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**GEMSTONES FROM ROMAN BRITAIN:
RECORDED IN THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME**

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Abstract: Roman gems have continued to be discovered in Roman Britain and published in archaeological reports and notes since the author completed his *Corpus of Gems from British Sites* in 1978. A new source of glyptic material can be found in the on-line publication of *Portable Antiquities (Portable Antiquities Scheme)* which includes intaglios, most of them found without stratigraphical context, by users of metal detectors, though many are set in rings, which provide significant aids in dating. Others were clearly re-used as they are set in seal matrices or medieval rings and were frequently freshly imported at that period from southern Europe. In the High Middle Ages, as in Roman times, intaglios reflect the interests, and patterns of thought of those who wore and valued these beautiful objects.

Keywords: Cameos, Intaglios, Jewellery, Seals, *Portable Antiquities*

It is an honour to salute the achievements of Tamás Gesztelyi, a contemporary of mine, who over the past decades has been one of a comparatively small number of scholars recording and commenting on Fundgemmen, from Brigetio and other sites in Hungary and beyond in the Middle Danube region, mainly in the Roman province of Pannonia. At the same time, he has been active in publishing the reuse of intaglios in personal seals in Hungary during the Middle Ages. In many respects his work has closely mirrored my own in recording and commenting on gems from Britannia. This paper provides an opportunity for me to reflect on my own recording of gems since the publication of second edition of my *Corpus of Roman Gems from British Sites*, essentially my doctoral dissertation, which came out in 1978.¹ In the second half of this paper I will draw attention to a scheme which has been set up in England and Wales to record casual finds which have not been recovered from excavations, and subsequently published in official reports.

Since the late 1970s, over more than forty years, I have continued to publish and comment upon new finds from Roman Britain, both from excavations, and recovered as chance finds which have turned up in increasing quantities from

¹ Henig 1974, 1978, 2007.

Roman Britain. These have appeared in excavation reports and as notes in (mainly local) journals as well as in a few papers, bringing together gems from discrete sites, for example the cities of Wroxeter, London and Colchester and the Saxon Shore fort at Dover. In addition, I have published reflections upon a large cache of cornelian intaglios from a second century jewellery hoard from Snettisham and the gems in the late Roman Thetford Treasure, Norfolk in the same county.² A comprehensive overview of intaglios from sites in Northern Britain that appeared in a Festschrift dedicated to Lindsay Allason-Jones is, unfortunately, largely without illustration.³ Papers and notes on gems set in Medieval personal seals from England, as mentioned above, likewise elide with Tamás Gesztelyi's interests. In many cases these intaglios appear to have been brought to England from Rome or even the East Mediterranean in the Middle Ages, especially in the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries, which compares well with evidence from Western France, but is rather earlier than appears to have been the case in Hungary.⁴ Three other scholars have contributed accounts of intaglios from two military sites in Britain. David Zienkiewicz has published a catalogue of the intaglios recovered from his excavation of the drain of the Fortress Baths of *Legio II Augusta's* Fortress at Caerleon, while Barbara Birley and Elizabeth Greene provide an account of the gems from the vicus of the auxiliary fort of Vindolanda.⁵ Some of the gems from the latter site had already been published in my *Corpus of Roman Gems from British Sites*.

Despite these many additions, since my *Corpus* was substantially completed in the 1970s, the general pattern of gem distribution between civilian sites, towns and smaller settlements in the south on the one hand, and the forts with their canabae in the military zone of northern and western Britain, still holds. There also seems little reason to revise the datings of intaglios by material, subject, style or ring type as originally proposed.

One new source of *Fundgemmen*, however, has become available on line through the Portable Antiquities Scheme (www.finds.org.uk). The law in England and Wales (but not in Scotland) allows for the use of metal detectors with the approval of the landowner although not on scheduled (protected) ancient sites. A highly successful scheme has been set up by which finds of probable antiquity should be reported to a local Finds Liaison Officer [FLO] for recording. In any case items of precious metal have, by English common law, to be reported to the authorities as possible Treasure Trove (essentially a survival of a Medieval

² Henig 1983; Henig 1997; Henig – Wilkins, 1999; Henig 2008a; Davis – Henig 2020.

³ Henig, 2014.

