



New iron age king found in Kent

By Chris Rudd

Julius Caesar names four Kentish kings in 54 BC – Carvilius ‘of the small stag’, Cingetorix ‘king of warriors’, Segovax ‘victorious fighter’ and Taximagulus ‘young badger’ – and a leader of noble birth, Lugotorix ‘king of mice’ or ‘moon king’. This recently discovered gold stater gives us a new royal name: Anarevitos or possibly Avarevitos.

Numismatists and metal detectorists work well together. Between them they keep digging up new kings that nobody else has heard of, especially in Kent, the ancient land of *Cantion* which gave its name to the modern county and its capital, Canterbury. Since 1997 three possible ‘new’ iron age rulers have been proposed for Kent – Sam, whose name means ‘summer’, Solidus ‘the firm’ or ‘enduring’, and Touto ‘the tribe’. Now a fourth new Cantian king has been unearthed, thanks to an amateur detectorist, Dan of Dover, aged 49.



Dan found the Anarevitos gold stater in a field near Dover, Kent. At first he thought it was a bottle top.

in West Sussex and Hampshire. Towards the end of the first century BC Eppillus proclaimed himself *rex Calleva* – king of Silchester – and later took control of north and east Kent.

However, the ruler named on the reverse of this unique gold coin is completely unknown. The inscription appears to read AVAREVITO or ANAREVITO; we can’t be sure which it is because the first two letters are joined together and are right on the edge of the flan. As a personal name (there’s no doubt



Gold stater of Cantian tribe inscribed EPPI ANAREVITO (or AVAREVITO), unique and previously unpublished. There appears to be a star above the horse’s head, a sign perhaps that Anarevitos was born into the royal house of Commios.

On 4th September 2010, a dry and breezy Saturday, Dan strolled onto a stubble field near Dover (British *Dubras* ‘waters, stream’) with the farmer’s consent and with his new

XP Deus detector. He says: “After four hours I’d found only a few Georgian coppers that were very worn and one Roman grot, plus about a pound of lead. Still it was nice to be out. Then I got a nice crisp signal and dug out a clod of dirt. As I broke it down into ever smaller pieces I noticed the edge of what I thought was a squashed, gold-coloured screw cap off a soft drinks bottle. As I chipped away more and more of the mud the ‘cap’ revealed itself to be my first ever find of a Celtic gold stater.”

This iron age gold stater isn’t just a first for Dan. It’s also a first for British numismatists, a first for British historians and a first for Celtic linguists. In fact it’s one of the most interesting and most significant iron age coins ever discovered in Britain – an entirely ‘new’ type, previously unpublished.

The ruler named on the obverse – EPPI, short for Eppillus ‘little horse’ – is already well known to numismatists. Eppillus was the second of three rulers who claimed to be a son of Commios, a former Gallic ally of Caesar who crossed the Channel to set up his own kingdom



The rider, horse and lettering on this Eppillus Victory gold stater (ABC 387), which celebrates his conquest of north and east Kent, are like those on the Anarevitos stater, hinting at a close family tie. COM F says Eppillus was a son (*filius*) of Commios.

about this), Anarevito[s] looks more plausible to me, but we must remain cautious until other more revealing specimens emerge.

Anarevitos, if I’ve read it correctly,

is not only an entirely new British ruler. Anarevitos is also a 'new' Celtic name, previously unrecorded. Professor Andrew Breeze thinks Anarevitos may mean 'one strongly possessed of foresight' as with Greek Prometheus or 'lacking in foresight' as with Epimetheus. He says the second interpretation is theoretically stronger *"but, although one could imagine such a name given to a slave or the like, it is hard to think of it as suitable for a king who had gold coins minted"*. Dr Oliver Simkin and Dr Anders Jørgensen both believe that Anarevitos may mean 'unforeknown'. All three philologists agree that Anarevitos is cognate with a Cisalpine Celtic name, Anareviseos, which may be translated as 'unforeknowable'.



Archaeologists often refer to tribal kings as 'chiefs' or 'elites'. But Caesar calls them 'kings' and rightly so, because that's what they called themselves, as attested by their coins. This silver unit (ABC 1160) describes Eppillus as 'king of Calleva', modern Silchester, Hants.

