

ART. VI. – *Roman Coin-finds in Cumbria*

By D. C. A. SHOTTER

IN recent issues of these *Transactions*, I have discussed the significance of Roman coin hoards from Cumbria and that of the Roman coin finds at known Roman sites (CW2, lxxix, 5–17; lxxx, 1–15). I have also listed occasionally individual finds of Roman coins in the county; over the years a considerable number of such coins have been found, and the purpose of the present paper is to attempt an analysis of such coin-finds.

It is obvious that the known Roman sites represent only the ‘tip of the iceberg’ of Roman settlement; stray finds of coins and other material may therefore play their part in filling out the picture of settlement. Many of the finds have been reported lacking precise details of location and date; the following lists therefore provide as much information as is available.

First Century A.D. (19 coins)

Republican	Denarius (Crawford 346; 88 B.C.)	Penrith	c 1860
Augustus	Denarius	Ulverston (Conishead Priory)	c 1800
Tiberius		Burton-in-Lonsdale	
Claudius	Sestertius (RIC 78)	Cartmel	c 1975
	As (Copy: RIC 65)	Kendal	c 1950
	As (Copy: RIC 65)	Barrow (Furness Abbey)	1978
	As (RIC 84)	Scaleby	1982
	As (Copy: RIC 68)	Kingsmoor	1983
Nero	Aureus	Scalesceugh	1844
	Sestertius	Broughton-in-Furness	c 1800
	As (RIC 174)	Borrowdale	c 1970
	As (RIC 203)	Scaleby	1982
Otho	Denarius	Urswick	1798
Vespasian	Denarius (RIC 123)	Broughton-in-Furness	1978
	Denarius	Kirkby Stephen	1985
	As (RIC 486)	Barrow-in-Furness	
Titus	Denarius	Crosby Ravensworth	1985
Domitian	Denarius (RIC 19)	Leck	c 1860
Nerva	Denarius (RIC 16)	Gosforth (Halsenna)	1905

Second Century (29 coins)

Trajan	Denarius	Near Gretna	1981
	Denarius	Langsowerby	c 1955
	Sestertius	Cockermouth (Isel)	1871
	Sestertius	Pendragon Castle	c 1920
	Dupondius (Hill 502)	Borrowdale (Grange)	1987
	Dup/As	Barrow (Furness Abbey)	1913

Hadrian	Sestertius	Coast (Turret 13A)	
	Æ	Broughton-in-Furness	c 1800
	Æ	Broughton-in-Furness	c 1800
	Tetradrachm (Milne 1049)	Buttermere (Knott Riggs) Melmerby	c 1940 1983
Antoninus Pius	Denarius (Hill 508)	Gleaston Castle	c 1985
	Sestertius (RIC 941ff)	Barrow (Furness Abbey)	1913
	Sestertius	Harraby	1977
	Sestertius	Starling Castle	1948
	Sestertius	Wetheral	1980
	Æ	Scalesceugh Ulverston	1973 c 1830
Faustina I	Sestertius	Barrow (Furness Abbey)	1913
	Sestertius (BMC 1416)	Lamplugh	
M. Aurelius	Aureus	Kendal (Castle)	c 1880
	Æ	Torpenhow	c 1875
		Hawkshead	1896
Faustina II	Sestertius	Kendal	
	Sestertius	Kirkby Stephen	1985
	Æ	Ireby	c 1940
L. Verus	Denarius	Crosby Ravensworth	
Commodus	Denarius	Crosby Ravensworth	1987
		Barrow (Foulney Island)	1958
Third Century (20 coins)			
Septimus Severus	Sestertius	Stanwix	1976
Julia Domna	Aureus	Garrigill	
Elagabalus	Denarius (RIC 56)	Crosby Ravensworth	1985
Severus Alexander	Sestertius (RIC 676)	Blindcrake	c 1875
Philip	Antoninianus	Grange-over-Sands	c 1940
Trajan Decius	Antoninianus (RIC 12b)	Barrow (Beacon Hill)	c 1940
Volusian	Antoninianus (RIC 205)	Kendal	1988
Gallienus	Tetradrachm	Barrow (Furness Abbey)	1978
Claudius II	Radiate (RIC 53)	Barrow (Furness Abbey)	1978
	Tetradrachm (Milne 4265)	Barrow (Walney Island)	
	Tetradrachm	Barrow (Walney Island)	
Victorinus	Radiate (RIC 118)	Barrow (Furness Abbey)	1978
	Radiate	Cartmel	c 1945
	Radiate	Langdale	1973
Tetricus	Radiate	Cartmel	c 1945
Probus	Radiate	Workington	c 1875
	Radiate	Ulverston	pre 1836
Diocletian	Æ	Kirkandrews	1785
Maximian	Radiate (RIC Cyzicus 13)	Kendal	
	Radiate (RIC 388)	Near Whitley Castle	

