

## Miscellanea

### STONE AXE-HAMMER FROM OLD WITHINGTON, NR. MACCLESFIELD

1. In November, 1959, a perforated stone axe-hammer was found by Master Richard Bloor in a potato field at Old Withington, near Macclesfield (National Grid Reference: Sheet 110/826718). It was submitted to the Grosvenor Museum where it was identified as a typical example of these Bronze Age implements, and subsequently referred to Mr. G. Russell Coope of the Department of Geology, Birmingham University, for petrological identification (results not yet to hand). The implement remains in the hands of the finder.

### FRAGMENT OF ROMAN MILITARY DIPLOMA FROM MIDDLEWICH.

2. One of the outstanding acquisitions by the Grosvenor Museum during 1959 was a fragment of a Roman military diploma from Middlewich (fig. 1). It was actually found in the winter of 1938/9 during the building of houses on the west side of King Street, Middlewich (Nat. Grid Ref. 110/704665), together with fragments of Samian ware and Roman coarse pottery. The diploma fragment

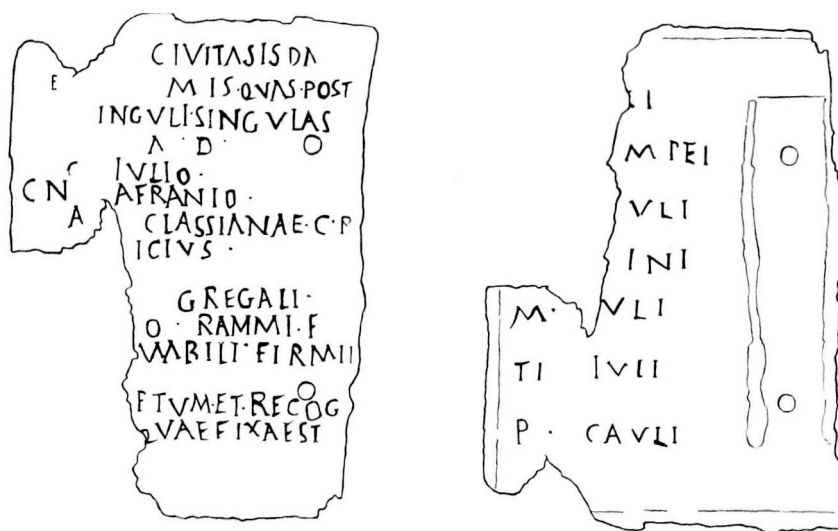


FIG. 1 (Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$ )

remained in the possession of the finder, Mr. J. H. Mann of Middlewich, until brought to the notice of the Grosvenor Museum by Mr. P. H. Davies of Sandbach School in June, 1959, and was subsequently bought for the Museum collection (Accession No. 61R59). Middlewich has, of course, long been known as the site of a Roman settlement<sup>1</sup> and is currently identified<sup>2</sup> as *Salinae*, a name which suggests

<sup>1</sup>cf. W. T. Watkin, *Roman Cheshire*, pp. 243—251.

<sup>2</sup>I. A. Richmond, *Roman Britain*, p. 170.

Roman exploitation of the salt deposits of mid-Cheshire. King Street itself is the line of the Roman road leading north to the Roman settlement at Wilderspool, near Warrington (*Condote*) and the pattern of finds at Middlewich suggests that there may have been occupation along both sides of the road. It is hoped that a programme of excavation begun during 1960 under the direction of Mr. D. W. Harding will throw more light on the extent and history of the site.

Diplomas, as they are called, are discharge certificates issued to veterans of auxiliary regiments, granting Roman citizenship to them and their children and legalizing their marriages. They are copies, adapted for issue to individual soldiers, of a decree by the Emperor granting these privileges to all the eligible men in the army of one province or in a group of regiments of that army; the decree itself was published on a bronze tablet set up in the Forum at Rome. In their complete state, diplomas consist of two bronze sheets, each about 9in. by 6in., hinged by metal rings and bound together by a triple thread. On page 1 is the whole text of the decree, the name of the veteran concerned, his regiment and its commander, on the inside pages the text is repeated and on page 4 are the names and seals of seven witnesses.

