

## REVIEW ARTICLE

*An Inventory of Romano-British Coin Hoards*, by Anne S. Robertson,  
edited by R. Hobbs and T.V. Buttrey. London (Royal Numismatic Society),  
2001. lx + 520 pages.

### The Person (by RR)

I first consulted the typescript of this great work in the second week of February 1966. I had been shown two groups of coins by the curator of the Stroud museum in Gloucestershire, and it seemed possible that they were two parcels from the same late third-century hoard. After both groups of coins were identified I compared them and they were similar. But were they more similar to one another than to other hoards of the same type? To answer that question I needed to know about other hoards and the name of Dr Anne Robertson came up. I wrote to say that I would be in Edinburgh in February and wondered if I could come over to Glasgow and ask her advice. A pleasant letter came promptly back giving a time to meet. When I got there we had a short talk and I was put in a window-seat with the typescript, which I was free to use for the next few hours. That would answer my questions. It did. The two groups of coins were very similar to many other hoards of the same date, and the only conclusion possible was that they had all been drawn from very much the same coin population. Now, thirty-five years later, that typescript of hoards is published and available to all.

That first meeting with ASR led to exchanges of letters, news, and Christmas cards up to her death in 1997, with the occasional meeting at conferences or on travels. I think I got to know her quite well. She had very strong views on many issues which could be expressed in cutting terms, but as far as my own experience goes she only did this when she believed it to be justified or necessary. In the early days of work on her typescript an assistant at the BM Coin Room sent a section for approval directed to Prof. A. Robinson at her address. A major explosion was expected. Instead there came a brief post-card to say that

'... there are no epicene Robinsons in this road'.

The assistant it was felt, after a dictionary had been consulted, had got off lightly.

I found her a mischievous person, not perhaps a description with which many would agree, and I value the few occasions on which she allowed the mischief into print. My favourite example is her discussion of the SC factor on Roman coins. A discussion of the letters on the reverse of much early imperial bronze would be expected, but she meant the Sheer Cussedness factor of coins travelling the width of the Empire in a purse to upset all the neat theories of modern scholars. The fact that I helped this paper into print later drew an angry protest from John Kent who felt that it should never have been published. I am totally unrepentant because it makes an important point about the interpretation of coin finds, and at the same time has strokes of broad humour, even repartee, which ASR rarely allowed out.<sup>1</sup>

### The Inventory (by PG)

Anne Robertson registered with Mortimer Wheeler at the new London Institute of Archaeology in 1937 for an MA on Romano-British coin hoards, and the work continued until about 1990. It has been rumoured that Ian Richmond borrowed the typescript from her, intending to have it published, but that his death in 1965 intervened and it was recovered from his papers. Professor Robertson's *Inventory* was eventually published in 2000 and it can only be described, without exaggeration, as an Aladdin's Cave for the numismatist and historian. On the other hand, it is truly sad that the author did not live to see the publication of her life's work.

<sup>1</sup> Anne S. Robertson, 'The SC Factor on Roman Coins', *Bulletin of the Institute of Archaeology* 29 (1992), 139-44.

The volume is divided into two main sections. The first is a lengthy description of Romano-British hoards that ranges over a number of themes, from a discussion of coinage as currency to the vessels used to store hoards. Somehow we get the impression that certain readers will think that the narrative should have been edited more ruthlessly, but ASR's knowledge of the material was encyclopaedic and the volume is better with her accompanying text left in. It also presents the opportunity to see how much ASR's ideas and understanding of Roman hoards had changed since the 1970s. When I first read her work as an undergraduate I felt that it was far too rigid and that her writing was overly restricted by seeing hoards as an appendix to the historical narrative of Roman Britain. Well, perhaps not quite in those terms, but Robertson's *Inventory* shows a different point of view; one that embraces the complexities of the material and relishes the fact that this is only the beginning.

