

From the *Transactions* of the  
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

**A Romano-Celtic Carved Stone Phallic Figure from Guiting  
Power, Gloucestershire**

by A. Marshall  
1984, Vol. 102, 212-215

© The Society and the Author(s)

*Reference*

Baddeley, W. St. C. 1910. The Manor and Site of Hullasey, Gloucestershire. *Trans BGAS* 33, 338–354.

October 1982

PETER ELLIS

Publication of this note has been aided by a grant from English Heritage

## A ROMANO-CELTIC CARVED STONE PHALLIC FIGURE FROM GUITING POWER, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

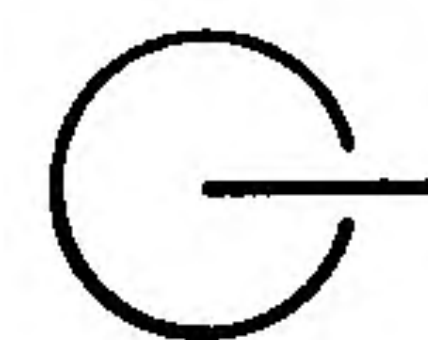
The object described in this note was recovered as a surface find from Ash Ground (SP078244), an arable field at approximately 236–252 m OD, on the hill flanking the upper Windrush valley approximately 1 km WSW of Guiting Power village, and overlooking Roel 1 km to the NW.

The field in which the object was found contains a small, unexcavated Romano-British site known from a localized scatter of Roman pottery around SP080244, where two slight hollows covering less than 1 ha may indicate the immediate area of occupation. Occupation debris recovered from the area as surface finds consists mainly of coarse pottery datable to the 3rd century AD, and a single 4th-century coin.

The site appears to be a small, isolated hilltop settlement, one of several recently discovered in the area during field-work undertaken by the Cotswold Archaeological Research Group. These small settlements appear as scatters of occupation debris covering less than 2 ha, and are located on hilltops or spurs associated with the Windrush stream system. Examples of such sites within a 3 km radius are Pinnock Bottom, Temple Guiting (SP07502720), Newtown Farm, Hawling (SP07652525), Tughill Barn, Hawling (SP07002355), and Roel Gate, Hawling (SP 05702380). A complete search of the double-spur system (SP0824 and SP0825), which includes the hill-slope on which the find was made, revealed no further Romano-British settlement other than the Ash Ground site.

The phallic figure (PLATE I) was carved from a small, columnar block of buff-yellow, shelly, oolitic limestone, approximately 280 mm in maximum length, and 100 mm maximum in both width and thickness. The limestone itself is Inferior Oolite of a type which occurs widely in the Guiting-Hawling area, and there seems no reason to suppose that the fabrication and use of the object were not entirely local.

The overall appearance of the object is phallic, especially when viewed laterally, the glans area being separated from the shaft by a well-developed groove. The glans, or head area, appears roughly flattened at the front, on which the face was carved, and at the sides also, but develops into a more bulbous, rounded area at the back of the head. The eyes appear to have been formed by rough pecking with a sharp point, then possibly emphasized by shallow drill holes. The nose, mouth, and hair-line (or possibly brow-ridge) are outlined by roughly pecked lines. The top and back of the head show some signs of broad, shallow pitting, which may be a possible representation of hair. On its left side the head shows a clear angular mark which may be the edge of a 'bobbed' hair-style, or part of a downward-pointing horn, possibly a forked antler, half of which has been obliterated by an area of ancient damage at the side of the head. There is also the slight indication of a downward-pointing horn on the right side of the head, where a faint and fragmentary ridge can be seen above and below a smoothed area. The body itself consists of a roughly-squared shaft, approximately flattened at the front and right side, but far less so on the left and back. The shoulder area appears fairly pronounced and squared to the neck area to the front. The suggestion of a crude, downward-pointing, wing-like arm on the right-hand side is



10 cm

PLATE I. Romano-Celtic figure from Guiting Power (the pointers below each aspect denote direction of view).

fortuitous, and appears to be part of the natural shape of the stone. At the front, immediately below the neck, two slight breast-like features appear, either side of a central, vertical, pecked groove, each bearing a lightly-pecked depression. An alternative interpretation of these features as torc terminals is possible but no sign of a connecting torc ring is visible below the neck groove at the sides and back of the figure. The bottom of the figure is roughly flattened and squared to the shaft, but not sufficiently to enable the object to stand without support.

Since its context has been lost it is not possible to provide direct evidence for precise dating of the figure. However, its proximity to an isolated Romano-British site, which has produced no evidence yet for earlier occupation, might suggest a Romano-Celtic rather than late Iron Age origin. The hilltop has produced no surface material suggesting later prehistoric settlement, and in fact the two known Iron Age sites from the area occur not on the hilltop, but in the adjacent Windrush valley on the lower slopes flanking the stream. These are at Wood House, Guiting Power (SP08312584; Gascoigne 1973) and Old Furlong, Guiting Power (SP08952503; Saville 1979). In inspiration and theme the object is clearly Celtic, but although there is evidence for a sculptural tradition in the immediately pre-Roman period, the available evidence suggests that most surviving cult heads and figures represent an expression of Celtic religious tradition in provincial Roman Britain.

