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The Holzthum 'Um Rank' solidus hoard

In September 2019, following earlier surveys at a site known as 'Um Rank' in Holzthum (Parc Hosingen, Luxembourg), and on the advice of the Luxembourg National Institute for Archaeological Research (INRA), two amateur fieldwalkers and detectorists made a significant discovery: they unearthed a total of 38 gold coins, which they promptly reported to INRA.

Following this initial find, three subsequent campaigns were conducted, leading to an extensive excavation project over several years; the remains of a multi-phase Roman fortification system, known as a *burgus*, along with its associated ditch system, were documented. These campaigns also had to take into account the specific dangers of the region from the presence of numerous munitions and explosives from the Second World War. For this reason, the archaeologists collaborated with the Luxembourg Army's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Service (SEDAL) to ensure the safety of the ensuing excavations.

This remarkable discovery not only highlights the rich historical significance of the region, but also underscores the importance of collaboration between amateur archaeologists and professional institutions in preserving and understanding our cultural heritage.

The archaeological efforts culminated in the successful documentation and recovery of a total of 141 late-Roman gold solidi. The site had probably been disturbed by hostilities during the Ardennes campaign in the winter of 1944–1945, as well as by more recent agricultural activity, so that although all coins still in the ground were definitely removed, it is by no means certain that the original hoard was recovered in its totality.

The 141 solidi were struck in the years 364–395/402. All mints active during this period are represented, with the exceptions of Londinium and Siscia; similarly all emperors apart from Magnus Maximus and his son, Flavius Victor. The latest coins in the hoard are two solidi of Honorius, struck in Sirmium in 394–395, and one from the mint of Mediolanum of a type produced from 394–402.

The hoard contains several noteworthy pieces, including two fragmentary plated coins of the RESTITVTOR REIPVBLICAE type (nos. 141–142), a type that was produced in large quantities in 364–367, as well as by Magnus Maximus in smaller numbers in 383–388. Judging by the style of the bust, one of the plated coins is most likely an imitation (no. 141). Coin no. 27 has a dark sheen, and does not seem to be of fine gold, but perhaps has a high silver or tin content. Stylistically it looks official, but no metal analysis has been conducted to date to confirm the coin's composition. The edge of coin no. 15 is bent, revealing that the flan appears to be made of two layers that have been bonded together. In a study of the fifth-century solidi from the Como (2018) hoard, Costanza Cucini and Grazia Facchinetti suggest that the flans were made from cutting them out of long metal strips of the required width that had been hammered to the necessary thickness¹. The use of folded flans for striking coins is attested from as early as the fifth century BC², and in the case of the Holzthum coin, possibly the flan had been cut from a strip made by hammering two strips folded together. When the edge of the coin was bent, perhaps during the hostilities of 1944–1945 or more

1 CUCINI – FACCHINETTI 2024

2 KROLL 2017

recent agricultural work, the two layers became separated. Detailed analysis of the phenomenon is planned.

The overall composition of the hoard presents few surprises (*table 1*). As comparative background, data on solidi in hoards from Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Western Germany with terminal coins dated to 364–402 was collected from the Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire (CHRE) website (<https://chre.ashmolean.ox.ac.uk>) (*table 2*). The large number of coins of 364–367, in particular from Antiochia, is common to other hoards in the region. Coins of the period from eastern mints will have arrived in the area with Valentinian I and his army following his proclamation as Augustus while at Ancyra (modern Ankara) in 364 and his subsequent transfer first to Italy, then Gaul. However, the Holzthum hoard is remarkable for the numerous coins of 364–367 from the mint of Nicomedia on the coast of the Sea of Marmara in northwest Anatolia, for which there is no parallel in the CHRE dataset.

The numismatic closing date of the hoard (which provides no more than a *terminus post quem* for its deposition and non-recovery) is probably 395 or soon thereafter. The VICTORIA AVGGG type for Honorius was produced at Mediolanum until 402, when the mint was transferred to Ravenna along with the imperial residence, and is extremely common in other hoards. Given that only one example was present in the Holzthum hoard, it is likely that the collection of coins for the hoard was terminated soon after the inception of the issue. The two coins of 394–395 from Sirmium, as well as some of the relatively large group of coins from Constantinopolis struck in 383–388, will probably have arrived in the region together with the victorious troops of Theodosius I following the defeat of the western usurper Eugenius in 394.

