

ROMAN PIGS OF LEAD FROM DERBYSHIRE— RECENT DATING EVIDENCE FROM THE MENDIPS.

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AN important paper by Professor L. S. Palmer and Mr. H. H. W. Ashworth in the *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*¹ has recorded the discovery at Rookery Farm near Green Ore on Mendip (31/576514) of four Roman pigs of lead (Figs. 9, 10). Though reference should be made to that paper for the full details, the following conclusions were reached:

1. The pigs were made during the reign of the Emperor Vespasian (A.D. 69-79), whose name they all bore, possibly towards the latter half of that period.
2. They were made at the mines at Charterhouse, the contraction of the Roman name for this settlement being VEB, which appears on the pigs.
3. The mines at this time were controlled by a Procurator, or by a British freedman, whose name may have been TI(BERIVS) CL(AVDIVS) TRIF-(OLIVS) or TRIF(AVSTVS) or TRIF(O). Three of the pigs were cold stamped with the legend TI.CL.TRIF
4. Separate dies, made up of individual letters, were used to impress the cast inscriptions on the sides and bottoms of the moulds, which were probably made of local clay.
5. The number cold stamped on one end of a pig indicates its excess weight above a recognized specified standard of 195 librae or 141 pounds, which happens to be one-twentieth part of the old lead

¹ L. S. Palmer and H. W. W. Ashworth, "Four Roman Pigs of Lead from the Mendips", *Proc. Somerset Arch. and Nat. Hist. Soc.*, 101/2 (1956-7), 52-88.

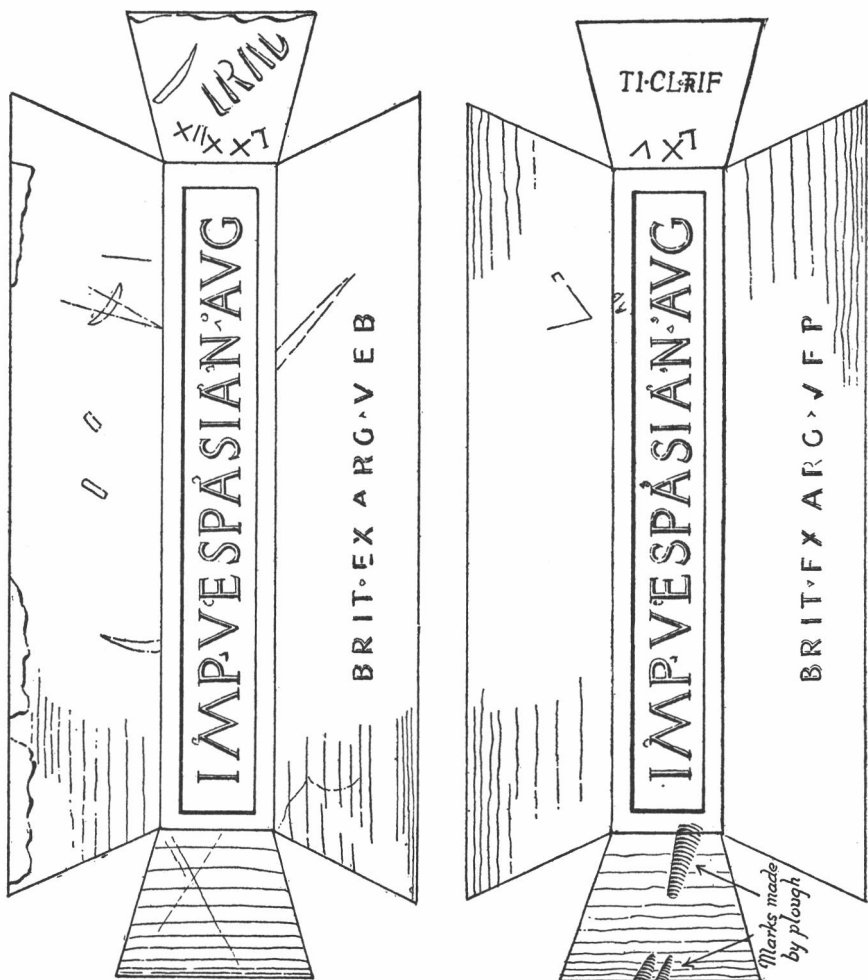


FIG. 9. Roman pigs of lead from the Mendips.

miners' ton or "fodder" weighing 2,820 pounds. Consequently 20 pigs equalled one fodder. The conclusion reached under this head was confirmed to some extent by a consideration of the pig found at Carsington.² The cold stamp on this pig, thought to be CCX, is re-interpreted as IIX, or eight librae assumed to be the excess weight above the standard of 195 librae, giving an assumed weight of 203 librae or 146 pounds, a figure less than $1\frac{1}{2}\%$ above the present weight (144 pounds) of the pig; this reading is to be preferred to that of CCX, which would indicate the weight of the pig to be 210 librae, or 151 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, and involve an error of 5%. Such an error involving the loss of 8 pounds would be hard to account for as the top and bottom laminae are complete.

