Sam Moorhead

Britain's Portable Antiquities Scheme and a 'Virtual Coin Collection' for all to use

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Britain's Portable Antiquities Scheme and a 'Virtual Coin Collection' for all to use

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This paper is not about a museum collection *per se* but a virtual collection created on a database run from the British Museum (www.finds.org.uk). Furthermore, this database is not only aimed at numismatists, but also archaeologists, historians and interested members of the general public. This paper will outline the origins, nature and applications of this data set and will show how it is revolutionising our understanding of Roman coin use in Britain.

The new Treasure Act (1996) and the creation of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (1997)

Since the 1960s hundreds of thousands of ancient and mediaeval coins have been found by metal detectorists in Britain. These finds range from massive hoards, such as the Cunetio Hoard[1] of almost 55,000 coins

Declared Treasure Trove and now in the British Museum

to the individual finds of poorly preserved late Roman coins

[1] E. Besly and R. Bland, *The Cunetio Hoard* (British Museum Press, 1983)

2. Poorly preserved late Roman coins, called “grots” by detectorists

All these finds are of archaeological importance. Since the 12th century, the ancient law of Treasure Trove was used to secure major finds of gold and silver for the state. However, there were flaws with this law. Only objects which were intended to be reclaimed were covered so, for example, the wonderful finds from the Sutton Hoo ship burial were not protected by Treasure Trove.

3. The Sutton Hoo ship burial, 1939: the site and coins

Mrs. Pretty watching the excavations in 1939

37 gold coins, three blanks and two Ingots found in the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial

Thankfully the landowner, Mrs Pretty, gave the finds to the nation and they now reside in the British Museum[2]. Furthermore, hoards of base metal or low-grade silver coins were not covered which meant that some rare coins were lost to the nation. In addition, disaster struck when thousands of Iron Age silver coins were looted from the ritual site at Wanborough[3]

[2] The Sutton Hoo hoard, which includes 37 gold coins, forms a major display in the early Mediaeval Gallery (Room 41) at the British Museum. [3] See D.G. Bird’s ‘Preface and acknowlements’ in *The Roman Temple at Wanborough* (*Surrey Archaeological Collections* vol. 82, 1994), pp. 6-8; also see http://www.ncl.ac.uk/unescolandscapes/files/THOMASSuzie.pdf

4. The Looted temple site at Wanborough Temple (Surrey), early 1980s

5. Examples of Iron Age coins from the Wanborough temple site

. Because it was deemed that the coins were deposited as gifts to the gods, the coins were not therefore protected by the Treasure Trove law – it was this incident that ultimately led to the introduction of the new Treasure Act in 1996.

How have things changed since the 1990s? Firstly, as noted above, in 1996 a new Treasure Act was introduced. This deemed that all gold and silver items over 300 years (with the exception of sole gold and silver coins) were to be declared as possible Treasure, the decision to be made by a coroner. The new Act also covers 10 or more base metal coins found together, and hoards of prehistoric base metal objects.[4] This immediately protects coin finds from ritual sites, such as Wanborough, and base metal hoards, such as the recent discovery of 11,640 4th century *nummi* at Thornbury[5]

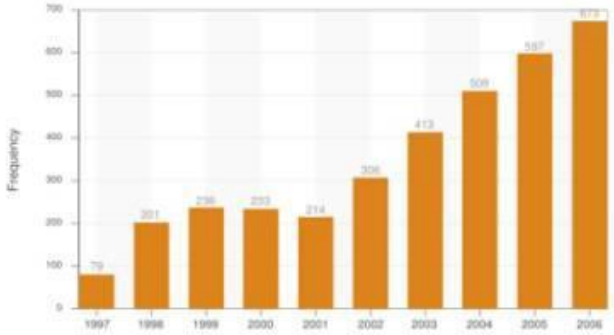
[4] For further details of the Treasure Act, go to: http://www.finds.org.uk/treasure/treasure_summary.php [5] See preliminary report, *R. Abdy*, 'Thornbury, Gloucestershire, March 2004', *Numismatic Chronicle* 165 (2005), pp. 311-312. The hoard was declared Treasure and then purchased by the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery where it is on public display.

