

THE ELVEDEN SILVER COIN HOARD

By GRACE BRISCOE, F.S.A.

This hoard was discovered in 1953 by warreners on the Elveden estate of the Earl of Iveagh. The longhandled warrener's spade, thrust into a rabbit burrow to a depth of $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet, struck a hard object. The warreners, realizing they had met something unusual, proceeded with great care. With little disturbance of the surroundings, a flask, capped by a small dish, was brought out on the spade. Where the spade had struck the pot there was a small hole disclosing the presence of coins. The sherd from this hole was recovered, otherwise the pots were intact.

The find was reported to the police and the next day a thorough examination of the burrow and surroundings was carried out by Dr. C. Parsons and myself, without finding anything of archaeological importance except a few sherds of R-B pottery. The site (Nat. Grid 52/8355/8000) is rough unploughed breckland, much disturbed by rabbits. There were signs of an R-B settlement, sherds, pieces of quern etc., for a considerable area around the findspot.

The coins, 1,146 in number, were cleaned and classified by Mr. P. A. Oldman. After the coins had been removed through the hole in the side of the flask it was found that the neck was stuffed with a piece of textile. At the subsequent inquest the coins were declared treasure trove and sent to the British Museum.

As the presence of the textile and of the second pot used as a cap make this find unusual, and as the hoard, it is believed, was recovered intact, it seemed desirable to record the archaeological circumstances with a summary of the published reports on the coins and the pottery. The report on the textile has not appeared elsewhere.

R. A. G. Carson has published a list of the coins (673 denarii and 173 antoniniani) in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, Vol. XIV, No. 44, p. 204,

A hoard which covers the change from denarius to double denarius and in which both denominations are present in reasonable proportions is rather exceptional. Beginning with Antoninus Pius, who is represented by a single coin with his tribunician date TRP XVI, A.D. 152-3, the hoard covers almost a hundred years, closing with the Philips, of whom the latest coin is an antoninianus of Philip I struck to commemorate Rome's millennium in A.D. 248. The hoard must have been formed, and presumably buried,

very soon after the issue of this coin, for only a small proportion of Philip I's coins bear this second obverse IMP PHILIPPUS AUG, current from 247 to 249; and these, linked as they are here with coins bearing TRP IIII (A.D. 247), probably did not extend beyond that year. In addition, there are no coins of Philip II with the title Augustus, assumed by him in 247. The peak of the hoard occurs under Severus Alexander, 341 coins.

The range of close on a hundred years suggests that the find represented private savings rather than an official fund, and for the third century, well over a thousand silver coins was a considerable fortune.

This is followed by a note on the pottery by J. W. Brailsford, (*loc. cit.*, p. 208),

The hoard was contained in a pottery flask, the mouth of which was covered by a small dish. The flask is of a hard, fairly fine grey ware, containing very small flecks of what appears to be mica. There is a matt zone round and above the widest part; the upper and lower portions are smooth. It is intact except that a piece has been removed from one side. The height is 6.9 ins., maximum diameter 5.75 ins. The dish is of a brown sandy ware with ? mica flecks. The surface is dark and poorly finished. It is 4.0 ins. in diameter. The flask is of a common R-B type, probably derived from Belgic examples, as at Sheepen site, Colchester.

I am indebted to Miss Audrey Henshall of the National Museum, Edinburgh, for the following report on the textile,

The cloth is a fine plain weave, with one system of threads set much closer than the other so that it is almost a rep. There is no selvage or flaw in the weave to prove which threads are the warp. The probable warp is Z-spun, with about 28 threads per inch. The weft is more lightly spun, Z, and finer, with two threads running together, 52 double threads per inch, i.e., 104 all told. The cloth is now a uniform dark brown colour but when found the inner folds were much lighter in colour.

A sample of the cloth was submitted to the Wool Industries Association, Leeds. The report states that the cloth is made from animal fibres. These fibres are stained brown and are not naturally pigmented; a few of them are medullated. The fibres are very fragile and severely

degraded, only slight indications of scale pattern being seen and on only a few fibres. The slight evidence available indicates the possibility of the fibres being wool but this is by no means certain. Noteworthy points about the cloth are the evenness of its spinning and its really remarkable fineness for an animal fibre.

The only ancient cloths in this country I know with double threads are plain weaves and are all from Roman sites; Newstead, Roxburghshire, mid or late 2nd century; and Ashstead, Surrey, 1st century; both with one system (presumably the weft) of double threads; while that from Silchester, 2nd half of the 1st century, has double threads in both directions (see *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, 1950, p. 136 and *Archaeologia*, 92, p. 147 and pl. XXXVI).

A somewhat similar but very much earlier cloth has recently been described from Nieuwenhagen, Limburg, Netherlands. It comes from a Hallstatt cremation, 6th-5th century B.C. It is wool, very fine, Z-spun, with double threads in the presumed warp. The count is about 75 warp threads and 113 weft threads per inch. It is almost a rep, but, unlike the Elveden example, the single threads overlie the double threads which are almost hidden. (*Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek*, VI, 71-72).

The pottery, the textile and a representative series of coins are deposited in the Elveden Estate Museum.