

TWO HOARDS OF ROMAN COINS FROM CALVERTON

By H. B. MATTINGLY

THE village of Calverton, which lies some six miles north of Nottingham, has yielded little evidence of Roman occupation. Recently, however, two very similar coin-hoards were unearthed there at sites less than three hundred yards apart. The first appeared in June 1959 during work on the foundations of Manor Park Infants' School, Collier Road, and the second during the building of a house in Crookdole Lane about April 1960. No structural remains were detected with either hoard and the only related archaeological material was the earthenware pot in which the first was concealed.¹

The following is a preliminary report of both hoards together with some comments on their importance for the history of Roman Britain. Fortunately the first hoard was preserved almost complete, thanks to prompt action. Even so at least a hundred coins passed into private hands and it has proved impossible so far to track down more than thirty-four of these. The total of coins examined by me is 1,460. The loss may seem trifling matched with this figure, but it does slightly damage the hoard's evidence and make my conclusions more tentative than perhaps they need have been. The second hoard was very likely almost as large as the first, but over two-thirds are said to have been thrown away by the workmen as useless soon after discovery. The portion that was saved suffered further losses until only 293 coins remained. They probably give us a fair cross-section of the whole, yet how much better it would be if we could compare the two hoards in their entirety.²

¹Mr. C. M. Daniels, who was excavating for the Ministry of Works at Southwell, dug trial trenches near the find-spot of the first hoard, but found nothing. For the pot *see* figure 1.

²My thanks are due to Nottinghamshire Education Committee for allowing me to keep the first hoard at Nottingham University and study it at my leisure; to the Rev. H. O. Hoyle and Mr. M. W. Barley whose timely intervention ensured that it reached me virtually intact; and to Dr. E. Addison whose help in cleaning both hoards was quite invaluable. Most of what survives of the second hoard has been acquired by Nottingham Castle Museum from Mr. G. E. Stirland, who was responsible for rescuing it. A hoard that has suffered *any* loss cannot be dated with full certainty. *See* further p. 13.

KEY TO PLATE I

Except for No. 16 all the specimens shown are from Calverton I. Nos. 1-10 are regular official issues; the rest are "barbarous" copies.

Nos. 1-5. The portraits are of Salonina, wife of Gallienus; Claudius II; Victorinus; Tetricus I and II.

6-10. Five much-copied reverses. SALVS AVG. (the goddess of "Health" feeding a serpent, which rises from an altar); INVICTVS (the "unconquered" Sun-god striding left with whip); SPES AVGG. ("Hope" walking left holding a flower); CONSECRATIO (flaming altar, symbolising the deification of Claudius II); PIETAS AVGVSTOR. (sacrificial jug and implements - the Emperors' "piety"). 6 and 7 are common types of Victorinus, 8 and 10 of the Tetrici.

