

## "Marti Fautori" - Innovation or Copy?

R J Bourne

Carausius, it would seem, occupies both ends of the spectrum when considering originality of coinage design. There are undoubtedly novel designs used, the Virgilian 'EXPECTATE VENI' with a representation of Britannia greeting the new ruler, Carausius, being perhaps the most widely known one. The legend roughly translates as 'Come O Long Awaited One', although, as Casey (1977) points out, the quote from the Aeneid is somewhat out of context and rather than it being a momentous arrival the original is rather sombre and introspective in mood.

"And, oh, how harrowing was the sight of him; how changed he was from the old Hector... Now his beard was ragged and his hair clotted with blood, and all these wounds which he had sustained fighting to defend the walls of his homeland could still be seen."



By contrast one only has to observe the bulk of the radiate bronze or (very) base silver coinage with the 'PAX AVG' reverse, hardly an innovation. The lack of innovation is reinforced by the following coin of Carausius of the 'PAX AVG' type (fig.1). The die cutter was either used to imitating the radiates of Victorinus or was using as his prototype a coin of Victorinus that he had to hand. The reverse type has Pax standing left holding an olive branch and a transverse sceptre flanked by a V and a star, the issue marks that appear on the second and third issues from the primary Gallic mint of that emperor (fig.2).



The meaning of the V and star on the coinage of Victorinus is uncertain but it is probably used to denote a specific issue from one of the mints. That it does not stand for a mint name we can be fairly certain as the V only occurs on coinage of Victorinus, just as the mark P only occurred on the sixth issue of coins from the primary mint under Postumus and there are reports of coins with the field mark T issued under Tetricus (although these are by no means certainly official issues). Thus it would seem that the initial of the emperor's name was used as an occasional control mark on the coinage.

There can be no excuse for the mark appearing on a coin of Carausius other than the definite copying of a relict design.

The coinage of Carausius is also a period of confusion, especially during the early part of his reign, as there is a large amount of coinage of a rather irregular style when compared to the later products of Carausius' mints. Much, if not all, of this coinage may be unofficial in manufacture. Indeed King (1984) believes there is no place within the structure of the official coinage for the 'semi-barbarous' issues where there may be inconsistencies in style of obverse, reverse or both.



It is against this background that the following coin has to be considered (fig.3):

Obverse 'IMP CA[RAVSIVS] P AV' Radiate, draped and cuirassed bust right.

Reverse 'MAR[T F]AV' Felicitas standing left holding caduceus and cornucopia.

The coin is the third specimen known to me. An illustration of the other two (in the form of a composite picture) is provided by Boon (1988), plate VI, no.111. All three examples appear to be struck from the same reverse die. The obverse dies are apparently different, although very similar. Two of the coins have Welsh provenances, one being from the Little Orme find, the other being from the Dinorben Hoard. The third coin of the type, my specimen, is of unknown provenance. There is evidence of a fourth coin of this type, or at least very similar, in Akerman (1834). He lists 'MART PAC', woman holding a long caduceus and cornucopia, on the authority of Stukeley amongst the 'third brass' coins. Given the style of the lettering it is not inconceivable that 'PAC' is a misreading of 'FAV'.

Stukeley is notorious amongst modern classical numismatists as being a most unreliable source in terms of the coins he describes. It was Stukely who started the myth of Carausius' wife, a lady called Oriuna, on the misreading of a silver denarius in the possession of the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris (1752, 1757-9). The reverse is apparently a misreading of 'FORTVNA AVG'. This was, to give him some credit, considered by Stukeley although he discounted it on the grounds that the usual attributes of Fortuna were not present on the coin. There is no other evidence of such an imperial lady in either the numismatic or epigraphic record and an examination of a cast of the original coin shows that the confusion probably arose due to a flan crack exactly where the F would be on the reverse (Boon, 1974). A more full investigation into the pros and cons of Oriuna being Carausius's wife is give in John Casey's book on Carausius and Allectus (1994).

George Boon apparently changed his opinion over the status of the 'MART FAV' coins. He originally considered them the products of an official mint as did Seaby (1956), including the coin in a list of previously unrecorded types. There are certain anachronisms in the reverse design, for example the figure of Felicitas with a legend referring to Mars, which are otherwise unknown and thus point towards illiteracy or at least a degree of misunderstanding on behalf of the die cutter suggesting a barbarous or unofficial mint.

This does not generally fit with barbarous, or rather illigitimate, coinage of the period which, while they may have inconsistencies and unusual groupings of attributes in the design, they at least usually have a traceable prototype. As far as I am aware 'MART FAV' (Marti Fautori, Mars the favoured) has no known prototype in third century coinage, the closest type being the 'MINER FAVTR' reverse used by Postumus on the antoniniani of the second issue. Far from being illiterate the die cutter has shown a fair degree of innovation. Why go to the trouble if the coin is a barbarous issue of coming up with a novel reverse design? One would surely try not to draw attention to a copy and imitate a known reverse type.

#### REFERENCES

Akerman, J.Y; A Descriptive Catalogue of Rare and Unedited Roman Coins (1834)

Boon, G.C; 'Oriuna Again' N.Circ (1974)

Boon, G.C; 'Counterfeit Coins in Roman Britain' in Casey, P.J & Reece, R; Coins and the Archaeologist 2nd edition (1988)

Casey, P.J; 'Tradition and Innovation in the Coinage of Carausius and Allectus' in Munby, J & Henig, M; Roman Life and Art in Britain (1977)

Casey, P.J; Carausius and Allectus: The British Usurpers (1994)

King, C.E; 'The Unmarked Coins of Carausius' BNJ 54 (1984)

Seaby, H.A; 'Little Orme's Head' NC (1956)

Stukeley, W; 'Oriuna, wife of Carausius, Emperor of Britain' Palaeographia Britannica 3 (1752)

Stukeley, W; The Medallic History of Marcus Aurelius Carausius Emperor in Britain (1755-9)