7. The actual weights of Roman pigs exceeded this standard and the average weight was about 195 British pounds, which suggests that the present English pound was in use prior to the Roman occupation, and possibly gives a reason for there being 16 ounces to the pound in contrast to the 12 unciae of the libra.
8. Three of the pigs of lead had their silver extracted, but the fourth, with no number stamped upon it, still contains the very large percentage of 0.05 by weight of silver, which is comparable with that in some of the Mendip ores. In spite of this difference in silver content, all four pigs have the inscription BRIT. EX ARG. VEB. cast on one of their long sides.
9. The suggestion is made that four pigs constituted a Roman cart-load because four were also found together at Brough-on-Humber and at Pulborough in Sussex. In both cases they appeared to be in transit to Roman ports, and, if so, then a Roman cart-load of four pigs of lead would be approximately equal to one-third of a medieval carretate of six sacks of wool.

² D.A.J., LXXIII (1953), 110; J.R.S., XLIII (1953), 129, no. 8.

In the light of conclusion no. 3 above, Mr. Graham Webster has suggested that, on the analogy of C. NIPIVS ASCANIVS, whose name appears on pigs from Stockbridge, Hampshire and Carmel, Flintshire, TI(BERIVS) CL(AVDIVS) TRIF(?) may be identified with the TI(BERIVS) CL(AVDIVS) TR(?),³ a name moulded on the top of pigs from Derbyshire.⁴ Mr. R. P. Wright describes this suggestion as "attractive, for a man who served on the imperial mining staff in Somerset might well later have become lessee of a mine in Derbyshire. But the fact that the names are in this case abbreviated deprives the suggestion of the complete certainty that attaches to the Flintshire case. Dissimilar expansions are not completely excluded".⁵

Mr. John Carrington, a Winchester classical scholar, made an interesting suggestion to the writer, which seems to carry the matter a stage further, namely that a man bearing names beginning with those of an emperor would most likely be a man of servile origin, who had gained his freedom under that particular emperor. Applying this suggestion to both the Mendip and the Derbyshire pigs, we find inscriptions in each case relating to a man whose first two names were those of the Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54).

That freedman were advanced to posts of responsibility under Claudius is well attested. While remaining personal servants of the emperor, they became in practice powerful ministers, who received great rewards and honour. The rule of the freedmen, who, though efficient, were arrogant and corrupt, was resented by the nobility, but the practice was continued to some extent under later emperors.⁶ One innovation of Claudius' reign was the formation of a State secretariat within the imperial household staffed by freedmen, but it was not only freedmen of servile origin who assumed the names of the emperor. The British client king COGIDVBNVS assumed the names TIBERIVS CLAUDIVS COGIDVBNVS.⁷

³ *Trans. Flintshire Hist. Soc.*, XIII (1952-3), 5-33.

⁴ *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, 1215a, b. Four examples.

⁵ *P. Somerset A.N.H.S.*, 101/2 (1956-7), 82.

⁶ M. Cary, *A History of Rome*, 2nd ed., 1954, 527.

⁷ R. G. Collingwood and J. N. L. Myres, *Roman Britain*, 2nd ed., 1937, 79, 87.