Fourth Century (20 coins)

Constantius I	Æ	Longtown	1983
Galerius	Æ	Kirkby Lonsdale	1927
Constantine I	Æ (<i>RIC</i> Trier 775)	Barrow (Furness Abbey)	1913
	Æ (<i>RIC</i> Trier 305)	Longsowerby	1981
	Æ (<i>RIC</i> Siscia 52)	Parton	1984
	Æ (<i>LRBC</i> I.51)	Parton	1984
	Æ (<i>LRBC</i> I.88)	Cartmel	1985
	Æ (<i>LRBC</i> I.1356)	Barrow (Furness Abbey)	1866
	Æ	Dalton (Little Urswick)	1904
	Æ	Kirkandrews	1785
	Æ	Urswick	1904
		Whitehaven	
		Whitehaven	
Magnetius	Æ (<i>LRBC</i> II.49)	Barrow (Foulney Island)	1974
Valentinian I	Æ	Cartmel	c 1945
Valens	Solidus	Tebay	1926
	Æ	Kendal	c 1950
Gratian	Æ (<i>LRBC</i> II.529)	Parton	1984
Magnus Maximus		Broughton-in-Furness	c 1800
Theodosius	Solidus	Muncaster Castle	c 1800

N.B.

The three fourth century coins found at Parton (CW2, lxxxvi, 256) were there incorrectly located at Parton, near Wigton.

Coins of uncertain date and/or quantity

Alston (Denarii)	Edenmount (Coin)
Beaumont (Coins : 1884)	Eskmeals (Coins : 1837)
Brae Lees (Coins)	Fisher Cross (Coins)
Brinns	Mawbray (Coins)
Brompton (Coins)	St. Bridget Beckermeth (Coin)
Cark (Coins)	St. Cuthbert Without (Gold coin)
Dalston (Gold coin)	Seascale Hall (Coin)
Elliscales (Coins : pre-1835)	Starling Castle (Coins : 1907)
Dalton (Coin)	Todhole Beck (Coin)

Because of the vagueness of most of these reports, it is possible that some may conceal hoards – particularly the Alston denarii and the finds of single gold coins (*Aurei* or *Solidi*), as at Dalston and St. Cuthbert Without.

The identified coins are chronologically distributed as follows:

I	(-A.D.41)	3	3.41%	XII	(235-259)	3	3.41
II	(41-54)	5	5.68	XIII	(259-275)	9	10.23
III	(54-68)	4	4.54	XIV	(275-294)	1	1.14
IV	(69-96)	6	6.82	XV	(294-324)	8	9.09
V	(96-117)	7	7.95	XVI	(324-330)	-	-
VI	(117-138)	5	5.68	XVII	(330-346)	8	9.09
VII	(136-161)	9	10.23	XVIII	(346-364)	1	1.14
VIII	(161-180)	7	7.95	XIX	(364-378)	4	4.54
IX	(180-192)	2	2.27	XX	(378-388)	1	1.14
X	(192-222)	3	3.41	XXI	(388-)	1	1.14
XI	(222-235)	1	1.14				

The distribution reflects fluctuations commonly seen in coin-loss at known sites, with particular strength in the Flavian/Trajanic and Antonine periods, the mid-third century and again in the Constantinian period.

It is noteworthy that a significant number of pre-Flavian coins have been recovered, comprising Claudian coins (and copies), some pre-Claudian and Neronian issues. Apart from Republican *denarii*, of which one has come from Penrith, pre-Flavian coinage is not commonly found in Flavian coin assemblages. The majority of pre-Flavian issues have come from Furness and the area around Carlisle.

The appearance of such coins may suggest some pre-Flavian military activity by Roman armies amongst the western Brigantes; alternatively it may be indicative of economic activity with groups which under the influence of Queen Cartimandua's policies had already adopted a pro-Roman stance. The absence of a *known* military site at any stage in Furness may suggest the latter as a more suitable explanation based presumably on a trade in iron-ore – unless a site (or sites) still await discovery. In the case of the Carlisle area, although recent excavations have produced no evidence of pre-Agricolan military activity, it remains a possibility that the area was penetrated, either by sea or across Stainmore, at the beginning of the Flavian period – or even a little earlier.