6. The Thornbury Hoard of 11,640 coins; latest coin AD347/8

Declared Treasure and purchased by Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery

Since 1996, the number of treasure finds has risen enormously, from 79 in 1997 to 673 in 2006

7.Treasure cases in England and Wales, 1997-2006



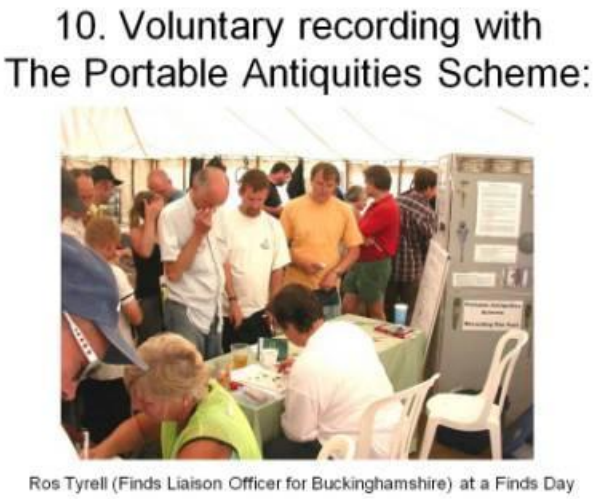
All Treasure finds are published in the *Treasure Annual Report.*

8. *Treasure Annual Report, 2004*

However, there were many in the archaeological world who were concerned about the thousands of base metal objects being found which were still not protected by the Treasure Act.[6] As long as metal detecting is legal, with landowner's permission, and not on scheduled archaeological sites, then detectorists are perfectly entitled to find this material. It was decided that a Voluntary Code should be established to encourage and enable detectorists to record their finds. Hence, the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) was born.[7] It started in 1997 with pilot projects in six counties and went

nationwide in 2003. It has coordinated the creation of a *Code of Practice for Responsible Detecting in England and Wales* which has the full backing of numerous national archaeological, heritage and detectorist bodies.

It is now run from the British Museum with 38 Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) operating across the country. The FLOs play an active role in public archaeology, liaising with detectorists, recording their finds, and educating the public at events and children in schools.



Ros Tyrell (Finds Liaison Officer for Buckinghamshire) at a Finds Day

[6] The author has catalogued several assemblages of Roman coins from Wiltshire which have been accumulated by metal detectorists. The largest comprised over 800 coins. T. S. N. Moorhead, 'Roman coin finds from Wiltshire', in P. Ellis, *Roman Wiltshire and After* (Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society), pp.

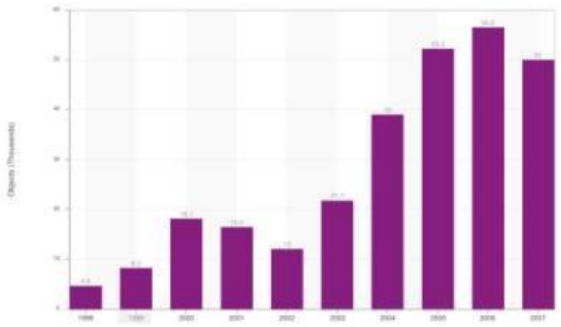
[7] For more details on the Portable Antiquities scheme, go to: http://www.finds.org.uk/background/history.php

It is clear that the creation of the PAS has resulted in much increased education of metal detectorists and the general public. People are now more aware of the importance of recording their finds, and also show more interest in the significance of their discoveries for broader archaeological and historical studies.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme database and the Oxford Celtic Coin Index

The individual finds made are entered by the FLOs onto the PAS database at www.finds.org.uk At present, almost 300,000 objects have been recorded and the numbers *per annum* are still increasing.

11. Objects recorded on PAS database 1998-2007 – note this is only up to July 2007



Of these, over 2,440 are Iron Age coins, 55,730 Roman, and c. 15,000 Mediaeval. The numbers increase daily - in the year since I started, over 15,000 extra Roman coins have been recorded.

The Iron Age coins on the PAS database have been incorporated into the Oxford Celtic Coin Index (CCI) which has been operating since the 1970s. Dan Pett, the IT Coordinator for the PAS, has completely rebuilt the CCI website which is now hosted by the PAS (Oxford Celtic Coin Index URL: http://www.finds.org.uk/CCI/).[8] It contains over 37,830 coins and is a unique and ground-breaking numismatic resource. Metal detectorists are responsible for a very large number of new types and varieties of British Iron Age coins, and so their recording by the PAS and on the CCI is crucial for the numismatic world. Although, we would like many of these new examples to reside in museums, there has not been the available funding to purchase them. However, the British Museum is beginning to seek more funds and we have just acquired two coins for our collection[9].

[8] The CCI database is largely the work of the numismatist Philip de Jersey and is now forming the basis for major research by Ian Leins at the British Museum.

[9] One is a unique coin found in Berkshire (BM 2007,4050.1); the other is the only silver coin known which has a complete reading of an inscription for Tincomaros (SUSS-2BF306).

