
Our leading expert on Iron Age coinage, Dr Daphne Nash recently left the numismatic field to pursue a career in psychotherapy, very much our loss and that profession’s gain. Fortunately, the publishers, to whom we must be grateful, persuaded Dr Nash to share her unrivalled knowledge of Iron Age coinage and society throughout Europe by writing a much needed review in their new series of introductory texts. Her Coinage in the Celtic World is quite simply the best introduction available, particularly to the use of Iron Age coinage and to the societies that employed it, and in this respect supersedes Derek Allen’s more comprehensive The Coins of the Ancient Celts. But her book is also far more than that. A masterpiece of compression, it is filled with interesting new ideas, and insights, while providing an excellent summary of the important theories that first brought Dr Nash to prominence in Iron Age studies.

The book explores the Mediterranean background to Iron Age coinage, following the historical process to its logical conclusion, the expansion of the Roman Empire over most of western Europe. Iron Age societies differed greatly from our own, and, as Nash shows, the adoption of coinage was to have profound consequences for their traditional warrior way of life. Three principal phases of coin use can be recognised, each corresponding to a particular stage of social development. The first phase coinages, starting in the later third century BC, were in precious metal, struck by competing chiefdoms perhaps acknowledging common ethnic or cultural identities, but lacking centralised military leadership. In the second phase, the coinages were still of high value only, but more organised with tighter distributions, representing, Nash suggests, a deepening of the elite hierarchy and increasing territorial cohesion. The third phase, from the later second century BC, saw the introduction of low value fractional coinages, sometimes in bronze, to serve the needs of the increasingly urbanised state societies which were now emerging, though for some archaeologists, her views exaggerate the political and economic development achieved by late Iron Age societies.

The coinages of each of the different regions are examined in detail, including central Gaul, the focus of Nash’s original research, and nearer home, Armorica and Belgic Gaul. The last chapter is devoted to Britain, where the coinage lasted for a full century after Caesar’s invasion of Gaul. Inevitably, there will be disagreement over material Nash has chosen to omit, or with her position on certain controversial issues. Nash is an exponent of the so-called ‘long chronology’, dating the earliest Iron Age coins shortly after their fourth–third century BC Greek prototypes, as opposed to the ‘short chronology’ (which compresses the same developments into a mere seventy years.) The archaeological evidence favours the former, but the exponents of a late dating are still fighting a vigorous rearguard action. However, it is difficult to agree with Nash’s post-Conquest dating of the latest Kentish cast bronze coinages from their occurrence in settlement deposits of the period. These same layers contain numerous inscribed coins, which we can confidently date prior to AD 43. Why are the cast bronze coins not residual, or losses from continuing post-Conquest use, like the rest undoubtedly are? Whether the authors of all the coinages we call Celtic were actually Celts may be doubted, and it is an interesting question why extensive coinages were struck in Gaul to finance armed resistance to the Roman invasion, but not in Britain. Nor does Nash enquire why coinage apparently ceased to be struck in Southern Germany two generations before the Roman conquest, possibly because under her model of episodic minting this does not pose a particular problem.

This book is attractively produced, with few misprints, and both author and publisher are to be congratulated. It was a false economy, however, not to have numbered or included a list of the otherwise excellent maps. Some readers would undoubtedly have found standard concordances for all the coins illustrated a useful addition to the plate references. I also wonder if mentioning fewer coin types per page at some points would have helped the narrative. But Iron Age coinage has been unjustly neglected and this excellent book will do much to restore it to its proper place in numismatic studies.

