

The UKDN

ISSUE 11 JULY 2008

World Of Responsible Detecting

WORD



Special Coinage Edition Featuring:

Sam Moorhead

*Emperors, Usurpers,
Decrees and Forgery:
Constans, Constantius II,
Magentius and
Decentius, AD 348-56*



John Naylor

*Sceattas and Trade in
Early Anglo-Saxon
England*



Philip de Jersey

Negative evidence

Stuart Laycock

On the Trail of the Tribes



Welcome...

To the 11th edition of UK DETECTOR NET's very own newsletter. This is a very special edition, a coin edition, into which much work has gone. Before we go any further we must thank the contributors of this special edition, all top notch people in their respective field.

We try not to stand still for too long at UK DETECTOR NET. On Sunday we launched the revamped Beginners Section which now contains 25 articles which will help a beginner to the hobby of metal detecting find his/her way into knowing the correct method of practising the hobby.

The PAS Review is now underway and we look forward to the results when they come out in the autumn. We still have our summer photo competition running in which we want members to submit a picture of the UKDN logo abroad, or a picture of the logo made of anything except computer graphics like Photoshop.

Obviously we are always looking for contributions from UKDN Members and will accept articles and ideas from anyone willing to put pen to paper.

In the coming months we are hoping to make some more improvements to UKDN including changes to the album software which is long overdue and also include the ability to download some documents.

We hope that you enjoy the newsletter and will welcome your feedback on the forum.

Brian, Mo' and The Team

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FOM Coin— Brainy

Addedomaros Quarter Stater 30 - 33 BC

Found this little champ along with 5 roman bronze and a roman silver

I was using the xterra as it is the ONLY machine I use and was also using the 18.75 khz 10" DD coil.

I can't really state the depth...but it came out in the second spade full and was bang in the middle thank god

That takes my tally in 2 weeks up to:

- 3 hammered
- 1 quarter stater
- 1 lead token
- 1 silver roman
- 9 bronze roman 2 of them Minims
- 1 roman gaming piece
- 4 musket balls
- 9 copper pennies
- 1 cartwheel penny.

Brainy.





FOM Artefact - Padge

Gold ring with Lombardic script engraving

It is 18mm in diameter and 4mm wide. It is engraved very finely on the outside and has three words engraved on the inside in what looks a bit like lombardic script.

History of the site is interesting. I have found a Saxon strap end, numerous roman coins including part of a Severus Alexander denarius and part of a Henry VIII groat, all within 200m of the ring.

In adjacent fields I have found Saxon and Roman brooches, Celtic gold, silver and bronze and heaps of hammered silver pennies, half groats and a full groat.

The immediate vicinity was the site of some kind of meeting point but it is not clear exactly what. There is also a minor Roman road running across the site somewhere but not identified as yet.

Padge.



Helping in the Community

First Gold Ring but does it count?

By Nickkeeler

I subscribe to a service called "freecycle" in Bristol where people register stuff they don't want to bin to see whether someone else can make good use of it. On Saturday there was an entry from a lady who was looking for a metal detector, in her blurb she explained that a friend of her mother had lost her wedding ring in her garden and that she wanted a metal detector to try and find it.

I contacted her and she gave me the details of the lady who had lost the ring who lived a few miles away from me. I pitched up that afternoon and although the garden was very small it was quite hard going due to all the iffy signals. After half an hours searching I found it and the look on her face when I gave it back to her was a picture.

She was in the late 80's and told me that she had been married 64 years and had worn her ring every day so losing it was awful for her and she had not been sleeping since losing it a couple of weeks ago.

Her husband was also pleased as punch and shook my hand till I thought it would fall off. She did offer me money but I asked that she make a donation to the local hospice where my wife was.

All in all a good days work but not sure that it counts as my first find of gold as I knew it was there somewhere!

Nick Keeler



On the Trail of the Tribes.

How you've been helping redraw the map of early Britain (and Roman Britain, and post-Roman Britain).

Stuart Laycock



Coins of Tasciovanus and Cunobelin. With kind permission of David Shelley.

There was a time when antiquarians viewed the period before the Roman invasion as a period of little or no culture, a period in which the locals pretty much ran around in furs just waiting and longing for the light of classical culture to shine into their dark, dreary lives. Pre-Roman coins, particularly those showing little sign of Roman or Greek influence, were regarded as crude and uninteresting. Collectors wanted to fill their cabinets with laurel-wreathed Roman heads, not with the un-Classical patterns and designs found on pre-Roman coinage.

Of course, for a long time we've known that the idea of the Romans arriving here in 43 to take over some simple, primitive society was complete rubbish. Britain in 43 was a complicated patchwork of competing, contrasting and often conflicting tribal territories holding sophisticated and diverse cultures. It was many things, but simple and primitive wasn't among them.

Nonetheless the idea that British pre-Roman coins were intrinsically less interesting and less significant than those of the Roman period lasted far longer than it should have done, with pre-Roman coins only comparatively recently getting the attention and study they truly deserve.

