

A depiction of Cartimandua handing over freedom-fighter Caratacus to the Romans in AD 51. In AD 69 they rescued her when her ex husband Venutius seized the throne from her. (Print by Francesco Bartolozzi, 1786, in the British Museum, from Wikipedia.)

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How a strong pony became a strong ruler

ON November 7, 1893 a small but significant hoard of late iron age and Roman coins and antiquities was discovered during quarrying at Honley ("rocky glade"), near Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. Like the famous Sedgeford cow-bone hoard of gold staters found in Norfolk in 2003 (see COIN NEWS, October 2003, pp. 22–23), the Honley Hoard had been concealed in an ox bone about 15cm long.

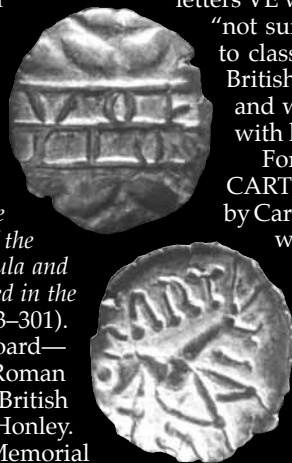
Sir G. F. Hill, keeper of coins and medals at the British Museum from 1912, said: "The objects in question were concealed in a cavity behind a piece of rock, and were discovered by workmen who were breaking away the rock. The greater part, if not all, of the coins and metal objects (a bronze seal box, bronze fibula and two bronze terret rings) are said to have been contained in the hollow bone." (*Numismatic Chronicle*, 1897, pp. 293–301). The five Ancient British coins from the Honley Hoard—all silver half units struck within ten years of the Roman invasion of AD 43—were presented to the British Museum by the landowner, William Brook of Honley. The rest of the hoard was given to the Tolson Memorial Museum by Thomas Brook.

Though issued by three different rulers, all five silver coins from the Honley Hoard pay homage to a fourth ruler called Volisios, whose name may mean "The Blood", as in hot-blooded or true-blooded. I believe that Volisios was a king of the Brigantes and the father of the three people named on the other side of the coins. The Brigantes ("The High Ones") were a powerful confederation of northern tribes whose main centre was probably the fortified site at Stanwick, near Darlington, between the rivers Tees and Swale.

One of the five iron age coins was inscribed VOLISIOS on the obverse and CARTIVEL[L] on the reverse, but the LL wasn't clearly legible. Not surprisingly the coin was attributed to Cartimandua ("Strong Pony"), queen of the Brigantes, and the letters VE were thought to refer to her husband Venutius. I say "not surprisingly" because Cartimandua was well known to classical historians as the queen who surrendered the British freedom-fighter Caratacus to the Romans in AD 51 and who divorced her husband Venutius, replacing him with his armour-bearer, Vellocatius.

For 60 years everyone was convinced that the CARTIVEL silver half unit from Honley had been minted by Cartimandua. Derek Allen, the great Celtic numismatist, was convinced. Richard Mack, author of *The Coinage of Ancient Britain* (1953), was convinced. Even the revered archaeologist Professor Sir Ian Richmond (with whom I had the pleasure of digging at Hod Hill, Dorset, in 1951), was convinced, though he thought "that the coin was struck before Cartimandua became paramount chief, being at the time only a regional chief" (I. A. Richmond, *Huddersfield in Roman Times*, Tolson Memorial Museum Publications 4, 1925; also "Queen Cartimandua", *Journal of Roman Studies* 44, 1944, pp. 43–52). For 60 years the "Strong Pony", queen of the Brigantes, was securely enthroned in Britain's early numismatic history.

Then in 1963 Derek Allen, doyen of Celtic numismatics and author of *The Coins of the Ancient Celts* (published posthumously in 1980), changed his mind. He said that all coins previously attributed to the Brigantes had in his opinion been minted by the Coritani of Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, and that a consequence of this reattribution



Cartivellaunos silver half unit (ABC 1992) from the Honley hoard, 1893. For 60 years it was thought to have been issued by Cartimandua. (Image courtesy of Celtic Coin Index © Institute of Archaeology, Oxford.)

The 20 Gallic War uniface gold staters (ABC 16) found in a cow bone at Sedgeford, Norfolk, on August 12, 2003. (Image from The Sedgeford Hoard, Sharp, 2004, courtesy Hilary Snelling.)



"is the abandonment of the belief, to which I previously subscribed, that a unique silver coin from the Honley hoard is a coin of Queen Cartimandua of the Brigantes." He said that the CARTIVEL legend on it probably stood for Cartivellaunos who, like Dumnocoveros and Dumnovellaunos, was probably a son not a daughter of Volisios (*The Coins of the Coritani*, 1963, pps. 26–29).

