Coinage at the End of Roman Britain

By Sam Moorhead and Philippa Walton*

ABSTRACT

Coinage is probably the most tangible form of material culture dating to the late fourth and early fifth centuries A.D. As a result, numismatic evidence, and particularly hoards data, has played a pivotal role in dating the 'end' of Roman Britain. This article summarises the numismatic evidence for the period and illustrates how both hoards and site finds can be used to explore the chronology and nature of coin use throughout the diocese of Britannia and its apparent collapse in the post-Roman period.

INTRODUCTION

Numismatics has a major part to play in the construction of narratives concerning late Roman Britain. As there are so few objects which can be dated accurately to the late fourth and fifth centuries A.D., coins provide the most reliable form of dating evidence for the period (Rivet 1964, 97; Kent 1978; Frere 1987, 363; Esmonde Cleary 1989, 14; Millett 1990, 219; Mattingly 2006, 330 *passim*). However, these coins are much more than just tools for dating. This article will provide an overview of coin hoards, excavation assemblages and stray finds recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, and will use this data to explore the nature of coin use in late Roman Britain and its apparent collapse in the post-Roman period.

MATERIAL AVAILABLE FOR STUDY

Numismatic research has traditionally concentrated on the analysis of hoards. In 1997, Peter Guest and Roger Bland both noted that approximately 120 hoards were known which were deposited in the period after A.D. 388.[1] Since then, there have been two major developments. Firstly the publication of Anne Robertson's corpus of Romano-British coin hoards in 2000 has added details of 59 hoards (Robertson 2000). Secondly, the introduction of the Treasure Act in 1996 has led to the recording of a further 55 hoards of this period (see Table 1).[2] With this extra data, there are now approximately 232 coin hoards with a *terminus post quem* of A.D. 388 or later.[3] This appears quite a large number, and indeed Britain has a proportionally higher number

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1 The hoards containing silver are taken from Bland 1997a (43; 51–2), which covered only gold and silver hoards, and the bronze from Guest 1997. Guest 1997 provides an analysis of the better recorded hoards (gold and silver 7; silver 32; silver and bronze 5; bronze 26; gold, silver and bronze 1); Bland 1997a also provides a major listing of late Roman gold and silver coin hoards from across the Roman Empire. There were around 70 British hoards which were too poorly recorded to be included by Guest and Bland. There have been other listings of gold and silver hoards by Carson (1976), Archer (1979) and King (1981), and a listing of bronze hoards by Moorhead (Moorhead *et al.* forthcoming) which already needs updating.

2 New hoards have been recorded in the *Coin Hoards from Roman Britain* X and XII, *Numismatic Chronicle* and *British Numismatic Journal* hoard summaries, and in *Treasure Annual Reports* (1998–2012); we are very grateful to Eleanor Ghey at the British Museum for a summary listing of unpublished hoards which will appear in future volumes of *CHRB*. It should be noted that a large number (around 20) of the latest finds are hoards with ten or fewer coins from 'productive sites'; such hoards would not have been recorded before the advent of the new Treasure Act in 1996.

3 The main sources for hoards are Robertson 2000, the *Coin Hoards from Roman Britain* series (Vols I–XIII), *Coin Hoards* I–VII (Royal Numismatic Society 1975–95), and summaries in the *Numismatic Chronicle* (1994–2011) and *British Numismatic Journal* (2012 onwards), the *Treasure Annual Reports* (1997–), and for Wales, Guest and Wells 2007. A thorough listing and analysis of gold hoards is in Bland and Loriot 2010.

of hoards from this period than any other province in the Roman Empire.[4] Although this may partly be the result of Britain's established record of reporting hoards, it is still the case that the incidence of hoarding in Britain in the late Roman period was exceptional (Bland 1997a; Guest 1997, 411; Guest 2005, n. 33; Hobbs 2006). A large number of hoards also include other objects, notably gold and silver jewellery, plate, ingots and spoons, showing how precious metal pieces of all types could be stored together; the Hoxne, Haynes and Coleraine hoards are good examples (Guest 2005; Johns 2010; Inscker and Orna-Ornstein 2009; Robertson 2000, 405–6, no. 1621).

TABLE 1. Frequency of late Roman coin hoards (A.D. 395–423) found in Britain

Reference	Gold	Gold & Silver	Silver	Silver & Bronze	Bronze	Gold, Silver & Bronze	Total
Bland / Guest 1997	10	15	50[5]	14	26	3	118
Other pre-1997 hoards from Robertson 2000	1	2	19	14	21	2	59
1997–2012	5	14	21	6	9	-	55
Total	16	31	90	34	56	5	232

Data from excavation assemblages can also be added to the plethora of hoards. However, one of the problems associated with studying excavation assemblages is that they are published in a myriad of reports; furthermore, most assemblages are not published fully enough to enable meaningful analysis. In recent years, this problem has been mitigated somewhat. Richard Reece listed coin data from 140 sites over twenty years ago and this dataset was enlarged by Philippa Walton to include information for 368 sites.[6] Finally, a selection of assemblages with a major Theodosian element has been generated by Moorhead (Moorhead *et al.* forthcoming).

Since the inception of the Portable Antiquities Scheme in 1997, over 170,000 Roman coins have been recorded throughout England and Wales.[7] As of 12 December 2012, there were 1,284 Theodosian coins of the period A.D. 388–402 from sites in England: 7 *solidi*, 271 *siliquae*, and 1,004 *nummi*. The Welsh data incorporated within the PAS database include 2 *solidi*, 7 *siliquae*, one half-*siliqua*, and 3,463 *nummi* from Caerwent, and 63 *nummi* from other sites (Guest and Wells 2007).[8] A major analysis of late Roman coin finds recorded with the PAS has recently been published by Walton and the recently published volume on the Traprain Law Treasure includes a detailed analysis of late Roman silver coins on the PAS database (Walton 2012; Bland *et al.* 2013).

AN OUTLINE OF THE COINAGE IN LATE AND SUB-ROMAN BRITAIN
c. A.D. 388–430

It is generally accepted that *Britannia* ceased to be an official diocese of the Roman Empire during the reign of Constantine III (A.D. 407–11) (Salway 1981, 432ff.; Moorhead and Stuttard

4 62 per cent of early fifth-century precious metal treasures and 58 per cent of all hoards containing silver coins from the period A.D. 300–500 come from Britain; Britain also has 24 per cent of all bronze hoards from the period (Guest 2005, 28); 80 per cent of all known silver coin hoards from the period A.D. 388–410 come from Britain (Abdy 2002, 62).

5 We have added the Coleraine hoard, found in Co. Londonderry, Northern Ireland, in 1854 (Robertson 2000, 405–6, no. 1621), and the Traprain Law Treasure, found in East Lothian, Scotland (Robertson 2000, 402–3, no. 1617; Hunter and Painter 2013), to this total.

6 Reece 1991 records 27,736 coins of the period A.D. 388–402, of which 22,822 were found at Richborough; Walton 2012 records 29,073 coins of the period A.D. 388–402; other corpora include Moorhead 2001 for Wiltshire, Shotter 2011 for the North-West, and Penhallurick 2009 for Cornwall.

7 www.finds.org.uk; the PAS data include 52,804 coins from Wales (Guest and Wells 2007).

8 Note that this work does not indicate whether the *siliquae* found in Wales are clipped or not.

2012, 237–8). However, it is important to gauge when the last major issues of gold, silver and bronze coins arrived on the island and to consider the supply of coinage in the period after.[9] In this way, it is possible to gauge the relative volume of coinage arriving in the province in the late Roman and early post-Roman periods.

