The Waternewton Hoard

by Catherine Johns and Robert Carson

On 24th February 1974 a most interesting Roman find of the mid fourth century was made in a field some 200 metres from the A1 road at Waternewton. A pottery bowl, covered by a lid, was found to contain a bronze bowl (used as a liner), two pieces of folded silver plate, remains of a linen-lined leather purse, and 30 Roman gold coins.

The pottery bowl (rim diameter 15.8cm) is burnished on the exterior and has a dark grey to black surface. The upper part of the body is decorated by double lines in zig-zag pattern, enclosing in each triangle three impressed roundels. The style has been called 'Romano-Saxon'. The 'Castor box' lid (diameter 21.7cm) is a typical Nene Valley product.

The bronze bowl (diameter 13.5cm, height 9cm) is of thin sheet bronze and consists of an upper band riveted to a lower part, formed from one piece of metal. Two handles were found inside it, loose; but their original points of attachment are marked by patches of solder. The two pieces of folded silver plate weigh respectively 642gm and 321gm. The linen purse-lining is in plain weave.

The finding of a hoard of Roman gold coins in Britain is rare. Previously only four such hoards with secure documentation were on record, and none from the mid fourth century, the date of this find. Although there are a few instances of silver coins hoarded with other silver objects, this is the first recorded find of gold coins hoarded with other precious metal objects. The 30 gold coins, all of the *solidus* denomination, the new gold unit introduced by Constantine I in A.D.312, are of Constantine I and his sons, and represent issues between A.D.330 and 350.

The coins fall into three chronological groups. The first group, four coins, was issued in the last years of the reign of Constantine I as Augustus and his three sons, Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans as Caesars up to A.D.337. The earliest coin, showing a little more wear than the others, is of Constantius II as Caesar, issued by the mint of Thessalonica in A.D. 330-1. Also in this group is the coin of Constantine I from the mint of Nicomedia in A.D.335 and two *solidi* of Constans Caesar of about the same date from the Trier mint. The second group, only three coins, dates to A.D.337-340 when the three sons of Constantine I divided the empire between them and reigned as joint Augusti. The single coin of the eldest, Constantine II, who controlled the western provinces, was struck at Trier. The one *solidus* of Constans, whose domain included Italy and the Balkans, was struck at Siscia. Although the third brother, Constantius II, had charge of the eastern provinces, his only coin in this group was issued at Aquileia in North Italy.

The bulk of the coins, 22 in number, falls in the third period between A.D.340, when the death of Constantine II left his brother Constantius II and Constans to share the empire, and A.D.350, when the revolt of Magnentius in the West removed Constans. The find contained no less than 14 *solidi* of Constans, five issued by the mint of Trier, three from Aquileia, five from Siscia, and one from Thessalonica. Of the eight coins of Constantius II of this period only the one from Constantinople is from a mint in his own part of the empire. The balance is made up of a *solidus* from each of the mints of Thessalonica, Siscia and Aquileia, and four from Trier. The final piece, making up the total of 30, is a contemporary forgery of a *solidus* of Constans from the mint of Trier. The coin is up to standard so far as weight is concerned, but is betrayed as a copy by the style of the obverse portrait and a small blunder in the inscription on the reverse.

The absence of any coins of Magnentius, who usurped power in the West in January A.D.350, makes it fairly certain that the hoard was closed in that year, and presumably concealed then or shortly afterwards. There is no tradition of an unusual disturbance in the area at this date which might have occasioned the concealment of the hoard, and the explanation must lie in local or personal circumstances which we cannot readily discover.

The Coin List

A.D. 330-337

1. Constantine I, *RIC* vii, Nicomedia 179.
2. Constantius II, cf. *RIC* vii, Thessalonica 176.
3. Constans, *RIC* vii, Trier 575.
4. Constans, *RIC* vii, Trier 576.