COLIN HASELGROVE


Any work by Richard Reece, it has been said, can always be guaranteed to contain one thing, diagrams, and I am glad to report that his public will not be disappointed by the present book. Equally characteristically, Reece approaches the subject from the point of view of the ‘man in the Roman slum’. In the first chapter he shows how little contact this man would have had with coins for the first two hundred years or so of Roman rule, and also how great the contrast is between urban and rural patterns of coin usage. This latter point is in fact one of the underlying themes of the whole book, as Reece shows how town-dwellers seem to have made greater use of coins in the third century than they did in the country,
where coin use only really took off in the following century. Reece then looks at the problems of the use of coin evidence for the dating of archaeological sites (a subject on which he is rightly very cautious), before discussing the mechanics of coin circulation in Roman Britain and the phenomenon of forgery. Here he stresses the chronic lack of small change that obtained in Britain down to about AD 270. In chapter 3 there is a valuable, although sometimes slightly repetitive, discussion of the references to the use of coinage in the Roman world in literary sources, concentrating on two very different works, Petronius’s Satyricon and the synoptic gospels.

There then follows the core of the book in which Reece examines first hoards and then site-finds in order to see what they tell us about the ways in which coins were used in Roman Britain. The chapter on hoards takes the much discussed Falkirk find as an example of how difficult it can be to give a date of burial to a particular hoard: Reece seems to make rather heavy weather of this. On p. 62 he seems to assume that no-one has ever tried to examine the 'stratification' within a particular deposit in order to see if the hoard was put into its container on a single occasion, or if it was added to a little at a time over the years. This has in fact been done more than once (a good example is Besly’s report on the Aldbourne hoard in Coin Hoards from Roman Britain IV) but it does not usually reveal any definite pattern. Reece, who is very good at explaining on paper what most students of Roman coins do intuitively, can also sometimes be rather unrealistic, as where he is continually urging the need of more die-studies. Without doubt it is extremely useful to have a few sample die-studies, but the law of diminishing returns applies to this activity. In particular, it is probably not feasible to undertake such a study of Carausius’s coinage (p. 118), so numerous are his coins and so frequently are new ones being found, and, even if such a Herculean task were ever carried out, experience suggests that it certainly would not provide a return commensurate with the effort involved.

Reece then launches into the subject that he has made very much his own, the study of site-finds, both in Britain and abroad, and in particular the comparison between the two areas. He stresses the predictability of British site-finds and elaborates on the contrast between the urban and the rural patterns of coin loss. It is here that the diagrams really begin in earnest, as Reece finds ever more sophisticated ways of expressing patterns of coin loss from Roman sites, setting other British sites against the background of the 56,000 coins from Richborough until, in the end, he lost this reader at least. He then develops this theme by comparing British sites with continental ones, again making copious use of diagrams. Reece concludes with a chapter on the mechanisms of how the coinage circulated, especially in the fourth century AD, and stresses how at all times the Roman government issued coinage solely for its own convenience and profit, without a thought for the public good.

If there are criticisms to be made, they are chiefly of the actual production and design of the book, which is often sloppy, rather than of its content. The plates seem to be an afterthought – I did not notice any references to them in the text – and the coin hoard illustrated on pl. I remains frustratingly unidentified, while on pl. 8 one of the photographs actually seems to have slipped off before the plate was made! Also frustrating is the very brief list of further reading: in the text, Reece frequently draws on the work of other researchers in the field but the reader will search in vain among the seven items listed here for references to their work. But it would be carping to be too critical of a book as reasonably priced as this.

To conclude. For the general reader this book offers a useful guide to Roman Britain, from the point of view of its coinage; for the excavator it will provide an invaluable guide to the interpretation of the coin-list from his site, while for the student of numismatics it will serve as a convenient distillation of Reece’s pioneering work in this field over the last twenty years.

ROGER BLAND


This thirty-sixth volume in the SCBI series publishes the 1132 Anglo-Saxon, Norman, Hiberno-Norse and related coins in the collection of the State Museum, Berlin. The origins of the Berlin collection as a whole go back at least as far as the seventeenth century, but its Anglo-Saxon element was chiefly acquired in the century between 1815 and 1914 and will be almost wholly unfamiliar to British readers.

