

CHAPTER 6

COINS AND MARKETS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

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INTRODUCTION

After pottery and other bulk finds such as ceramic building material and animal bone, coins often rival nails as the most common single type of artefact recovered from rural Romano-British sites. There is, however, considerable variation in their distribution. The imbalanced geographical distribution of coins has been demonstrated most clearly by Philippa Walton, who has shown a distinct difference in the frequency with which coins circulated in Britain, north and south of a line corresponding broadly with the Fosse Way, with the area to the north of the Roman road much less well represented by coins than the south (Walton 2012; 2015). However, beyond this geographical distinction, there are also significant differences in terms of the social distribution of coins in the Romano-British countryside. Volume 1 (Smith *et al.* 2016) has demonstrated the immense variability and complexity of settlement in Britain during the Roman period, and, as might be expected, there is a considerable degree of variation in the extent and frequency with which people at different types of site used coins. This is of considerable importance for our understanding of the role that coins played in the lives of the inhabitants of rural Roman Britain, a subject that has engendered considerable debate. Some, for instance, have posited that coins were seldom used outside military sites and urban centres, suggesting that barter and social obligation were likely to have represented the primary mechanisms for exchange in many parts of the Roman countryside (e.g. Duncan-Jones 1994, 20), whereas others take the view that coin use was more widespread (e.g. Harl 1996). The reality, as we shall see in the following discussion, was varied and complex.

A PROVINCIAL OVERVIEW OF COIN USE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The work of Reece (1991; 1995; 2002), Casey (1986; 1988) and most recently Walton (2012; 2015) and Moorhead (Walton and Moorhead 2016a) has been fundamental for our understanding of the way that coins circulated in Roman Britain (see *Evidence and methodologies*, Ch.1, for an overview of this earlier work and for details of the

methods adopted in this study). However, until now there has been relatively little detailed understanding of the way coins may have been used by people in the wider countryside. Reece included 21 villas and 36 other rural sites ‘not otherwise classified’ in his coin lists (1991), and a further 32 villas and 80 other rural sites were added by Walton (2012) to make up 169 rural sites, which she used as a comparative dataset alongside nearly 58,000 coins recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). Of the 116 unclassified rural assemblages presented by Walton, 100 (86 per cent) have also been recorded on the Roman Rural Settlement Project database, where they were classified according to the project methodology (see Volume 1; Smith *et al.* 2016). A range of settlement types are included, yet there is a strong emphasis on nucleated settlements associated with the major communications network (principally roadside settlements, but also ports and walled ‘small towns’), and these account for the majority (54) of the assemblages, while a further eight of the sites were classified as villas by the project. Farmsteads accounted for just 21 of Walton’s unclassified rural sites. There is therefore a strong emphasis on villas and roadside settlements in Walton and Reece’s rural site data, accounting for 36 per cent and 32 per cent of the coin assemblages respectively. For comparison, in the Central Belt project region (where villas and roadside settlements are actually well represented compared with some other regions) these settlement types make up respectively just 14 per cent and 8 per cent of the sites, while farms account for 74 per cent of the excavated settlements. It is clear, therefore, that the excavated rural sites incorporated in the studies undertaken by Reece and Walton were disproportionately weighted towards villas and roadside settlements (chiefly, as we shall see, because these are the types of rural sites that yield coins in sufficient numbers to allow statistical comparisons), and our understanding of the use of coins at other rural sites remains ill understood. Furthermore, because most of the coins incorporated into Walton’s study were amateur metal-detector finds recorded by PAS, we often have very little understanding of the types of site from which they originated. This chapter seeks to explore in more nuanced ways

