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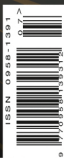
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CHRIS RUDD

CARATACUS STRIKES GOLD

How recent discoveries and numismatic research are rewriting the story of Britain's first Prince of Wales and first famous royal family

AT 2pm, Sunday, November 10, 2019, a metal detectorist found a unique gold coin in a field near Newbury in Berkshire, in the former territory of the Atrebates. As soon as he got home he tried to find it in *Ancient British Coins* (ABC), but couldn't. Which isn't surprising because it isn't there. So he wrote to my colleague Elizabeth Cottam and sent her images of the coin. She could hardly believe her eyes, and neither could I when she showed me the photos. It was a gold stater of Caratacus, the British freedom fighter who defied the forces of Rome for eight years, mostly in what is now Wales. More to the point, it was the first gold coin of Caratacus that anyone had seen for 2,000 years—a gold coin of the highest rarity and highest importance, historic as well as numismatic.

My aim here is to explain the significance of this rare gold stater, to tell you a bit about Caratacus and, very briefly, to summarise other coin finds made over the past two decades—almost all by metal detectorists—which are causing us to revise our ideas about other members of Caratacus' family, especially his brothers. This family may fairly be described as Britain's first famous royal family, well known not only on both sides of the English Channel, but as far away as Rome.

This hitherto unrecorded gold stater of Caratacus was probably struck at the Atrebat capital of Calleva (Silchester, Hampshire), about 20 miles east of where the stater was unearthed. It is almost identical to the gold stater, ABC 1343, issued previously by Caratacus' uncle, Epaticcus. The obverse shows CVNO (short for Cunobelinus, father of Caratacus, brother of Epaticcus) divided by a bushy ear of barley. On the reverse we see a naked, heavily muscled horseman—a javelin thrower to be more precise—charging into battle on a sturdy stallion. He seems to be riding bareback, his long legs almost touching the ground. He is about to hurl a javelin, "the Celtic weapon par excellence" as renowned Celtic coin expert Derek Allen calls it, and he holds a large oval shield. The boldly engraved legend reads CARAT. Could the naked cavalryman be Caratacus himself? Like President Vladimir Putin (remember that photo of him sitting on a horse, stripped to the waist?) I think Caratacus wants to be seen as a tough guy, which is presumably why his main silver coin (ABC 1376), like his uncle's, shows him posing as Hercules, the mythical Mr Muscle, in a lionskin headdress.

The discovery of this previously unknown Caratacus gold stater is of colossal significance. Dr John Sills says: "The Caratacus stater is perhaps the most important single Iron Age coin ever found in this country, the only known gold coin of one of Britain's greatest resistance leaders". It's not just the extreme rarity of the coin. It's not just the international celebrity, both ancient and modern, of the man who struck the coin: The Roman historian Tacitus tells us that "the reputation of Caratacus had spread beyond the islands and through the neighbouring provinces to Italy itself... Even at Rome his name meant something" (*Annals* 12.36). It's more than rarity, more than celebrity. This newly discovered gold stater is crucially important because it provides irrefutable proof that the CARA named on silver coins (ABC 1376, 1379, 1382) is one and the same person as the historical Caratacus cited by classical authors Cassius Dio, Suetonius and Tacitus, and by Welsh authors in the early Middle Ages. For decades cautious academics have cautioned



Caratacus, freedom fighter and best known member of Britain's first famous royal family. His historical status as a powerful warrior-prince is confirmed by a newly found gold stater. (Stained-glass portrait of Caratacus in Colchester Town Hall: Miranda Aldhouse-Green, by kind permission of Colchester Borough Council.)



Caratacus gold stater closely copies that of his uncle Epaticcus (ABC 1343), unsung hero of the Catuvellaunian royal family. He captured Calleva before Caratacus did.

Gold stater inscribed [C]VNO CARAT, the first recorded gold coin of Caratacus. CVNO attests that his father was Cunobelinus. Found near Newbury, Berks, 10.11.2019.



The cavalryman on Caratacus gold stater was inspired by this gold stater of Verica (ABC 1190) who fled to Claudius for help when Caratacus invaded his kingdom.

Caratacus silver unit (ABC 1376) is almost identical to Epaticcus's (ABC 1346). Like Alexander the Great both wear the lion skin headdress of Hercules.



