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12. Romano-British Precious-Metal Hoards: some comments on Martin Millett's paper

by Catherine Johns

Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

(Matthew 6: 19–21)

Investigation of the possible reasons behind the deposition and non-recovery of hoards in antiquity is currently a fashionable area of research, and so it is not entirely unexpected to find that scholars who have hitherto shown scant interest in Romano-British treasure (i.e. precious-metal hoards) are now turning their attention to this class of evidence. For many years, the focus of attention in Romano-British archaeology has been on economic theory, subconsciously triggered by the importance of economic questions in modern society, on the development and application of scientific and mathematical methods of analysis, and on fieldwork. As Martin Millett himself admits, artefact studies (other than pottery) have been neglected, except by a few determinedly unfashionable scholars. The tendency to interpret a wide variety of archaeological evidence in terms of religion and ritual, so typical of earlier generations, has been somewhat out of favour, while art-historical methods have been anathema.

The pattern of academic research resembles the familiar fluctuations of fashion which are found in so many aspects of life; study advances for a while on one front and then falls back to allow another to become popular. Fashions regularly recur after some time has elapsed, though generally in a subtly altered form. There have been signs for some years that artefacts are beginning to be noticed again, and the same would seem to be true of the rôle of ritual in past societies. Those of us who have worked consistently for many years on subjects which were outside the mainstream can only welcome the renewed interest of our colleagues, provided they acknowledge the research that has been going on in what might be described as their intellectual absence on other business.

Notwithstanding these incipient changes of research emphasis, many of the theoretical issues raised by M. are not, in fact, new to those concerned with the Roman period, but have been actively debated for many years. In particular, study of the dynamics of coin-hoarding has given rise to an extensive literature. For a statement of what might be termed the pro-votive view, together with references to other approaches and classifications, see Aitchison (1988). Many of the points brought out by M. were discussed in characteristically lively fashion by

Richard Reece over eight years ago, in a paper which is surprisingly not cited in M.'s references (Reece 1988).

The comments which follow were written in response to a draft of Martin Millett's paper which he circulated to a number of colleagues; I have not seen his final text. From the complex subject of treasure hoards, their contents and interpretation, he has selected certain specific themes and ideas for discussion. I have done likewise, taking up points which seem to me to invite challenge or further investigation, and dealing at some length with the definition of votive hoards and objects, a subject which has become increasingly confused of late. I hope that this section in particular will be seen as a useful contribution to the general debate on hoarding in antiquity. Like M., I have not attempted to address all of the many issues involved since this would be impossible in a short paper.

Research on Roman Precious-metal Objects

It is important to emphasise that over the last twenty-five years or so, considerable progress has been made in this country and abroad on the study of the coins, silver plate and jewellery of the Roman period which are found in precious-metal hoards. Many new discoveries have augmented the body of evidence, and there is now enough published work for any interested scholar to inform him- or herself and become qualified to join in the debate. It should hardly be necessary to stress that familiarity with the state of knowledge on the artefacts is a prerequisite for theorising about the assemblages. (For a summary of research on Roman silver plate since Strong 1966 — still an invaluable source — see Johns 1990.)

The study of Roman precious-metal hoards is not, and never has been, a 'British Museum monopoly'. If this theme has been neglected in Britain outside the British Museum, the fault lies not with curators but with outside scholars, who as free agents have opted to pursue other lines of enquiry. It is wholly perverse to blame British Museum curators for the research decisions of others: the study of Roman treasures, and access to the objects themselves, has always been open and available to people working on Roman Britain and the Empire. Continental and transatlantic scholars have been very active in these fields, and many have studied material in the British Museum's collections. Names such as François Baratte, Herbert Cahn, Barbara Deppert-Lippitz, Michel Feugère, Annemarie Kaufmann-Heinimann, Ernst Künzl, Marlia Mango, Max Martin, Stefanie Martin-Kilcher, Catherine Metzger, Andrew Oliver and Kathleen Shelton spring to mind, but apart from Ernst Künzl's magisterial catalogue of the Neupotz find, reviewed in detail in an English magazine, M. does not cite any of their work in his bibliography. (Künzl 1993; Painter 1994).