12. Two Iron Age coins recently purchased by the British Museum

Unique Iron Age silver coin, found in Berkshire in 2007 (BM 2007, 4050.1)

Silver coin of Tincomarus, c. 20- c. AD 10, with only known complete inscription. Found in Sussex in 2007 (SUSS-2BF306)

What is crucial though is that the PAS and CCI database records these finds with images and a provenance. This makes these websites virtual collections which can be consulted by all, irrespective of the ownership of the coins. Access to these databases is leading to ground-breaking new research by archaeologists, museologists, numismatists and historians.[10]

Roman coins do pose different problems. They are found in much greater numbers than Iron Age pieces. A major issue is the recording of poorly preserved coins, or "grots" as detectorists call them [Plate 2]. These coins are sometimes discarded or, more often, just left unattended in boxes with other unwanted objects. This means that only the precious metal, larger and better preserved coins tend to be reported by some detectorists. Obviously, this skews any statistical analysis that might be made on a group of coins from a particular site.[11] However, I have been encouraging and educating detectorists and FLOs, both via our website and through lectures, to bring in all Roman coins for identification.[12] This is beginning to occur and is not only providing more coins for statistical studies, but also some coins of numismatic interest. A detectorist on the Isle of Wight, in response to a call to bring in "grot", produced two-thirds of a silver denarius of Augustus, a type which has only been published by the Bibliotheque Nationale.[13]

13. The call for "grot" turns up some surprises!

Silver denarius of Augustus, brought in for identification after The FLO for the IOW pleaded to see all grot – only second of its type ever published (IOW-0D5931). Other specimen in Paris (CBN 1011)

[10] See the Proceedings of the Portable Antiquities Scheme conference held at the British Museum in April 2007: S. Worrell and H. Geake, forthcoming, *British Archaeological Report*s

[11] The author once recorded several hundred well-preserved coins from a site that ended with coins of AD 364-

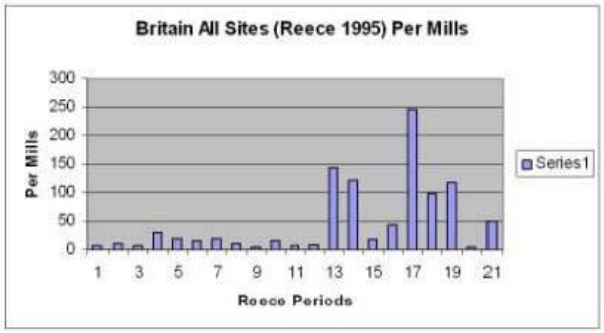
78. When the poorly preserved coins were finally made available for study, a number of coins from the period 378-402 were found, changing the overall site profile significantly.

[12] See 'Grot, Glorious Grot' at http://www.finds.org.uk/wordpress/index.php/246

[13] Credit must go to Frank Basford, Finds Liaison Officer for the Isle of Wight (IOW-0D5931; CBN 1011)

Overall, it is exciting to consider the potential importance of this new and increasing corpus of Roman coins which is providing archaeologists and numismatists with a wealth of new data. To provide instant period analysis of the coins, we are developing a means of automatic assignation of coins to Reece periods[14].

14. System being developed to assign Roman coins automatically to Reece Periods



15. Reece Periods used in analysis for PAS site-finds from Britain

Before AD 43	1	235-60	12
43-54	2	260-75	13
54-68	3	275-96	14
69-96	4	296-317	15
96-117	5	317-330	16
117-138	6	330-348	17
138-161	7	348-364	18
161-180	8	364-78	19
180-192	9	378-388	20
193-222	10	388-402	21
222-235	11	402-45	22
		445-98	23

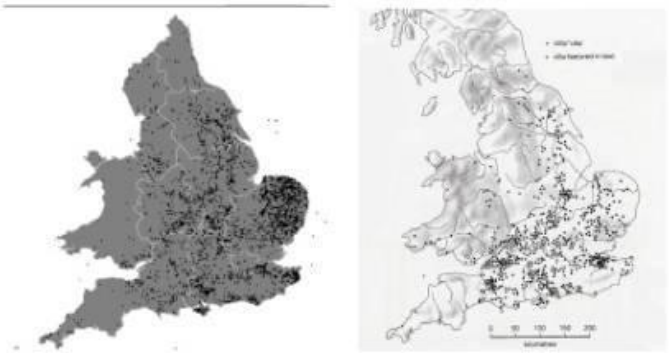
Note: Sam Moorhead has added Periods 22 and 23 because later coins are recorded by the PAS

At present this can happen with all coins on the PAS database which date to 17 of the 21 periods.

In 1991 Richard Reece prepared his *Roman Coins from 140 Sites*.[15] This corpus comprised 168,828 coins, of which 50,767 pieces come from one site alone, Richborough. Furthermore, only about 34,000 coins come from sites in rural areas, notably villas, indeterminate settlements and temples. The majority of Reece's coins come from urban and military sites which is not surprising given their popularity with archaeologists over the last century. The PAS, however, records coins which come from predominately rural sites, as shown by a comparison with villa distribution.

