

## Engraved gemstones from the Roman frontier post at Newstead, Roxburghshire

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The last decade has seen a remarkable increase in the number of engraved gemstones which have been found on the site of the Roman camp at Newstead, Roxburghshire. Although most finds have been recorded (Henig 1978) it was felt a worthwhile exercise to list all known Newstead gems and record the known findspots.

Newstead, the Roman *Trimontium*, was occupied in AD 81 and was finally abandoned before AD 200 – the exact date still being in some doubt. Thus a terminus date can be given to the undernoted gems. The subjects on the stones also provide some insight to the beliefs of the inhabitants of what was basically a military outpost on the Roman frontier.

The first mention of gemstones from the site occurs in 1769 when the Rev Adam Milne writes ‘when the ground is plowed or ditched, the foundations of several houses are discovered, a great deal of lead got and some curious seals’ (Milne 1769). In 1905, encouraged by finds made during draining operations, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland requested that Mr James Curle of Melrose superintend some excavations on the site at Newstead. The results were spectacular (Curle 1911) and, to stick strictly to the purpose of this note, produced two gemstones. The excavation was completed in 1910.

From the early 1920s, the site has been regularly walked in the winter months to recover artifacts from the loose plough soil. First by the brothers J B and W D Mason, by one of the present writers (JWE) from 1958 and by Mr and Mrs Cruickshank from 1967. In all it is estimated that the five individuals will have spent in excess of 10 000 hours in the search, and this during the months of winter and early spring.

The gems from the Mason collection were mainly found around the site of the Bath House and the Mansio in the W Annexe but unfortunately, with two exceptions (nos 24 & 28), the exact findspots were not recorded at the time.

In a previous note (Elliot 1976, 314) two small areas were noted as being rich in Roman finds. The plotted findspots (fig 1) show a similar concentration of gems. In the S Annexe, four intaglios were found in a 25 m by 10 m rectangle. In this same area a terra-cotta head of Minerva was found and the possibility exists that an altar was located in this vicinity.

In the E Annexe, three intaglios were found within a slightly larger area. In March 1980 a drain was dug across this site, revealing a clear occupation layer of 7 to 10 cms thick. This seems to be a fairly large building outside the main camp.

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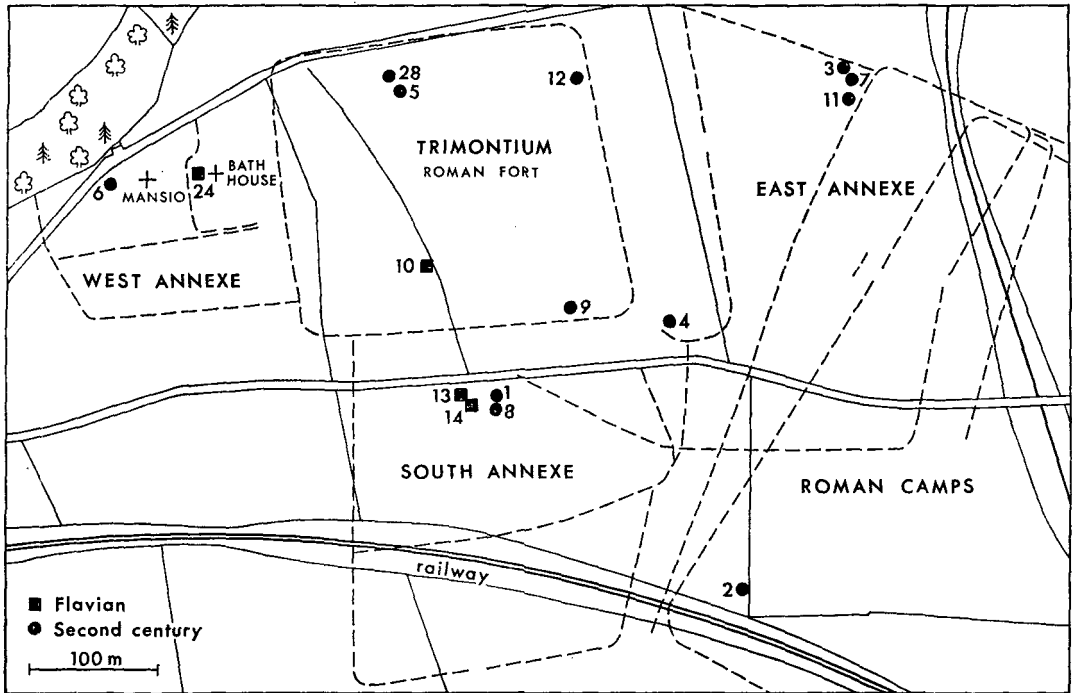