For very good reasons, in Britain scientific work on Roman precious-metal objects has been centred in the British Museum Research Laboratory, but valuable research has been done in Oxford, and Continental scientists have also made a major contribution. The great importance of scientific advances in the study of the material is ignored by M. Coin specialists, whose crucial rôle in this whole debate is similarly given little weight by M., are based both within and outside the British Museum. There is currently only one British Museum curator, the present writer, with a special interest in the study of Roman silver plate and jewellery. Overall, it is difficult to see how this picture can be described even by the most prejudiced observer as a British Museum monopoly.

The accusation that scholarly interpretation has been influenced by the provisions of the ancient English Treasure Trove law is unfounded, and worse, impugns the academic integrity of those who work on the material. It may not be widely understood that the British Museum

has no financial vested interest in the legal status of a treasure; any museum which wishes to acquire a treasure hoard has to pay the full market value for it whether it has been declared Treasure Trove or not. The mechanisms for payment and the identity of the payee are different, but the cost is always the market value of the material. Undoubtedly we should all prefer the concept of the *animus revertendi* (the intention to retrieve) to be irrelevant in legal terms, and perhaps eventually it will be, but consideration of whether or not it existed is important in academic terms because it is germane to the interpretation of the dynamics of hoarding which M. is advocating.

Alleged 'Modern Values'

M. implies that those who work on Roman treasures have given little thought to the reasons for their deposition, and that any attempts which have been made at interpretation have been based on an unthinking assumption that modern value-systems were shared by people of the Roman period. No reasonable person can be unaware of the fact that many beliefs and attitudes have changed radically within the last century, let alone the last two millennia, and all serious students of the past are acutely conscious of the need to free themselves from their own culturally-conditioned preconceptions, difficult though that can be. I made this point at some length in my book *Sex or Symbol* (Johns 1982: 144–148), but only because I was writing for the general reader. I assumed all professionals were familiar with the problem.

It is totally false to state, as M. does, that other researchers have been 'assuming that ancient values were similar or identical to those of the modern world'. Where some apparently 'modern' values are attributed to our forebears in Classical antiquity, it is not through ignorance or default, but because, after due consideration, we believe that in those particular instances, ancient and modern thinking broadly coincides. Far from imposing modern concepts on our forebears, we have in some cases inherited theirs.

The truth is that in the past some cultural values were profoundly different from our own, some were slightly different, while others were similar or virtually the same: we are studying human beings in a different time and environment, not an alien species. L.P.Hartley's dictum 'the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there' can be taken further; foreign cultures, like the past, are not different from our own *in every single respect*: they display many similarities as well. The challenge is to identify the differences and similarities accurately. This is a particularly daunting task when dealing with prehistory. The Roman world at least provides a few pointers in the ancient literature.

The concealment of valuables for safekeeping, whether to be secured against potential theft or to be drawn upon as a resource over a long period, is not a medieval or modern concept imposed upon antiquity by unthinking twentieth-century museum curators; it is a known and documented phenomenon of the Classical period. Consider, for example, the familiar New Testament quotation at the head of this paper, or the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25: 14–30), or the collection of references to the hoarding of Greek coinage brought together in Melville Jones (1993: nos. 544–552).

Whatever may have been the case in prehistory, in the Roman period, coinage was the medium of exchange, and gold, silver and bronze had a relationship which corresponds with both medieval and modern perceptions of the relative values of different metals. It is therefore hardly unreasonable to infer that bullion hoards had a special status in antiquity because of their purchasing power, in addition to any other values they might have possessed, aesthetic, magical, religious or sentimental. The latter are likewise perfectly familiar to post-Roman

perceptions. That objects could carry more than one level of significance or value is surely self-evident, and is indeed another example of similarity between the past and the present. The Mildenhall Great Dish (Painter 1977b: no.1) contains 8256 grammes of silver; it is also an example of artistic and technical excellence in silversmithing, and its iconography is full of complex religious symbolism which would have carried a range of meanings: all of these qualities were clearly important in antiquity and remain so today. It is when we see one quality valued at the expense of others, as in the case of silver tableware treated solely as bullion (*Hacksilber*), that we are alerted to an unusual situation. The classic case in Britain is that of the treasure of Traprain Law (Curle 1923), which contains the broken remains of silver vessels even more magnificent than those from Mildenhall. The excellent discussion of *Hacksilber* in the account of the treasure from Gross Bodungen remains indispensable (Grünhagen 1954: 58–70).

