

## Further engraved gemstones from Newstead (Trimontium), Roxburghshire

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### ABSTRACT

*This short note brings up to date the list of Roman gemstones found by fieldwalkers on the site of the fort of Trimontium, by Newstead village in Roxburghshire. A previous paper by the authors (Proceedings, vol 112, 1982) listed all of the intaglios which were then known from the site, together with a distribution map of their findspots.*

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this short note is to bring up to date the list of Roman gemstones found by fieldwalkers on the site of the fort of Trimontium, immediately east of Newstead village in Roxburghshire, Scottish Borders (NGR: NT 564 343). Our previous paper (Elliot & Henig 1982) contained a list of all 31 intaglios known to have been found on the site up to 1983 together with a distribution map of their findspots. This map is again used and the numbering of the stones continues from that in the earlier paper. We also take the opportunity to put on record that the gems noted in that paper as being from the Mason Collection are now in the collection of the National Museums of Scotland.

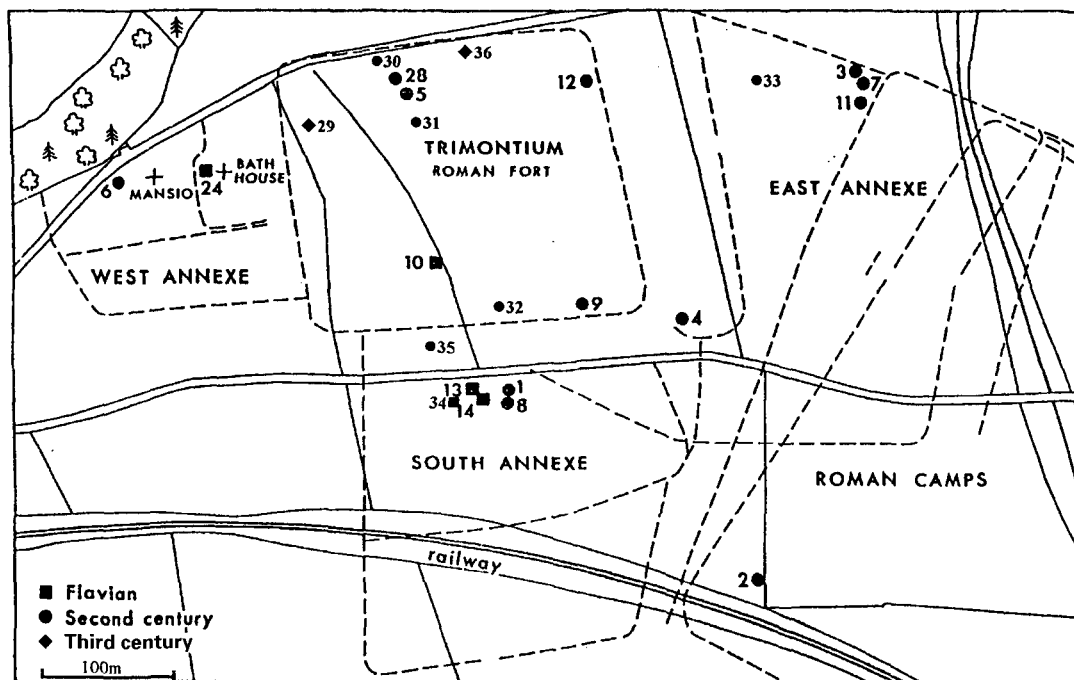
The area of the fort complex has been systematically field-walked by Jack and Caroline Cruickshank and one of the present writers (JWE) since the publication of our previous paper on gemstones from the site in 1982. In the period 1983–8, the fields were cultivated in the traditional fashion, being ploughed in October and sown in March. However, after the harvest of 1988, a new crop-rotation of winter wheat meant that the fields lay ploughed (and thus available to fieldwalkers) for a mere two weeks in September. In October 1997, the fields reverted to their previous method of cultivation. This change is reflected in the absence of gems during the years of autumn sowing.

### THE FINDS

All of the following objects were recovered from the surface of the loose plough soil. The materials are all varieties of chalcedony: translucent, orange-coloured cornelian, opaque red jasper; or a two-layered 'onyx', with an upper blue layer on a black ground. The latter type is known to jewellers as 'nicolo' and was frequently reproduced by moulding in glass ('nicolo glass'). In the

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ILLUS 1 Distribution of gemstone finds at Trimontium, Newstead, including finds previously reported by Elliot & Henig (1982)

descriptions which follow, 'left' or 'right' are as seen on the face of the gem, rather than on an impression of the gem, though the opposite convention has been used elsewhere (eg Henig 1978; Elliot & Henig 1982). For general references on ring types and the dating of gems see works by Henig (1978; 31–42; 1988).

### *Catalogue (illus 2 & 3)*

- 32 **Roma** wearing an Attic helmet, is seated in profile to the left. The goddess is being crowned with a laurel wreath by a victory which she holds in her right hand. The face shows considerable signs of wear. Dimensions 13 mm by 10 mm by 4 mm. Nicolo. Found by J A Cruickshank in 1984. At present retained by the finder.

This gem shows a cult image of pre-Hadrianic form (Vermeule 1974, 31–5 and 68–9, pl I, nos 2–12, especially gem no 3). However, it is probably Antonine in date owing to its execution in 'patterned style' (Henig 1988, 149). For type compare a cornelian from York (Henig 1978, no app 85) and also a nicolo from Silchester (*ibid*, no 249) where Roma holds a patera rather than a victory.

