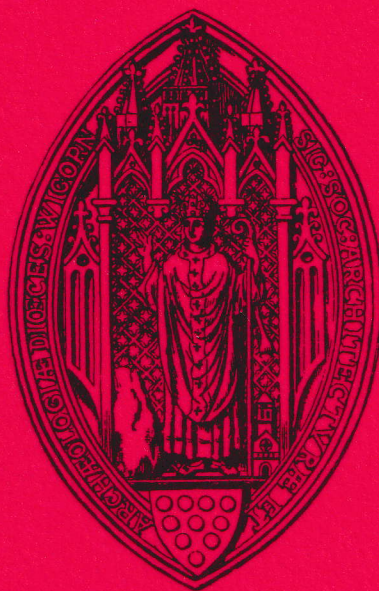


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Old Money, New Discoveries: Roman Coins in Green's *Survey of the City of Worcester*

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Valentine Green's 1764 *Survey of the City of Worcester* contains one of the earliest substantive assessments of Romano-British occupation on the site of the medieval and later city. Like many of his contemporaries, Green placed heavy emphasis on onomastic and topographic indicators for Roman settlement, but nonetheless admitted the potential of archaeological finds, and particularly coins, to serve as 'a sort of evidence less direct, yet the other proofs are strengthened by it' (Green 1764, 7). In this spirit, the *Survey* contains a foldout annex of copperplate engravings of six 'Roman Coins found in this City' (Fig. 1), produced for the author by Robert Hancock (1730–1817). While Green gives few details concerning the origins of these coins, remarks in his later *History and Antiquities of the City and Suburbs of Worcester* suggest that they derive from the 'very considerable collection[s] of Roman coins found in this city' belonging to Messrs Berwick, Helme, and Sheriff of Worcester (Green 1796, 107); in two cases, individual collection histories can be traced as far back as 1741, when coins 1 and 2 were illustrated and labelled on John Doharty's *Plan of the City of Worcester* as having been 'found lately in this city' (Andrews 2014, 6).

Notwithstanding an indirect reference in Maurice Fendall's (1969) *Sylloge*, the six coins presented by Green in 1764 have not featured in modern accounts of Romano-British occupation in the city area. As a means of reintegrating antiquarian data into the modern archaeological resource, this note presents revised numismatic identifications of Green's coins on the basis of Hancock's engravings.¹ Using Green's numeration and the standard modern reference work, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, the six coins can be identified as follows:

1. Copper alloy *sestertius* of Claudius. AD 41–50. RIC I² Claudius 96. Obverse: TI CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG P M TR P [...], laureate head right. Reverse: EX SC OB CIVES SERVATOS, legend in four lines within oak wreath. Mint of Rome.
2. Silver denarius of Marcus Aurelius. AD 171–172. RIC III Marcus Aurelius 259. Obverse: MANTONINVS AVG TR P XXVI, laureate head right. Reverse: IMP VI COS III, Roma seated left holding spear and Victory. Mint of Rome.
3. Copper alloy *nummus* of Constantius II. AD 348–350. RIC VIII Rome 108. Obverse: D N CONSTAN TIVS P F AVG, laureate, rosette-diademed, draped and cuirassed bust right. Reverse: FEL TEMP REPARATIO/-//Re, Emperor standing left on galley holding phoenix on globe and Chi-Rho banner; seated Victory steering ship. Mint of Rome.
4. Copper alloy *nummus* of Constantine I. AD 333–334. RIC VII Treveri 549. Obverse: CONSTANTI NVS MAX AVG, rosette-diademed, draped, and cuirassed bust right. Reverse: GLOR IA EXERC ITVS/ (wreath)/-//TRS, Two soldiers holding two standards. Mint of Trier.
5. Copper alloy *nummus* of the House of Constantine. AD 330–331. RIC VII Treveri 522. Obverse: VRBS ROMA, helmeted and cloaked bust left. Reverse: (Anepigraphic)/-//TRP, She-wolf suckling twins below two stars. Mint of Trier.
6. Gold *solidus* of Valentinian II. AD 388–392. RIC IX Treveri 90a. Obverse: D N VALENTINI ANVS P F AVG, pearl-diademed, draped and cuirassed bust right. Reverse: VICTOR IA AVGG/T/R//COM, Two nimbate Emperors, seated facing, holding globe, with winged Victory above. Mint of Trier.

While precise find circumstances are unknown, the chronological breadth and base-metal bias of the coins presented by Green is fully consistent with a collection formed from multiple unrelated



Fig. 1 Engravings of Roman coins found in Worcester from Green's *Survey of the city of Worcester* (after Green 1764, 7f.)