Like silver plate, gold jewellery had a negotiable value as bullion, but it was worn for adornment and display and was therefore carefully selected for its appearance. The combination of intrinsic and symbolic value has been characteristic of precious-metal and gem-set jewellery in most societies, including our own (Johns 1995, forthcoming).

Incidentally, while M. is criticising us for supposedly applying to antiquity the ‘modern’ perception that gold and silver are of high value, another scholar, Michael Vickers, has for many years been denouncing the notion that pottery, such as Greek painted vases or *terra sigillata*, could ever have been regarded as a luxury material in the Classical world; he attributes this view to 19th/20th century ideas about aesthetic value, that is, to modern perceptions imposed upon the past! (See, most recently, Vickers 1994).

Distribution of Romano-British Precious-metal Hoards

Two subjects which are important to the understanding of hoard deposition require closer scrutiny than they have received from M., (1) the perceived distribution of known gold and silver hoards from Roman Britain and (2) the meaning of ‘votive’, especially as it may affect the *animus revertendi* required by the traditional Treasure Trove law, and hence the imagined influence upon scholars who are thought to prefer Treasure Trove verdicts.

Hoards which are known to archaeology are those which were not recovered by their owners or depositors in antiquity, which were not found and used in medieval or modern times, and which are not still lying undiscovered in the ground. Hoards which were legitimately retrieved by their owners or appropriated by others in antiquity, those found in the intervening centuries and melted down for re-use, and those which are still buried are not present in the record. A statement of the obvious, perhaps, but what proportion do these known and reported hoards represent of the treasures originally buried for safekeeping or any other reason? Though we cannot know, it is likely to be a very small percentage.

Legislation and practice to deal with buried treasure evolved in Britain and other countries in the Middle Ages. As M. points out, this circumstance reflects the value to the Crown and Treasury of gold and silver at that period. It also reflects the fact that treasure was unearthed often enough to attract some kind of standard procedure rather than an *ad hoc* response. We can only speculate about the quantity of prehistoric, Roman and early Medieval bullion which must have been found and absorbed by the Exchequer even by the 12th century, when the law reached a semblance of its present form.

In Britain, the earliest discovery of Roman silver plate of which we have a record is the Risley Park Lanx, found in June 1729 (Stukeley 1736; Johns 1981; Johns & Painter 1991):

records of the discovery of Roman coin hoards go back further, but only to the 16th century. Elsewhere in Europe, it was also in the eighteenth century that scholars began to record such finds on a fairly regular basis. The number of recorded or surviving seventeenth-century finds of Roman plate is very small, and earlier ones are extremely rare (e.g. the cup from Arras now in Vienna, found in 1568: Baratte & Painter 1989: no.104; see also the Empire-wide summary in Oliver 1977: 16–18). Several 18th and 19th century finds from Britain are still extant, though few contextual details have been preserved. The Backworth treasure, for example, found about 1811, is probably not from Backworth itself, but from elsewhere in Northumberland (Hawkins 1850).

The apparent pre-eminence of East Anglia observed by M. on today's distribution map is based on the discovery and reporting of several large and spectacular plate and jewellery hoards in the twentieth century, specifically within the last 50 years, amounting to a little over 3% of the time which has elapsed since the Roman period. The only important item of Roman silver plate from East Anglia known to have been found in earlier generations is the Mileham dish, which came to light in 1839 (Walters 1921: no. 87; Kent & Painter 1977: no. 103). Land use, agricultural methods, metal-detecting and media hype all affect the rate of discovery and reporting. Noteworthy finds stimulate increased searching activity in the areas where they were located. The fact that in recent decades East Anglia has also produced important prehistoric and early medieval finds of gold and silver may, as M. suggests, indicate a long tradition of such burials in that area in antiquity, and if so, this is clearly a matter of great interest. However, a concentration of hoards of widely separated date is perhaps more likely to constitute evidence of a 20th century phenomenon concerned with their recovery and reporting, and/or a history of discovery and destruction of such finds in other areas in the medieval and early modern periods. This is a subject which certainly requires more searching analysis.