- 33 **Satyr** (not *illus*) walking left, holding a bunch of grapes. Well worn, partly through use, but partly as a result of using a worn mould in casting. Probably Antonine. Nicolo glass. Found by J W Elliot in 1985. This gem — together with no 31 as described by our previous paper (Elliot & Henig 1982, 299) — was lost while on loan to a Roman exhibition in Eyemouth Museum.
- 34 **Maenad** dancing and playing the double pipes (*auloi*). A virtually exact parallel has been published from Aquileia (Sena Chiesa 1966, no 449) The style of cutting is strongly classicizing, most probably

Julio-Claudian and brought to Newstead at the time of the Agricolan occupation (see Henig 1988, 147 for this style). The iron ring in which it is set, now much decayed, is of Type II (see Henig 1978, 35–6, fig 1) and tends to confirm the dating. Dimensions 13 mm by 11 mm. Nicolo. Found by Mrs C Cruickshank in 1986. At present retained by the finder.

Like Pan-pipes, *auloi* played music of wild abandon and were characteristic instruments for satyrs and other followers of Bacchus (cf Henig 1997a, 23, 26–7, figs 10 & 11).

- 35 **Goddess** — Fortuna, Concordia or Abundantia — dressed in a long chiton, holding patera and cornucopia. The subject is already represented at Trimontium on a red jasper gem (Elliot & Henig 1982, 298, no 25) which was formerly in the Mason Collection and is now in the collection of the National Museums of Scotland. The intaglio is not highly detailed but probably dates to the Antonine period. Dimensions 10.5 mm by 8 mm by 4 mm. Cornelian. Found by J A Cruickshank in 1988. At present retained by the finder.
- 36 **Caracalla**, draped bust facing left. The youthful portrait is that which appears on the coins of Caracalla as Augustus under Septimius Severus in the years AD 205–9 before he grew a beard (cf Kent 1978, pl 113, no 391). The rich texture of the hair places the gem firmly in the ‘late (Severan) patterned style’ (Henig 1989, 149). Dimensions 18 mm by 11 mm by 2 mm. Red Jasper. Found by J W Elliot in 1998. At present displayed in the Trimontium Exhibition, Melrose, on loan from the National Museums of Scotland.

This last can be compared with the red jasper intaglio found at South Shields, showing a bust of Caracalla in the guise of Mercury, described by Collingwood Bruce (1885, 266) as ‘the finest in the whole group’. Although that gem is now lost, drawings and wax impressions were made (Henig 1986, 378, fig 4 & pl lxiv d). The Newstead gem is an important addition to the glyptic iconography of Caracalla as the more familiar image occurs on gems which show him fully bearded, after he assumed sole power in AD 212 (eg the sardonyx now in Basel: Vollenweider 1984, 190–2, no 313).

## DISCUSSION

Of the five intaglios listed above, four are finds which would have been expected on a fort reckoned to have been deserted around AD 180. The Caracalla gem, however, found inside the fort near the north gate, gives greater credence to the suggestion by Anthony Birley (1988, 180–1) that ‘Trimontium was perhaps the point where Septimius and his generals concentrated their forces for the big push into hostile territory’. The gem does not stand alone. A photographic enlargement of a comparable gem (first published as Elliot & Henig 1982, 288–9, no 29; reproduced here in illus 3) suggests that this sliver from a head, likewise cut on red jasper, is in the same ‘Severan patterned style’ and not in an earlier style as was previously proposed. Third-century pottery has been found on the site by fieldwalkers (Hartley 1972) and recently a coin of Severus and two of his wife, Julia Domna, were found west of Newstead village (Bateson & Holmes 1997, 530). Taken together, these small finds indicate either that the Trimontium fort was occupied for longer than originally thought or that it enjoyed a brief phase of (perhaps intensive) military activity during the Severan campaigns in Britain. It must be noted, however, that meticulous excavation has not, so far, noted structural remains of this date.

Gems, given to supporters of the regime, were a major feature of Imperial gift-giving and propaganda in the Severan period (Marsden 1997). In view of the dynasty’s involvement in the province, it is not surprising that quite a number of gems associated with Septimius Severus and his family have been found here (Henig 1986). The Caracalla gem gives further weight to the



ILLUS 2 Gemstone finds from Trimontium: (top left) no 32, Roma seated, 13 mm by 10 mm by 4 mm; (top right) no 34, maenad playing pipes, 13 mm by 11 mm by ? mm; (below left) no 35, standing goddess, 10.5 mm by 8 mm by 4 mm



ILLUS 3 Gemstone finds from Trimontium: (left) no 36, Caracalla, 18 mm by 11 mm by 2 mm, a recent find; and (right) no 29, a fragment showing facial features of a youthful person, 10 mm by 3 mm by 2 mm, also in the 'Severan patterned style' (first published by Elliot & Henig 1982, 288–9, no 29)

proposal that there was a workshop operating in Britain between c 208 and 212, when the province was *de facto* the heart of the Empire. It is possible, even probable, that the workshop had an official basis, making 'loyalty tokens' for presentation by the imperial secretariat to influential army officers and other supporters of the regime. This has recently been discussed in relation to another contemporary red jasper intaglio found at Birdoswald, Northumberland, depicting a portrait of Caracalla's younger brother Geta (Henig 1997b, 284–5, no 87).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank Mr and Mrs Cruickshank for allowing us to publish their finds; thanks again to Mr Cruickshank for his excellent photographs and to Debbie Mabon for re-working the original map of the findspots.

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*This paper is published with the aid of a generous donation by the authors*