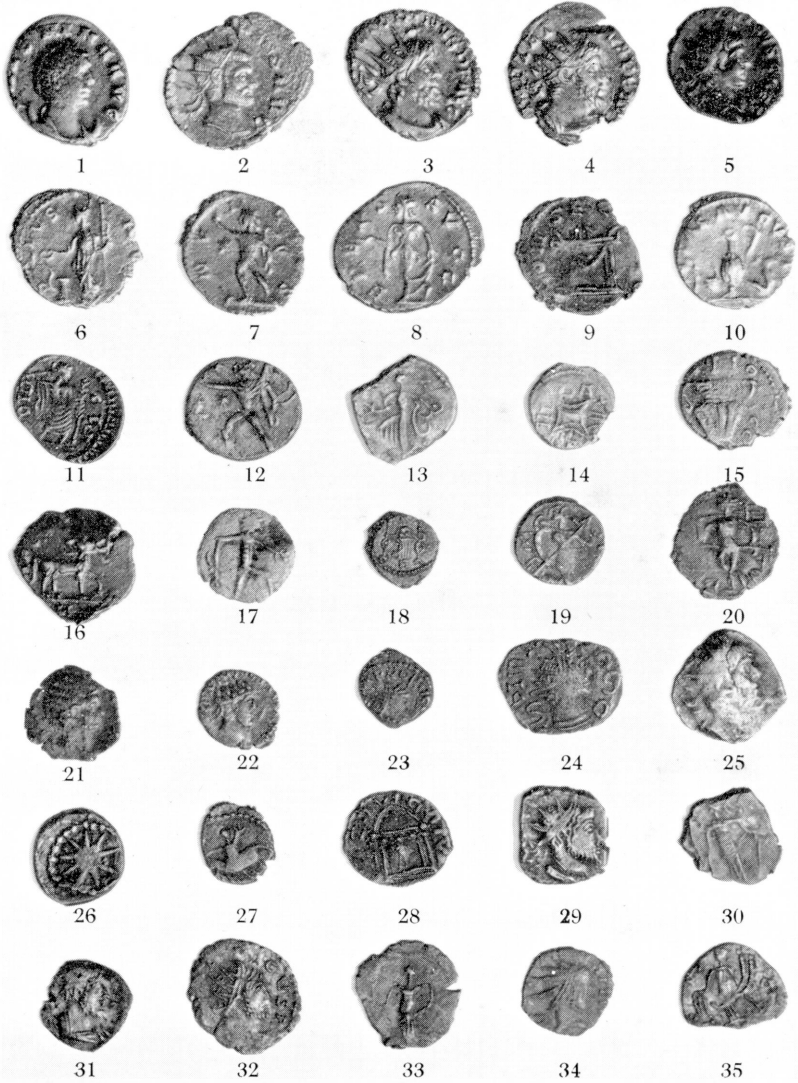
11-15. Copies of Postumus' COS. III reverse (Victory and palm); INVICTVS (vigorous and finely modelled); possibly SPES AVGG. (half abstract); CONSECRATIO (an abstract design); PIETAS AVGVSTOR. (reduced to a large ornamental jug).

16-20. A centaur walking right with bow (a rare type of copy from Gallienus); a strange version of INVICTVS; FIDES ("Loyalty") between two ensigns (a *minus* like 22/3 and 27); two lively versions of MARS VICTOR (the war-god carrying spear and trophy).

21-25. "Portraits" of Salonina (see No. 1); Tacitus; Probus; Tetricus II? (see No. 5); Victorinus (see No. 3).

26-28. Wheel or star (an original type); "Emperor" on horseback (copied from Aurelian or Probus; very rare); standing figure in a temple (another rare kind of copy; from Probus).

29-35. Four issues from a local mint(s)—obverse followed by reverse, except for No. 31. Of 29/30, Calverton I had 20 identical specimens, Calverton II 6; for 31 the figures are 34 and 8; for 32-3 they are 33 and 4; for 34-5 Calverton II has 9 against Calverton I's 18.



PL. I. COINS FROM THE CALVERTON HOARDS

Each hoard consists of a nucleus of base *antoniniani*—the standard silver coin in the later third century—and a mass of those local copies which are widely found in Britain and Gaul and are misleadingly termed 'barbarous'.¹ In fact they often show real artistry and the best are hard to distinguish from the products of the regular imperial mints. Naturally there is great variety in the quality of the copies and, though the obverses are normally better than the reverses, their makers were sometimes content with mere caricature on both sides. It was apparently enough if the coin had a head of sorts with the spiked or 'radiate' crown which the Emperor invariably wears on the *antoninianus*. Many of the copies are smaller than the average *antoninianus* and some are really minute, c. 5-7 mm. in diameter. The range in metal and in the technique of preparing it for striking is hardly less remarkable than the range in style and size. This wide variety has caused much controversy about the date and significance of these 'barbarous radiates'. No one now doubts that there was vigorous contemporary production of copies in the third century and that this included some of very small diameter. A few leading numismatists, however, still believe that the practice was revived at the very end of the fourth century and that small radiate copies partly supplied the needs of Britain after the end of Roman rule in A.D. 410.² It is probably true to say that most numismatists have come round to the view of the archaeologists, who hold that the production of radiate copies definitely ceased c.A.D.300.³ The Calverton hoards support this view, since they include every conceivable type of copy and yet must surely be dated firmly within the third century.

It is time to consider their composition, which can perhaps be best appreciated from the following table :

¹Though only silver-washed bronze these *antoniniani* were still silver currency from the Roman government's point of view. The copies are unashamedly base and never plated.

²For a recent restatement of the case see C. H. V. Sutherland in *Dark-Age Britain : Studies presented to E. T. Leeds* (1956), pp. 3-10.