GOLD

Theodosian gold coins struck between *c.* A.D. 402 and *c.* A.D. 408 at the Italian mints of Milan, Rome, Ravenna and Aquileia arrived in significant numbers in Britain and are found in hoards, notably the *c.* 600 *solidi* from Eye (Suffolk), 577 from Hoxne (Suffolk, with 368 dating to A.D. 394–402 and 94 dating to A.D. 402–8), and 8 from Boscombe Down (Wilts.) (Robertson 2000, no. 1620; Guest 2005, 134, nos 45–9; Burnett 1992). The hoard from Good Easter (Essex) with 16 *solidi* terminates with a piece of Constantine III from Lyon, dating to A.D. 407–8 (Bland 1997b; Abdy 2009a; Bland and Loriot 2010, 249). One recently discovered hoard of 159 gold *solidi* from near St Albans (Herts.) has a *terminus post quem* of A.D. 406–8 (142 coins date to A.D. 378–402; 17 date to A.D. 402–8). The coins are unworn and it is quite possible that the coins were deposited in the chaos that engulfed the province in A.D. 408–9 (Thorold 2013).[10]

For the rest of the fifth century, after *c.* A.D. 410, Bland and Loriot have shown that a small, but generally constant, number of gold pieces continued to arrive in the province, but most are found in the South-East and East Anglia. 28 pieces, including some pseudo-imperial issues or copies, are recorded from the reign of Jovinus (A.D. 411–13) to that of Zeno (A.D. 476–91), a number of these pieces coming from grave deposits (Bland and Loriot 2010, 86–8).

SILVER

The last major issue of silver in the Western Empire was of *siliquae* for Arcadius and Honorius from Milan in A.D. 397–402,[11] with silver coins becoming much scarcer across the Empire in the fifth century. These Milan pieces are very common in Britain, both in hoards and as site-finds, but after A.D. 402 there are only a very small number of silver pieces, notably for Constantine III (A.D. 407–11). It seems that the last official issues to arrive in Britain when it was a functioning province were the *siliquae* of Constantine III, struck with the legend VICTORIA AVGGGG in A.D. 407–8, which have been found in the Hoxne, Coleraine and Haynes hoards (Guest 2005, 146, nos 752–3; Robertson 2000, 405–6, no. 1621; Inscker and Orna-Ornstein 2009, 385, nos 97–8).[12]

One phenomenon characteristic of late Roman silver coinage in Britain is 'clipping', whereby the outer circumference of the coin was removed. Clipped *siliquae* are commonly found in hoards and as site-finds across the diocese. There has been a debate over several decades about when clipping occurred. Andrew Burnett argues, from the evidence of the Terling hoard, that the practice started after A.D. 404, possibly in A.D. 407 with the collapse of provincial administration (Burnett 1984). On the strength of the Stanchester hoard, Richard Abdy suggests A.D. 406 as a starting date (Abdy 2005, 84–8; Abdy and Robinson 2009; Abdy 2013, 107–9). However, Peter Guest has argued that the practice might have begun slightly earlier, after the cessation of production of *siliquae* at Milan in A.D. 402 and that it might have continued until as late as *c.* A.D. 420 (Guest 2005, 44; 1997, 413). A hoard of clipped *siliquae* found in the Pyrenees may indicate the presence of British troops who had left the province with Constantine III's army in A.D. 407 (Berdeaux-Le Brazidec and Hollard 2008).

Whilst it has been argued that *siliquae* were clipped in order to reduce the weight of coins to match silver issues of the Visigoths and Vandals (King 1981, 9), it is more likely the silver was taken for bullion, allowing the remaining coin to continue in circulation (Burnett 1984). The head of the

9 See Kent 1954 and 1978, 21–2 for the use of this approach.

10 The hoard will be published in a forthcoming volume of *CHRB*; *Money and Medals Newsletter* 57 (December 2012), 1–2.

11 *RIC* X, nos 1227–8.

12 AVGGGG refers to Constantine III, Arcadius, Honorius and Theodosius II.

emperor was not touched by clipping, although the inscriptions could be totally removed. This respect for the imperial portrait may suggest that, even if of reduced weight, *siliquae* still played a role as currency. It is highly likely that some of the clippings were used to make copies of *siliquae* which circulated alongside the official issues, as evidenced by the Hoxne hoard (Guest 2005, 146ff.). However, it is also possible that some clippings were melted down to create ingots of fixed weight, probably alongside hack-silver, cut from late Roman silver plate (Abdy 2013, 109).

We know that ingots were increasingly used for payment in the late Roman world and its peripheries. For example, the Coleraine hoard from Northern Ireland contained a mixture of clipped *siliquae*, terminating with a coin of Constantine III (A.D. 407–8), hack-silver from Roman plate, and ingots of fixed weights (Robertson 2000, 405–6, no. 1621). A similar hoard with hack-silver and clipped *siliquae* was found at Traprain Law in East Lothian (Robertson 2000, 402–3, no. 1617; Guest 2013, 100–2). In the Coleraine hoard, there were fragments of official silver 'ox-hide' ingots, but also unmarked ingots: two flat ingots of good quality silver which weighed a pound each; three smaller finger ingots of lesser weight which contained more trace elements suggesting a wider range of metal sources (Abdy 2013, 110–11). An 'ox-hide' and an official ingot were also found in the Canterbury hoard, and a finger ingot has been found in excavation at Vindolanda (Robertson 2000, no. 1541; Wiegels 2003, pl. V, 1–2; PAS NCL-62C367). The Coleraine hoard shows the transition from an economy in which bullion was normally stored as coin to one where bullion could consist in a variety of forms: coin, plate and ingots. The use of hack-silver is also attested in the Traprain Law and Patching hoards, both deposited in the fifth century (Robertson 2000, 402–3, no. 1617; Hunter and Painter 2013; Orna-Ornstein 2009).

The majority of late Roman coin hoards contain silver coins — 90 are solely of silver and almost 70 other hoards contain silver coins (see Table 1). These hoards can vary in size from only two or three pieces (such small hoards are increasingly being found by detectorists) to hoards of several hundred, or even thousands, as in the case of the Hoxne hoard. Determining the *terminus post quem* for late silver hoards is problematic because *siliquae* of Constantine III (A.D. 407–11) are so rare and are normally only found in large hoards, such as those found at Hoxne, Coleraine and Haynes (see above). By analysing the composition of late silver hoards against the Hoxne hoard, Guest has shown that a number of hoards with an earlier *terminus post quem* (notably the many hoards ending with *RIC* X, 1227–8, Milan *siliquae* of Honorius and Arcadius, *c.* A.D. 397–402) were probably collected or deposited at the same time as Hoxne or in some cases even later (Guest 1997, 420, figs 2e–f). Furthermore, Guest argues that many late bronze hoards post-date Constantine III and some might be later than Hoxne (ibid., 415 and 421–2, figs 3b–c). It is apposite that in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, written in the late ninth century, the record for 418 states: 'In this year the Romans collected all the treasures which were in Britain and hid some in the earth so that no one afterwards could find them, and some they took with them to Gaul' (Garmonsway 1953, 10–11).

After the traditional date for the demise of the diocese in around A.D. 408–11, very few new silver coins arrived in Britain, although it should be noted that the production of silver coins in the Empire had already declined markedly after A.D. 402. The later silver issues of Constantine III (struck A.D. 408–11), inscribed VICTORIA AVGGG, are even rarer than Constantine's earlier issues in Britain and only two specimens have been recorded — one at Richborough and one in the Patching hoard (Reece 1968, 200; Orna-Ornstein 2009, 392, no. 43). The Patching hoard also contained a *siliqua* of Theodosius II from Trier, struck *c.* A.D. 425–30 (Orna-Ornstein 2009, 392, no. 44). Two similar *siliquae* of Theodosius II were found pierced for use as jewellery along with a later *siliqua* of Athemius (A.D. 467–72) in an early medieval grave at Chatham Lines in Kent (Blackburn 1988).