Later first century issues are less difficult to explain, appearing as they do in the proximity of known routes of communication. Such coin-finds at places like Crosby Ravensworth, Kirkby Stephen and the vicinity of Burrow-in-Lonsdale could indicate a commercial relationship between local farmers and Roman military units, based presumably on the supply of food. Alternatively, such finds might indicate the existence of plots of land distributed to Roman Army veterans.

The topographical distribution of second century coins shows some inland penetration, reflecting perhaps the importance as focal points of the north/south route through the Eden and Lune Valleys and the route from Carlisle to the west coast through Red Dial. The growing economic importance of these areas has been established through a strong body of evidence from recent field-work (Higham 1986).

Chronologically, the distribution of second century coins has one major feature of interest – namely the relatively low showing of Hadrianic coins when compared with those of the Trajanic and Antonine periods. Since we should expect Hadrianic coins to circulate most freely in the early Antonine period, we should conclude that the use (and loss) of Hadrianic coins was affected by Antonine frontier developments in Scotland. The removal of considerable numbers of soldiers which was caused by the temporary

decommissioning of Hadrian's Wall and the Coastal system, and some other sites (Shotter 1975; 1984) may have effected a temporary depression in economic activity or simply a decline in the number of Hadrianic coins being reintroduced into the area. The marked 'recovery' in Antonine coin-loss is paralleled by a similar phenomenon at military sites, such as Ravenglass and Watercrook (Shotter 1980). The period from A.D. 165 onwards possibly represents one of the most thriving for the Cumbrian economy, as it also saw a strongly-recovered military deployment.

Third century coin loss in Cumbria is less well represented than that of the second century; that this, however, should not be taken to imply a diminution of wealth is suggested by the decision to establish at some stage, during the century, the civilian-controlled *Civitas Carvetiorum* (Jones and Higham 1985). Such a shift in control, however, must argue for a smaller volume of troops in the area, with consequently smaller consignments of cash to pay them – and this at a period when inflation had tended to render small change redundant.

The presence in the sample of relatively rare finds such as those of Philip, Trajan Decius and Volusian should be noted, as should the Alexandrian tetradrachms of Gallienus and Claudius II from Barrow, to which should be added the issue of Hadrian from Melmerby. It is generally thought that these eastern Mediterranean coins reached Britain by way of commerce. Few radiates have been found away from the main centres – perhaps surprising in view of the very large numbers of such coins to have come from such sites as Carlisle where they make up 30% – 40% of the total sample. Again, Furness has provided a large proportion (50%) of the known third century coins.

As always, fourth century coin-loss is harder to discuss because of our greater ignorance of the working of the coin-system and the effect of the *annona militaris*, the practice of paying soldiers at least partly in kind (Casey 1974). Few fourth century coins have been found other than at coastal locations, with Furness remaining strongly represented; this presumably indicates the growing strategic importance of coastal defence in Cumbria (Potter 1979), as happens in other parts of Britain. In addition to those coins which have been clearly identified we should note that a considerable number of coastal locations have been provided for coins of unspecified date; failure or inability to identify more often than not points to coins of third or fourth century date.

It should be noted that two of the finds – at Tebay and Muncaster Castle – are of single gold *solidi*, which may be indicative that these finds were of hoarded coins. The chronological distribution of fourth century coins shows particular strength in the Constantinian period, and a further 'peak' in the Valentinianic – in common with most-known sites in the area. The fact that two late fourth century coins – those of Magnus Maximus and Theodosius – have been found, indicates that coastal defence remained significant into the latest years of the fourth century, and perhaps into the fifth, a feature paralleled at Lancaster (Jones and Shotter 1988, 189ff).

In short, whilst nothing can be *proved* on the basis of stray coin finds, it can be seen that such evidence is of value in that it is capable of supporting hypotheses, which are themselves a contribution to the wider discussion of the Roman period in Cumbria. In particular, questions are raised about coastal occupation – not least along the Furness coast, where the volume and regularity of such finds serves to keep alive the enigma of whether or not it supported Roman sites. It is, however, clear that the present absence

of major sites in the area must not be taken to indicate that it was without significance to the economy of north-west England.