The Middlewich diploma consists of part of the second sheet, giving a portion of the text inside and the names of the witnesses. It is to be published *in extenso* by Mr. R. P. Wright, F.S.A. in the *Journal of Roman Studies*, and all that need be said here is that it was issued to a private soldier (*gregalis* - 1.10) of the *ala Classiana* (1.8), a cavalry regiment stationed in Britain in A.D. 105, when C. Julius Bassus and Cn. Afranius Dexter were consuls (11. 6, 7). The full text, giving a list of all the regiments involved, can be restored from another diploma of the same year found at Sydenham in Kent; similarly, the names of the 7 witnesses can be restored from a diploma found in Hungary, also issued in A.D. 105.

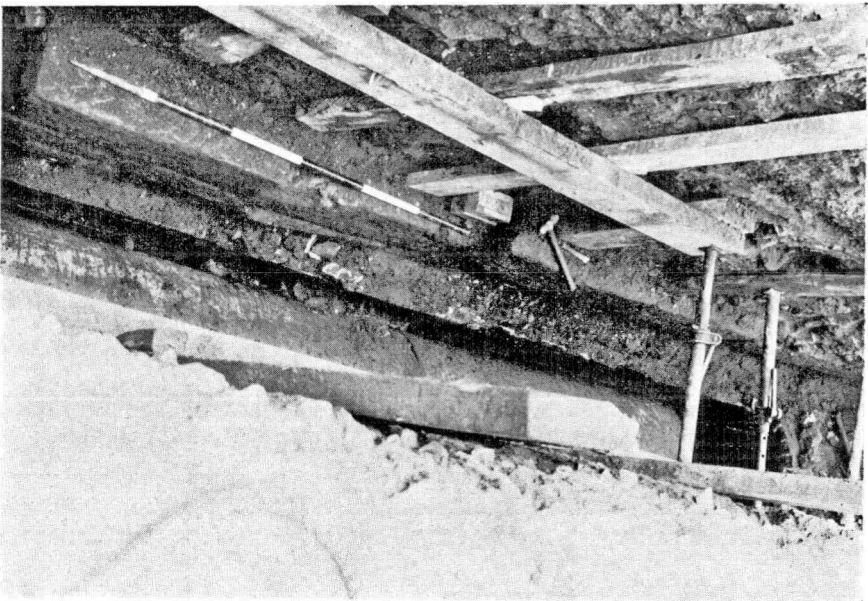
About twelve other diplomas, complete or fragmentary, are known from Britain, the most perfect, curiously enough, being that found at Malpas in 1812 and now in the British Museum; this was issued in A.D. 103<sup>3</sup>.

### ROMAN WALL IN LOWER BRIDGE STREET.

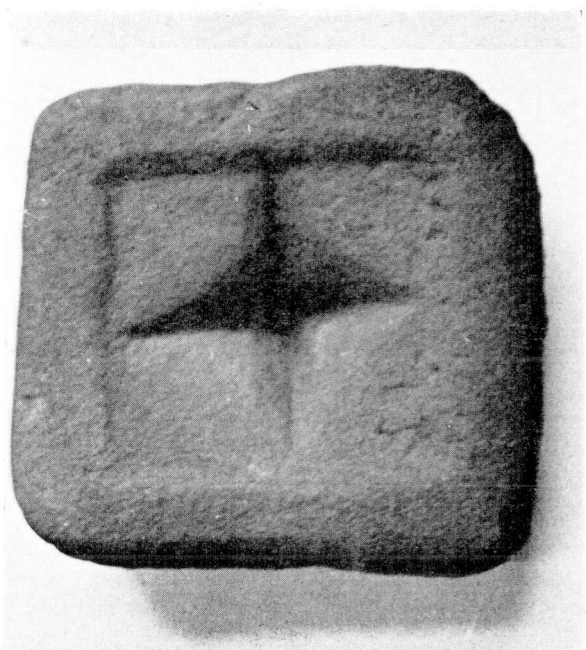
3. In February, 1959, during the renewal of the main sewer running down Lower Bridge Street, by the insertion of concrete piping into the original brick culvert, the top of a massive sandstone wall was found at a depth of 7ft. below the modern road surface. It first appeared in the sewer trench 90ft. north of the north face of the Bridgegate and was traced southwards for a distance of 20ft., beyond which it had been destroyed by the construction of the brick culvert. The east face of the wall lies 26½ft. east of the front of *The Bear and Billet* (fig. 2); as exposed, it was composed of four courses of sandstone blocks, closely jointed and hammer-dressed, standing to a height of 2½ft. (pl. IIIa). It is not possible, in view of the circumstances of the discovery, to say how much deeper it may go.

