CARAUSIUS ET FRATRES SUI

N. SHIEL

Those antoniniani struck by Carausius which bear the conjoined busts of himself, Maximian, and Diocletian together with the obverse legend CARAVSIVS ET FRATRES SVI have, since Stukeley's day,¹ been rightly regarded as among the most original of the usurpers' many imaginative issues. Accounts subsequent to the Medallie History mention other specimens, several of which can no longer be traced or at least separately identified.² By the time of his treatment of the subject for RIC³ Webb knew of at least ten specimens, although he only describes two varieties, both of which have Pax reverses. Pflaum⁴ provides a much more recent catalogue of these and related issues and is able to include the Moneta reverse of the Springhead coin⁵ with the comment, 'On peut prédire sans crainte de se tromper que cette série, quelle que rare qu'elle fût, se composait d'un nombre de frappes plus considérable . . .' He has indeed been proved correct in this prediction by the appearance of several new reverses in recent years, although his further suggestion that such pieces were probably also struck in gold awaits confirmation. The recently discovered specimens bring the total number of Fratres coins that I have been able to trace with certainty to seventeen.

THE COINS

There are two obverse types:

A. CARAVSIVS ET FRATRES SVI
   Three busts left, conjoined radiate and cuirassed, with that of Carausius furthest away.
B. As last but each bust with raised right hand.

1. Obv. A   REV. COMES AVGGG S/P C Victory advancing right, wreath in right hand, long palm over left shoulder.
   RIC—wt. 3.86 g., diam. 21 mm., d.a. † Found Hacheston, Suffolk, 1973. Cf. forthcoming excavation report.

¹ W. Stukeley, The Medallie History of Carausius, London, 2 vols., 1757, 1759. Vol. 1, pp. 105-6 and pl. VII, no. 2. His comment that 'Charles Gray . . . one of the curators of the British Museum . . . picked it up out of a vast heap of Roman coins' from Canonium in Essex, seems to be the earliest record of such a piece.

² J. Eckhel, Doctrina Nummorum Veterum, viii. 46, describes a specimen then in a Genoese collection on which the bust of Carausius is radiate, that of Diocletian laureate, and that of Maximian in a lion's skin. Stevenson also alludes to this (Dictionary of Roman Coins (London, 1889) p. 181) giving as its first publication a letter in the Giornali de Letterati (Pisa, 1782), xiv. 205. He also mentions (p. 182) a specimen in the collection of the Hon. R. C. Neville. This must be the coin first published in the Antiquaries Journal, vi (1849), 114-23, 'Memoir on Remains of the Anglo-Roman Age at Weycock, in the parish of Laurence Waltham, Berkshire, and in the excavations there made in 1847 by the Hon. Richard C. Neville'. On pp. 119-20 he gives a description of an RIC 1 Fratres coin of obverse type A, presented to him by a local clergyman as a local find. P. H. Webb, NC 1907, 'The Reign and Coinage of Carausius' on p. 81 states one specimen to be in the possession of M. Naville, another 'recently found at Marlborough' in that of J. W. Brooke, and others in private collections. Of these it has proved impossible to discover any trace of the Genoese specimen or to establish with certainty the separate identity and present whereabouts of the other pieces.

³ Roman Imperial Coinage, vol. v, pt. 2, p. 441.


2. Obv. B  Rev. As last but Victory advancing left.
   *RIC*—wt. 4·23 g., diam. 22 mm., d.a. ↓
   Found *East Anglia*.
   Obv. die-links 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

3. Obv. B  Rev. Moneta AVGGG *s/p* C
   Moneta standing left with scales and cornucopae.
   *RIC*—wt. 4·67 g., diam. 23 × 21 mm., d.a. ↓
   Found *Springhead*, Kent.
   Obv. die-links 2, 4, 5, 6, 7.  Rev. die-link 4.

   *RIC*—wt. 3·54 g., diam. 21 mm., d.a. ↑
   Found Hampshire.
   *Glendinings* 21/11/69, lot 333, £260; *Num. Fine Arts* 25/3/77, lot 690, $2,000.
   Obv. die-links 2, 3, 5, 6, 7.  Rev. die-link 3.

5. Obv. B  Rev. Pax AVGGG *s/p* C
   Pax standing left with olive branch and vertical sceptre.
   *RIC* 1—wt. 2·26 g., diam. 20 mm., d.a. ↓
   Ashmolean (ex Evans)

   *RIC* 1—wt. 5·05 g., diam. 23 mm.
   Obv. die-links 2, 3, 4, 5, 7.
   *Mallinson* 
   Cf. *T.I.N.C.*, London, 1938, pp. 372–3, and pl. XXIII, from which I have taken the weight. I have, unfortunately, been unable to see the coin itself.