BRONZE

The striking of bronze *nummi* of the VICTORIA AVGGG type at Trier, Arles and Lyons ceased around A.D. 395 and very few pieces arrived in Britain after this date.[13] Aquileia also ceased to

13 *LRBC* 109, VICTORIA AVGGG type 2; for a general overview of late Roman coinage, see *RIC* X and Moorhead 2012; for a general overview of late Roman coinage in Britain, see Reece 2002, 59–66.

strike bronze soon afterwards (Delmaire 1983, 166) and, in the West, only Rome continued to issue the SALVS REI PVBLICAE *nummi* until A.D. 402.[14]

A number of major excavations have produced large quantities of late Roman bronze issues of the House of Theodosius (A.D. 388–402, Reece Period 21). The two most notable sites are Richborough (Kent), with over 27,000 late *nummi*, and Caerwent, with over 6,000 (Reece 1991, 119 and Robertson 2000, 379–82, nos 1543–51A; Guest and Wells 2007, 24–43, nos 18–63). Both of these sites have also produced a large number of hoards of *nummi*, some containing thousands of coins (Robertson 2000, 379–82, nos 1543–51A; 401–2, nos 1611–15; Guest and Wells 2005, 25, no. 18 *passim*). Other sites with a large number of Theodosian *nummi* include various locations across London (Gerrard 2011), Silchester (Hants.) (Reece 1991, 45), Wanborough (Wilts.) (Reece 1991, 64–5), Nettleton (Wilts.) (Reece 1991, 131), Cirencester (Glos.) (Reece 1991, 39–43), and Uley (Glos.) (Reece 1991, 140). A large number of other sites in the south and south-west of the province have smaller assemblages, but with a higher than average proportion of Theodosian pieces. Beyond the South, however, there are only a handful of sites with significant numbers of late coins. These include Water Newton (Cambs.), Ashton (Northants.) and Sapperton (Lincs.) (Reece 1991, 44, 80–1, 76). In the North, recent study has shown that three sites have a significant proportion of Theodosian coins: Vindolanda, Corbridge and South Shields (Collins 2013). Hoards are found in the same regions as site-finds, again mostly in the South and South-West, and range in size from several thousand to fewer than fifty pieces. What is interesting is that a large number of the assemblages come from military or urban sites (see below).

After A.D. 402, only a handful of *nummi* arrived in the province before A.D. 407–11, notably two VRBS ROMA FELIX pieces of Rome (A.D. 404–8), one from near Bowood (Wilts.) and another from near Guildford (Surrey). Another piece was reputedly found at Heddon-on-the-Wall (Northumbd), but there is some question as to whether this actually represents an ancient loss (*RIC* X, 1271–83; King 1977/8, 185, no. 448; Kent 1954, 119, n. 8; Robertson 2000, 363, no. 1494; Collins 2008, 259). Five further coins from unclear eastern Mediterranean mints are recorded from Britain: a VIRTVS EXERCITI piece of Arcadius (A.D. 395–401)[15] and a Theodosius II CONCORDIA AVGGG cross type (A.D. 404–6)[16], both from the Isle of Wight; and three GLORIA ROMANORVM (three emperor) pieces of the House of Theodosius (struck A.D. 406–8) from Didcot (Oxon.), Great Chesterford (Essex), and just north of Hadrian's Wall, from a small hoard at Great Whittington (Northumbd).[17]

After Constantine III's reign (post-A.D. 411), there are up to nine *nummi* with British findspots. One is a GLORIA ROMANORVM piece of Theodosius II, probably from Thessalonica (struck A.D. 408–23), said to be from Clywd (Abdy and Williams 2005, 31, no. 56, type as *RIC* X, 395ff.). There are three *nummi* of the VICTORIA AVGG type from Rome struck for Honorius (*c.* A.D. 421–3), one certainly from Verulamium and two possibly from Richborough (Abdy and Williams 2005, 30, nos 48–50, *RIC* X, 1357).[18] Finally, there are five *nummi* of Valentinian III, dating to *c.* A.D. 425–35: one VICTORIA AVGG two Victories type from near St Albans (Herts.) (Abdy and Williams 2005, 31, no. 57, *RIC* X, 2131–2), one VOT PVB camp-gate piece from Wroxeter (Shrops.) (Abdy and Williams 2005, 31, 58, *RIC* X, 2135), and three VICTORIA AVGGG Victory advancing coins from Dunstable (Beds.), near St Albans (Herts.) and Richborough (Kent) (Abdy and Williams 2005, 31–2, nos 59–61, *RIC* X, 2138–9).[19]

To summarise, it can be stated that very few bronze coins arrived after the extinction of bronze production at Western mints in A.D. 395. Silver disappears soon after A.D. 402 and gold soon

14 *RIC* X, 1245–9.

15 IOW-E616B4 (Allen *et al.* 2008, 270, no. 54), type as *RIC* X, 56ff.

16 IOW-D05764, type as *RIC* X, 106ff.

17 Type as *RIC* X, 141a ff.; Abdy and Williams 2005, 31, no. 51; *Numismatic Chronicle* 1934, 227 and Kent 1954, 119, n. 8; Collins 2008, 257, no. 8 (NCL-EE2655).

18 Moorhead believes that these pieces might be more realistically dated *c.* A.D. 410–23.

19 Kent also records a GLORIA ROMANORVM emperor holding standard and shield type (struck at Lyons and Arles) from Caerhun (N Wales), but this coin is not recorded in Guest and Wells 2007 (Kent 1954, 118, no. 5).

after A.D. 408. After the reign of Constantine III (A.D. 407–11), a small number of bronze *nummi* arrived until *c.* A.D. 430; very few silver *siliquae* from the later issues of Constantine III (struck A.D. 408–11) or for Theodosius II (struck *c.* A.D. 425–30) and Anthemius (A.D. 467–72) have been found; a constant trickle of fifth-century gold pieces continued to arrive in the diocese between A.D. 411 and 491. What is clear is that there was no major influx of Roman coinage after the first part of Constantine III's reign.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF COIN FINDS IN LATE AND SUB-ROMAN BRITAIN

Bland and Loriot show conclusively that there was a major shrinkage in the distribution of gold coin loss between the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. (Bland and Loriot 2010, 42–3, figs 33–4). In the fourth century, hoards of gold coins are found as far afield as Corbridge (Northumbd), Holyhead (Anglesey) and Cornwall with a significant number from the Midlands. In the fifth century, the hoards and single finds are largely confined to the South-East, with concentrations from Kent to East Anglia, and the South, from West Sussex and the Isle of Wight to Dorset (FIGS 1–2).

Mapping hoards terminating with coins of Honorius (with a *terminus post quem* of A.D. 402) and single finds of Theodosian *siliquae* (for the period A.D. 388–402) provides the most accurate indication of the distribution of silver coins in the last years of Roman Britain (FIG. 3). We can gain an insight to potentially even later coin-loss by plotting all clipped *siliquae* of Period 21 (A.D. 388–402) (FIG. 3). The picture presented is consistent, the majority of finds coming from the 'lowland' zone to the east of the Fosse Way with an extension into East and parts of North Yorkshire. Finds in Devon and Cornwall, Wales, the West Midlands, and the North-West and North-East are generally very rare. Walton has shown that this distribution pattern is very similar to that of coin-loss in the first and second centuries, so it is possible to argue that there was not in fact a gradual process of monetisation in Roman Britain (Walton 2012, 113–14). Both hoards and stray finds of *siliquae* are common in rural regions with very few specimens being found as site-finds on military or urban excavations; Richborough, and possibly Cirencester, are the notable exceptions (Reece 1972, table 1a). In contrast to silver coins, Bland and Loriot have shown that the majority of late Roman gold coins come from finds in military or urban contexts (Bland and Loriot 2010, 54, table 12).