⁴ Henig 2008b; Cherry – Henig 2018; Henig – Cherry 2021. Compare these with Gesztelyi – Rácz 2006.

⁵ Zienkiewicz 1986; Greene 2006.

act of Parliament, whereby items of gold and silver, for which no lawful owner can be traced, are the property of the crown). Such gold and silver items can still be retained by the authorities and subsequently assigned to a museum, although the finder is compensated. Most 'treasure hunters' behave responsibly and themselves try to deter the criminals who illicitly, and without any permission from the landowner, plunder sites in order to sell antiquities for profit, and who like criminals anywhere else, are liable for arrest, and trial for theft. The Portable Antiquities Scheme has vastly increased our knowledge in all areas of study.⁶ The most interesting finds are recorded each year in local journals, and the best Roman finds (including gems) are published in *Britannia*. As most, though not all, are found through the use of metal detectors the majority of these are still in their metal settings. Consequently, loose gems have in most instances evaded detection, the exception being intaglios found by those people licensed to search the Thames foreshore after high tides when individual intaglios are sometimes seen and collected. In the section below I will illustrate and highlight a selection of the 'new' finds both those in Roman settings as well as those re-used in personal seals during the Middle Ages. When you consult the PAS website, you will find individual gems referenced by the unique alphanumeric identifiers by which they are documented on the database (e.g. 'LON-CF9D8B'). In order to consult the object record, from the PAS home page (www.finds.org.uk) follow the link to 'database'. The entries on the PAS database are inevitably of variable quality, although in some, but not all, instances you will find detailed comments, and some of the better gems are, as stated above, illustrated in *Britannia*. I have also added, simply for documentation purposes, items set in gold or silver which have been reviewed by the Treasure Committee which include the letter 'T' (e.g. 2018T397) though for most purposes this can be ignored. In the survey that follows references to items on the data base and where relevant to the Treasure reference will be given in the endnotes in the form as above.

Apart from augmenting the totals of gems, these and other finds made since 1978, both through excavation and casual finds, confirm the general range of material to be found in the province which, indeed, is not very different from the gems recorded for Hungary. I will attempt wherever possible to suggest parallels for the ancient cameos and intaglios from Britain with those held in the Hungarian National Museum or at Brigetio.

Very few cameos have been found in Britain over the past few decades. One of the commonest types throughout the Empire is, of course, the Medusa mask, which was believed to protect the wearer from the Evil Eye, and rather a fine example of

⁶ For a recent conspectus see Bland et al. 2017. [<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1vxm8r7.12>]

the type was recently recorded near Swaffham in Norfolk (**Fig. 1**).⁷ The profile heads of women comprise another fashionable subject, represented by a new example from Little Weighton, East Yorkshire, set in the remains of an elaborate gold ring, dated by the coiffure to the early third century (**Fig. 2**). These would seem to have been presents given by male lovers to their girlfriends or perhaps their betrothed as the inscription on a cameo in the Content collection suggests. There have only been two previous examples of such cameos from Britain, but the indication from site finds would suggest that the main distribution was on the Middle Danube including those from Hungary as well as in the North Balkans and further to the East.⁸

The intaglios found on the Thames foreshore in London or Southwark complement those already published from London.⁹ To the portraits of Mars, Dea Roma and a youthful satyr, a bust of Apollo engraved on a red jasper, another very fine gem, dating to the second century can now be added.¹⁰ The other outstanding intaglio, likewise engraved on a red jasper, portrays a hound coursing a hare (**Fig. 3**),¹¹ This is a reminder that *Londinium*, for all that it was the largest city in Britain and the province's effective capital, was surrounded by woodland and often wild countryside which extended right up to its walls. Indeed, the new gem is not the only subject on a gem from *Londinium* that references hunting, because there is another exceptionally well-cut red jasper in the collection of the Museum of London that depicts a wild boar bursting out from a covert.¹² Other intaglios from the foreshore include a cornelian depicting a cockerel, doubtless an allusion to Mercury, and another in the same material figuring the goddess Fortuna, both of these common types in Britain as elsewhere, and indicative of the need for protection from malign forces. A dolphin, the subject of another gem from the foreshore, was also a beneficent image as it depicts a creature supposed to be friendly to humankind, though here it is not unlikely that its association

⁷ NMS-1396BC. Cameo, 21 x 17 x 11.5 mm. Pearce – Worrell 2021, 451–2 no. 12. For the type see Gesztelyi 2000, 82 no. 269; Gesztelyi 2004, no. 67; Gesztelyi 2013, no. 137.

