Figure Polynesian stone adze from Winscombe

This all raises the question of how it came to be buried in a field in Winscombe. The connection with Polynesia is not however necessarily so bizarre. The cottage where the adze was found formerly belonged to Sidcot School and was lived in by either a gardener or carpenter (or both). Christine Gladwin, the historian of the school, suggests that some connection with staff, students or even missionaries of the Quaker foundation could have brought back or sent back the adze in the late 19th or early 20th century. Research on this aspect continues. No doubt it would have been used in teaching or put on display in some cabinet of curiosities in the school. It may later have been thrown out and used by one of the workers at the school and eventually been lost or thrown away into the field.

The find generated considerable local interest and surprisingly (to this author at least) this did not wane, indeed it increased, when the adze was suggested to be foreign rather than a prehistoric British find.

Thanks are due to Steve Bridges for reporting the find so promptly, largely a result of his being a fan of Channel 4's *Time Team* programme and a local parish councillor, and of donating the adze to the author. It will be deposited in either the Somerset County Museum or Weston super Mare museum.

Note

This is one of several axes to have turned up in the parish. A palaeolithic hand axe found in 1995 is reported elsewhere in this volume (Harding and Aston above), and a perforated stone macehead was found at Max Mills in Winscombe in 1865 which is now in Bristol City Museum.

M. ASTON

THE SILVER *SILIQUAE* FROM GREEN CUTTING, KINGSHAMS, ILCHESTER

The aim of this short note is to highlight the possible significance of five late Roman silver coins excavated under Peter Leach's direction at Kingshams in Ilchester during the mid-1970s.

Two hundred and forty-two Roman coins were recovered from the excavations and of this total five are silver issues known to archaeologists and numismatists as *siliquae* (Leach 1982, 237–8). The *siliqua* was the standard silver unit of the late empire, introduced *c*. 325, reduced in weight *c*. 355 and supplied to Britain by continental mints up until the usurpation of Constantine III in 407 (Casey 1994, 18; Guest 2005, 41–4). Silver *siliquae*, like all coins struck in precious metals, are rare as site finds but do occur occasionally in large assemblages of 4th-century coins (Reece 1973, 241). Therefore, the recovery of five from the relatively small area excavated at Kingshams is noticeable, especially when only a single *siliqua* is recorded from elsewhere in Ilchester (Leach 1982, 239).

Most inter-site syntheses of Roman coin data (eg Reece 1991) treat each coin as an individual unit of data. It is thus difficult to quantify the number of *siliquae* from a large number of sites without recourse to a multiplicity of coin reports. Fortunately, some data is available in an early study by Reece (1973, table 1) and this information has been combined with data from a series of excavations in and around Ilchester to produce the Figure. This histogram shows the ratio of *siliquae* to other coins and it suggests that (generally speaking) a group of at least 300 coins is required to produce a single *siliqua*. In practice I suspect the figure is actually higher, perhaps somewhere in the region of 1:1000. Interestingly, a number of local sites (Bradley Hill, Ilchester Mead, Ilchester Little Spittle) produce low ratios of less than 1:100 and this may suggest that there is a local or regional pattern of *siliquae* loss. However, confirmation of such a phenomenon and its interpretation requires a more detailed study beyond the scope of this note.

The five *siliquae* from Kingshams included: an issue of Julian (Cat. No. 189), two coins of the usurper Magnus Maximus (Cat. Nos. 215 and 216)