Bronze hoards are found in a similar geographical zone as precious metal hoards, but they are more numerous in the southern part of the province (FIG. 4) (Guest 1997; Moorhead *et al.* forthcoming). Over a third of *nummus* hoards come from military or urban centres, notably Richborough, Canterbury and Caerwent. This concentration on military and urban sites is much greater than for silver hoards, but more in keeping with the finds of gold coins. This phenomenon is shared by the distribution of single-finds of Theodosian *nummi*, with many of the major assemblages coming from military and urban centres, again Richborough, Canterbury and Caerwent, but also Dorchester-on-Thames, Cirencester and Alchester (FIG. 4) (Moorhead *et al.* forthcoming). Using a statistical technique known as Cluster Analysis, Philippa Walton has shown how the distribution of bronze coinage across England changes over the course of the fourth century (FIGS 5–7). In the late third and fourth centuries, the distribution is at its widest with significant quantities of coinage found on often quite remote rural sites; in the mid-fourth century, this pattern shrinks. Finally, in the Theodosian period the sites with significant numbers of coins tend to be near to roads or at nodal points on the road system (Walton 2012, 103 *passim*). This accords well with the evidence from excavated finds that shows that the largest assemblages of Theodosian copper come from military or urban sites (see above), suggesting that there was little demand for or usage of late Roman *nummi* in rural areas.

Indeed, the distribution of *nummi* is in marked contrast to the distribution of *siliquae*. Although on excavations, stray finds of bronze *nummi* far outweigh the number of silver *siliquae* (316:1 at Richborough; Table 2), the PAS data show a much larger proportion of *siliquae* to *nummi*. This suggests that *siliquae* were relatively more common in the countryside than on urban sites. This may be because detectorists do not report these small and often virtually illegible coins, but our experience of dealing with large, complete, rural assemblages does seem to suggest that the finding is valid. It is possible that silver was accepted in rural areas because of its intrinsic

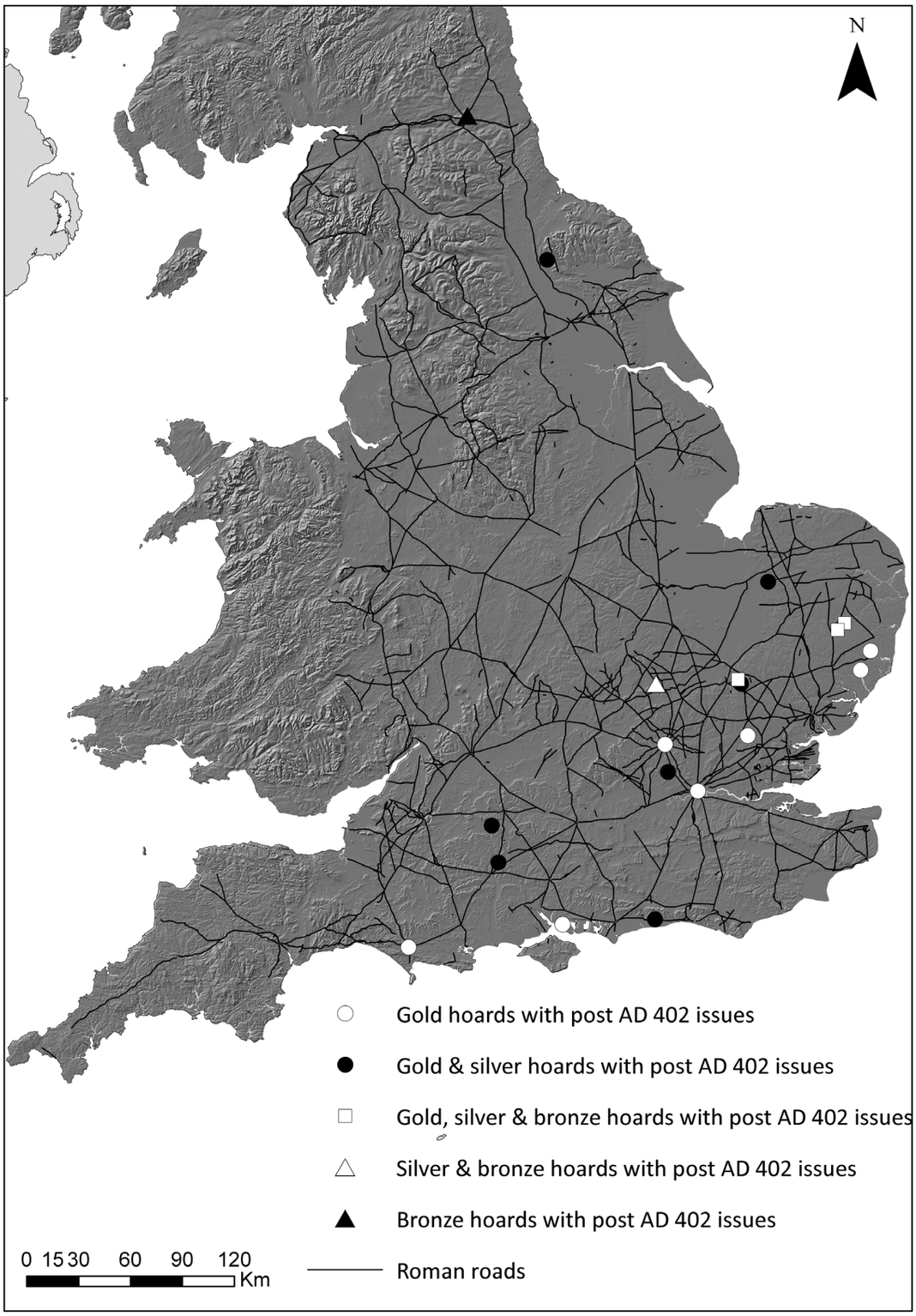

FIG. 1. Roman coin hoards from Britain with a *terminus post quem* of A.D. 402 or later. Note that the Traprain Law hoard (East Lothian, Scotland) and the Coleraine hoard (Northern Ireland) are off the map.

