

The Coinage of Caratacus

Mike Cuddeford

The attribution of certain Late Iron Age silver coins from the Southern Region inscribed 'CARA' (01) to the historical Caratacus had long been championed by several scholars, including the eminent numismatist Derek Allen, but others, including myself, were less convinced and considered the evidence to be too circumstantial. But things move on!

In 2016, Chris Rudd presented what in my view was a convincing argument for accepting the coins to be that of Caratacus. (Rudd 2016, 43-45). Two developments had occurred that meant the evidence went from being circumstantial to quite plausible and these were firstly, the discovery of a new silver unit in Hampshire only some 15 kilometres from Silchester, which is thought to be Calleva and the mint site of Atrebatic coins, including the 'CARA' units already known. The new find (02) has the same types as an issue of Epaticcus (Cottam *et al* 2010, ABC1370), which has on the obverse the letters 'EPATI' and on the reverse the letters 'TA' (03). This new find had the letters 'CAR' on the obverse and 'CV' on the reverse. This would suggest that Eppaticus was acknowledging his father Tasciovanus and Caratacus his father Cunobelinus, confirming that he was the nephew of Epaticcus. The second bit of evidence came in the reinspection of a silver unit of North Thames origin attributed to Cunobelinus (*ibid.* ABC2903). This has an obverse legend of 'CVN' and a reverse legend of 'CA/R' (04) but the significance was not recognised until 1996 when Richard Hobbs noticed the full inscription on the British Museum specimen and this was further highlighted by Elizabeth Cottam (Cottam 2011, 5).



01



02



03



04



05



06

This all seemed most persuasive and I was just about to publish it with the speculation that maybe Caratacus could even have struck a gold stater when one turned up (05)! I had imagined that any such stater would be in North Thames style and struck when Caratacus succeeded Cunobelinus, but instead the new find is Atrebatic and follows on from a stater of Epaticcus (06). This suggests that Caratacus succeed-

ed Epaticcus as paramount ruler in the south whilst another brother, perhaps the one recorded to history as Togodumnus, succeeded Cunobelinus in the north. This is of course assuming that the coins of Caratacus indicate succession but we do not know in what circumstances these coins were struck and so it is possible that both men could have been alive at the same time, but succession does perhaps seem more probable. Both coins share the same iconography which bring together powerful motifs of the North Thames origins of the rulers; the warrior on the reverse reflecting the reverses of some Tasciovanus stater and the obverse ear of barley the extensive stater coinage of Cunobelinus.

This amazing new find was made in November 2019 and was sold just a year later by Chris Rudd. The coin was found near Newbury in Berkshire, approximately 20 kilometres from the site of Calleva, the presumed mint site. Just like the silver units that copy issues of Epaticcus, this stater does also, differing only in the legends.

Historically, this new find must rank as one of the most important in British coinage, finally confirming the narratives of Dio Cassius and Tacitus and vindicating those numismatists who, right from the start, recognised the coins of Caratacus.

Bibliography

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Acknowledgements

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Images not to scale. 01: 12mm, 02: 8mm, 03: 8mm, 04: 13mm