   *RIC* 1—wt. 3·73 g., diam. 23 mm., d.a. ↓
   Obv. die-links 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
   *B.N.*
   Cf. Webb, 1907, pl. II, no. 12; *Pflaum*, p. 62.

   *RIC* 1—whereabouts unknown, d.a. ↓, pierced.
   *Christies* 2/7/68, lot 209, £22, ex Oman

   *RIC* 1—wt. 3·55 g., diam. 23 × 21 mm., d.a. ↓
   Obv. die-link 16

    *RIC* 1—wt. 4·22 g., diam. 22 mm., d.a. ↓
    BM purchased at the Thomas Sale, lot 647, £22; cf *Monumenta Historica Britannica*, 1948, pl. X, no. 1; S. Stevenson, *A Dictionary of Roman Coins* (London, 1889), p. 181 (where nos. 1 and 2 are the same coin); Webb, 1907, pl. II, no. 11.

    *RIC* 1—wt. 4·12 g., diam.—d.a. ↓
    Found *Alcester*, War.

    *RIC* 1—wt. 2·85 g., diam. 21 mm., d.a. ↓
13. **Obv. A**  
   **Rev.** As last.  
   *RIC* 1 — wt. 3·88 g., diam. 21 mm., d.a. ↓  
   Found *Brinkworth*, Wilts.  

14. **Obv. A**  
   **Rev.** As last.  
   *RIC* 1 — wt. 3·17 g., diam. 22 mm., d.a. ↓  

15. **Obv. AVGGG C VA DI [ ]**  
   **Rev.** *PAX AVGGG S/P C*  
   Pax standing left with olive branch and vertical sceptre.  
   *RIC* 2 (corrected) — wt. 3·21 g., diam. 20 mm., d.a. ↓  
   Found *Bourton on the Water*, Glos.  

16. **Obv. A**  
   **Rev.** *VICTORIA AVGGG S/P C*  
   Victory advancing right, wreath in right hand; long palm over left shoulder.  
   *RIC* — wt. 3·35 g., diam. 21 mm., d.a. ↓  
   Obv. die-link 9.  

17. **Obv. A**  
   **Rev.** *VIRTVS AVGGG S/P C MLXXI*  
   Carausius, Maximian, and Diocletian standing left, each with globe and baton.  
   *RIC* — wt. 3·06 g., diam. 21 mm., d.a. ↓, pierced.  

These Fratres coins are clearly a special part of the issue of antoniniani on which Carausius wished to associate himself specifically with Diocletian and Maximian. The majority of the surviving specimens of this issue are of the sort on which this propaganda is least obvious, simply consisting of the triple G termination of the reverse legend. Antoniniani and aurei were also struck bearing the portraits of Maximian and Diocletian, which have survived in much smaller numbers. No doubt this is a reflection of the respective size of original issues, but, in the event of a reaction against the failure of such propaganda, the most striking examples of it would have been the first to have been withdrawn or suppressed. The standard of workmanship evident in the Fratres coins is considerable as may be seen from the well-preserved specimens which show considerable detail and distinctly recognizable portraits. This, together with the paucity of surviving specimens and frequency of obverse die-links, suggests that these coins formed a special short-lived issue produced, perhaps, for distribution to selected recipients. This would have made any subsequent attempt at recall or suppression easier.

Virtually all the correctly documented examples of the Auggg coinage as a whole have either *S/P C* or *S/P C MLXXI* as sequence mark. The only Fratres coin not from the C mint would appear to be an exception with only *I MLXXI* (no. 16) but such is the nature of its reverse type that there is no room left for any letters in the field. Indeed it seems unlikely that the issue as a whole lasted for a very long time and it is not numerous enough to square with having been struck from 290 to 292 as has been suggested. Die-links are

---

6 *Webb*, op. cit., p. 81, is misleading here with, 'It is doubtful if any two of them are from the same die'.  
7 *e.g. RIC* v. 2, p. 442; *Pflaum*, p. 56.
sufficiently frequent to support this. The need to bring the issue as far forward in the usurpation as 290 has been felt because it has been assumed that its propaganda was born directly of the peace Carausius is supposed to have made with the central emperors after the unsuccessful attempt to remove him in 289. 'He may well have doubted an honest intention to keep it (i.e. the peace) on the part of Diocletian and Maximian but he took care that the fact of its conclusion should be widely publicised.'