Fig 3 The Waternewton hoard

A.D. 337-340

5. Constantine II, C.195, TR
6. Constantius II, C.63, SMAQ.
7. Constans, cf. C.147, *rev.* VICTORIA DN CONSTANTIS AVG, SIS*

A.D. 340-350

8. Constantius II, cf. C.67, *rev.* FELICITAS REIPVBLICE, CONS
9-12. Constantius II, cf. C.261, TR (3), TES (1)
13. Constantius II, C.280, TR
14. Constantius II, cf. C.283, but VOT XX MVL XXX, *SI*
15. Constantius II, C.288, SMAQ
16-19. Constans, C.88, TR (2), SMAQ (2)
20. Constans, cf. C.89, but VOT X MVL XX, *SIS*
21-22. Constans, cf. C.90, but VOT X MVL XV, SIS*(1), .SIS*(1)
23-24. Constans, C.171, TR
25-28. Constans, cf. C.174, but VOT X MVLT XX, TR(1), SMAQ(1), *SIS*(1), SIS.(1)
29. Constans, C.191, TES
30. Constans, cf. C.153, TR (contemporary copy).

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Amazement — even disbelief — greeted the news that a *second* hoard of Roman treasure had been found at the Roman town of Durobrivae early in 1975. The find follows hard on the heels of the first hoard, a collection of gold coins, which came to light in 1974 (see p. 10).

The new hoard consists of fourth-century Roman silver plate, and seems to have belonged to a wealthy Christian community in the Nene Valley. Indeed, its value as bullion pales into insignificance when compared with its unique importance for early Church history.

The hoard contains the following items:

1. a simple bowl or chalice carrying round its rim the dedication: 'Lord, I humbly honour your sacred altar', and underneath the donor's name, Publianus;
2. a bowl with the inscription: 'Innocentia and Viventia presented this (chalice)';
3. a small pedestalled cup with two handles;
4. an elaborately decorated shallow bowl in sheet silver;
5. a plain flat silver dish;
6. a heavy ornate flask without handles;
7. a broken flagon-neck;
8. a small silver wine-strainer;
9. a collection of votive palmettes in sheet silver, one of which carries an inscription stating that the donor 'fulfilled the vow which she promised'.

The chi-rho monogram (the first two letters in Greek for the name of Christ) appears on most of the objects, and it would not be too far-fetched to regard the collection as communion plate and other furnishings from a Christian chapel.

A coroner's inquest will be held on the hoard in September 1975.

J. P. Wild

The Waternewton Silver Treasure

by Kenneth Painter

In February 1975 a treasure of one gold and 27 silver objects was found at Durobrivae. The group includes 28 objects, of which 9 are vessels and 19 are plaques:

1. Plain bowl; broken, diameter *c.*16cm.
2. Mouth and neck of a spouted jug. Height 10.5cm.
3. Large dish with Chi-Rho and omega in the central roundel (fig. 2). Diameter, 27cm.
4. Bowl decorated with facets. Diameter *c.*10cm.
5. Decorated jug (fig. 3). Height 20.3cm.
6. Cup with two detached handles (fig. 4). Height 12.5cm.
7. Strainer with handle; decorated at the end of the handle with a Chi-Rho and alpha and omega. Length 20.2cm.
8. Cup, partly lost, inscribed round rim: "(Chi-Rho with alpha and omega) INNOCENTIA ET VIVENTIA . . . RVNT". Height *c.*12.4cm.
9. Cup or bowl, inscribed in same style of lettering on the base and round the rim: (a) on base: "PVBLIANVS"; (b) round the rim: "(Chi-Rho with alpha and omega) SANCTVM ALTARE TVVM D (Chi-Rho with alpha and omega) OMINE SVBNIXVS HONORO". This inscription forms a dactylic hexameter. Height 11.5cm.

10-19. Triangular plaques, with veins like leaves. Heights 3.8cm — 7.8cm.

20-26. Triangular plaques, each with veins like leaves, and also with a Chi-Rho stamped in relief in a central roundel (fig. 5). All except one have in addition an alpha and omega. One has an inscription at the top: ". . . AMCILLA VOTVM QVO(D) PROMISIT CONPLEVIT". Heights 4.9cm-15.7cm.

