THREE ANCIENT BRITISH COINS
By D. F. ALLEN

The three Ancient British coins described below have nothing in common but novelty and a certain bizarre fascination. They are now brought together only because they each merit early publication.

(a) Vosenos: quinarius

A most remarkable silver piece was found at Canterbury in 1953 during the excavations which have been in progress for several years under the direction of Mr. Shepherd Frere, Esq., F.S.A.; and it is by his kindness that the coin is now published. It is clearly a silver member of the Kentish group now classed under the name Vose or Vosenos; we already had the gold stater and quarter-stater and a bronze piece but no silver coins. It was to be expected that a silver piece would eventually turn up, but no one could have forecast the piece now found.

The following is a description:

Obv. Beneath an exergual line at the top of the flan the field is divided into two almost equal parts by a fine vertical line. The field on either side of this line is occupied by separate types of equal size and prominence. To the left of this line is a griffon galloping to right. To the right of the line is a horse with abnormal (but not androcephalous) head similarly galloping but to left; its front legs are covered by a vertical wave pattern formed of seven prone S symbols. At the top of the coin, between the exergual line and another similar one, is a row of six pellet-in-circle symbols. The whole within a fine beaded circle.

Rev. Above an exergual line a horse walking to right. A triangular motive of three pellet-in-circle symbols in front. Above, diagonally between two parallel lines, the legend SΩVΙΙΙΙCIOV or perhaps SΟΜΙΙΙΙCΙΟV. In the exergue five pellet-in-circle symbols in a row. The whole within a fine beaded circle. [Pl. I, 1].

The coin is of bright white silver, very finely struck, though thin. It is slightly cup-shaped. The weight is 17·7 gr. The coin is now in the Canterbury Museum.

The effect of the obverse on a modern observer is heraldic, as if there were a twisted column and architrave in the middle and two beasts heraldically arranged on either side. Of course, no such conception is to be sought. If my interpretation of the engraver's mentality is right, we have here a coin which was meant to be looked at from three different angles—the griffon angle, the horse angle, and the exergue angle; indeed, if the coin is held in the normal position, with the exergue at the bottom of the coin, the rest of the design appears almost to be lying on its back. It is typical of a Celtic artist's restless
treatment of his subjects that as a variant of the usual trifurcated dis-
integration of the theme we should be offered three irreconcilable
viewpoints.

The effect of the reverse is much more normal in that a very
recognizable, if unusual, horse stands on a clearly marked exergue.
The peculiarity lies in the diagonal retrograde legend between two
lines above the horse's back. The reading of the legend is in doubt
only at one point, where a weakness of striking may conceal a small
element of double striking. We cannot say for certain whether the
legend is meant for Vodenos or Vodenios.

Staters from Kent are known with a legend ending in letters which
cannot be read certainly but are consistent with the reading . . . NOS
or . . . NIOS. Quarter-staters, clearly of the identical series, are
known with a very clear reading VOSII. Small bronze coins with the
reading SA which are found in Kent are linked closely with this stater
and quarter-stater by features of the horse. Evans very reasonably
associated the VOSII of the quarter-staters with the NOS of the staters,
giving a probable enough Celtic name Vosenos.

Is the Vodenos or Vodenios of the new silver coin the same, and if so,
how can we explain the D or S? Although the style of the gold coins
is not close to that of the silver in the sense that, given no legends,
one would associate the two, they clearly belong to the same artistic
horizon. The same may, I think, be said for the gold and silver coins
of Dubnovellaunos in Kent, or of Tasciovanus and others; stemming
from a different numismatic tradition, the details of contemporary
gold and silver coins tend to be very different. I do not think, there-
fore, that any lack of resemblance in coin types or in the representa-
tion of a horse on gold and silver need cast any doubt on the identity of
the issuer of both. The find-spots being what they are, there must be
a strong presumption that the new silver coin is the missing de-
nomination in the Vose series.