[14] Richard Reece developed a method for analysis of Roman site finds using 21 periods, ranging from pre-AD43 to AD 402. See especially R. Reece, 'A Short Survey of the Roman Coins Found on Fourteen Sites in Britain', *Britannia* III (1972), pp. 269-76; R. Reece, 'Site-finds in Roman Britain', *Britannia* XXVI (1995), pp. 179-206. [15] R. Reece, *Roman Coins from 140 Sites in Britain* (Cotswold Studies, Volume IV, 1991)

16. PAS Roman coin distribution compared with Villa distribution



Therefore, the 55,730 PAS coins represent an extra 160% over the corpus for rural sites provided by Reece. Given that these coins are available for study as soon as they are recorded, this enables instant access for researchers.

The vast majority of the coins recorded are pieces already listed in the standard catalogues.[16] However, a number of new varieties and rare coins have been found. Many of the most interesting pieces are recorded in the annual Coin Register of the *British Numismatic Journal* and in the *Portable Antiquities Annual Report*.

17. *Portable Antiquities Annual Report, 2005-6*

Recent finds of note include: a gold aureus of Carinus,

[16] The standard catalogues used are: M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (RRC) (Cambridge, 1974); *Roman Imperial Coinage* (RIC, 10 vols.) (Spink 1923-94); *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* (BMC, 6 Vols) (British Museum 1923-62);
R. A. G. Carson, P. V. Hill and J. P. C. Kent, *Late Roman Bronze Coinage* (Spink 1961); E. Besly and R. Bland, *The Cunetio Treasure* (British Museum 1983) and R. Bland and A. Burnett, *The Normanby Hoard* (CHRB VIII, British Museum 1988).

18. Gold Aureus of Carinus, struck at Siscia, AD 283-5; found in Nottinghamshire (DENO-3B3AF6)

for which only one other specimen (from different dies) is known (DENO-3B3AF6)[17]; an unpublished type for a denarius of Carausius with VICTORIA AVG reverse

19. Unpublished coin of Carausius, AD 286-93 – RSR, VICTORIA AVG (Found in Norfolk, NMS-784AF4)

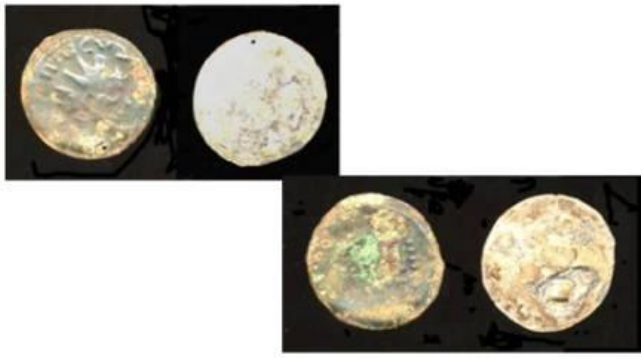
(NMS-784AF4); a medallion of Antoninus Pius

20. Bronze medallion of Antoninus Pius, AD 140-4, (Sussex, SUSS-5C54B2)

[17] These codes are the record numbers for individual finds on the database – www.finds.org.uk

(SUSS-5C54B2); and a unique cliché coin of Tetricus I (FASA-FC2B63).

21. Unique cliché copy of a coin of Tetricus I (271-4) - (Found in Essex, FASA-FC2B63)



Furthermore, detectorists are finding many irregular coins, such as Claudian As copies,

22. Contemporary copy of a Claudian As (c. 43-54) found in Surrey (SUR-94E3E4)

debased Severan denarii,

23. Plated silver denarius of Septimius Severus (193-211) found in Yorkshire (SWYOR-DA78E7)

barbarous radiates and FEL TEMP REPARATIO ‘falling horseman’ types.

24. Contemporary copy of a Constantius II FEL TEMP REPARATIO 'falling horseman' coin, c. 355-361, found in Somerset (SOMDOR 208F27)

This is providing important data for further research of imitation coin production and use in Britain. Finally, because these recorded coins have reliable provenances, Museums are able to acquire pieces within accepted ethical codes of practice.[18]

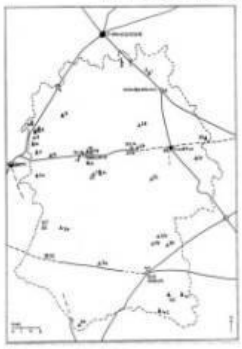
Reliability and Validity of the PAS Roman coin data

One question which we have been asked is: "Are the data reliable and valid?" It is my responsibility to ensure the reliability of the data for Iron Age and Roman coins. Given the vast quantities that are being found and recorded it is not possible at present to check every entry. I do organise training for Finds Liaison Officers and I am available to advise at any time. In this way, I am able to improve the quality of the records, mainly through the identification of coins sent as digital images to the British Museum. Furthermore, when I research a particular site or region for a paper or lecture, I have an opportunity to assess the records. In general, for period analysis, the entries are quite reasonable; most of the corrections that I make are either the provision of more precise descriptions or the identification of poorly preserved coins.