³This view is vigorously championed by J. P. C. Kent in *Limes Studien* (Basel, 1959) pp. 63-65. P. V. Hill tells me that he no longer believes in the late datings for which he argued in *Barbarous Radiates . . .* (*Amer. Num. Soc., Notes and Monographs*, no 112, 1948).

TWO HOARDS OF ROMAN COINS
FROM CALVERTON

	Calverton I		Calverton II	
	Official	Barbarous	Official	Barbarous
<i>A. Roman Issues</i>				
Saloninus (A.D.258/260)	1	—	—	—
Gallienus (A.D.260/268)	29	15	4	5
Salonina (A.D.260/268)	2	2	—	—
Claudius II (A.D.268/270)	18	11	3	2
Quintillus (A.D.270)	2	—	—	—
Divus Claudius (A.D.270-?)	14	*	—	*
Aurelian (A.D.270/275)	—	1	1	—
Tacitus (A.D.275/276)	—	4	—	3
Probus (A.D.276/282)	—	5	—	2
	—	—	—	—
	66	—	8	—
	—	—	—	—
<i>B. Gallic Issues</i>				
Postumus (A.D.260/268)	1	1	—	—
Victorinus (A.D.268/270)	36	*	3	*
Tetricus I (A.D.270/274)	95	**	16	**
Tetricus II (A.D.270/274)	43	**	5	**
	—	—	—	—
	175	1219	24	261

* indicates many coins.

** do. very many coins.

The first point worth noting is that the issues of the Gallic usurpers are three times more numerous in each hoard than those of the legitimate Roman Emperors. Moreover the Gallic issues are massed on the Tetrici, father and son, and Postumus's long reign is marked by only one coin. The earliest coin in the hoards is the piece of Saloninus, the son of Gallienus, whom Postumus put to death at Cologne on seizing power. After years of joint rule with Valerian, Gallienus had been suddenly left alone in a menacing situation when the Persians defeated and captured his father in Mesopotamia. It is small wonder that Postumus's attempt succeeded in this crisis and that he managed to extend his control over Britain and parts of Spain. The Gallic Empire in fact maintained its independence, pouring out a flood of coinage, until Aurelian felt strong enough to attack it with full force and compel surrender.¹ Nor was the loss of the western provinces the only disquieting consequence of Valerian's débacle. The silver currency of the Empire collapsed in a final great debase-ment. Previously the *antoninianus* had been made of an alloy containing about 25% silver. Now the silver content slumped to a mere 4% and the coin became basically a bronze piece

¹See *Cambridge Ancient History*, XI, pp. 182 ff ; 305 ff. (evidence and dating problems).

disguised by a thin silver-plating. For much of his reign Postumus resisted the evil precedent and pursued a policy of sound money, but in the end he too had to conform and his successors often outdid the Central Empire at its worst. After about A.D.268 the silver wash was rather carelessly applied, and public confidence was now harder hit than ever. The coins were seen for what they really were after only a short circulation.¹ These two Calverton hoards, in which only the Saloninus piece can decently be termed silver, form a classic illustration of Gresham's law. The old silver currency has been virtually driven from circulation and with it all the better issues of Postumus.²

The distribution of the official issues in the hoards is typical of the period from A.D.274 to 286 in Britain. The mass of currency was composed of the wretched issues poured out between A.D.260 and 274, though normally hoards buried after Aurelian's reign contain a small proportion of the reformed *antoniniani* of Aurelian and his successors. Here there is a complete blank after A.D.274, but it is possible that a few of these bigger, heavier and better-silvered pieces have been abstracted from the first hoard or lost in the unfortunate disintegration of the second. In any event the hoards could not have been buried before *c.* A.D.280, since they contain copies with the names of Tacitus and Probus and in addition one certain example each of a barbarous adaptation of one of Probus's reverse types.³ Need we, however, come any later

¹See *Roman Imperial Coinage*, V, i, p. 7 f. and ii, p. 322 f. and 328. It is worth noting, however, that a few of the Tetrican coins in the first Calverton hoard retain much of their silvering. The best-looking coins are one each of Salonina and Claudius II and two of Victorinus, which preserve their silvering intact.

²For Postumus compare the evidence of the hoard from Goadby Marwood (*Trans. Leics. Arch. Hist. Soc.*, XXII (1956), p. 25 ff.), which was buried *c.* A.D.280. Out of nearly 1900 official coins there were only 20 of Postumus compared with over 700 of Tetricus I. In the hoard from Bavai (France), which closed A.D.289, there were only 7 poor specimens of Postumus out of a total of 6659!