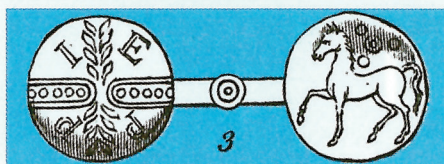
Who was Anarevitos? Where and when did he rule? My hunch is that he was a son of Eppillus – a grandson of king Commios – and that he ruled in Kent, perhaps south-east Kent (though we mustn't be swayed by a single findspot), either on behalf of Eppillus as a sub-tribal kinglet or after the death of Eppillus in his own right, as a full-blown king. Either way, as kinglet or king, the reign of Anarevitos seems to have been a very brief one – only one of his coins has been found – and he was probably deposed sometime around AD 15 by Cunobelinus.



We don't know what Anarevitos looked like, but this may be a portrait of his father. Eppillus silver unit (ABC 1166), struck c.20 BC-AD 1.

My reasons for believing that Anarevitos was a son of Eppillus are as follows:

- It was fashionable for a prince of this period to quote his father's name prominently on coins (with or without F for *filius*). It helped to give him legitimacy.



The layout of E-P-P-I on the Anarevitos stater is identical to this unique Cantian gold quarter stater of Eppillus (ABC 390), struck c.AD 1-15. Evidence of a family link between the two rulers. 18th century engraving.

- The weight of Anarevitos's stater (5.43grams) is almost identical to the weight of Eppillus's Cantian staters, which suggests that it wasn't struck long after they were.
- The horse and horseman on the Anarevitos stater look very much like the horse and horseman on the Eppillus Victory stater (ABC 387), apart from a few minor details. The stance of the two horses is the same. The posture of the two riders is the same. Commenting on the Anarevitos stater, Dr John Sills says: *"I suspect this coin was engraved by the same hand that did ABC 387, the Eppillus Victory stater; the style of the lettering and horse are almost identical."*



The star on the Anarevitos stater, a sign of sacral kingship, is also seen on the coins of Tincomarus, Eppillus and Verica – all kings of the house of Commios. Another hint that Anarevitos may be a son of Eppillus. The Commian star was derived from the 'Julian star', a comet seen shortly after Caesar's assassination in 44 BC and used here on this silver denarius of Augustus (Sear 1607) to advertise the divinity of Caesar and, by implication, the divinity of Augustus too.

- The letters E-P-P-I on the Anarevitos stater are arranged in precisely the same manner – in a diagonal cruciform pattern in the quarters of a crescent-cross motif – as on a unique gold quarter stater of Eppillus (ABC 390), presumed to be a Cantian issue, though it lacks a recorded findspot. Found over 245 years ago, a drawing of it was engraved for 'Arch-

Druid' William Stukeley (1687-1765) of Stonehenge and Avebury fame.

- Though small and indistinct, there appears to be a star on the Anarevitos stater, just above the horse's head. If so, it might indicate that Anarevitos was a scion of the royal house of king Commios, because the same star shines brightly in the same position – above the regal rider – on horseman staters of Tincomarus 'great in peace', Eppillus 'little horse' and Verica 'the high one', who were all apparently descended from Commios.
- Apart from Touto, another Cantian king or kinglet whose coins tie him to Eppillus, there's no other obvious heir apparent for Eppillus in Kent. Dan's discovery of this new gold stater with the royal star stamped on it introduces us not only to a new British king but also, quite possibly, to a new grandson of old king Commios.



The discovery of the Anarevitos stater near Dover (ancient *Dubris*) reinforces my belief that Caesar's quartered Cantion of 54 BC (*De bello gallico* V, 22) remained divided and contested well into the first half of the first century AD. This map shows four hypothetical kingdoms of the late iron age (A, B, C, D) defined by the rivers Darent, Medway and Stour. Main tribal centres: 1 Oldbury. 2 Vagniacis 'marshy place' (Springhead). 3 Durobrivae 'bridge fort' (Rochester). 4 Bigbury. 5 Durovernon 'alder fort' (Canterbury). 6 Duno- 'fort' (location unknown).

What does it feel like to dig up your first gold stater? Dan says: "The feeling I had on seeing this work of art was indescribable. I had to catch my breath. I suppose it could be likened to a feeling of awe and excitement and AT LAST! What a lovely reward after twenty odd years of metal detecting and many miles of pacing up and down fields!" Dan, who is a Member of the Royal Phoenix Metal Detecting Club, tells me that he has no plans to sell the coin and that he intends to keep it for his own enjoyment. Who can blame him?

Picture credits

1, 3 DB/KL. 2 D. Holman. 4,5,6 *Ancient British Coins* (Chris Rudd 2010). 7 W.Stukeley (R.Fleming 1776). 8 Wildwinds.com 9 Chris Rudd.

Just before going to press we learned of the tragic death of Dan, who found the Anarevitos gold stater. This article is dedicated to Dan, a great metal detectorist.