Partly this has probably been due to inaccurate, but lingering (even if often unspoken) prejudice about the supposed superiority of Roman culture and artefacts over their British equivalents. Partly it has been a question of sheer accessibility. With Roman coins being found in large quantities all over the Empire, and with their study being something that has been going on for hundreds of years, it has been much easier to understand Roman coinage. By contrast, the small numbers of British pre-Roman coins available for study until recent decades, made it much harder to decide how different issues were linked and to interpret their chronology and geography.

This, however, began to change with the arrival of metal detecting as a major hobby. Metal detectorists who report their finds have been responsible for an explosion in examples of pre-Roman coins available for study and consequently we know far, far more about the subject than we ever have done before. Both the Celtic Coin Index and the Portable Antiquities Scheme now have large and growing databases of pre-Roman coins, and detectorists are responsible for a large chunk of those.

One of the most exciting things about the growing number of pre-Roman coins documented is that it is helping us to understand the political geography of pre-Roman Britain.

Apart from coinage distribution, about the only way to understand the boundaries of tribal territories in the period before Rome is through the works of the geographer Ptolemy, writing in the 2nd century AD, backed up by a smattering of references in other classical sources, plus an even smaller number of inscriptions and, to some extent (though here the interpretation tends to be more subjective) the distribution of other pre-Roman artefacts, such as pottery types. Ptolemy's work is vital, but all he does is list names of towns and cities belonging to each tribe. With some tribes the list includes a number of towns and cities, which is very helpful. With others, he may give just one, which is obviously a lot less helpful. That is why some maps of pre-Roman Britain, particularly older ones, just slap the names of the tribes across vaguely appropriate parts of a blank map of Britain and leave it at that.

When we take into account coinage distribution, however, particularly with the increasing numbers of coins found, the picture becomes much clearer. It is true that there is a slight inherent danger of circular arguments (e.g. if a coin previously recognised as Dobunnic turns up somewhere no other Dobunnic coins have previously, that area gets recognised as part of the territory of the Dobunni, rather than it being questioned whether the coin really is Dobunnic), however, treating the evidence with due caution, it is still possible to come up with a map of tribal territories that is broadly-speaking, convincing, coherent and consistent with other non-coin evidence.

**Map of tribal territories based on
main areas of coin distribution.
Areas of overlap show regions of
competing or changing influence.**



Obviously this information is vital in understanding the history of pre-Roman Britain, but it looks like it might be equally important in understanding the history of Britain during the Roman period and even in the post-Roman period.

The pre-Roman tribal territories formed the basis of the civitates (very roughly like our counties), the basis of Roman civil administration in this country. Thus each tribe continued, after the invasion, administering itself as a political unit, probably (judging by the recurrent appearance of Roman-period villas on the site of pre-Roman dwellings) with the same aristocracies in place. It has already been suggested that the distribution of different styles of Roman mosaic in the 4th century indicates that civitas boundaries were still an important factor in British life towards the end of the Roman period. Work I've been doing on the distribution of different styles of military and paramilitary buckles and belt fittings also suggest that by the end of the 4th century, a number of British tribes may have re-armed and formed their own tribal militias.

This re-arming may originally have been done with Roman permission and encouragement as an attempt to counter raiders from beyond the borders of Roman Britain. However, if foreign raiders were the original intended target of these militias, the evidence of coin hoards, burnt villas and linear defensive earthworks from the period around the end of Roman rule suggests that the militias may soon have resumed their pre-Roman customs and turned on each other,. In the process they may have well have created a failed state scenario in Britain, which could account both for the rapid collapse of Roman culture at the end of the Roman period and for the arrival of at least a significant proportion of the original Anglo-Saxon settlers (brought in as mercenaries to fight for one British tribe/civitas against another or others).

Persistence of tribal customs and borders could also even account for another enduring mystery of British and particularly English history – how do the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms come into being? From our increasing knowledge of pre-Roman tribal boundaries, we can now see that there is a very significant similarity between the map of pre-Roman tribal territories and the map of post-Roman Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Somehow, presumably through the growing influence of Anglo-Saxon mercenaries (and maybe, the occasional Anglo-Saxon coup d' état, where the Anglo-Saxon mercenaries just stopped taking orders and started giving them), the British tribal territories of central and eastern England adopted Anglo-Saxon culture (just as they had previously adopted Roman culture) and became the main Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

So next time you're out detecting, keep a sharp eye out for some fascinating British pre-Roman coins and do report any you find. Detectorists have already helped redraw the map of British history, but there's still lots more detail to add and lots more new history to find.

Britannia The Failed State

Britannia The Failed State, by Stuart Laycock is published by Tempus. Available from Amazon etc.

Stuart Laycock studied Classics at Cambridge and experienced the reality of a failed state at first hand as an aid worker in Bosnia during the war. He has been studying late Roman belt fittings (working closely with detectorists) and the end of Roman Britain for the past 4 years. He's written a number of articles for the detectorist press and his book (with Andrew Appels) on Roman Buckles & Military Fittings was published by Greenlight last year.