The numismatic "dethroning" of Queen Cartimandua in 1963 and putting a previously unknown, previously unattested prince in her place on the Honley silver coin—by no means a popular "regime change" in academic circles—was a courageous decision on the part of Derek Allen, because the idea of Cartimandua, a well known historical British royal issuing her own coins, was well liked. "No doubt so attractive a theory will still find champions" added Allen wryly. And it has done. In her well researched book, *Cartimandua, Queen of the Brigantes* (The History Press, 2008), Nicki Howarth says: "In the light of this reattribution, it would appear that there were no Brigantian coins. It could be that none have yet been found and recognised as such. As happened with the Corieltavian coins [as Allen's Coritani coins are now known], modern study is constantly reinterpreting past conclusions. If Cartimandua did mint coins, they could have been melted down and used for other purposes in the uprisings that tore Brigantia apart." The possibility cannot be ruled out, Nicki, but I think it's unlikely.

Allen's 1963 proposal that CARTIVEL stood for Cartivellaunos ("Strong Ruler") was prescient. Some 36 years later he was proved right. In 1999 the first gold stater of Cartivellaunos was found. Discovered by a metal detectorist at Scampston, near Malton, North Yorkshire, this gold stater was the first coin to reveal the full name CARTIVELLAUNOS, the horse's forelegs providing the letters LL, a clever device that not only saves flan space and die cutting time, but also makes the lovely lunate horse an integral part of the ruler's name. This superb stater was acquired by Michael O'Bee, the Corieltavian coin specialist, and sold in 2008 by Dix Noonan Webb for £12,650 which at the time was the highest price ever paid for an Ancient British coin (a record broken three years later when we sold the first known gold stater of Anarevitos for £21,000—see COIN NEWS, December 2010, p.10).

So who was Cartivellaunos? Dr Philip de Jersey, co-author of *Ancient British Coins* (Chris Rudd 2010), says: "His name is otherwise unknown to us—we have no archaeological or literary evidence for him, just a handful of coins. It's not much to go on, but a few suggestions can be made. The other part of the inscription—Volisios—occurs with two other names, Dumnovellaunos and Dumnocoveros. It's possible that Volisios could have been the father of three sons, each named on coinage, or there may have been some other blood relationship between them. Perhaps they ruled different parts of the northern Corieltavian territory. There are still relatively few findspots of the Volisios series, and a related type inscribed DVMNOC TIGIR SENO (presumably another issue of Dumnocoveros), but there is certainly a possibility that they were produced in Brigantian territory, rather than among the

Corieltavi to the south of the Humber. If this is the case, then we might also speculate on the relationship of Cartivellaunos to Cartimandua. Perhaps he was her father? Tacitus records Cartimandua's illustrious lineage (*Histories* III, 45), and it is tempting to think that the unusual first syllable shared by these names might reflect a family link" (from "Cartimandua and Cartivellaunos", *Chris Rudd List* 66, November 2002, pps. 2–3).

The possibility of a family link between "Strong Pony" and "Strong Ruler" was recently (and independently) raised by Dr Daphne Nash Briggs, author of *Coinage in the Celtic World* (Seaby 1987), when I showed her the latest gold stater of Cartivellaunos that had been found. She wrote: "The Cartivellaunos stater, and what you said, Chris, about the likely Brigantian distribution of some of the East Midlands staters did make me think, as I mused upon it, of how name-elements repeat themselves in many elite families everywhere, at all periods, in Europe. It struck me, coming home, that Carti-vellaunos and Carti-mandua could easily have been relatives in the same family. Some coin!"

Some coin, indeed. This recently discovered Cartivellaunos gold stater (see COIN NEWS, December 2016)—only the fourth known—is without doubt one of the finest. Below the stylised horse whose body is composed of crescent moons we can clearly see the ligatured letters VE, once thought to represent Venutius, former husband of Cartimandua. We can also see a pellet triad—a sacred symbol of British druids—prominently displayed under the horse's head. This is a highly important coin, not simply on account of its great rarity and superlative condition, but because of its provenance. It was found at Kilham, East Yorkshire, well north of the Humber and well beyond the tribal borders of the Corieltavi, whose heartland was in Lincolnshire. More evidence, in my view, that Cartivellaunos—like Cartimandua—may have heralded from the royal house of Brigantia.

For their help I thank Jane Bottomley, Elizabeth Cottam, Philip de Jersey and Daphne Nash Briggs.



Michael O'Bee's Cartivellaunos gold stater (ABC 1989) from Scampston, N. Yorkshire, sold by DNW in 2008 for £12,650. (Image courtesy of DNW.)



Cartivellaunos gold stater (ABC 1989) found near Bawtry, Notts., before 2007, and sold by Chris Rudd in 2010 for £9,400. (Image courtesy Chris Rudd.)



Cartivellaunos gold stater (ABC 1989) found at Kilham, E Yorkshire, 30 January 2016, to be sold by Chris Rudd, 15 January 2017, est. £9,500. (Image courtesy Chris Rudd.)