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# THE MONMOUTHSHIRE ANTIQUARY



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VOLUME I, PART I 1961

# THE MONMOUTHSHIRE ANTIQUARY

VOL. I. PART I.

1961

## A ROMAN GOLD COIN FROM LLANELEN, ABERGAVENNY

By GEORGE C. BOON, F.S.A.

In February 1961, Mr. Edward Jones was cultivating a potato field<sup>1</sup> on Ty Aur farm, Llanelen, when he noticed the rim of a coin protruding from the ground. The coin was sent to the National Museum of Wales for identification, and proved to be a gold piece (*aureus*) of the Roman Emperor Claudius I (A.D. 41–54). A description of the coin is as follows<sup>2</sup>:

*Obv.*

TI CLAVD CAESAR · AVG · P · M · TR · P · XI · IMP · P · P · COS · V  
beginning low right, reading outwardly; head, laurelled, of Claudius to right.

*Rev.* PACI AVGVSTAE. Female figure advancing right, winged, and holding a winged *caduceus* in her left hand, whilst her right pulls out a fold of her dress below the neck. In front, a serpent glides right.

*Dies:* ↑ ↑

*Weight:* 7.72 grams

*Diam:* 19 mm.



FIG. 1. SCALE 2/1

*Photograph: National Museum of Wales.*

### THE OBVERSE

The coin bears the Emperor's name and titles—Tiberius Claudius Caesar, Augustus, High Priest, Holder of Tribunician Power for the eleventh time, Commander in Chief, Father of his Country, Consul for the fifth time. The portrait of the Emperor is a good one, and recalls Robert Graves's graphic description, put in the mouth of the Emperor, in his novel *Claudius the God*: "My little head with its worried face perched on my long neck, and the Adam's apple standing out almost like a second chin . . ." The Tribunician Power, which was one of the emperor's main constitutional bases of authority, was renewed annually. Consequently, when the number of times that an Emperor held this office is specified, the coin can be dated—as here. Since Claudius's TR.P. dates from January 25, A.D. 41, the eleventh TR.P. works out as January 25, A.D. 51 to January 24, A.D. 52. The fifth Consulship, also held in 51, was the other main basis of the Emperor's legal authority. The titles *Pater Patriae* and *Imperator* were specially

awarded. The latter, which we often render simply as 'Emperor,' means literally 'Commander,' and arose from the custom whereby a victorious general was hailed as *Imperator* by his soldiers in the field. The number of occasions on which this honour was paid to the reigning Emperor, as the Commander-in-Chief of the armies, is also frequently specified on coins especially in the 2nd century and gives us another means of dating them exactly. In general, however, dates in years were defined by reference to the annual consuls; for example, *Peregrino et Aemiliano Consulibus*, an expression which appears in abbreviated form on an inscription at Caerleon, refers to the year A.D. 244. Dates were seldom given as so-many years after a particular event, such as the Foundation of the City in 753 B.C.; as far as coins are concerned, this only occurs on *denarii* and *sestertii* issued under Hadrian in A.D. 121. These bear a reference to the Games which Hadrian celebrated on the 'birthday' of Rome *ANN. DCCCLXXIII*, i.e. in the 874th year after the Foundation of the City (*ab Urbe condita*).

#### THE REVERSE

The reverse side of the coin, with the legend *PACI AVGVSTAE*, 'To the Imperial Peace,' embodies a complex group of allusions. Such symbolism, at least in the abstruse form here present, is quite foreign to modern thought; but to the educated Roman it was a remarkably compact means of conveying a message of complicated overtones. Such symbolism might almost deserve the term ideogrammatic.

It should firstly be realized that the Roman coinage, unlike our own, did not keep the same 'types' year after year without change. The methods of hand-production—and how beautifully each small die was engraved—enabled those in charge of governmental policy to use the coinage as an effective medium for spreading official propaganda and news in a way which would be quite impossible under the system of mechanically mass-produced dies in use today. The nearest approach to the Roman technique is to be found in the issues of postage-stamps made by certain foreign countries, where a propaganda interest is readily discernible. Thus, for each year of the Roman coinage we find a lesser or greater variety of reverse designs. The fact of their existence shows that the men of those times were accustomed to looking far more closely at their coins than we are today; and, by implication, to understanding at least part of the meaning of the legends and designs stamped upon them.

Claudius was the first Emperor to use the adjective *Augusta*, 'Imperial,' in conjunction with a personification of one of the 'Virtues'; some of these 'Virtues' were considered deities in their own right, and the linkage of the imperial power with such a personification lent a quasi-divine connotation to the régime itself. We soon, in fact, find not only *Augusta*, but *Augusti*, 'of the Emperor,' which is a much more direct and personal statement of the same kind.