To test the validity of detector finds, I compared the PAS records for Roman coins from the county of Wiltshire with earlier research that I had carried out in the 1980s and 1990s.[19] My research covered 10,550 coins from 44 sites (in 35 parishes); the PAS data covers 890 coins from 90 sites (in 51 parishes).

[18] See note 9, above
[19] See note 6, above

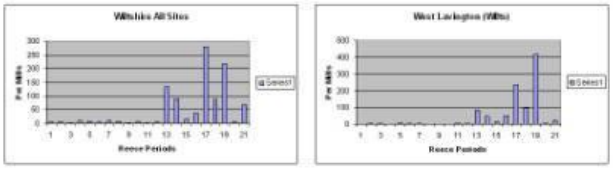
25. Distribution of Wiltshire finds: Moorhead versus PAS



Moorhead 2000

PAS 2006

26. Bar Chart showing 10,550 coin finds from Wiltshire (per mill) with an unusually high peak in Period 19 (House of Valentinian, 364-78), mirrored by recent finds from West Lavington (Wilts.)

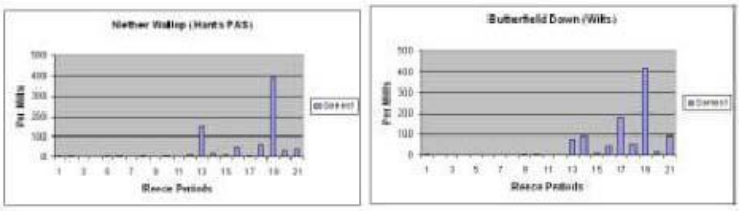


Immediately, it is clear that the PAS records provide a broader sweep of the county, but the assemblages tend to be smaller. However, consideration of the large PAS groups show that they do generally follow the trends that I would predict. In my research I showed that northern and central Wiltshire had an unusually high number of Valentinianic coins (Reece period 19: AD 364-78), with one outlier in the south, Butterfield Down.

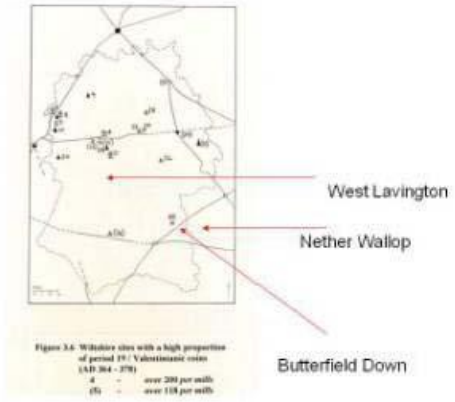
The PAS finds from the parish of West Lavington, which is in central Wiltshire, clearly shows this Valentinianic pattern, as does the Hampshire site of Nether Wallop which is only two miles to the east of Butterfield Down.

My research also showed a major decline in coin loss after AD 350 on sites in south-east Wiltshire, a pattern confirmed by PAS data from the Site at Pitton and Farley.

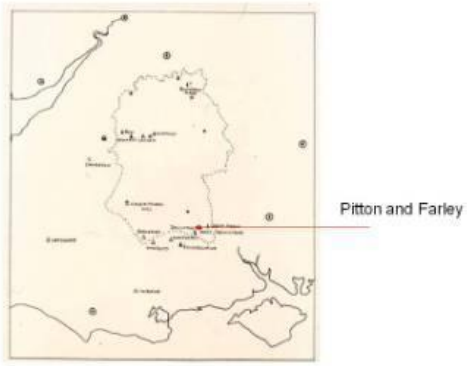
27. Butterfield Down (Wilts) versus PAS site at Nether Wallop (Hants, PAS): share Valentinianic peak (Period 19: 364-78)



28. Sites in Wiltshire with an unusually high proportion of Valentinianic coins (AD364-78)



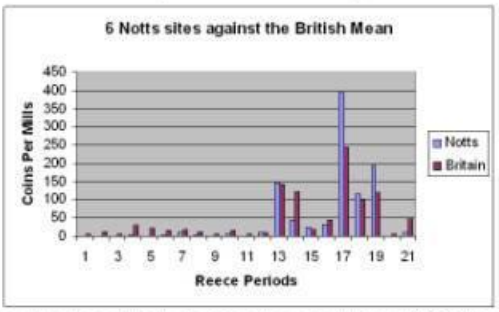
29. Pitton and Farley fits neatly into a group of sites with few coins after AD 350



Therefore, this comparison of PAS data with existing research shows that larger assemblages recorded on the database are apparently valid for period analysis.[20] Therefore, it should be possible to use PAS data to provide a numismatic profile for regions where few Roman coins have been previously published. This is just what I have been able to do for Nottinghamshire where few significant groups of Roman coins have been published. Here, I have generated a profile which shows few coins prior to the second half of the 3rd century and a peak in the 4th century. This is a typical rural profile, but also reflects the lack of major Roman military sites or settlements in the

region. country.[21]

30. Nottinghamshire, 6 PAS sites (917 coins) – against the British Mean (Reece 1995)



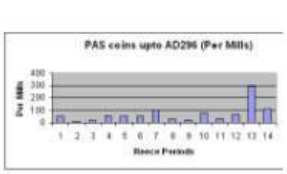
Nottinghamshire has minimal coin-loss in the period before AD260. Especially noticeable is the lacuna for Flavian coins (period 4: AD69-96): did the Flavian advance of the AD70s just pass Notts by?