References

- RIC*: Mattingly, H., Sydenham, E. A. and Sutherland, C. H. V. (Eds.), *The Roman Imperial Coinage* (London, 1923-83).
- BMC*: Mattingly, H., *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* (London, 1923).
- LRBC*: Hill, P. V., Carson, R. A. G. and Kent, J. P. C. (Eds.), *Late Roman Bronze Coinage* (London, 1960).
- Crawford: Crawford, M. H., *Roman Republican Coinage* (Cambridge, 1974).
- Hill: Hill, P. V., *The Dating and Arrangement of the Undated Coins of Rome, A.D. 98-148* (London, 1970).
- Milne: Milne, J. G., *A Catalogue of Alexandrian Coins* (London, 1971).
- Casey 1974: Casey, P. J., "The Interpretation of Romano-British Site Finds", pp. 37-51, in Casey, P. J. and Reece, R. (Eds.), *Coins and The Archaeologist* (Oxford, B.A.R.).
- Higham 1986: Higham, N. J., *The Northern Counties to A.D. 1000* (London).
- Jones and Higham 1985: Jones, G. D. B. and Higham, N. J., *The Carvetii* (Gloucester).
- Jones and Shotton 1988: Jones, G. D. B. and Shotton D. C. A., *Roman Lancaster* (Manchester).
- Potter 1979: Potter, T. W., *The Romans in North-west England* (Kendal).
- Shotton 1975: Shotton, D. C. A., Coin Evidence and the Northern Frontier in the Second Century A.D., *P.S.A.S.* CVII, 81-91.
- Shotton 1980: Shotton, D. C. A., "The Roman Occupation of North-west England: The Coin Evidence", *CW2*, lxxx, 1-15.
- Shotton 1984: Shotton, D. C. A., *Roman North-west England* (Lancaster).

