

ATTRIBUTION OF THE ANCIENT BRITISH COINS
INSCRIBED DIAS OR DEAS.

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IT is due to the kindly generosity of my friend Mr. Edward Tristram, a Member of this Society, that my collection has recently been enriched by the addition to it of a specimen of the extremely rare silver coin, an example of which forms the subject of the illustration, Plate VI, No. 14, of the late Sir John Evans's truly classic work, *The Coins of the Ancient Britons*. At p. 249 of the text the following description is given :—

“*Obverse.*—DIAS on a tablet with an annulet or ring ornament above and below, in the centre of a star formed of two squares interlaced, —the one beaded, and with the sides curved inward ; the other plain with straight sides.

“*Reverse.*—VIR, or possibly VER, beneath a horse galloping to the left ; above, a curved object of doubtful import.”

The weight is not stated, but that of my specimen is 21 grains.

As regards this type of coin, it is interesting to note that it was first published and illustrated by Camden (No. 13, 1637 edition), but without the VIR on the reverse. Although the illustration was more or less accurately copied by later authors there was no record of any coin of this type having been seen until the inspection by Sir John Evans of the coin engraved in his work, which he records, p. 250 *op. cit.*, as having been found, he believed, upon the borders of Essex and Herts. He makes no reference to the ownership of the piece, but Sir Arthur Evans informs me that the coin was in his father's collection and is now in his own, also that it was found at Harlow, in Essex. Mr. Tristram tells me that the coin, now mine, came to his family

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from the late Admiral Smyth, of Bedford, to whom, as Captain William Henry Smyth, R.N., Vice-President of the Royal Society, the first volume of *The Numismatic Journal*, 1837, was dedicated. He is there described as "a zealous promoter of the science of medals."

To return to the example illustrated by Sir John Evans. There appear to be some discrepancies between the description and the engraving of the coin, as in the latter the upper "annulet or ring ornament" is shown as a well-defined letter C, and both interlacing squares are shown as beaded.

My specimen agrees with the engraving in disclosing a well-defined C in the space above the tablet, whereon the letters are DEAS, not DIAS; again, the sides of both squares are composed of plain lines, while in the space below the tablet are the letters IO, the first, however, is not very clearly defined. A pellet appears in each of the eight spaces outside the design formed by the interlaced squares.

Upon the reverse of my specimen the letters are clearly VIR, and not VER, whilst all that is disclosed of the "curved object of doubtful import" is a crescent, the horns of which point upwards.

In order to correctly describe my coin I have altered the description above quoted. Thus amended it is:—



FIG. 1.—SILVER COIN READING DEASCIO.

Obverse.—DEAS on a tablet, with the letter C above and the letters IO below, in the centre of a star formed of a square and a quadrilateral figure with incurved sides interlaced. In each of the eight outer angles a pellet.

Reverse.—VIR, beneath a horse galloping to the left; above, a crescent, horns upwards.

R, weight 21 grains. Fig. 1.

I do not attach importance to the variation of E for I, or I for E, in DEAS and VIR respectively, for upon coins of this period the letters E and I are, in effect and practice, interchangeable.

On the other hand the substitution of the letter c for an annulet or ring ornament is of the highest importance in establishing the true reading of the inscription and the correct attribution of the coins. With regard to this Sir John Evans, p. 250 *op. cit.*, wrote as follows :—

“What I have described as an annulet, above the tablet on the obverse, has much more the appearance of the letter C. I think, however, that my description is correct, and that half of the ring has been destroyed by corrosion, as the coin has in parts suffered from oxidation. I cannot offer any probable conjecture as to the meaning of the word DIAS. Whatever its import may be, it seems evident, from the character and style of the coins, that they were struck either under Tasciovanus, or within a very short period after his reign. DIAS can, however, hardly be only another way of writing TAS. The legend DIAOVLOS occurs on Gaulish coins, and the Diablintes were a people of Gaul.”

It will thus be seen that the inscription upon the coin is in three parallel lines, that it commences with the central line, continues above and finishes below—

2. C
1. DEAS
3. IO

and that the full reading thus disclosed is DEASCIO.

A precisely similar method of arrangement is in evidence upon other coins, notably upon the reverses of pennies of Burgred, King of Mercia, and upon those of Æthelræd I. and Ælfred of the Mercian type, whilst in the Ancient British series a similar arrangement, but in two lines only, is displayed upon coins of Antedrigus, of the type Evans, Plate I, Fig. 8, where the letters AN appear *beneath* the horse and the continuing letters TED or TEΘ of the name are placed *above* the horse.

The readings ANTED and ANTEΘ upon coins of Antedrigus or Antethrigus bring me to the next point in my elucidation of the inscription DEASCIO, in that they establish the fact that D and Θ = TH are interchangeable. We may therefore read for DEASCIO the alternate form THEASCIO.

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Having progressed so far, I feel that no philologist should dispute the connexion of this form with the more usual TASCIO, which we are able, by means of the inscriptions upon certain coins of his son, Cunobeline, to expand to TASCIOVANVS, TASCIOVANTVS, or TASCIOVANS.

T, D and TH are dentals: sharp, flat, and aspirate respectively, and in this connexion it is interesting to note that Sir John Evans, pp. 226-7 *op. cit.*, writes:—

“The name of the father of Cunobeline, as given by Geoffrey of Monmouth, is Tenuantius: he is also called Themantius, Theomantius, Tenancius, etc., all of which bear some slight likeness to the real name, which in its British form must have been Tascio-van, or something like it.”

I have quoted this passage here to show that manuscript variations of the name beginning with TH, as well as with T, are in evidence.

Sir John Evans then continues:—

“That it was so, is proved by the fact that on the coins of Cunobeline it appears Latinized under three different forms—Tasciovanus-i, Tasciovanus-ii, Tasciovanus-vantis.”

