

THE CRANLEY GARDENS HOARD

BY CAROLINE NEUBURG

AIM

The aim of this paper is to place the Roman find of 1928 from Cranley Gardens, Muswell Hill, London N.10, into the context of the other Roman antiquities from the Highgate and Muswell Hill areas. A complete report of the coins from this find was made in the *Numismatic Chronicle* in 1929¹ but neither a report nor an analysis of the associated finds of a pot, a spoon and a ring have yet been made.

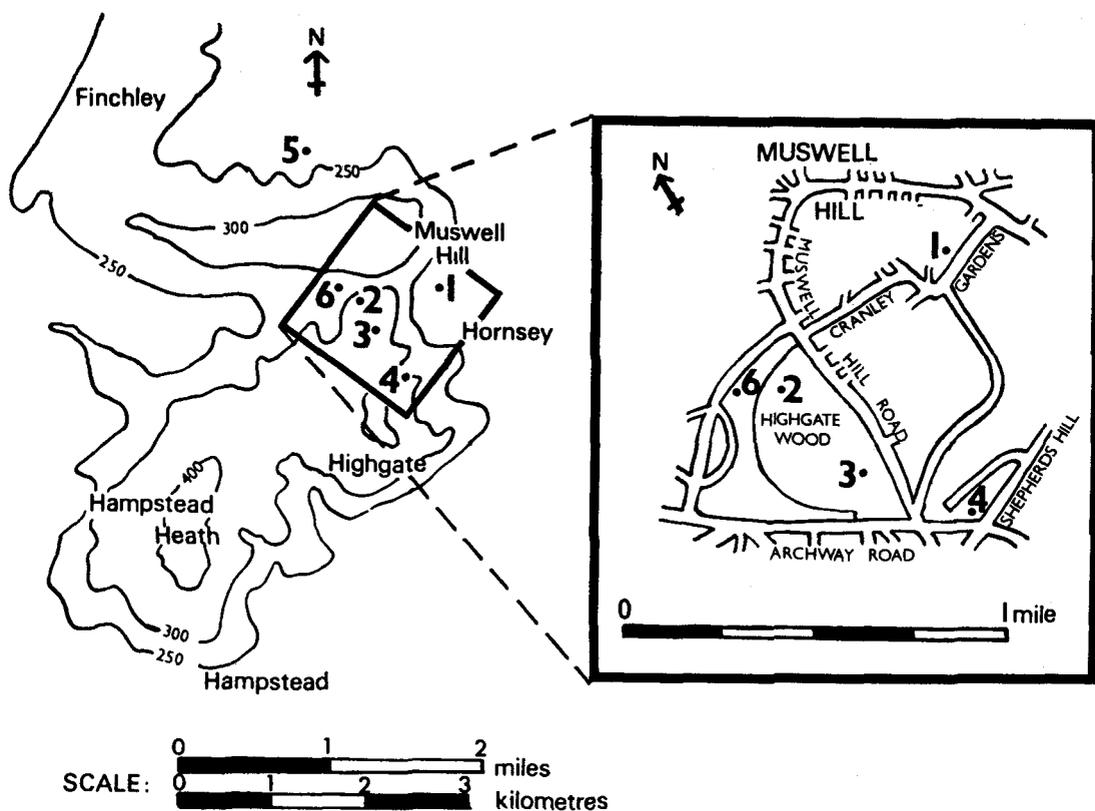


Fig. 1

Location plan of the Cranley Gardens hoard and other local finds. Based upon the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright reserved.

Key to the finds:

1. Cranley Gardens Hoard.
2. Highgate Wood Pottery Factory Site.
3. Highgate Wood second site.
4. The Priory, Shepherd's Hill.
5. Barrenger Road, Muswell Hill (coin).

THE SITE

The Cranley Gardens Coin Hoard was found on September 6, 1928, in the garden of No. 104 Cranley Gardens (TQ 292891) and the site is shown as No. 1 on the location plan (Fig. 1). According to the original report the find was made at an approximate depth of four feet and was embedded in clay.² The Geological Survey shows the area as London Clay and just under half a mile north-west is the southern tip of the Pleistocene Boulder Clay and Glacial Gravel.³

THE FINDS

The discovery consisted of a pot containing over six hundred coins, a silver spoon and a bronze ring. It was adjudged to be Treasure Trove, and was examined by the British Museum in 1928.⁴

(A) THE POT

Madge (1938) reproduced a photograph of the pot as it was originally reconstructed but it was unfortunately reproduced upside down.⁵ After its initial reconstruction the pot was separated again and the sherds were examined early in 1970.⁶ The fabric was found to be of a gritty, light red type, unevenly fired. On present knowledge the fabric cannot be paralleled to the material from the Roman Pottery Factory at present under excavation in Highgate Wood.⁷ The sherds had the appearance of having been burnished rather than slipped or colour coated. It was not possible at this stage to form an idea of the shape of the vessel, although the foot-ring was considered to belong to a beaker-type of vessel.

