

ART. III. — *A Roman glass phalera from Carlisle.*

By J. M. C. TOYNBEE, F.B.A., and I. A. RICHMOND,
F.B.A.

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THE following notes on a Roman glass "medallion", or *phalera*, from Carlisle owe their origin to the kindly interest and generous co-operation of the present owner of the object, Mrs Elizabeth Cox of Blackhall Wood, near Carlisle. Not only did she bring the piece to the notice of modern students by loaning it to the special Festival of Britain exhibition, held in the Public Museum and Art Gallery at Tullie House in August 1951; but after the close of that exhibition she handed it over to the writers to inspect and study at their leisure, consented to an examination of it in the Research Laboratory of the British Museum and, finally, gave permission for its publication here. The writers are glad to have this opportunity of recording their gratitude to Mrs Cox.

The *phalera* has been in private hands since it was first exhibited at Carlisle nearly a century ago, in 1859. On p. 10 of the *Catalogue* of the Museum formed for the Carlisle meeting of the Archæological Institute in that year, it is described as:—

"A round medallion of lavender coloured opaque vitreous paste, found about 1850 in excavation at Eden Mount, or Devonshire Terrace, Stanwix, the site of one of the stations *per lineam valli*, possibly Axelodunum. It is an object of great beauty and of very uncommon occurrence, unique possibly in England; it represents a bust in high relief, nearly full face turned towards the right; the hair long and flowing; it appears at first sight to represent a female, but the countenance partakes of an androgynous character, and the subject intended may have been the youthful Bacchus."¹

¹ Also quoted by J. Collingwood Bruce, *Lapidarium Septentrionale* (1875) 243 f., no. 485.

The piece is next mentioned in connection with a "medallion" of similar character unearthed at Colchester in 1863, in *Archæologia* xxxix (1863), 508 f., where it is said to have been "found about 1850 in excavations at Stanwix near Carlisle", to be "of . . . opaque glass, . . . of a lilac colour", and to represent "an androgynous bust of great beauty, possibly Bacchus." The account goes on to say that it "had likewise a metal rim, which, however, was so decayed as not to be considered worth preserving."

The first, and as yet the only, publication of the object is by Bruce in *Lapidarium Septentrionale*, where it is illustrated, by a woodcut to actual size, as framed in the modern setting which it retained when it came into the ownership of Mrs Cox. Bruce describes it as found at Stanwix and as being in the possession of Mrs Bendle, of Lambley Bank, Scotby. To his quotation from the Carlisle *Catalogue* he adds:—

"Subsequent enquiry has, however, led to the conviction that the medallion presents us with the portrait of Antonia, the wife of Drusus When found, the medallion was set in a circle of silver filigree, which, however, was so much oxydized, that on being handled it fell to pieces. The present setting is modern."

The statement made in 1859, that the object was found at "Eden Mount or Devonshire Terrace, Stanwix", has been accepted without question, despite the lack of precision, the two places being contiguous terraces on the west side of the North Road. But in the Roman topography of Stanwix the find-spot is an odd one, since the Wall and Vallum pass close together through this very area: and it is also difficult to see how a relic of this value could have got to the north side of the river in the pre-Hadrianic period to which it undoubtedly belongs. Mrs Cox, however, the present possessor of the piece, preserves quite a different family tradition about the find-spot. She received the "medallion" from an aunt,

daughter of Mrs Joseph Bendle, its original owner. This lady stated that it had been dug up on some land near the Cathedral, during building-operations, and that it had been given to Mrs Bendle because the land belonged to her. The cause of the confusion is probably the fact that Mrs Bendle, whose maiden name was Miss Maria Farrer, had lived at 3, Eden Mount, Stanwix; but her Carlisle property occupied the position now taken by Messrs White's chemist's shop, just south-east of the Cathedral. This information was kindly furnished by her sole surviving daughter, Miss Ada Bendle. Archæologically, this find-spot would raise fewer problems, since first-century activity at Carlisle centred about the Cathedral site.

The "medallion" (pl. I, figs. 1 and 3) measures $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. in diameter and consists of powdered copperite glass,² worked into a paste and pressed into a mould. The mould was probably made of some such substance as talc, since terracotta would hardly have been fine enough to give so detailed an impression. The finished product is opaque, and of a colour on the whole best described as lavender-blue. The majority of the "medallions" in the series to which our piece belongs³ are translucent, the colour being normally a deep blue and, in one case, an emerald green. But a "medallion" from Vechten (*Fectio*) in Holland, now in the State Museum of Antiquities at Leyden,⁴ 3.8 cm. in diameter and bearing a Medusa head, is of the same light, opaque, lavender-blue as our piece. The opacity is due to a less fierce firing; the

² The writers are greatly indebted, for information on technical matters, to Emeritus Professor W. E. S. Turner, formerly professor of glass technology in the University of Sheffield, who kindly examined this "medallion", and other specimens of the same class, in the British Museum.