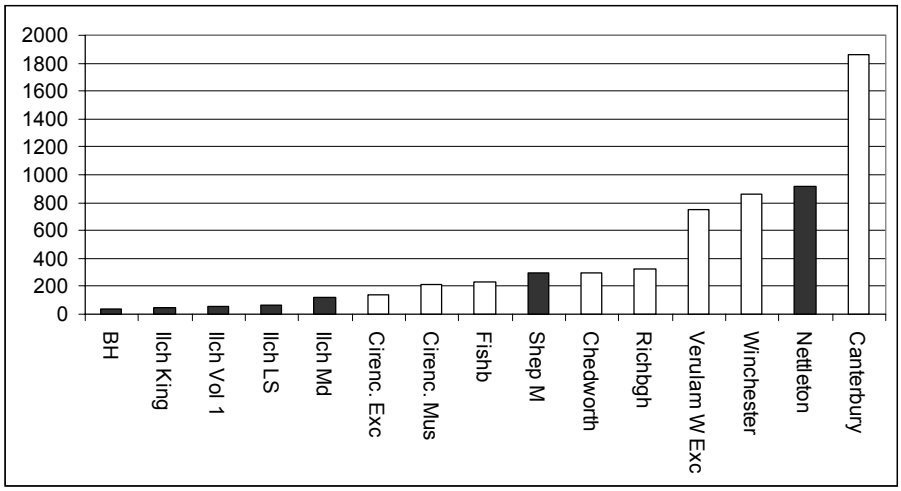

Figure The ratio of siliquae to other coins at selected sites (all data from Reece 1973 Table 1 unless otherwise indicated). Ilchester and sites 'local' to the town are indicated by black bars. BH: Bradley Hill (Leech 1981); Ilch King: Kingshams; Ilch Vol 1: all sites; Ilch LS: Little Spittle (Leach 1982); Ilch Md: Ilchester Mead (Hayward 1981); Cirencester Exc: Cirencester Excavations; Cirenc Mus: Cirencester Museum; Fishb: Fishbourne; Shep M (Leach and Evans 2001); Richbgh: Richborough; Verulam W Exc: Verulamium Wheeler's Excavations

and single *siliquae* of Valentinian I and Valentinian II (Cat. Nos. 209 and 210) (Leach 1982, 238–9). All of these coins were recovered from post-Roman deposits labelled by the excavator Periods V and VI (Leach 1982, fig. 23). The coins from Period V were recovered from a layer (GRF12a) argued to represent 'the ultimate collapse and decay of (Roman) structures' (Leach 1982, 52). This layer was heavily disturbed by later activity and it seems reasonable to suppose that the three *siliquae* from Period VI contexts had been redeposited from Period V. This might in turn suggest that we are dealing with a small hoard or 'purse group'. Five coins may seem like a small number, but a 4th-century curse tablet from Bath records the theft of six silver coins and this highlights their considerable value (Tomlin 1988, 232–3). Of course, the five coins may represent this putative 'hoard' in its entirety or alternatively be all that remains of a larger group of coins, discovered during the robbing of a nearby Roman building.

If the Ilchester coins represent a small hoard of *siliquae* then it joins a number of other such late-Roman hoards from Somerset (eg Guest 1997, 413). Whatever the reasons for the deposition of these hoards (Reece 1988) they point to the wealth of late-Roman landowners in Somerset. Ilchester, as an urban centre and central place in the 4th century, would have been an obvious focus for that wealth. This may explain why some sites in the hinterland of the town (Bradley Hill and Ilchester Mead: Leech 1981; Hayward 1981) have also produced *siliquae*. Finally, the presence of *siliquae* in the late 5th-century hoard from Patching (West Sussex) suggests that *siliquae* could be encountered in the bullion boxes and treasure chests of 5th and 6th-century warlords and potentates (White *et al*. 1999). This in turn may help to explain how such individuals and groups were able to refortify sites like Cadbury Castle and maintain connections with the Mediterranean world (Alcock 1995; Thomas 1988).

References

Alcock, L., 1995. *Cadbury Castle, Somerset: the early medieval archaeology,* Cardiff.

Casey, P., 1994. *Roman Coinage in Britain,* Aylesbury.

Guest, P., 1997. 'Hoards from the end of Roman Britain', *Coin Hoards from Roman Britain 10*, 411–23.