⁸ YORYM-98A607/2020T331. Cameo, 11 x 10 mm in gold ring. Pearce – Worrell 2021, 443–4 no. 5 for the Little Weighton gem. The only other cameos from Britain in the form of female busts are from Kettlebaston, Suffolk, Henig – Plouviez 2006, and Silchester, Hampshire, Henig 1995. From Hungary see Gesztelyi 2000, 84 no. 279–280; Gesztelyi 2004, no. 69; Gesztelyi 2013, no. 140–141.

⁹ Henig 2008a.

¹⁰ LON-9B6 D66. Intaglio 13.27 x 11.22 mm.

¹¹ LON-CF9D8B. Intaglio 14 x 11 mm. The same subject as Gesztelyi 2000, no. 211.

¹² Henig 2008a no. 45.

with Oceanus may have been paramount especially if it was the seal of a mariner.¹³ That was certainly the case with a cornelian intaglio in the Museum of London depicting a Roman warship, found on the foreshore in Southwark in the years before PAS was set-up which certainly attests a naval presence on the Thames.¹⁴ Another gem from the Thames recovered in pre PAS days is yellow jasper intaglio figuring a scorpion, a type familiar from amulets, found in the river mud at Blackfriars, possibly simply the Zodiac sign Scorpio, although it may have served as a charm against scorpion stings and have been lost by a sailor or merchant from the Mediterranean.¹⁵ Finally, a hippalectryon, a grotesque with horse's head and the legs of a cockerel, cut rather schematically on a nicolo, was a specific charm against the Evil Eye.¹⁶ A much more accomplished example of the type engraved on a red jasper has, indeed, been excavated in Southwark.¹⁷

Other Roman gems add an individual contribution to the understanding of life in Britannia. A cornelian depicting Fortuna or Abundantia from Norfolk is clearly, from its style, a product of the same workshop as the Snettisham hoard and is set in a silver ring of a type identical to those in the cache, as is very probably another silver ring depicting a cockerel found near Caistor St Edmund in the same county.¹⁸ Many gems with such subjects come from areas of the countryside where arable farming has always been a major activity. A cornelian from South Gloucestershire belongs to a familiar subject type, portraying a countryman holds two ears of wheat in one hand and in the other a pole from which a hare is suspended. This figure stands for Bonus Eventus, who likewise evokes the prosperity of the land.¹⁹ Symbols of rustic prosperity were also popular as devices on signet rings. An animal, probably a hare, symbolic of fecundity, is the subject of a cornelian set in a hollow gold ring from near Harpenden, Hertfordshire.²⁰ Another gold ring from Much Hadham in the same county is set with a nicolo intaglio depicting a bee with two cereal grains in its jaws accompanied on each side with Ceres' emblem of an ant each of which clasps a single ear of

¹³ LON-4C8401 (cockerel) Intaglio 11.17 x 9.11 mm, compare Gesztelyi 2000, no. 226–227; LON-9D59FA (Fortuna) from Southwark, Intaglio 11.07 x 8.54 mm, compare Gesztelyi 2000, no. 128–140; LON-37EB06 (dolphin) Intaglio 12 x 10 mm, compare Gesztelyi 2000, no. 229–230.

¹⁴ Henig – Ross 1998.

¹⁵ Henig 1980. See Gesztelyi 2000, no. 238.

¹⁶ LON-A20D83. Intaglio 12.76 x 10.56 mm.

¹⁷ Henig 2008a, 231 no. 64. Compare Gesztelyi 2000, no. 250.

¹⁸ NMS-9D9633. Intaglio 8 x 6 mm (Fortuna); CORN-7384FE Intaglio 9 x 7 mm (cockerel). See Johns 1997, no. 157–166 (for the Fortuna gem), no. 202–203 (cockerel) no. 222–242 (for the rings).

¹⁹ GLO-EB93D3. Intaglio. 15 x 12 x 3 mm, compare Gesztelyi 2004, no. 34.

