

SHORT NOTES

AN UNRECORDED ALEXANDRIAN COIN HOARD FROM MANCHESTER

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The Department of Numismatics at Manchester Museum houses a considerable number of Roman coins found in and around the *vicus* of Manchester in the nineteenth century, and published in 1909.¹ The most notable amongst these is a major portion (*c.* 800 pieces, correcting Shotter)² of the Knott Mill hoard of bronzes of the period 335–75 A.D.

The purpose of this brief note is to place on record a rather smaller Roman group, recorded by the department as the 'Great Jackson Street Hoard', which has been in the museum since the turn of the century, but which was overlooked in 1909 and has subsequently remained unpublished. The coins were among a number of objects discovered at the corner of Great Jackson Street and Chester Road,³ an area which lies just outside the site of Roman Castlefield in the centre of Manchester. The exact date of the find is unknown, but the

- 1 R. S. Conway, J. MacInnes, and G. C. Brooke, 'The Roman coins of Manchester', in F. A. Bruton, *The Roman fort at Manchester* (Manchester, 1909), pp. 1–153. A convenient summary was made by R. Higginbottom, 'Some Roman coins from Manchester found *c.* 1820–1907', in *Roman Manchester*, ed. G. D. B. Jones and S. Grealey (Manchester, 1974), pp. 137–40.
- 2 D. C. A. Shotter, *Roman coins from north-west England* (Lancaster, 1990), p. 139.
- 3 National Grid Reference: SJ 83209739.

only contemporary reference which the present author has been able to locate points to the mid-1890s.⁴ The bulk of the group—and the more important element numismatically—comprises nineteen coins of Roman Alexandria of the third century. Their uniform patination and close chronological span provide strong evidence for regarding them as a hoard (or at least part thereof). The balance of the group (seven pieces, one of which is now missing) is of coins from Domitian to Pius, a range typical of Manchester finds,⁵ and certainly to be regarded as intrusive in the context of the present note.

The interest of the Alexandrian coins lies in the paucity of such issues amongst Romano-British hoards, and thus the legitimate interest which such a find represents. A few Romano-British hoards contain one or two Alexandrian pieces, but Robertson records only two hoards of specifically Alexandrian bronzes found in Britain,⁶ one in London (no. 821 in her inventory) and the other in Guernsey (no. 838);⁷ both, like the present hoard, span the reigns of several third-century emperors. She notes that reported finds of single Alexandrian issues tend to be regarded as suspect intrusions of later date, but adds that their losses are often just as inexplicable in modern as in ancient times. All this is perhaps a little disingenuous, and a healthy scepticism should remain with regard to the provenance of both single 'strays' and the two

- 4 Summary of a paper by the local antiquarian Charles Roeder, reproduced in *T.L.C.A.S.* XVI (1898), pp. 181–5 at 184. A note by the donor of the coins, dated Nov. 1926, records that they 'were found by some navvies working on sewer drains or demolition of cottage property in Great Jackson St, Hulme . . . brought by them in their dinner hour to Publican in Gt Jackson St and disposed of for a few shillings and pints of beer': Greater Manchester Sites and Monuments Record, 415.4.19; this reference is also noted by D. C. A. Shotton, *Roman coins from north-west England: 1st Supplement* (Lancaster, 1995), p. 50.
- 5 See, for example, the references above; P. J. Casey, 'Roman coins from the Manchester vicus 1972', in *Roman Manchester*, ed. Jones and Grealey, pp. 135–6; 'The non-ceramic finds from the Northgate', in *Roman Manchester, a Roman settlement*, ed. S. Rendall and others (Manchester, 1986), pp. 61–84.
- 6 A. S. Robertson, 'Finds of Roman imperial coins in Britain', in *Essays in honour of Robert Carson and Kenneth Jenkins*, ed. M. J. Price, A. M. Burnett, and R. F. Bland (London, 1993), pp. 229–40.
- 7 A. S. Robertson, *An inventory of Romano-British coin hoards* (forthcoming).

recorded hoards: the Grand Tour, the Napoleonic campaigns, the Great War, and the Second World War are four obvious explanations for more recent losses of such exotic pieces. Indeed, Edward Besley, keeper of numismatics at the National Museum of Wales, recently dealt with another Alexandrian hoard with an impeccable British provenance: twenty late third-century tetradrachms from *H.M.S. Pomone*, a frigate wrecked on the Needles, Isle of Wight, in 1811 on her way back from (as might be guessed) the eastern Mediterranean.⁸ Further, his predecessor, the late George Boon, investigated the 'findings' of Byzantine coins in Britain in some depth, and was driven to the conclusion that the overwhelming majority were relatively recent losses.⁹ Whatever the correct interpretation to be placed on all these finds, what is obviously a hoard of Alexandrian coins should remain unrecorded no longer, despite doubts as to its immediate provenance.

CATALOGUE

M: J. G. Milne, *Catalogue of Alexandrian coins in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford, 1933, with supplement 1982)

R.I.C.: *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, ed. R. A. G. Carson, J. P. C. Kent, and A. M. Burnett (London, 1923 onwards)

Gallienus

- 1 Year 9; *rev.* eagle; wt 8.83g; *M*4070
- 2 Year 11; *rev.* eagle; wt 10.91g; *M*4095
- 3 Year 13; *rev.* Eirene; wt 7.43g; *M*4114
- 4 Year 13; *rev.* eagle; wt 8.13g; *M*4119
- 5 Year 15; *rev.* eagle; wt 10.37g; *M*4178

Salonina

- 6 Year 15; *rev.* eagle; wt 10.81g; *M*4189
- 7 Uncertain: *rev.* probably Eirene or Elpis from manuscript description, but coin now missing

8 Personal communication to the author.

9 G. C. Boon, 'Byzantine and other exotic ancient bronze coins from Exeter', in *Roman finds from Exeter*, ed. N. Holbrook and P. T. Bidwell, Exeter Archaeological Reports, 4 (Exeter, 1991), pp. 38–45.

Claudius Gothicus

- 8 Year 1; *rev.* eagle; wt 10.33g; M4202
 9 Year 2; *rev.* Dikaiosyne; wt 9.21g; M4231
 10 Another, wt 10.2g
 11 Another, but coin missing
 12 Year 2; *rev.* Hermanubis; wt 9.59g; M4240
 13 Another, wt 8.52g
 14 Another, wt 10.66g
 15 Year 2; *rev.* eagle; wt 9.53g; M4265
 16 Another, wt 10.77g
 17 Year 3; *rev.* eagle; M4287 or M4291 from manuscript description, but coin missing

Aurelian

- 18 Year 5; *rev.* eagle; wt 9.02g; M4418

Severina

- 19 Year 6; *rev.* eagle; wt 8.97g; M4463

The die axis for all but the last two coins is 360°; nos. 18 and 19 are 315°

Earlier issues

- 20 Domitian: sestertius, *rev.* Jupiter; *R.I.C.* 313; 23.27g; 180°
 21 Trajan: as, *rev.* Trajan on horseback; *R.I.C.* 543; 8.72g; 180°
 22 Antoninus Pius: coin missing, but sestertius, *rev.* Concordia; *R.I.C.* 600
 23 As last: sestertius, *rev.* Salus; *R.I.C.* 635; 26.5g; 315°
 24 As last: illegible; 21.75g; 315°
 25 As last: dupondius; illegible; 10.45g; 360°
 26 As last: 12.26g; 180°