THREE NOTES ON ANCIENT BRITISH COINS

By D. F. ALLEN

SILVER MINIMS AGAIN

1. Mr. John Collis’ excavations at Owslebury, Hampshire, have, for the third year running, produced a silver minim. I published the first in BNJ XXXIV (1965) 4–5; it was a coin of Tincommius, of a type previously known from only one other specimen, which had been misread. I published the second in BNJ XXXVI (1967) 9; it was a new type of Verica. I now publish the third, again a new type of Verica, his fifth. The description is as follows:—

Obverse. viri in beaded circle. (The die is cracked through the letters and the mark above the legend may be an extension of the flaw).
Reverse. Boar charging right. Fibula above, circle below.
Weight. 0.374 grams or 5.771 grains.

The coin corresponds with Verica’s well-known silver type of the normal denomination, Mack 115, which also has a boar to right on the reverse.

The most interesting feature is the fibula above the boar’s back. The pin and the spring are clearly shown, as is the bent back, but the catch is off the coin. There is a numismatic parallel for a fibula of this kind, as an accompanying ornament, on the gold staters of Criciru of the Suessiones, de la Tour XXXII 7941, or Blanchet, Traité des Monnaies Gauloises, fig. 373.

2. My account of the pre-Roman silver minims of Britain in BNJ XXXIV (1965) 4–7 included a brief description of the coin found at East Harting, Sussex, in 1938, Mack 316. Shortly after its discovery by Mr. W. A. Gilmour, this coin was broken in postage and one part was lost. I do not know the fate of the remainder. Before the accident a cast had been taken and the electrotype now kept at the British Museum was made later for record from that cast. Recently, in going through old papers, I came across a drawing of the coin which
was made by Mr. C. O. Waterhouse before these events. Since it shows details which are not at all clear from the electrotype, as reproduced, it is worth while to put Mr. Waterhouse’s drawing on record, reduced to the size of the original. [Fig. 2.]

3. The same account in *BNJ* failed to take note of another silver minim recorded from a nearby provenance, Little Harting, also, I believe, found by Mr. W. A. Gilmour. It was shown to me by Mr. A. H. F. Baldwin in June 1947, in circumstances which precluded taking a cast or photograph. I did, however, make a quick ink sketch, which I now reproduce reduced. The coin was originally 9 mm. in diameter. The weight was 3½ grains, say 0·21 grams. The finding of the coin is mentioned in *PPS* XXIV (1958) 63 and I have referred to this in my *Origins* paper, p. 269. I do not think the coin has ever been reproduced, nor do I know where it now is. [Fig. 3].

If my drawing may be believed, the obverse has a remarkable anticipation of a mediaeval sterling. The reverse has what I took to be a trident; but I noted at the time that it could be seen as a monogram including E, conceivably YE. The coin obviously belongs to the same class as the minims of Verica, of which five types are now on record; but I would not like, without seeing the coin again, to claim it as a sixth Verica type. It may have some resemblance to the presumably uninscribed coin, Mack 120, which also has a cross pattern on the obverse; the reverse, however, looks entirely different.

**A BRITISH SILVER COIN IN COPENHAGEN?**

The coin illustrated [Fig. 4] may be of some interest to readers of the *BNJ*. It has for many years been exhibited in the Royal Danish Cabinet at Copenhagen amongst Galli Incerti. In the absence of a provenance or other specimens any view must be subjective, but I think it is probably a British silver coin of an unpublished type. So many British silver coins of the Celtic period are known from only a single specimen that it would be in good company.

The following is a description:—

**Obverse.** Gryphon prancing to left, with erect tail, in double circle of leaves arranged in pairs.

**Reverse.** Pegasus prancing left, the hind legs standing on a panel containing a legend, which is not readable.

**Weight.** 0·925 grams, or 14·3 grains.

The shape, metal and style of the coin are very close to what one would expect on a coin of Tasciovanus. A coin of his, Mack 159, which has both a gryphon and a pegasus, as well as a double circle, is an obvious and close parallel. The weight, perhaps a fraction light, is near enough to the normal in Britain to be acceptable. The only puzzle is the legend.

Legends in panels are fairly common on British coins, commoner than on the continent, and they are normally legible. Although the engraving of the Copenhagen coin is neat and clear, I can make no sense of the letters. The symbol on the left appears to be a monogram of V with the tail of a reversed Z; it is followed on the right by two cs. It cannot be read either way to make an intelligible name.

The most likely explanation is that the coin is composed of types copied from two Roman denarii. The gryphon on the obverse is taken from Sydenham 773, L. Papius, 78–75 BC; the pegasus on the reverse, including the panel, is taken from Sydenham 691–2, Q. Titius, 88 BC.
Both are reversed. The double circle on the obverse may possibly be suggested by serration. If so, we are perhaps wrong in trying to make sense of a blundered reproduction of Q. Titius' name in a panel. The dates of the denarii copied confirm that the coin is likely to belong to the second half of the first century BC.

A QUARTER STATER FROM WORCESTER

A quarter stater, no. 68, is illustrated by Commander R. P. Mack amongst the types from Selsey in his *Coinage of Ancient Britain*. It is placed there for the very good reason that two examples have been recorded from Selsey itself, and hitherto no other find-spots of gold specimens have been on record. Nevertheless, there have been two reasons for thinking that the coins may well have been Dobunnic. The first is that they are of the same red gold and distinctive fabric as regular Dobunnic staters. The second is that the only inscribed Dobunnic quarter stater, so far known from a single example, Mack 394, is obviously based on Mack 68. There has, moreover, been a record of a plated specimen with traces of an obverse type, absent on the Selsey specimens, from Mildenhall, *Cunetio*, Wiltshire, marginally a Dobunnic site.

It is, therefore, gratifying that a specimen of Mack 68, with clear traces of the obverse pattern, should now have been found at a good Dobunnic site, namely Worcester. (Fig. 5). The coin was dug up in 1967 at 33 Kingston Avenue, Bilford Road, (SO/85645692). It weighs 1.243 grams. It has been acquired by the Worcester City Museum. I think we may now be confident that Mack 68 should be described as a Dobunnic type.

It is of interest to record, in this context, that in the sale at Sotheby's on 26th June, 1968, of the cabinet of Prince de Ligne, lot 61 was another example of Mack 68, but with a good obverse type. It weighed 1.16 grams. This was presumably in the nature of a prototype of Mack 68, as we know it from a fair number of examples. It was not of the same red gold, and it would not be surprising if lot 61 were the coin which should be grouped with the Selsey quarter staters in the place where Mack 68 has hitherto stood. Lot 61 is well illustrated in the catalogue.