

VI.—COIN HOARDS OF THE ROMAN PERIOD FROM NORTHERN ENGLAND.

COUNTY DURHAM.

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This article is the first of a series in which I shall endeavour to place on record all coin hoards, of which some record is extant, from the four northern counties, Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland and Westmorland. The present deals with County Durham, which provides sites of six definite forts, Piercebridge, Binchester, Lanchester, Ebchester, Chester-le-Street and South Shields. South Shields has been excavated several times, and in fact this is one of the two fort sites in the county which produce coin hoards, and further, the hoard itself is the first of its kind from Britain. There is site-find evidence from all six forts for occupation until Valens-Gratian period, with South Shields producing coins to Arcadius. South Shields is the only northern site at which there are no destruction levels until the final destruction by burning early in the fifth century A.D.

In his "Coinage and Currency in Roman Britain" Dr. C. H. V. Sutherland mentions only four hoards from the county, namely South Shields, Westgate-in-Weardale, Piercebridge and Seaton, and indeed this is practically half the total number of hoards which I have been able to trace. I shall deal with these four before mentioning others.

SOUTH SHIELDS.

This hoard was discovered within the site of the Roman Station on The Lawe, and brief mention was made in several

earlier publications,¹ but it was never scientifically recorded. The original hoard was said to be composed of 12 aurei and about 200 denarii. The gold, happily, was recorded by Craster in his Corbridge Coin Report² but the silver disappeared, and was not rediscovered until 1955 when the writer visited Alnwick Castle in connection with work on the collection there. Here were discovered several packets marked "coins interesting as having been found at South Shields", and later research established them as part of the original hoard. A full report of the discovery was published by the writer in the papers of the South Shields Archæological and Historical Society,³ but a brief résumé will not be out of place here, followed by a catalogue of the coins.

SOUTH SHIELDS ROMAN GOLD AND SILVER HOARD.

References: Bruce, AA, ns, x, p. 271. Craster, AA, 3, viii, p. 219.

Of the original hoard of "about 200 denarii", only 53 now remain in the collection at Alnwick Castle, being definitely assignable to this site, ranging from Nero to Commodus, the latest coin being A.D. 184-85, therefore placing South Shields alone in the category of hoards formed of the precious metals closing with Commodus, as there are no other known hoards in this country closing with this Emperor which contain both precious metals,⁴ and none at all from the Wall area, irrespective of composition. It is, of course, as Miss Robertson says, "quite natural that the latest gold coins (to Pius) should be earlier than the latest silver coins. This is a feature of first- and second-century Romano-British hoards of gold plus silver coins. It is simply due to the fact that gold coins had a much longer circulation life than silver coins."

¹ Bruce, AA, ns, vol. X, p. 271.

² AA, 3rd, vol. VIII, p. 219.

³ Corbitt, Paper South Shields Archæological and Historical Society, 1955.

⁴ Miss Anne Robertson confirms this.

The only other large mixed hoard of gold and silver coins from the Wall area previously compared with South Shields was noted by Craster, being the Rudchester find of 1764, Nero to Marcus Aurelius, the latest coin being a denarius of A.D. 168, which he compared with the South Shields gold coins and those discovered at Kirkby Thore, Westmorland, being silver and copper terminating with the marriage of Crispina, about A.D. 178. On the new evidence, Rudchester cannot be compared favourably with South Shields. Kirkby Thore could be placed at around the same time, but is not of the two precious metals.

With regard to a date of deposit, it is a known fact that there are no destruction levels at this fort until the final destruction early in the fifth century A.D., but it is possible that the hoard was hidden in a time of alarm, and the date of the last coin, A.D. 184-85, certainly bears out this point as the following years up to A.D. 197 were disturbing years for the Empire in Britain. Kirkby Thore could also be placed at about A.D. 180. The composition of the hoard would suggest that it was the savings of a family. It is most unfortunate that the finder did not locate any traces of a receptacle, nor did he state the exact location of the find, although as excavations commenced in 1875 and the hoard was found in 1878, the coins must have been found inside the station where they would then be working.

As mentioned above, this is the first hoard from the Wall closing with Commodus, and in fact, from this country. The hoards from Drummond Castle,⁵ Airdrie⁶ and Strathaven⁷ all contain AR and AE, as does the hoard from Kirkby Thore⁸ to which I have already referred, and those from Lydney,⁹ Sheffield,¹⁰ Edwinstowe¹¹ and Chesterford.¹²

⁵ PSAS, lii, p. 263.