Roymans has drawn attention to the large number of later hoards of solidi of the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries from both banks of the Lower Rhine, which he attributes to payments to Frankish *foederati*, who were to become the dominant power in the region in the early 5th century, in order to secure the frontier³. However, there are no specific historical situations or events with which the deposition and non-recovery of the Holzthum hoard can be directly connected. The hoards post-dates the usurpation of Eugenius, and the political and military situation in the region was stable into the early-fifth century, even following the withdrawal of much of the field army from the Rhine frontier by Stilicho in 402. The situation only changed with the invasion of the Vandals, Alans and Suebians in 406/407. Nevertheless, a small number of solidus hoards of the years 364–395/402 are known from the wider region (*table 3*), including four with an apparent terminal coin similar to Holzthum. However, it is not clear that all coins from the Beilen and Venlo hoards were recovered, only three from Bato's Erf were recorded, and Würselen was found in a secondary, non-ancient context, so that there is no certainty as to whether their terminal dates are reliable.

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	364–367	367–375	375–378	378–383	383–388	388–395	
Treveri	13	9	6	7	–	3	38
	9.4%	6.4%	4.3%	5.0%		2.2%	
Lugdunum	2	–	–	–	–	2	4
	1.4%					1.4%	
Arelate	7	–	–	–	–	–	7
	5.0%						
Mediolanum	5	–	–	–	2	1	8
	3.6%				1.4%	0.7%	
COM West	–	–	–	2	–	–	2
				1.4%			
Aquileia	2	–	–	2	–	–	4
	1.4%			1.4%			
Roma	8	–	–	–	–	–	8
	5.8%						
Sirmium	–	–	–	–	–	2	2
						1.4%	
Siscia	–	–	–	–	–	–	0
Thessalonica	1	–	–	2	–	–	3
	0.7%			1.4%			
COM East	–	–	–	1		–	1
				0.7%			
Cyzicus	1	–	–	–	–	–	1
	0.7%						
Constantinopolis	–	–	–	3	8	–	11
				2.2%	5.8%		
Nicomedia	17	–	–	–	–	–	17
	12.2%						
Antiochia	33	–	–	–	–	–	33
	23.7%						
Total	89	10	5	17	10	8	139
	64.0%	6.4%	4.3%	12.2%	7.2%	5.8%	

Table 1: The Holzthum hoard.

	364–367	367–375	375–378	378–383	383–388	388–395	
Treveri	10	45	10	3	7	8	83
	3.8%	16.9%	3.8%	1.1%	2.6%	3.0%	
Lugdunum	6	–	–	–	–	–	6
	2.3%						
Arelate	7	1	–	–	–	–	8
	2.6%	0.4%					
Mediolanum	5	–	–	4	–	28	37
	1.9%			1.5%		10.5%	
COM West	–	–	–	11	–	–	11
				4.1%			
Aquileia	5	–	–	–	–	–	5
	1.9%						
Roma	14	–	–	–	–	–	14
	5.3%						
Sirmium	4	–	–	–	–	5	9
	1.5%					1.9%	
Siscia	1	–	–	–	–	–	1
	0.4%						
Thessalonica	6	–	–	3	–	1	10
	2.3%			1.1%		0.4%	
COM East	–	–	–	4	–	–	4
				1.5%			
Cyzicus	–	–	–	–	–	–	0
Constantinopolis	10	1	–	2	5	–	18
	3.8%	0.4%		0.8%	1.9%		
Nicomedia	9	–	–	–	–	–	9
	3.4%						
Antiochia	50	1	–	–	–	–	51
	18.8%	0.4%					
Total	127	48	10	27	12	42	266
	47.7%	18.0%	3.8%	10.2%	4.5%	15.8%	

Table 2: Composition of finds with a terminal coin of 364–395/402 from Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Western Germany recorded by the Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire project.