Small columnar carvings which appear as a phallic/human hybrid, with the face carved on the glans, are widespread in Roman Britain (Ross 1967). Examples similar to the Guiting Power figure occur in southern Britain at Eype (Dorset), in northern Britain at Corbridge (Northumberland), Maryport (Cumbria), and Heaton Woods, Bradford (West Yorkshire), and in Wales at Caerwent (Gwent) and Port Talbot (West Glamorgan).

Other examples of phallic figures are known from the Cotswolds. The small phallic carving in limestone from Broadway (Hereford and Worcester), although only 83 mm long, showed a clearly carved but crude face on the bulbous glans/head area (Hawkes 1948). This example was found during excavation at a small ditched enclosure on gravel at the foot of the Cotswold scarp at SP0938. The main occupation was first to mid-second century AD, and the immediate context of the figurine dated it to the first half of the second century. The phallic theme in small portable votive objects can perhaps be seen again in the area, in a late Iron Age context at Barnwood, Gloucester, which produced a conical, possibly glans-shaped, stone object with incised decoration clearly of late Iron Age type (Smith 1934).

The two definite motifs which appear in the Guiting Power figure, the head and the phallic symbol, are elements central to Celtic religious expression. In Celtic Britain and Europe the head appears to have been considered as a centre of life-force and to have been capable of continued, independent existence after death. The head, therefore, coupled with the penis, with its obvious connotations of fertility and human continuity, would have had especial potency as a double symbol.

If the fragmentary carvings in low relief at the sides of the head of the Guiting Power figure are in fact horns or forked antlers, then this introduces the possibility that the object represents a stag-like deity of the 'Cernunnos' type. Examples of horned gods are found widely in southern/central Britain and also in the north, especially in the area around Hadrian's Wall. More locally there is evidence in the Cotswolds for the existence of the cult of the antlered stag-god. From Corinium two sculptures depict a stag-god, in one case with two ram-headed serpents in place of lower limbs, and with an open purse or cornucopia at either side of the head (Ross 1967, plate 43a). There is a clear association here between the stag-god and plenty or fecundity, and other evidence links this cult strongly with other aspects of sexual fertility, since the antlered god may be shown ithyphallic or be accompanied by an attendant or worshipper in this condition. In the light of this connection, carving the stag-god as a phallic symbol as in the Guiting Power

figure would seem an appropriate combination.

### *Acknowledgements*

I should like to thank Mr E.R. Cochrane of the Guiting Power Amenity Trust, with whom the object remains, for his interest and support, and for permission to publish the figure. An acknowledgement is also due to Mr Colin Trinder of Guiting Power, who made the find.

Sincere thanks are also due to the many individuals (including Paul and John Edwards, John Lees, and Mark Maillard) who have helped with the extensive programme of archaeological survey work in the area undertaken by the Cotswold Archaeological Research group.

### *Bibliography*

- Gascoigne, P.E. 1973. An iron age pit at Wood House, Guiting Power. *Trans BGAS* 92, 204–207.  
 Hawkes, C.F.C. 1948. A Romano-British phallic carving from Broadway, Worcs. *Antiq J* 28, 166–169.  
 Ross, A. 1967. *Pagan Celtic Britain: studies in iconography and tradition*. London.  
 Saville, A. 1979. *Excavations at Guiting Power iron age site, Gloucestershire, 1974*. Bristol (=CRAAGS Occasional Papers 5).  
 Smith, R. 1934. An early British fragment. *Antiq J* 14, 59–61.

January 1984

ALISTAIR MARSHALL

## OBSERVATIONS AT SALMONSBURY CAMP, 1983

Between 15th August and 2nd September 1983 a watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Western Archaeological Trust and the Department of the Environment on the laying of a pipe by the Thames Water Authority along the line of the southern rampart of Salmonsbury Camp, Bourton-on-the-Water (FIG. 1).

The pipe trench, 0.6 m wide, was dug to a depth of approximately 1 m along the lane which runs on the south-west of the camp, on what is presumed to be the inner rampart. At the south corner of the 'extension' to the camp, the trench, dug on the south-west side of the lane, entered the scheduled area. For 60 m from this point only redeposited gravel was revealed. Then stones appeared on the south side of the trench, much shattered and lying on top of each other, dipping to the north at an angle of about 20°. These continued for 8m, and may have come from a revetment wall. They were lying thick but loosely, and tipped from the south side into the trench. This may have been because the trench was running along the inside of the rampart at this point, the outer part having been eroded or quarried away for gravel in living memory. There were no stones, only gravel, on the north side of the trench.

At the entrance to Bury Bank Farm the pipe trench crossed to the north side of the lane and continued beside the hedge. Skeleton No. 1 was encountered at 14 m from the field gate which is next to the southern end of the inner rampart coming from the north-east. The sheds of the farm lie between the two ramparts, which are not now prominent at this point. The O.S. map shows the two ramparts meeting the lane and rampart at a right angle, which is not usual for the corner of an Iron Age camp. The skeleton was shattered and mostly removed by the J.C.B., but the operations were stopped immediately so that the bones could be collected and the position examined. The skull remained in the side of the trench and lay to the south-east of the other bones, which lay in a dirty gravel deposit of approximately 1.22 m length. It was evident that the