The main part of the *Inventory* is the catalogue of coin hoards from Roman Britain. Each individual hoard is numbered, although not strictly consecutively for some reason. Too frequently numbers such as 9A are inserted into the sequence, which makes adding up hoards from a certain period rather more time-consuming than it ought to be. We believe that the volume contains descriptions of 1994 hoards in total, though this figure is probably wrong. The circumstances of every hoard's discovery are discussed exhaustively, and references to the most obscure publications and manuscripts are provided for those who will dare to follow these up. It is extraordinary that it is these sections that delayed and postponed the publication of this catalogue, but matters of accuracy diverted the editors for too long. ASR herself was concerned with the meticulousness of the detail, but the spelling of place names, duplication of entries, references, numbers and dates are all issues secondary to the main purpose of her work; as the catalogue of Roman coin hoards. For example, hoard 823 is described as 'Malpas, St Clement, 1749 (Cornwall)'. The original account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* mentions a place called Mopus Passage. H. L. Douch of the County Museum in Truro said in a letter written in September 1958 that he would describe Malpas: 'as being in the parish of St Clement. The name properly refers to the passage across the river'. This is where the editors could have been more effective, as these lengthy introductions, while being informative, are curiosities only and detract from the listing of the coins from each hoard. The format of the *Fundmünzen der Römischen Zeit in Deutschland* (FMRD) or the *Corpus des Trésors Monétaires Antiques de la France* (TAF) catalogues has been shown to be perfectly satisfactory.

Hoards are arranged in chronological order according to their latest coins, and their contents are described in terms of numbers of coins for each emperor, empress or prince represented in that hoard, not to *RIC* reference as one might have hoped. This is only in a minority of cases, however, as most hoards are not known in anything like this detail. It is more normal to find that a hoard is not known to have been complete, or is described with phrases such as 'the coins included...'. Many hoards should be treated with extreme caution as the near complete absence of the most basic observations, other than 'coins of the family of Constantine' for example, means that we have almost no idea of how they were originally constituted. In other cases it seems that intrusive groups of coins are listed under a hoard, but with reservations. Hoard 451 (Constantine), 1739 (Cornwall) apparently contained six denarii and three asses from Vespasian to Philip I, and twelve coins of the House of Constantine up to AD 360. It is listed rightly with hoards of Philip I, and the later coins are noted with the statement that they: 'must have come from another find'. That this has been done inevitably means that a good number of hoards have a strong aura of uncertainty about them.

For the fourth century the *Inventory* suffers from the same problem as FMRD and TAF. Coins from the period after AD 296 are listed by the prince shown on the obverse, rather than by reverse type. This means that the many lists and tables cannot be used for further work as they are incompatible with the system of classifying fourth century coins that has been accepted practice for the last forty years. In every case recourse must be had to the original published or manuscript source, an unnecessary diversion since many of those sources list fourth century coins by reverse type. A second edition must repair this defect, which is a product of the times in which the lists were made rather than a vagary of the compiler.

Yet even these criticisms do not undermine the value of Robertson's *Inventory*, because now for the first time the evidence exists that enables the study of coin hoards to move beyond first principles. The material gathered together, despite the faults, is already enhancing our understanding of coin circulation and hoard deposition in the Roman world. It is possible that applied numismatics can move on from the flat-earth level of debate now that ideas can be tried and tested.

The significance of hoard distributions in Britain has long been recognised, although the spatial patterning of hoards was known only for a handful of 'peak' episodes. The publication of twenty-four maps showing the distribution of hoards in the British Isles, each for an issue period of perhaps twenty to thirty years, is a considerable improvement. I am reliably informed that the dots on these maps represent hoards for which the latest coin is tolerably certain, while the stars only show the latest coin mentioned in the references. The maps do not discern between different denominations, which is work that desperately needs to be done if we are to understand how coinages circulated together. Nonetheless, the sequence of hoard distributions illustrates how dramatically and rapidly the patterns changed. Early hoards are eastern, they spread northwards with Vespasian, show an interesting line around the wall during Hadrian's reign, and move north of the wall with Antoninus Pius. The map for Marcus Aurelius is particularly dense with hoards and Commodan finds have a sprinkling in Scotland. Radiate hoards of the mid and later third century are scattered all over England, but not elsewhere. Hoards of later radiate coins, however, show a gap between the wall and a horizontal line through Manchester. Carausian hoards reveal a concentration in north Wales and Anglesey, while Allectus is confined to south Wales and the part of England south-east of the Fosse Way. The maps of fourth century hoards are rather unreliable, partly because of uncertainties over precise dating, although from AD 383 we see the almost exclusive concentration of hoards in the south-east, a feature that ASR pointed out in earlier studies.