I would therefore counsel the greatest caution in drawing any conclusions based on the currently-known geographical or chronological span of precious-metal hoards from Roman Britain, as the evidence, although more extensive than that from most European countries, is still extremely limited. It may be significant that late-Roman gold and silver coin-hoards, which are far more numerous than treasures containing plate and jewellery, do not reveal a concentration in East Anglia; if anything, there is a slight emphasis on the West Country (Archer 1979; King 1981; Robertson *forthcoming*).

Votive Hoards

It may be as a result of recent work by prehistorians (notably Bradley 1990) that the definition of votive or ritual deposits has become so contentious and so fashionable. M. believes that some scholars working on treasures have been unwilling to admit the possibility of religious or votive deposition as opposed to the practical purpose of the safekeeping of valuables because votive status would imply the absence of the *animus revertendi* on the part of the original owner, and would therefore preclude a Treasure Trove verdict under the traditional rules.

This idea is based on confusion about the meaning of *votive*. An overtly religious or votive hoard could perfectly well have been buried with the intention of recovering it later. *Votum* is a vow, a promise made to a deity in return for or in the hope of the granting of a favour. Figuratively it could denote a wish, desire or prayer; a vow to a god could be in the form of an action rather than the gift of an object. (For a good general discussion, see Henig 1984).

Items dedicated to a deity were not necessarily in specific fulfilment of a vow but could be a more generalised expression of piety. Such gifts might include objects of low intrinsic value,

e.g. wood or terracotta (which, *contra* Millett, certainly can be and are described as hoards where appropriate), intended to draw a deity's attention to a request, and also gifts in cash and kind made by the pious towards the running of the cult site, and as thank-offerings. In Classical contexts, and surely also in Roman Britain, these could have included animals for sacrifice or consumption, other types of food and probably materials and craftsmanship donated by worshippers to the building and maintenance of a shrine or temple. The wealth of a temple could also encompass much that had not been given but nevertheless formed part of its earnings or production: for example, sacrificial animals could be kept and bred as a temple flock or herd. Votive gifts of cash or bullion could be used to purchase other goods or services, but would not thereby be rendered secular.

We can identify four categories of objects in the Roman period which may appear to have been votive or religious.

- a) single objects with the names or symbols of a god inscribed on them, or hoards containing such objects;
- b) single objects or hoards bearing overt dedications to a deity;
- c) hoards of bullion or other material found in or near a known temple or church site;
- d) hoards found in wet or waterlogged contexts which were clearly not buried for safekeeping because they would have been irretrievable by the depositor.

(a) Objects inscribed with the names or symbols of a god.

Utensils and decorative items such as articles of jewellery frequently bore names and visual devices relating to a deity. They were personal or family possessions, used or worn by an owner who believed that these religious symbols were propitious and conducive to his or her good fortune. Apotropaic symbolism was part of the belief-system of the ancient world, and remains much more common today than most people would readily admit. The presence of personal or domestic items bearing religious symbols in a Roman hoard does not of itself indicate that the hoard was votive.

(b) Objects with votive inscriptions

Dedications to a deity or references to vows made or fulfilled are a different matter. Objects such as the silver skillet from the Backworth treasure, dedicated to the Mother-goddesses by Fabius Dubitatus, the silver plaques from Barkway dedicated to Mars with the classic formula V.S.L.M., *votum solvit libens merito*, or their Christian counterpart from Water Newton, are all overtly votive. (Walters 1921: no. 183, 230–231; Painter 1977: no.12). They were given by worshippers to a deity or shrine, and their ownership was thus transferred from the donor to the god and his temple.

It does not follow from this that if buried, such items were never intended to be recovered. Though dedicated to sacred purposes, votive objects were not necessarily withdrawn from circulation in human society. They had become the property of a god or goddess, and could be used in any appropriate way for the good of the temple, and temples were commercial institutions as well as centres of worship. The Water Newton Christian hoard is a classic case of an assemblage of plate intended for religious purposes, but the Coroner's jury at the inquest

held in September 1975 quite rightly considered this no hindrance to declaring the hoard Treasure Trove.

(c) *Hoards from sacred/temple sites*

Hoards found at a known temple site do not necessarily belong to a single category, and those which had a high intrinsic value in antiquity, i.e. gold and silver hoards, were re-usable in a sense which does not apply to hoards of terracotta lamps or wooden statuettes. If we take first the objects classed under (b) above, those with specific dedications to a deity, we still have to infer the reason for their burial. One argument, which M. would presumably support, is that the administrators of the temple had chosen to put them beyond human reach because they belonged to the god. This would prevent the cult site from benefiting from the wealth which was represented by coinage and precious-metal objects.