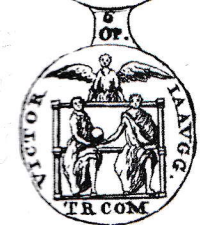
'single finds' found in the area of the eighteenth-century city, thereby offering a small but significant cross-section of coins individually lost or otherwise deposited on the site of its Roman forebear.

Aside from its general contribution to the growing corpus of Roman coins from Worcester, the Green plate illustrates a number of individual coins with a heightened archaeological significance in both the city and county contexts. Of the two early Roman coins presented by Green (nos. 1–2), the single Claudian *sestertius* (no. 1) is of special interest. Though scarce in the county as a whole (Andrews 2018, 48), Claudian coins, and particularly Claudian bronze coins, are surprisingly numerous in Worcester itself: several *asses* and *dupondii* have been found on excavations at Deansway, Old Palace, Sidbury, and Slade's Ditch (Fendall 1969, 106–108; Darlington and Evans 1992; King 2004, 456), and other examples are known from antiquarian diggings at Worcester Castle (Allies 1852, 16) and from a hoard found during redevelopment in the early 1960s (Sutherland 1963). Most of these coins are in fact irregular issues of the period AD c. 41–64, which were supplied to Britain by military-linked mints in Iberia and Armorica at a time when low-value specie was in high demand as a means of payment for the military (Kenyon 1992, 313–315; Besombes and Barrandon 2000, 174–183). Analogous copies are especially common on sites with military associations, including local forts at Dodderhill (Davies 2006, 37) and the Lunt (Hobley 1975, 23–25), and also the putative trading site immediately west of the city at St Johns (King 2014, 48). Whether or not the Green *sestertius* is a regular coin or an irregular copy is presently unknowable, but it is nonetheless the case that the majority of Claudian *sestertii* found in Britain, whether regular or irregular, derive from military sites (Kenyon 1992, 365; Walton 2011, 151); its addition to the corpus of Claudian coins from the city may therefore strengthen the argument for a military presence at Worcester during the mid-first century.

Similarly, the presence of Theodosius I (no. 6) is an instance, single finds of which are known from the entire county and Loriot (2010, xxv) has known from the entire county more than 150,000 fourth-century detector assemblages (Kenyon 1992), although a complete set of the latest Roman coins has been recovered from a hoard (192), although a complete set from antiquarian records (192) for the continued supply of fourth century or beyond precious metal hoards (192) several years after it was dried up in AD c. 408.

Historical sources in the economic system in which the aristocracy and military to the imperial treasury. This model is substantiated by singly-found fourth-century coins and by their frequent occurrence in metal deposits like the social groups, the Green activity in the city area at by some recent discoveries building at The Hive building rubble, including a limestone column, for material may, in turn, have traditionally down of the minimal structure the conversely abundant were converted to agriculture is unique to Worcester late Roman occupation transformation in the fourth time 'a small Roman to iron-working village of metamorphosed into a The identification of new centuries, however, requires understanding of long-

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Similarly, the presence of a gold *solidus* struck during the joint reign of Valentinian II and Theodosius I (no. 6) among the four late Roman coins is of undoubted importance. In the first instance, single finds of fourth-century *solidi* are exceptionally rare, with a recent survey by Bland and Lorient (2010, xxvi) recording just two other Worcestershire examples out of a total of 246 known from the entirety of Roman Britain, a figure that pales in size when compared to the more than 150,000 fourth-century *nummi* known from British excavation, fieldwalking and metal-detector assemblages (Walton 2011, 419).² Moreover, the Green *solidus* is by any measure one of the latest Roman coins known from Worcester: no other coins of the period AD 388–402 have been recovered from excavations in the city area (cf. Salisbury 1919, 125; King and Evans 2018, 192), although a complementary unlocalised silver *siliqua* of Eugenius (AD 392–394) is known from antiquarian records (Fendall 1969, 112). As such, the coin provides major new evidence for the continued supply of high-value coins to Roman Worcester into the final decades of the fourth century or beyond; since Theodosian-era gold coins are relatively common in fifth-century precious metal hoards, we cannot exclude the possibility that the Green *solidus* was deposited several years after it was struck, potentially even after the supply of fresh coins to the province had dried up in AD c. 408.³