It is possible with the publication of this volume to begin examining the chronological development of hoarding in Roman Britain. A first step would be to arrange the hoards according to the *terminus post quem* of their latest coins, as shown on Table 1. The real value of the *Inventory* is shown by the fact that this table took only a few hours to prepare. Some of the entries do contain mistakes, certain hoards should be removed, or moved from one period of deposition to another, but the general picture of Roman coin hoards is now available for all to interpret. With the value of the volume firmly established, we can begin to look to a more complete understanding of coin hoards in the future.

TABLE 1: Coin Hoards in Categories.

Date	Total	Gold	Mixed	Silver	Mixed	Bronze	Uncertain
to 41	18	1	1	13	0	1	2
41-54	26	5	2	4	2	11	2
54-69	11	1	1	5	0	3	1
69-96	60	7	5	17	8	13	10
96-117	21	0	0	11	3	3	4
117-138	43	1	2	20	7	7	6
138-161	66	1	3	29	9	9	15
161-180	97	0	1	62	10	20	4
180-192	35	0	2	16	1	8	8
193-222	49	0	0	31	4	7	7
222-238	31	0	0	26	1	2	2
238-260	36	0	0	28	1	2	5
260-296	530	0	0	515	2	12	1
296-317	99	0	0	0	0	99	0
317-348	195	2	0	0	0	193	0
348-364	119	1	0	2	2	114	0
364-411	280	12	14	59	13	182	0

**The Future (1): Hoards in Britain and hoards abroad (by PG)**

The fact that Robertson's *Inventory* was being brought to publication for so long meant that a survey of coin hoarding in the western empire was not able to include the British material.<sup>2</sup> However, it is possible to give a brief summary of that information here so that the picture of British hoards can be seen against a wider background. Detailed information will be included in the full publication.

The most obvious point about the information presently available is that the number of hoards known in Britain is significantly higher than from other countries. Of 3266 hoards in total, 1715 come from Britain, while the publications of France and Germany (both incomplete), yielded only 296 and 259 hoards respectively. Whether the remarkable quantity of hoards from Britain is due mainly to the work of ASR or Roman hoarders will not be known until the details are checked in other countries. Clearly land area must come into the calculation for the 51 hoards from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg are proportionately a much denser scatter than the 296 so far from France.

A starting point for the analysis of western Roman hoards might be to consider the proportion of hoards with an end-date in the radiate period (AD 260 to 296). Over 40% of the total number of hoards from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and Bulgaria belong to the radiate period. In Romania, the former Yugoslavia, Britain and Hungary this drops to around 30%, leaving Austria and Germany just above 20%. As always, when Britain is compared to the mainland of Europe, the picture is complicated by the fact that fourth century coins are far more common in Britain (both in hoards and as in site-finds) than in more southerly countries. It remains to be seen whether this fourth century material indicates different processes of deposition, or whether deposition was relatively uniform and this difference is merely the result of regional variation in the recording of hoards.

If chronological details are neglected and only the metal of the coins considered, then we end up with Table 4. It is clear that in every area studied most hoards are either of silver alone or copper alone. The elimination of chronology makes this a very blunt instrument of analysis because, while copper hoards are better represented in the early Empire in France, the copper hoards of Britain are more often of fourth century date.

TABLE 2: Numbers of coin hoards.