FIG 1 Distribution of gemstone finds at Newstead

## DISCUSSION

Although the majority of the stones were found in field walking and in fact not one comes from a stratified context, it is possible to group them stylistically. Following Dr Maaskant-Kleibrink in her masterly survey of the Hague collection (1978) it is possible to perceive two clearly distinct groups in the Newstead gems. The first, of four stones only, is ascribable to Flavian times, the remainder date to the second century.

The earlier stones are cut in the 'classicising style'; the cutting is precise and careful and has not lost touch with Hellenistic traditions (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 194-8). The other intaglios are much more coarsely engraved. Many depict figures who 'wear their hair in a roll around the head but this hair style is so rendered that it looks like a close-fitting hat' (*ibid*, 302). This 'cap-with-rim' style seems to be reasonably common at Newstead. Can we legitimately wonder whether some of the stones did not emanate from a common source or even if there was an itinerant gemcutter established in the vicus? It is interesting to compare Jupiter with his stylized Victory (no 1: pl 23a) with Sol (no 16: pl 24b) and an equally schematized Minerva with her Victory (no 23: pl 25a).

However 'common' is a relative term. The long hours put in by the field workers at Newstead have not produced the great quantities of gems found at the first-century legionary fortress at Vetera or the great Italian gem-cutting centre of Aquileia. The number is indeed less than that of the putative engraver's cache at Bath while the large recent find of over 80 intaglios from a drain at Caerleon should also restore a sense of proportion (Vetera: Steiner 1911, 115-45; Aquileia: Sena Chiesa 1966; Bath: Cunliffe 1969, 71-88; Caerleon: info from the excavator, D Zienkiewicz).

The total haul from Newstead is highly respectable for a site in Britain – comparable with Corbridge which had a much lengthier occupation. The collection is not sufficiently remarkable to allow detailed speculation on gem usage and supply in Roman Scotland. It has always seemed possible that the varied geology of Scotland and the presence of semi-precious stones might have encouraged Roman prospection but nothing in the number of gems in the north of the Province bears out this theory.

#### LIST OF KNOWN GEMSTONES FROM NEWSTEAD

1. Jupiter sits on throne without a back, profile to left. A victory stands on his right hand and he holds a sceptre in his left hand. In front of him stands an eagle. Ground line. Type of Capitoline Jupiter adapted from 'Olympian Zeus' of Pheidias. Milky chalcedony. Henig 1978, no 5. Found J W Elliot 1966. Pl 23a. 'Cap-with-rim' style. Second century. Note that milky chalcedony is commonly used for representations of Jupiter.

2. Satyr as huntsman, standing to the right and accompanied by his hound. Cornelian. Henig 1978, no 171. Found Mr Scott 1968. 'Cap-with-rim' style. Second century.

3. Female figure, possibly Juno, standing holding a staff in her left hand. Nicolo paste. Henig 1978, App no 122. Found J W Elliot 1972. Coarsely moulded nicolo-pastes are no earlier than 2nd century.

4. Not available for examination. Cornelian. Found Mr Murray 1973.

5. Two cupids wrestling. Ground line. Cornelian. Henig 1978, App no 120. Found J A Cruickshank 1973. 'Cap-with-rim' style. Second century.

6. ? Satyr to the left; tree on right. Very little remains but gem seems to belong to 'cap-with-rim'/ plain grooves group. Cornelian. Henig 1978, App no 107. Found J A Cruickshank 1974.

7. Bonus Eventus standing in profile to the right; in his right hand he holds corn-ear(s) and in his left a dish. Set in a corroded iron ring. Burnt Onyx. Henig 1978, App no 113. Found Mrs C Cruickshank 1975. 'Cap-with-rim' style. Second Century.

8. Mercury stands with his body to the front and faces left. He holds a moneybag in his right hand and a caduceus in his left hand. Hair roll is very prominent. Cornelian. Henig 1978, App no 95. Found J W Elliot 1976. 'Cap-with-rim' style. Second century.