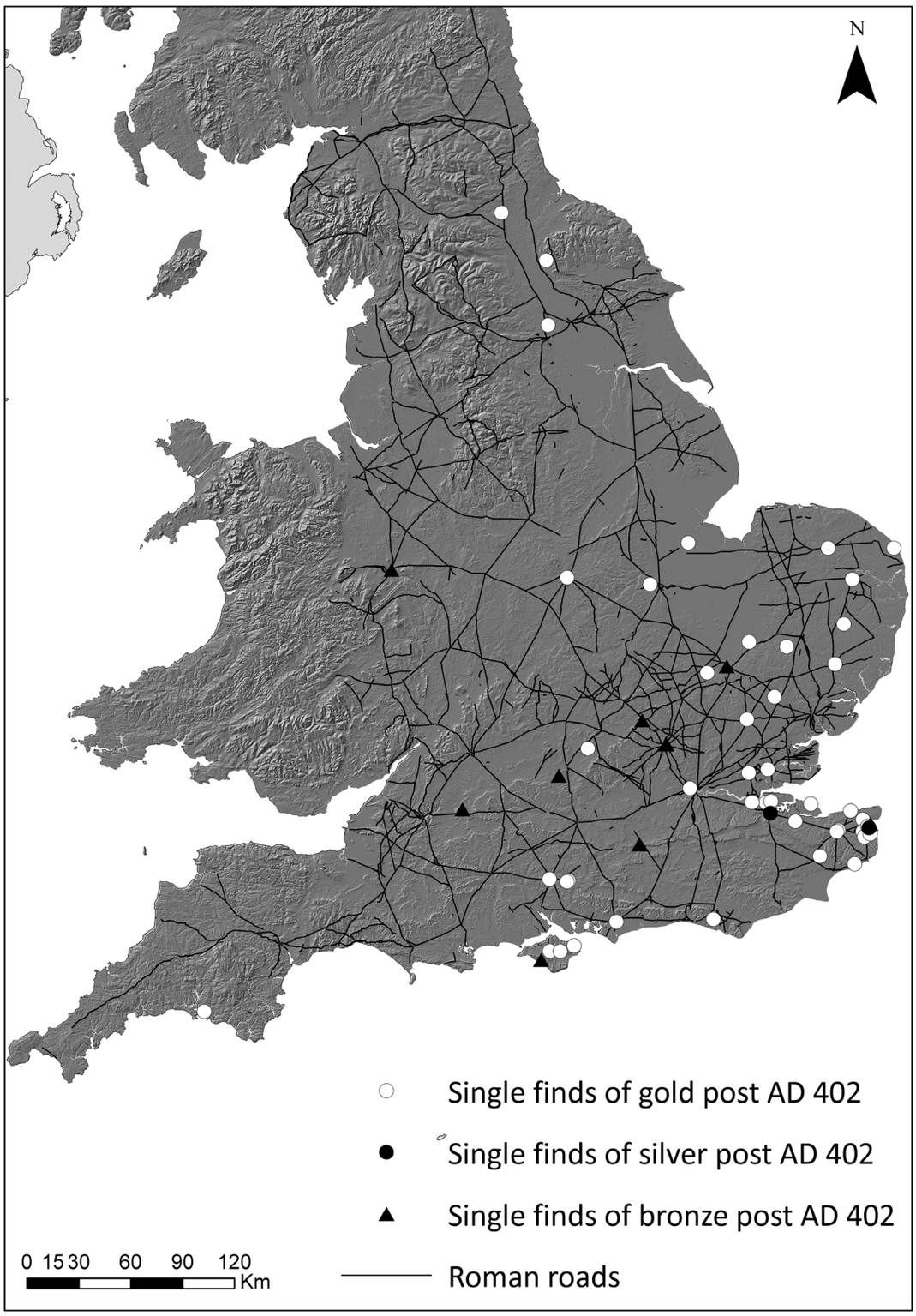

FIG. 2. Single finds of Roman coins in Britain, struck after A.D. 402.

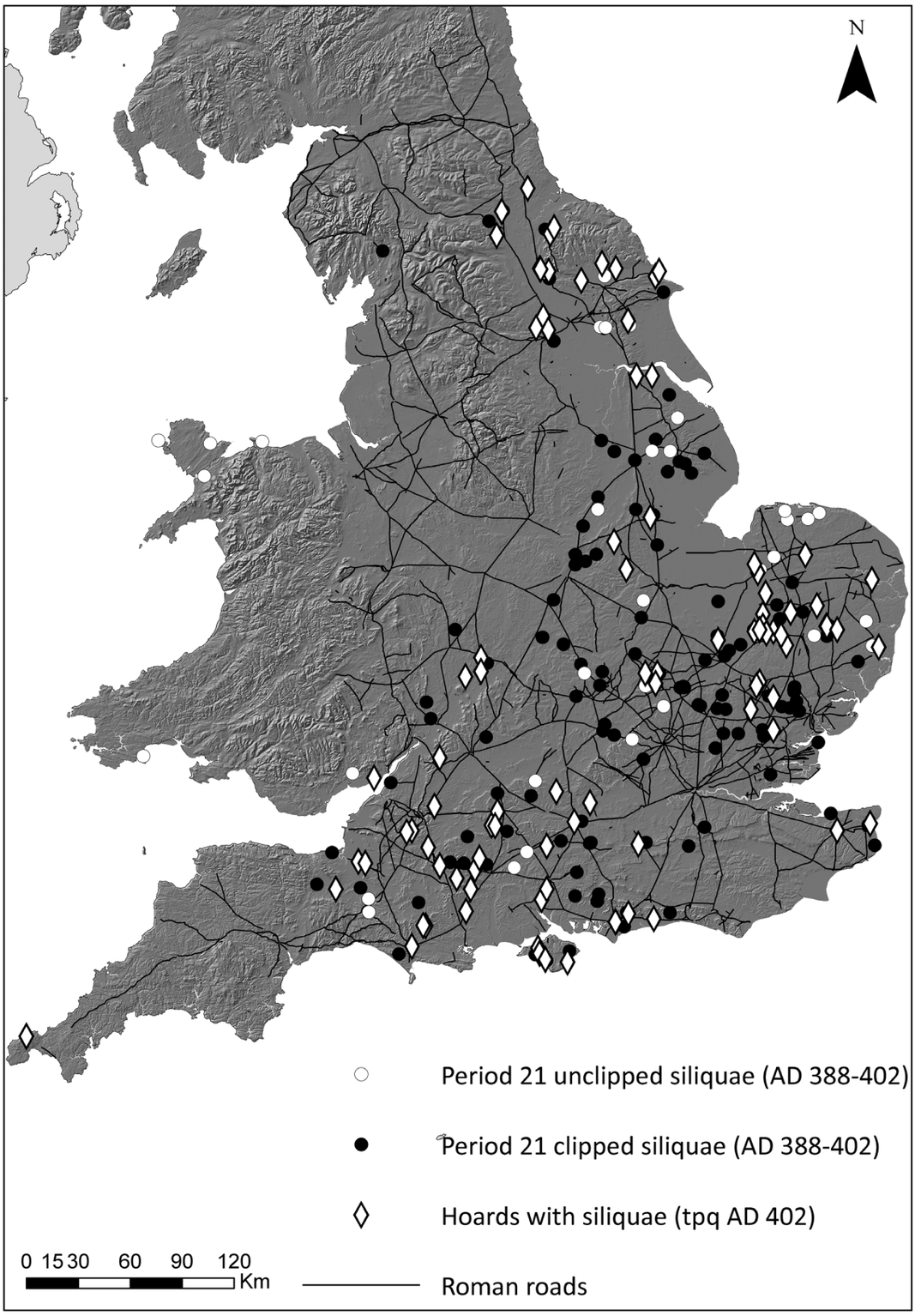

FIG. 3. Silver *siliquae* of the period A.D. 388–402 (Reece Period 21) found in Britain. (It is not recorded if the Welsh *siliquae* were clipped or not.)