³ For the series in general see (1) *VII. Bericht d. R.-G. Kommission* (1912), 189 ff.; (2) F. Drexel in *Antike Plastik: Walter Amelung zum sechzigsten Geburtstag* (1928), 67 ff.; (3) *Germania Romana*, 2nd ed., v (1930), 23 and pl. 36, figs. 2-4; (4) *Anzeiger f. Schweizerische Altertumskunde* xxxv (1935), 19 ff.; (5) L. Curtius in *Röm. Mitteilungen* 1 (1935), 260 ff.; (6) F. Fremersdorf in *Bulletin van de Vereeniging tot Bevordering der Kennis van de Antieke Beschaving* x (1935); (7) A. Alföldi in *Ur-Schweiz* xv (1951), 66 ff.; (8) J. M. C. Toynbee in *Transactions of the Essex Archæological Society* (forthcoming).

⁴ Inventory no. V. F. 522.

fiercer the firing, the more translucent the piece would be. The makers of the Carlisle and Vechten examples seem either to have been unable to produce sufficient heat to render them translucent, or to have deliberately controlled the firing so as to obtain the opaque effect, perhaps in imitation of precious stone. There are traces of two small bubbles on the background to the right of the head; and just above the head a crescent-shaped segment of the rim has been broken away, presumably by a workman's pick at the time of discovery. When the object was mounted in its modern frame, the missing portion was completed in coloured wax (pl. I, fig. 3).

The subject of the bust shown in relief on the surface of the "medallion" is certainly a woman and a member of the Julio-Claudian imperial house. Two other examples, both in deep, translucent blue, but obviously cast from the same mould as the Carlisle piece, have long been known. The first, perfectly preserved, is now in the Musée Romain at Avenches (*Aventicum*) in Switzerland, where it was found (pl. I, fig. 2); the second, a fragment showing the head only, is of unknown provenance, and was formerly in the Berlin Antiquarium, but is now no longer traceable in that collection (pl. I, fig. 4). This is the sole female type so far discovered among a series of glass "medallions" which exhibit frontal portraits uniform in size and character, and Julio-Claudian in their coiffure and style. Drexel, who was the first to publish the Avenches and Berlin pieces with the female portrait,⁵ established their function as *phalerae* or military decorations, depicting members of the imperial family and presented to troops stationed (as the recorded find-spots suggest) on the Rhine and Danube frontiers or at strongholds in the northern and western provinces. Three examples, one from Rheingönheim now at Speyer,⁶ one from Vindonissa in the Brugg museum,⁷ and the

⁵ Drexel, *op. cit.*, figs. 1 and 2.

⁶ Alföldi, *op. cit.*, 71 and pl. II, figs. 1 and 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 73 and pl. III, fig. 4.

Colchester piece,⁸ were found complete with the bronze frame or mounting by which they had been attached to leather straps on their wearer's cuirass⁹; while the Carlisle piece had, as we have seen, a mounting of silver filigree when discovered. Drexel, however, knew only two male types, a man with three children (Type A), and a man with two children (Type B), apart from a fragment exhibiting a child's head surmounted by a star (Type C), which may be a variant of Type B.¹⁰ He suggested that the series was issued by the emperor Gaius for the German campaign of A.D. 39, and that the three portraits were those of the elder Drusus, Germanicus and Agrippina I. But since he wrote, three further types of young men unaccompanied by children, on *phalerae* of the same size, have been recognised and clamour to be identified (Types D, E and F).¹¹ Two of these could be Nero and Drusus Caesars, whom Gaius also commemorated on his coinage, but the third lad would remain an enigma, if it was Gaius who issued the series. Further, as Professor Alföldi has observed, the series presumably contained a central piece portraying the issuing emperor; and, with him, we would recognise such a central piece in the British Museum fragment of a round or oval *phalera* bearing a laureate portrait of Tiberius in profile, considerably larger in size than the other *phalerae*, but executed in the same style.¹²

⁸ Toynbee, *op. cit.*, forthcoming.

⁹ Cf. *Germania Romana*, 2nd ed., pl. I, fig. 2 and pl. V, fig. 3; *Bonner Jahrbücher* 114/5 (1906), 18 and fig. 13.