27. Gold disc with Chi-Rho and alpha and omega. Diameter, 4.9cm.
28. Fragments of undecorated silver plaques or sheet.

No precise indication of date is available from within the group. The approximate date of manufacture of certain of the objects, however, can be ascertained by comparison with other discoveries: No.4, bowl decorated with facets, late third century A.D.; no.5, decorated jug, late

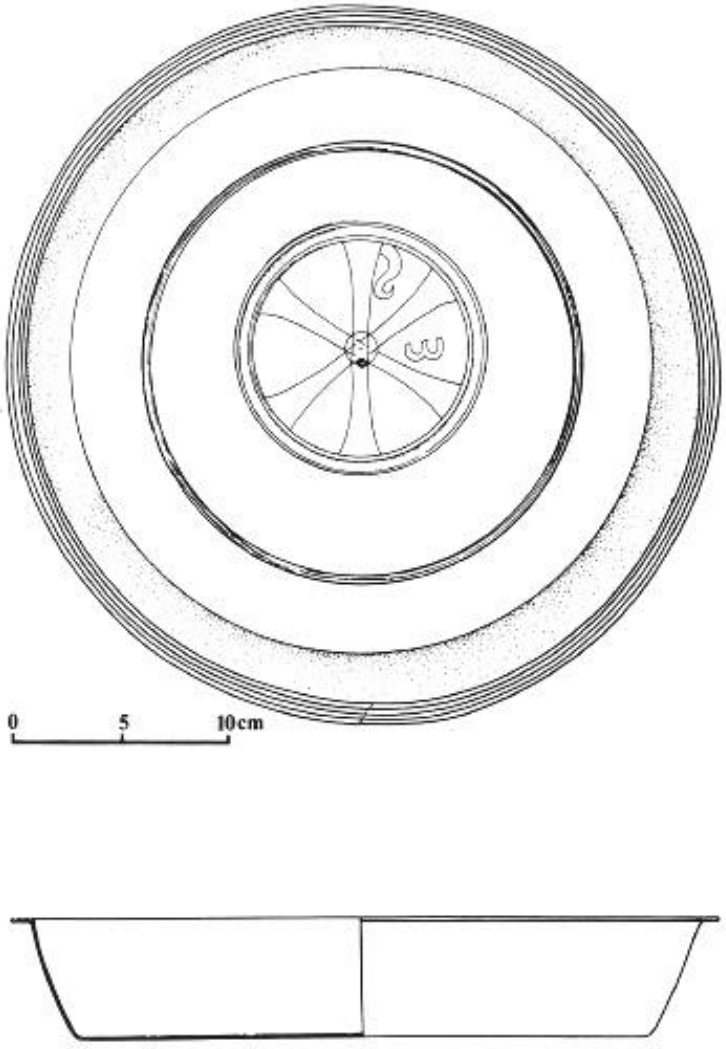

Fig 2 Silver dish with Chi-Rho and omega in the central roundel (diameter 27cm)

Fig 3 Decorated silver jug (height 20.3cm)

third or early fourth century A.D.; no.6, cup with two handles, third century A.D.; no.7, strainer, third century A.D.; nos.10-27, votive plaques, third century A.D. in type. The earliest possible date of deposition of the group is the latter part of the third century or the early part of the fourth century. The group was not deposited later than some time in the fourth century; for it does not include types of vessels found in the outstanding fourth-century silver hoards, while types found in these latter hoards are represented in fifth-century deposits.

There is evidence that the vessels were not simply abandoned. First the finder described how the vessels lay, carefully arranged in the large dish, and his evidence is confirmed by markings on the large dish. Second, laboratory examination of the broken edges of the objects shows that the majority of the breaks are recent and are likely to have occurred during ploughing or the removal of the objects from the soil. All the objects, therefore, were probably in a usable condition when they were put away in antiquity. The combination of these two factors suggests that the objects were deposited with the intention of being recovered. The reason for putting away the Waternewton Treasure could have been protection against theft or confiscation, or perhaps to keep objects safe in a period of danger. One of the earliest occasions when such hiding might have been necessary is the Great Persecution of Diocletian in A.D.303-304; but there are many other possibilities and the particular reason is not now likely to be known.

In character the Treasure is religious, Christian and not secular. The use of the Treasure, however, is problematical. The plaques were clearly votive, payments to God for requests fulfilled. The group of vessels, however, must be compared with those in other major hoards of the period. They resemble those in the important religious hoard from Berthouville in France in that they have dedicatory inscriptions. The vessels from Berthouville, however, were old and more or less worn when the dedications to Mercury were added in the third century A.D. The major secular hoards, however, were all usable when deposited. It seems likely, therefore, that the Treasure was in the possesion of, and being used by, a practising Christian group, perhaps for *refrigeria* or for baptisms or for communion. No matter where this group lived, it is clear that they had a religious meeting-place; for one of the inscriptions refers to the *altare,* not an altar, but a sanctuary or sacred area, which must have been contained within a shrine or larger building.