Later in 1970, the vessel was reconstructed, and it again assumed the bulbous shape depicted in the photograph referred to above. A new photograph is shown at Plate 1. There is a small slit 2.5 cms long and 1.25 cms wide, not in the top but on the irregular shoulder. A roughly executed groove runs round the shoulder of the vessel, and the whole is 15 cms high. Fig. 2 shows the section of the pot.

Because of the unusual form of this pot, and its lack of parallels, it is felt that some justification for its form of reconstruction should be given. Maureen Robson (Conservation Assistant, Department of Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities, British Museum), who reconstructed the vessel kindly provided the following observations:

"The initial reconstruction of the vessel took the form of two shallow spheres, one with the foot ring attached, the other with an incised line decoration and a small hole in the upper portion. The two halves were linked with one join giving a globular shape. At this stage the form was found to be slightly distorted. The upper portion of the pot was brought in, so that its lower edges followed exactly the profile of the lower pot. This explains the flatness in one area of the upper pot.

"The following observations led to the completion of the globular form:

- (a) There was no evidence of a rim, or change in contour in the sherds forming the upper pot.
- (b) The profile from the curve of reconstructed sherds suggested an enclosed top.
- (c) The pot section thinned towards the top and the throwing rings faded, suggesting that the clay was originally drawn up and into the centre in order to complete the globular form".

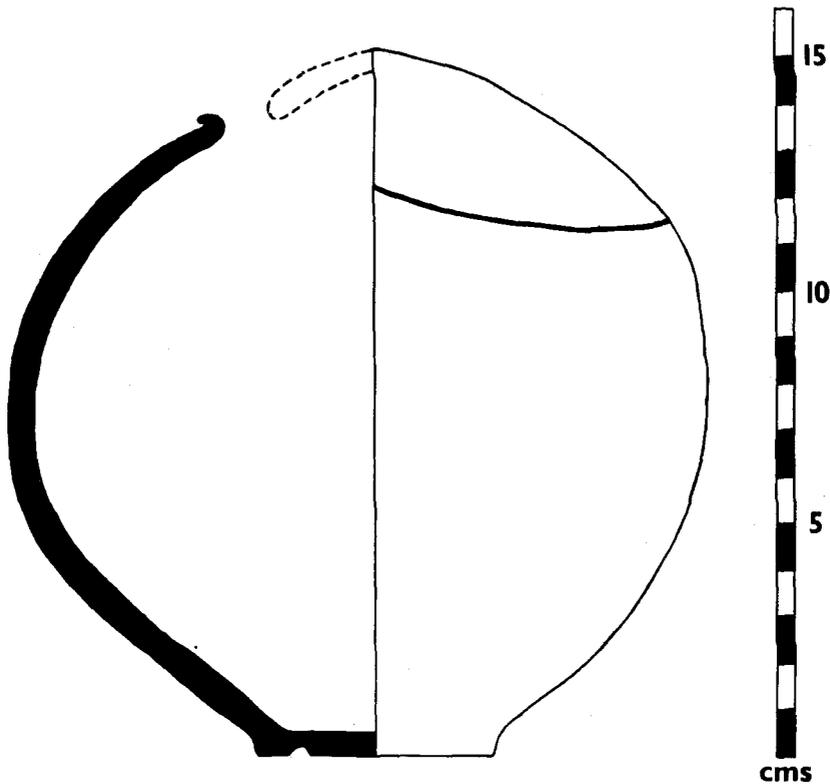


Fig. 2
Section of the Cranley Gardens Pot as now reconstructed

It has not been possible to find any parallels to the form of this vessel. The opening in the top of the vessel may indicate that it functioned as a "money-box". One example of a Roman money-box may be found in the British Museum. This vessel was found in Lincoln and contained coins dated AD 307-340. Its shape is not unlike some Medieval money-boxes which had to be broken in order to extract the money. The Lincoln money-box cannot be quoted as a parallel to the pot from Cranley Gardens for reasons of size and shape. It is mentioned here in order to show that the idea of a money-box is a possibility to be considered.

It should be mentioned here that in his account of the find Dr. Draper (1936) records the presence of two bowls.⁹ It has, however, been impossible to substantiate their existence, and it may well have been a misinterpretation of the broken sherds. The reconstructed pot is now in the British Museum Reserve Collection.