The figure on the coin, however, is obviously not simply a personification of Peace; and here the symbolism comes into the picture. The figure is considered by some to be that of Nemesis, goddess of Fate; and she is winged, like Victory. She additionally holds the winged, serpent-entwined staff (*caduceus*) often borne by Mercury, as a symbol of good fortune, and seen also on representations of Peace and Happiness. The snake is best understood as an attribute of *Salus*, 'Well-Being': and the figure's attitude of raising a fold of drapery before her face can be understood either as an act of modesty or propriety, or else as an apotropaic act (spitting in the bosom). *Aurei* of this type, together with various others, were issued from the beginning of



the reign, and may be understood as conveying the desire of the government to exercise its power with restraint, preserving the Imperial Peace to the happiness and well-being of mankind. Not the least of the advantages of issuing a message in this form is that the legend and design could be interpreted at various levels, and in varying ways, according to the individual's own association of ideas around the central theme. This was a most efficient means of conveying such a complicated message on a disc of metal less than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch across.

#### THE ROMAN MONETARY SYSTEM IN THE 1ST CENTURY

*Aurei* are naturally seldom found; they represented a considerable amount of spending-power. The legionary's yearly pay at this period was probably only nine *aurei* a year, raised by the end of the century to 12; and he seems to have been comfortably off under this system. It is almost impossible to give an equivalent in terms of modern money, but the *aureus* weighs less than a gram lighter than an English sovereign and is of similar purity. The *aureus* contained 25 silver *denarii*, and the *denarius* 16 copper *asses*; there were also larger brass coins—a *dupondius* (two *asses*) and a *sestertius* (four *asses*, two *dupondii*). This was the first monetary system to come into use in Wales, for Ancient British coins are so rare in the Principality that the Iron Age tribes could not, in general, have been coin-users.

#### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Llanelen coin, as can be seen from the illustration, is in very good condition, apart from a few abrasions. Nor has it been long in circulation. The original mint shine can still be seen in the deeper parts of the lettering. Now the conquest of Wales by the Romans did not occur until 75-8, that is, a quarter of a century after this coin was issued from the Rome mint. If it had been in circulation throughout that time it would have become very worn: the hoard of five *aurei* found at Caerleon in 1939 illustrates this point very well, for only the latest two, of A.D. 73 and 74, approach the condition of the Llanelen coin, whilst the earliest, of A.D. 55, is markedly worn. Unless, therefore, the Llanelen coin had been hoarded away for many years, it seems very likely that it was lost within a few years of issue.

The Flavian conquest of Wales was far from being the first Roman contact with the Silures, in whose territory Llanelen would have been. Tacitus records the strength and ferocity of this tribe, and mentions that a legion had to be stationed in their territory; this is thought by some to refer to Gloucester, where the Twentieth Legion, later based at Chester, may have been established about 49, although Gloucester cannot have been within the territory of the tribe. The Belgic refugee war-leader Caratacus, son of Cunobelin, was at this time in command of the Silurian forces and caused much trouble to the Roman army until his betrayal and capture in 51; and under Nero, fresh attempts were made to subjugate the tribes of Wales. There was, in other words, a very hostile situation along the Welsh borderlands, with continual raids by both sides. Our coin could well have been lost in such circumstances.<sup>3</sup>

There is very little in the archaeological record, as it is at present known, that can be related to the pre-Flavian period in Wales. The fort-site at Usk (*Burrium*) has yielded some early pottery, of which a complete south Gaulish samian bowl, form Dragendorff 30, by the potter Martialis, is the most convincing. Both Usk and Abergavenny lie at strategic points of the terrain which may well have been held, if only temporarily, by Roman troops in advance of the conquest of Frontinus.

## THE SEARCH FOR A HOARD

The name of the place where the coin was found is intriguing. Not only is the farm called *Ty Aur*, but there is a barn in the field next to that in which the coin turned up, called *Ysgubor Aur* (Gold Barn). Professor William Rees informs me that the word *aur* might very well be understood literally in this context. A figurative sense is not perhaps ruled out, but it would seem that some other word might more probably have been chosen if it had been desired to name the barn or the farm after the wealth of agricultural produce yielded. The term *cyfoeth* (wealth, riches) is used in such a sense, for example of the King's private lands in and around Aberystwyth, which are sometimes referred to as *Cyfoeth y Brenin* (The King's Wealth) after the conquest of west Wales in 1283-4. Thus it seems very likely that the farm, or the barn, or both, could have been named after previous discoveries, although no record of any finds of gold coins hereabouts seems to exist.

The condition and date of the coin naturally suggested that a search should be made of the find-spot for others, in case a hoard had been disturbed by the cultivation. Thanks to Mr. Alfred Jackson, and Mr. Isca Bowen, the find-spot was determined and a first visit made with Mr. Cefni Barnett, of Newport Museum. On the face of it, the case for a hoard still in something like its original position appeared very doubtful, for the field concerned lies at the foot of a steep hillside; and although it had been ploughed only once within the memory of the farmer, Mr. S. Francis, there had obviously been every opportunity for soil to wash down from the hill above and cover any ancient deposit in the field to a considerable depth—far deeper than ploughing would reach.