As part of their Local Authors' Day, Stuart Laycock will be signing copies of Britannia The Failed State at Waterstones, St. Albans on Sunday July 6th 12noon - 4pm

BRITANNIA

THE FAILED STATE



Tribal Conflicts
and the
End of Roman Britain



STUART LAYCOCK

Sceattas and Trade in Early Anglo-Saxon England

John Naylor

In 410, the legions left *Britannia* and the islands fell outside of the Roman world. The widespread monetary economy of Roman Britain collapsed, and coins became little used. We know some were pierced, used as jewellery or amulets, and buried with the dead, and a few new coins entered western Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries through trade with Byzantium. By the later 6th century, a standardised gold coinage, the tremissis (**Fig. 1**), was being produced across France and these have been found in England. The first English issues, thymas (**Fig. 2**), were based on these and were minted from about 620 but the gold content declined over the next half century and they were replaced by a silver coinage from around 670. Numismatists call these coins sceattas, (pronounced 'shatters', singular sceat, pronounced 'skeet').

They were produced at a time of great change. Christianity was sweeping through England, monasteries were founded across the country, old Roman towns were re-occupied as the seats of bishops and the Church was gaining a powerful place in Anglo-Saxon society. Alongside this, the economy of the lands around the North Sea was also moving up a gear. Archaeology has shown us that during the later years of the 7th century, a number of large ports were founded on coasts and rivers which acted as major places for craft production and the import and export of both ordinary and luxury goods. Places such as Southampton, London and Ipswich housed populations of several thousand, and were much bigger than typical settlements of the time. The archaeology of the countryside is less well understood but it has shown that during the later 7th-8th centuries many places underwent profound changes, moving from subsistence farming to deliberately producing surpluses, in such items as cereals and wool. These surpluses fed into the economy of the time. However, exploring how trade worked in the countryside has proven very difficult as the number of excavated 7th-8th-century settlements is still relatively low. Luckily, the work of detectorists has helped to fill the gaps, and has given us a massive amount of material to study. It gives us a solid background into which archaeologists can place their excavations and understand the Anglo-Saxons a little better. In this article, I'm going to explore how the study of sceattas has revolutionised our perceptions of the 7th-8th centuries, and what they tell us about how trade was organised. First, though, we'll briefly look at the coins themselves.

What is a sceat?

Sceattas are small, hammered coins, generally about 11-13mm in diameter, and were issued at a weight standard of around 1.3g, declining to about 1g by 740. There are a very wide variety of designs, influenced both by local art styles and by Roman and Byzantine coinage. These widely varied types have been further classified into Series, and these into three phases based on their style, silver content and weight.

The various Series need not worry us too much here, but a brief explanation of the phases, dubbed Primary, Intermediate and Secondary, is important.

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The Primary phase consists of English coins containing about 90-95% silver (**Fig. 3**), mostly minted in south-east England between c.680-710. The Secondary phase dates from c.710-760 (790 or so in Northumbria), and included a very wide range of types minted across the eastern and southern England (**Fig. 4**). Early issues were of about 80% silver gradually dropping to 20%. Spanning the two is the Intermediate phase consisting entirely of Continental coins minted in Denmark and the Netherlands (**Fig. 5**). They were initially of about 90% silver, but this drops away with time, and were minted from c.695 to around 750, although it now seems Danish types continued until the end of the 8th century at least. Intermediate phase coins are some of the most common English finds.

Sceattas and trade

As with most types of ancient coin, sceattas are very useful to use when considering trade. We've already seen that archaeologists have excavated large ports around the North Sea, and like ports today these places were hubs for trade and travel, and sceattas have been found at them all, sometimes in their hundreds. However, they are not the main focus of this article. What has proved of real importance are those thousands of finds made by detectorists and reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Corpus of Early Medieval Coins. **Fig 6** shows the general distribution of over 2,500 sceattas across the country. You'll notice the concentration towards areas which border the southern North Sea encompassing eastern England, France, the Low Countries and Denmark, where most of the larger ports are to be found. Quite often sceattas are found only in ones or twos, and probably just reflect the odd loss of a coin either at home or whilst travelling. There are, though, some sites which are on a different scale. Archaeologists and numismatists have adopted the detecting term 'productive site' for this group, especially in Anglo-Saxon archaeology, for representing sites of the 7th-10th centuries. They are generally found from the Yorkshire Wolds to Kent, with a few others further west. One of the major questions for archaeologists and historians is what kind of places were these?

Study of 'productive sites' around the country has shown that there are similarities in their geography with many found on old Roman roads or well-used prehistoric trackways, near rivers or the coast, or, importantly, at the junctions between these. It suggests that they either took advantage of passing traffic, or were part of the economic organisation of each kingdom, and it's certainly likely that sites with large numbers of sceattas will be economically important. Historical documents tell us that some are on Anglo-Saxon royal estates and others on the sites of later medieval monasteries showing, unsurprisingly, that the state and Church were important economic players. Most, though, have no history and may have been toll stops or fairs.

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A good example for how important sceatta studies are can be seen in part of the kingdom of Northumbria, made up from the area of Yorkshire between the Rivers Humber and Tees. In the Primary phase, coins are concentrated on routes northwards towards York, and on a few sites on the Yorkshire Wolds, some quite productive. Given their locations, it seems likely that the 'productive sites' were located with the idea of controlling traffic heading to York, either by cart or boat. Combining the archaeology and metal-detector finds then gets really interesting.