⁶ PSAS, lii, p. 261.

⁷ PSAS, lii, p. 270.

⁸ Cumb. West. Trans., ns, vol. III, p. 415.

⁹ NC, 3rd, vol. II, p. 53.

¹⁰ Arch. Jour., XVIII, p. 71.

¹¹ NC, 4th, XII, p. 149.

¹² Fox, Arch. Cambridge Region, p. 231.

Appended to this report is a complete list of the denarii from the find. Unfortunately, although reported to have been sold to the Duke of Northumberland the gold is most certainly not at Alnwick Castle, and I must be content with a summary of the gold coins offset against those from Rudchester for comparative purposes. I have also listed the Rudchester, Kirkby Thore and South Shields denarii for this same purpose.

APPENDIX 1.

HOARD.—DENARII.

1.	Mark Antony	Illegible. Legionary type.
2.	Nero	RIC 45.
3-4.	Galba	RIC 4 and IMP SER GALBA AVG—bare to r. SPQR OB C S—within wreath.
5-11.	Vespasian	RIC 10, 66, 89, 90, 218 and two illegible.
12.	Titus	RIC 17.
13-14.	Domitian	RIC 154 and 193.
15.	Nerva	RIC 16.
16-23.	Trajan	RIC 80, 147, 219, 318 (2), 347, two illegible.
24-32.	Hadrian	RIC 40a, 71, 85, 116, 127a, 137b, 173c, 202, 226a.
33.	Sabina	RIC 390.
34-42.	Ant. Pius	RIC 45, 48b, 64, 111b, 127, 175, 179, 203, 231.
43.	Pius & Marcus	RIC 475a
44-46.	Faustina I	RIC 344, 351, 383.
47-48.	M. Aurelius	RIC 233, 248.
49.	Commodus Caes.	RIC 649 (Marcus).
50.	Lucilla	RIC 788 (Marcus).
51-53.	Commodus	RIC 74, 102, 267.

APPENDIX 2.

AUREI.		
	<i>Rudchester.</i>	<i>South Shields.</i>
Nero	4	1
Vespasian	4	—
Titus	1	—
Domitian	1	2
Trajan	2	3
Hadrian	1	4
Ant. Pius	—	2
Faustina I	1	—
M. Aurelius	1	—
	—	—
	15	12

APPENDIX 3.

COMPARATIVE LIST OF DENARII.

	<i>Rudchester.</i>	<i>Kirkby Thore.</i>	<i>South Shields.</i>
Mark Antony	8	—	1
Nero	8	2	1
Galba	2	1	2
Otho	—	1	—
Vitellius	6	2	—
Vespasian	137	11	7
Titus	26	4	1
Domitian	40	4	2
Nerva	6	1	1
Trajan	96	27	8
Hadrian	74	35	9
Sabina	5	6	1
Ant. Pius	32	29	9
Pius & Marcus	—	3	1
Faustina I	17	13	3
M. Aurelius	10	13	2
Faustina II	4	5	—
Lucius Verus	—	6	—
Lucilla	—	3	1
Crispina	—	1	—
Commodus	—	—	4
	—	—	—
	471	167	53

We must, of course, remember that the original number of denarii from South Shields was in the vicinity of 200, according to Bruce, and if these turn up they would supplement the number given above considerably.

WESTGATE-IN-WEARDALE, 1870. SILVER HOARD.

References: AA, 4, i, p. 24. PSAN, 3, iv, 1. 83.

This hoard seems to have disappeared altogether. No specimens are recorded at the Black Gate Museum nor at the Barnard Castle or British Museums.

The records state that a number of coins, denarii, were discovered, whose dates cover a period A.D. 81-161. However, Mr. Hildyard calls my attention to his recent notes on Weardale,¹³ wherein he states that in Pt. i Vol. i of the Transactions of the Weardale Naturalists Field Club (1900) there is an article by W. M. Egglestone on "The Romans in Weardale", giving some details of this small hoard, said to be of 15 denarii, "not a hundred yards away from the site of Westgate Castle . . . in the bed of the Middlethorpe Burn". The coins were of five Emperors: Vespasian—one with the reverse IVDAEA; Domitian-Trajan—one which had legends obv. Caesar Trajan Optimus Aug. Germ: Rev. PM TR P COS V PP SPQR; Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. Egglestone says also "Three at least of the coins have on the reverse the full figure of a Roman soldier with helmet on his head, spear in his right hand, short sword in left and left foot treading on the head of an enemy; the figure representing Valour".