Date	Brit	Fran	Belg	Lux	Ital	Aus	Germ	Rom	Yug	Bulg	Hung	Total
to 41	18	13	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	34
54	26	14	3	0	1	3	17	5	0	2	0	71
69	11	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	1	0	19
96	60	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	68
117	21	3	1	0	4	1	3	4	2	0	0	39
138	43	4	0	0	1	0	5	1	2	9	0	65
161	66	3	2	0	2	5	4	4	5	8	2	99
180	97	4	3	0	1	1	12	16	3	6	1	144
192	35	5	4	2	8	11	12	21	11	15	5	129
222	49	14	8	2	5	3	17	13	4	2	0	117
238	31	6	8	2	5	5	26	10	4	24	9	130
260	36	5	6	0	6	4	27	6	6	12	4	112
296	529	141	63	23	42	17	54	49	39	157	19	1133
317	99	37	6	4	9	7	4	1	5	7	4	183
348	195	36	4	4	5	4	15	8	11	30	1	313
364	119	2	3	9	5	7	35	5	14	9	2	210
411	280	3	8	5	9	8	26	23	15	7	16	400
Total	1715	296	119	51	105	77	259	166	126	289	63	3266

<sup>2</sup> P. Guest (forthcoming), *Roman Imperial Coin Hoards*.

TABLE 3: Percentages of coin hoards.

	<i>Brit</i>	<i>Fran</i>	<i>Belg</i>	<i>Lux</i>	<i>Ital</i>	<i>Aus</i>	<i>Germ</i>	<i>Rom</i>	<i>Yug</i>	<i>Bulg</i>	<i>Hung</i>
to 41	1	4	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
54	2	5	3	0	1	4	7	3	0	1	0
69	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
96	3	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0
117	1	1	1	0	4	1	1	2	2	0	0
138	3	1	0	0	1	0	2	1	2	3	0
161	4	1	2	0	2	4	2	2	4	3	3
180	6	1	3	0	1	1	5	10	2	2	2
192	2	2	3	4	8	14	5	13	9	5	8
222	3	5	7	4	5	4	7	8	3	1	0
238	2	2	7	4	5	6	10	6	3	8	14
260	2	2	5	0	6	5	10	4	5	4	6
296	31	48	53	45	40	22	21	30	31	54	30
317	6	13	5	8	9	9	2	1	4	2	6
348	11	12	3	8	5	5	6	5	9	10	2
364	7	1	3	18	5	9	14	3	11	3	3
411	16	1	7	10	9	10	10	14	12	2	25

TABLE 4: Hoards by metals.

(a) numbers

	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Silver</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Bronze</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>
Britain	31	31	838	63	686	66
France	25	4	165	21	81	0
Belgium	4	0	57	18	40	0
Luxembourg	1	1	27	2	20	0
Italy	4	3	29	11	56	2
Austria	2	0	46	5	21	3
Germany	11	0	127	20	91	10
Romania	2	0	125	0	39	0
Yugoslavia	10	1	59	4	52	0
Bulgaria	0	0	182	13	94	0
Hungary	2	1	37	4	19	0

(b) percentages

	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Silver</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	<i>Bronze</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>
Britain	2	2	49	4	40	4
France	8	1	56	7	27	0
Belgium	3	0	48	15	34	0
Luxembourg	2	2	53	4	39	0
Italy	4	3	28	10	53	2
Austria	3	0	60	6	27	4
Germany	4	0	49	8	35	4
Romania	1	0	75	0	23	0
Yugoslavia	8	1	47	3	41	0
Bulgaria	0	0	63	4	33	0
Hungary	3	2	59	6	30	0

**The Future (2): Analysis of hoard material (by RR)**

As Table 5 shows, about half the hoards listed up to AD 296 provide enough information for considerable work of analysis. These are the 'good' hoards. The information given in the 'bad' hoards is not firm enough for any further detailed work, and in the years before 296 even examination of earlier original sources is unlikely to be very rewarding.

TABLE 5

	41- to 41	54- 54	69- 69	96- 96	117- 117	138- 138	161- 161	180- 180	193- 193	222- 222	238- 238	260- 260	296- 296	317- 317	348- 348	364- 364	364- 411
Total	18	26	11	60	21	43	66	97	35	49	31	36	530	99	195	119	280
Good	15	10	7	38	12	21	44	62	17	22	22	13	287	0	0	0	0
Bad	3	16	4	22	9	22	22	35	18	27	9	23	243	99	195	119	280

There are obviously two types of analysis which proceed by different methods, give different types of information, and appeal to different types of mind. Qualitative analysis would examine the attributes of the coins hoarded – emperor, reverse type, legend, mint, metal, size, shape, weight, and so on down to the smallest possible detail. This material is not listed in ASR so the book must be used as a check list to get back to the most useful basic publication of the hoard. Quantitative analysis would examine the numbers of coins of different types in the hoards, and here the listing of hoards by emperors gives plenty of material to work on.