Fig 4 Silver two-handled cup (height 15.7cm)

Before the discovery of the Waternewton Treasure, the two earliest known Christian treasures were those of Canoscio in Italy and of Kumluca in Turkey, both of the sixth century A.D. The Waternewton Treasure is not later than the fourth century A.D. This new discovery is the earliest group of Christian religious silver from the whole Roman Empire and is a discovery of international importance.

Fig 5 Silver plaque with gilt roundel (height 15.7cm)

Durobrivae

by Donald Mackreth

The Roman town of Durobrivae has been well-known to generations of antiquarians and archaeologists ever since E. T. Artis published the first plan of the site in 1828. More recently, aerial photographs taken and published by Professor St Joseph have made some aspects of it more familiar; but there is no published plan showing in detail features visible on the photographs. The plan on the next page (fig. 11), prepared from over 1000 photographs mainly taken by Professor St Joseph and Mr S. G. Upex, can only be called an interim statement on the site.

The principal difficulty is that, without excavation, it is hard to be sure which features are specifically Roman, apart from the obvious roads, defences and buildings. (There has been no attempt to screen out any non-Roman features except modern roads, field boundaries and gravel pits. Several crop-marks which are surely prehistoric are present.) The plan in fig. 11 is part only of another fuller plan, which includes the great suburb across the Nene as well as more of the area to the west and south-west of the town.

The main lines of the plan are familiar: Ermine Street pursuing its course across the site, the most obvious limits of which seem to be the defensive circuit. The irregular street plan inside the walls is well-known and often quoted to demonstrate the difference between what was originally an informal settlement and one of higher status having a full-gridded street layout.

Another known major feature of the plan is the fort (A) by the river crossing. What may be accounted as new on fig. 11 is the direct evidence for a high degree of development inside the walls. The shape of the walled area would lead one naturally to suspect that the end by the river was the more intensely occupied and the other photographs show that this is the case. However, crop-marks at the other end of the site never show with equal clarity and occupation there cannot be dismissed as only ribbon development along Ermine Street until greater definition of the area becomes available.

The complete line of the defences is not yet visible. However, the aerial photographs show two features of interest. Firstly, the south-west gate has been known for some time to be off-set, but it was not clear, until Professor St Joseph's photographs of the south-east end of the town were examined, that at least one of the two main gates was of the same pattern and that Ermine Street was diverted to approach the gate squarely. Secondly, bastions attached to the wall can be seen frequently enough for it to appear that they were probably evenly spaced along its line. The town wall is so heavily robbed that it requires just the right conditions to show the wall-line and the surviving masonry clearly.

Work in recent years has tended to emphasise the extensive extra-mural development, which in places achieves a density not far short of that in the north-east end of the walled enclosure. Durobrivae is always considered to be an outstandingly good example of the small town, yet in many ways this is false; for it is by far the largest known, if its area within the walls is taken as a measure: some 44 acres (17.6 hectares) — and perhaps some six or seven times as big again if the external settlement is taken into account. It is clear that the town is exceptional by any standard.

The legal status of the town is known to be that of *vicus*, the lowest level of local government save for *pagi* or country districts. The evidence consists of the stamp on a mortarium — CUNOARDA FECIT/VICO DUROBRIVIS. As such it would not be surprising to discover that the town contained a *mansio*, or government staging post with accommodation for imperial officials and couriers. Inside the walls can be seen one large building (B), and what may be detected of its plan shows that it is comparable with other buildings interpreted as *mansiones*.

Mr C. E. Stevens ((1937), 199) was the first to suggest that Durobrivae had, by the fourth century, been promoted to *civitas*, a status which may very roughly be equated with that of a regional capital. His evidence was based upon the location of a milestone which appears to give the mileage from Durobrivae, a feature, he suggested, only to be found when towns had achieved this level of prestige.