³See Sutherland, *Coinage and Currency in Roman Britain* (1937), pp. 54 ff. The solitary coins of Saloninus and Postumus appeared among the 34 'lost' Calverton coins which I managed subsequently to see and record. It is clearly possible that the blank after Aurelian is as illusory as the blank that I had established for Postumus. The hoard from La Vineuse (France), however, parallels Calverton I as it stands: there were no official coins after Aurelian, yet imitations of Probus proved it to be of later date.

than this reign? Barbarous radiates, including those of *minimi* size, are sometimes found in close association with coins of Carausius, ruler of a separatist British Empire from A.D.286 to 293. The most famous example is the hoard of *minimi* from the theatre at Verulamium, which was found in earth filling sealed by a cement floor of *c.*A.D.300. Thus, though no regular coins were found in the hoard, there can be no doubt of its third century date. It belongs firmly to a stratum in which the latest coin is one of Carausius, that was probably struck near the end of his reign.¹ Such evidence should not prevent us from dating the Calverton hoards before Carausius, even though the majority of the copies are smaller than the regular coins and an appreciable group, on any reckoning, must rank as *minimi*. It may well be that production of *minimi* reached its peak under Carausius, but the steady decline in size probably began some time earlier.² It is hard to account for the complete absence of Carausius' *antoniniani* if the hoards were buried at any time within his reign. Even if we explain this by the presumed loss of the few specimens which may once have been included, there remains the objection that not one of the numerous copies either in portrait, legend or reverse type seems to be based on Carausius' coinage.³ Indeed there is no clear trace of imitation of *any* Emperor later than Probus. We may then date the hoard with some confidence *c.* A.D. 280-282 and this conclusion appears to be confirmed by the evidence of a similar mixed hoard which was found recently at Longton near Stoke-on-Trent.⁴

¹See T. V. Wheeler, *Numismatic Chronicle* (1937), pp. 211 ff. and Kathleen Kenyon, *Archaeologia*, LXXXVIII (1936), pp. 236 ff. (with similar evidence from other parts of the theatre).

²*Minimi* is the conventional word for copies ranging from about 5 to 10 mm. in diameter.

³One portrait in Calverton I has a slightly 'Carausian' look, but the impression is not strong enough to be convincing. Whether consciously or not copyists under Carausius would surely have been influenced by his striking portraiture and individual types.

⁴It contains 2485 coins in all, of which at least 600 are barbarous. I have so far seen it only in an uncleaned state at the British Museum. Of the identifiable coins, Mr. R. A. G. Carson informs me, 12 are of Tacitus and 2 of Probus; no later Emperor seems to be represented. A date *c.* A.D.280 would be appropriate. The barbarous coins range widely in size and in many ways resemble those from Calverton. The pattern of the Goadby Marwood hoard (*see* n. 2, p. 13) from *c.* A.D.280 closely parallels that of the official issues in Calverton I and II, suggesting the same date.

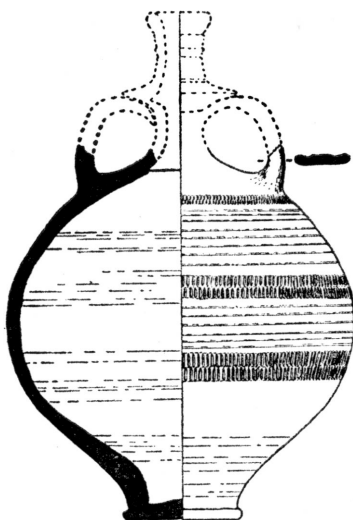


FIG. 1.—FLAGON CONTAINING CALVERTON HOARD 1

The pattern of the barbarous copies from Calverton corresponds closely with the general pattern of this currency as known from British hoards. There is hardly a coin, however, crude, that does not ultimately derive its reverse from an *antoninianus*. Even where there is no legend or merely a jumble of letters and the head is an unrecognisable caricature, the reverse type can often be definitely traced back to its original in a fairly narrow repertoire. The Emperors most often imitated, whether by portrait, legend or type, are the two Tetrici, who easily predominate, and Victorinus. The memorial issue struck to honour the heroic Claudius II after his death is also frequently copied, perhaps because its two types (Altar and Eagle) gave full scope to a native love for abstract design. Otherwise it is normally the commonest types of the three Gallic Emperors which provide the models for the reverse.¹ On my table I have merely noted the four main classes of copy with ** or * to indicate their frequency in the Calverton hoards, since it is quite typical and nothing is gained by attempting to establish precise figures.

