

A Second Hoard of Late Roman Coins from Shapwick Heath, Somerset

BY H. ST. GEORGE GRAY, F.S.A.

(a) INTRODUCTION

ANOTHER hoard of late Roman coins, associated with pewter and earthenware vessels, has been found in Somerset, at a distance of only 6 feet from the similar discovery made in May 1936 on Shapwick Heath. That find was described and illustrated in the *Proceedings*, vol. lxxxii (1936), pp. 163-170; and the first section of the paper gave a list of similar discoveries made in Somerset, showing how comparatively common these late Roman hoards are in the west of Britain as compared with some other parts of the Roman Empire. (For general information on this subject readers are referred to the paper quoted above).

(b) DISCOVERY OF THE SHAPWICK HOARD, No. 2

On 18 June 1937 Mr. Percy S. Mullins, peat merchant, while digging peat on Shapwick Heath, in the parish of Shapwick, discovered the undermentioned Roman objects 2 ft. below the present surface and only 6 ft. in a S.E. direction from the first hoard found in the previous year (see *Proc.*, lxxxii, 165). A white spot below the finder's spade in Plate XXII indicates the exact position of the discovery.

The objects found consist of a damaged jug of pewter in which a small earthenware beaker stood in an upright position (see pp. 150, 152, and Plate XXIII). This pot contained 125 silver coins (*siliquae*).

The coins were found to be in an excellent state of preservation, as was the case with Hoard No. 1; few of them were clipped, and those very slightly.

On 6 July an inquest was held by the coroner for S.E. Somerset, Mr. C. Leslie Rutter, in the Church Room at Meare,



SHAPWICK HEATH, SOMERSET, 1937

View, looking N., showing the position in which the Hoard No. 2 was found (the exact place is indicated by the white spot below the man's spade)

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY DR. A. BULLEID, F.S.A.

where the writer, as in the case of Hoard No. 1, gave evidence as to the significance of the discovery.¹ The finding of this enquiry was that the coins being of silver were Treasure Trove, and by direction of H.M. Treasury they were sent to the Coin Department of the British Museum for examination, record and valuation. One hundred and five of the coins were retained and acquired for the National Collection, and the remaining twenty coins, together with the pewter and pottery, were purchased by the Somerset County Museum, Taunton Castle.²

(c) SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE COINS

The coins, extending from Constantius II to Arcadius, have been described by Mr. J. W. E. Pearce, F.S.A., in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, 5 ser., vol. xviii (1938), pp. 53-58.

Here we need give only a table of the names of the Emperors and the number of coins of each.

Emperor	Date of Reign	No. found	
		British Mus.	Taunton Mus.
Constantius II ..	337-361	—	4
Julian II ..	355-363	—	7
Valentinian I ..	364-375	1	1
Valens ..	364-378	31	3
Gratian ..	367-383	35	1
Valentinian II ..	375-392	9	1
Theodosius I ..	379-395	3	1
Arcadius ..	383-408	1	—
Magnus Maximus ..	383-388	24	2
Flavius Victor ..	died 388	1	—
		105	20

¹ On hearing of the discovery Dr. A. Bulleid, F.S.A., visited the place and marked the position (given above) on the 6 in. Ordnance Sheet (Som. LI, N.E.). Dr. H. Godwin, of the Botany School, Cambridge, who had been boring the peat close to the spot, was on the ground at the same time. The writer visited Meare on 20 June to examine the coins, etc., at Mr. P. S. Mullins' house (Westfield House, Meare), when the beaker was found to be broken, but no fragments of the vessel were missing.

² Of the purchase-money the following was subscribed by members: Mr. W. Wyndham, 10s.; Dr. E. A. G. Dowling, 10s.; and Mrs. Martin Alford, 3s.

(d) DESCRIPTION OF THE VESSELS

(1) Jug of pewter, of a typical Roman shape, with grooved handle having a terminal of triangular or 'arrowhead' form attached to the side of the vessel. Just above the maximum bulge the jug is ornamented with a band of three (sometimes four) encircling lines rather faintly and clumsily incised. There are two other similar lines on the splayed foot of the jug; the base is concave. (Figured in Plate XXIII).

Height of the jug $7\frac{3}{8}$ in.; maximum diameter $4\frac{1}{2}$ in.; diameter at the base $2\frac{3}{8}$ in.

The jug is much damaged and distorted,—the result of the slitting of the sides of the vessel for the purpose of making it possible to place the pottery vase containing the coins within the narrow-necked jug. The vase having been inserted, the cut side of the pewter vessel was to some extent bent back again to hide and secure the pottery vase.

A small fragment of the damaged portion was sent to Dr. J. A. Smythe, of King's College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, for analysis, and he kindly reports that the pewter is made up of:

Tin	88.00 per cent.
Lead	12.22 „
	<hr/>
	100.22

'It is richer in tin than the modern pewters.'³

³ This analysis varies considerably from one of the pewter jugs from Brislington, which, according to the report in *Trans. Bris. and Glos. Archaeol. Soc.*, xxiv, 288, gave:

Lead	62.5 per cent.
Tin	36.0 „
Antimony	0.8 „
Copper	nil
Earthly matter (and possible loss)	0.7
	<hr/>
	100.0

In 1935 this analysis was tested by Dr. J. A. Smythe, the result being:

Tin	45.38 per cent.
Lead	54.80 „
	<hr/>
	100.18

For this analysis we are indebted to Mr. G. R. Stanton of Bristol Museum.