There is a possible explanation of the D and S dilemma. As the
letter-forms show, especially the characteristic II for E, which is
frequent in Britain and Gaul at this time, the legend is thought of in
Celtic rather than Roman terms. Celtic writing was clearly phonetic
and variants of names arise from different attempts to put spoken
names into a form of writing with no long tradition behind it. There
is plenty of evidence from Gaul that the Celtic language used a
sibilant sound of the nature of our modern "th". In Celtic inscriptions
on coins and in monuments from Gaul this is represented either as a
barred ﬃ or a Greek Θ, a latinized TH or even a SS. The tribe known
in Caesar and elsewhere by the name of Veliocasses appears on coins
as VELIOCAE. The name Carassounus appears in inscriptions under
the forms CARATHONVS or CARADONVS, and other examples could
be quoted.1 In Britain we have ADDEDOMAROS or ADEDOMAROS and
ANTEBRIG. We have no previous example here where a simple unbarred
D is equivalent to the barred one, but there is a series of Gaulish coins

1 J. Blanchet, Traite des Monnaies Gauloises, p. 88.
reading **EPAD** or **HIPAD**, which can certainly be associated with Caesar’s **Epasnakicus**. On these coins the cross-bar is definitely absent, as it is on the **Vodenos** coin. It is, therefore, clear that the form **D** on a Celtic coin can sometimes represent a sibilant sound, more often represented by **θ**, **θ**, or even **S**. If a coin of Cassivellaunus were to turn up, the legend might well read **C̃D̄**. We should probably not be far out if we were to classify this series of coins under the name **Vothenios**; in any case the presence of a **D** on the new coin is no insuperable obstacle to indentifying the issuer with that of the stater and quarter-stater.

This coin confirms the place in the Kentish sequence to which the coins of **Vosenos** have been assigned, namely, the first ten years of the first century A.D. There is very little that is Roman in the conception or execution of this remarkable piece, unless the mere fact of a legend may be held to reflect Roman influence. We must consider **Vothenios** as the last and most advanced of the Kentish chieftains before the district was infused with the classical influence so noticeable on the coins of Eppillus.

If we turn now to the subject-matter of the types, there is much food for speculation. It has not been fashionable for many years to search behind the types of Celtic coins for their meaning, but that is an eschewal which can be carried too far. A coin such as this is in no sense a debased copy, and we are fully entitled to presume that the engraver had a purpose in view.

The walking horse on the reverse need not delay us, since, different though it is in detail from other representations of the time, it is not unusual in kind. It is the two mythological beasts on the obverse which incite curiosity.

Of these the more easily understood is the griffon. Although not a particularly common subject at this time on Roman coins, it is clear that by this date the griffon had become one of the most popular cult beasts of the Celts. It is used on British coins by **Tasciovanus**, **Cunobelinus**, **Dubnovellaunus**, and **Epaticcus**, in addition to **Vothenios**, and in a variety of forms and attitudes. It occurs on a Gaulish bronze coin of **Pixtilus**, which is found in the upper Seine valley and attributed to the **Carnutes**. It is also found on one of **Rubios** from the Pas de Calais area, attributed to the **Morini**. Griffons have been found in Gaul, for instance, as ornaments on a bronze basin from a tumulus of Gerenne (Ste-Colombe, Côte d’Or) and in England on a repoussé bronze disk brooch from Santon Downham (*Archaeologia*, xxxvi, 455, pl. xxxviii. 5).

This cannot be coincidental copying, but it is not possible to say in what context the griffon here had obtained a cult significance; other fabulous beasts assembled from parts of different animals, such as sphinxes, were also popular. British griffons generally consist of an eagle’s head and wings combined with a horse’s body, but the **Vothenios** coin very clearly shows enlarged lion’s paws in place of horse’s hooves.

The beast heraldically opposed is no ordinary horse. If obverse and
reverse representations are compared, it is clear that the obverse horse is meant to be fabulous or heroic also. The androcephalous horse is familiar on Gaulish coins, especially of the Armorican group, but this does not appear to be the explanation of the Vothenios animal. The horse's misrepresented head has a penetrating eye, as for instance the beasts on the Aylesford Bucket or on some of the staters of the Iceni, such as Mack 400 or 400a. Something of the same quality of the horse's head occurs on some of the pegasus horses, intrinsically mythical. The closest parallel is, however, Mack 225, a bronze coin of Cunobelinus, which on obverse and reverse displays precisely the same pair of beasts shown here on a single side. Not very far removed is Mack 159 of Tasciovanus, which combines a griffon with a pegasus.