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Hoard	Number of coins	Terminal date	Bibliography
KONZ	29	364–367	BINSFELD 1975; CHRE 4334
ELLERBECK	25	364–367	BERGER 1988, 1051; CHRE 4319
MACHTUM	100	375–378	REINERT 2008; CHRE 7438
ALTKALKAR	14	378–383	BACKENDORF – GORECKI 2011, 3163; CHRE 18 703
EIDINGHAUSEN	10	388–392	GEBHART 1973, 6097; CHRE 4317
UDDEL 1864	4	378–392	GELDER – BOERSMA 1967, 178; CHRE 10 022
BEILEN 1845–1985	24	394–395	GELDER – BOERSMA 1967, 103; VAN DER VIN 1988, 264–267; VAN DER VIN 1996, 2008; CHRE 9855
VENLO 1675	10	394–395	GELDER – BOERSMA 1967, 478; VAN DER VIN 1988, 270–273; CHRE 10 040
WÜRSELEN	34	394–402	KOMNICK 2010, p. 211 o. Nr.; CHRE 4535
BATO'S ERF	>3	395–402	VAN DER VIN 1988, 274; CHRE 4385

Table 3: Gold hoards from Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Western Germany with terminal coins of 364–395/402.

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Catalogue

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TREVERI**364–367****Find no.**

1	2021-037-043	Valentinianus I	RIC IX I(a)3	-/-//TR*
2	105	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 1(a)4	-/-//TR[wreath]
3	2020-079-X013	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 1(a) var.	-/-//TR•
4	2020-079-X028	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 1(a) var.	-/-//TR•
5	2020-079-X029	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 1(a) var.	-/-//TR•
6	2021-037-028	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 1(a) var.	-/-//TR•
7	2021-037-036	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 1(a) var.	-/-//TR•
8	2021-037-014b	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 1(a) var.	-/-//TR•
9	2	Valens	RIC IX 1(c)1	-/-//TR•
10	12	Valens	RIC IX 1(c)1	-/-//TR•
11	3	Valens	RIC IX 1(c)1	-/-//TR•
12	2020-079-X041	Valens	RIC IX I(c)2	-/-//TR*
13	2020-079-X014	Valens	RIC IX 1(c) var.	-/-//TR[wreath]

367–375

14	2021-037-112	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 14(a)	-/-//SMTR
15	2021-037-1002	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 17(b)3	-/-//TROBC
16	2020-079-X024	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 17(b)3	-/-//TROBC
17	2020-079-X017	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 17(b)6	-/-//TROBT
18	2021-037-047	Valens	RIC IX 17(d)2	-/-//TR-OB•
19	2021-037-017	Valens	RIC IX 17(e)2	-/-//TROBC
20	2021-037-044	Gratianus	RIC IX 17(g)3	-/-//TROBC
21	2021-037-010	Gratianus	RIC IX 17(g)4	-/-//TROBS
22	2021-037-022	Gratianus	RIC IX 17(g)5	-/-//TROBT

375–378

23	2021-037-032	Valens	RIC IX 39(b)1	-/-//TROBC
24	2021-037-990	Gratianus	RIC IX 39(c)3	-/-//TROBT
25	2021-037-014a	Gratianus	RIC IX 39(d)3	-/-//TROBT
26	2021-037-025	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 39(e)1	-/-//TROBC
27	2020-079-X020	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 39(e)2	-/-//TROBS
28	2021-037-055	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 39(e)3	-/-//TROBT

378–383

29	5	Valens	RIC IX 49(a)2	-/-//TROBT
30	2021-037-049	Gratianus	RIC IX 49(b)	-/-//TROBT
31	301	Gratianus	RIC IX 49(b)	-/-//TROBT
32	201	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 49(c)1	-/-//TROBS
33	2021-037-126	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 49(c)2	-/-//TROBT
34	2021-037-039	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 49(c)2	-/-//TROBT
35	2020-079-X015	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 49(c)2	-/-//TROBT

388–392

36	2020-079-X036	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 90(a)	T/R//COM
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392–394

37	2020-079-X035	Eugenius	RIC IX 101	T/R//COM
38	2020-079-X012	Eugenius	RIC IX 101	T/R//COM

LUGDUNUM**364–367**

39	2021-037-1003	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 1(a),1	-/-//SMLVG
40	2021-037-037	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 1(a),1	-/-//SMLVG

388–392

41	2020-079-X032	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 38(a)	L/D//COM
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392–394