It would appear, therefore, that it is a complete-silver hoard—A.D. 69-161 in period—and in this it is similar to hoards classified by Sutherland, such as the Newbiggin Cumberland, Linlithgow, West Calder Midlothian, Taymouth, Pitcullo Fife and Sheffield Hoards. This period produces quite a number of hoards composed solely of denarii, as evidenced by Sutherland's list. The records quoted do not allow us to state a peak period for the hoard, but otherwise it does not call for particular comment.

¹³ Arch. of Weardale, 6th summary, 1950-52, p. 12.

PIERCEBRIDGE, 1921—ANTONINIANI AND AE3

Reference: JRS, xi, p. 202.

This is another hoard of which the contents have strayed and, therefore, it is again not possible to give a catalogue of the coins themselves.

Records suggest a hoard of "Antoniniani and AE3, covering a period A.D. 254-379", and state that the hoard consisted of about 250 coins with the suggestion of a concealment about the time of Magnus Maximus. In the period covered it is similar to hoards mentioned by Sutherland in his list under the subdivision of those hoards "not including Honorius".¹⁴

SEATON, SEAHAM PARISH—ANTONINIANI

References: AA, 4, i, p. 26. Surtees, iii, I. 402.

The records here state that an earthenware vessel half filled with Roman third brass was found, chiefly of Victorinus, Tetricus, Claudius Gothicus, etc., in miserable preservation. It would appear, therefore, to be a common type of hoard, and I would again refer the reader to the list printed by Sutherland¹⁵ for further references to this period of hoards.

Apart from the four hoards mentioned above, there are five others of which some mention is made, as being found in the county, although the references are wanting for more precise information. Unfortunately all, apart from one, were found at a period when little or no attention was paid to such discoveries, apart from the interest they immediately

¹⁴ Sutherland, *Coinage and Currency*, pp. 166-67.

¹⁵ Sutherland, *Coinage and Currency*, p. 160.

aroused as being "money of the ancient Romans". One of the hoards, that from Washington, is a recent discovery of which I have been notified and which can happily be recorded in full.

GATESHEAD, 1790.

The most northerly site in the county, apart from South Shields. This hoard is mentioned by Sykes in his "Local Records"¹⁶ as being discovered by workmen in February 1790 whilst engaged on the building of a new street, and he states "Great number of Roman coins enclosed in an urn . . . many of the coins having got into the hands of the workmen could not be recovered, yet several of them, in good preservation, of the Emperor Hadrian, were in the possession of the late D. Stephenson, Esq., architect".

From the information given it is impossible to deduce a period of concealment. It may be one of the Hadrianic hoards, but as this is the only Emperor mentioned in the report it is quite probable that others were represented, perhaps of later reigns. It is doubtful, however, that any new information will come to hand which would shed further light on this hoard—a hoard which led early antiquaries to believe that there was a Roman site at Gateshead, perhaps a bridge-head leading to the fort of Pons Aelius on the Wall.

DARLINGTON, NO. 1. 1790. . . .

Mention of this hoard is made by Longstaffe in his "History of Darlington" (1854) when he states that a "hoard of Roman silver was taken up out of the bed of the Tees, near Darlington. Some Trajan, Gordian, Hadrian, Severus, Antoninus, Carausius, and others."

¹⁶ Sykes, Local Records, vol. I, p. 354.

This, unfortunately, is the only information he gives. If Carausius is the last of the Emperors represented it would certainly make this a unique hoard, as being the first northern hoard terminating with that Emperor, and in fact, site finds are particularly scarce for this period. This, however, would make it further unusual in the period covered. The bulk of Carausian hoards only include Antoniniani of later periods, and a hoard of denarii, beginning with Trajan and terminating with Carausius, is unknown. It is possible, therefore, that our informant is wrong in stating Carausius, and perhaps the hoard should be attributed to an earlier period, for instance similar to those hoards from Edlington Wood¹⁷—to Philip, II, and Severus to Gallienus, or from Harndon Hill, Som.¹⁸—Domitian to Philip.