Evidence from Egyptian papyri shows that although temples received certain official subventions, their assets were also subject to taxation (Wallace 1938: 238–254). In times of religious persecution, such as the persecution of Christians in the 3rd century AD and of pagans at the end of the 4th century, the wealth of places of worship was under threat of seizure and confiscation. There were occasions when temple wealth was raided for secular purposes; for example, Cleopatra VII of Egypt used this resource to help finance her armies: 'she slew many of the foremost men ... and she proceeded to gather vast wealth from their estates and from various other sources both profane and sacred, sparing not even the most holy shrines ...' (Cassius Dio: 51, 5). Gold and silver were wealth, as were land and other possessions, and organised temple and church sites were commercial entities subject to the same economic conditions and pressures as the society of which they formed part, including taxation, the threat of theft, civil disturbance, ordinary living expenses and the maintenance of land and buildings (Bowman 1986: 107, 197). Temples and churches therefore required cash, and made use of it.

It is also relevant that one of the businesses conducted at some cult centres was banking, including the granting of loans. There is ample evidence for private and corporate wealth being stored under the guardianship of a deity and the deity's human agents at major sacred sites such as Delphi, Delos and Ephesos; Herodian, writing of the Temple of Peace in Rome, comments: 'the temple was also the richest in Rome, since it was adorned with offerings of gold and silver that had been placed there because they were safe. Everyone used it as a deposit for his possessions'. (Herodian I, 14, 2–3. See also Juvenal 14, 260–1). Christ expelling the moneychangers from the Temple is also apposite (Matthew 21: 12). The safekeeping of valuables under the guardianship of a god was not merely a pious conceit but a practical business proposition. Thus, bullion hoards found at a known cult centre might not even form part of a temple's own wealth, but could have belonged to private individuals, firms or official organisations. In passing and in connection with the Thetford treasure, it may be noted that one of the recorded functions of the relatively obscure god Faunus was to guard treasure (Johns & Potter 1983: 49).

The possibility of votive status was raised in the discussion of the Thetford treasure (Johns & Potter 1983: 73–74) and the early-Roman Hockwold treasure (Johns 1986: 10–11). The latter had hitherto been widely regarded as a hoard of loot, though the objects are not quite typical *Hacksilber* as seen in late-Roman assemblages such as that from Traprain Law (Curle 1923), and the findspot is near a known temple complex. The deliberately damaged condition of the Hockwold silver cups could conceivably indicate votive or ritual status rather than looting, because it would have prevented their use for their original secular, domestic purpose. It would

not, however, have prevented re-cycling as bullion if required. No firm conclusions were reached in either case simply because the evidence is inconclusive, but both publications demonstrate that this question is not one which has been ignored or avoided by those who study the objects in Roman hoards.

In the Roman world there was always an acute need for gold and silver, and the pressures against taking cash out of circulation were strong. To assume that because gold or silver was buried in a sacred precinct, it had been removed permanently from the contemporary economy seems far more dubious than the assumption that in most cases it was simply in storage. Deposits of such items as terracotta votive statuettes are often dumps of non-recyclable religious gifts (e.g. Potter 1989). They are votive, because they were presented to a god, and they may well have been interred with appropriate ceremony, but they were buried to make room for new gifts. They would not have been recovered because they could perform no further service for the temple. Gold and silver votives could continue to benefit the institution to which they had been donated.

(d) Hoards from waterlogged contexts

There is no doubt that objects were, and still are, permanently given up for good luck by depositing them in water, and I am certainly not claiming that the practice was unknown or even uncommon in the Roman period, nor do I wish to challenge the theories of prehistorians trying to understand and classify the many hoards of prehistoric bronze weapons and the like deposited in water (Bradley 1990). We should not, however, leap to hasty conclusions about objects deposited in apparently wet conditions; not all were deliberately and permanently abandoned by human owners. We have to be sure of the circumstances. Built cisterns, fountains and pools, as opposed to natural rivers and lakes, can usually be regularly trawled for the coins thrown in by visitors, just as they are today. Moreover, there is post-medieval evidence from Denmark for the safekeeping, not religious dedication, of silverware by depositing it in bags in the shallows of lakes or bogs, a practice which might conceivably have existed elsewhere and at other times (Randsborg 1980: 139). Until a Romano-British precious-metal treasure is found in a waterlogged context which indisputably made it irrecoverable in antiquity, we can ponder the matter.