²⁰ BH-58E8E6. Intaglio 10 x 10 mm in gold ring.

wheat.²¹ Ceres is also evoked by a green chrome chalcedony, whose colour is also a reminder of Ceres and the growing crops which depicts a modius containing three ears of wheat, over which the scales of equity (*aequitas*) are balanced; it too is set in gold ring (**Fig. 4**). Its find spot, in the extreme south-west of Britain near St Just in Cornwall, is interesting because of the paucity of high quality Roman artefacts from this region, and the first-century date of both gem and ring suggest the presence of someone of Equestrian status in the area, perhaps a prefect in charge of a military unit prospecting for metals.²² Animal husbandry is evoked, on a cornelian intaglio mounted in a silver ring of third-century date from Gothington in the Tewkesbury area of Gloucestershire which figures a goat, like the cockerel sacred to Mercury, with a tree behind the animal.²³

Bucolic themes depicting Bacchus and his thiasos were always popular. Bacchus with his panther is the subject of a cornelian intaglio, set in a second century silver ring from Eaton, Leicestershire.²⁴ Bacchus, here holding a thyrsus and accompanied by a satyr, is also the subject of a circular cornelian gem from Lincolnshire. As this intaglio is set in a silver ring of early form, no later in date than the beginning of the first century, several decades before the Roman invasion in the 40s AD, it was probably quite old when lost, and it might have reached North East Britain during the late pre-Roman Iron Age.²⁵ Another gem with a bucolic theme is a nicolo intaglio from Great Bentley, Essex depicting a young satyr seated on a rock, playing aulos.²⁶ As this gem is certainly of first-century date, although now set in a third-century gilded setting, it, like the previous ring in its entirety, may have been cherished over several generations as an heirloom. The realm of Bacchus was symbolised not only by panthers but also by parrots – actually the red-necked parakeet which like the felines originated in India and evoked his Indian triumph. A cornelian intaglio from Kirk Deighton, North Yorkshire probably of late first- or early second-century date depicts a parrot holding two cherries in its beak.²⁷ One class of intaglio which employs Bacchic imagery is the grotesque or combination of human and animal forms, such as a red jasper intaglio, set in a third-century, hexagonal gold ring from a site in Warwickshire. The device consists of a bearded Silenus mask back to back with a paniska, combined with an elephant scalp whose trunk clasps a palm branch.²⁸

²¹ BH-702ED7/2019T979. Intaglio 10 x 8.9 mm in a gold ring. Pearce – Worrell 2020, 461–2 no. 20.

²² CORN-C611F4/2022T13. Intaglio 9.08 x 6.01 mm set in a gold ring, Fullbrook – Henig 2021.

²³ GLO-3D6EDF. Intaglio 10 x 8 mm in silver ring.

²⁴ LEIC-D636D8. Intaglio 12 x 10 mm in silver ring.

²⁵ NCL-D1B498. Intaglio 18 x 14 mm in silver ring.

²⁶ ESS-014824. Intaglio 17 x 15 mm set in a gilded ring, Pearce – Worrell 2021, 452–3 no. 13.

²⁷ SWYOR-D 1BF15. Intaglio 14.1 x 10.8 x 5.5 mm. Worrell 2009, 291–292 no. 8.

²⁸ WAW-799E22. Intaglio 10 x 7.5 mm.

The realm of cupid was associated both with Venus and with Bacchus and this rendered him a fairly common subject on intaglios both as god of love and as an avatar or infant version of the Saviour god. Amongst varied representations is pale nicolo intaglio depicting Cupid leaning on a column, set in an elaborate gold ring, of perhaps fourth-century date recorded from Tangley Hampshire.²⁹

Amongst other gems depicting deities, a nicolo mounted in a gold collet probably of second or third century date, the intaglio figures Jupiter, seated on a *diphros*, holding a vertical sceptre in one hand and a thunderbolt in his other hand; it was found in the area of an important settlement at Hacheston, Suffolk.³⁰ A cornelian set in a silver ring, found at Stock near Chelmsford in Essex figures Apollo holding a laurel branch and with a prominent quiver strung behind his back. It has been compared with a gem with the same subject from the Snettisham cache, and may, like a gem showing Fortuna mentioned above, be a product of the same or related studio.³¹ Finally, a pale nicolo in a gold setting from Chale on the Isle of Wight depicts Minerva wearing a belted chiton with overfold, holding a spear in front of her and her other hand supporting her shield.³²

