

The Rusted Lynch Pin & The Little Winged Horse

Julian Evan-Hart

Photographs by Dave Stuckey

A very brief search the other day paid off very well. I was just skirting round a small moist area of field that was riddled with molehills when I had a signal. I was soon holding a very small uneven hammered coin. I am not good at hammered coin identification, so at the time of finding I was unsure which king was represented. The small coin was carefully placed into my pocket. I love hammered, and several seconds later I reached into my finds bag to take another look.

Later at home, with the help of Seabys, I made an attempt at identification. I came to the conclusion that the coin is an Edward IV halfpenny from his second reign, London Mint (Rose mint mark). Seabys stated these coins are hard to find with full or even flans. As you can see from the photographs, they are certainly not wrong in the case of my example.

Our first trip out in the new Millennium was, of course, to our largest and most favourite Roman site. A few days before this visit the field had been covered with a thick blanket of snow, and this had prevented a search we had planned earlier. Once the snow was gone we were there. Another small piece of copper alloy sheet, perhaps of military origin, was my first find. Then 10 corroded Roman coins came my way, followed by a stream of lead bits. Other finds included a tiny Hod Hill variant brooch, retaining some tinning, that must have been manufactured for a child as it was so small.

Stopping for a break I looked around and could see all the other members of the Pastfinders spread out over the field. It is a sight I have seen hundreds of times before, but one that I will never tire of. At the moment the anticipation level is high for the first claim of "Best find of the year". But it is amazing how quickly the proud holder of that title can lose it too! But that is the nature of the hobby; you just don't know what's around the next field corner. For most



Obverse and reverse of Edward IV halfpenny.

of us that's what keeps us going.

Several days later I was to experience yet another angle of just how marvellous and interesting this hobby can be. Readers may remember the piece of named "horse tack" in January's issue of **Treasure Hunting** with "Lady Bearsted, Sunrising House, Banbury" stamped on it. Well, I had a letter from reader Gary Murray that contained some interesting details. In the early part of the last century Lord and Lady Bearsted lived in and owned Upton House at Shenington near Banbury. In 1934 this house was sold to Walter Horace Samuel, Viscount Bearsted and remained a Bearsted possession until 1959. Gary told me that since the next door property is Sunrising House, in all probability Lord and Lady Bearsted may well have bought Sunrising House at an earlier date and then later moved to Upton House. I suspect the named tag was lost whilst out foxhunting or pheasant shooting in the early part of the last century. Lady Bearsted may perhaps have been a guest at the nearby

Reverse of Constans centenionalis showing emperor on galley.



stately home. Remarkably in context to this story, Gary himself was actually born on the Upton House Estate. It is so very unusual in this hobby to be able to attribute located artefacts to specific owners. Consequently I have written to the now National Trust owned Upton House to see if they can supply some more information on Lady Bearsted from any deeds etc they may have retained. Perhaps there are some photographs of Lady Bearsted still in existence.

A few days later I was talking about the find with Cliff. A work colleague overheard me and said "Upton House? I've been there and it's got a wonderful lake and beautiful gardens". I feel a Pastfinder research trip over to Oxfordshire could be imminent.

One Sunday morning the telephone rang, and all film watching and lunch plans were instantly relegated to make way for another "Pastfinders" site search. Loaded up with maps and local history books some mud caked wax jacket wearing individuals left my house for the car. Tony, Cliff, Jeff, Dave and I were packed in so tight that even passing a thermos flask or bag of crisps instantly resulted in extreme gymnastics and fostered humorous but critical comments as to how big certain peoples' posteriors were etc. Unfortunately, the majority of sites we went to investigate were already under crop. A slightly outdated map resulted in one site we visited being under a council estate, and not one farmer was at home on the remaining few potential sites.

On the way home to make up for these frustrations we decided to visit a small Roman farmstead site. I like this little site as you park in a sunken lane and walk up a steep sided sunken track way. Recent rains had washed and revealed flints and gravel in the base of this track, and these crunched satisfyingly as we approached the kissing gate at the top. We unpacked our machines and then set up whilst sitting on the carry bags. Gazing out across the

RUSTED LYNCH PIN

slightly green field I tried to imagine what the farmstead must have looked like. Perhaps it consisted of small wooden frame and stone buildings, one or two with roof tiles, and various paddocks and crop or livestock enclosures. Perhaps there were also several iron furnaces, as we have located Roman-dating lumps of iron slag here. As with many Roman sites, the people who lived here seemed to have had an obsession with smelting lead and being very bad at recovering all the “drip off” and waste cuttings. We had about an hour and a half until dusk so wishing each other “good luck” we were soon detecting.

Tony who had not been out for a few weeks, set off saying that he was going to get at least 10 Roman coins. I started by the field edge sweeping against a verge of old nettle stems. My perseverance here revealed a highly corroded Hans Krauwinckel jetton. At my side Jeff was digging a signal that converted itself into a short cross cut halfpenny, our first hammered of the New Millennium.