Caratacus boar's head minim (CR 139.15, £3,600) mimics Epaticcus's (ABC 1370). CV links Caratacus to Cunobelinus like TA ties Epaticcus to Tasciovanos.



ABC 1379



ABC 1382



ABC 2903

Caratacus issued three other silver coins (ABC 1379, 1382 and 2903), all very rare. CVN on ABC 2903 indicates that his father was Cunobelinus. (Coin drawing Paul Sellier 1890/CR.)



Cunobelinus (ABC 2957) was the most powerful tribal ruler of his time in Atlantic Europe. When he died Caratacus become his best known son.

Caratacus caused Verica (ABC 1310) to flee to Claudius who invaded Britain, and celebrated his triumph with this DE BRITANN aureus and by naming his son Britannicus. (Coin courtesy of Martin Henig, photo Ralph Merrifield.)



Coins not shown to size or scale.

us not to assume that the CARA we see on our silver coins is the Caratacus we see in our history books. They need worry no longer. At a stroke their doubts have been dispelled by this gold stater. The CVNO is obviously patronymic, clearly indicating that the person named on the other side of the coin is the son of Cunobelinus, and the CARAT is obviously Caratacus. Who else could it possibly be? That letter T, absent on silver coins, is the clincher.

Who was Caratacus? And what did he do to win international fame? A younger son of Cunobelinus, the most powerful potentate in pre-Roman Britain, and grandson of Tasciovanos of Verlamion (St Albans, Hertfordshire), king of the Catuvellauni, Caratacus may have been born around AD 10, perhaps shortly after his father had taken control of Camulodunon (Colchester, Essex). Caratacus grew up in what was undoubtedly Britain's first famous royal family. The father of this family, Cunobelinus, was the strongest, wealthiest and most widely known tribal king of his time—the most powerful in Atlantic Europe—who personally controlled more land, more lives and more riches by AD 41 than any tribal leader west of the Rhine. The Roman historian Suetonius called him *Britannorum rex* (king of the Britons).

As a leading member of this Catuvellaunian royal family, well known for its expansion by aggression, prince Caratacus will surely have been well trained in the art of warfare. His uncle Epaticcus seems to have taken him under his wing. When Epaticcus died (or was killed) Caratacus succeeded him at Calleva, causing Verica, king of the Regni and Atrebatas, to flee to the Roman emperor Claudius for help. This resulted in the Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43. Caratacus and his brother Togodumnus (some of us think his real name was Dubno-) led the fight against the Roman invasion. After the death of Togodumnus, Caratacus retreated to the land of the Dobunni in the West Midlands, where the Catuvellauni had some influence, crossed the River Severn and entered what is now Wales, where he commanded a remarkable guerrilla war against the Roman forces for eight years. The fact that Caratacus was over 100 miles from his powerbase at Calleva and over 200 miles from his hometown at Camulodunon and yet still managed to lead the resistance against Rome, first with the Silures of south Wales and then with Ordovices of north Wales, testifies to his skill as a military strategist and as a leader of men, even though he never won a single set-piece battle against the Romans.

Caratacus must have been a charismatic commander, probably inspired and aided by the Druids throughout those eight years of hit-and-run campaigning. Dr Graham Webster says: "If Cunobeline can be said to have been the first British statesman, Caratacus was certainly the first great British commander". In view of what he achieved in Wales, a foreign country to this Catuvellaunian prince, and in view of his inspiring leadership of Welsh tribal leaders and their warriors for eight years—longer than Caesar's Gallic War, longer than Hitler's World War II—I'd call Caratacus the first Prince of Wales. But his exit strategy from Wales wasn't smart. Caratacus sought aid in Yorkshire and, after being captured in AD 51 by Cartimandua, queen of the Brigantes of northern England, he ended up in chains in Rome. He was due to be executed after a triumphal parade held to celebrate Claudius' conquest of Britain. However, Caratacus spoke so eloquently to the Senate—"if you preserve me safe and sound, I shall be an eternal example of your clemency" (Tacitus, *Annals* 14.31)—that his life was spared and he died a natural death sometime later, still in Rome.