9. ? Satyr walking to the left. Fragment but probably 'cap-with-rim' style. Cornelian. Henig 1978, App no 105. Found Mrs C Cruickshank 1976. Second century.

10. Nemesis, winged and dressed in a chiton with overfold. She stands in profile to the right, holding a branch in her left hand and raises her right hand to her mouth. (On other gems she is clearly exposing her bosom in order to spit upon it.) Beside her is her wheel – the Wheel of Fate. Ground line. Plasma. Henig 1978, App no 144. Found J W Elliot 1977. Pl. 23b Classicizing style (see Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 196–7). First century.

11. Fragment of onyx intaglio. No cutting remaining. Found Mrs C Cruickshank 1977.

12. Two eagles, between them a standard. Nicolo paste. Henig 1978, App no 187. Found Mrs C Cruickshank 1978. Nicolo pastes of this sort are generally 2nd century. Note that this intaglio is more likely to have belonged to a legionary soldier than to an auxiliary.

13. Bust of Jupiter to the right. The gem is very similar to one discovered in excavations at Carmarthen in a late 1st-century context (Henig 1978, App no 90). A parallel is cited from Pompeii where it must antedate AD 79. Maaskant-Kleibrink (1978, 162, no 300) dates such a gem to the 1st century BC. This is perhaps too early although the refinement of the late Hellenistic 'Wheel Style' remains in the cutting of all these intaglios which may more properly be assigned to the classicizing style of the 1st century AD. Dimensions 16 mm × 13 mm × 2.5 mm. Cornelian. Found J A Cruickshank 1979. Pl 23c.

14. A dolphin swims to the right, its tail raised in the air. Dolphins are common in Roman art and upon gemstones (see Henig 1978, 264, no 645 for a list). This is the smallest so far seen in Britain; its upper surface is only 4 mm by 2 mm. Thus the lack of detail is understandable and the gem is best regarded as one of a group of small scale animal studies in the classicizing style (as Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 240, no 616 or, more particularly, the ant in the sardonyx from the 1st-century Rhayader hoard, Henig 1978, 271, no 711, because our sardonyx would have fitted into a similar ring. Pfeiler 1970, 52–3 & pl 16.6 seems to date the Rhayader example a little early but criticism in *Britannia*, 2, 1971, 322 was perhaps too severe. The ring and other jewellery are probably Flavian). Sardonyx. Found J W Elliot 1979. Pl 24a.

15. Ganyমে seated on a rock in profile to the right, offers a cup to Jupiter's eagle which stands on a pedestal. Compare Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, no 911 which is in the 'cap-with-rim' style. Despite certain differences, the scale of the eagle being larger on the Hauge gem for example, the figure of Ganyমে is executed in the same manner. Red jasper. Henig 1978, no 473. Found during Curle Excavations. Second century.

16. Sol stands to the front, clad in short tunic. His right arm is raised in salutation and he clasps a whip in his left hand. Ear corn in front. Ground line. Cornelian. Henig 1978, no 30. Found during Curle Excavations. 'Cap-with-rim' style. Second century. Pl 24b.

17. Jupiter stands to the front and faces left. He holds a thunderbolt in his right hand and his sceptre in his left hand. Eagle in front of him. Ground line. Cornelian. Henig 1978, no 14. Mason Collection. Chipped at head but probably 'cap-with-rim' style. Second century.

18. Mercury stands to the front, holding money-bag in right hand and caduceus in left hand. Ground line. Cornelian. Henig 1978, no 42. Mason Collection. Chipped but clearly in 'cap-with-rim'/ plain grooves style. Second century.

19. Cupid stands to the right. He is about to singe the wings of the Psyche-butterfly with a torch. Ground line. Compare Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 307, no 899 for a similar diminutive cupid in the same style. Nicolo. Henig 1978, no 121. Mason Collection. Probably 'cap-with-rim' style. Second century.

20. Same theme as no 19. Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 315, no 937 claimed to be of the 'plain grooves style' is a close parallel but both these gems are more properly placed in the related 'cap-with-rim' style. Nicolo paste. Henig 1978, no 122. Mason Collection. Second century.