The new coin seems to show that in the obscure cults of Celtic Britain we should look for one which links into a single theme both the griffon and a heroic or larger-than-life horse. Beyond that at present we cannot go.

One final element of this coin calls for comment, the elaborate guilloche scroll down the middle. Such scrolls are familiar on Gaulish staters as a means of replacing the legends of the original philippus, but they do not occur on coins struck in this country. On the gold staters from Gaul, not infrequently found inland in Kent (Mack 1 and 3), a zigzag meander of the same general kind occurs on the reverse. It is also fair to compare the cup-and-ball pattern in Mack 27 and coins derived from it. A prone S occurs as an ornament in many contexts on British coins, and as a familiar element of Celtic scroll work needs no elaboration. It would seem to me that, in keeping with the concept of three points of view, the engraver has inserted, as it were, an exergue down the middle of the coin; but it is not to be excluded that the guilloche has in this unusual situation some ritual or cabalistic significance. The other rows of ornaments, though striking, are not so out of the ordinary.

This most unusual coin will no doubt provide discussion for a long time to come, and it is certainly a notable addition to the range of Celtic coin art in this country.

(b) Epaticcus: quinarius

Another striking discovery is a new inscribed silver coin of Epaticcus.

It was found in 1954 in excavations at Bagendon, Gloucestershire, conducted by Mrs. E. M. Clifford. The owner of the land, Mr. T. A. McKenzie, has generously presented the coin to the British Museum, and it is published here by the kindness of the Keeper of Coins and Medals.

The coin may be described as follows:

**Obv.** Winged figure seated to right, draped. Right arm with hand on seat behind; left arm extended, holding wreath. Traces of ground line. Legend, commencing behind, TAS CIO V. The whole within a beaded circle.
Three Ancient British Coins

Rev. Boar prancing right. Tree behind without leaves or fruit. Legend, beneath boar, **IPAT.** The whole within a beaded circle, the beads being lozenge shaped.

The weight is 19 gr. The coin is of the ordinary slightly cup-shaped fabric of silver coins of the period. It is well preserved. [Pl. I, 2, and enlargement.]

Some details of the obverse are uncertain. The head of the figure may be looking forwards or backwards. The drapery seems to be gathered round the loins, with the upper part of the body naked. Otherwise both sides are very clear.

Several features of the new coin are interesting. The obverse type, a seated victory with wreath, is common enough. It is a very frequent classical subject, and we do not have to look far for individual Greek or Roman models. The winged victory with wreath, palm branch, or weapon is a common figure on Belgic coins of the period, but it is as often a male figure as a female one. Indeed, up to now we have had no certain seated female victories. The two Cunobelinus coins, Mack 218 and 221, with seated winged figures, both seem to me male, while the seated female figures of Verica on Mack 126, 129, and 130 are not winged. The present coin could be seen as female, but the division of the upper part of the naked male torso is common, and such traces of the head as can be seen may suggest helmet and beard. All we can say is that here we have another example of the victory figure, male or female, which every self-respecting Belgic chieftain felt obliged at some stage to use on his coins. I suspect that winged human gods and goddesses had by this date been absorbed (as much as griffons) into the Belgic mythology.

The magnificent boar on the reverse compares favourably as an animal with the best already known on Tasciovanus, rather than Cunobelinus, coins, for instance Mack 164 and the parallel 179. The presence of the tree, curiously barren, like an unrolled vine scroll, links it closely with Cunobelinus (Mack 252), or less directly with Dubnovellaunus (Mack 289). Although we have an essentially Celtic animal, the type is redolent of Roman influence. It cannot be far separated in date from the end of Cunobelinus reign. The dates suggested for Epaticcus in my article on Belgic Dynasties,¹ A.D. 20–40, are fully consistent with this coin. If we compare the animal with sculpture in the round, we may say that the boar comes in type, if not in date, between the Hounslow and the Lexden animals and rather nearer to the latter. In this coin (unlike the Vothenios coin described previously) we have none of the Celtic pursuit of asymmetrical shape; classicism has damped the vagaries of the engraver’s imagination, but this more disciplined production is by no means a slavish copy of anything Roman.