The size of the settlement may be explained as being due to the exceptional industrial activity around it, coupled with a flourishing agriculture based upon good soils. However, there is one aspect which is impossible to prove, but which may account for some of the expansion, namely the Roman drainage of the Fens. While there is no direct proof that the newly settled lands there constituted an imperial estate, it is hard to imagine that any authority other than the imperial could have ordered and financed the scheme. So far as what we know of local government in Roman times is concerned, it is not clear to which regional capital the Fens would have fallen — Caistor-by-Norwich or Lincoln, or even, in part, to Leicester. The truth is that it is hard to see a single civil authority governing the whole area, if it was not the emperor himself. Is it beyond the bounds of possibility that the Fens were governed from the largest settlement on its boundaries, one well placed to serve both north and south parts, and

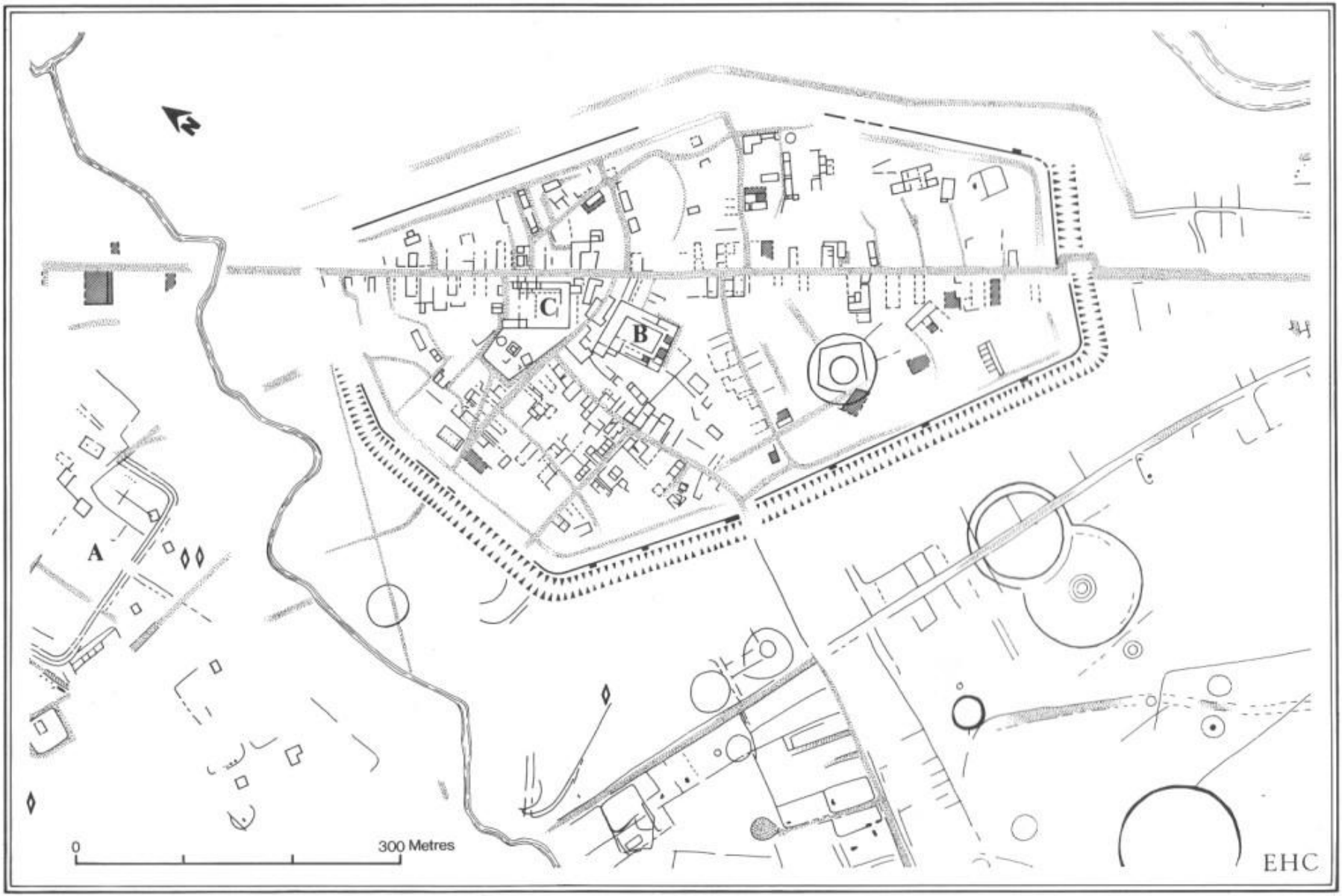

Fig 11 Plan of Durobrivae based on aerial photographs

lying on the cross-country route from the Midlands to East Anglia?