I have done some work on the material using the method which I described in earlier publications.<sup>3</sup> The method is basically a matter of reducing the coins in each hoard, by emperors, to a diagram. The diagram is so constructed as to make the average hoard the straight mid-line of the diagram with some hoards 'above' average, and some 'below'. The method does no more than separate out a number of hoards into groups which resemble each other more than any other hoards. Since the points plotted refer to the coins of each emperor the similarities and differences can be immediately tracked back to a given point in time. That is, the difference between groups is seen to be mainly in the coins of Aurelian for example. I hope that details of this work will be published in full at some later date, but, for the moment, several points have emerged which show how the evidence gathered by ASR can be used to go quite deeply into the understanding of hoards in Britain. The two examples on which I worked were denarius hoards from Trajan to about 250, and hoards of radiate coins.

A first point of interest concerns the reliability of numbers. Many of the hoards listed by ASR are very small groups, five or ten coins; are these worth considering beside larger groups of thousands of coins? Conventional statistical wisdom says that when a number of samples are taken from a pool of material then the larger the sample the smaller the variation from what the total pool represents. On this basis the smaller hoards and groups might be ignored and the larger groups should be selected for analysis. This is no comfort to the worker who wants to get information from the group on which he is working which contains only twenty-five coins. In fact a whole series of diagrams of about 120 of the best recorded radiate hoards show that small groups can be just as reliable as guides to the coinage available for hoarding as the large groups.

Five hoards stand out from the rest of the 120 because of their concentration on coins of the Central emperors such as Aurelian, Tacitus and Probus and their apparent rejection of the very common coins of the Gallic and British Empires. These have often been called legitimist hoards with the idea that they were put together in the reigns of Carausius and Allectus yet included few, if any, of these rebel coins and concentrated on the legitimate emperors. It is reassuring that these hoards stand

<sup>3</sup> R. Reece, 'Site-finds in Roman Britain', *Britannia* 26 (1995), 179–206; R. Reece, 'Roman Coin Hoards in Dacia and Beyond', *Studii de Cercetari de Numismatica* 11 (Bucharest, 1995), 107–18.

out immediately from the rest on a purely numerical analysis and interesting that the considerable differences shown in Table 6 seem to have little effect on their composition. Totals of coins range from 15,544 down to thirty-five. Circumstances of discovery and completeness range from the excavations which produced Cheddar and Gloucester complete to uncertain early finds. And 833 also contained a coin of Magnentius and one of Valens. The only similarities in the hoards, apart from their profiles, are this close concentration of four of the five in Somerset/Gloucestershire with an outlier said to have been found at St Albans.

TABLE 6

ASR number	Name	County	Number of coins	Date of find	Complete?	Carausius Allectus?
827	Wint Hill	Somerset	827	1967	Yes	No
833	St Albans	Hertfordshire	345	1749	?	No
859	Cheddar	Somerset	99	1846	?	No
912	Gloucester	Gloucestershire	15,544	1960	Yes	Both
945	Tickenham	Somerset	35	1891	?	1 Carausius