Nevertheless, it was considered important that the attempt should be made, and Mrs Barnett and I spent two days in a reasonably thorough search of the field. A mine-detector was kindly lent for the purpose by the Territorial Army H.Q. at Cardiff, and was used for a minute examination of the immediate area of the find and for general sweeps up and down the field as an aid to eyesight. The result was negative, although the instrument (Model 4A) had been proved by experiment to be capable of detecting the one coin when it had been buried to a depth of several inches. Previous experience at Llanbethery, near Barry, had shown that electro-magnetic metal detectors were quite capable of picking up small metal objects, in that case of bronze and about the size of a shilling, although one is naturally using the machine to the limits of its performance. In particular, the oscillation is not easy to control for such small objects, and varies with the irregularity of the surface of the ground unless one is careful to adjust it. We did in fact find numerous small scraps and larger pieces of iron wire, horseshoes, etc., in our search, and the strength of the signal—a high-pitched buzz—varied very little as between a small object on the surface and a larger one buried only a few inches deep. This effect was also noted in the case of Llanbethery, where the persistence of a signal of the same strength as that noted for a single coin on the surface, or immediately beneath, finally brought about the discovery of the body of the hoard, over 800 pieces in a mass, about six inches below ground. At Llanbethery, we had been able to pin-point the exact find-spot to within a few feet, and there were several coins to suggest that there was in fact a hoard to be found. It is in circumstances like these that a mine-detector can be used to advantage, and will save a great deal of trouble and time. At Llanelen, circumstances were quite different, and it was really only necessary to satisfy ourselves that no valuable hoard lay open to the casual visitor.

Relying on the configuration of the ground, and the suggestive name of the site, one may conclude that a hoard may have been buried on the hillside above Ty Aur and had been washed out and scattered possibly centuries before Ty Aur and Ysgubor Aur got their names from strays from it. If a hoard did exist, it is unlikely to alter the historical conclusions expressed above, for earlier *aurei* were called in by Nero in A.D. 64 and were melted down for re-issue to a slightly lower standard of weight. Thus the hoard will almost certainly have been of Claudian and earlier *aurei* like the Bredgar (Kent) hoard of 34 *aurei* from Julius Caesar to Claudius, which is thought to have been buried during the early days of the invasion of A.D. 43.

I wish to express my thanks to those concerned in the search, which was carried out with the approval of Mr. W. R. Winstanley, agent for the Llanover Estate. In particular, I should like to refer to the kindness and co-operation of Mr. and Mrs. Francis, of Ty Aur.

<sup>1</sup> Field No. 451, Mon. XII,11; towards the bottom corner, furthest from the barn.

<sup>2</sup> As *British Museum Catalogue, Emp.*, No. 68 of Claudius.

<sup>3</sup> Worth mentioning here is the gold coin of Otho (A.D. 69) found at Abergavenny—*Gobannium* itself, in the vicinity of the Castle—J. Horsley, *Britannia Romana* (1732), p. 319. The five ounces of gold coins of unspecified type, sold to a shopkeeper in the town, mentioned by V. E. Nash-Williams, *The Roman Frontier in Wales* (1954), p. 80, is a slip for silver: see *ibid.*, *Bull. Bd. of Celt. Studies* IV (1927-9), p. 262, quoting A. Hall, *Archaeol. Cambrens.* III (1848), p. 172. The Caerleon hoard mentioned in the present text is published by Aileen Fox, *Archaeol. Cambrens.* XCV (1940) p. 123-4 pl. VIIA—Myrtle Cottage Orchard site.

#### A NEWLY-DISCOVERED MEDIEVAL TOMB-SLAB AT ABERGAVENNY

An interesting addition has been made to the renowned group of medieval monuments in the Priory Church of St. Mary, Abergavenny, by the discovery, in the spring of 1961, of an inscribed tomb-slab in the churchyard, just a few yards beyond the north wall of the Church. The slab was found, a couple of feet below ground level, when the churchyard was being cleared and levelled preparatory to being laid out as a "garden of rest." At the request of Mr. Alfred Jackson, of Abergavenny, the writer examined the stone immediately after its discovery and has since paid two visits to Abergavenny to photograph it and to take rubbings on which the accompanying illustrations are based. Apparently, there is no previous record of this stone<sup>1</sup> and one must conclude that it has lain concealed in the ground for several centuries.