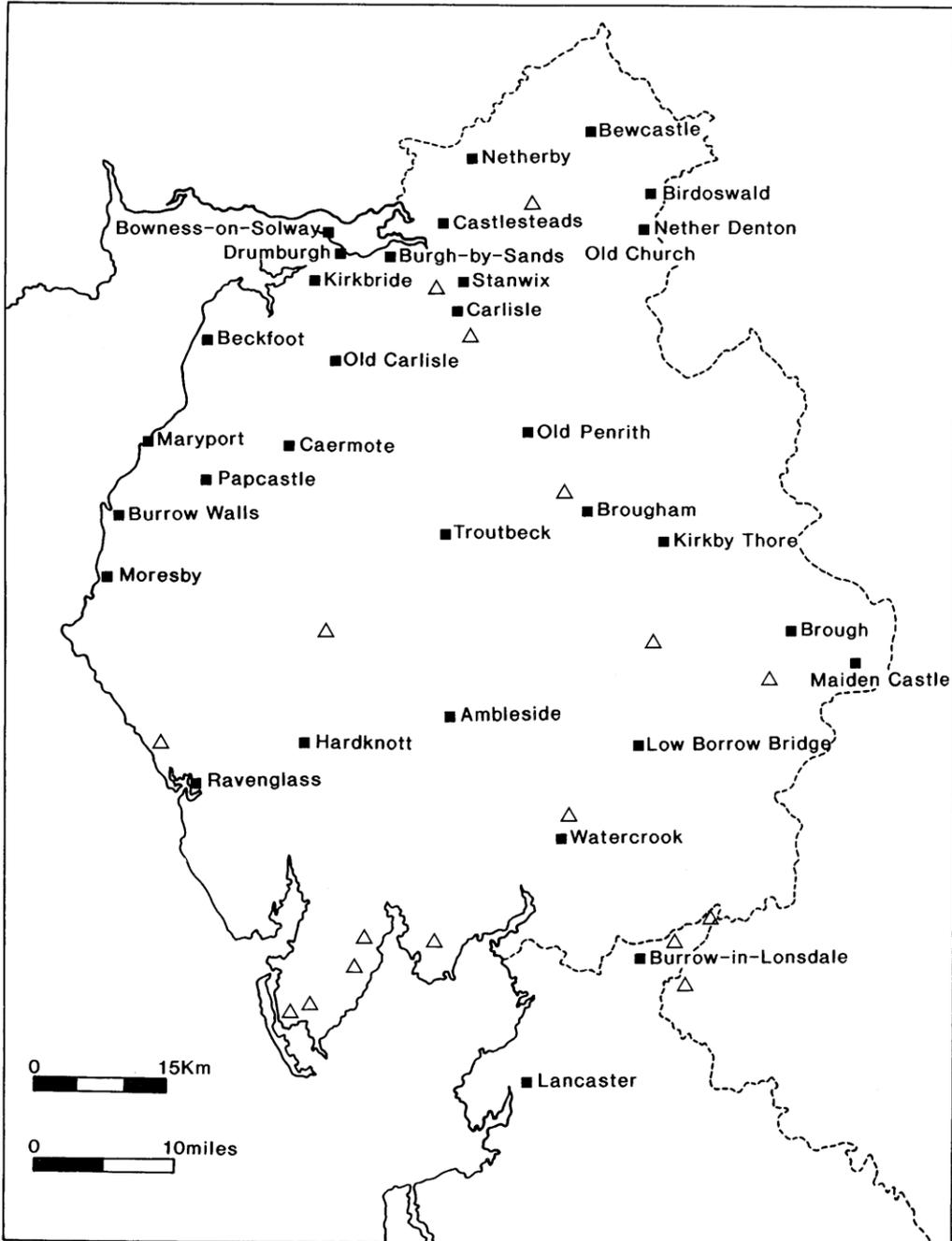


FIG. 1. Cumbria: find-spots of coins of the 1st Century A.D.

