

Review.

A HOARD OF ROMAN FOLLES ETC. FOUND AT FYFIELD, BERKS.
By E. T. Leeds, M.A., F.S.A. Published at Oxford
(University Press) for the Ashmolean Museum. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ ×
7 $\frac{1}{2}$. Pp. 63 + 8 plates. 15s. *od.*

Roman coin hoards, especially those of the middle and later phases of the Empire, as it affected Britain, are not infrequently found within the area occupied by the Romans in this country.¹ By themselves such hoards are of little archaeological value since their place of discovery is most often unmarked by any other finds, except perhaps for a vessel containing the deposit. They usually occur, however, within hailing distance of a Roman road, station, villa or earthwork, and it is reasonable to suppose that in most cases the owners, troubled by local or widespread disturbances by monetary inflation or by high taxation, intended to recover their buried wealth in more propitious times. A hoard as large as that discovered at Fyfield, Berkshire, in March 1944, and now housed in the Ashmolean Museum, is of exceptional importance for its numismatic content and the additional light it throws on the economic history of the period.

Mint marks and recognised methods of abbreviation for descriptions must of necessity be adopted in classifying large hoards of coins for publication. This form of presentation, occupying about half the Fyfield report, will mean little to the general reader and baffle the imagination of most; but a catalogue of inscriptions, tables of mints and types are of the utmost interest to students of Roman Britain and to the numismatist in particular. In this monograph Mr. Leeds has again amply demonstrated his untiring energy and a scholarly and intimate knowledge of numismatics.

In a paper of sixty-three pages, well illustrated by eight plates showing ninety-six coins, many aspects of the hoard, including the monetary reforms adopted during the first period of the Tetrachies (296–305 A.D.) have been discussed. It is suggested that the unmarked series of *folles* which constitute one fifth of the hoard were probably minted in Britain at "travelling" mints for payment to the troops, since the London mark (LON) occurs on several of the earlier issues of Diocletian and Maximinian and again in a new form (PLN) on the reduced coinage of Constantine, in 306. The unmarked pieces are rarely found on the continent and everything points to their being

¹ C. H. V. Sutherland (*Coinage and Currency in Roman British, 1937*) lists no less than 363 recorded hoards dating from Septimius Severus (c. 200 A.D.) to a period subsequent to the withdrawal of the Roman legions in A.D. 410. Of these, six hoards have been found in Berkshire and six in Oxfordshire.

struck in this country but, as Mr. Leeds has pointed out, not at the London mint. The style of the costume of Genius in the GENIO POPVLI ROMANI series has been minutely studied and the change from *chlamys* to *himation* noted; this was probably a result of the growth of Christianity in the West. Another interesting and original point made by Mr. Leeds is that S F, which appears on the new issue of the GENIO POPVLI ROMANI type following the MONETA SACRA series, may stand for *sacer follis* and was so placed as a warning to would-be clippers that the coin was divine and inviolable.

The careful attempt at classification and dating will be of utmost importance in the study of similar hoards of this period; thirty-six of the coin types have been published for the first time. Coins are almost certainly the surest guide to the absolute chronology of sites, to the dating of levels and floors and quite often for establishing pottery forms and other material. The more closely a coin type can be placed within a reign or dynasty the more valuable it becomes in giving a *lower* dating to other objects when found in undisputed association with them.

W. A. SEABY.