A search right across the farmstead site revealed about 30 coins, including a worn Georgian penny and a disc of pewter of uncertain age. These were accompanied by about the same number of lead fragments. Among the eight coins I found two were in reasonable condition. One was a small bronze of Crispus Caesar, the other an *antoninianus* sized coin with rather a nice reverse that will require some cleaning before identification is possible. Tony found what will be a very nice Urbs Roma issue once 16 centuries of calcareous concretion have been removed.

I stopped to gather up some oyster shells that had been washed out by the recent rains, and was studying the cream coloured flaking layers so intently that I did not see the fox that ran past some 30ft from me. I looked round to see Tony waving. Walking over to him I found that he had been trying to attract my attention concerning the fox. It was at this point we decided to call it a day. While we were heading back to the bags Tony found a very worn *denarius* of Vespasian, and



was quick to point out that it was his “tenth coin of the search”. Dave and Jeff had a selection of small Roman bronzes. When they were all placed together it was possible to see the wide variety of patinas that come from this site including black, dark green, and a really light green with white blotching.

Chatting all the way on our return down the sunken pathway, we all seemed to have forgotten that we still faced the challenge of squeezing back into the car again.

Some hours after returning from the “sardine” car journey I was thumbing my way through the Roman section of Seabys to identify the large bronze coin I had found. Suddenly, it was on the page looking at me. It was a *centenionalis* of Constans. None of us can recollect any coins of this Emperor amongst recent finds, so perhaps this is another first for us.

Several days later I was on the phone to Cliff suggesting that we should take a trip out somewhere. As usual we chose our large Roman site. However, as we walked down the lane we decided on a slight change of plan. Usually we head for the buildings and their adjacent area. With 400 years of occupation potential finds must be all over the place, but the pull of the buildings is strong as many good finds have come from here. On this trip we swung away from the main site and ended up in the gateway of a field several hundred metres away.

The field was rolled flat with just the hint of a crop creating a green tinge across the surface. What more could we ask for? We set up while sheltering

against a rather sparse hedgerow, as the wind was picking up and it was getting bitterly cold. Cliff set up, and was quickly away. I decided to unpack my thermos first and have a coffee whilst examining the view. Before long Cliff was digging. This stimulated me to water the hedgerow with the remains of my coffee, and I was digging my first target shortly afterwards. A scratchy but persistent signal just inside the gateway transformed itself into a Roman hair or cloak pin with a baluster type head. The pin is twisted and bent but is complete. Clutching my treasure I shot over to Cliff who, I discovered, had just located a “grot”. I had a feeling that we were perhaps on the verge of another large Roman site, or on an undiscovered part of our existing one. Looking around us we noticed some “out of place” large stones, several limestone roof tiles, some oyster shells, and a slightly undulating field surface.

The next signal I had was very sharp, and after some digging I eventually traced the target to a wedge of clay I had just removed from my digger. A visual check revealed nothing, so I began breaking up the lump and checking each piece. Why do many such targets nearly always reside in the very last piece to be checked? True to form this one did,

“Silver!” I said out loud in response to a bright smallish coin that now lay in my palm. A *siliqua*! Careful cleaning revealed it to be of Valentinian with Urbs Roma on the reverse. The coin was in marvellous condition and unclipped too! As it was being cleaned a hairline striking crack became obvious



running across half the coin. But even this could not dampen my spirits, as this is my best *siliqua* to date. I hope readers will get as much pleasure from looking at it as I do. It is just a tiny find, but part of the masses of wonderful things that all of us detectorists unearth on a daily basis.

After staring for some time at the tiny 4th century bust, I thought I should tell Cliff about my find. We decided to stay on, and really concentrate on this "new site". But after three hours all we had located was about one and a half pounds of lead. The consolation was that it was Roman lead. We had therefore found the site of some form of Roman activity, if nothing else.

How many times have you made good finds as soon as you start or when you are just about to finish? On this trip it seemed that we had made ours as soon as we started, and then found absolutely no other artefacts. However, as if to balance this rule, Cliff had one last dig on a target smack in the gateway and joyfully recovered his second ever hammered coin.

Within a few days Dave, Tony Jeff and I were back on this site. Somehow it did not appear to be so bleak. How-



Obverse and reverse of denarius of Domitian. Legend reversed on obverse.



Our collection of "grots" from just a few weeks of detecting.

ever, I suspect this appearance was more likely due to the finds we made. The first signal almost just inside the gateway was from a worn hammered short-cross penny. Just a few feet from this came its Scottish equivalent, a silver hammered coin of King Alexander. This is only the fifth Scottish hammered I have ever seen from this area. Within ten minutes of this Rome was

represented by a *denarius* of Domitian. All three were very welcome finds, but they were to be the only finds to be made of note. Nothing else was found as we came away either, so this was one of those days when the best finds being made first was the rule. As always the Pastfinders wish all of you the very best of luck and good hunting. **TH**

I URGENTLY REQUIRE ARTEFACTS FROM ALL PERIODS

(You only sell them once so get the best price & advice)



Contact

PAUL MURAWSKI (Author of BENETS)
 13 Benet Street
 Cambridge
 CB2 3PT

Total confidentiality assured

TELEPHONE: 01223 319319