¹⁰ Cf. Alföldi, *op. cit.*, 69 and pl. I, figs. 1-9; 71 and pl. II, figs. 1, 3 and 5; 73 and pl. III, fig. 9. Two fragments of *phalerae* of type B, unknown to Alföldi, are in the Louvre (MND 2010: *Bull. Musées de France*, May 1950, 83 and fig. 6) and the British Museum (Walters, *B. M. Catalogue of Gems &c.*, 1926, no. 3921) respectively.

¹¹ Alföldi, *op. cit.*, 69 and pl. I, figs. 10-12 = Type F; 71 and pl. II, fig. 4, and 73 and pl. III, figs. 1-4 = Type D; 73 and pl. III, fig. 5 = Type E. A complete example in the British Museum and a fragment at Groningen from Vechten, both of type D, were unknown to Alföldi.

¹² Alföldi, *op. cit.*, 68 and 73, with pl. III, fig. 5. The frontal laureate head from another blue glass *phalera* of larger size, found at Carnuntum and formerly at Deutsch-Altenburg but now lost (published in *Röm. Mitt.* liv, 1939), is identified by Alföldi as a portrait of Tiberius and as belonging to another central piece of our series. But this head, which appears to have been in exceptionally high relief, does not necessarily belong to the same series, and it bears little resemblance to Tiberius; the upward gaze rather suggests Nero.



I



2



3



4



5



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PLATE I.

FIG. 1. Carlisle *phalera*.

FIG. 2. Avenches *phalera* (from a cast).

FIG. 3. Carlisle *phalera* in its modern setting.

FIG. 4. Berlin *phalera*.

FIG. 5. Posthumous portrait of Agrippina I on *sestertius* of Gaius.

FIG. 6. Posthumous portrait of Agrippina I on *sestertius* of Claudius.



PLATE II, FIG. I.—Bust of Agrippina I
(Museo Capitolino, Rome).

facing p. 45.



PLATE II, FIG. 2.—Head of portrait-statue of Agrippina I
(Lepcis Magna, Tripolitania).

It is probable, then, that the series of *phalerae* was issued by Tiberius, and that the other seven (possibly eight, if Types B and C are not variants but distinct) personages portrayed, including the lady (Type G), are members of the imperial family whom Tiberius wished to "advertise", for some special purpose, or on some special occasion, to the north-west frontier armies. Professor Alföldi, believing that, apart from Divus Augustus, only *living* members of the imperial house could have featured on military decorations, considers that Types A-D all portray Drusus II, the son of Tiberius, and that the series was issued by Tiberius between the birth of his twin grandsons in 19 and the death of Drusus in 23. Types E and F are identified by Alföldi as Nero and Drusus, sons of Germanicus, while in the lady he recognises Livilla, the wife of Drusus II. This theory, however, is open to various objections. Firstly, given that Type C is very probably a variant of B, both showing Drusus II and his twins (who figure in C as Dioscuri, with a star above the head of each¹³), it seems clear that the men depicted in Types A, B/C and D are deliberately differentiated from one another by features and hair-style, and in the number or absence of children, and that they are intended to be three separate personalities. Secondly, on the analogy of the nine *phalerae* from Lauersfort,¹⁴ and of the *phalerae* in sets of nine represented upon military reliefs,¹⁵ we may imagine that the glass *phalerae* were also issued as a set of nine. Towards such a set at least seven different types are represented on the extant pieces, and it is therefore difficult to believe that Drusus II would have figured three times, in different guises, in the set. Why should he have been shown now with three children, now with two, and now with none

¹³ Cf. the lead *tessera* figured by Alföldi, *op. cit.*, 71 and pl. II, figs. 7 and 8, with portraits of Drusus II (obverse) and the twins, surmounted by stars (reverse), identified by inscriptions.

¹⁴ Published by F. Matz, 92. *Berlin Winckelmannsprogramm* (1932).