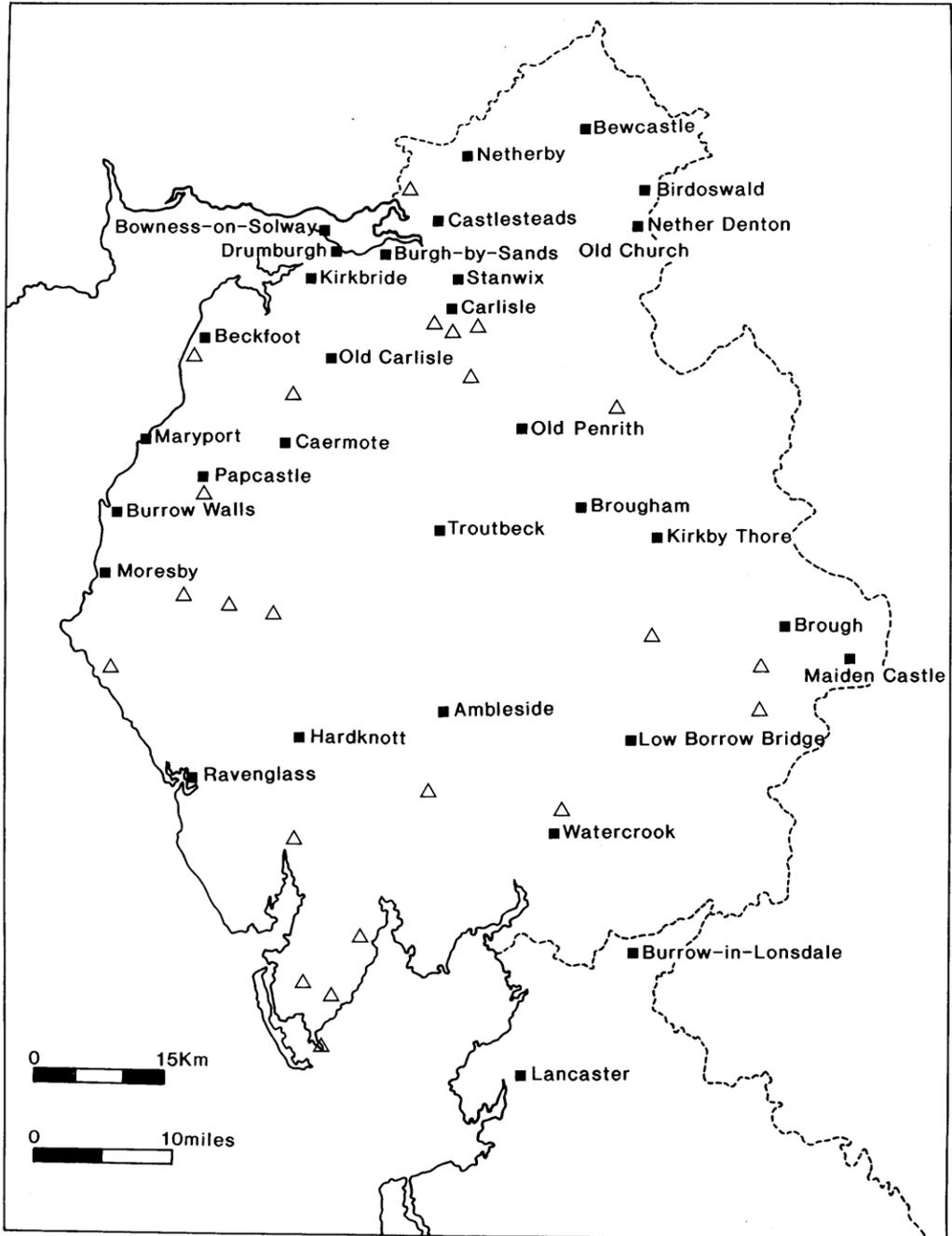


FIG. 2. Cumbria: find-spots of coins of the 2nd Century A.D.

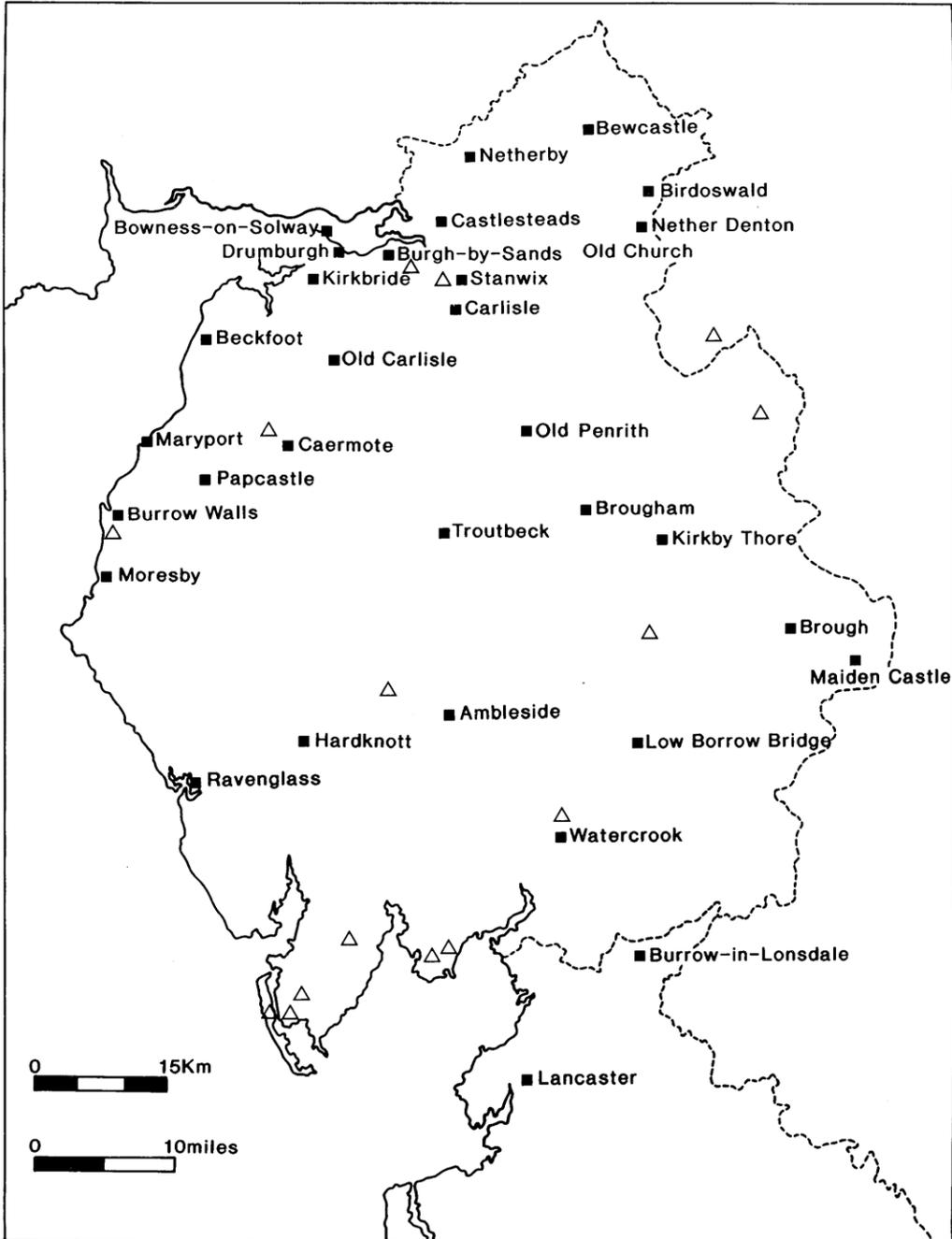


FIG. 3. Cumbria: find-spots of coins of the 3rd Century A.D.