Is it possible to look at the plan of the town with this consideration in mind? I suspect that it is: the possible *mansio* has been mentioned, but there seems to be another large building aligned on Ermine Street itself (C). The details are not clear, but the perusal of many air photographs suggests strongly that there is such a single large building, apparently lying in an *insula* in the western part of which there is a group of temples. If the whole of the plan of the north-west end is examined it will be seen that there appears to have been a road entering the area from the west which leads directly to the temples. Some photographs also suggest that the area outside the probable *temenos* wall at this end was metalled. It may be that here lies the main administrative centre for the Fens and its association with temples may not be entirely fortuitous. Caution advises, however, that the large building may merely be a service structure connected with the operation of a complex cult.

Lying on the fringes of the extra-mural settlement north of the river is the very large building under Castor village, which has given rise to speculation since Artis first published his findings there. Haverfield went against the idea that it was one structure, thinking it too large and disjointed. A visit to the site, coupled with an appreciation of the work carried out by Dr Wild and Mr Dannell, shows clearly that the whole complex is of one design, carefully adapted by means of terraces to suit the hillside on which it lies. The very scale of the works is enough to suggest that it was perhaps intended for a government official of high rank rather than a wealthy private owner. While excavation does not always provide the answers to the questions which are posed, it is true to say of Durobrivae and its environs that there is no other way of seeking answers.

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A Roman Intaglio found near Durobrivae

by Martin Henig

A cornelian gemstone was found near Durobrivae by Mr S. Lindsey who subsequently presented it to the Peterborough Museum (acc. no. L317). The stone (fig. 23) is oval in shape (Henig (1974), i, fig. 1, flat 2) and has sides which bevel outwards. It is 3mm thick and the lower face measures 12mm by 10mm. Its upper face (9.5mm by 8.75mm) is cut with the device of an eagle standing on a ground-line in profile to the left, but with its head turned towards the right (as it would appear on an impression). The bird holds a wreath in its bill, but this is represented in a rather indistinct manner.

Both the device and the coarse and schematic style of cutting (Maaskant-Kleibrink (1975), 227-34) are matched on a cornelian from Great Chesterford, Essex, and on an onyx found in London (now in a private collection). The latter was set in a ring of late second-century date (Henig (1974), ii, 91, 690). A yellow jasper from the late Flavian or Trajanic cache of gemstones from Bath and a cornelian found in a Trajanic context at Holditch, Staffs, are cut more carefully and show eagles in the same stance as the bird on the Durobrivae stone. They have additional attributes emblematic of prosperity — a corn-ear and poppy in one case and a cornucopia in the other (Henig (1974), ii, 91, pl. xxi, 689, 694).

Eagles were of course the birds of Jupiter and this connexion with the 'ruler of gods and men' is sometimes stressed on gems, such as an agate found at Aldborough depicting an eagle perched on a thunderbolt (Henig (1974), ii, 115, pl. xxvi, app. 69). For the Romans the eagle of Jupiter was a symbol of their own military power, one particularly associated with the legions. Several gems portray eagles standing between maniple standards, including a cornelian from Southwark found in a second-century context and another cornelian excavated at Witcombe villa in Gloucestershire, set in a third-century ring (Henig (1974), ii, 93, pl. xxii, 707; (1975), 243). In both cases the style of cutting is not dissimilar to that of the gem under discussion.

It is unfortunate that we know nothing more about the context of the intaglio. The device would obviously have appealed to a soldier, for whom it might have appeared as a victory charm. However, it is perhaps more likely in the present instance both on the grounds of probable date and of the evident garbling of the wreath that it belonged to a civilian who merely wished to invoke the protection of the god.

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Fig 23 Roman gemstone found near Durobrivae