Many gem devices are symbolic. For example, domestic harmony is implied by the subject of a cornelian intaglio set in a silver ring of second or third century date, found at Quenington, Gloucestershire. It shows clasped right hands (*dextrarum iunctio*), which on rings is usually a marriage or betrothal device.³³ We have already noted symbols evocative of Bacchus and Ceres. A dolphin intaglio from London has been noted above, with the suggestion that here was a maritime theme associated with the realm of Oceanus, and this is further emphasised by a nicolo from Acton Bridge, Cheshire set in a keeled gold ring of third-century date where the dolphin holds the trident, emblematic of that deity in its jaws.³⁴

The eagle is the avian familiar of Jupiter but the main interest of a cornelian intaglio engraved on a cornelian intaglio set in a silver ring of second or third century date from Quenington, Gloucestershire is that the eagle is shown between legionary standards. That it is suggestive the presence of a legionary centurion

²⁹ HAMP-EC91E2/2014T12. Intaglio c. 8 x 7 mm in a late Roman gold ring. Worrell – Pearce 2015, 378–9 no. 20.

³⁰ SF-CA8DE8. Intaglio c. 18.9 x 14.8 mm in gold collet.

³¹ ESS-73FD6C. Intaglio 11 x 8.4 mm in a silver ring. Compare Johns 1997, no. 134.

³² IOW-C60374. Intaglio 10 x 12 mm, compare Henig 1974, 1978, 2007, no. 230.

³³ PAS-62A405. Intaglio. 11 x 7 mm in silver ring. Compare Gesztelyi 2000, no. 239–243; Gesztelyi 2013, no. 125–126.

³⁴ LVPL-3E45C2. Intaglio 11 x 8 mm in gold ring. See Henig 1974, 1978, 2007, no. 649, and compare Gesztelyi 2013, no. 118 and especially no. 117.

in the region, either a *beneficiarius consularis* from a nearby posting station, or else a retired officer farming in the area.³⁵

Military themes are not well represented in our selection, but that is because most of the metal detecting has taken place in what was a largely civilian area in southern Britain. Even a cornelian intaglio, likewise in a silver ring, from Scawby, Lincolnshire which depicts Mars Gradivus, Mars marching armed with a spear and shouldering a trophy,³⁶ is not necessarily out of place in a civil context, as Mars was the protector of the growing crops, as is demonstrated by an example of the type in the Snettisham jeweller's hoard.³⁷ However, a cornelian intaglio picked up during digging work in the Allendale district of Cumbria, not far from the fort at Maryport depicting Minerva might well have belonged to a soldier.³⁸ Another cornelian intaglio from Farndon, Cheshire near the site of a legionary tile works at Holt on the road to Chester, probably also has a military connection in the light of the amphitheatre or *ludus* at the fortress of *Legio XX Valeria Victrix*. The gem depicts a feline rearing up towards fallen gladiator, and perhaps reflects activities in the local amphitheatre outside the Chester fortress.³⁹ Amphitheatre scenes were not a popular subject for gems, and gladiatorial displays do not seem to have had deep roots in the provincial culture of Britannia, although the substantial amphitheatres excavated at the legionary fortresses at Chester and Caerleon and in London attest and emphasise their importance of these structures at such centres of Roman power. This gem is mounted in a silver pendant with piercing which could have allowed contact with the breast of the wearer so it is possible it worn by a gladiator as an amulet, though there is a possibility that the amulet, like an example discussed below, is in fact of (early) medieval date re-employing a Roman gem.

Most intaglios recovered in the Portable Antiquities Scheme in their original settings are set in finger rings, but gems were also mounted in other items of jewellery including brooches and ear-rings. A small almost circular cornelian intaglio from Rowley, Yorkshire depicting a cockerel with a plant spray in front is set in a gold setting with crimped edges typical of the third century with the remnants of a pendant loop and was probably part of an ear-ring.⁴⁰ Another example from Grafton Regis, Northamptonshire, likewise of gold with the remains

³⁵ HAMP-1516. Intaglio c. 20 x 18 mm. Type as Gesztelyi 2000, no. 223–224.