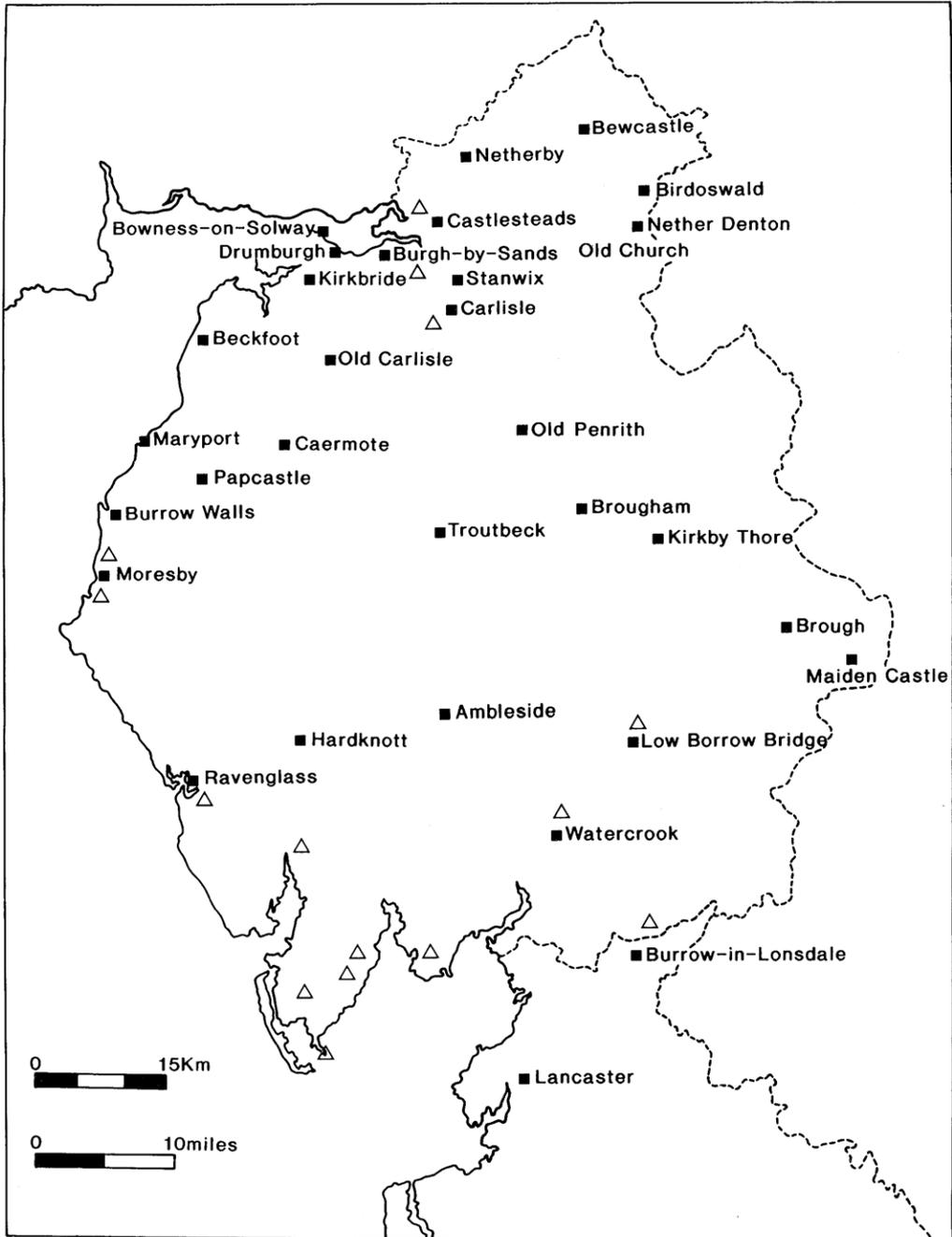


FIG. 4. Cumbria: find-spots of coins of the 4th Century A.D.