21. A tree from which hangs an eviscerated hare; below stands a satyr playing the double pipes. He is shown with the usual rim around his head. The composition is better than that of many of the 2nd-century gems from Newstead and may be compared with that of the better stones of the Aquileian workshop designated 'officina dei Diaspri Rossi' as well as with other jaspers of the late 2nd century. (Sena Chiesa 1966, 60, pls 91-92; Henig 1978, 33-4). Red jasper. Henig 1978, no 179. Mason Collection. Second century.

22. Bonus Eventus clad in a short tunic, stands cross-legged to the right. Curved staff over left shoulder; corn-ears in right hand. Red jasper. Henig 1978, no 200. Mason Collection. 'Cap-with-rim' style. Second century.

23. Minerva clad in a peplos, stands to the right. On her head is a plumed helmet with a prominent rim (taking the place of the hair-roll). She holds a spear in her right hand and a Victory on her left hand. In front of her is a shield. Ground line. Cornelian. Henig 1978, no 243. Mason Collection. Pl 25a. 'Cap-with-rim' style. Second century.

24. Victory walks to the right; palm over left shoulder and wreath in right hand. In front, a trophy with a shield leaning against it. This is a nicely patterned gem in the classicizing style, closely comparable in theme and execution with the gem from early Flavian levels at Newcastle-under-Lyme (Henig 1978 305, App no 140). Cornelian. Henig 1978, no 302. Mason Collection. Pl 25b. First century.

25. Fortuna dressed in a chiton stands towards the left. In her left hand is a cornucopia and in her right a patera. Ground line. Red jasper. Henig 1978, no 335. Mason Collection. 'Cap-with-rim' style. Second century.

26. A ram stands in profile to the right. Ground line. Cornelian. Henig 1978, no 604. Mason Collection. Incoherent grooves style. Second century.

27. A hound leaps towards the right. Ground line. Red jasper. Henig 1978, no 625. Mason Collection. Plain grooves style. Second century.

28. Small fragment of polished cornelian with no cutting remaining. Mason Collection.

#### ADDENDUM

Since writing the original paper (Jan 1981), a further three gemstones have been picked up. These were found in the NW sector of the Main Group. Their distribution does not add significantly to the discussion above other than to note that the Flavian gems from the site now numbers six.

29. This fragment preserves the facial features (eye, nose and mouth) of a youthful personage, probably female. The refined and accurate engraving is in the classicizing tradition of the 1st century. The portrayal of the eye as a groove is also seen in the Jupiter head (no 13) but there is no doubt that this gem is of better quality. It is most likely to belong to a Flavian context. There is not enough of the gem remaining to identify the subject closely but the modelling of the face is paralleled by that of Luna

in Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 218, no 517. Dimensions max length 10 mm, thickness 2 mm. Jasper. Found by Mrs C Cruickshank 1981.

30. Satyr walking left, in his outstretched right hand he holds a hare; in his left hand, his curved stick (lagobolon/pedum). Over his left arm hangs an animal skin (nebris). This paste might be as early as the late 1st century but it is probably later, having been moulded in the first half of the 2nd century (small grooves style). For the type compare Henig 1978, 207, no 166; Sena Chiesa 1978, 86, no 69; Krug 1980, 230, nos 317 & 320. This gem is a variant on the commoner type where the satyr holds a hare; see Henig 1978, 206-7, nos 161-120, 164-5 & 167-9, all in nicolo paste. Dimensions 13 mm × 10 mm × 2.5 mm. Nicolo Paste. Found by J A Cruickshank 1982.