I am extending this research, with the assistance of a PhD student, across other regions of the

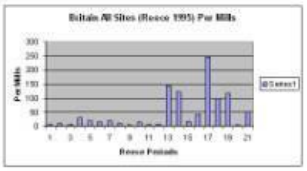
The Flavian and Antonine Peaks

When one looks at a graph of Richard Reece's coin-loss for all sites in Britain

31. PAS versus the National Mean up until AD 300



PAS coins up to AD 296, Per Mills (Sample 9,544)



British Mean for all periods (Reece 1995)

Note: PAS shows lower peak for Flavian Period (4: 96-96) in relation to Antonine 1 Period (7: AD 138-161) than the British Mean.

[20] Analysis of sites in Suffolk confirms these findings. See T. S. N. Moorhead in S. Worrell and H. Geake xxxx [21] Such is the significance of the Roman coin data on the PAS database, the Arts and Humanities Research Council have awarded the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, and the British Museum funds for a PhD student, Philippa Walton, to research a thesis on the corpus.

the first significant peak is in the Flavian period (4: AD69-96). Indeed, this is often the case at military and urban sites that were founded in the half century or so after the conquest in AD 43. However, initial analysis of the PAS data from up to AD 296 (periods 1-14) shows that the most significant early peak is in the Antonine I period (7: AD138-161), not the Flavian. Why is this the case? As mentioned above, the PAS data comes from mainly rural sites, sites which were not Romanised to the extent of forts and towns in the 1st century AD. Indeed, until the middle of the 2nd

century they appear to have been on the periphery of coin use. However, with the massive influx of dupondii and asses of Antoninus Pius, Aurelius Caesar and Faustina II in the 150s there appears finally to be a more plentiful supply of low denomination coinage to the Province.

32. Dupondius of Marcus Aurelius , struck c. AD 154-5, found in Surrey (SUR-C34227)

In fact, David Walker noted in his seminal report on the coins from the Sacred Spring at Bath that many of these coins were of types common only to Britain, coins he called "Coins of British Association".[22] He suggested tentatively at the time that this was a time when coin use became more widespread, as did Reece in a paper on coins from villas.[23] Although more work needs to be done to break down the coins by denomination and type, the PAS data seems to prove that indeed it was in the mid-2nd century that coin use expanded significantly in rural regions in Britain. Obviously, this peak in period 7 (AD138-161) does not compare with the explosion of coin use across the Province in period 13 (AD 260-75).

Spatial analysis of Iron Age and Roman coins

Many coins are recorded with precise find-spots, often 8 figure National Grid References. Furthermore, an increasing number of detectorists are using GPS systems to record even more accurate find-spots.

[22] D. R. Walker *Roman Coins from the Sacred Spring at Bath* (taken from Part 6 of B. Cunliffe, ed., *The Temple of Sulis Minerva, II: Finds from the Sacred Spring*) (Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1988), p. 288ff. [23] R. Reece, 'Coins and Villas', in K. Branigan and D. Miles (eds.), *The Economies of Romano-British Villas* (University of Sheffield, 1986), pp. 34-41

33. Frank Basford, Finds Liaison Officer for the Isle of Wight, instructing detectorists in the use of GPS systems

34. Controlled detecting survey at Braughing (Julian Watters, Find Liaison Officer for Hertfordshire)

Therefore, using GIS technology, Dan Pett and Ian Leins have been able to produce ground-breaking distribution maps. For Iron Age coins, Ian Leins is already beginning to analyse the distribution of different issues of coins, recorded on the CCI, in much greater detail.

35. Distribution of silver coins of Cunobelinus, king of the Catuvellauni / Trinovantes, c. AD 10-40, using GIS technology with CCI data

(Map: Ian Leins)

Silver coin of Cunobelinus in Classical style

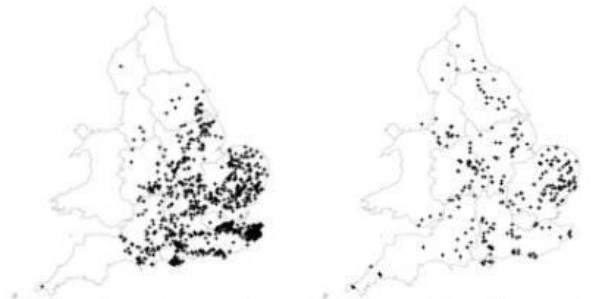
Dan Pett is experimenting with the Roman coin data; with Roman coins it is most important in the first instance to map the sites.[24] There is no doubt that this development of distribution analysis will change greatly our understanding of Iron Age and Romano-British coin use, leading to important revisions of broader archaeological and historical narratives.