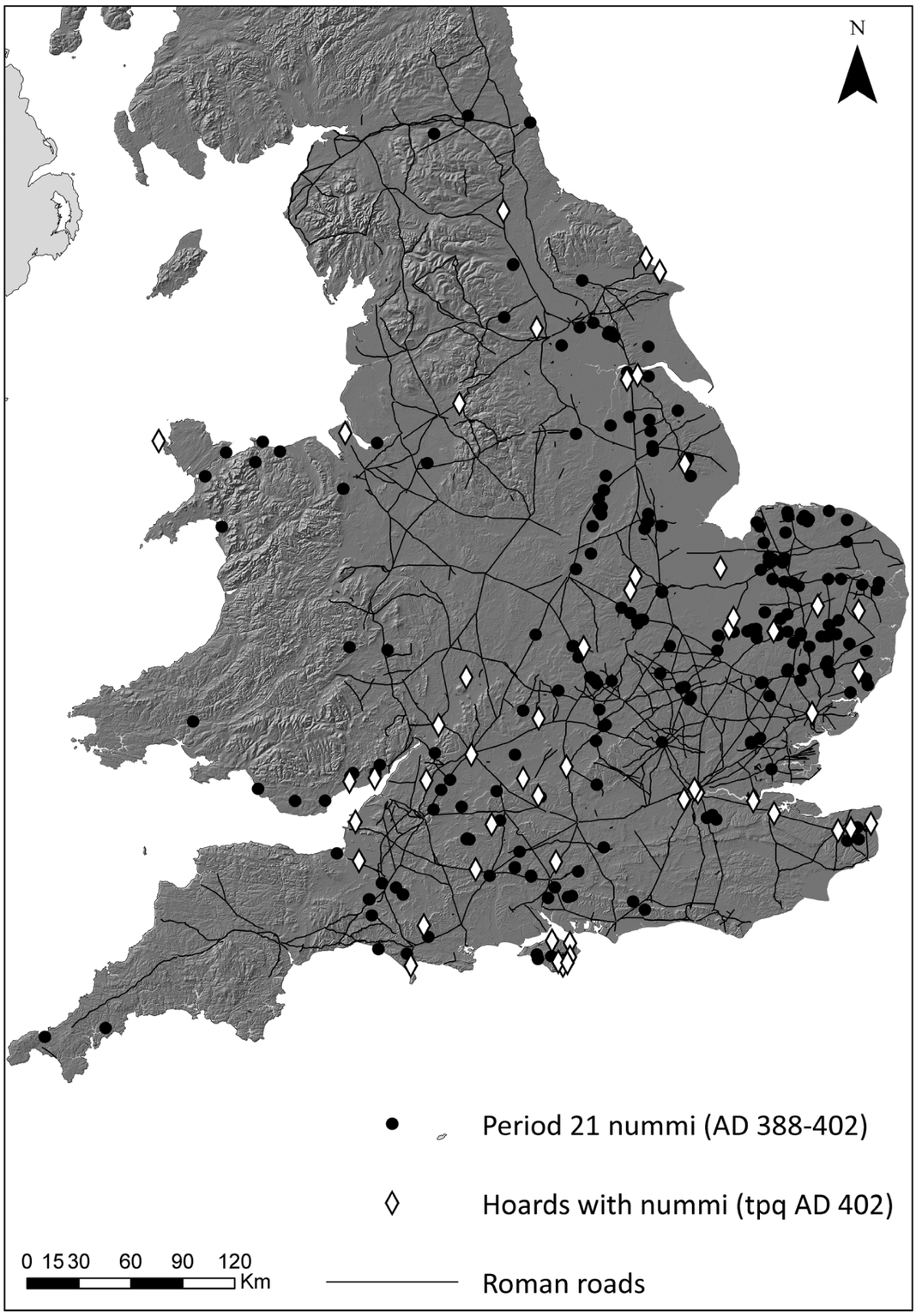

FIG. 4. Single-finds of Theodosian *nummi*, A.D. 388–402 (Reece Period 21) and bronze hoards with a *terminus post quem* of A.D. 402.

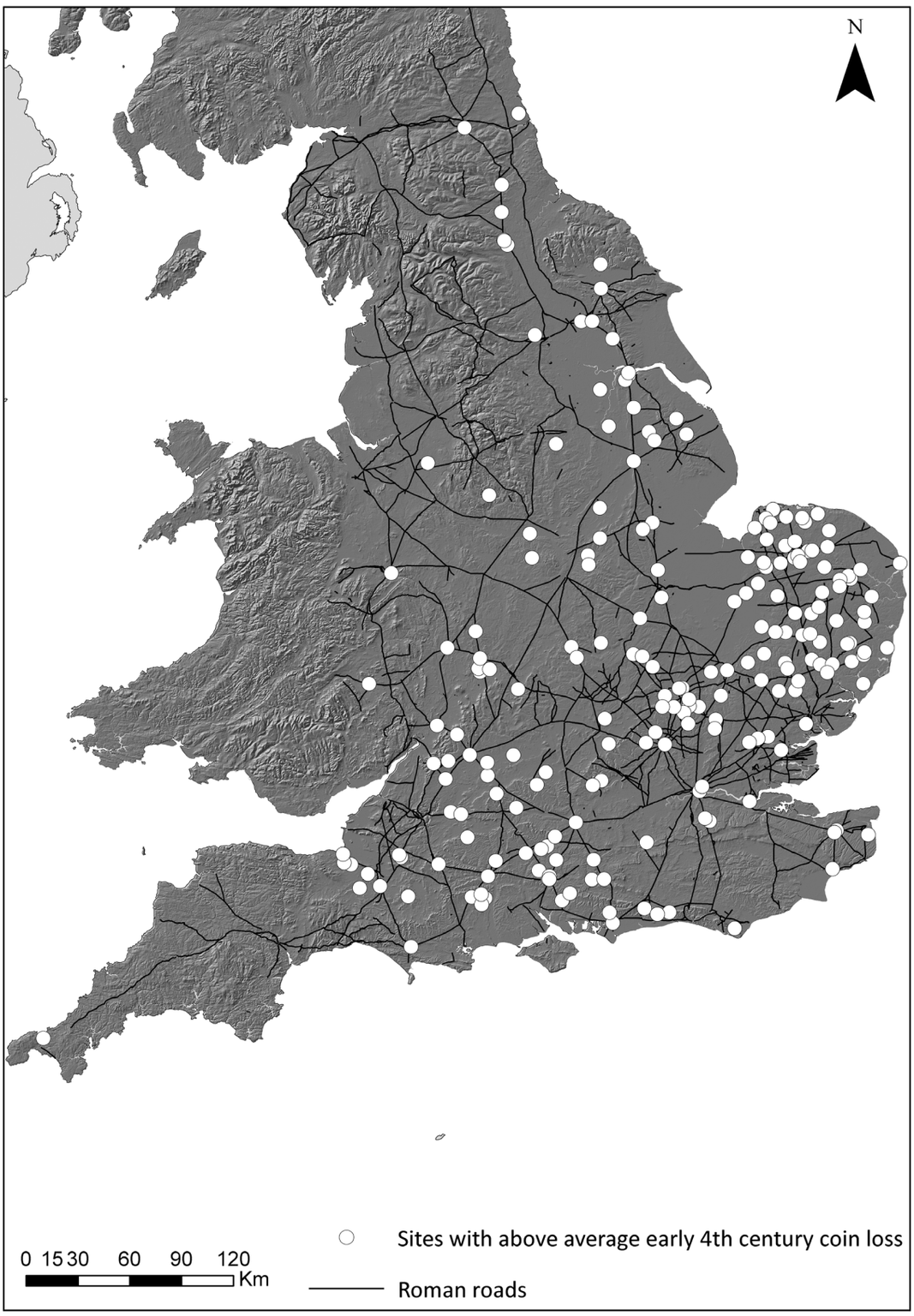

FIG. 5. Map showing assemblages with above-average coin-loss for the late third and early fourth centuries. (The assemblages were divided into three sub-groups based on their chronology using DMax Cluster Analysis. For more detailed discussion, see Walton 2012, 103 *passim*.)