42 600 Eugenius RIC IX 45 L/D//COM

ARELATE**364–367**

43 2021-037-998 Valentinianus I RIC IX 1(a),1 -/-//KONST_A_V
44 2021-037-996 Valens RIC IX 1(c),1 -/-//KONST_A_V
45 100 Valentinianus I RIC IX 1(e) -/-//KONST_A_V
46 2021-037-024 Valentinianus I RIC IX 1(e) -/-//KONST_A_V
47 2020-079-X025 Valentinianus I RIC IX 1(e) -/-//KONST_A_V
48 2021-037-048 Valens RIC IX 1(g) -/-//KONST_A_V
49 6 Valens RIC IX 1(g) -/-//KONST_A_V

MEDIOLANUM**364–367**

50 2021-037-053 Valentinianus I RIC IX 2(a) -/-//MED
51 2020-079-X030 Valens RIC IX 2(b),1 -/-//MED
52 2021-037-052 Valens RIC IX 2(b),1 -/-//MED
53 2021-037-046 Valens RIC IX 2(b),1 -/-//MED
54 14 Valens RIC IX 2(b),1 -/-//MED

383–387

55 2021-037-993 Arcadius RIC IX 7(b) -/-//MDOB
56 2021-037-035 Theodosius I RIC IX 7(d) -/-//MDOB

394–402

57 700 Honorius RIC IX 35(c) /
RIC X Honorius 1206 M/D//COM

WESTERN COMITATENSIAN MINT**378–383**

58 2021-037-003 Gratianus RIC IX (Med) 5(d) -/-//COM
59 2021-037-1006 Gratianus RIC IX (Med) 5(d) -/-//COM

AQUILEIA**364–367**

60 2021-037-041 Valentinianus I RIC IX 2(a),1 -/-//SMAQ
61 2021-037-045 Valentinianus I RIC IX 2(a),1 -/-//SMAQ

378–383

62 2020-079-X009 Gratianus RIC IX 21(a),1 -/-//AQOBF
63 2021-037-042 Gratianus RIC IX 21(a),1 -/-//AQOBF

ROMA**364–367**

64 2021-037-124 Valentinianus I RIC IX 2(a),6 -/-//RQ
65 2020-079-X010 Valentinianus I RIC IX 2(a),7 -/-//RP[wreath]
66 2020-079-X044 Valentinianus I RIC IX 2(a),9 -/-//•RP[branch]
67 102 Valentinianus I RIC IX 2(a),9 -/-//•RP[branch]
68 2021-037-050 Valentinianus I RIC IX 2(a),11 -/-//•RT[branch]
69 101 Valentinianus I RIC IX 2(a),12 -/-//RP[branch]
70 11 Valens RIC IX 2(c),8 -/-//RB[branch]
71 2021-037-054 Valens RIC IX 2(c),10 -/-//•RQ[branch]

SIRMIUM**393–395**

72 2021-037-997 Honorius RIC IX 14(d),2 S/M//COMOB - B
73 2020-079-X043 Honorius RIC IX 14(d),5 S/M//COMOB - 4

EASTERN COMITATENSIAN MINT**378–388**

74 2020-079-X008 Theodosius I RIC IX (The) 34(j),1 / 55(c) -/-//COM

THESSALONICA**364–367**

75 108 Valentinianus I RIC IX 2(a) -/-//SMTES

378–383

76	300	Gratianus	RIC IX 34(a)	-/-//TESOB
77	200	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 34(e)	-/-//TESOB

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CONSTANTINOPOLIS**378–383**

78	2020-079-X039	Theodosius I	RIC IX 43(b)	-/-//CONOB
79	2020-079-X016	Arcadius	RIC IX 46(g),3	-/-//CONOB - 4
80	400	Theodosius I	RIC IX 47(a),1	-/-//CONOB

383–388

81	2020-079-X007	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 67(a) var.	-/-//CONOB - B
82	202	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 67(b),1	-/-//CONOB - ε
83	203	Valentinianus II	RIC IX 67(b) var.	-/-//CONOB - B
84	2021-037-019	Arcadius	RIC IX 67(c),4	-/-//CONOB - Θ
85	2021-037-125	Theodosius I	RIC IX 68(b),3	-/-//CONOB - Δ
86	2021-037-033	Theodosius I	RIC IX 70(b) var.	-/-//CONOB - Θ
97	500	Arcadius	RIC IX 70(c),2	-/-//CONOB - Δ
88	2021-037-1000	Arcadius	RIC IX 70(c),3	-/-//CONOB - 4

