Extending the frontiers – how the PAS Roman coin database expands our knowledge of Roman Coin use in England

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Finds Adviser: Iron Age and Roman Coins,
Portable Antiquities Scheme
Numbers of Roman coins recorded

- 45,000 Roman coins (mostly from rural sites) from a total number of 234,000 objects

- Richard Reece’s *140 Sites* lists 168,828 coins (but note Richborough 50,767!)
Adding knowledge about Roman coinage: important single finds

Gold aureus of Carinus, Siscia Mint, AD 283-5 Notts (FLO: Rachel Atherton)

Unpublished silver denarius of Carausius, London, 286-96 Norfolk (FLO: Adrian Marsden)
Adding knowledge about Roman coinage: important single finds

Copper alloy medallion of Antoninus Pius (138-61), Rome, found in Sussex (David Rudling and FLO: Liz Andrews-Wilson)

Cliché coin of Tetricus I, Essex – unique? (FLO: Caroline MacDonald)
But most site-finds are not attractive, interesting coins in their own right.
Recent drive to encourage the reporting of “grots”

Silver unit of Adminius, c. AD 40; only a few known (Essex) (FLO: Caroline MacDonald)

Silver denarius of Augustus, 27BC-AD14; only published example in Paris (Isle of Wight) (FLO: Frank Basford)
Where are Roman Coins found?
PAS Roman coin finds versus Villa Distribution: a rural pattern

Villa distribution in UK (Wacher 1979)
PAS has 150% more Roman coins from rural sites than Reece

• However, Reece lists fewer coins for Rural and Temple sites:
  - 21,621 coins from 57 rural sites
  - 12,821 coins from 11 temple sites

Therefore, the PAS database, with 45,000 coins, exceeds our sample for rural sites by almost 1.5 times
General Distribution: Iron Age and Roman Republican coins

PAS Iron Age coin records

PAS Roman Republican coin records
General Distribution: All Roman versus Roman Republican coins

PAS All Roman coins records

PAS Roman Republican coin records
Is the PAS material Reliable and Valid? A Wiltshire Case-Study

• Moorhead Research (completed 2000):
  - 10,550 coins from 44 sites (in 35 Parishes)

• PAS Database (28.9.06; David Algar and FLO: Katie Hinds):
  - 890 coins (687 assigned) from up to 90 sites (in 51 Parishes)
Distribution of Wiltshire finds: Moorhead versus PAS

Moorhead 2000

PAS 2006
Moorhead: Detector coins

1,979 coins were detector finds from 6 different sites:

- Lacock 50
- Verlucio 858
- Calstone 135
- Mother Anthony’s Well 552
- Urchfont 372
- Eastcroft Farm 12
PAS Finds – Larger groups

- Kington Langley 21
- Wanborough 14
- Great Bedwyn 20
- West Lavington 384
- Winterbourne Stoke (various locations) 14
- Salisbury (SU 131314) 31
- Salisbury (no NGR) 16
- Pitton and Farley (various locations) 34
The Validity Issue

- Many PAS sites have too small a sample (fewer than 12 coins)
- Possibly due to fact that coins are stray finds not associated with ancient settlements
- Also certain that it is also often due to the lack of declaration of “grotty” coins – these often include AD378-402 issues
West Lavington (PAS) shows North Wiltshire Valentinianic Peak

Also shown by PAS assemblages from Kington Langley, Winterborne Stoke and Euridge (Colerne)
Valentinianic coins
AD 364-78
Butterfield Down (Wilts) versus Nether Wallop (Hants, PAS): share Valentinianic peak
Sites with high incidence of Valentinianic coins

- West Lavington
- Nether Wallop
- Butterfield Down
Sites with few coins after AD 350 in south-east Wiltshire

Pitton and Farley follows three villa sites:
- Downton
- East Grimstead
- West Dean

This phenomenon extends to Hants as well: e.g. Thruxton
Wenhaston (Suffolk) shown by Jude Plouviez to follow East Suffolk pattern (FLO: Faye Minter)
Wenhaston vs Hacheston (Suffolk)

Wenhaston with Mells (Suf)

Hatcheson 1 (Suffolk)

Hatcheson 2 (Suffolk)

Hatcheson FW (Suffolk)
Filling the void: Roman coins from Nottingham

- 1535 coins recorded on PAS by 11.2006 (FLO: Rachel Atherton)
- 917 coins from 6 sites analysed (without edit of data)
- No widely available comparative material from Nottinghamshire
Thoroton, Notts – 574 coins Per Mills

Thoroton (Notts; 574 coins) Per Mills

Per Mills

Perce Periods

Series 1
Shelton, Notts – 104 coins
Per Mills

Shelton (Notts; 104 coins) Per Mills

Per Mills
0 50 100 150 200 250 300
1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21

Reece Periods

Series 1
Notts, the 6 sites (as above)  
917 coins – Per Mills – 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?
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. WHY?
Bath: the Sacred Spring

The Sacred Spring today

David Walker’s report on the Roman coins identified “Coins of British Association”

Some of 12,165 Roman coins From the Bath Spring
Possibly due to large influx of Base Metal “Coins of British Association” in AD 150s

Antoninus Pius Britannia issue As

Marcus Aurelius as Caesar As, Surrey (FLO: David Williams)

Marcus Aurelius as Caesar As, Surrey (FLO: David Williams)

Faustina II As, Sussex (FLO: Liz Andrews-Wilson)
A new votive site: Piercebridge River (FLO: Philippa Walton)

Cumulative Frequency graph for Piercebridge, Coventina's Well and Bath against the British Average

Reece Periods

Per MILLS

-200 0 200 400 600 800

1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21

Piercebridge
Coventina's Well
Bath

Cumulative Frequency graph for Piercebridge, Coventina's Well and Bath against the British Average
Coins as evidence for trade: ?direct trade between Cornwall and the Mediterranean

Coins found at Hayle, Cornwall:
AD 335-40
Mint of Alexandria (Egypt)

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

What does this suggest about trade links?

Also coins from Sirmium and Nicomedia (FLO: Anna Tyacke)
Exotic coins

Gold solidus of Phocas from North Yorkshire, mint of Constantinople, 602-10 (FLO: Rob Collins)

Copper alloy coin of the city of Cius (North-West Turkey) struck for Elagabalus (218-222) from Hertfordshire (FLO: Julian Watters) Another example was found in Kent c. 2000
Byzantine coins in Dark Age Britain

Dark Age site at Tintagel, 5th & 6th cents AD – seat of a ruler and monastery in Cornwall with links to the Mediterranean (FLO: Anna Tyacke)

10 Nummus coin of Justinian I (527-65), struck at ?Cyzicus (Turkey), found at Padstow, Cornwall
Justinian I (527-65) follis of Constantinople, from Gloucestershire (FLO: Kurt Adams)

6th century folles from Devon (FLO: Danielle Wootton)
Conclusions 1

• The PAS extends our coverage of rural Roman Britain enormously
• Many assemblages are small, possibly often due to the non-recording of grotty or less interesting coins
• Comparison with previous research shows that larger assemblages, however, are valid
• PAS records are a valuable source for studying the distribution of coin finds (hence use)
Conclusions 2

• PAS records are helping to elucidate particular patterns of coin loss (e.g. Coins of British Association)
• PAS records include enough unusual coins (e.g. Byzantine) to challenge some traditional tenets
• PAS data will help to transform our knowledge of Romano-British coin loss ….. especially in rural areas