a local market, was he a soldier stationed at the nearby garrison town of Catterick (Cataractonium) or had he been asked to head north from York (Eboracum) and help with the trouble caused by the Caledonians near Hadrian's Wall? What we can say for certain is that these coins were not recovered, at least not in Roman times.

Published 2025 © Silbury Coins Ltd. For information about the hoard, visit **www.silburycoins.com** 

#### THE FIND 2<sup>ND</sup> JUNE 2021

The hoard was found by a Metal Detectorist who was carefully searching a large arable field in North Yorkshire, after gaining permission from the landowner where some 1,824 years previously these coins had been buried.

Whilst searching the field he received a signal, digging down he was rewarded by the unmistakable sight of a coin, then, nearby, another and another. On close inspection they were Roman silver denarii and what's more, they were likely from a buried hoard lying somewhere nearby.

Careful searching led to the discovery of a nucleus of several hundred coins and the remains of a broken pot. Imagine what must have been running through the finder's mind!



Metal Detectorist searching for finds



Typical Field Excavation

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

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.

EMPERORS PRESENT	Number of Coins Present
Mark Antony (32-31 BC)	16
Nero (AD 54-68)	3
Galba (AD 68-9)	1
Vespasian (AD 69-79)	45
Titus (AD 79–81)	8
Domitian (AD 81–96)	14
Nerva (AD 96-8)	4
Trajan (AD 98-117)	46
Hadrian (AD 117-38)	47
Sabina (AD 117-38)	3
Antoninus Pius (AD 138-61)	41
Faustina I	21
Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-80)	38
Faustina II	23
Lucius Verus	6
Lucilla	5
Commodus (AD 180-192)	23
Crispina	4
Pertinax (AD 193)	1
Septimius Severus	16
Julia Domna	11
Clodius Albinus (as Caesar)	2
Caracalla	7
Geta	3
Uncertain	4
Total	392



The pottery vessel was damaged by agricultural activity, but this incredible image reveals that its contents fused together, preserving the shape of the original container—a small grey ware vessel similar to that shown below, common in Roman Britain and with finds like this.



### **BACKGROUND** TO THE AREA

Yorkshire 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 the find site.



Just west of the find spot is the Roman town of Catterick (Cataractonium). This was an important settlement in Roman Britain due to its strategic location where Dere street crossed the river Swale, close to the Empire's northern frontier & Hadrian's wall.

Here, the Romans built a fort over an earlier Iron Age settlement sometime in the 1st century AD and likely charged a toll for those travelling on Dere Street, a major Roman road heading north from York (Eboracum). The settlement expanded rapidly in the early 2nd century into a large town with strong military presence.



Roman Fort



Mansio at Cataractonium

Industry included tanning and leather working, which receives mention on one of the Vindolanda tablets (343). The late second century saw the building of a large Mansio, a guest house or inn for travelling officials with some 11 rooms and a bath house. In the early 4th century, a defensive wall was erected, encompassing an area of roughly 6.3 hectares.

# THE COINS

Once at the British Museum, the coins were conserved in order that they could be counted and identified. There were 392 silver denari stretching from coins of Mark Antony (32-31 BC) to Geta (AD 204), some 236 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 236 years. The later dated coins in the hoard were much as struck, having seen very little wear through circulation.

Over 200 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 1789 showing the bust of King George III!

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 this 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 VII (Seventh) Legion.



Legion VII

We then see a mix of coins from the 1st Century AD including famous names like Nero and Titus, the latter being known as one of the less successful Roman Emperors reigning for just a couple of years in AD 79-81 before dying of a fever. No doubt he endured the usual trusted Roman medical practice of 'a course of leeches'.



**Nero** AD 54-68



**Titus** AD 79-81

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 Emperors as family men – something which must have been increasingly popular with the Roman citizens.

#### **EMPERORS' WIVES**



**Crispina** AD 177-192

### THE COINS CONTINUED



#### Hadrians Wall

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 Emporer'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, they were fused together with extensive green corrosion products meaning they were barely legible.

Initial cleaning to aid identification was carried out at the British Museum.

While the coins were now identifiable they still required further conservation to remove the corrosion products as can be seen below. Luckily, at Silbury Coins, we have our own specialist conservators who know exactly what to do with finds like this. Careful work to remove the encrustation, but not damage the coins themselves, took place over a number of weeks and the results are clear to see.

Hoard coins like these which are made of good quality silver can often be restored to their original state with the right attention, often not the case with individual field finds.

#### **BEFORE SILBURY CONSERVATION**

#### AFTER SILBURY CONSERVATION



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

# CONCLUSION

A HUGE thank you to the dedicated finder for the countless hours spent searching and for the meticulous care taken during the excavation of this buried treasure. Our gratitude also goes to the landowner for granting permission to explore the land without which this remarkable hoard would never have been uncovered and to everyone else who played a part in bringing this exciting discovery to light.

It's been a true pleasure to be part of yet another incredible Treasure find. From start to finish, the entire process has been thoroughly rewarding and reflects the deep passion we have for what we do.

Now, it's our privilege to share that excitement with you—the collector—by offering you the chance to own coins from an authentic Roman Treasure hoard.





#### 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.

www.silburycoins.com

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

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

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#### IRON AGE 🌤 ROMAN 🌤 SAXON 🌤 NORMAN 🌤 MEDIEVAL