<sup>3</sup>cf. W. T. Watkin, *op. cit.* p. 287 *et seq.*

PLATE III.



(a) Roman Wall in Lower Bridge Street.



(b) Stone piscina from Aldford.



The function and date of the wall remain a problem but there are certain pointers. One is that the natural sandstone lies only a matter of 2ft. below the surface along most of Lower Bridge Street and in fact the sewer mentioned above has been cut in the solid rock. At a point just north of Shipgate Street, the rock shelves steeply and from there south to the Bridgegate the sewer and the wall now described lie in made ground. This suggests that at some stage the channel of the Dee may have been much wider than today and that the lower end of Lower Bridge Street is reclaimed ground. But the line of the City Wall makes it clear that this reclamation

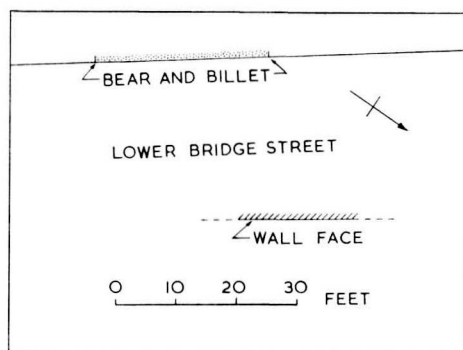


FIG. 2

probably took place early in the Middle Ages, and that the newly discovered wall belongs to a period before that. Another point is the deviation to the south-east of Lower Bridge Street as it approaches the Bridgegate so that it no longer continues the reasonably direct Bridge Street—Lower Bridge Street line. The sandstone wall, however, lies fairly well on this line and it is suggested that it may well represent the eastern revetment of an earlier road. In fact, to go farther, it may well be the eastern edge of the Roman causeway leading to the bridge or ford across the Dee by which Watling Street led south from the fortress at Chester.

#### ROMAN POTTERY FROM FOREGATE STREET.

4. In January, 1959, the Post Office authorities excavated in front of the premises of W. H. Smith and Son Ltd. in Foregate St., just outside the Eastgate. A small quantity of Roman pottery was recovered and subsequently presented to the Museum by Master G. D. Jones; it included Samian ware of late first/early second century date and there is also a lead disc,  $1\frac{3}{4}$  in. in diameter,  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. thick, and with a central perforation  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. in diameter. A foot-ring from a Samian vessel bears the graffito IV.

#### STONE PISCINA FROM ALDFORD.

5. In May, 1959, a small excavation was carried out at Blobb Hill, the site of the Norman motte at Aldford (Nat. Grid Ref.—Sheet 109/419596) by two

Aldford boys, Brian Powley and Malcolm Mursell. A cut was made into the east side of the mound just below the crest and a mass of tumbled masonry exposed, with traces of mortar. The writer visited the site and was able to locate a wall face at this point, which suggests that there may originally have been a shell keep. From the masonry was recovered a stone piscina (pl. IIIb) which is now in the Grosvenor Museum (36M59). It is a simple affair, 8in. square and 4in. thick, with a central perforation,  $\frac{1}{2}$ in. in diameter; to this are connected four drainage channels, arranged in a cruciform pattern. No close dating is possible, but the simplicity of design suggests that it may well be as early as the Norman period.