We know from archaeology that things were coming up from Lincolnshire to York, and foreign goods were coming into the region via the Humber estuary. We also know that at this time there was a new port at Fishergate in York where, like the other big ports in England, lots of imported goods were found, as well as buildings and craft-working debris, so it is not unlikely that traffic was perhaps being channelled into this port. Oddly enough, when the Fishergate was founded, the finds along the routes to York dry up, and instead virtually all of the rural finds are made further away on the Wolds. It seems that apart from a couple of likely toll stops other monetary trade in the York area stopped, or was stopped.

However, the archaeology and analysis of the coins from the region, tells us that by 740 the port was probably in decline. Northumbria's first major coinage began to be issued at this time, and turns up all over the region, except at Fishergate where only a couple were found. Again, the detector finds add to this. Around the region, sites which had produced lots of earlier sceattas, don't proportionally produce so many of the new ones, and some new 'productive sites' also appear. It seems as if long-distance trade declined and any attempts to tightly control trade by having one major port at York and a couple of other sites simply didn't work, so a new network was organised to control local and longer-distance trade across the region. This system continued until the Viking take-over of York in 867.

From this short example, the value of studying detector finds and their locations becomes clear. Without them we still wouldn't have much idea how trade was organised in the countryside and we'd certainly not suspect the changes which went on in the 7th-8th centuries. The combination of archaeology and detecting is a powerful one which has revolutionised our understanding of Anglo-Saxon trade and the fascinating coins we call sceattas.

John Naylor is the Portable Antiquities Scheme National Advisor for Medieval and Post-Medieval Coinage, based at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Sceattas and Trade in Early Anglo-Saxon England

John Naylor



Fig. 1 Merovingian gold tremissis (source: PAS, database no. LEIC-6BAA60)



Fig. 2 Early English thrymsa of Wuneetton type (source: PAS, database no. LIN-D82D76).

Sceattas and Trade in Early Anglo-Saxon England

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Fig. 3 Examples of Primary phase sceattas: a) Series A (SUR-FEE233), (source: PAS).



Fig. 3 Examples of Primary phase sceattas: b) Series BII (GLO9BD812) (source: PAS).

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Fig. 4 Examples of Secondary phase sceattas: a) Series H, type 49 (WILT-D3B061) (source: PAS)



Fig. 4 Examples of Secondary phase sceattas: b) Series N, type 41b (HAMP-963F86) (source: PAS)

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Fig. 5 Examples of Continental Intermediate phase sceattas: a) Frisian Series E, variety K (LANCUM-9E9461) (source: PAS)



Fig. 5 Examples of Continental Intermediate phase sceattas b) Danish Series X, variety 3e (BERK-220523) (source: PAS)

Sceattas and Trade in Early Anglo-Saxon England

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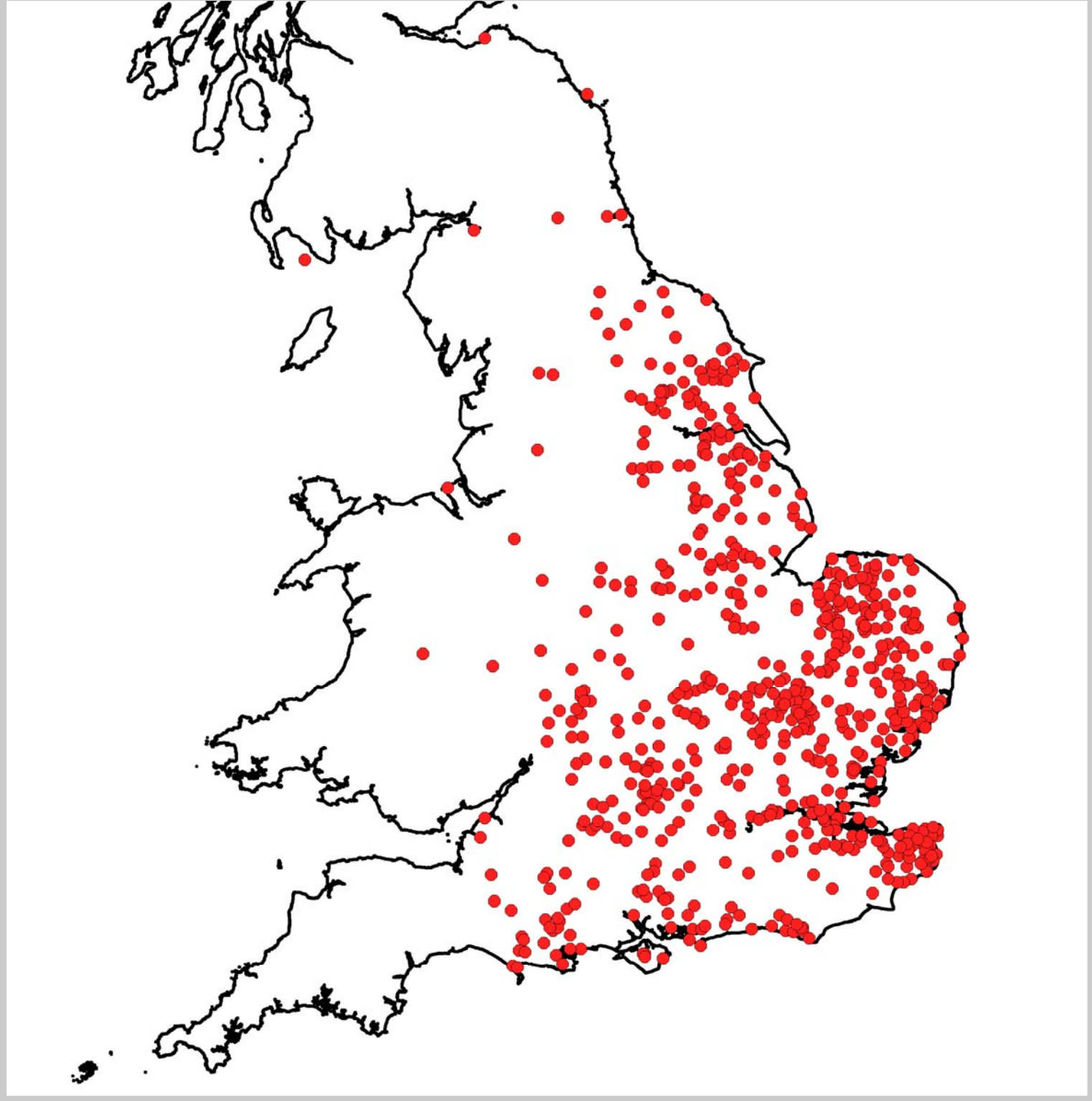


