

FOUR ANCIENT BRITISH COINS

By C. W. LISTER

THE four Ancient British silver coins described here are all from approximately the same period. Two are new and uninscribed, one of which appears to be of the Catuvellauni following the Whaddon Chase series and the other similar to the gold quarter-staters of the Sussex Coast. The other two have already been published, but the specimens illustrated here show so much more detail that they warrant further publication. Unfortunately none of the find-spots is known.

Silver coin of the Catuvellauni

Obv. A male head to the right with a firm line of nose and brow. A long flowing moustache with a shaven chin is clearly seen, and the hair portrayed by long curls or scrolls. An animal in miniature appears in front of the face with a star below the chin.

Rev. A finely engraved horse with twisted mane and tail. A winged annulet appears above the horse, two ringed dots below the belly and tail, and another annulet encircled by dots in front of the chest.

Weight. 18 grains (Pl. XV, 6).

The reverse shows a very strong resemblance to two gold staters of the Whaddon Chase series from the British Museum, reproduced here. In Pl. XV, 10, the shape of the horse's head is very similar; the twisted mane, the neck raised in relief, and the ornament between the legs appear on both coins. The winged ring so characteristic of ordinary Whaddon Chase staters is prominent on both the silver coin and the stater shown on Pl. XV, 11. The winged device may have given rise to the object above the horse on Mack 375 and the bird in Mack 435.

The obverse on the other hand is very different to that of the Whaddon Chase, but it has a lot in common with Mack 375, which has been attributed, without any real basis, and probably wrongly, to the Dobuni.

The fact that a recognizable head first appears on coins struck in Britain on the later coins of Tasciovanus and the resemblance of the reverse to the later Whaddon Chase coins suggest that this one was struck during the period between the two (c. 25 B.C.). Julius Caesar, in his *Gallic Wars*, Book V, chap. xiv, records that the inhabitants of Britain 'wear their hair long and have every part of their body shaved except the head and upper lip'. This coin, almost alone amongst British coins, bears out this description. The hair and moustache are long and the chin shaven. With the hair so clearly shown in curls, any beard meant to be depicted would have been engraved in the same way. The head is likely to be that of some British or Belgic deity following the Roman pattern, though it might be argued that it could be of a tribal king.

The whole style of the coin and its engraving betray that it is the work of a Celtic and not a Roman craftsman.

The miniature animal could be a horse or a deer, but its head is obscure. Compare the animal similarly placed in front of the head on Mack 375.

The coin itself is very clear, well struck, and centred. It is slightly cup-shaped and bears no trace of wear.

Uninscribed silver coin of the Sussex coast type

Obv. A degenerate laureate head to the right with a clearly defined wreath, crescents for the face, and pointed hair curls. Two annulets appear, one behind the crescents and the other in the curls. A wheel or annulet can be made out at the top by the wreath.

Rev. A cantering triple-tailed horse to the right with a wheel below and three annulets in the field. The central strand of the tail is beaded. The horse has a twisted mane and donkey-like ears.

Weight. 16.8 grains (Pl. XV. 7).

The relationship of this coin to the early uninscribed gold staters and quarter-staters found on the Sussex coast near Selsey is plain. The Apollo pattern, the horse and wheel, and the ornaments in the field resemble the many different types found mostly in this area, notably Mack 63 and 76. As it has no lettering or find-spot, it is not possible to attribute it with any certainty to one particular tribe, particularly since the origin of many of the gold coins found around the Channel is in doubt. The coin shown in Mack 439, found at Colchester, also has the Apollo pattern and horse, but has greater resemblance to the Whaddon Chase in both obverse and reverse. This latter coin is silver and classified as uncertain, but both would appear to be silver coins following the gold series.

Inscribed silver coin of Verica

Obv. The letters COM•F in the centre with crescents above and below and an annulet on each side of the crescents. The whole is in a beaded circle, though part of this is off the flan.

Rev. A boar running to the right above a line. Below the line the letters VIRI. The whole is enclosed in a beaded circle.

Weight. 19 grains (Pl. XV, 8).

Two similar coins are illustrated in Evans III. 4 and Mack 115. Both these coins are in the British Museum but are relatively poor specimens. On the one shown here the letters COM•F are clearly seen on the obverse as well as the dot between the M and the F. On the reverse the letters VIRI are perfectly clear but on the other two specimens are off the flan or so indeterminate as to be illegible. At first sight the animal depicted could be a wolf or a dog but the line of the mane above the body and the shape of the tail identify it conclusively as a boar. Evans suggested that it could be a lion, though he had only had one specimen from which to work. Although none of these

coins has the same reverse die, the obverse die of this one and that illustrated in Mack appear to be the same, though detail on the latter is poor.

This coin is of good silver, slightly cup-shaped, and well struck.

Uninscribed silver coin of the Coritani

Obv. A long-legged boar to the right with an elongated nose. The limbs are bifurcated with cloven hooves. A sun ornament above the boar and two rings behind it. A nearly vertical line above the boar, obscure ornaments in front, and below the body what appears to be a gryphon's head and neck.

Rev. A lifelike horse with a sun ornament above and three annulets in the field. A flaw in the die appears in front of the horse's chest.

Weight. 22 grains (Pl. XV, 9).

This coin corresponds to the one engraved in Evans XXIII. 11, from a coin in the British Museum on which the detail is not very clear. Coins similar to the one shown here have been found at Guisborough in Yorkshire, Scunthorpe in Lincolnshire, Castor near Peterborough, and Bygrave in Hertfordshire. The area over which they have been found indicates that they were struck by the Icenii or the Coritani, probably the latter.

The coin is finely engraved with a great deal of detail and is less crude than other types with the horse-and-boar pattern. The fact that later versions of the theme tend to deteriorate in design points to this coin as being one of the earliest and likely to be a prototype of the whole series of silver coins with boar on the obverse and horse on the reverse, struck in east and north-east Britain towards the end of the period of British coinage. This motive is basically Celtic rather than Roman. The object below the boar is hard to place. A gryphon's head has been suggested, but this would be more in keeping with Roman than Celtic designs. The nearly vertical line is more likely to be a tree than a spear.

The coin is of better silver than that of other coins of this area and is only slightly cup-shaped.

I am indebted to Mr. Derek Allen for his invaluable advice in preparing these notes, to Mr. Pollard of the Fitzwilliam Museum for his assistance and permission in showing the coin of the Sussex Coast type and to Mrs. Martin and the staff of the British Museum for their help.