For a long time there has been generally informal debate about the circulation of Roman Republican *denarii* in Iron Age Britain.

We know from hoards that these coins could circulate as late as the 3rd century AD, although most were driven from circulation by debasements in the 1st and 2nd century.[25] However, it is strongly stated that there was no mining of silver in Britain prior to the Roman conquest and, indeed, the presence of a significant amount of silver in Iron Age Britain only seems to start with the contacts with the Roman world from the time of Caesar's campaigns in the 50s BC.[26] Furthermore, other than the use of the odd piece of silverware, like the cup found in the Welwyn Garden City burial, the major source of silver in Iron Age Britain would have been continental silver coins, the *denarius* becoming the major denomination from the later 1st century BC. Therefore, we might assume that Republican and early Imperial denarii were melted down to provide the large silver coinages of rulers like Cunobelinus, Tincomarus and Verica, not to mention the massive silver issues of regions further north like the Iceni. However, there still appear to be no Roman *denarii* in a secure pre-conquest archaeological context. Can the PAS data help? Plate 37 shows all the Republican coins recorded with the PAS and all the Iron Age coins recorded on the Celtic Coin Index (which includes PAS data).[27]

[24] For Iron Age coins, it is imperative that individual coins are plotted. For Roman coins, initial period analysis requires the identification of discreet sites. However, exemplary recording by detectorists, for example David Hunt in Surrey (which attracted the Channel 4 television programme *Time Team*), will enable researchers to study the distribution of Roman coin finds across a single site. [25] The Shapwick Hoard, buried after AD 224, contained 9,238 coins, of which 260 were Mark Antony denarii of 32-31BC. R. Abdy and S. Minnitt, 'Shapwick Villa, Somerset', *Coin Hoards from Roman Britain* XI (Royal Numismatic Society, 2002), pp. 169-233. [26] Craddock 1995, p. 214; Northover1992, p. 253ff.; Matthew Ponting *pers. comm.*; I am also grateful to Catherine Johns and the late Tim Potter with whom I had lengthy discussions about silver in Ancient Britain. [27] CCI web URL http://www.finds.org.uk/CCI

37. General Distribution: Iron Age and Roman Republican coins

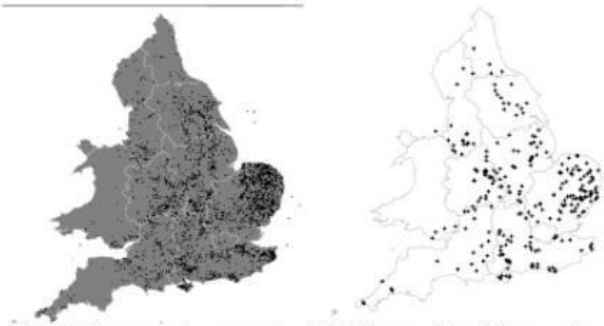


PAS Iron Age coin records

PAS Roman Republican coin records

Upon initial inspection, the patterns are similar with the bulk of the coins coming from the "lowland zone" to the east of the Fosse Way. However, when one looks more closely at the Republican coin distribution one can see a larger, more distinct, group of coins in the Cheshire/Lancashire region, and another group moving up the Vale of York towards a scatter on the Hadrianic frontier. When one then compares the Republican map with a map showing all Roman coin finds,

38. General Distribution: All Roman versus Roman Republican coins



PAS All Roman coins records

PAS Roman Republican coin records

it is possible to see that these two groups fit neatly into the Roman coin finds pattern. This does not mean that all the Republican coins were lost in the Roman period, but it suggests that a large number were.

Coins and trade routes

In most periods and regions the use of coin mintmarks to argue for particular trade routes is not valid. This is because when there were several mints feeding coins to Britain, there was a homogenous mix of coins. For example, in the Valentinianic period (364-78), coins are found in hoards and as site-finds with roughly the same percentages from the different mints: Arles, Lyons, Trier, Rome, Aquileia and Siscia.[28] However, a recent group of detector finds from Hayle, east of St. Ives, in Cornwall might indicate a distinct trade route.

39. Coins as evidence for trade: ?direct trade between Cornwall and the Mediterranean

AD 330-5
Mint of Heraclea (south-west of Istanbul)

These coins came from a coastal settlement and include pieces from central and eastern Mediterranean mints - Sirmium, Heraclea, Nicomedia and Alexandria – coins which only occur rarely in British assemblages. In this case, it might be possible to argue for a direct maritime link with the Mediterranean. This is apparently supported by the finding of Byzantine coins in the South West (see below) which probably also came on ships directly from the Mediterranean. Whether we can extend this argument to cover other coins on the south coast is debateable, but a recent Constantinian coin from Cyzicus found on the Isle of Wight might be a contender (IOW-33D5F0).