Measuring 6ft. 5ins. in length, 2ft. 1in. in width, and 8½ins. in thickness, the slab is of local red sandstone conglomerate—a most unsuitable material, one would have thought, for even the simplest form of carving, and it must have entailed considerable effort to obtain the reasonably smooth surface and chamfered edge. No attempt was made to smooth the edges of the stone below the chamfer, and the absence of a lip or rebate suggests that it might have been used as a simple gravestone rather than the lid of a tomb. This may well have some significance when we attempt to place the inscriptions on the slab against the historical background.

With the exception of about six inches, the whole of the flat surface of the stone is occupied by a large incised 'Maltese' ringcross on a long stem of typical medieval form (fig. 1). This was cut by a craftsman with more than average sense of symmetry and geometrical form, who evidently made use of a compass to mark out the sweeping arcs and circles. Indeed, one is tempted to the view that this part of the sculpture, simple though it is, bears no relation to anything else on the stone, certainly not to one of the inscriptions which has been crammed into the

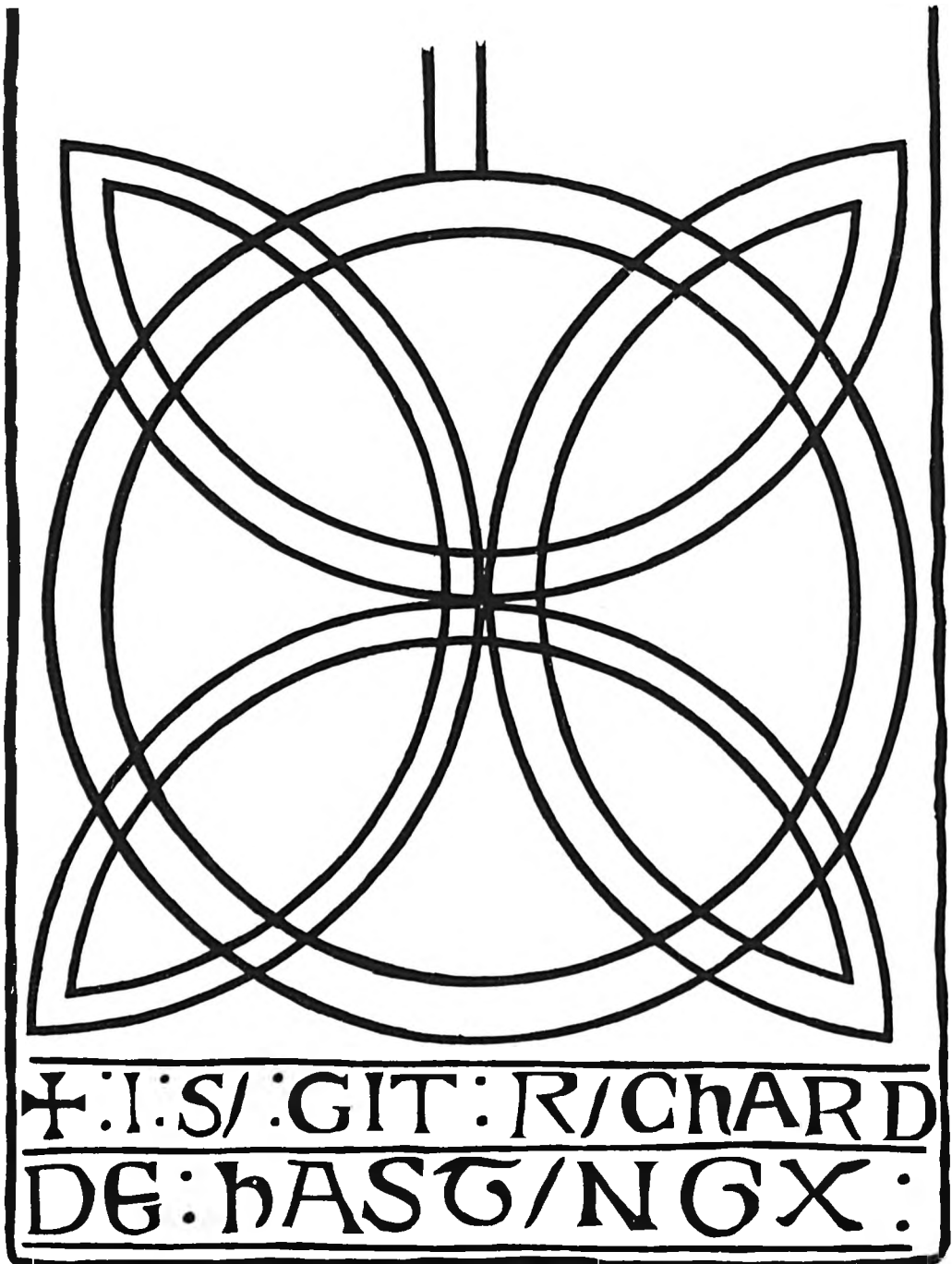


FIG. 1. SCALE  $\frac{1}{2}$  RING-CROSS AND INSCRIPTION ON ABERGAVENNY TOMB-SLAB

remaining six inches of the surface. This inscription, cut *in reverse* to the cross, upsets completely the balance of design and is quite obviously a later addition. It reads:

(A) ✠ : I : SI : GIT : RICHARD  
DE : HASTINGX :

Below this, on the chamfered edge of the stone, is a second inscription (fig. 2) in which the second syllable of the final name is carried round the corner. It reads:

(B) ? VNCLE : SIR [ : ] ION : HAS  
TINGX

Inscription (A), in Norman French, declares quite simply: “*Here Lies Richard de Hastings.*”



FIG. 2. INSCRIPTION ON EDGE OF ABERGAVENNY TOMB-SLAB

Inscription (B) sets a pretty problem. “Sir John Hastings” is straightforward enough, but the first word in the inscription *appears* to read ‘uncle’! This, of course, is not in accordance with the Norman-French character of the inscriptions. The letters V, C and L, are distinct enough, but the other two letters are open to question. The N is very doubtful; the serifs turn *inwards*, and actually meet at the bottom. The diagonal stroke seems to have been added as an after-thought. The final letter is an even greater puzzle; it could be either C, G or E! There appears to be a thinly cut vertical ‘leg’ forming a G, but a close examination of the stone reveals the presence of a serif terminal on the bottom which would make it C. Then again, just to add confusion to confusion, a horizontal stroke gives the impression of a rounded E, but this turns out to be a natural ‘stain’ in the stone! The writer has discussed these curious features with several scholarly friends; many suggestions have been made, some ingenious, but there is no solution in sight as yet. For the present we can only assume that it represents an error on the part of the mason.

Professor William Rees received the news of the discovery of the slab with characteristic enthusiasm and the writer is greatly indebted to him for allowing notes, contained in a letter, to be quoted here.

He writes: “There can be little doubt from your description that it is a 14th century tomb, and that of the Hastings family. They are already represented in the memorials in the church by Lawrence, the Earl of Pembroke (who died from the plague, the Black Death, in 1348 in all probability) and by William, who was illegitimate but was in possession of certain of the Abergavenny estates by grant (? of Lawrence). He too, seems to have died of the Black Death in 1349. The Black Death hit Abergavenny hard.

“To come to the slab-stone, it looks from your account that John is the first burial, his name occupying the chamfered edge of the stone—Sir Ion Hastingx. I have been trying to make [the first word on the chamfer] into a date with CL, but no John Hastings died in 1350. There were four John Hastings during the century, two in the first half and two in the latter, but there were long periods of minority. The last two died in 1375 and 1389 respectively.



“From your copy it looks as if Richard de Hastings is added later and may well be a second burial in the tomb. The Norman French inscription is clearly 14th century. Richard is not one of the family names and I must surmise that he is illegitimate.”

Professor Rees suggests that John was the first burial, but the striking similarity in the style of lettering in the two inscriptions—the curious mixture of Roman and Gothic characters, for example—indicates the work of one man and this, in turn, might suggest that Richard soon followed John into the grave. No elaborate tombs for these members of an important family, but a simple burial in a grave marked by an equally simple stone. They, too, may have been victims of the dreaded plague.

In addition to Professor William Rees, the writer wishes to acknowledge the helpful opinions expressed by Mr. George C. Boon, of the National Museum of Wales, and Mr. A. J. Richard, Cardiff. A special tribute is due to Mr. Alfred Jackson for his vigilance and active concern for the preservation of the monument, which has now been placed with the others inside the church. The prompt action taken by the Vicar, Canon M. E. Davies, is greatly appreciated.

CEFNI BARNETT.

<sup>1</sup> There is no mention of it in Cox's *Tour in Monmouthshire* (1801), or in Octavius Morgan's *Account of the Ancient Monuments in the Priory Church, Abergavenny*, published by this Association in 1872.

#### A TRACE OF ROMANO-BRITISH CHRISTIANITY AT CAERWENT

In the Newport Museum there is a portion of a pewter bowl from House VII North, Caerwent<sup>1</sup>, which lies opposite the north-east corner of the Forum-Basilica. The bowl was found, together with fragments of a pewter dish, five pottery vessels, a scrap of cloth, and an iron knife-blade and an iron hook, enclosed within a large grey urn. The urn, its mouth closed by an inverted mixing-bowl (*mortarium*), had been buried in the corner of a room.

The pewter bowl (figs. 1 & 2) was being idly examined by the writer on September 25th, 1961, at the conclusion of other business at the Museum, when it was noticed that there was a lightly-incised *graffito* on the underside of the base. When a little powdery oxide had been rubbed off, this *graffito* turned out to be a Christian monogram—a Chi-Rho, the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek characters. The form of the bowl was common in the 4th century, and the pottery, which includes three colour-coated red bowls, gives a firm date in the middle to late 4th century for the deposit. The Chi-Rho monogram was much in vogue at this period.