Now I'll quickly discuss Caratacus' brothers and supposed brothers. Sons and brothers in the royal family of Cunobelinus didn't mean quite the same thing as they do in today's royal family of Windsor. Just because a British Celtic coin claims that so-and-so is the son of so-and-so doesn't necessarily mean that there was a biological father-son relationship, although I believe it often does mean exactly that. Well-known historian Guy de la Bédoyère says: "It is probably more accurate to regard the 'sons' of Cunobelinus as a mixture of men he had



Where Caratacus and his brothers ruled, as suggested by distribution of coin finds. Arrows show approximate route of Caratacus' 8-year resistance campaign.

fathered by more than one woman, nephews, adopted sons, cousins and kin". Cunobelinus probably sired many sons and daughters during his long life. I think that Caratacus had three or four brothers or so-called brothers who struck coins. Two of them, Amminus and Togodumnus, are known to history. So I'll deal with them first.

Suetonius says Amminus (misspelt "Adminius") was a son of Cunobelinus who banished him shortly before Caligula's sham "seashell" invasion of Britain (Caligula 44.2). Was he really Cuno's son? I doubt it. Dr John Sills argues that Amminus was a son of Sego, a former king in Kent and possible son of Tasciovanos (*Divided Kingdoms: the Iron Age gold coinage of southern England*, Chris Rudd 2017, pp. 785–6). Amminus ruled in Cantion (Kent) circa AD 10–40.

Cassius Dio says that Togodumnus and Caratacus were sons of Cunobelinus, that they were defeated during the Roman invasion of AD 43 and that Togodumnus died shortly afterwards (*Histories* 60.20, 21). Clearly Togodumnus was a leading prince of the Catuvellauni, of equal if not greater status than his brother Caratacus. Yet, incredibly, no coin inscribed TOGO—not a single one—has ever been found, and never will be. Why not?

Because Dio, writing at least 160 years after AD 43, had got the name wrong, or his informant had, or later copyists had. This big booboo was first revealed by Celtic coin specialist Rainer Kretz. He realised that the DVBN on two gold quarters (ABC 3008) was the Togodumnus of Dio (Chris Rudd List 86, pp. 2–4). His brilliant insight guarantees Kretz a high place in the numismatic hall of fame.

I believe that two other Catuvellaunian rulers, Agr and Solidu, known to us solely from their coins, were also brothers of Caratacus. Eight years ago, aided by good ideas from Robert Van Arsdell, Michael J. Cuddeford, Dr Philip de Jersey, Guy de la Bédoyère and Dr John Sills, I concluded that Agr was an elder son of Cunobelinus, perhaps his heir apparent; that his full name was probably Agricu (war hound [Dr Sills' idea]); that he was the first of Cuno's sons to issue coins (ABC 2819, 2999, 3002, 3005); and that he ruled briefly in Essex and Suffolk on behalf of his father (Chris Rudd List 124, pp. 2–8). Sills says that Agr may have acted as regent for his father if Cunobelinus had gone to Rome shortly after AD 14 to pay homage to Tiberius. Another good idea (*Divided Kingdoms*, pp. 757–8).

In 2002 I suggested that Solidu (ABC 474, 477), or Sol to his family and friends, was a younger son of Cunobelinus; that he took charge of the Thames estuary before his father died; and that he replaced his brother Amminus as king of the Cantiaci circa AD 40–43 (Chris Rudd List 66, pp. 4–7).

What the royal names mean:

Agr, probably Agricu "war hound"; Amminus, not Adminius, "friend"; Caratacus "beloved leader"; Cartimandua "sleek pony"; Cunobelinus "hound of Belenus"; Dubn, probably Dubno, "deep, world"; Epaticcus "horse commander"; Sego "victorious, strong"; Solidu "firm, enduring"; Tasciovanos "killer of badgers"; Verica "the high one".

The Caratacus gold stater will be sold in November in Aylsham, Norfolk. For their help I thank Dr John Sills, Dr Daphne Nash Briggs, Dr Thomas Markey and Elizabeth Cottam.

	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	Camu
Agr				
Ammi				
Dubn				
Cara				
Sol				
'Togo'				

Chart showing coins found to sons of Cunobelinus. Only Agr, Dubn and Cara (his most senior sons) seem to have struck gold coins. No coins naming "Togo" have been found, because there was no "Togo". (Note: "C" on the red circles refers to coins struck at the Camulodunon mint (Colchester).)