The legend is of interest. The name of Epaticcus on the three types hitherto recorded (gold staters, silver **quinarius** and silver **minims**)

¹ "The Belgic Dynasties of Britain and their Coins", Archaeologia, xc, 1944, 1–46.
always spelt with an E. This coin most clearly reads I\textsc{Pat}. That the name is the same is rendered quite certain by the reverse legend of T\textsc{asciov}, which links it with \textit{Epaticcus} famous gold stater. Double i (II) is common as a form of E both on British and Gaulish coins, but the interchange of the single i and E is rarer. It does occur, however; the spelling EC\textsc{En} on Icenian coins is an obvious example, and on Mack 243 \textit{Tasciovanus} name is given in the genitive as \textit{Tasceovantis} instead of the usual \textit{Tasciovan}. Gaulish examples could also be cited.

The find-spot is consistent with the spread of \textit{Epaticcus} coins from the southern to the western fringe of \textit{Cunobelinus} region. It adds little to our exiguous knowledge of him and his connexions. On grounds of style one would imagine it to be the earlier of his two silver types.

(c) Uninscribed bronze

The following bronze coin shown at the British Museum is uninscribed:

\textit{Obv.} Face left; pronounced eyebrow and eye visible; cheek appears to be marked with a row of pellets. Hair represented by three \&-shaped curls, with plenty of other curls. Part of the die only visible.

\textit{Rev.} Horse walking right; front near leg raised, hoof turned in, single tail. Small boar above back, curl in tail. Pellet-in-circle symbol below horse; part of circle in front.

The coin is of normal cup-shaped fabric and reasonably well preserved. (The weight is not recorded.) [\textbf{Pl. I, 3}]

This coin was found at Great Chesterford, Essex, a place at which coins of \textit{Tasciovanus}, with Verulam legends, and of \textit{Cunobelinus} have been found. It appears to belong to the same general group as a number of silver, and occasionally bronze, coins without legends which are found in Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk, and are collected in Mack as Nos. 435–46. It is, however, not identical with any of them, coming closest perhaps to Mack 438, a silver coin from Bury St. Edmunds. This has a head on the obverse and a horse on the reverse. The affinities of the head are difficult to assess because the Chesterford bronze displays little except the hair, while the Bury St. Edmunds silver shows mainly the features. The link with No. 438 lies in that the front legs of the horse show traces of the forked upper joint of the forelegs so characteristic of coins of the \textit{Iceni} and the \textit{Brigantes} later.

The unusual feature of this coin is the small additional boar over the horse’s back. A number of British coins have a subsidiary emblem over the back of the horse, but this is very rarely a recognizable animal. We have an extra boar on the curious silver coin from Sussex, Mack 87. This feature also occurs on several Gaulish coins, bronze or silver—for instance Blanchet 253 (\textit{Deionigeagos}, cast bronze), 264 (\textit{Andecombo}, where it may be meant as a standard), 238, 239, as well as on numerous Armorican varieties. This is perhaps, in a less organized
or pretentious way, an attempt to display two associated cult animals on one coin at the same time, as is done so strikingly in the Vothenios coin described at the beginning of this article.

Stylized boars are characteristic of the Iceni and the Brigantes, and the appearance of this small boar above the back of the horse is, therefore, not surprising on a coin from this site. It does, nevertheless, draw attention to the fact that the group to which it belongs, Mack 435-46, are in general feeling at least as akin to the latest, and so far undated, Gaulish coins as to British.

Are we to deduce from these coins some separate tribal influx into East Anglia from Gaul, bringing its own metal craftsmen with it? The coins are not datable in any precise sense. We have no regular sequences into which to fit them, with dated beginnings or endings; but they must belong, generally speaking, to the period of Tasciovanus, which coincided with the consolidation of Roman rule in Gaul. Nothing could be more likely than that odd unrecorded bands of Gauls should seek to establish themselves in parts of the country not already firmly within the domain of existing Belgic rulers.

While such coins by themselves do not provide strong evidence, they suggest a scattered group of small communities in East Anglia not subject to the recognized Belgic kingdoms, and bringing with them ideas and crafts from Gaul.