¹The best treatment of the style of the barbarous radiates and their range of model is found in Sutherland's *Coinage and Currency in Roman Britain* (1937), pp. 126 ff.

It does seem worthwhile, however, to record the number of specimens of rare kinds of imitation, such as those of Gallienus and Claudius II's own coinage. Female portraits are extremely rare, but Calverton I has two good copies of Gallienus's wife Salonina. Copies of Postumus are less rare than the table suggests, but they are usually full-size forgeries and almost contemporary with the originals; the one certain example here is of quite a different sort. It couples a travestied reverse of Postumus with a rendering of Victorinus's portrait and legend and shows how little the copyists came to care in time for consistency. They drew indiscriminately on all the currency still in circulation, as can be proved by many other examples. This must imply a change in the main purpose of imitation. The copyists were no longer forging *antoniniani* as such, intending to pass off their work as official coins. So much is already clear from the multiplication of copies of smaller size than the *antoniniani*, ranging right down to the true *minimi*.

We touch here on the real interest of this barbarous currency. What does it mean in social and economic terms? For how long was its manufacture tolerated by the Roman government as a necessary evil? Where did the mints operate, and were local authorities involved as well as private enterprise? We can hardly answer these questions yet, but such representative hoards as these from Calverton will richly reward continued study. There can be little doubt of the purpose which the mass of smaller or less accurate copies were meant to serve. They represent currency for all the minor transactions of everyday life and, like the eighteenth-century English tokens, flourished because of a growing shortage of official issues of small change. The old bronze coinage had been virtually suspended since the mid-260's and with it the lower denominations in the 'silver' series. Aurelian's tentative reform in A.D.274 made little difference, since he neither restored the silver in any real sense nor brought back an adequate bronze coinage of small account. In the West special local causes evidently operated to make the situation more acute and, though we cannot yet quite understand them, we see the result in the flood of smaller copies poured

out between A.D.274 and *c.* 290.¹ How they were tarified is a baffling mystery, in view of the endless variety in size and weight, but there can be no doubt that they *did* circulate freely both with each other and with official issues. Metal of all kinds was hastily commandeered for their manufacture, including brass coins of the old bronze series, base *antoniniani* and possibly billon (poor silver) *antoniniani* of Postumus. These coins were normally clipped or even cut up so as to make flans for more than one of the imitations.²

Most barbarous hoards of any size have revealed by unusual die-linkings (that is, the particular combination of dies used for obverse and reverse) which coins or groups can fairly be regarded as local products. The Calverton hoards have provided exceptionally good evidence. In the first there are four really large sets of coins, each of which is struck from the same pair of dies. There are thirty-four coins in one, thirty-three in the second, twenty in the third and eighteen in the fourth. Here we must have four issues from a nearby mint, perhaps at Calverton itself. This is confirmed by the recurrence of the same sets in the second hoard, where they number eight, four, six and nine coins respectively. Normally sets of die-linked coins break up as they travel any distance from the mint and pass into general circulation. There are some other significant die-linked sets in the first hoard. One consists of eleven coins with the portrait of Victorinus and a copy of his PROVIDENTIA reverse, another of seven with Tetricus I's portrait and a third of six which show the young beardless Cæsar Tetricus II. Here again the same pair of dies is used throughout. Finally a group of nine coins proves the use of the same reverse die with an obverse die of Salonina (2) and another of Tetricus II (7). Curiously, none of these sets are represented in the second Calverton hoard, though that may partly be due to its incompleteness. More

¹See *Roman Imperial Coinage* (Webb), V, i, p. 7 f. and ii, p. 319. Carausius' coinage reform may have ended the currency in Britain, as Kent surmises (*op. cit.*, p. 64).