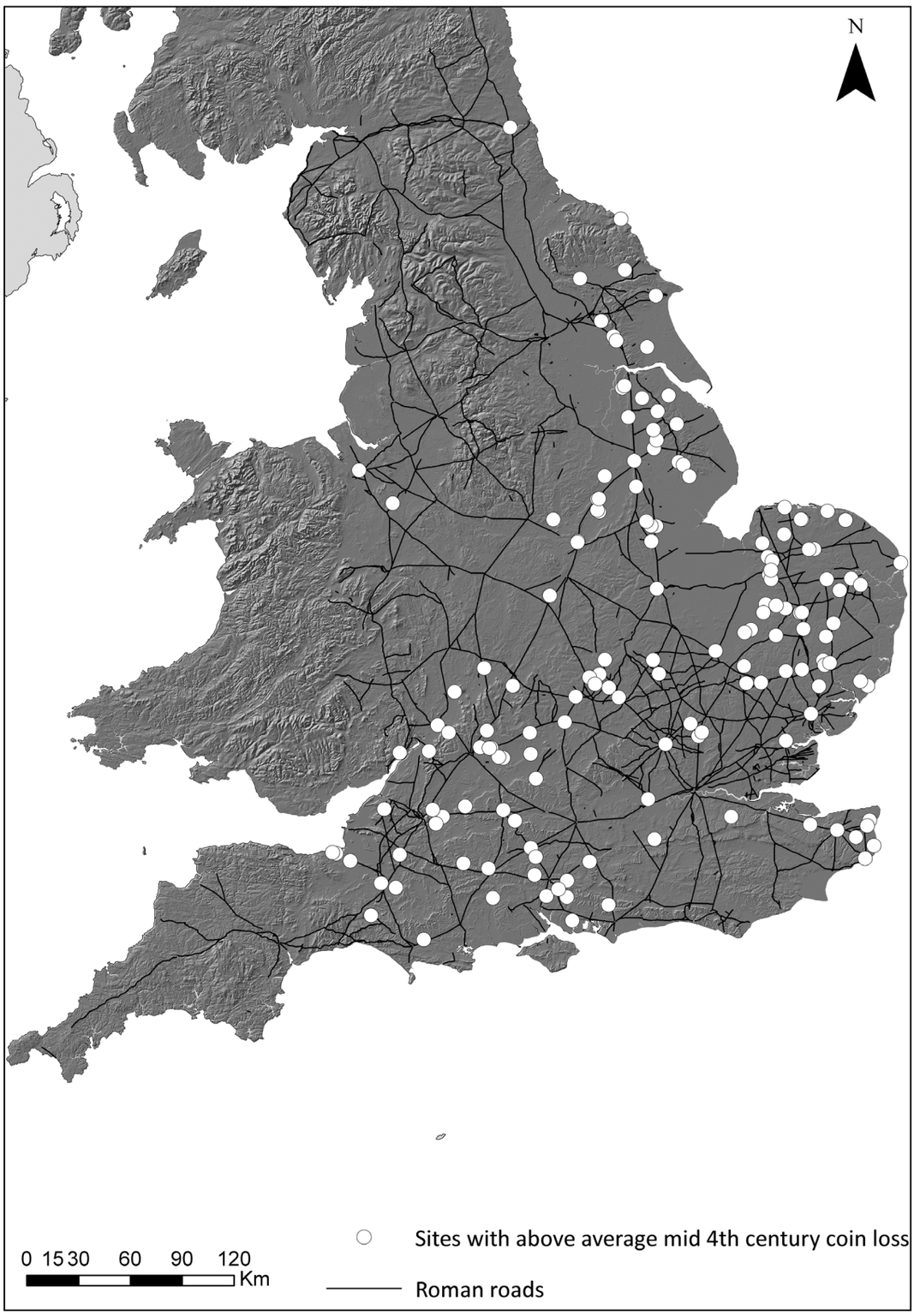

FIG. 6. Map showing assemblages with above-average coin-loss for the mid-fourth century. (The assemblages were divided into three sub-groups based on their chronology using DMax Cluster Analysis. For more detailed discussion, see Walton 2012, 103 *passim*.)

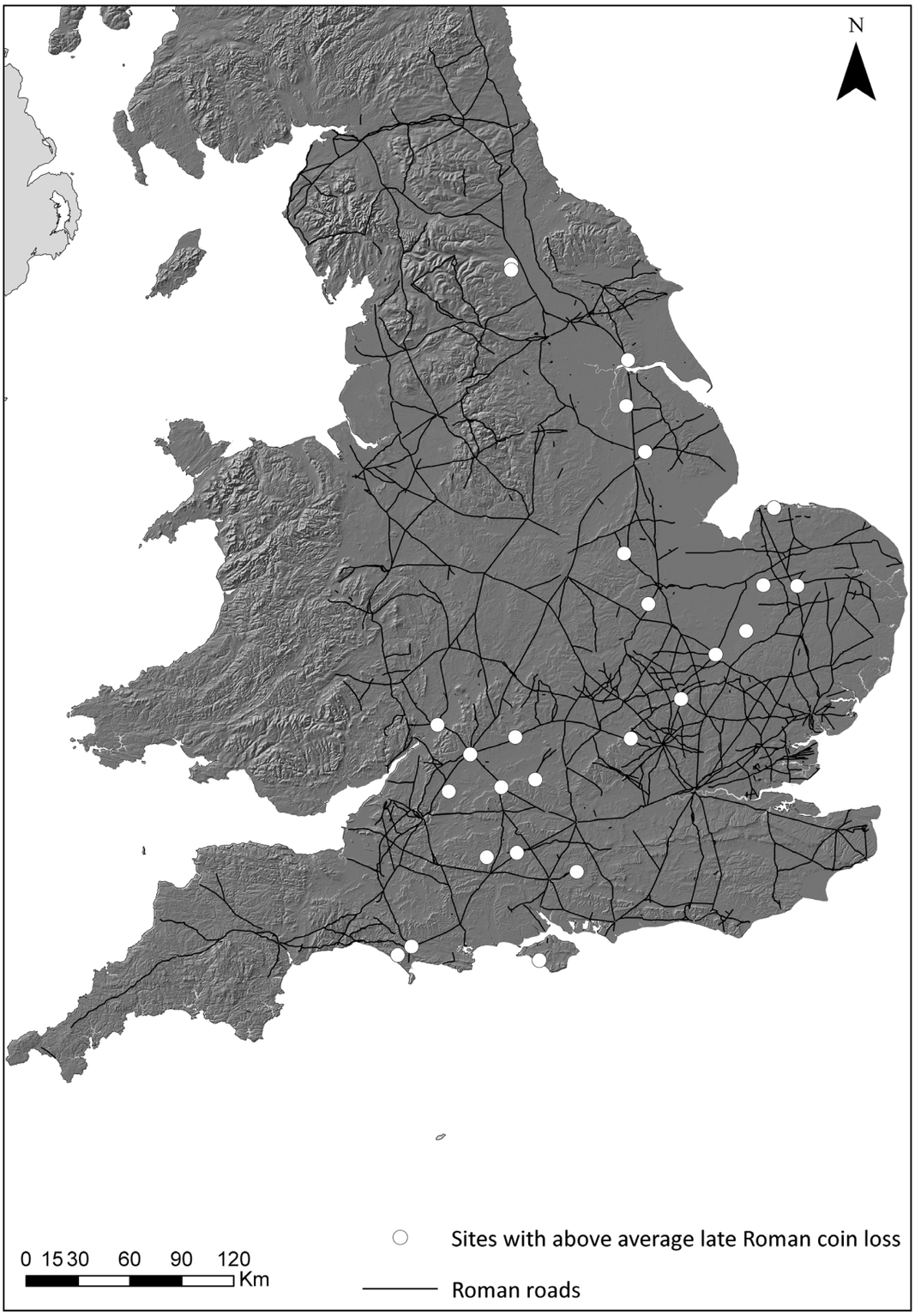

FIG. 7. Map showing assemblages with above-average coin-loss for the late fourth century. (The assemblages were divided into three sub-groups based on their chronology using DMax Cluster Analysis. For more detailed discussion, see Walton 2012, 103 *passim*.)

value as bullion, whereas bronze *nummi* only played a role in the much narrower economic spheres of urban and military life. One can also question whether the finds of *nummi* at certain urban centres, for example Dorchester-on-Thames and Canterbury, are intimately linked with a military presence (Moorhead *et al.* forthcoming; Wacher 1995, 203–5; Burnham and Wacher 1990, 121–2). In this regard, it is interesting to note that a large number of major assemblages and hoards of Theodosian bronze coins are found in coastal or estuarine regions. For example, they are present at Colchester, London, Canterbury and Richborough in the South-East, and there is a concentration of hoards on the Isle of Wight. Other hoards and site-finds are present at Caerwent and several sites in Gloucestershire which are close to the Severn Estuary. Finally, a concentration of pieces is known from Dorchester-on-Thames which is on the upper reaches of the Thames. Does this suggest that there were still strong links between the Continent and major centres in Britain which were easily accessible from the sea? Interestingly, in the Netherlands and Belgium, after a *lacuna* of coin-loss in the mid-fourth century, there is a sudden, albeit short-lived, spate of hoarding of Theodosian bronze coins in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Can one argue that the Roman authorities were trying to maintain maritime links between centres in southern Britain and the Rhineland (Moorhead *et al.* forthcoming; Stroobants 2013)?