Fig. 6 The distribution of sceattas in Britain (source: PAS/EMC). (Copyright digital map data is owned and supplied by HarperCollins Cartographic and used with permission)

Sceattas and Trade in Early Anglo-Saxon England

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Fig. 7 Series Y sceat of King Eadberht, 737-58 (YORYM-4E54C7) (source: PAS)

Further Reading

For identifying sceattas Tony Abramson's ***Sceattas: an illustrated guide*** is excellent value. Current sceatta studies are summed up well in ***Two Decades of Discovery: Studies in early medieval coinage 1*** (edited by Abramson). For productive sites, try Tim Pestell and Katharina Ulmschneider's ***Markets in Early Medieval Europe: Trading and 'Productive' Sites, 650-850***.

The PAS website can be found at

<http://www.finds.org.uk/>

and the Corpus of Early Medieval Coins at

<http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/>

Negative evidence

Philip de Jersey

Most of the time archaeologists and numismatists are understandably happy if their distribution maps are covered with findspots – the more the better, because it enables us to recognize patterns of distribution, and to suggest explanations for the patterns that we can see. However, from time to time it's well worth looking at the empty areas as well. In this short article I want to highlight one such area in the field of Celtic coinage.

At the time of Julius Caesar's campaigns in Gaul, in the 50s BC, the tribes in Belgica (now northern France and Belgium) united against this powerful enemy. As part of this process they produced huge quantities of a distinctive gold coinage, with one side blank and the other side showing a stylised horse. This coin type goes by various names: you'll see it described as a uniface stater of the Ambiani (one of the Belgic tribes), or 'Gallo-Belgic E', or simply the Gallic War stater.



It has been estimated that as many as 1,500,000 of these gold staters were produced between about 58 and 52 BC. They were probably used primarily to pay Celtic warriors who were fighting the Roman army. The warriors themselves came from different parts of northern Gaul, and they also came from Britain, where the Gallic War stater is a reasonably common find: there are several hundred recorded from this country, including some significant hoards, and they are found across almost all of the Iron Age coin-using territory, roughly speaking south of a line from the Severn to the Humber. It seems likely that many of these coins were brought back to Britain by warriors returning from their campaigns in Belgic Gaul.

Negative evidence

Philip de Jersey

There is one area, however, where these coins are absolutely unknown: the territory of the Durotriges, in Dorset. Despite hundreds of years of antiquarian activity, a century or more of archaeological excavation, and more than three decades of intensive metal-detecting, the Gallic War stater remains completely absent from Durotrigan territory. There are many examples from the Atrebrates, to the east, and a scattering across Dobunnic territory, to the north, but none from Dorset. And yet the Durotriges were a coin-using tribe, and they produced very large quantities of their own staters and quarter staters, mostly in silver and bronze. Why did nobody on their territory ever lose, or deliberately bury, a Gallic War stater?

My theory is that the Gallic War staters never arrived there in the first place. I suspect that their absence from Durotrigan territory demonstrates some kind of important political difference between the Durotriges and their neighbours, and that they may never have contributed warriors to the fight against Rome, unlike most of the other southern British Celtic tribes. But why wouldn't they have fought alongside their fellow Celts? Why adopt this neutral, or perhaps even pro-Roman stance?