Much of the material comes directly from Viking-age coin hoards found at sites once all in German territory but of which a good proportion are now in Poland (Dr Kluge gives both the German names of the sites and their modern Polish names). The earliest of these hoards is a shadowy one from Pomerania perhaps dating from the 930s, but the vast majority belong in the date bracket c.995–c.1100 and thus provide substantial runs of coins of Æthelred II, Cnut and their immediate successors, as well as Hiberno-Norse, Scandinavian and ‘West Slav’ imitative pieces.

Other Anglo-Saxon coins in the Berlin collection have chiefly reached it as minor component parts of larger accumulations. Thus, a collection of 28,000 coins formed by the Berlin merchant P. P. Adler (d.1814) contained fifty-one coins listed here, ranging from a ninth-century coin of Edmund of East Anglia to a coin of the Two Sceptres type of William I. Similarly, a collection of 6028 coins purchased from
Lieut-Gen. August Ruehle von Lilienstern in 1842 included 192 Anglo-Saxon coins; a collection of about 5800 coins purchased from the widow of Lieut-Gen. Hermann von Gansauge in 1873 included seventy-two Anglo-Saxon coins; and two collections, totalling some 8000 coins, purchased from Hermann Dennenberg respectively in 1870 and 1892, contained eighty Anglo-Saxon coins between them. Many of the coins in these collections no doubt came from Viking-age coin hoards of the character already mentioned, but the coins acquired by the two generals include ninth- and tenth-century coins which more probably derive somehow from the English coin trade of their day. It may be noted here that since the Ruehle von Lilienstern collection was already on deposit in the Berlin coin cabinet in 1837 (see p. 7), SCBI Berlin 158, a good specimen of a coin of Alfred's Two Line type by the Canterbury moneyer Tirwald, cannot come from the Cuerdale hoard of 1840.

Acquisitions of this nature made it largely unnecessary for those administering the collection to make individual purchases of Anglo-Saxon coins, but this volume shows that a few obvious gaps were filled from the trays of the London dealer William Webster in 1872; two coins of Offa and one of the very rare eighth-century coins of Egberht of Kent came from the Munich dealer Hirsch in the 1870s; and a group of the best Anglo-Saxon coins from J. G. Murdoch's collection was purchased from Messrs Spink in 1905.

Dr Kluge and the editors of the SCBI series deserve warm congratulations on the way that the material has been published, for the volume is one of the most satisfactory in the SCBI series so far. To take its component elements in order, Dr Kluge's introductory chapters describing the history of the collection and the hoards from which the coins come are clear and informative; the plates, being from casts, are consistently legible (not always the case where SCBI volumes are concerned!); the standard of cataloguing is good; and an editorial decision to print the obverse legends of the coins and the mint signature element of the reverse legend in an instantly legible bold type is most welcome.

As a research tool the volume is going to be most useful for those working on eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon coins and their imitations, especially the 'West Slav' ones which will be least familiar to the Blackburns and Chowns of this world. For specialists in eighth- tenth century Anglo-Saxon coins there is however a not insignificant range of new material, and here this reviewer should perhaps record in passing that coin 48 is an admittedly rare coin of Æthelred II of Northumbria's second reign, not a coin of his first reign as Dr Kluge supposes; that the full provenance of coin 71 is ex Murdoch 22 ex Boyne 1118 ex Sir Henry Ellis sale, 1869, lot 20, and 'found in Northamptonshire in 1849' (see British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals, Scrap Book I, f.20); and that coin 150 is doubtless ex Murdoch 60 ex Montagu sale, 1897, lot 5 ex Montagu sale, 1895, lot 456, ex Wylie sale, 1882, lot 105, ex Murchison sale, 1866, lot 141, and deriving ultimately from the 'Suffolk' hoard via the Rich, Durrant and Martin collections (the present reviewer established this provenance in its main outlines in BNJ 47 (1977), 129-30, but it had not then occurred to him that the group of Anglo-Saxon coins which formed the first few lots of the Montagu sale of 1897 were in fact unsold coins from the 1895 sale, and thus that Montagu (1897) 5 = Montagu (1895) 456).