The second form is due to a misreading of the specimen figured in Plate XII, No. 2, which in reality reads CVNOBELINVS TASCIOVAN TI F., as is shown by a very perfect example of that type in my own collection illustrated here, Fig. 2.



FIG. 2.—COPPER COIN OF CUNOBELINE.

For the reasons given above I think that we need no longer hesitate to ascribe to Tasciovan or Theasciovan, the father of Cunobeline, the hitherto mysterious DIAS coins of Evans, Plate VI, Fig. 14.

That they were struck at Verulamium (St. Albans) has already been sufficiently established by Sir John Evans.

There is, however, another coin of bronze, also struck at Verulamium, which bears upon the obverse, in front of a bold head

to the right, the inscription DIAS reading upwards from the position of V to II o'clock upon the dial of a watch.

This is illustrated in Evans, Plate XXI, No. 11, and in our Fig. 3, and is contained in the supplement to the book already so often quoted.

With this must be compared a coin of the same type, but not from the same dies, which is illustrated in Plate VII, No. 7, of the main work, and in our Fig. 4.

This has the letters TASC behind the head reading downwards from about X to VII o'clock, while in the engraving there are traces of the continuation of the inscription in front of the head.

It now becomes necessary for me to again quote at length from the supplement to Sir John Evans's work, pp. 549-50, what he has to say in reference to the coin illustrated, Plate XXI, No. 11—



FIG. 3.—COPPER COIN, TYPE HEAD TO RIGHT, LEGEND DIAS.

“*Obverse*.—Convex. Male head with sharp features and short crisp beard, to the right; behind TASC; in front, DIAS. The whole within a beaded circle.

“*Reverse*.—Concave. Centaur to the right, playing on a double pipe; in front a ring ornament; above, a crescent; below, VER; the whole within a beaded circle. Æ. 24½ grains.”

“This coin, which was found near Braughing in 1864, enables us to complete the legends on the coins of the ¹*same type*, Plate VII, No. 7, in a satisfactory manner, as TASC DIAS instead of TASCIAVA as I formerly suggested. . . . We have now the three forms, TAS, DIAS, and VER, all associated together ¹*on one coin*, and as we know that the first and last are abbreviations of Tasciovanus and Verlamio, we may reasonably suppose that DIAS is also an abbreviated form. As we have the name of the king and of his capital city, it would appear probable that the third word of the legend either designates some regal or other title, or else some person associated with the king in the government, possibly his queen.”

¹ The italics are ours.

Again, at p. 537, Sir John Evans writes :—

“The legends TASC, DIAS, and VER are found to occur on one and the same coin, so that their intimate connection cannot be doubted whatever the interpretation of DIAS may be.”

When, however, we turn to the engraving, Plate XXI, No. 11, we find that there is no trace of any inscription *behind* the head. The only letters are DIAS, in front of the face, in the same position as TASCIO, TAS and TASC upon the bronze coins Nos. 3, 4, and 9 in the same plate. These, and especially Nos. 4 and 9, are, as regards the obverse, of very similar type to No. 11.

We, therefore, find that, departing from his usual accuracy and caution, Sir John Evans has represented a composite description of two coins of similar type, viz., Plate VII, No. 7, and Plate XXI, No. 11, as a description derived from a single coin.

In reality we have here examples of coins of Tasciovan of similar type—the one with the more usual form TASC(IOVA), and the other with the rarer form DIAS, a circumstance which would appear to make my attribution of both forms to Tasciovan a certainty rather than a speculation.

After the above was written, Sir Arthur Evans very kindly lent to me for exhibition at the Meeting at which this paper was read the coins above referred to, from which the illustrations Evans, Plate VII, No. 7, and Plate XXI, No. 11, were prepared. They confirmed my conclusions in all respects, except that the illustration, Plate VII, No. 7, is made up from two coins, both of which were exhibited.



FIG. 4.—COPPER COIN OF TASCIOVANUS, EVANS, PLATE VII, NO. 7.



FIG. 5.—ANOTHER SPECIMEN OF EVANS, PLATE VII, NO. 7.

One of them, Fig. 4, has TASC behind the head, but, owing to the position of the die as regards the flan, if there were any letters upon the die in front of the face they are “off the coin.” The second specimen, Fig. 5, has indications of letters in front of the face, but it

is not possible to say what letters are intended. The dies are similar, but I do not think that they are the same. The important point is that the third coin, Plate XXI, No. 11, our Fig. 3, is very obviously from different dies, obverse and reverse, to those from which the other two specimens were struck. The letters appearing upon the reverses of the three coins seem to be VIR rather than VER.

To complete my subject I have only to make reference to the type of coin illustrated, Plate XXI, No. 8, another bronze coin struck at Verulamium, with regard to which Sir John Evans records, p. 547 *op. cit.* :—

“Mr. Frank Latchmore has an example ($22\frac{1}{4}$ grains), found near Arlesey Station in 1888, on which there is an indistinct legend in front of the face. It seems to begin with D, and may eventually prove to be DIAS or DIAIS.”

It should be noted that there seems to have been some uncertainty in the minds of those who were responsible for the various issues of the coins of King Tasciovan as to how his name should be rendered, as, in addition to forms beginning TASCIO, we also have others commencing TASCIA and TAXCIA. In the last reading the third letter may represent a Greek *chi* rather than a Roman X, and in that event its use would be due to the same influence which caused the occurrence of Θ for D on certain coins of Antedrigus and Addedomasos.

Sir John Evans, p. 145 *op. cit.*, has already recalled the passage in Cæsar, *De Bell. Gall.*, vi, 14, where, in his account of the Druids, he remarks “*Græcis literis utuntur.*”