²Some flans were clipped out of thin sheet metal, others properly cast. Calverton I includes two cast flans which were never struck. Dr. R. B. Waterhouse of the Metallurgy Department is engaged on analysing the metals used for the Calverton copies (some seem to have a high tin or zinc content) and the results should be instructive.

reliable is the observation, based on thorough study, that the two hoards overlap much less than might have been expected on current theory. Only six other coins in the second hoard appear to be die-duplicates of specimens in the first. There are, of course, very many coins in the two hoards which betray the same 'local' style, but equally there are a considerable number in the second which have no counterpart in the first, despite its much greater size. This suggests that some numismatists may have over-estimated the degree to which barbarous coinage was local currency with very restricted circulation. On the analogy of the English tokens it would seem reasonable to suggest that some of this currency travelled considerable distances from its original area.

We know already that a coin in the Mere (Wilts.) hoard is die-linked with a specimen found at Whitchurch (Somerset) some thirty miles away and apparently a similar link has been proved for areas as far apart as Kent and Herefordshire.¹ Unfortunately few hoards can be illustrated in full and some have been published without any photographs, so that it is difficult to compare adequately material of certain provenance, unless one is prepared to travel widely in the search. Nevertheless there is hope that real discoveries may be made by comparative study and the writer would be interested to hear of any finds of these barbarous copies that may be found in Nottinghamshire and the surrounding counties. The Longton (Staffs.) hoard promises to be most interesting in this respect. If in fact these coins did travel widely round the country by way of trade, it might one day prove possible to trace the main routes of commerce in late third century Britain and the areas which had special relations with each other. Bearing marks of their local origin, these coins are much more informative than the official uniform coinage and could become reliable tracer elements. These wider connections have not so far been observed in the Calverton material, though one coin in the first hoard seems to have been struck from an obverse die very closely related to that used for a specimen in the Mere hoard. The reverses are slightly less similar.

¹See Sutherland in *Dark Age Studies* . . . , p.9 n.33 (from P. V. Hill) and Hill, *Num. Chron.* (1951), p. 94.

In one other way the barbarous coinage can increase our knowledge of Roman Britain. That is by bringing us very vividly in contact with the artistic traditions of the native inhabitants. Like all their life at this period their coinage was thoroughly romanised in inspiration, but they gave it a strange form of their own and in it we sometimes catch glimpses of the half-submerged Celtic culture. To sympathetic eyes, these crude and bungled copies of Roman style do sometimes reveal unexpected artistic quality. We can all admire the skill and success with which the expert copyists mastered the neat Roman tradition of design, especially on the small scale of the *minimi*. But it is a limited achievement and one that tells us little of its makers. The real interest of this coinage lies where native force, imagination and sheer zest break through. Occasionally the result is a minor triumph, though hardly ever when the artist attempts the human figure. Their real strength undoubtedly lay in abstract treatment of a small repertoire of models such as the Altar and Eagle of the memorial coinage struck for Claudius II and the sacrificial implements of Tetricus II's PIETAS reverse. Here the old types are broken down, rearranged, even re-fashioned to form something refreshing and new. Very rarely an engraver creates a completely original abstract type, possibly without the help of any model. Feebleness and failure are, of course, far more common than the work which can give aesthetic satisfaction, but they are hardly less revealing. In a word, the more that this odd, varied and unjustly despised coinage is studied, the more does one begin to sense certain qualities of the men who made, used and appreciated it.

NOTE ON A FLAGON FROM CALVERTON, NOTTS.

By J. P. GILLAM

The vessel is a two-handled flagon, in white-bodied colour-coated fabric, the so-called Castor ware, with neck and handles missing. *Colchester* no. 377 has the same general form¹, and also shares the common feature of three rouletted bands; neither vessel is decorated *en barbotine* as fourth century specimens frequently are. Except that it has only one handle, *Colchester* no. 360 is also similar. While certainty is impossible, the *Colchester* flagons may well indicate the kind of tall collared neck once possessed by the Calverton flagon.

The Calverton flagon may be assigned, with fair confidence, to the Nene Valley group of kilns, as the fabric is similar in appearance to that of vessels known to have been made there, and as Calverton is less distant from this group than from *Colchester* and other centres.

In the *Colchester* report, Mr. M. R. Hull dates the single-handled flagon, which is similar in other respects, from *c. A.D.200* onwards; he quotes Sir Mortimer Wheeler's dating of *c. A.D.220-350*. This dating seems to be acceptable.

The date of deposition is indicated more precisely by the date of the hoard than by the type of the flagon, though the fact that the date of the hoard falls near the middle of the period accepted for the life of the type is useful corroboration.

¹M. R. Hull, *Roman Colchester*, R.R.S.A.L. XX, 1958, Appendix F.