The answer might just lie in their trading relationships. There was a long history of trading contact between the Durotriges and their neighbours in the south-west, and the tribes which inhabited the Armorican peninsula (roughly equivalent to modern-day Brittany), across the Channel. This must have brought some wealth to at least part of the Durotrigan population, and it's possible that when Armorica was conquered by Caesar, they saw this not as a setback, but as an opportunity to improve their links with the mighty Roman Empire – in due course bringing more trade and more wealth to their territory.

If that was the case, then it would not be in the Durotriges' best interests to provide warriors to fight against Rome, even when Caesar threatened (in 55 and 54 BC) to launch an attack across the Channel. But was it the right decision? While they may have gained some short-term benefit from maintaining trade with the new Roman masters in Armorica, over the course of the next few decades the balance of trade in southern Britain shifted towards the Kent/Northern France axis, and the Durotriges were too distant to take much advantage of that trade route. They may also have paid a price within Britain. It seems that very little gold reached their territory, not just during the Gallic War but in the years afterwards, and hence their reliance on a silver coinage for the next century, while most of their Celtic neighbours maintained a gold coinage through most of this period. Some Durotrigan coinage found outside their territory is also ritually defaced, perhaps indicating their unpopularity with their neighbours.

Before getting too carried away with all this, it's important to remember that much of this theory is based on the absence of evidence – and as every archaeologist is supposed to remember, 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence'. In other words, just because we don't find something, doesn't mean it wasn't there. It's possible that Gallic War staters will start popping up all over Dorset now – but I don't think so. I think that there is a real absence here, something which demonstrates a clear difference between the Durotriges and their neighbours. Although it would damage my theory, I'd be very pleased to hear of any Gallic War staters which *have* been found on Durotrigan territory – **do you have the first?**

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Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans, Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56

Sam Moorhead

National Finds Adviser for Iron Age and Roman Coins
Portable Antiquities Scheme, British Museum



Introduction

This short piece discusses Roman bronze coinage between c. AD 348 and the 360s. Before 348, there were issues of many small *nummi*, but in 348 the emperors reformed the coinage. This reform appears to have failed leading to a decree in 354 which seems to have created a shortage of official money in Britain until the House of Valentinian arose in AD 364. Many finds made by detectorists give insights into how the people of Britain responded to these monetary changes.

The *nummi* of c. 330-348

Detectorists will be familiar with the coins issued for the sons of Constantine I (307-337), Constantius II (337-61) and Constans (337-50). Many of these coins are small *nummi* struck before the currency reforms of AD 348. Most of you will have found a GLORIA EXERCITVS (Fig 1) and VICTORIAE DD AVGGQ NN (Fig 2) *nummus* for these emperors.



Figure 1:

Nummus of Constantius II as Augustus, GLORIA EXERCITVS, 2 soldiers and 1 standard, Trier, 337-41 (found in Surrey: SUR-10E595)

Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans, Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56



Figure 2:

Nummus of Constans as Augustus, VICTORIAE DD AVGGQ NN, 2 Victories, Trier, 347-8 (found on the Isle of Wight: IOW-33C8E0)

The Currency Reforms of AD 348

In 348, Constantius II and Constans reformed the bronze coinage, introducing three new denominations, all bearing the inscription FEL TEMP REPARATIO (Felicium Tempus Reparatio – ‘Happy days are here again’):

AE2a (possibly the *Maiorina*) – the largest coin of about 5.25 grams with up to 3% silver content. The most common reverse in the west is the Emperor on Galley (Fig 3)



Figure 3:

AE2a of Constans, FEL TEMP REPARATIO, emperor standing left on galley, Trier, 348-50 (found in Herefordshire: WMAS-2C89E4)

Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans, Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56



AE2b – the medium-sized coin of about 4.25 grams with up to 1.5% silver content. The most common reverse in the west shows a soldier leading a person from a hut (Fig 4)

Figure 4:

AE2b (possibly the *Centenionalis*) of Constans, FEL TEMP REPARATIO, soldier leading small person from hut, Trier, 348-50 (found in Buckinghamshire: BUC-98FBF3)

AE 3 – the smallest coin of about 2.4 grams with no significant silver content. The reverse shows a Phoenix standing on a globe or pile of rocks, a reference to Rome's 1100th anniversary in 348 (Fig 5)



Figure 5:

AE 3 of Constans, FEL TEMP REPARATIO, Phoenix on pile of rocks, Trier, 348-50 (found in Leicestershire: LEIC-1BDE05)

The Coinage of Magnentius and Decentius, AD 350-3

These coins were struck until 350 when Magnentius rebelled against Constans in the West. Constans was defeated and killed and Magnentius took control of Britain, Spain, Gaul and Germany; he made his brother Decentius junior emperor (Caesar) in 351. Magnentius struck coins for himself and his brother at Amiens, Trier, Arles and Lyon (later also at Rome and Aquileia) which consisted of a range of generally good-sized AE 2 and AE 1 coins with four common reverses:

Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans, Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56



Figure 6:

AE 2 of Magnentius, FELICITAS REI PVBLICE, emperor standing holding standard and Victory of globe, Trier, 350-1 (found in Somerset: SOM-932FA2)

AE 2, GLORIA ROMANORVM; emperor galloping right, spearing falling enemy soldier (Fig 7).