³⁶ NLM-74D2F2. Intaglio. 9 x 6 mm in silver ring.

³⁷ Johns 1997, no. 185 and 234.

³⁸ LANCUM-306098. Intaglio. 12 x 10 x 2 mm, compare Henig 2007, no. 234 from Caerleon.

³⁹ LUPL-A40A40. Intaglio. 18 x 11 mm, cf. Zazoff 1975, no. 1015.

⁴⁰ LANCUM-3C3804/2016T1075. Intaglio 11 x 10 mm in gold setting, Pearce – Worrell 2017, 436–437 no. 6.

of a loop setting is set with a nicolo glass intaglio depicting a seated image of Jupiter.⁴¹

Gems sometimes had an afterlife in the Middle Ages, as attested by Gesztelyi and Rácz, as noted above. In Britain we find a few being incorporated in Anglo-Saxon pendants of the so called 'conversion period' in the seventh century, at a time when following the Augustinian mission at the very end of the sixth century the re-assertion of Romanitas became important. A gold pendant from Ulcombe in Kent contains a cornelian intaglio depicting standing figures of both Mars and Minerva (**Fig. 5**).⁴² Comparison may be made with similar pendants both set with cornelian intaglios from Anglo-Saxon graves at St Martin's Canterbury, also in Kent depicting Minerva, and from Caistor St Edmund, Norfolk figuring a satyr or paniscus.⁴³ It may be noted that gems were at this time being imported from far outside Britain, amongst them a garnet cameo depicting a bearded male bust wearing a Phrygian cap set in an early Anglo-Saxon gold pendant found at Epsom, Surrey; the gem originates from the Byzantine Empire or beyond, perhaps Georgia.⁴⁴ In addition a gold setting, very probably a pendant from Great Totham, Essex was set with a contemporary pressed glass cameo of zoomorphic interlace.⁴⁵

The great period for the employment of Roman gems in medieval settings in Britain ran from the twelfth to the early fourteenth centuries. Some, especially the gems of lower quality and with common subjects may have been picked up by peasants working the land. Many others were certainly acquired in southern Europe for the personal seals of notables, both Ecclesiastical and lay; some were certainly traded from the Levant, opened up to the West particularly as a consequence of the Crusades. Many gems used in such seals are of Republican or Augustan date and though not impossible as local losses, found by medieval peasants working the land were more probably aliena, imported to Britain in Medieval times.

Typical is a banded agate, figuring a muse reading from a scroll, set in a silver thirteenth century vesica-shaped matrix inscribed +IOhS:EST:NOMEN:EIVS, found at Wargrave, Surrey (**Fig. 6**).⁴⁶ It is a common subject in the later Republic and the intaglio probably dates to the first century BC.⁴⁷ Someone with the name of John presumably, owned it, but the device clearly references an episode in the

⁴¹ BUC-CE48C1. Intaglio 11 x 9 mm in gold pendant.

⁴² KENT-B8F318. Intaglio 13 x 9 mm in gold pendant.

⁴³ Henig 1974, 1978, 2007, no. 23; Penn, 2000, 51 and Fig. 96, Grave 33 no. 3.

⁴⁴ Henig 1974, 1978, 2007, no. 734.

⁴⁵ ESS-2AO65A. Cameo 13 x 12 mm.

⁴⁶ SUR-0608ID. Intaglio c.19 x 12 mm in silver matrix. Cherry – Henig 2018, 109. Fig. 113.

⁴⁷ Cf. Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, no. 163–164; Spier 1992, no. 179.

first chapter of St Luke's Gospel where Zacharias pronounces the name of the baby John the Baptist. Almost as early is an agate intaglio from Bratton Seymour, Somerset depicting the head of the young Octavian as Hermes, a type belonging just after the second triumvirate's victory over Brutus and Cassius at the Battle of Pharsalus, so dated c.43 BC. It is mounted within a silver matrix with pedestal handle of early fourteenth-century date with the surrounding legend +S' IOhANNIS. DE. WIKI. Identifying the particular John de Wike is not easy, but he was clearly able to acquire a very fine intaglio from afar. The seal is now in Taunton Museum.⁴⁸ Many gems were set in seals with more anonymous legends such as a cornelian showing a kneeling satyr set in a thirteenth-century seal inscribed SERVITE DOMINO IN TIMORE found at Bayston Hill, Shropshire.⁴⁹ A cornelian from South Yorkshire figures a dancing satyr, both arms raised and in front of him a vase containing a palm of victory. The refined 'wheel style' in which it is cut dates it to the second half of the first century BC. It is set in a medieval gold ring with a surrounding legend in French, PENSE DE MOY P (Think of me P).⁵⁰ One wonders who was the owner of the seal with the initial 'P'.

