Hoard of Roman Coins in the Reading Museum and Art Gallery

By George C. Boon

In addition to the several hoards from Silchester forming part of the Silchester loan collection, eight hoards of Roman coins are preserved in Reading Museum. The main purpose of this note is to supply details of hoards VI-VIII (Woodcote; and the two from Bob’s Mount, Reading) but for the sake of completeness the others are also briefly described below.

Hoard I (Reading Museum, 74:52)

Archaeologia, LXXI (1921), 264; V.C.H. Oxon., 1 (1939), 327.

This hoard comprises 34 Æ coins—1 sesterius, 9 dupondii, and 24 asses—dredged from the Thames at Whitchurch Weir Pool in June 1911, when operations were being carried out in 8 feet of water 20 feet from the Berkshire bank. Whitchurch Weir Pool is about 6 miles upstream of Reading. In common with the large and varied collection of antiquities obtained from the river in subsequent years, the hoard has been deposited on loan in the Reading Museum by the Thames Conservancy Board. Most of the coins have been considerably eroded by the action of the water, and their state of wear is extremely difficult to assess with certainty. A recent re-examination of the hoard yielded the following results, which differ slightly from the description given in the Victoria County History.

1, 2: Claudius I
3: Antonia
4: Galba?
5: Vespasian
6: Vespasian or Titus
7-10: Domitian

asses, Minerva type, Grade III copies.
dupondius.
as.
as, RIC 746† or similar.
dupondius.
as, COS V; as, COS XII; as, cf. RIC 333; dupondius, rather doubtful.
sesterius, dupondius, 4 asses.
dupondius.

11-16: Hadrian
17: Sabina?
18-19: Antoninus Pius
20: Faustina II
21-22: M. Aurelius
23-34: Illegible

asses, RIC 934.
dupondius.
as, TR P VIII; as, COS III.
dupondii (3), asses (9), presumably of the same period as the foregoing.

RIC=H. Mattingly, E. A. Sydenham and others, Roman Imperial Coinage (London, 1923 ff.).
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HOARD II (READING MUSEUM, 5:54)

H. J. E. Peake, Archaeology of Berkshire (1931), 104; V.C.H. Oxon., i (1939), 326.

Hoard (?) or part of a hoard (?) consisting of 5 Æ coins (1 dupondius, 4 asses) dredged from the Thames at Goring at an unspecified date probably late in the last century. Accompanying the coins were two Roman brooches and some pottery. A much-corroded halfpenny of George II has long been associated with the Roman coins. Although beyond doubt a river find this halfpenny does not appear to have been part of the original acquisition since an old label survives bearing the words ‘Five Roman coins . . .’ with ‘Five’ crossed out and ‘Six’ substituted in manuscript.

The Roman coins are in a condition parallel with that of the coins in hoard I. Only one is fully legible, an as of Vespasian, RIC 746. Another seems (ex capite) to be of Domitian. The dupondius and the two other asses are quite illegible. The brooches are as Collingwood’s groups K and R (ii), Flavian and early second-century respectively. The pottery is not available for examination.

In connexion with this group it may be mentioned that a hoard of coins, stated in V. C. H. Berks., i (1906), 214, to have been found in the river at Goring, was not in fact found in the river but at some distance from its right bank: on the 1883 edition of the 6-inch O.S. map, the record of the discovery runs, as it were, from the actual find-spot, marked with a cross, right across the river. This misleading detail has been rectified in later editions.

HOARD III (READING MUSEUM, $424.45)

Hitherto unpublished.

Part of a hoard dredged from the Thames immediately below Maple-durham lock in August 1910. The original quantity recovered was said to have been about a pint in volume. The Museum possesses only four coins from this hoard, forming part of the bequest of the prominent local antiquary, G. W. Smith. Again, the coins are in the characteristically eroded state of specimens from this reach of the Thames. There are dupondii of Trajan and Hadrian (?) and two asses, one being a copy of Minerva type (Claudius I) and the other of Hadrian, probably RIC 664.

HOARD IV (READING MUSEUM, 23:33)

Hitherto unpublished.

The following five sesterii were found in 1926, on the Berkshire side of Caversham Bridge, Reading, which was then undergoing reconstruction. The coins were bought by the Museum in 1933. Not improbably they formed part of a hoard. W. A. Seaby, when cataloguing this purchase, recorded a
doubt as to whether all had come from the same spot; but the writer can see no reason for doubting the attribution in the absence of any positive indication of different proveniences.

1, 2: Tiberius RIC 42, TR POT XXXVI and XXXIIIX. Much worn; obv. on second specimen defaced.
3: Nero Defaced.
4, 5: Hadrian RIC 631 ff. and RIC 777, the latter slightly worn.