Figure 7:

AE 2 of Magnentius, GLORIA ROMANORVM, emperor galloping right, mint unclear, 350-1 (found in North Lincolnshire: NLM-5BFA21)

Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans, Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56

AE 2, VICTORIAE DD NN AVG ET CAE(S); Two Victories standing, holding a shield inscribed VOT V MVLT X (Figs 8-9).



Figure 8:

AE 2 of Magnentius, VICTORIAE DD NN AVG ET CAE, 2 Victories hdg wreath inscribed VOT V MVLT X, Amiens, 351-2 (found in Leicestershire: LEIC-804925)



Figure 9:

AE 2 of Decentius, VICTORIAE DD NN AVG ET (CAE), 2 Victories hdg wreath inscribed VOT V MVLT X, mint unclear, 351-3 (found in Dorset: DOR-062267)

Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans, Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56



Figure 10:

AE 1 of Magnentius, SALVVS DD NN AVG ET CAES, Large Chi-Rho, Amiens, 352-3 (found in Oxfordshire: BERK-6F83B2)

Constantius II defeats Magnentius and Paul 'the Chain' visits Britain

However, in 353, Constantius II avenged his dead brother, Constans, at the Battle of Mursa, and regained control of the entire Roman Empire. We know from the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus that many prominent Britons who had supported Magnentius (and other innocent Britons) were rounded up by one of Magnentius' henchmen, Paul "the Chain". It is interesting that archaeology shows that several sites in the south of Britain seem to have declined rapidly in the mid-350s – is this evidence for the activity of Paul "the Chain"? Future research of PAS data might well identify other sites which might have also suffered at this hands.

Further Reforms of the Coinage, AD 354-6

Preserved in the Theodosian Code, a collection of laws compiled under the emperor Theodosius II in AD 438, is a decree that was probably made in 354, and possibly re-issued in 356 (*CTh* IX.23.1). It has been interpreted in different ways by scholars, but it appears to have dealt with trade between Arles (in southern France) and Africa and includes a reference to three types of coins which were banned or whose movement was restricted:

1. "Coins which are known to be forbidden." These are almost certainly the coins of Magnentius and Decentius which would have been demonetized after the death of Magnentius in 353 (Figures 6-10). It is interesting that there are a large number of hoards which terminate with coins of Magnentius, or soon afterwards. The most recent, from Buckinghamshire, contained almost 1500 coins (*Searcher* Nov. 2007, 8-10; hoard being published by the British Museum). These hoards were probably buried after the defeat of Magnentius when Constantius had outlawed his coins. The owners of the coins probably hoped that might be of value at some time in the future.
2. "Maiorinae" which might be the large (and smaller) AE 2 coins mentioned above (Figures 3-4). It does seem that all the FEL TEMP REPARATIO large module coins were now restricted in their movement or even banned from use. A blanket ban of all large coins would certainly quickly remove all the coins of Magnentius and Decentius from circulation.
3. "Centionales Communes" might be the pre-348 coins (or possibly the AE2b coins) which were still in circulation (e.g. Figures 1 & 2). That these coins were banned is suggested by their over-striking with the smaller module FEL TEMP REPARATIO 'falling horseman' types (Figs 11-12).

Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans, Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56



Figure 11:

Contemporary copy of a FEL TEMP REPARATIO 'fallen horseman' type overstruck c. 355-61 on a CONSTANTINOPOLIS nummus of c. 330-40 (found in Leicestershire: DENO-BF2E34)



Figure 12:

Contemporary copy of a FEL TEMP REPARATIO 'fallen horseman' type overstruck c. 355-61 on an VRBS ROMA nummus of c. 330-40 (found in Essex: ESS-857F35)

Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans, Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56

My interpretation of the Decrees of 354-6, and their implications for Romano-British currency

Upon the death of Magnentius and Decentius, their coins would have been automatically outlawed which probably explains large hoards of Magnentian and Decentian coins, such as the recent Buckinghamshire hoard. Furthermore, it does seem that there were either major restrictions on the use, or even banning of the earlier AE2a and AE2b coins of Constans and Constantius II. This was possibly because such a ban would make it easier to remove all the coins of Magnentius and Decentius from circulation. What does happen is that the module of the FEL TEMP REPARATIO coins, now only showing a 'fallen horseman', is reduced enormously so that they are only AE 3 (c. 18mm) size with negligible silver content (Fig 13). This suggests that the authorities decided to discontinue altogether with the larger denomination coins



Figure 13:

AE 3, Constantius II, FEL TEMP REPARATIO, soldier advancing left, spearing fallen horseman, Thessalonica, probably c. 354 (found on the Isle of Wight: IOW-694363). Examples of this type found in Britain normally come from the mints of Trier, Arles and Lyon; Thessalonican issues are rarely found in Britain.

However, it is clear that the authorities did not strike enough of the smaller 'falling horseman' coins (Fig 13), leading to a major shortage of small change from c. 355 onwards. This triggered the enormous output of 'falling horseman' type copies that are found across Britain (Figs 14-15).