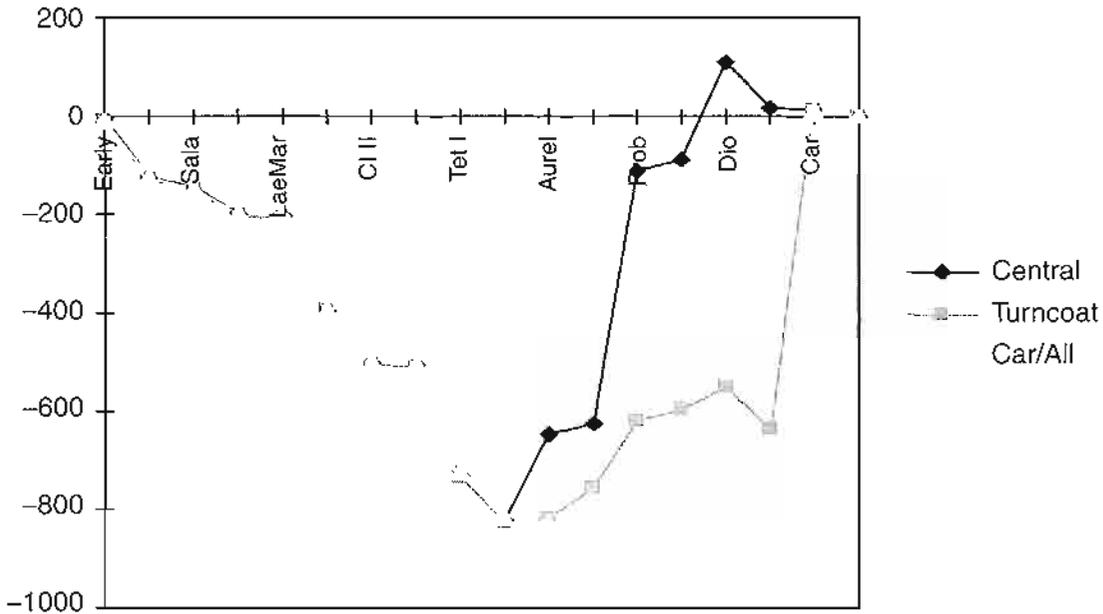


Fig. 1. Central and British Hoards, with the Turncoat (Linchmere).

There is one other hoard which has a unique profile (861, containing 812 coins from Linchmere in Sussex). This has a profile exactly like the five hoards above up to the reign of Aurelian (274). Issues of Tacitus and Probus are low, Carus, Carinus, Numerian and Diocletian and Maximian are not there in the expected numbers, and the hoard finishes with 534 coins of Carausius. The profile is therefore a hybrid of legitimist up to about 278 and normal Carausian from there onwards. It is almost as if the hoarder changed his mind in the early 280s and veered from legitimist to British with the Adventus of Carausius.

It must not be assumed that all small groups and hoards fit into the general pattern. There is a collection of ten groups and hoards which will not fit with any other profiles and with one exception they all contain less than sixty coins:

737	22	Chance discovery 1778 only a few coins of which were listed
739	22	Chance discovery 1907 apparently complete
745	25	Excavations at Dover, from a mixed level with other coins
756	300	Chance find apparently complete
852	15	Excavations at Lancaster, a scattered group
853	15	Excavations at Lancaster
869	6	Excavations at Dinorben
873	9	Found in the Wisbech area, might be a hoard
915	59	Excavations at Godmanchester, a scattered hoard
916	35	Excavations (1846) at Borden, Kent, with many other finds

When I was working out and plotting the profiles I was concerned at the group which failed to fit into the larger picture. At that point only the hoard numbers were available, and it was not until I had consigned them to a 'rag-bag' that I looked up their pedigrees. The fact that six out of the ten problems came from mixed levels during excavation, that one was a local group rather than a known hoard, another only partly listed, left only two likely hoards which did not fit in. All the information was available in ASR and it needed only a few hours of work to sort out the different categories of find.