This is the first time that a trace of Romano-British Christianity has been found at Caerwent, or indeed in Roman Wales as a whole<sup>2</sup>. It is hoped to give a more particular account of the find in the next issue of these *Proceedings*.

GEORGE C. BOON.

<sup>1</sup> T. Ashby, 'Excavations at Caerwent, Monmouthshire, on the site of the Romano-British city of Venta Silurum, in the year 1906,' *Archaeologia* LX (1907), 459 – p. 9 of offprinted report.

<sup>2</sup> The pottery lamp with a pattern of raised dots on its base found at Caerleon (civil settlement, 1954 – *Journ. Roman Studies*, XLV (1955), pl. LI, 1; p. 122) is of 1st–2nd century date, and is not Christian. Nothing later than the early 3rd century was found in the large culvert where the lamp occurred.



FIG. 1. SCALE  $\frac{1}{2}$   
 PEWTER BOWL WITH CHI-RHO ON BASE, FROM CAERWENT  
*Photograph: Newport Museum and Art Gallery*

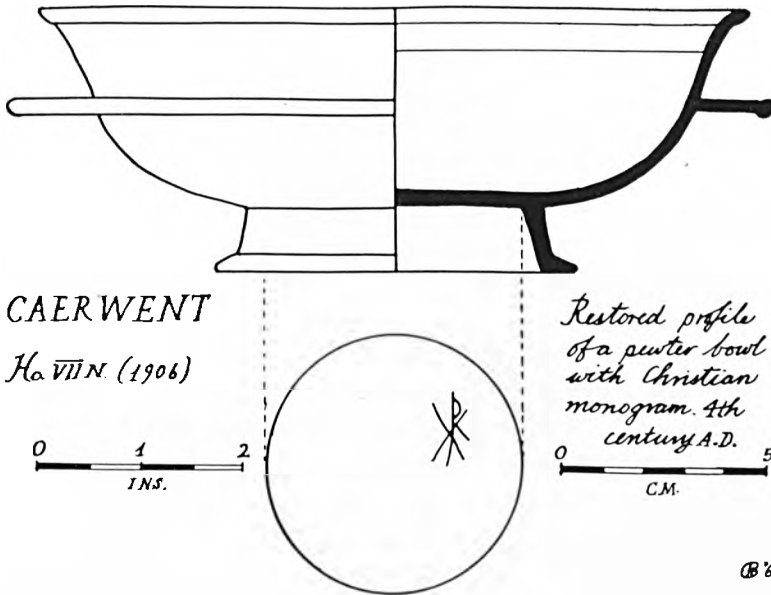


FIG. 2.

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## A NEOLITHIC HUMAN SKULL AND ANIMAL BONES FOUND AT NEWPORT

*A human skull and a quantity of animal bones were discovered early in 1961 when a pit was being dug at the Orb Works of the Steel Company of Wales at Newport. The remains were found embedded in clay, or "bunguni," at a depth of 34 feet.*

*The skull and bones have been examined by Mr. Lionel F. Cowley, M.Sc., Assistant Keeper of the Department of Zoology, National Museum of Wales, and his report is given below in full.*

*Mr. R. P. Perry, General Manager at the Orb Works, readily agreed that the skull and bones should be preserved in association with another Neolithic skull found in Newport in 1911 (see below), and has kindly deposited them on 'long loan' in Newport Museum and Art Gallery.*

### REPORT, BY LIONEL F. COWLEY, M.SC.

**HUMAN SKULL:** There was no lower jaw, the nasal bones were incomplete, and the mastoid process of the right side was damaged. In all probability it belonged to a person of the male sex.

Three molars were present on each side of the palate and the 1st premolar of the right side was still in place. All the alveoli for the other teeth were open indicating that all teeth were present at death but had subsequently been lost. There was no evidence of decay or crowding of teeth. The sutures of the skull indicated in my opinion a person of about 30 years of age.

It is not uncommon for skulls when found to show damage to the facial region. However, in the present skull the facial bones were not damaged and it has thus been possible to measure the orbit, nose, upper face and palate.

#### CRANIUM

Length:	191.5 mm.
Breadth:	146 mm.
Auricular height:	118 mm.
Basion-bregmatic height:	131 mm.
Nasion-opisthion arc:	388 mm.
Frontal arc:	136 mm.
Parietal arc:	124 mm.
Occipital arc:	128 mm.
Cephalic index	76.2
Cranial capacity	1539 c.c.
Foramen magnum	33 mm. long
Foramen magnum	29 mm. wide
Index of foramen magnum	87.8

#### FACE

Inter temporal width of frontal bone 102.5 mm.  
 Inter angular width of frontal bone 108 mm.  
 Inter temporal/interangular index 94.9  
 Bi-zygomatic (facial) width 133 mm.