SHAPWICK HEATH, SOMERSET, 1937

Jug of Pewter and the Pot in which the late Roman Coins were deposited

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY MR. H. ST. GEORGE GRAY, F.S.A.

Seven pewter jugs with curved and ornamented handles were found near the bottom of the well (depth 32 ft.) at the Roman villa at Brislington (Som.) in 1901,⁴ and are preserved in Bristol Museum. They were all more or less bruised and bent, and six of them vary in height from about 7¾ to 14 in. The other consisted of the mouth and neck of the jug, with the handle remaining.⁵ This handle had a triangular terminal similar to the Shapwick specimen.⁶

Three pewter jugs of the Roman period are to be seen at the Roman Baths Museum at Bath, which Mr. Alfred J. Taylor states were found just outside the Roman reservoir at the beginning of the main culvert leading to the river. One of these vessels is exactly of the same type as the specimen from Shapwick and those from Brislington.

Only two of the Appleshaw specimens appear to bear any resemblance to those found at Brislington.⁷ One of these was an octagonal jug with narrow neck, height 10¼ in.; the other a portion of a jug of somewhat similar shape, but circular and having a stout handle of triangular section, on the side of which *VICTRICI* is scratched (British Museum).

The similarity between the Brislington and Appleshaw examples is further marked by the triangular section of the handle and the heart-shaped plate. The latter feature is seen also on a jug with moulded neck, height 13¾ in., found at Glastonbury in 1820, but the handle (except for the terminal plate) is broken off; this piece is to be seen in Bristol Museum and is dated A.D. 250-400. A similar jug with moulded neck is exhibited in the British Museum (found in England); also another found at Church Norton, near Selsey.

For the sake of those studying pewter jugs of late Roman date, attention might also be drawn to the whole-plate illustrations of three such vessels with handles and moulded necks, found in Cambridgeshire. One was dug out of the old bed of the Cam beside Quaveney Island; another, similar, is of unknown provenance but was found in the Fens. Two others came from Isleham Fen in 1907.⁸ Another pewter jug (damaged), with moulded neck or collar, was found in a Roman well at Thatcham, Berks.⁹

⁴ The villa is said to have been built c. 300 A.D. and destroyed c. 360 A.D. Although the villa was discovered in December 1889, the well was apparently not cleared out till the spring of 1901.

⁵ As the handle is 11 in. in length, the height of the vessel must have been at least 16 in.

⁶ Three of the Brislington pewter jugs and five of the ornamented handles are figured in the *Proc. Clifton Antiq. Club*, v (1904), pl. xviii, and *Trans. Bris. and Glos. Arch. Soc.*, xxiv (1901), plate facing p. 291; also in a separate handbook which was sold at Bristol Museum, by W. R. Barker (1901). See also *V.C.H. Som.*, i, p. 305, and Fig. 65.

⁷ *Archaeologia*, lvi, 11.

⁸ *Proc. Camb. Antiq. Soc.*, xxxiii (1933), 165-6.

⁹ *Antiq. Journ.*, xi (1931), pls. viii, ix; *The Archaeology of Berkshire*, by Harold Peake (1931), 118, and fig. 22; *Trans. Newbury Dist. F.C.*, vi, 10, 11.

Mention might also be made here of the six silver flagons of the same period, without handles, found with the Traprain treasure. Five of the vessels have the collar round the neck.¹⁰

Another pewter jug similar to the Shapwick form, height $8\frac{1}{2}$ in., was found at Icklingham, Suffolk. Although it has lost its handle it retains traces of solder on the shoulder just below a break in the lip (British Museum).

A pewter jug of Roman date, of a different character, with handle terminating at the lower end in plain ivy-leaf, was found, crushed flat, in Moorgate Street, London.¹¹

(2) Beaker, or vase, lathe-turned, with bulbous body and everted rim (rounded), below which there are two encircling grooves. As ornament there are also two slight encircling grooves on the widest part of the vessel, and one at the base of the neck. Height of the pot $4\frac{5}{8}$ in.; maximum diameter $3\frac{1}{8}$ in.; diameter of the small base $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. (Figured in Plate XXIII).

Like the similarly-shaped but smaller pottery vessel found in the Shapwick hoard of 1936,¹² it is of a soft buff clay with chocolate-brown coating, dark in places. These pots were very probably made in the late fourth century by the same individual.

NOTE.—On going to press the writer of this paper has received a proof of Mr. Pearce's paper referred to on p. 149. As compared with 'Shapwick I' hoard, 'Shapwick II' is about two decades earlier, c. A.D. 390. There is no coin of Eugenius or Honorius, and the coins of Valentinian II and Theodosius 'show the style which seems distinctive of the earlier part of that issue'. Again, the latest coins of 'Shapwick I' show slight traces of wear, while the latest of 'Shapwick II' are in mint condition; and the weight of the *siliquae* (1.99 gramme) is found to be a high average. 'The two hoards whether buried, or not, at the same time must be regarded as typical of two widely separated periods.'

¹⁰ *The Treasure of Traprain*, by Alex. O. Curle (1923), pls. v-x, illustrating the pieces numbered 1-6.

¹¹ *London in Roman Times*, London Mus. Cat., no. 3 (1930), Pl. liB, I.

¹² In the paper on the first hoard (*Proc.*, lxxii, 168) the size of the pottery vessel was not given (and the photograph is not to scale). The height is $3\frac{1}{4}$ in.; maximum diameter $2\frac{3}{8}$ in.