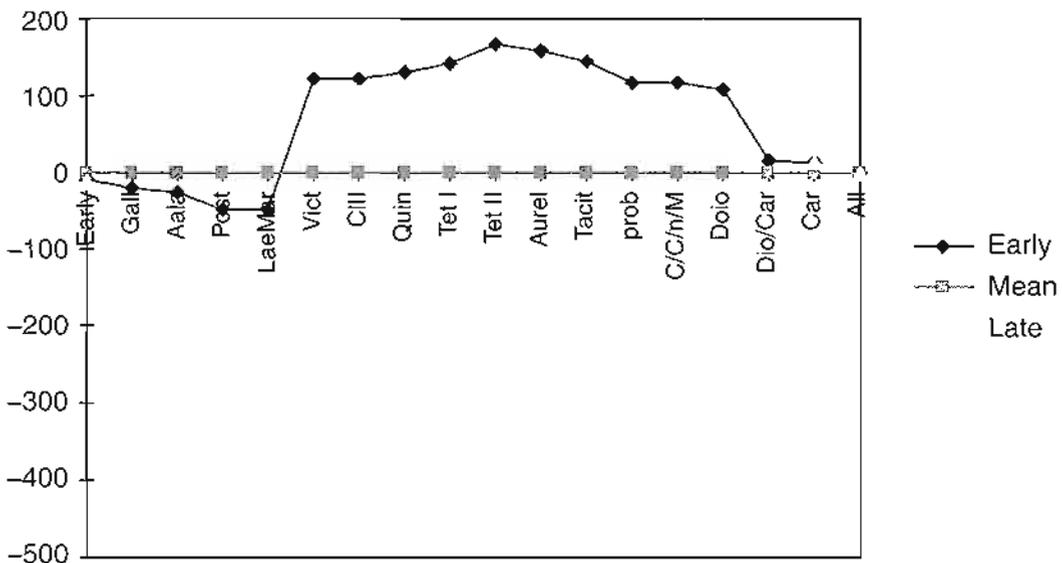


Fig. 2. Early, average and late Radiate hoards.

One obvious characteristic of radiate hoards which extend beyond the reign of Claudius II is that they are either Gallic/British or one of the five 'Central' hoards. There are virtually no hoards in the middle ground, or 'average' radiate hoards. While it is a detail of the method used that hoards will be strung out either side of an average there is nothing to stop a steady distribution from one extreme to the other through the middle area. With radiate hoards in Britain this does not happen.

The extreme similarity of different hoards within some of the groups is also a matter for comment.

732	Amlwch, Anglesey	1937	421	Aurelian, pre-reform
741	Agden, Cheshire	1957	2443	Probus
752	Riby, Lincolnshire	1953	13730	Probus
759	Longton, Staffordshire	1960	1739	Probus
822	Much Wenlock, Shropshire	1977	2582	Carinus
828	Monkton Farleigh, Wiltshire	1980	3466	Diocletian (285-6)
880	Rockbourne, Hampshire	1967	7714	Carausius
903	Caerwent, Monmouthshire	1860	1051	Carausius