¹⁵ Cf. *Bonner Jahrbücher* 114/5 (1906), 19 and 21, figs. 14 and 16 and pl. I, 2; Espérandieu, *Bas-reliefs de la Gaule romaine* viii (1922), 246, no. 6266.

at all, at a time when the twins were of prime importance? Thirdly, Professor Alföldi rightly stresses the fact that in the Roman army loyalty was extended, not only to the reigning emperor, but to all members of the imperial house, male and female.¹⁶ But his argument that dead members were virtually excluded from this sentiment¹⁷ is not convincing. If there could be commemorative coin-portraits, and posthumous portraits in the round, why could there not also have been commemorative *phalera*-portraits? And it is hardly credible that portrait-*phalerae*, intended to advertise, among the frontier forces, the unity of both branches of the emperor's family, should include portraits of the sons of Germanicus but omit portraits of their parents, to whom the Rhineland troops had been so deeply attached. More probably, then, we should identify the man with three children (the type of the Colchester piece and of three others) as Germanicus with his three sons (Nero, Drusus III and Gaius) shown as infants, and the three types of young men without children as those three princes portrayed in more adult guise. Fourthly, Agrippina I must, like her husband, have had her place in this family portrait-gallery. No certain portraits, numismatic or sculptured, of Livilla, the wife of Drusus II, have come down to us, and there is no evidence to support Professor Alföldi's assertion that she affected precisely the same coiffure as Agrippina I.¹⁸ If that were so, and if she is the person portrayed on the Carlisle, Avenches and Berlin *phalerae*, she must have been iconographically indistinguishable from Agrippina: for, as Drexel was the first to recognise, the lady depicted in Type G shows unmistakably both the coiffure and the facial features of the wife of Germanicus. There may be observed, as on the coin-portraits struck posthumously for her by Gaius (pl. I, fig. 5)¹⁹ and Claudius (pl. I,

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, 77.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, 74.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, 77.

¹⁹ *B. M. Catalogue, Coins of the Roman Empire I (1923)*, pl. 30, nos. 4-6.

fig. 6),²⁰ the hair growing low over the brow and waved on either side of a central parting, with thick, somewhat irregular curls bunched on either side of the face, and a ringlet falling down either side of the graceful neck; the deep-set eyes, the curved but determined mouth, and the softly rounded cheeks. The same characteristics recur on her portraits in the round, on the well-known bust in the Capitoline Museum in Rome, for example (pl. II, fig. 1),²¹ and on a less familiar head from the Forum Vetus at Lepcis Magna in Tripolitania (pl. II, fig. 2).²² Agrippina's portrait, like that of her husband, must have been well known and readily identifiable among the Rhineland troops; the three princes they would recognise in the three youths unaccompanied by children; Drusus II they would know as the emperor's son and the father of twins; but in Livilla they would have had comparatively little interest.

Arguments have been set out elsewhere²³ in support of the suggestion that this series of glass *phalerae* was issued soon after Drusus's death in September 23, when the situation called for special emphasis on solidarity within the imperial family. In the set of nine there are still two gaps to fill: were those places occupied by the two other great imperial ladies, Antonia and Livia? If so, the arrangement of our set of *phalerae* may be reconstructed, very tentatively, as follows:—

Germanicus	Antonia	Drusus II
Agrippina I	Tiberius	Livia
Gaius	Nero	Drusus III

Under what circumstances did the Carlisle and Colchester *phalerae* reach their final destinations? Each piece, it should be noted, was found by itself, without trace in

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pl. 37, no. 1.

²¹ *Catalogue of Sculptures in the Museo Capitolino* (1912), ed. H. Stuart Jones, 190, no. 10 and pl. 47; Anderson photograph, *Roma*, 1488.

²² *Africa Italiana* vii (1940), 79 f. and figs 56 and 57.

²³ Toynebee, *op. cit.* (forthcoming). Cf. A. W. Byvanck's dating and interpretation of the "Grand Camée de France" in *Mnemosyne* xiii (1947), 238 ff.

either case of any of the other pieces belonging to the set of nine to which (if the above hypothesis is right) it belonged originally. We have no proof, therefore, such as we have in the case of the Lauersfort *phalerae*, that they were the personal decorations of the men who owned them when they vanished into the earth. The Lauersfort find shows that a whole set of such *phalerae* could, on occasion, be buried with the soldier who had won it. But it is not impossible that a man might sometimes bequeath some, at least, of his decorations separately to various heirs or legatees, whether soldiers or civilians; and that heirs or legatees of the former category might have carried such individual pieces about with them on active service—not as decorations, but as keep-sakes or amulets, slipped into pouch or pocket. In the case of the Colchester *phalera*, the man with whom it was buried could easily have been a veteran-colonist who had been decorated with it *circa* A.D. 23. But he could equally well have been the man to whom it was left by its original owner. The Carlisle piece is unlikely to have been dropped before the establishment of a permanent garrison at *Luguvalium* in the early seventies; and it seems highly improbable that the man who lost it there, at that date, had been personally decorated with it *circa* 23. It must surely have been an heirloom; was the “circle of silver filigree” perhaps a secondary setting, with which its second owner had dignified it?