



Book Reviews

COIN HOARDS IN IRON AGE BRITAIN BY P DE JERSEY

The British Numismatic Society Special Publication No.12, 2014, Spink, London. 474 pp, 22 col pls, 15 B/W figs, 39 tables. ISBN 978-1907-427-38, hb, £65

This volume provides the first comprehensive study of the three hundred and forty-six hoards which have so far been found in three hundred and seven locations in Britain since the mid-seventeenth century. The hoards are very well researched by Dr. Philip de Jersey, currently the Archaeology Officer for the States of Guernsey, and having formerly worked on the Celtic Coin Index (held at the Institute of Archaeology in Oxford) from 1992 to 2007, and initially publishing his doctoral thesis on *Coinage in Iron Age Armorica* in 1994. Since then Dr de Jersey has published widely on the archaeology and numismatics of Iron Age Britain and France and is the national expert on Iron Age Armorican coins.

The incredible amount of information amassed in this volume has been supported by the wonderful work of the Celtic Coin Index, set up in 1961, which has collected the records of over twenty-eight thousand Iron Age coins into one central place, and is kept up to date by its connection to other ongoing databases, such as that of the Portable Antiquities Scheme. It should also be noted that there would only be one hundred and three hoards, less than a third of the actual total, listed in this volume if it did not include those hoards found and reported by metal detectorists, between 1971 and 2010. This shows the debt we owe the metal detecting community and the need for continued support for the Portable Antiquities Scheme in order to keep the channels of communication open.

This thorough study, where the author has returned to the primary sources in order to correct errors in the literature, has allowed him to compare and contrast these hoards in order to uncover the relationships between the tribes that produced them, their geographical boundaries, the monetary systems used at the time, and how this related to the expanding Roman Empire. For example, the patterns revealed by the distribution of the hoards can be related to significant events such as the Roman conquest of Gaul and of Britain, and analysis of the deposition of the hoards can determine if they were votive or more pragmatic 'purse' hoards and can suggest the value of precious metals at the time and any regional differences. The data will certainly provide many opportunities for future research into these themes and others.

The corpus of hoards forms the predominant section of the book with three hundred and seven entries over three hundred and eighty-five pages. The hoards are arranged alphabetically by county and within that by the place name of the find-spot and not the date of discovery. Each entry lists the description of the find-spot, with a grid reference, if known, and the circumstances of discovery and phase of deposition. There is also a 'quality of record' rating depending on the reliability of the account. The *contents* lists the number of coins and then each coin according to its type and composition, referring to its type number as set out in Cottam, de Jersey, Rudd and Sills' work *Ancient British Coins* (2010). Its individual Celtic Coin Index number and its weight are also recorded. The *dispersal* section shows the current location of the hoard and the *additional references* section at the end of each entry gives bibliographical details of publications that have not been quoted in the main discussion. The colour plates are distribution maps and the

fifteen figures are illustrations of coins, so this is not a catalogue of coins with image references for typological identification, but the book has many indices in order to quickly refer to the coins that the reader may be interested in, according to type, ruler, inscription and geographical area.

This authoritative account of all of the Iron Age hoards found in Britain up to 2012 will be invaluable to other colleagues who work for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, especially in helping to determine and discover new examples of coin types which are recorded on to the Portable Antiquities Scheme database. All of the Iron Age hoards recorded in the book will also be available to be viewed on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database at <https://finds.org.uk/database> thanks to the work of the Hoards Project run by the British Museum and the University of Leicester, set up in 2013 and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council for three years.

Having just had the first hoard of British Iron Age coins from Cornwall, since the Carn Brea hoard found in 1749, reported through the Treasure Process, I was able to use the detailed tables in this publication to identify some of the coins, including the continental types, looking particularly at the listings of inscription, composition and weight. I also wanted to compare this new Cornish hoard to others where Republican and Roman coins had been found amongst them. The whereabouts of some of the coins have come from research into the auctioning of Iron Age coins and missing coins have been tracked down and acquired for the nation through this process. The Royal Institution of Cornwall (in Truro) was luckily able to acquire one of the missing Gallo-Belgic Westerham type staters from the Carn Brea hoard in 2010, missing for over two hundred and fifty years, through the valiant efforts of Dr. John Sills, of the Celtic Coin Index, and Chris Rudd, who was selling it at his auction house in Norfolk: both have contributed to this volume. We know from auction records that the coin had crossed the Atlantic at least four times, having been bought and sold, since 1970, so it can only be imagined how much it travelled around the globe for the two hundred years before that. This shows just how collectable these artefacts are and reminds the reader how fortunate we are to have so many recorded in the public domain here.

This publication is a testament to the beauty, imagination and craftsmanship involved in the production of these wonderfully precise packages of information and art, and will attract archaeologists, historians, collectors and metal detectorists alike as a very useful reference for future finds for many years to come.

References

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Anna Tyacke
Finds Liaison Officer for Cornwall
Portable Antiquities Scheme
www.finds.org.uk

Review submitted: January 2016

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