In publishing the Fratres coin from Springhead (no. 3) Carson suggests a date in the ‘latter part of 292 when Carausius . . . found his hold on the channel coast of North Gaul coming under threat’. He further says, ‘The present coin adds to the evidence which suggests that Carausius, faced with this threat, was anxious for a détente with Diocletian and Maximian.’ It seems unlikely that Carausius’ propaganda at this time was directed towards the central empire any more than that his legionary coins had been struck earlier to persuade imperial forces to defect to his cause. In both cases the propaganda was aimed at those within, rather than without, his sphere of influence. He clearly wished to suggest that he was on the best of terms with the so-called Fratres and may even have believed for a while that he was, until the elevation of Constantius early in 293 brought home the truth to all. That act may have been deliberately delayed to prolong Carausius’ hopes for integration into the imperial hierarchy, until such time as the newly created Caesar could move directly against him. Diocletian and Maximian did not reciprocate with any coins issued in Carausius’ name nor did they publicize their fraternity in any way.

The Auggg issues do not occur at all in what is demonstrably Carausius’ last issue with the \( \frac{S/P}{ML} \) mark. This is by no means an extensive issue and it might be presumed to have begun when Constantius became a Caesar and full hostility was resumed against Carausius. After that all pretensions of fraternity would have been ridiculous, but it remains possible that this issue had been phased out earlier and followed by coins with the \( \frac{S/P}{MLXXI} \) mark in Carausius’ name alone. Carson suggests this because of the pattern of marks for the C mint where the \( \frac{S/P}{C} \) mark is common to the Auggg issues, Carausius’ last issue in his own name alone, and the first issue of Allectus. There is not an exact parallelism between the changes of marks at these two mints, and so it is equally possible that Carausius’ \( \frac{S/P}{MLXXI} \) coins in his own name came first followed by the Auggg coins at which time the C mint changed its mark to \( \frac{S/P}{C} \) for its complementary issues. This would allow Constantius’ actions not only to be the reason for the cessation of the fraternal issues but also of their XXI value mark from the exergue of the London pieces. That this mark was not on the C coins meant no such change was necessary and the recently introduced \( \frac{S/P}{C} \) mark could carry on for a full term of use.

On none of the specimens that I have seen has any of the Fratres anything that is clearly not a radiate crown as head-dress. Pflaum suggests that some of the busts of Carausius and Allectus, pp. 57–65, in Minis, Dies and Currency, ed. R. A. G. Carson (London, 1971), esp. p. 61.
are laureate. Webb\textsuperscript{12} long ago refuted the suggestion of Stevenson\textsuperscript{13} and others that Carausius had deliberately given himself a radiate crown while leaving his colleagues bareheaded as a slight. It would appear that on all specimens in sufficiently good condition some trace of a radiate crown may be seen on all three heads, as would be expected in the case of alleged imperial equals. The only obverse which is unusual is that of no. 15 where the portraits are facing right with Carausius uppermost, and the legend appears to leave no room for a mention of the three Augusti but appears to give only Diocletian's name in full. The reverses on these coins are very ordinary types, dominated as ever by Pax. Only that of no. 17 matches the originality of the obverse. It may be that subsequent discoveries will show that other reverses which were used in the Auggg issue as a whole were also used with Fratres obverses.

The pattern of distribution of the provenanced specimens covers much of Southern Britain with two areas of concentration, East Anglia and the central south. Both of these are fruitful sources of Carausian coins in general. What is, perhaps, surprising is that none of the Fratres coins have come from military sites or from London itself. Richborough, by far the most productive source of Carausian coins, has yielded examples of other rarities such as denarii or BRI\textsuperscript{14} coins, but not a single Fratres piece. None were found in the enormous Blackmoor hoard,\textsuperscript{15} although four have provenances quite near to where that hoard was discovered. This further supports the view that these coins never entered normal circulation, despite the worn condition of some of the survivors. It may have been that these were donative pieces for favoured recipients which soon fell from favour as circumstances changed, and that some few saw a subsequent circulation as souvenirs rather than as money. The Fratres coins could represent the culmination of the Auggg issue with their production having been commenced at the C mint to which new obverse dies were sent for use in conjunction with current $S/p\_C$ reverses. All but one of the seventeen extant coins are of such a type, yet that one is the most original, which could suggest a London production stopping almost as soon as it had begun when things went wrong in Gaul. Thus fewer London pieces would have been issued and those more easily recalled than from the C mint. Seventeen coins is too small a body of evidence from which to be too definite and this suggested schema remains a possibility for newly discovered specimens to support or disprove.

\textsuperscript{12} Webb, op. cit., pp. 82–3.
\textsuperscript{13} Stevenson, loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{15} For details and bibliography see N. Shiel, The Episode of Carausius and Allectus, British Archaeological Reports, 40 (1977), 51.