31. Satyr standing towards right in a relaxed pose, with weight on left leg and right leg bent at the knee. His nebris hangs from his left arm and he holds some object, perhaps a bunch of grapes in his right hand. In front of him stands a baby satyr who raises his arms towards his father. There is a ground line but the upper third of the gem is lost. This subject became established in Late Hellenistic/Republican glyptic art (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, 170-1, no 337) but remained popular in the Early Empire (*ibid*, 211, no 487, cut in the classicizing style). The only other example of the theme from Britain is the little cornelian from Bedfordshire, where the adult satyr is seated (Henig 1978, 205, no 156). The Newstead gem is matched in type and style by a number of published examples (eg Henkel 1913, 141, no 1543, pl LXXVI, a heliotrope in a late first/early 2nd-century iron ring and in Sena Chiesa 1966, 190-1, nos 402, 403 & 405, which the author attributes to the 'Officina della Ninfa' or 'Officina del Guerriero', of the mid or second half of the 1st century AD. The cutting of this gem is bold and an attempt has been made to show the body musculature in the case of the adult satyr. It may be assigned to the classicizing style and thus to the Flavian group of gems from Newstead. Dimensions 7 mm × 8 mm × 2 mm reducing to 1.5 mm. Sardonyx. Found by J W Elliot 1983.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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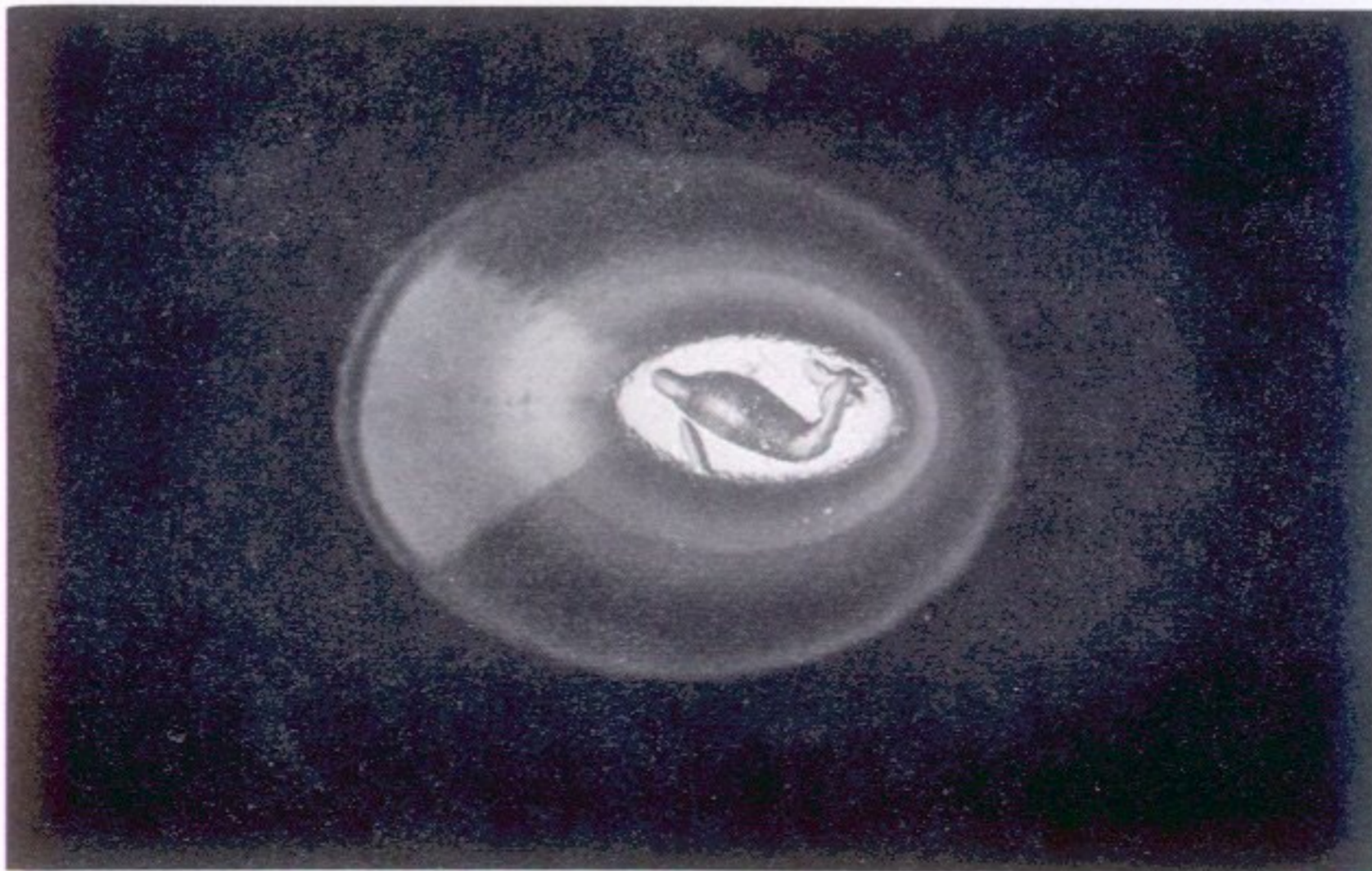
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a No 1: Jupiter. 2nd century. 5:1