Guest, P., 2005. *The Late Roman Gold and Silver Coins from the Hoxne Treasure,* London, British Museum.

Hayward, L., 1981. *Ilchester Mead Roman Villa,* Ilchester and District Occasional Papers 31.

Leach, P., 1982. *Excavations at Ilchester Volume 1,*

Bristol.
Leach, P., and Evans C., 2001. *Fosse Lane, Shepton Mallet 1990*, Britannia Monograph 18.
Leech, P., 1981. 'The excavation of a Romano-British farmstead and cemetery on Bradley Hill, Somerset', *Britannia* 12, 177–252.
Reece, R., 1973. 'Roman coinage in Britain and the Western Empire', *Britannia* 4, 227–52.
Reece, R., 1988. 'Hoards and hoarding', *World Archaeology* 20 (2), 261–9.
Reece, R., 1991. *Roman Coins from 140 Sites in Britain*, Cirencester.
Robinson, A., 2000. *An Inventory of Romano-British Coin Hoards,* Royal Numismatic Society Publication 20.
Thomas, C., 1988. 'The context of Tintagel: a new model for the diffusion of post-Roman Mediterranean imports', *Cornish Archaeology* 27, 7–25.
Tomlin, R., 1988. 'The curse tablets', in B. Cunliffe (ed.) *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath, Vol. II: the finds,* Oxford Univ Committee for Archaeology Monograph 7, 59–277.
White, S., Manley, J., Jones, R., Orna-Ornstein, J., Johns, C., and Webster, L., 1999. 'A mid-fifth-century hoard of Roman and pseudo-Roman material from Patching, West Sussex'. *Britannia* 30, 301–14.

JAMES GERRARD

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, SEAVINGTON: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION OF THE NAVE AND CHANCEL

Introduction

In 2007 a proposal to refloor the church was put forward as one of a number of measures to improve the conditions in the building, in particular the alleviation of damp. The new floor, a continuous stone floor throughout the church, removing the existing step up into the chancel, was to have underfloor heating, which required a considerable depth of foundation and insulating material beneath it. The whole interior of the church was therefore to be dug out to this depth beneath the existing floor levels, with obvious implications for any remaining archaeological deposits. Early in 2007, very limited work was carried out to try to assess the extent of any deposits, but with limited results. It was clear, however, that at least the areas of aisle within the nave contained significant deposits from the medieval church. A programme of archaeological work was therefore agreed, and in February 2008 the whole of the interior of the church was excavated and recorded to the depth required by the proposed works. The archaeological excavation was carried out in advance of and at times alongside the ongoing building works. The detailed archaeological records can be found in an archive at the Somerset Record Office (reference A/BHF/19) together with the full report, of which this is an extract.

Structural development

The excavations revealed the foundations of the church past and present (Fig. 1), with evidence of at least four structural phases (Fig. 2) culminating in the late 15th century form seen today. Though the 11th or 12th century may be the most likely date for the first period of building – against the historical background of the Norman conquest and the arrival of new owners of the land – the small church shown by the excavations could be pre-conquest. Perhaps the building of the chancel was the first Norman work, symbolising the power of the new rulers. Though the sequence of development is clear, the absolute chronology is elastic with the few broadly fixed points based only on architectural style.

Origins, 11th–12th century

The primary feature revealed by the excavations was a wall foundation beneath the north side of the present nave (Fig. 1, A). This comprised a foundation of oolitic limestone rubble in clay, 2 feet (0.65m) wide and 18 inches (0.45m) deep below the contemporary ground surface. It was revealed in three places, surviving between the later graves, running west from the present chancel arch for at least 6.5metres. This was the foundation for the north wall of a building pre-dating the present nave, and running slightly skew to it. Its line is indeed parallel to the north side of the foundation revealed beneath the south wall of the present nave (Fig.1, J), which could be the contemporary southern foundation, incorporated into the later, enlarged foundation. This rectangular building was therefore about 10 feet 6