This is an instance when more information as to the Emperors represented and the reverse types would have been most helpful in determining the period covered.

DARLINGTON, NO. 2.

A second hoard from Darlington is also mentioned by Longstaffe, when he states "discovered at Cockerbeck, between Mowdon Bridge and Darlington, and in Baydalebeck, near the same bridge. They are in most perfect preservation, and all of the Constantine family."

Here our information is a little more precise, and allows us to place the hoard among the many of the Constantinian era, such as the two Corbridge hoards, one discovered in 1907¹⁹ when about 490 Constantinian coins came to light, all badly burnt, and again in 1908²⁰ when further badly burnt coins of the same period were discovered, numbering about 400. The period produces quite a number of such hoards, and a detailed list will be found in Sutherland.²¹

¹⁷ NC, 5th, XV, p. 202.

¹⁹ AA, 3rd, IV, p. 282.

¹⁸ NC, 3rd, VI, p. 96.

²⁰ AA, 3rd, V, p. 361.

²¹ Sutherland, *Coinage and Currency*, pp. 164-66.

WHITBURN.

References: AA, 4, i, pp. 28-9. Hutchinson, ii, p. 628n.

We are informed that a "peckful of Roman coins" was discovered, and mention is made of Maximianus, Maxentius and Licinius. The information is slight but allows us to class the hoard as being similar to those listed by Sutherland as hoards composed of coins of the Tetrarchy intermixed with later bronze, i.e., Licinius and Constantinian; instance the hoards from Kirkandrews-on-Eden²² and Newstead.²³

WASHINGTON, 1939.

This hoard has only recently been reported to the writer by the Washington Antiquarian Society, to whom I am indebted for the information and for allowing me to classify the coins found, all of the Constantinian period. The hoard was found in the latter part of 1939 by a labourer excavating an air raid shelter, and is reported to have been found in a small earthenware pot since lost. The number of coins I have before me is 59 and it is impossible to say whether there were others. This is a hoard not previously published and I have, therefore, appended a complete catalogue of the coins. In composition, the hoard is very similar to Darlington No. 2 mentioned above and the Corbridge Hoards of 1907/8.

LICINIUS I.	Cohen 15.
CONSTANTINE I.	Cohen 16, 20, 123, 250, 254 (5), 454 (3), 487 (3), 690.
HELENA	Cohen 12 (2).
FAUSTA	Cohen 15.

²² Cumb. West. Trans., ns, XXIII, p. 235.

²³ PSAS, lii, p. 272.

CRISPUS	Cohen 6, 36, 44 (2), 119, 122.
CONSTANTINE II.	Cohen 38 (2), 122 (11), 127, 163, 165 (3).
CONSTANTIUS II.	Cohen 104 (2), 167, 171-var. FLA in obv. legend.
CONSTANTINOPOLIS.	Cohen 21 (6).
URBS ROMA	Cohen 17 (6).

TABLE OF MINT ISSUES.

	<i>Arelate. Treveri. Lugdunum. Rome. London. Siscia. Illeg.</i>						
Licinius I	1						
Constantine I	2	9	1	2	1		
Helena		1				1	
Fausta		1					
Crispus		3	1		1	1	
Constantine II	1	11	2		2	1	1
Constantius II		2			1		1
Constantinopolis	1	4	1				
Urbs Roma		6					
	5	37	5	2	5	3	2

As will be seen from the above catalogue, the mint of Treveri is predominant with 37 specimens, with Lugdunum, Arelate and Londinium equal with 5 specimens each. Siscia provides 3 and Rome 2 specimens, with 2 unidentified.

The coins themselves are all in very good state of preservation and will, I understand, eventually be displayed at Washington Old Hall.

In the article I have embodied all the information which I have been able to trace concerning coin hoards from County Durham, and whilst the number of hoards is small they are all very interesting. The article must show that particular attention should be paid to earlier records and manuscripts which, whilst sometimes exasperating in giving insufficient information, often contain most important information, and all references regarding coin finds should be annotated. Following articles will eventually be prepared on the other three northern counties and the writer would

be pleased to have information concerning coin finds which may be unpublished.

AA—Archæologia Aeliana.

PSAS—Proceedings of Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

NC—Numismatic Chronicle.

Arch. Jour.—Archæological Journal.

Cumb. West. Trans.—Transactions of Cumberland and Westmorland Archæological Society.