Other Points from Millett's Paper

1) Purchasing power of coin-hoards.

The comment that many Romano-British coin-hoards are of 'modest purchasing power' is an unacceptably subjective one. Modest by whose standards? The wealth represented by a given hoard of cash at any period will be perceived differently by different people. One person's life-savings may equal another's tax-bill for a year, whether in the 4th century AD or the 20th. The changing pattern of coin issue, use and hoarding in the later Empire is a subject which deserves, and is receiving, much thought, but the issues are a good deal more complicated than M. implies. Arbitrary judgements are unlikely to be useful in deepening our understanding.

2) Spoons in hoards.

Spoons do indeed feature prominently in late-Roman silver hoards from Britain and elsewhere, a fact which is familiar to all who study silver plate. While there may be an arcane and magical reason behind their presence in so many silver plate hoards, it seems unnecessary to look for

one when there is an obvious common-sense explanation. A spoon is the smallest and most personal item from a set of silver tableware, and is therefore the one likely to exist in the largest numbers. Families who could afford huge multiple sets of large silver dishes and bowls and ewers would have possessed correspondingly extensive sets of spoons: families who could afford very little silver plate would be more likely to own spoons than any other class of tableware. The balance of different vessel-types in earlier Roman silver hoards is altered by the presence of silver drinking-cups, also personal and fairly small, but many silver spoons are also known from the Early and Middle Empire. There is no mystery unless we choose to create one.

3) Aesthetic qualities of hoarded items

M. states that 'aesthetic merits appear important in the selection and perhaps the hoarding of the objects buried in the Mildenhall treasure...', another subjective statement which is incapable of proof. We can reasonably assert that some of the items in the Mildenhall treasure are of exceptionally fine technical and artistic quality in comparison with other surviving examples of 4th century silverware: indeed, they are of outstanding quality by the standards of any period. What we cannot say is whether their owner selected them for concealment because they were especially splendid: we do not know who the owner was, what other items he/she owned, and what the occasion was for their deposition. For all we know, the owner may have possessed infinitely *more* magnificent vessels, perhaps including gold plate, and buried the moderately handsome pieces while carrying away the finest (Painter 1977b).

4) Attitudes to treasure

Finally, 'coyness' about treasure, and public attitudes to it: those of us who have spent the whole of our professional careers trying to convey through publications, exhibition labels, lectures and letters to the public that present-day monetary value does not equate with archaeological importance, and who have been subjected to ordeal by journalist and media hysteria whenever 'treasure' is found, can only feel unutterably weary when we read M.'s jejune comments.

It is not archaeologists, or at any rate not those in the alleged 'professional coterie' which deals with bullion hoards, who have created or encouraged the shallow and frivolous popular perception of treasure. This view has long existed and is becoming ever more deeply entrenched. The public perception of treasure is entirely independent of the work of archaeologists — indeed, many members of the public are faintly surprised that archaeologists have anything to do with the matter — and is based on the excitement about discovery and riches which is natural in children, augmented by the ruthlessly materialistic values which have increasingly characterised the last fifteen years or so.

5) Future work

In the preface to his important book *The Romanization of Britain*, M. expresses the hope that he has avoided the perpetuation of factoids, those myths and unsupported assertions which, through repetition alone, become accepted as truths, and adds 'If I have unwittingly created new 'factoids', I trust reviewers will unmercifully point them out'. (Millett 1990: xvi) While I do not wish to be unmerciful, I have therefore felt no compunction in drawing attention to the numerous factoids-in-the-making which are set out in M.'s article.

Research on the nature of hoarding in Roman Britain, whether of precious metal or other materials, and on the objects which were hoarded, including coins, will undoubtedly benefit

from increased debate. If we can dispense with blatant factoids like the mythical British Museum closed-shop invented by M., and avoid unnecessary and unproductive confrontation, one of the outmoded masculine devices which still bedevil our discipline, we might be able to build on the work of the last 20 years or more and make some major advances in the interpretation of Roman precious-metal hoards and their contents. That is an aim upon which we can all surely agree.

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