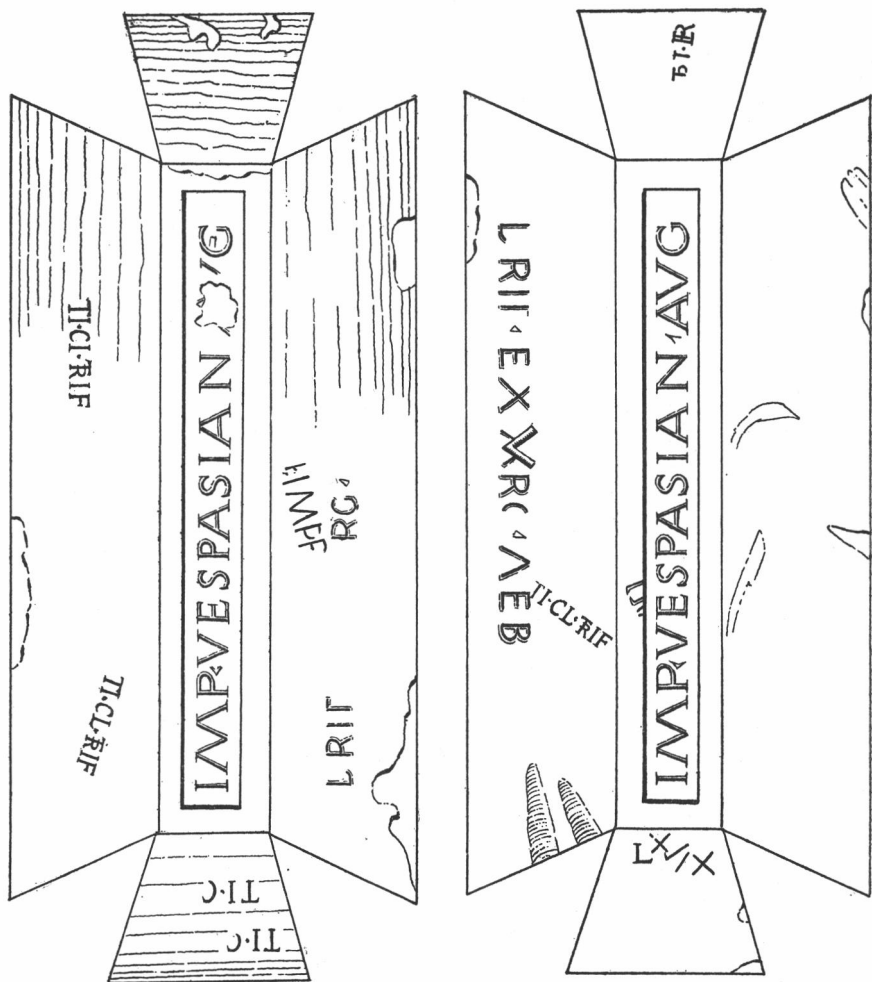


FIG. 10. Roman pigs of lead from the Mendips.

The name TI. CL. TR. conjures up the picture of a freedman, or possibly a British mining expert, given his freedom after conquest in order that he might be of use to the Romans in exploiting the lead. A man of 30 years of age, who gained his freedom under Claudius, say, in A.D. 50 would have been 59 if he survived to the end of the reign of Vespasian. His useful working life, as one having the oversight of mines, might well have gone on into the reign of Domitian. There is therefore no obstacle to the acceptance of this idea of the identity of the man operating the Mendip mines for Vespasian with the man, bearing a like name, operating the Derbyshire mines of Lutudaron (at a date unknown), probably as a lessee, just as C. NIPIVS ASCANIVS is shown conclusively by Mr. Graham Webster to have operated the Mendip mines for Nero in A.D. 60, and also in his own name at a date unknown.

Further evidence pointing in the same general direction is provided by a study of the list of all pigs of lead of the Roman type found in Britain up to 1952 compiled by Mr. Webster. To this list must be added the recent discoveries of the four pigs from Green Ore on Mendip, the Carsington pig and the pig SOC. LVT. BRIT. EX. ARG. from Woodale Farm, Ellerker in the East Riding (SE. 937305) that was found 1,000 yds. N.E. of Ermine Street;⁸ these bring the total up to 68. From this list it is notable that the LVT BR EX ARG of the TI CL TR inscription from Lutudaron⁹ is matched by the BRIT LVT EX ARG of the pigs of C. IVLIVS PROTVS also from Lutudaron five examples,¹⁰ the LVT BRIT EX ARG of the SOCII or partnership also from Lutudaron¹¹ three examples, and also by the BRIT EX ARG of the Mendip pigs associated with Vespasian seven examples.¹² That partnership mining was going on in Vespasianic times is evidenced by the two SOCII inscriptions from Clausentum (out of these seven) bearing Vespasian's

⁸ *J.R.S.*, XLVIII (1958), 152.

⁹ *C.I.L.*, VII, 1215a.

¹⁰ *C.I.L.*, VII, 1216; *Ephemeris Epigraphica*, IX, 1265; *J.R.S.*, XXXI (1941), 145, no. 15.

¹¹ *J.R.S.*, XXXI (1941), 145, nos. 16, 17; XLVIII (1958), 152.

¹² *E.E.*, III, 121a; *Proc. Soc. Ant. London*, XXXI (1918-9), 36.

name, both cold stamped NOVEG SOC NO as given by Webster.¹³ Five of the seven in all bear private or partnership titles.