Historical sources indicate that late Roman *solidi* circulated within a theoretically closed economic system in which gold coins were distributed outwards from the imperial court to the aristocracy and military by means of largesse and payment before eventually returning to the imperial treasury through compulsory purchase and taxation (Guest 2008, 299–301). This model is substantiated in a British context by the extremely strong associations between singly-found fourth-century *solidi* and military sites and towns (Bland and Lorient 2010, 54), and by their frequent co-occurrence with items of prestige tableware and jewellery in precious metal deposits like the Hoxne hoard (Guest 2005). As an object with implicit links to elite social groups, the Green *solidus* therefore offers significant indicative evidence for high-status activity in the city area in the late fourth or early fifth century, a phenomenon otherwise hinted at by some recent discoveries from excavations in the northern suburb, including a large aisled building at The Hive (Bradley et al. 2018, 391), and the substantial quantity of high-status building rubble, including box flue tiles, tesserae, painted wall plaster, and a fragment of a limestone column, found in a well shaft fill at 1 The Butts (Napthan 2011, 36–39). This material may, in turn, suggest a need to revisit narratives of late Roman Worcester, which have traditionally downplayed the status and scale of occupation in the city area on the basis of the minimal structural evidence for high-status public buildings (Barker 1968, 15) and the conversely abundant evidence for a restructuring of the occupied area as former suburbs were converted to agricultural use (Dalwood et al 2018, 54). Although neither circumstance is unique to Worcester (cf. Gerrard 2011, 183–185), the emphasis placed on these aspects of late Roman occupation have specific regional implications insofar as they imply a radical transformation in the form and character of settlement in the post-Roman period, during which time ‘a small Roman town of little importance’ (Barker 1968, 19) – or, less charitably, a ‘little iron-working village on the banks of the muddy river’ (Reece 2002, 17) – had apparently metamorphosed into a suitably prestigious location for the seat of a seventh-century Bishopric. The identification of new artefactual evidence for high-status activity in the late fourth or fifth centuries, however, reduces the scale of this discrepancy, with concomitant impacts on an understanding of long-term settlement dynamics in the city area.

In reassessing the coins illustrated in Green’s *Survey*, this note aims to have highlighted the potential of antiquarian records to shed new light on major archaeological questions: in this case, highly significant evidence pertaining to both the earliest and latest phases of Roman occupation at Worcester could be found ‘hiding in plain sight’ in a seminal text published more than 250 years ago. Compared to many similarly-sized English counties, Worcestershire is blessed by a considerable volume of antiquarian finds, most of them provenanced in varying detail and a non-incidentally proportion available for study in museum collections; the reassessment and reintegration

of this data into the modern archaeological resource may, like the Green coins, yield important new evidence for years to come.

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Notes

- 1 Hancock's engraving compare favourably *Dissertationes*; index Library might have inaccuracies are pre coins 1 and 2 are in and a mild amount of an excessively large marks, T and R, to the overall accuracy
- 2 These two coins contain an unlocalised *solidi* century (Bland and
- 3 The two largest fifth (Hertfordshire; 158 Britain was found at respectively containing 2005, 14; Orna-Orn

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Notes

- 1 Hancock’s engravings are, by eighteenth-century standards, of comparatively high quality, and compare favourably with illustrations in contemporary numismatic textbooks like Spanheim’s (1706) *Dissertationes*; indeed, it is quite possible that a copy of the *Dissertationes* held in Worcester Cathedral Library might have been consulted by Hancock as an artistic model. Nevertheless, some minor inaccuracies are present in the engravings, taking the form of a single printing error – the reverses of coins 1 and 2 are incorrectly transposed, but are otherwise correctly paired on the 1741 Doharty plan – and a mild amount of artistic licence; a notable case of the latter occurs on the reverse of coin 6, where an excessively large rendering of the legend VICTORIA AVGG resulted in the relegation of the two field marks, T and R, to the exergue. That these errors can be immediately identified, however, is testament to the overall accuracy and quality of the engravings as a set.
- 2 These two coins consist of a *solidus* of Constantius II, issued in 355–361 and found in Great Witley, and an unlocalised *solidus* of Valentinian I, issued in 367–375. Both were discovered in the later twentieth century (Bland and Loriot 2010, 265–266).
- 3 The two largest fifth-century Roman gold hoards from Britain, Hoxne (Suffolk; 580 *solidi*) and Sandridge (Hertfordshire; 158 *solidi*), both close with coins dated to 407–408; the latest Roman gold hoard from Britain was found at Patching (West Sussex; 23 *solidi*), and closes with a coin of 461–465. These hoards respectively contained 51, 7, and 2 barely-worn *solidi* of the same Trier issue as the Green *solidus* (Guest 2005, 14; Orna-Ornstein 2009; Thorold 2015, 9).