**The Largest Hoard of Iron Age Coins Ever Found in Europe**

In June 2102, the largest hoard of Iron Age coins ever found was discovered in Jersey, one of the English Channel Islands. It is the third and largest hoard found at the secret location by Reg Mead and Richard Miles who have been searching the area for thirty years after a farmer's daughter told how her father had found some coins when uprooting a tree. The coins had the "head of an Indian chief" on one side and a horse on the other. Reg and Richard knew this probably meant the coins were Iron Age.

They thought that perhaps these coins had been held in a pot, and hoped that the base of the pot might still be buried in the ground. Reg used a specialised detector to search deep into the ground. When they got a signal they dug to find a small handful of Iron Age coins and promptly reported their find to Jersey Heritage. A team of archaeologists, assisted by Reg and Richard, excavated the site to reveal a massive hoard of Iron Age coins and ornaments. They decided to remove the hoard in one lump and take it to the laboratory for expert cleaning and recording.

The latest estimate for the number of coins fused together in a lump that weighs three quarters of a ton is 70,000. All the coins so far seen were made by the Coriosolites, a tribe in the area centred around what is now St Malo in France and date to around 56BC, when Julius Caesar was conquering Gaul (modern day France). Perhaps this hoard was buried by Gauls on the run from Caesar!

The coins are made of billon, a mixture of silver and copper, and are staters and quarter-staters. The ornaments are made of gold and silver.

During the excavation they found a smaller hoard, about 25 coins of the Roman Republic, in a pot. As the coins are well-worn, they may be about 50 years younger than the big hoard. So now there are three hoards: the one found under the tree by the farmer in the 1960s; the big hoard; and the small hoard of Roman coins.

In addition to the coins, other items are also visible, squashed within the mass of coins, including a tubular gold neck ornament.

Neil estimates that it will take him eight years to fully dismantle, record and conserve the whole hoard - if he does it alone.

The findspot of the hoard is being kept a secret. It is understood that the finders and landowner will be awarded the current market value of the hoard when it is declared treasure.

Reg Mead is a regular listener to Win Scutt's weekly chat about Archaeology on BBC Radio Jersey's Late Show with Vic Morgan. He has kindly supplied a set of the latest pictures of the hoard, showing how it was craned out of the ground in a single lump and taken to Jersey Heritage Museum where it is now being meticulously cleaned and recorded by conservator Neil Mahrer.

*www.archaeology.ws*