HOARD V (READING MUSEUM, 76:46)

_Berks. Archaeol. Journ.,_ xliii (1939), 133.

A hoard of 16 _antoniniani_ (Postumus, with a single Victorinus) from an area about two or three feet square within a Roman-British building at Little Wellington Wood, near _Watchfield, Shrivenham_ : found in 1903. This hoard has already been published in full (see above) and it merely remains to be noted that the coins were presented to Reading Museum in July 1946, by H. de S. Shortt, Curator of the Salisbury, S. Wilts. and Blackmore Museum, Salisbury. The coins of Postumus vary from unworn to slightly worn; that of Victorinus is slightly worn. The coins are rather inferior, as a whole, to those of Postumus in hoard VI.

The other coins mentioned in the paper quoted, found in or near the same building but not associated with the hoard, were also presented to Reading Museum at the same time.

HOARD VI (READING MUSEUM, 53:39)

Hitherto unpublished.

This hoard of 1 _denarius_ and 77 _antoniniani_ ranging from Julia Soaemias to Postumus, was found in June 1939 when the foundations of a bungalow were being dug at _Woodcote_ (Oxon.), near Reading. The site of discovery was some 500 feet N.W. of Newbarn Farm. The coins were in a pot lying at a depth of about 2 feet. The pot was smashed, and only seven fragments of it were saved. The hoard was bought by the Museum from the finder and land-owner, Mr. L. A. Smith, of Newbarn Farm, for 5. 

At the time of finding, the total number of coins was given in the local newspapers as 76, not 78. All the coins were cleaned at Reading Museum, and were found to exhibit little or no wear; only one, indeed, could be considered more than slightly worn. Obviously these are picked specimens from the currency, and their excellent condition leads one to suppose that they formed the savings of some years.

1: Julia Soaemias RIC 243.
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2-9: Gordian III
10-14: Philip I
15-17: Philip II
18-21: Otacilia Severa
22-28: Traianus Decius
29: Herennius Etruscus
30: Hostilianus
31: Trebonianus Gallus
32-34: Volusianus
35-45: Valerian
46-55: Gallienus (J. R.)
56-57: Valerian II
58-60: Salonina (J. R.)
61-78: Postumus

Hoard of about 50 siliquae, as far as the original number could be ascertained, from a disused gravel-pit between Milman- and Swainstone-road, Whitley, Reading—Bob’s Mount in old Reading topography, a watershed between the Kennet and the Loddon. The discovery took place in the middle of February 1895 when some boys were playing on the ice in the pit. The pot had been brought down by a fall of gravel at the side of the pit; one of the boys kicked the unusual looking object, broke it, and so discovered the coins. Only 11 of them, 7 damaged, could be purchased by the Museum; sixpence each was paid. The fragments of the pot were also acquired (see T. May, The Pottery Found at Silchester (1916), pl. ixi, 102). The 11 available coins range from Julian II to Arcadius; the latest is unworn, the earliest and some of the others slightly worn to worn.

Julian II.

Obv. D N IVLIAVS P F AVG. Bust pearl-diademed R., draped and cuirassed.
Rev. VOTIS MVLTIS X in four lines within a wreath with central jewel.
Mint: PCO (Arles).
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2. *Obv.*: D N FL CL IVLI-ANVS PF AVG. Bust as above, but bearded.

*Rev.*: VOT X MVL T XX in wreath as above. The central jewel bears an eagle to R., looking backward.

*Mint*: TCONST (Arles)

3. As above; inferior workmanship. ]CONST

Valentinian I 4: RIC Rome 11a, RP (fragment).

Valens 5, 6: RIC Trier 27c, TRPS.

Gratian 7: RIC Trier 45c (by bust), TRP[108

8: RIC Trier 46b, TRPS

Valentinian II 9: RIC Trier 95a, TRPS (R²)

Magnus Maximus 10: RIC Trier 84b, TRP[S

Arcadius 11: RIC Trier 106b. This is the latest coin, of A.D. 392-5.

HOARD VIII (READING MUSEUM, 16:48)


A second hoard of coins from Bob's Mount, found on 11 December 1895. About 120 coins were said to have been present; of these, one solidus and 49 siliquae were purchased by Reading Museum for 35s. 6d. on two separate occasions. The coins range from Constantius II to Honorius, and like the contents of hoard VII, vary from unworn or virtually so to slightly worn. The colour-coated, indented beaker which had contained the hoard is also in the Museum (see T. May, *The Pottery found at Silchester* (1916), pl. liii).