H. E. PAGAN


This well-produced booklet is an updated and revised version of earlier pamphlets by the same author. Much of the content was also incorporated into the introduction of SCBI 19 which covered the collections of the Bristol and Gloucester Museums. The reworking of material in this way needs no apology. The new edition is published by the Bristol Museum itself, of which the author was for many years curator of Archaeology and History, and it represents a praiseworthy policy of keeping available in an accessible form material informative to interested visitors and useful to local historians.

As well as the historical outline of the Bristol mint presented in the earlier versions, a number of extra items are included, mostly to make numismatic matters clearer to the non-specialist: a glossary; a table of the Bristol moneyers; a section on the types of late Saxon and Norman coins; a discussion of denominations and values; and a list, mostly illustrated, of the types of coinage issued at Bristol. It also contains an interesting survey of the sites of the various Bristol mints based largely on the author's own research, and a concordance between the sylloge numbers of coins in the Bristol collection and the museum's own registration references. Four new Anglo-Saxon and Norman acquisitions are also listed.

It is not surprising that in a work intended for a general audience there are statements which, perhaps just through a desire for brevity, may give a misleading impression, such as the suggestion that changes in type of late Anglo-Saxon and Norman coins were always accompanied by wholesale recoinage. Occasionally, the descriptions of coin types and classes also mislead through being over succinct, for instance the pothook N on sterling pennies of class 9 is commonly but not necessarily a characteristic of the class. Some periods of minting at Bristol might well have been considered in greater detail: the activities of Sharlington and Chamberlain in the 1540s surely merit considerable attention in their local context, though anyone might balk at attempting a clear but simple exposition of the debasement policies of the Tudors.

One criticism which might be made of the book as a work designed to enlighten the general reader is that there is little attempt to consider the contribution of
Bristol issues to the national currency at particular times. Output figures are given where known, but these mean little without a standard of comparison. Nevertheless, the book can certainly be welcomed and its author and the Bristol Museum congratulated. It provides a useful checklist of Bristol issues for numismatists and is in many ways a model for what museums can do to make their numismatic collections accessible to a non-specialist audience and to encourage awareness of local monetary history.

B. J. COOK


This little book is more substantial than its page length would suggest. In it Miss Grimshaw has recorded and in many cases illustrated 125 prize medals awarded to girls in English and Scottish private and charitable schools in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. All are hand engraved pieces of great rarity, hardly to be found even in the largest public collections, and this work is a tribute to the author's persistence as a collector as well as to her scholarly contribution to the study of a neglected field.

The medals included come from over ninety different schools, and although Miss Grimshaw modestly plays down their importance as a source of evidence about the curricula of the girls schools of the period, they provide, when illuminated by her fascinating commentary, very considerable new insights into the beliefs about education of those who commissioned and awarded them. The very prevalence of the habit of awarding medals even in the tiniest of schools is significant, as is its gradual disappearance in the twentieth century. The reiterated idea that merit deserved a reward, that pupils would be thus encouraged to persevere in their studies and that others would be encouraged by the constant sight of their medal-wearing contemporaries to emulate them (all the medals illustrated were evidently made to be worn) gives valuable insight into the pattern of beliefs about childhood motivation that underlay education of the period.

The pieces themselves can hardly fail to arouse the reader's historical imagination, charged as they are with the hopes and fears of generations of long-dead children. Largely ignored and forgotten until rescued by Miss Grimshaw, they must have had great symbolic significance both to the girls who received them and to their parents and teachers, occupying a central place in assessments of worth and prospects. Indeed, the worth of this book is not only that it presents the reader with a considerable body of valuable material evidence about, but also that it provides an imaginative link with, the realities of girls' education two centuries ago.

MARK JONES