(B) THE COINS

The hoard consisted of 653 denarii and one drachm. The earliest of the coins in date were ten denarii of Mark Antony. Such coins are not unusual in hoards of this kind so that the real dating of such a hoard usually begins with the next in the series, in this case, with

Neronian coins.¹⁰ A full description of the coins was published in the *Numismatic Chronicle* and the hoard was adjudged "not of an uncommon type".¹¹ The coins enable the date of burial of the hoard to be fixed at about AD 210.

Forty-one of the coins were retained by the British Museum, all but one of these being of Roman mint. The exception is a denarius of Eastern mint. The London Museum were given disposal of the remaining coins of which they retained 13.¹² The residue was dispersed and a number were put up for sale by a London dealer early in 1970.¹³

(C) THE SILVER SPOON

A photograph of the spoon is also shown in Madge (1938) with the pot.¹⁴ The spoon, which is in the British Museum, is of silver and is 18.5 cms long. It has a narrow, pointed stem and its round bowl has a grooved lip. Parallels to it may be seen in the British Museum Reserve Collection. An example is one from Colchester, Essex, on exhibition in the British Museum.¹⁵

(D) THE BRONZE RING

No mention of the bronze ring appears in the British Museum's Register of Antiquities for 1928 and it was not retained by the British Museum. Its ultimate disposal is unknown and, unfortunately, no satisfactory description of it survives.

DISCUSSION

In the area under investigation there are only six established sites where Roman material has been found (Fig. 1). By far the most important find in the area is just over half a mile due west of the Cranley Gardens site. This is the Romano-British Pottery Factory centred on TQ 28298897 in Highgate Wood¹⁶ (No. 2 on Fig. 1). This major industrial site is considered on present evidence to have been in production between 60 and 120 A.D. There is a further suspected Roman site in Highgate Wood, approximately one third of a mile south of the known Pottery Factory site (No. 3 on Fig. 1). This second site is centred on TQ 28398845 and has been defined by a surface pottery scatter.¹⁷

Approximately three-quarters of a mile south-west from Cranley Gardens is the site of a find made sometime between 1830 and 1850 (No. 4 on Fig. 1). This find was made when the house known as the Priory (now Shepherd's Hill Library) in Shepherd's Hill Road (now Shepherd's Hill) was under construction (TQ 287881). The discovery is alleged to have consisted of "a fine bronze sword handle" and pottery filled with "many coins," the disposal of which is now unknown.¹⁸

Another find reported but with no trace remaining, is that from Shepherd's Cot.¹⁹ No accurate location can be assigned to this find to justify its being placed on the distribution map. Research is being undertaken to attempt to establish more information but it seems possible that this was the hoard of coins "rumours of which reached the British Museum in 1925".²⁰ The find was probably made on the demolition of the property known as Shepherd's Cot Farm, Shepherd's Hill Road.

Another established find in the area was made in 1937, approximately a mile north-west of Cranley Gardens. It was in a garden in Barrenger Road, although the exact site is not known. This find was a single coin of fourth century date.²¹

The final established Roman find in the area is a sherd of pottery found less than a quarter of a mile north-west of the Highgate Wood Pottery Factory. The find was made in May 1970 in the grounds of a house in Woodside Avenue at TQ 281891²² (No. 6 on Fig. 1). The sherd measures approximately 4 cms x 5 cms and 1 cm thick. It is of grey fabric with incorporated mica. There are some lightly incised grooves on the exterior and some vertical marks which are probably scratches. Internally the sherd is darker in colour and shows the marks of wheel-turning. The sherd is not of Highgate make and it is difficult to assign a date to so small a sherd.

In analysing the evidence for the Romano-British occupation in the small area of the present survey, it is worth noting that all the sites mentioned above are situated below the 350 ft. contour (Fig. 1). This may well have no significance, but no signs of Roman occupation have as yet been obtained from the top of Highgate Hill, which is the highest ground in the vicinity. It is a popular belief that the Romans settled on high ground, and the reason why this appears not to be the case in this area may very well be due to the lack of careful looking, rather than to a dearth of occupation.

It must be said that neither the find from Cranley Gardens, nor the other finds from the area, do in themselves prove a Roman settlement. They do, on the other hand, make likely the supposition that there were Romans settled somewhere in the locality.