- Nasion-alveolar (facial) height 75 mm.
- Upper facial index 56 (leptoprosopic or long-faced)
- Orbital height – 35 mm.
- Orbital breadth – 38.5 mm.
- Orbital index 90.9 (–high orbits or magaseme condition)
- Nasal height 54.5 mm.
- Nasal width 22.5 mm.
- Nasal index 41 (–narrow nose or leptorrhine condition)
- Palate width 40 mm. (across palate between 2nd molars)
- Palate length 47 mm. (from anterior border of alveoli of central incisors to line joining posterior margin of 3 molars). This dimension is an estimate because of slight damage at the anterior border of the alveoli of the central incisors. In Neolithic skulls it is rare to have such a relatively undamaged face and palate.

In 1911, a human skull was found during the extensions of the Alexandra Dock in Newport,<sup>1</sup> at approximately the same depth as the present skull (1961). This skull was reported on by Professor Arthur Keith<sup>2</sup> at the time and it is of interest to compare the two skulls.

	1911 SKULL	1961 SKULL
Maximum length	195 mm.	191.5 mm.
Maximum width	141 mm.	146 mm.
Cephalic index	72	76
Auricular height	116 mm.	118 mm.
Basi-Bregmatic height	135 mm.	131 mm.
Intertemporal width of frontal	99 mm.	102.5 mm.
Interangular width of frontal	111 mm.	108 mm.
Bizygomatic (facial) width	134 mm.	133 mm.

CRANIAL CAPACITY: For the 1911 skull Keith gave 1450 c.c. but did not state how he arrived at this figure. However, if we use Hooke’s formula for both skulls then from the above dimensions we have

1911 SKULL	1961 SKULL
1557 c.c.	1539 c.c.

I share Keith’s view that the 1911 skull is of the Neolithic period, and must add that the 1961 skull belongs in my opinion to that period.

ANIMAL REMAINS: The Ox was represented by the right half of a lower-jaw containing four cheek-teeth, two pieces of scapula (shoulder-blade), part of a vertebra, and the proximal portion of a metacarpal bone. These remains represent in all probability the Small Celtic Shorthorn, *Bos taurus var. longifrons*.

The Sheep was represented by a complete metatarsal bone which measured 124.5 mm. This length metacarpal indicates an animal having a height of about 1ft. 11ins.

<sup>1</sup> In Newport Museum and Art Gallery.

<sup>2</sup> *Human and other Remains found in the neighbourhood of Newport, Mon.* (Newport Library and Museum Committee), 1911.

### A FIND OF ROMAN POTTERY AT USK MOUTH

The discovery of Roman potsherds and the bones of domestic animals at Usk mouth (Nash) Power Station was reported to Newport Museum and Art Gallery by the Resident Engineer in June 1959. The site was visited by the writer who examined the find-spot and took away the sherds and bones for cleaning and for detailed examination, after which they were returned to the Electricity Board, at their request, for display in the entrance hall of the administrative building.

The objects were found when digging a drainage system in connection with the building of Usk mouth Power Station 'B', at a point where the ground rises slightly—24 feet above O D.—on the east bank of the mouth of the river Usk. The potsherds and bones were grouped closely together at a depth of about 14 feet, embedded in the glutinous estuarine clay known locally as "bungum." At the request of the writer, the excavation was extended beyond immediate requirements, but there was no trace of any structural remains or any further material.

The principal items are as follows:

(a) Four fragments of a samian bowl (Dragendorff 30) which, when joined, formed about one third of the original. The panel decoration, including lions and figures of Hercules, is reminiscent of the potters *Butrio* and *Albucius* of Lezoux, Hadrian-Antonine period.

(b) Some sixty sherds of grey and black coarse ware—cooking pots, storage jars, and bowls of common 2nd century types. Several of the cooking pots bear traces of fire. It was possible to partially restore some of the vessels, but there was no complete one.

(c) Numerous bones representing sheep (or goat) and ox.

Seen in isolation and in the absence of more positive evidence, it is difficult to observe any direct archaeological significance in this find. Only the obvious can be stated with any certainty: that at Usk mouth has been found a rubbish pit into which someone threw bits of broken pottery and the remains of hearty meals in the 2nd century A.D. But in a broader context it might be linked, rather tenuously at the moment perhaps, with other recent discoveries of Roman material along the Welsh side of the Bristol Channel. It may be relevant, for example, to recall the discovery in 1950, and in subsequent years, of hundreds of Roman potsherds (and more recently a complete storage jar<sup>1</sup>) and other objects on the foreshore at Cold Harbour Pill, Redwick, some 6½ miles east of the Usk mouth site. The fragments of samian ware from Redwick have been ascribed to the Hadrian-Antonine period, and all the coarse ware is also of 2nd century date.