40. Nummus of Constantine I, struck at Cyzicus, found on the Isle of Wight (IOW-33D5F0)

Byzantine and Exotic Coins

For long it has been argued that Byzantine coins recorded as being found in Britain were in fact recent losses, for example coins bought back by troops after the two World Wars.[29] In many cases this might be true, especially when the coins have no patina or verdigris.

[28] T. S. N. Moorhead, 'All Cannings' in R. Bland and J. Orna-Ornstein, *Coin Hoards from Roman Britain* vol X (British Museum, 1997), p. 407, Table 2 [29] P. J. Casey, *Understanding Ancient Coins* (Batsford, 1986), p. 108
However, there are a number of recent Byzantine finds from Britain, ranging from a gold solidus of Phocas (AD602-10) found in North Yorkshire (NCL-6A6EF5)

41. Gold solidus of Phocas (AD 602-610) from North Yorkshire(NCL-6A6EF5)

to 6th century copper issues found in the South West.

Byzantine gold coins did reach Britain, as is shown in a recent gazetteer of early Mediaeval continental coins found in Britain.[30] Furthermore, given the large amounts of 6th century Mediterranean ceramics from Tintagel in Cornwall and Bantham in Devon should we be surprised by the finding of Justinianic decanummium near to Tintagel (CORN-72D1D7),

42. Byzantine coins in Dark Age Britain

Dark Age site at Tintagel, 5th & 6th cents AD – seat of a ruler and also a trading centre in Cornwall with links to the Mediterranean

10 Nummus coin of Justinian I (527-65), struck at ?Cyzicus (Turkey), found in Cornwall

four 6th century folles in a river in east Devon (DEV-464726)

[30] R. A. Abdy and G. Williams 'A catalogue of hoards and single finds from the British Isles, c. AD 410-675, in B. Cook, B. & G. Williams (eds.), *Coinage and History in the North Sea World, c. 500-1250* (Brill, 2006), p. 30ff

43. 6th century Byzantine folles from the South West

Justinian I (527-65) follis of Constantinople, from Gloucestershire (GLO-709856)

6th century folles from Devon, (DEV-464726)

and one from Gloucestershire (GLO-709856) [Plate 40]? The PAS is therefore already beginning to present supportive evidence for continued contact between the South West and the Mediterranean in the 5th and 6th centuries.

There are a number of other "exotic" coins which have been recorded by the PAS. The author feels that we should not always doubt the authenticity of find spots for a number of later 3rd century Alexandrian tetradrachms struck for Roman emperors. Such coins with a plausible patina or verdigris can be entered on the database with some confidence, given the fact that other Roman provincial coins are now being found (see below), although we still need to be wary of intruders as John Casey warns.[31] However, the finding of Roman provincial coins from Eastern mints in Britain can also be countenanced. For a long time, Roman provincial silver coins from Lycia and Cappadocia have been found in hoards. Now, we have examples of bronze issues, notably two specimens of the same issue for Elagabalus (AD218-222) from Cius (BH-9909C7), in North West Turkey on the PAS database – one from near Ashford in Kent[32], and the other from Hertfordshire.

44. Copper alloy coin of Cius in NW Turkey, struck for Elagabalus, AD 218-222

Coin found in Hertfordshire (BH-9909C7) – another specimen was found in Kent, c. 2000

[31] Casey 1986, p. 108 [32] *British Numismatic Journal* 72 (2002), p. 195, no. 37

Conclusion

I hope that this short paper highlights the value of the Treasure Act and the Portable Antiquities Scheme for recording Britain's numismatic heritage as found mostly with metal detectors. For about 30 years, enormous quantities of coins have been lost to academic research, but now there is a database of coins which is increasing by over 10,000 a year. Although the British Museum and other museums can only afford to purchase a few rare or unique coins, we can live happier knowing that many important coins have been fully identified, photographed and published – indeed a virtual collection available to all. Furthermore, the method of recording is enabling swift analysis of the coins, whether it be period or spatial studies. I believe that I have shown how much of the data is both reliable and valid. Not only does this research assist the academic community, it also encourages the detector community to record more of their finds and to research for themselves. Many detectorists are enthused to provide more information now they are aware of the potential importance of their new discoveries.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme combined with the Internet and the power of new digital technology is enabling us to record a significant part of Britain's Iron Age and Roman past, something that was certainly not possible only ten years ago. There is genuine interaction with the public, leading to a shared project between academics and ordinary people, providing information about our shared heritage – it is not just recording our monetary heritage, it is adding to it.