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Bearsden

A Roman Fort on the Antonine Wall

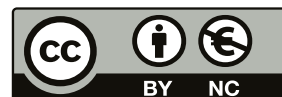
David J Breeze

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Chapter 10

THE INTAGLIOS

MARTIN HENIG

10.1 CATALOGUE

1. Intaglio of cornelian, orange in colour with a few black inclusions (illus 10.1). Dimensions: 15mm × 11mm × 3mm thick slightly convex, oval (Type A5).

The device is Minerva standing with her body towards the spectator but facing left. She wears a peplos and on her head



Illustration 10.1
Intaglio of Minerva.

is a crested helmet. In her right hand is a spear, its point downwards and she lowers her left hand to the shield by her side. The type is, of course, a free adaptation of the *Athena Parthenos*. Similar adaptations are recorded from near Oxford, Canterbury (in an Anglo-Saxon setting), Cologne and Aquileia (Henig 1978: no 230; no 231; Henkel 1913: no 1208, Chiesa 1966: nos 132–3).

More interesting than this is the evidence that the Bearsden find provides, that the rich, bold style of Antonine gem-cutting was in existence before 158. The gem may be compared with other intagli showing Minerva from the fortress baths at Caerleon (late second century context) from the legionary depot at Holt, Denbighshire, and from a lead-mining site probably under military control at Charterhouse-on-Mendip, Somerset (Henig 1978: nos 234, 242 and 237). All these stones testify to the popularity of the goddess amongst members of the imperial army. In addition two gems from Scotland, less well executed but evidently also second-century in date, should be noted. One was found in the fort at Newstead and the other is from the cremation of a Roman auxiliary at High Torrs, Luce Bay (Henig 1978: nos 243 and 235). This glyptic evidence does not, of course, stand alone but is fully supported by epigraphic finds.

NK73CD; bath-house, cold room, lying on the floor.

2. Intaglio of red jasper. Dimensions: (upper-surface) 9mm × 6mm × 3mm thick (illus 10.2). The stone is flat with levelled edge, oval (type F2) and is set in an iron ring of normal early second-century type (Henig 1978: no 381. Marshall 1907, x LVI, Type E x VII and cf no 1469). The device is much more personal than that on the other intaglio and British inscriptions do not help in elucidating its significance. The intaglio is a well executed representation of a shrimp (probably *Peneus kerathurus*), with long antennae curving down under the body and the back arched so that the creature's tail almost touches them. A shrimp is depicted on a gem from Colchester and probably on another from York, but the crustacean on an intaglio from Silchester is almost certainly a crawfish (Henig 1978: nos 716, 715 and 717). The type is by no means rare and fine examples of intagli which portray shrimps are published from Aquileia and elsewhere (Chiesa 1966: nos 1388–92; Fossing 1929: nos 1512–13). The Romans ate all sorts of seafood and this taste is



Illustration 10.2
Ring and intaglio of a shrimp.



Illustration 10.3
Intaglio of a shrimp.

reflected both in literature and art (Apicius, *Artis Magiricae* Ix. Pliny, 9, 168–74; Toynbee 1973: 209–215, pl CVIII). However a personal signet is likely to have had more than merely culinary significance. Pliny lists a number of cures for ailments which make use of fish. Furthermore crustacea appear to have been invested with apotropaic qualities.

NK73CQ; drain to west of building 4.

For the sake of completeness, mention should be made of a chance find in 1933, when a cornelian intaglio depicting a figure of Ceres was found on the site. This is now in the National Museum at Edinburgh. The type is attested at military sites including Holt and Corbridge, but the idea behind it reflects the essentially agrarian ethos of all men in Antiquity, the hope for prosperity on a good harvest.

10.2 THE 'SHRIMP'

SUSAN CHAMBERS

The specimen is without a head (illus 10.2 and 10.3). The main upper part of the body is divided into 6 segments with a tail fan which are characters of the Crustacean group Caridean decapods (Shrimps and Prawns, see Smaldon 1979: no 15). However, the long jointed appendages on the front of the body are confusing. If it was a shrimp or a prawn these structures would be attached to the carapace. From the illustration the point of attachment could be the posterior part of the carapace, which has been torn from the body.

The other possibility is that the joint appendages are antennae of another group of Crustacean the Amphipoda. These are commonly known as sand hoppers and have long antennae, no carapace, and more 'body' segments.

The intaglio is possibly a composite of the two groups or the front pair of jointed limbs have been exaggerated in length in which case it is a Caridean decapod. On reflection I prefer the latter idea.