TABLE 2. Relative proportions of *nummi* and *siliquae* from site assemblages and recorded with the Portable Antiquities Scheme (see Bland *et al.* 2013, 131, tables 6a–d)

Assemblage	Reference	Nummi	Siliquae	Ratio
Richborough	Reece 1991	22,750	72	316:1
Non-Richborough sites	Reece 1972	1,949	103	189:1
Caerwent	Guest and Wells 2007	3,463	1	3,463:1
Wales, non-Caerwent	Guest and Wells 2007	63	6	10.5:1
PAS England	www.finds.org.uk queried 12.12.2012	1,004	271	3.7:1

COIN USE IN BRITAIN IN THE EARLY FIFTH CENTURY

COIN USE *c.* A.D. 407–430

It is clear from late Roman precious metal hoards that coinage was in use during and probably after the reign of Constantine III (A.D. 407–11). There are coins struck for him and for Arcadius and Honorius in the Hoxne hoard, dating to A.D. 407–8, which have been clipped, suggesting that they had been in circulation for a little while before deposition (Guest 2005, nos 748–53). Clipped coins of Constantine III are also found in the Coleraine hoard (see above) and the Haynes hoard (Robertson 2000, no. 1621; Inscker and Orna-Ornstein 2009, 385, nos 97–8). What is significant is that the Constantine III coins found in Britain are nearly all from his early issues of A.D. 407–8. This suggests that later coins of Constantine III did not arrive in Britain in significant numbers, possibly due to the rebellion against Roman authority recorded in A.D. 409 by Zosimus (Zosimus 6.5–6). The notable examples of later issues of Constantine III come from Richborough and the Patching hoard (West Sussex) which was deposited many decades later *c.* A.D. 470, when one can argue that Roman coin use in Britain had long since ceased (Reece 1968, 200; Orna-Ornstein 2009, 392, no. 43) (FIGS 1–2).

If silver coinage continued to be in circulation after the reign of Constantine III, albeit in dwindling numbers and alongside hack-silver and ingots, bronze coinage seems to have ceased to circulate widely in great numbers earlier (see above). As we have already noted, Theodosian bronze coins, in hoards and as stray finds, tend to be found in greatest numbers at military and

urban sites and at nodal points on the road network. Although most Theodosian bronze coins are struck before *c.* A.D. 395 (see above), the few fifth-century pieces found suggest that there was possibly still some supply of bronze coinage in the province until *c.* A.D. 430.[20] The early fifth-century VRBS ROMA FELIX, GLORIA ROMANORVM and CONCORDIA AVGGG pieces (see above) quite probably arrived in the years A.D. 407–11. However, the three Honorius pieces (dating to *c.* A.D. 410–23; see above) and five Valentinian III pieces (dating to *c.* A.D. 425–35; see above) must have arrived significantly after the traditional date for the collapse of the diocese. Their findspots at Richborough (3), St Albans (3), Dunstable and Wroxeter do seem to suggest that there was some arrival of fresh coin in Britain in the decades after A.D. 407–11 (Abdy 2005, 91–4; Moorhead 2005) (FIG. 2). The presence of these coins may suggest some form of official intervention from the Continent, perhaps linked in some way to the legend of St Germanus (Moorhead and Stuttard 2012, 249)?

In most mixed silver and bronze hoards, silver coins are normally present in much greater numbers, as if the bronze coins were almost an afterthought; this was probably because bronze was not worth hoarding for people operating outside the urban and military spheres.[21] There are some exceptions, notably the Bishops Cannings hoard (Wilts.) which contained 1 gold, 1,569 silver and 5,837 bronze coins. Peter Guest notes that the profile of the silver coins suggests that this is a very late hoard, possibly contemporary with the Hoxne hoard. If this is the case, it suggests that bronze coinage (Theodosian and earlier Valentinianic) was still in use, or at least being hoarded, at this late date (Guest 1997, 415; Moorhead 2005, 103–4). It could also be argued that such a hoard of mixed silver and bronze was in official hands before deposition, the coins representing money that could still be used, or accepted by, members of the army or administration.

COIN USE POST-*c.* A.D. 440

After the A.D. 430s, a number of gold imperial pieces continued to arrive in Britain. Alongside these official pieces was a steady input of barbarian and pseudo-imperial pieces, copies of official coins made by various barbarian tribes on the Continent, notably the Visigoths and Franks (Abdy and Williams 2005, 114–51). Bland and Loriot list a significant number of pieces from the second half of the fifth century into the eighth century (Bland and Loriot 2010, 84–5, table 32). Many of these gold coins were re-purposed as jewellery and a number come from graves (Abdy and Williams 2005, 23–9, nos 6–47; Abdy 2009b and c). That the term *solidus* was still used in Britain in the fifth century is shown by its use in a letter written by St Patrick.[22] However, there are two hoards which date to the later fifth century. One, the Oxborough hoard from Suffolk, can be dated to around A.D. 475 or later and consists of three coin pendants — one with a silver *denarius* of Severus Alexander (A.D. 222–35) and two with late Roman *solidi* of Severus III (*c.* A.D. 461) and Julius Nepos (*c.* A.D. 474–5) (Abdy 2009b and c). The Patching hoard, found in West Sussex, consists of 13 imperial and 10 Visigothic *solidi*, 3 *miliarenses*, 23 imperial and 3 Visigothic *siliquae*, and one Roman Republican *denarius*. In addition, the hoard contained 54 pieces of scrap silver and two gold rings (White 1998; White *et al.* 1999; Abdy 2005; Orna-Ornstein 2009; Abdy 2009c). Richard Abdy argues that 'Patching records the transition from Roman Britain, where coins were specific to financial transactions, to that of a bullion using society where coins (so long as they were of precious metal) were incidental' (Abdy 2005, 94). He suggests that perhaps we could view Patching as 'Britain's earliest early-medieval coin hoard'. Finally, the finds of fifth-century *siliquae* in an early medieval burial at Chatham Lines (see above) is further evidence for the arrival of coins from the Continent at this time.

20 These *nummi* probably arrived with individuals in a similar manner to earlier *quadrantes* in the first and second centuries (McIntosh and Moorhead 2011).

21 Hoxne has only 24 *nummi* alongside 577 gold and 14,643 silver pieces.

22 Patrick, *Epistola* 14: '*mittunt viros sanctos idoneos ad Francos et ceteras gentes cum tot milia solidorum ad redimendos captivos baptizatos*' / 'they send suitable holy men to the Franks and other peoples with so many thousand solidi to ransom baptised captives' (Hood 1978, 37 and 57).

There were no bronze coins in the Patching hoard and indeed barely any base metal coins arrived in Britain after the *nummi* of Valentinian III mentioned above.[23] One can mention a single later fifth-century bronze piece of Odovacar, struck in Rome *c.* A.D. 489–91, and found in a Saxon grave at Barfreston in Kent in the nineteenth century (Abdy and Williams 2005, 40, no. 122; Moorhead 2009, 269, no. 3). This absence of bronze coins confirms Abdy's statement that the narrow urban and military economy of Roman Britain, and neighbouring parts of the Continent, had collapsed, leaving only a bullion economy. It should be noted that finds of late Roman bronze coins at Wroxeter and other post-Roman British sites have been used to argue for the continued use of coinage in the early Anglo-Saxon period, although the archaeological contexts can be disputed and the presence of coins in the archaeological record does not necessarily imply their use in anything approaching a monetary economy (Dark 1994, 200–6; Dark 2000, 143–4; Reece 2002, 63–6; Williams 2010, 56). Finally, although finds of later copper Byzantine coins in Britain show that base metal coins did arrive on these shores in the sixth and seventh centuries, there is no reason to believe that these coins served an economic function in early medieval Britain (Moorhead 2009). Indeed, the evidence suggests that coin use, in whatever form it took, dwindled in the early fifth century, although vestiges of it might have survived until as late as *c.* A.D. 430.

ABBREVIATIONS

CHRB *Coin Hoards from Roman Britain* I–X (British Museum Press, 1979–97); XI (Royal Numismatic Society Special Publication 36, 2002), XII–XIII (Moneta 97 and 113, 2009–10)
LRBC R. A. G. Carson, P. V. Hill and J. P. C. Kent, *Late Roman Bronze Coinage* (1960)
RIC X J. P. C. Kent, *Roman Imperial Coinage* X (1994)

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23 Byzantine bronze coins do start to arrive after the monetary reforms of Anastasius in A.D. 498 (see Moorhead 2009).

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