CYZICUS**364–367**

89	2020-079-X018	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b),2 var.	-/-//SMKA
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NICOMEDIA**364–367**

90	109	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a),2	-/-//SMNε
91	110	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a),2	-/-//SMNε
92	2021-037-015	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a),3	-/-//SMNS
93	107	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a),6	-/-//SMNI
94	111	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b),2	-/-//SMNS
95	103	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b),2	-/-//SMNS
96	2020-079-X033	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b),2	-/-//SMNS
97	2021-037-011	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b),2	-/-//SMNS
98	2021-037-040	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b),3	-/-//SMNI
99	4	Valens	RIC IX 2(c)	-/-//SMNS
100	2021-037-026	Valens	RIC IX 2(c) var.	-/-//SMNI
101	1	Valens	RIC IX 2(d),1	-/-//SMNε
102	2021-037-991	Valens	RIC IX 2(d),1	-/-//SMNε
103	2021-037-031	Valens	RIC IX 2(d),2	-/-//SMNS
104	2021-037-051	Valens	RIC IX 2(d),4	-/-//SMNΘ
105	2021-037-995	Valens	RIC IX 2(d),4	-/-//SMNΘ
106	7	Valens	RIC IX 2(d),5	-/-//SMNI

ANTIOCHIA**364–367**

107	2020-079-X034	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a)i.6	-/-//ANTZ
108	104	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a)i.2	-/-//ANTB
109	2021-037-029	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a)ii.var.	-/-//ANTA
110	2020-079-X011	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a)ii.var.	-/-//ANTε
111	2021-037-012	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a)iv.var.	-/-//ANTB
112	2021-037-999	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a)iv.var.	-/-//ANTZ
113	2020-079-X022	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a)xiii.5	-/-//ANTS•
114	2021-037-030	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a)xvi.var.	-/-//ANTZ•
115	2020-079-X037	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a)xviii.2	-/-//ANT4•
116	2021-037-1001	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a)xxv	-/-//•ANTH•
117	113	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(a)xxv	-/-//•ANTH•
118	2020-079-X019	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b)xxviii	-/-//ANTH*
119	2021-037-016	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b)xxii.var.	-/-//•ANTε•

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	121	2020-079-X045	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b)xxx.6	-/-//ANTI*
	122	2021-037-009	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b)xxxv	+/-//*ANTI*
	123	2021-037-013	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b)xxxviii.6	+/-//*ANTS*
	124	112	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b)xxxviii.6	+/-//*ANTS*
	125	2021-037-018	Valentinianus I	RIC IX 2(b)xxxviii.10	+/-//*ANTI*
	126	2020-079-X027	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)i.1	-/-//ANTB
	127	9	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xiii.8	-/-//ANTI•
	128	8	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xiii.8	-/-//ANTI•
	129	2020-079-X021	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xv.1	-/-//ANTB•
	130	2021-037-023	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xv.3	-/-//ANTI•
	131	2021-037-992	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xviii var.	-/-//ANTA•
	132	13	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xviii var.	-/-//ANT⊙•
	133	2021-037-020	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xxii var.	-/-//•ANTA•
	134	10	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xxiv var.	-/-//•ANTIΓ•
	135	2021-037-027	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xxv var.	-/-//•ANTA•
	136	2020-079-X042	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xxix var.	-/-//ANTA*
	137	2021-037-021b	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xxxvii.3	+/-//*ANTI*
138	2021-037-1004	Valens	RIC IX 2(d)xxxvii.5	+/-//*ANTε*	
367–375					
	139	2021-037-021a	Gratianus	RIC IX 21(a) var.	-/-//ANOBIΓ
UNCERTAIN MINT					
	140	2021-037-980	364–367	RESTITVTOR REIPVBLICAE	
IMITATION					
	141	2020-079-X040	(364–367)?	RESTITVTOR REIPVBLICAE	*/-/-

Figures



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