Figure 14:

Contemporary copy of a FEL TEMP REPARATIO 'fallen horseman' type, copying a prototype of Constantius II from Trier, c. 355-61 (found in Dorset: DOR-065907)

Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans, Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56



Figure 15:

Contemporary copy of a FEL TEMP REPARATIO 'fallen horseman' type, possibly copying a Constantius II prototype from Arles, c. 355-61

Because earlier nummi were also apparently banned, this explains why FEL TEMP REPARATIO 'falling horseman' copies were often over-struck on earlier coins (Figs 11-12). There are also a number of smaller versions of Magnentius's coins amongst these copies which is a little surprising (Figs 16-17). It is possible that these copies were made during the reign of Magnentius to alleviate a possible shortage of the smallest coins – he did not strike many small *nummi*. However, it is equally possible that they were struck later when the authorities were not taking a close interest in the nature of circulating copies.



Figure 16:

Contemporary copy (15mm) of a GLORIA ROMANORVM 'emperor galloping' type of Magnentius, c. 350-61 (found in Dorset: DOR-FCB860). Copies of this type are uncommon.

Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans, Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56



Figure 17:
Contemporary copy of a VICTORIAE DD NN AVG ET CAE(S) 'Two Victories' type of Magnentius, c. 351-61 (found in Hertfordshire: BH-227582)

Finally, there is a very interesting group of coins which have been found by detectorists. Occasionally, small coins are found which have been cut from larger coins of Magnentius. These are most commonly cut from the large Chi-Rho coins (Figs 10 and 18). Furthermore, remains of the original coins with the circular cut-outs are also found (Fig 19). This does suggest that all large coins were demonetised and that rather than make new copies some people just cut smaller coins from the larger ones. However, the date of this activity could have been later in the 4th century, even early in the 5th century AD.



Figure 18:
AE 4 size coin cut from an AE 2 coin of Magnentius, SALVS DD NN AVG ET CAES 'Chi-Rho' issue, c. 352-61 (found in Lincolnshire: LIN-3FC248)

Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans, Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56



Figure 19a



Figure 19b

Figure 19a & b:

AE 2 coin of Magnentius, SALVS DD NN AVG ET CAES 'Chi-Rho' issue of Trier, 352-3, which has had two smaller coins cut from it, c. 352 – early 5th century (found in Lincolnshire: to be uploaded onto PAS database with a large assemblage; coin kindly donated to the British Museum by Mr Clive Rasdall).

Whatever the exact nature of the imperial decrees, from the many bronze coins found in Britain, we can see how the local population responded to political and economic

changes. The numerous 'falling horseman' copies (and the cut-out Magnentian coins, whether cut in the 350s or later) attest to the resourcefulness of the Britons at a time of dire shortage of official small change.

The return of an abundant official base metal currency, 364-78

There was an issue of AE 3 SPES REI PVBLICE coins struck in the late 350s until 361 for Constantius II and Julian, but these coins never reached Britain in great quantities (Fig 20). However, with the advent of the House of Valentinian in 364, large issues of bronze AE 3 coins came from mints across the Empire and vast quantities of these coins are found in this country (Figs 21-4). Normal service was restored at last!

**Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans,
Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56**



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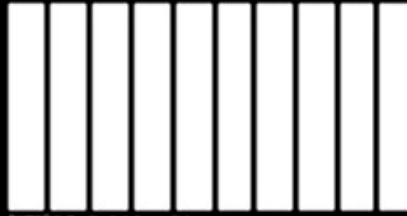


Figure 20:

AE 3, Constantius II, SPES REI PVBLICE, emperor standing holding spear and globe, Siscia, late 350s-361 (found on the Isle of Wight: IOW-E55FC2). These coins are scarce as site-finds in Britain.



Figure 21:

AE 3, Valens, SECVRITAS REI PVBLICAE, Victory advancing left, Arles, 367-78 (found in Leicestershire: LEIC-B46746)

**Emperors, Usurpers, Decrees and Forgery: Constans,
Constantius II, Magnentius and Decentius, AD 348-56**



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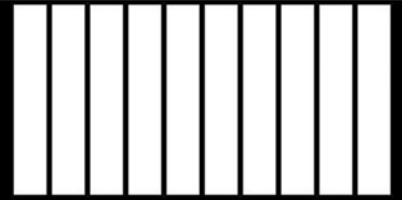
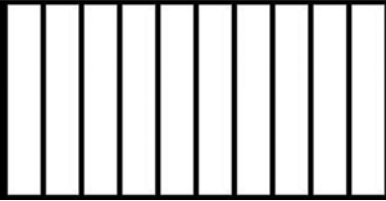


Figure 22:

AE 3, Valentinian I, GLORIA ROMANORVM, emperor advancing right, holding standard and dragging captive, Lyon, 367-75 (found in Hertfordshire: BH-A5E001)



Figure 23:

AE 3, Gratian, GLORIA NOVI SAECVLI, emperor standing holding shield and standard, Arles, 367-75 (found in Hampshire: HAMP-24A3C4). This type was only struck for Gratian, and only struck at Arles.

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