After considering these few established Roman finds and remembering the industry present in Highgate Wood, one must think about the possible Roman road network in the area. In the vicinity of this group of finds there are no established Roman roads, although several theories do exist. The Viatores route No. 220²³ passes within approximately one mile to the west of the area under discussion. This route is considered to run from Cripplegate to Stevenage via Islington, Highbury, Wood Green, Southgate, Brookman's Park and Hatfield. The line of the road appears to be well established north of Potters Bar,²⁴ but one cannot accept without question the rest of this route into Cripplegate. No archaeological evidence has yet been described for this line in the north London area.

Another route often considered is north from the City via Maiden Lane (now York Way and Brecknock Road) and Dartmouth Park Hill.²⁵ The extension of this route would align in a northerly direction approximately along the central portion of the Muswell Hill Road shown in the location plan (Fig. 1). That this happened is pure supposition, but many authors have claimed Maiden Lane to be an old road, though its existence as a Roman alignment has not been proved. Two Roman finds are, however, associated with Maiden Lane. A monumental inscription was found in the vicinity of its southern end at Battle Bridge in 1842.²⁶ Also, in 1845, an iron urn allegedly containing gold and silver coins of Constantine was found under the foundations of a house in Maiden Lane.²⁷

There is a third possible route that could serve the Highgate and Muswell Hill areas. Norden (1593) described an "old and ancient highway to High Barnet" via Grays Inn, Crouch End, Muswell Hill, Colney Hatch and Whetstone.²⁸ This line also has no archaeological evidence to support it, and so the road network in the Highgate and Muswell Hill areas remains a matter for conjecture. Roads undoubtedly existed, but it will take time and patient research to prove convincingly exactly where they were.²⁹

As regards the dating implications of the few finds reported in this paper, the Cranley Gardens find is at least a century later in date than the Highgate Pottery Factory. The find of a fourth century coin at Barrenger Road gives a continuity from the first to the fourth

century in this small area. Patient research and observation, together with excavation will, it is hoped, eventually show that this area was settled by the Romans and that it is not the archaeological desert it is so often thought to be.³⁰

NOTES

1. *Numismatic Chronicle*, ix (1929) 315.
2. *ibid.*, 315.
3. *Geological Survey of Great Britain (England and Wales)*, 1951; Sheet 256 (North London).
4. British Museum, "Muswell Hill Hoard", *Treasure Trove*, 1908-31, E-Z.
5. S. Madge, *Early Records of Harringay*, Hornsey Public Libraries, 1938, 21.
6. Examination by Mr. Harvey Sheldon and the author.
7. A. E. Brown and H. L. Sheldon, "Early Roman Pottery Factory in North London", *The London Archaeologist*, i (1969), 39.
8. *Guide to the Antiquities of Roman Britain*, British Museum, 1964, No. 27/36.
9. Dr. F. W. M. Draper, *Muswell Hill Past and Present*, Hornsey Public Libraries, 1936, 5.
10. The Antonian denarii remained in circulation for some time after that ruler's death. Personal communications from R. A. G. Carson, Deputy Keeper, Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum.
11. *Op. cit.* in Note 1, 318.
12. Personal communication from the London Museum.
13. *Numismatic Circular*, Spink and Son Ltd., April 1970, 155.
14. S. Madge, *op. cit.* in Note 5, 21.
15. Unpublished. Found in 1852 in Colchester. British Museum registration No. 54-11-20.
16. A. E. Brown and H. L. Sheldon, *op. cit.* in Note 7, 39.
17. A. E. Brown and H. L. Sheldon, *op. cit.* in Note 7, 44.
18. B. Robertson, "Resistivity Surveying Based on a Highgate Site", *The London Archaeologist*, i (1970), 195.
19. J. H. Lloyd, *History of Highgate*, 1888, 8, 15.
20. *Hornsey Journal*, 21 September 1928.
21. *Numismatic Chronicle*, v (1925), 398.
22. *Evening Standard*, 20 March 1937, 4, col. 4.
23. The author is indebted to Miss R. Warren for permission to publish this find.
24. Viatores *Roman Roads in the South-East Midlands*, Gollancz, 1964, Road No. 220, London (Cripplegate) to Stevenage, pp. 165-201.
25. I. D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, John Baker, 1967, 201.
26. W. F. Grimes, *The Excavation of Roman and Medieval London*, Routledge and Kegan Paul (1968), 43.
27. *Old and New London*, Edward Woolford (), ii, 278.
28. *ibid.*, 278.
29. Norden, *Speculum Britanniae* (1593).
30. The author is indebted to Brian Robertson for his help into research in this field.
31. *Map of Roman Britain*, Ordnance Survey (1956), 12.

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Editor's note: Since the completion of the above article, a new find of Roman material has been made within the area surveyed by Miss Neuburg. A report of this find from Southwood Lawn Road, Highgate, follows.