#### FINDS FROM BANGOR-ON-DEE.

6. In September, 1959, the digging of foundations for an extension to Cadbury's factory at Bangor-on-Dee uncovered a rubbish-pit or dump in the bend of the Dee (Nat. Grid Ref.—Sheet 109/388465). A considerable quantity of late 17th/early 18th century pottery was recovered, together with stamped bowls of clay tobacco-pipes, a decorated shoe-buckle, buttons and thimbles. A 17th century Shrewsbury token was also found, of which details are as follows:—

*Obverse* OWEN ROBERTS—a wheatsheaf

*Reverse* IN SALOPP 1666—HIS HALFPENY

The finds are now in the Grosvenor Museum.

#### COINS—VARIOUS.

7. The outstanding coin discovery, or rather re-discovery, of 1959 was a hoard of medieval "short-cross" pennies from Newhall, near Nantwich. They were actually found in the winter of 1939 during building extensions to Newhall Dairies; during the digging of a deep drain, the workmen came across the coins at a depth of about 5ft. From conversation with two of the men still working in the area, the coins were apparently in a bag which disintegrated and the quantity was estimated at a "shovelful", which suggests that there may have been between 1,000 and 2,000 coins in the hoard. Nothing was thought of them at the time and they were thrown back with the exception of a few retained by three of the workmen.

In October, 1959, three of the coins were submitted to the Grosvenor Museum for identification by Mr. E. Lloyd, a master at Nantwich Grammar School, to whom they had been brought by the daughter of one of the workmen, Mr. Thomas. A hoard was suspected and eventually confirmed; a visit was paid to the site at the invitation of Mr. N. Keeling of Newhall Dairies and the find-spot examined (Nat. Grid Ref.—Sheet 110/609454), on the bank of a small stream known as Sales Brook. There was clearly no hope of recovering the remainder of the coins which now lie beneath the corner of a building and a concrete floor. An inquest was held at Nantwich on March 16th, 1960, when those in private possession, a total of 97, were declared Treasure Trove and the finders suitably rewarded with their market

value. The British Museum retained 7 of the coins for the national collection and 90 were bought by the Grosvenor Museum (60M60).

The hoard is to be published in detail by Mr. R. H. M. Dolley, F.S.A. and I am indebted to him for preliminary details. The coins belong to the reigns of Henry II and Richard I and were apparently deposited round about the year 1193, assuming that the coins available can be regarded as a representative sample of the whole hoard. The following mints are represented:—

CANTERBURY	CARLISLE	EXETER	LINCOLN	LONDON
NORTHAMPTON	NORWICH	OXFORD	RHUDDLAN	WILTON
WINCHESTER	WORCESTER	YORK.		

with a strong preponderance of London mint. One important new fact to emerge from a study of the hoard is that the Rhuddlan mint was operating, and so presumably in English hands, much earlier in the short-cross period (1180-1247) than had hitherto been thought.

Other coins found or reported during 1959 were as follows:—

- i) *folles* of Diocletian (A.D. 284—304) with reverse legend SACRA MONET AVGG ET CAESS NOSTR and AQP in exergue (mint of Aquileia); found in field by Highcroft Avenue, Congleton, and now in possession of Mr. G. Brown, 33, Lawton Street, Biddulph.
- ii) bronze coin of Constantine I as Augustus (A.D. 308—337) with reverse legend VIRTVS EXERCIT. VOT. XX; found during alterations to the Bridge Street Post Office, Chester.
- iii) bronze coin of house of Constantine of CONSTANTINOPOLIS type, found in Abbey Square, Chester.
- iv) four bronze tetradrachms of Alexandria, one of Probus (A.D. 276—282), two of Diocletian (A.D. 284—304), and one of Maximianus I (A.D. 284—308) found in the garden of 22, Carrick Road, Curzon Park, Chester.
- v) half-groat of Henry VI (1422—1461) of the Calais mint; found in the garden of 44, Mount Drive, Nantwich.

F.H.T.