The late Dr. Nash-Williams<sup>2</sup> was of the opinion that the domestic character of the Redwick finds suggested the presence of a small Roman settlement. He inclined to the view that they might be related to the discovery, in 1878, of the Roman centurial stone at Goldcliff<sup>3</sup>, almost mid-way between Redwick and Nash, recording the building of thirty-three and a half paces<sup>4</sup> of what has been assumed to be a sea wall. Nash-Williams suggested that the Redwick finds might indicate the place where a legionary working party established a temporary camping site while engaged on coastal defence work. There does not appear to be any doubt about the temporary nature of the Redwick or Usk mouth sites for as yet nothing has been found to indicate occupation after the first half of the 2nd century A.D., and equally, there is nothing to

show the true character or functions of the two sites. A trial excavation at Redwick might clarify matters there.

A communication received from Mr. George C. Boon, Assistant Keeper of the Department of Archaeology at the National Museum of Wales, after the above note was written and just before this publication went to press, emphasises the need for further field work along the Severn Shore. As recently as 26th October 1961, Mr. Boon visited Goldcliff with the object of examining the site where the centurial stone, referred to above, was found. On the surface of alluvium left by bulldozing operations connected with the strengthening of the sea-wall he found several objects, including fragments of Roman pottery. They had obviously been disturbed, but it was clear that they had come from the alluvium beneath a thin buried beach and about 18 inches below the present surface of the flats, immediately west of the cliff.

The 'finds,' now in the National Museum of Wales, are as follows:

*Samian*: Rim fragment of a dish (Dragendorff 31), East Gaulish (Antonine)

Base fragment of a conical cup (Dragendorff 33), Central Gaulish (Antonine)

*Coarse ware*: Grey 'olla,' of 2nd century type.

*Medieval*: Two fragments of glazed roof tile, presumably from Goldcliff Priory.

A flake of black chert, humanly struck, and an iron horseshoe, were also found.

The Roman pottery is not abraded or 'rolled'; the medieval fragments are 'rolled.'

The writer is greatly indebted to Mr. Boon for allowing him to make use of this new and valuable information.

CEFNI BARNETT.

<sup>1</sup> In Newport Museum: to be published later.

<sup>2</sup> *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, Vol. 14., p. 254.

<sup>3</sup> V. E. & A. H. Nash-Williams, *Catalogue of the Roman inscribed and Sculptured Stones found at Caerleon*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> This distance is given in the *Catalogue* as thirty-one and a half paces, but a recent re-examination of the inscription by Mr. R. P. Wright has revealed the presence of two additional vertical strokes, making it thirty-three and a half. The writer is indebted to Mr. George Boon for this information.

## HUMAN REMAINS AT LITTLE DEWSTOW

Three human skeletons were brought to light at Little Dewstow Farm, near Caldicot, when a shallow trench was cut across the farmyard in connection with structural alterations to some of the outbuildings in the spring of 1961. When the writer visited the farm, soon after the discovery, he found that two of the skeletons had disintegrated and the bones were scattered over a wide area. The crown of the skull of the third skeleton was just visible in the side of the trench but it was decided that there was nothing to be gained by extending the digging to extract it from the soil. A remarkable feature was the shallowness of the burials; at most they lay only some twelve inches below the surface of the cobbled yard and this no doubt was responsible for the collapse of the skeletons.

Sir Joseph Bradney<sup>1</sup> records that three human skeletons were dug up on the site in 1899, and the writer was interested to learn from Mr. Harries, the farmer, that it was about that time that the cowshed (in which he was now carrying out structural alterations) was built. Bradney does not mention what happened to the skeletons of 1899 and the writer can only conclude that they were re-interred in shallow pits to be 're-resurrected' in 1961.

Dewstow, according to Bradney, is Dewi's Stow, the hamlet of Dewi or David, and evidently takes its name from a church that stood on the site. It is mentioned in *Liber Landavensis* as one of the churches given by Arthwys, King of Gwent, to the see of Llandaff in the time of the suffragan bishop Comereg in the sixth century. It was referred to in the Domesday Book as *Sanctus Dewin*.

Professor William Rees shows the manor and church of Dewstow in his map of South Wales in the 14th century and it would appear that it was a thriving community down to the outbreak of the civil wars when it was confiscated and sold in 1657.

There is a tradition that the large barn at Little Dewstow was originally the church, but although it is obviously of some antiquity it has no ecclesiastical characteristics whatsoever. There is, however, little doubt about the existence of a church there in medieval times, and this may account for the skeletal remains. Excavation of certain interesting contours in adjacent fields might reveal the foundations of the medieval hamlet.

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<sup>1</sup> A History of Monmouthshire, vol. IV, p. 121.