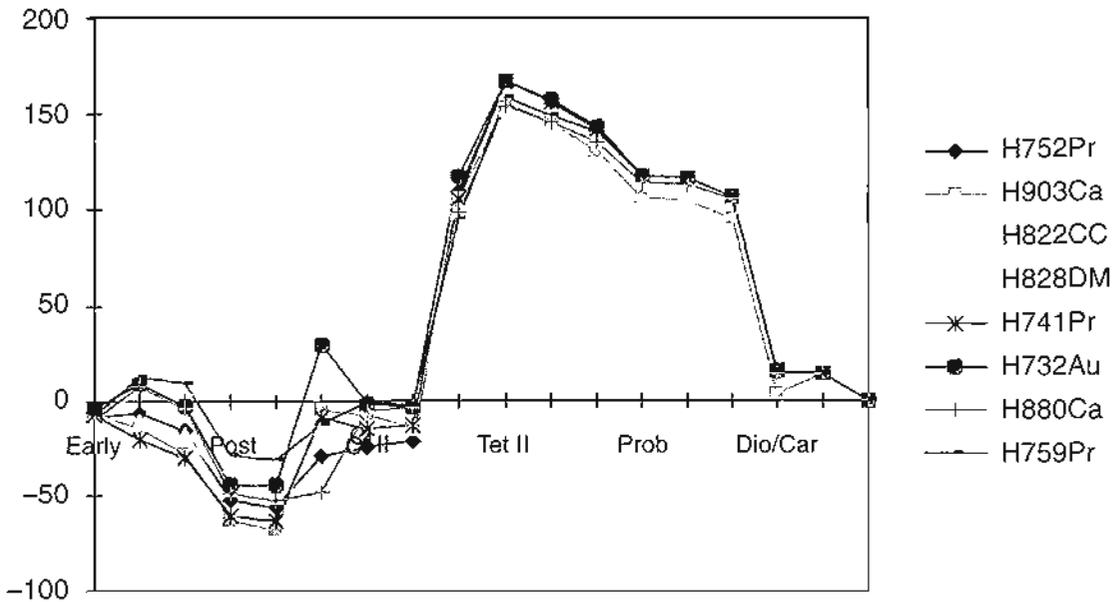


Fig. 3. A very close group of Gallic/British hoards.

The fact that the profiles of all these hoards are almost superimposed on the diagram means that their composition in terms of coins of different emperors is very close indeed within the more general spread of Gallic/British hoards. The hoards are of different sizes, were buried in very different places, and the date of their latest coin is spread through a twenty year period. There are three different explanations of this.

- (1) The coins were all drawn from one pool of coin circulation in one place, and then carried throughout Britain to be buried at times varying over a twenty year period with the addition of no more than one or two of the latest coins available.
- (2) The coins were drawn from circulation at a similar date, in roughly the area in which they were buried, and the latest coins included were a matter of chance.
- (3) The coins were drawn from circulation at roughly the time of their latest coin and in roughly the place where they were buried.

All the explanations have their unlikely aspects, all could say something very interesting about radiate coin circulation in Britain if they could be authenticated, and all could be tested by further work. Answer 1 has problems in supposing the gathering of people at one spot to gain a uniform supply of coin and then moving away to different areas to add a few coins and then bury the hoard later. Answer 2 depends very much on the relative numbers of coins of different rulers available during the reign of Carausius. Answer 3 has least problems, but it presupposes a remarkably constant coin pool over much of Britain from about 275 to 285. That constancy lies basically in the conservation without change of the pool available after the last striking of the Tetrici. To this a fairly constant small number of post-274 reform coins were added. This is the 'early' pool which is changed after the large issues of Carausius into the 'late' pool with few hoards apparently being drawn from the intermediate pool which was half Gallic and half British.

The question of a coin pool changing smoothly and imperceptibly as old coin is lost and hoarded and new coin is added as opposed to a coin pool changing in fits and starts can be investigated through the denarius hoards of the period 100 to 250. The hoards can be studied together, irrespective of the date of the latest coin in the hoard, and can be sorted out so that each hoard is very close in composition to the other hoards of the group. Because the emperors are set in their appropriate sequence the hoards settle out into that same sequence moving from left to right across the diagrams. They follow in general terms the date of their latest coin but, as several work-

ers have already noted, there are precocious hoards and backward hoards. This brings in the whole question of thinking about the hoard as a matter of its latest coin or its centre of gravity. The latest coin, Hadrian, may be way ahead of the 'date' of the general composition of the hoard which groups itself with mainly Trajanic hoards – it is backward. The hoard, ending with a coin of Hadrian, groups itself with other hoards ending with A. Pius or M. Aurelius – it is precocious. These points can be used in further more detailed work in which the type of coin hoarded can be examined, or the geographical pattern examined. Do precocious hoards belong to the Home Counties (i.e. in terms of Roman Britain, Hadrian's Wall), and do backward hoards belong to the farmlands of the Cotswolds?

As with radiate hoards a change can be seen from early denarius hoards to late denarius hoards. In this case the time of change does produce a few hoards, but the majority are either early or late. The borderline comes somewhere between 175 and 195, judged as always by the latest coin. This might conceal a major switch in the very last years of the second century as the debasement of Septimius Severus (194) had a serious effect on the coin pool. This might well have happened while the new coins were uncertainly excluded from hoards, and the transition hoards may all date to a very short time bracket around 196 to 200.

What matters in all this discussion and speculation is not whether the ideas are right or wrong but that so much has been generated by the publication of this remarkable work. In the Inventory of Romano-British coin-hoards Anne S Robertson compiled a work whose minor blemishes are almost invisible in the brilliant glare of usefulness and inspiration.

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