Introduction

At precisely 2pm on Sunday 10 November 2019, a detectorist found a unique Celtic gold coin (Figs.1a & b) in a field near Newbury in Berkshire, in the former territory of the Atrebates. As soon as he got home he tried but failed to find it in Ancient British Coins (ABC) – which isn’t surprising, because it isn’t there.

So he wrote to my colleague Eliza- beth Cottam and sent her images of the coin. She could hardly believe her eyes, neither could I when she showed me the photos. It was a gold stater of Caratacus (Fig.2), the British ‘freedom fighter’, who had 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 two thousand years. A gold coin of the highest rarity and therefore the highest importance, both historically as well as numismatically.

Significance in Terms of Rarity

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 of them found by detectorists and 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 Atrebatic 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, (Figs.3a & b) issued previously by Caratacus’ uncle, Epaticcu. The obverse shows CVNO (short for Cunobelinus, father of Caratacus, brother of Epaticcu) 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 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 lion skin head dress (Fig.5).

Further mimicry of Epaticcu’s coinage can be seen in Caratacus’ boar’s head minims (Fig.6). Caratacus issued three other silver units, all of which are extremely rare (Fig.7).

**Missing Link**
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 being the only known gold coin of one of Britain’s greatest resistance leaders.” It’s not just the extreme rarity of the coin, nor is it 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. A coin of Cunobelinus can be seen in Fig.8.

**Caratacus the Man Himself**
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 (Fig.9) of Verlamion (St Albans, Hertfordshire), king of the Catuvellauni. Interestingly, Tasciovanus may well have been known to the Emperor Augustus as he clearly attempted to copy a denarius issue of this emperor (Fig.10a & b).

Caratacus (Fig.11) 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’ (Caligula 44).

It is quite possible that Caratacus was a direct descendant of Cassivellaunos, commander of the British coalition against Caesar in 54 BC, who is possibly depicted on a silver unit (Figs.12a & b).

**Caratacus the Warrior**

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 Epaticcu seems to have taken him under his wing. When Epaticcu died (or was killed) Caratacus succeeded him at Calleva, causing Verica (Fig.13), king of the Regini and Atrebates, to flee to the Roman emperor Claudius for help. This resulted in the Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43, celebrated on the reverse of the well-known aureus issue (Fig.14). 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.
A Charismatic Commander
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 (Fig.15) can said to have been the first British statesman, Caratacus (Fig.16) 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 and longer than Hitler’s World War Two), I’d call Caratacus the first ‘Prince of Wales’.

However, 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.

Brothers
Now I’ll quickly discuss Caratacus’ brothers and supposed brothers (Fig.17). 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. Guy de la Bédoyère says, “It is probably more accurate to regard the ‘sons’ of Cunobelinus as a mixture of men he had fathered by more than one woman, nephews, adopted sons, cousins and kin.”

Cunobelinus probably sired many sons and daughters during his long life. To clarify this complex family, I have included Fig.18 and to illustrate potential areas of rule Fig.19 is provided. I think that Caratacus had three or four brothers (or so-called brothers) who struck coins (Fig.20). 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 Cunobeline 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, p.785-6). Amminus ruled in Cantion (Kent) c.AD 10-40 (Figs.21a & b).

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, not a single coin inscribed TOGO 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 Rainer Kretz. He realised that the DVBN on two gold quarters (ABC 3008) (Figs.22 & 23) was the ‘Togodumnus’ of Dio (Chris Rudd List 86, p.2-4). His brilliant insight guarantees Kretz a high place in the numismatic hall of fame.

Other Brothers?
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 Cuddetord, 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; his full name was probably Agricu ‘war hound’ (Sills’ idea); he was the first of Cuno’s sons to issue coins (ABC 2819, 2999, 3002, 3005) (Fig.24); he ruled briefly in Essex and Suffolk on behalf of his father (Chris Rudd List 124, p.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, p.757-8).

In 2002 I suggested that Solidu (ABC 474, 477) (Fig.25), 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 c.AD 40-43 (Chris Rudd List 66, p.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’
Eapticu ................. ‘horse commander’
Sego .......................... ‘victorious, strong’
Solidu ....................... ‘firm, enduring’
Tasciovanos .............. ‘killer of badgers’
Verica .................... ‘the high one’

As I mentioned at the beginning I would consider calling Caratacus the first ‘Prince of Wales’, however unlike the ancestors of Edward the Black Prince (Fig.26), who was made Prince of Wales in 1343, Caratacus fought for the Welsh, not against them. In addition, he was also British and not of Norman French extraction.

Auctioning of Numismatic History
This so far unique 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 Cot tam.

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