The discovery (according to the earliest source, which is the *Journal of Reading Museum*) took place during the digging of house foundations in Milman Road; a site quite near that of hoard VII. Stevens, *loc. cit.*, appears to have been misled by the eponymic character of the next turning, Swainstone Road, for numerous specimens from the hoard came into the possession of Mr. Swain, the land-owner and builder. Some of Mr. Swain’s specimens were acquired for the Museum (see above). There is no authority for the statement that this hoard, like hoard VII, was found in a gravel pit; the story no doubt owes its origin to the fact that both hoards were found in the same year, obviously not far from each other.

As regards the number of siliquae that are not in the Museum the *Journal* is far from clear; so much so, that it is quite uncertain how the original or postulated total was reached. The minimum number of siliquae apparently remaining in the hands of Mr. Swain after having sold some specimens to the Museum is 47:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Num.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julian</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valens</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratian</td>
<td>7</td>
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Theodosius 6
Maximus 15
Arcadius 5

Dr. Stevens evidently examined these coins, but no details of them are recorded. A Mr. Oliver and Mr. Swain, Jr., appear to have had some of the others. There is no indication of there ever having been more than the solitary solidus.

It is said that some of the coins in the possession of Mr. Swain eventually were given to the late G. W. Smith in 1924. The Smith collection, now in the Museum, contains no Roman gold or silver of the period concerned, so this tradition must be discounted; G. W. Smith is not known ever to have disposed of any of his local treasures. What is probably a stray from this or the preceding hoard is given at the end of the following list.

Constantius II. 1-2: Obv.: D N CONSTANT-TIVS P F AVG. Bust pearl-diademed R., draped and cuirassed.
Rev.: VOTIS XXX MVLTIS XXXX in four lines within a wreath with central jewel.
Mints: PCON SCON (Arles)

Julian II.
3-4: As above, but mint: LVG (Lyons)
5: Obv. D N IVLIAN-VS P F AVG. Bust as (1) above.
Rev. VOTIS V MVLTIS X in four lines within a wreath with a central jewel.
Mint: TCON (Arles). Coarse work.
6-7: Obv. FL CL IVLIANVS P P AVG. Bust as above; the diadem has the usual central jewel partly shown, and on the right of this, another.
Rev. As above, but a dot inside the central jewel of the wreath.
Mint: LVG (Lyons).
8: Obv. D N CL IVLI-ANVS AVG. Bust as (1) above.
Rev. As (5).
Mint: TR (Trier).
9: Obv. D N FL CL IVLI-ANVS. Bust as (1) but bearded.
Rev. VOT X MVLT XX in four lines within a wreath with central jewel bearing an eagle to R., looking backward.
Mint: PCONST (Arles).
10: As above, but TCONST, and the eagle appears to have both wings stretched out above its head, instead of one along its back, and one indicated by a vertical line in front of the body.
11: As above, but IVLIA-NVS. Also TCONST. Dot in jewel instead of an eagle. These signs are no doubt différents monétaires.
Valentinian I 12 : RIC Rome 11a, RP 13-17 : RIC Trier 27d, TRPS.

Valens 18 : Antioch, cf. RIC 34d, •ANH (sic). It appears that the N of the mint-mark has been struck over some pre-existing letter, for there are projections on either side of it.

19 : RIC Aquileia 15a, AQPS.
20 : RIC Rome 10c, RB 21 : RIC Trier 27b or 45a (latter ?)

Gratian 22 : RIC Aquileia 28a 23 : RIC Rome 35a, R*ε 24-26 : RIC Trier 27c ; 55b (R°) ; 58a, TRPS

Valentinian II 27 : RIC Trier 49c (solidus) * 28-29 : RIC Aquileia 15d, AQPS ; 27a

Theodosius I 30 : RIC Rome 35b but R*T 31-32 : RIC Trier 43 ; 94a.

Magnus Maximus 33-34 : RIC Rome 35c, R*P (same obv. dies) 35 : RIC Siscia 24b 36-37 : RIC Trier 55a ; 94b

Flavius Victor 42 : RIC Trier 84d, TRPS (R°)

Arcadius 43-44 : RIC Trier 106b, c 45 : RIC Milan 32b (R°)

Eugeniuss 46 : RIC Lyons 46 (R) 47-48 : RIC Trier 106d

Honorius 49 : RIC Milan 26 50 : cf. RIC Milan 32, but obv. 5A (=Cohen° 59)°

The latest coins from this hoard are nos. 43, 44, 47, 48, struck A.D. 392-395, shortly after which date hoard VIII, like hoard VII, must have been buried.

Note

The following siliqua 'found in Reading' is regarded as having come from one or other Bob's Mount hoard: Gratian. RIC Trier 27f, TRPS.

*I am indebted to Miss Anne S. Robertson for providing me with this reference, and for reading through the remarks and descriptions.