b No 16: Sol. 2nd century. 3:1



c No 14: Dolphin. 1st century. 5:1



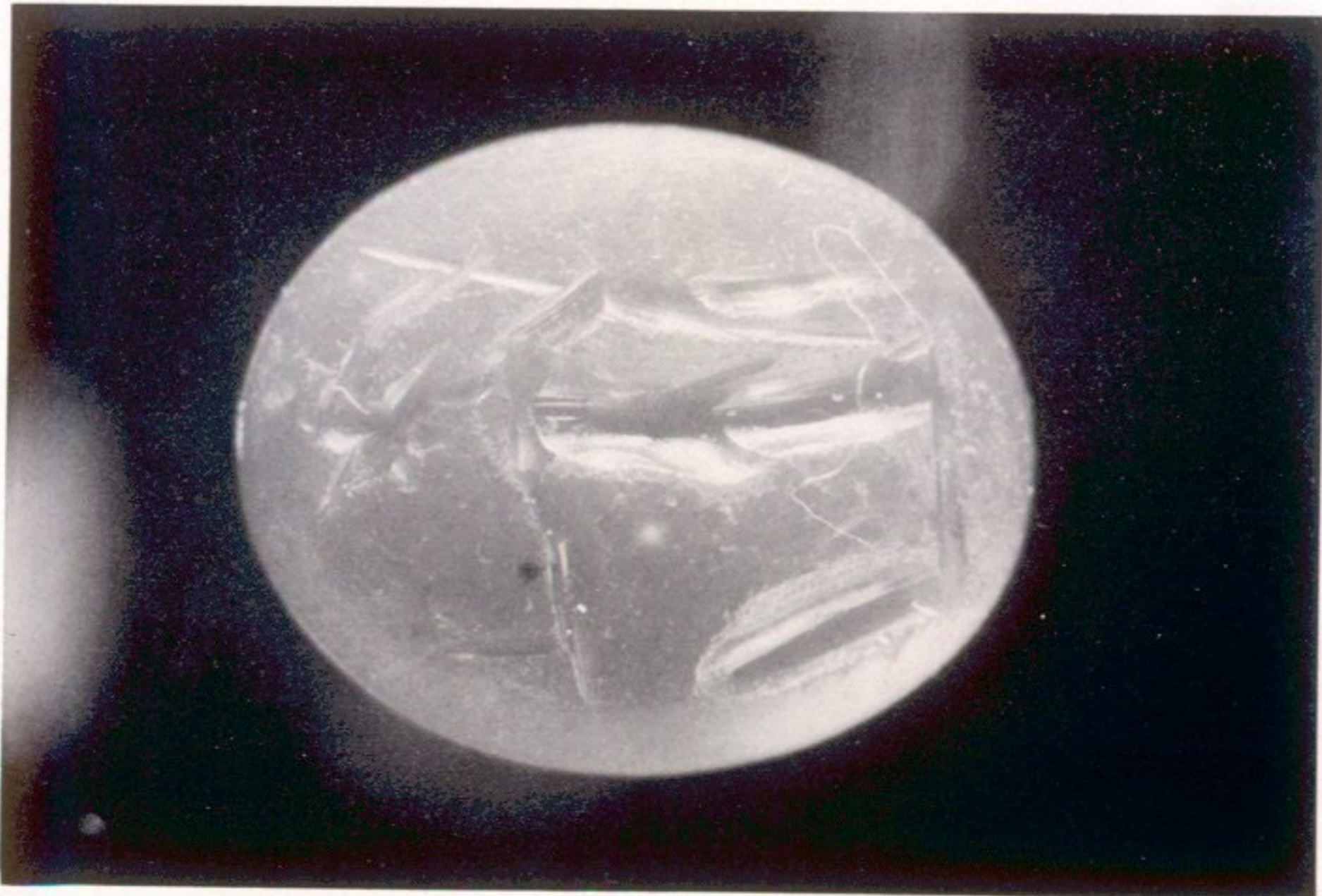
b No 13: Jupiter. 1st century. 5:1



a No 10: Nemesis. 1st century. 6:1



b No 24: Victory. 1st century. 5:1



a No 23: Minerva. 2nd century. 6:1