By Hadrian's reign (A.D. 117-38) the legend on the pigs has changed and is simply MET LVT.¹⁴ The BRIT EX ARG has apparently been dropped. The Shropshire pigs of the reign of Hadrian, five in all,¹⁵ show no comparable legend nor do the Hadrianic pigs from Bath and Hertfordshire.¹⁶ While it is true that there are seven Vespasianic pigs which do not bear any comparable legend to the BRIT EX ARG,¹⁷ this legend is for the present only datable to the reign of Vespasian. This raises a presumption, which may or may not be displaced by other evidence yet to be discovered, that pigs bearing such a legend are *prima facie* datable to the reign of Vespasian or thereabouts. And this in its turn supports the suggestion made by Graham Webster that we are dealing with one and the same TI CL TR(?) on the Derbyshire and the Mendip pigs, even though complete certainty is denied us.

The certainty, which attaches to the Flintshire case of C. Nipius Ascanius, is sufficient to assure us that there was nothing against the stamping of the pigs with the names of private owners, rather than imperial names, in the second half of the 1st century, and calls for some qualification of the statement made on the Carmel Flintshire pig, "In this instance the lessee (C. Nipius Ascanius) is a private individual and belonged to the 2nd century".¹⁸ He must now be assigned to the 1st century, and it seems not improbable that the same assignation should now be made to C. Julius Protus, the lessee from Lutudaron, though not to P. Rubrius Abascantus and L. Aruconus Verecundus, two other lessees from Lutudaron, whose pigs do not bear the BRIT LVT EX ARG legend, but instead METALLI LVTVDARES or METAL

¹³ *T. Flintshire H.S.*, XIII (1952-3), 33, n32-3.

Richmond reads the first word as NOVAEC, *Trans. Newcomen Soc.*, XX, 145.

¹⁴ *C.I.L.*, VII, 1208.

¹⁵ *C.I.L.*, VII, 1209a, b, c, e, f.

¹⁶ *C.I.L.*, VII, 1209d; *E.E.*, 1264a.

¹⁷ *Flintshire C.I.L.*, VII, 1204, 1295; *E.E.*, VII, 1121, IX, 1264; *Mendips E.E.*, III, 121b, c; W. Camden, *Britannia*, 1594 ed., 470.

¹⁸ *J.R.S.*, XLI (1951), 142 n8.

LVTVD, the significance of silver mining having possibly been discounted at a later date.¹⁹ See the MET LVT quoted above.

As for the extension of the name TRIF, though it must be to some extent a guess between two or three possibilities, there is something to be said for Professor Palmer's suggestion of TRIFAVSTVS, or "thrice fortunate". This might well have been appropriate enough for one who had suffered the misfortune of subjection to the Roman yoke, had survived the ordeal and had been raised to an unexpected position of power and responsibility. It might well be the romanization of a British name conveying the same sentiment.

The fact that some of the Mendip and Flintshire pigs bear the emperor's name, plus cold stamps to indicate the name of the official responsible for the mines, does raise the question whether the pigs bearing only an official's name might have been more or less contemporary with those bearing an imperial name together with the official's name on a cold stamp. In this connection it is worth noting that under the Derbyshire lead mining customs, which stretch back to pre-Norman and possibly to Roman times in this island, the Crown in right of the mineral field known as the King's Field is entitled to every thirteenth dish of lead ore. May it not have been so in Roman imperial times? Could it have been that the lead due to the emperor was cast into pigs bearing his name (with the official's or lessee's name cold stamped to show that it came from him), whereas the other lead, available for ordinary commercial purposes, was cast with only the name of the official or lessee, or without any legend at all other than possibly a mark, made after casting, to indicate the excess weight over the recognized standard? Though no certain answers can be given to such questions, it is useful to bear them in mind in seeking an explanation of the introduction of private and partnership, as well as imperial, names on some of the pigs which have so far been revealed.

The only pig from Derbyshire, which is clearly datable to an emperor (Hadrian), is that found on Cromford

¹⁹ *C.I.L.*, VII, 1214; *E.E.*, IX, 1266.

Nether Moor near Wirksworth, and it omits the BRIT EX ARG legend.²⁰ The evidence considered above, though not conclusive, seems to point to an exploitation of the Derbyshire lead mines by the Romans in Flavian times by imperial, private or partnership mining, with the probability that thirteen of the sixteen inscribed pigs from Lutudaron, so far discovered, are of or about that period by reason of the BRIT EX ARG legend, which they bear in common with seven of the nine Mendip pigs clearly of Vespasianic date.

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²⁰ C.I.L., VII, 1208.