Gem cutting was revived in France and Britain during this period. The green jasper intaglio depicting the profile bust of a woman, the back of her head veiled is a particularly fine example of medieval glyptic art. It was found at Epwell, Oxfordshire and is now in the Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock. The gold matrix in which it is mounted is inscribed *SIGILVM : SECRETI : hEN probably a woman called Henrietta or the like (**Fig. 7**).⁵¹ Another portrait gem, a male bust engraved on a black jasper found at Thorley, Hertfordshire is set in a silver matrix with a legend in French FAVSE : AMYE : SOIT : HONYE (shame on the unfaithful lover).⁵² Likewise probably medieval is a cornelian depicting a laureate male bust likewise in a silver matrix, inscribed +SERVO:SECRETVM:DOMINI MEI, found at Hambledon, Hampshire.⁵³ The influence of Late Hellenistic and Roman glyptics here and indeed on all metal personal seals with portraits like that of Wymond de Brandon found near Cholsey in Oxfordshire is obvious.⁵⁴

The gems mentioned in this paper are only a selection of the gems being unearthed in Roman Britain. Many more are being unearthed annually in excavations, most recently for example in a fort bath-house at Carlisle where over 40

⁴⁸ SUR-36D8C9/2018T397. Intaglio 12.5 x 9 mm in a silver matrix. Henig – Cherry 2021.

⁴⁹ HESH-318CC9/2006T126. Intaglio 12.4 x 9.7 mm in silver matrix.

⁵⁰ SWYOR-FB2051. Intaglio 12 x 8 mm, mounted in a gold ring. Compare the dancing satyr, Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, no. 336 for style.

⁵¹ BERK-2A91CA. Intaglio 12 x 10 mm in gold matrix. Byard 2016, 246. Fig. 10.

⁵² BH-B60A01. Intaglio. c. 18 x 14 mm in silver matrix. Cherry – Henig 2018, 107. Fig. 109.

⁵³ DOR-952C7E. Intaglio. c. 12 x 10 mm in silver matrix.

⁵⁴ Henig – Ramsay 2015, 1–6; Cherry – Henig 2018, 105. Fig. 106.

intaglios have so far been found. Although they most gems from excavations are eventually published it may be hard for gem experts without time and access to local journals or the many archaeological monographs to locate them all. However, for the most part, the excavated gems together with the PAS finds confirm the uniformity of Roman gems both in the materials employed and in the subjects portrayed, a uniformity more or less standard throughout the western part of the Empire. However we can hope to detect local workshops in Britain as in other provinces, while unusual and interesting subjects are of course sometimes encountered although these will hopefully receive publication in National and International journals.

I hope however that this selection of gems and publicising the availability of an online resource which makes available not only gems but many other small items of archaeological interest will interest our most deserving honorand.

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Fig. 1. Medusa cameo, Onyx, from Swaffham, Norfolk. 3rd century AD.



Fig. 2. Female portrait on a cameo, from Little Weighton, East Yorkshire.
Set in gold ring. 3rd century AD.



Fig. 3. Red jasper intaglio depicting a hound coursing a hare, from the Thames foreshore at London. 2nd century AD.



Fig. 4. Chrome chalcidony intaglio figuring a modius containing ears of wheat, from St. Just, Cornwall. Set in a gold ring. 1st century AD.



Fig. 5. Cornelian intaglio showing Mars and Minerva, of 2nd century date set in a 7th-century gold pendant, from Ulcombe, Kent.



Fig 6. Banded agate intaglio showing a muse reading from a scroll dating from the 1st century BC, set in a silver matrix of 13th-century date. From Wargrave, Surrey.



Fig.7. Green jasper intaglio set in a contemporary 13th–14th century gold matrix from Epwell, Oxfordshire.