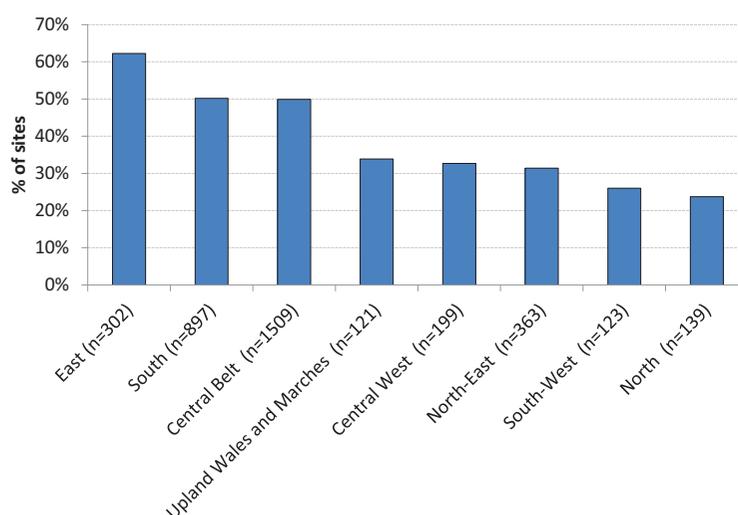


FIG. 6.1. Percentage of sites with Iron Age and Roman coins by region

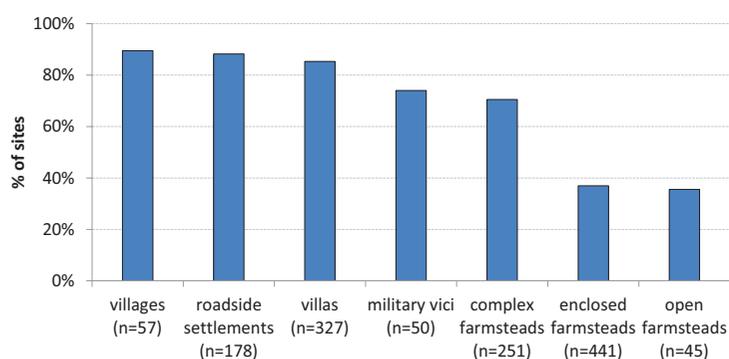


FIG. 6.2. Percentage of sites with Iron Age and Roman coins by settlement type

some of the differences in coin loss between different types of rural site in the Romano-British countryside.

The data collected on coins by the project allow some important observations to be made regarding the way coins circulated in the countryside, with differences visible between different regions and different types of site. At the most basic level, this can be explored by considering coins simply by presence/absence. Using the project regions set out in Volume 1 (Fulford and Brindle 2016, 15–16), FIG. 6.1 demonstrates how the geographical distribution of coins recovered from excavated sites varies immensely, with coins recovered from 62 per cent of sites in the East to as little as 24 per cent in the North, reflecting the aforementioned geographical divide previously recognised by Walton (2012; 2015), among others.

There are also some very clear distinctions between different classes of rural settlements (as presented in Volume 1; Allen and Smith 2016) that can also be recognised simply by examining the percentage of site types with coins (FIG. 6.2). Almost all excavated nucleated sites (roadside

settlements, villages and military *vici*) have yielded coins, as have most villas and complex farmsteads, whereas coins have been recovered from far fewer enclosed and open farmsteads. This varied social distribution in large part reflects the broader geographical pattern, as enclosed farmsteads make up the principal settlement type in much of the north and the west, where coins circulated less widely in the countryside. However, the variation in the social distribution of coins is replicated across the province, even in areas where coins are recovered in abundance.

In the Central Belt, for instance, where 50 per cent of sites in general produced Iron Age or Roman coins, there is a similar hierarchy in terms of the proportions of different site types at which coins have been recovered, with villas, roadside settlements and villas at the top (almost all yielding coins), followed by complex farmsteads, with open and enclosed farmsteads at the bottom (FIG. 6.3).

However, while presentation of coins by percentages allow these broad (and important) patterns to be recognised, there are further nuances, both regionally and between different

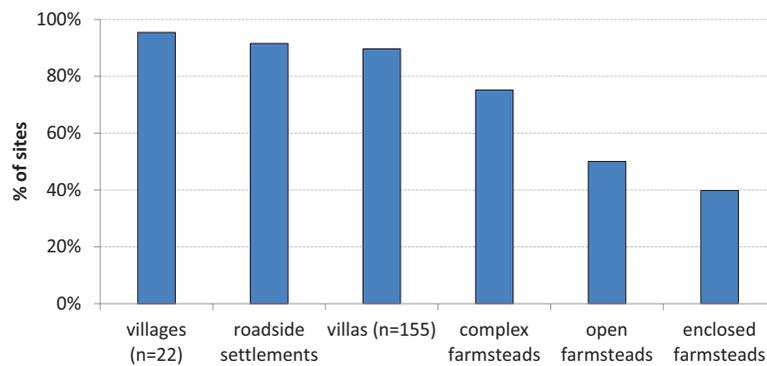


FIG. 6.3. Percentage of sites with Iron Age and Roman coins in the Central Belt by settlement type

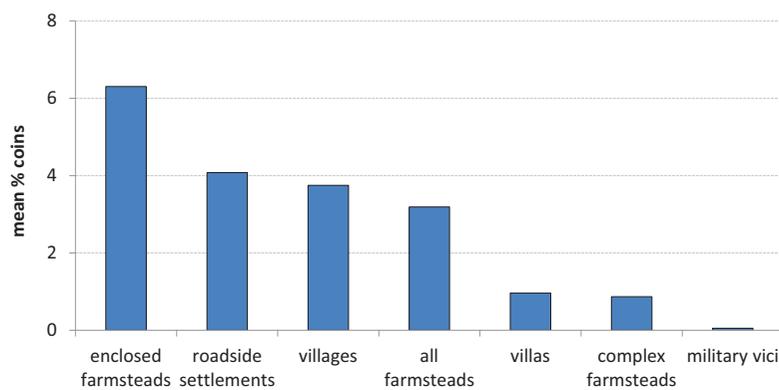


FIG. 6.4 Mean percentages of Iron Age coins by settlement type

classes of site, which can be explored using more refined levels of analysis, and the following discussion explores variation in the chronological distribution of coins across different types of Romano-British rural settlement (see Ch. 1 for a discussion of the methodology used).

IRON AGE COINS

Considering Iron Age coins first, FIG. 6.4 shows mean values for the percentage of Iron Age coins from the different classes of rural settlement. Coins of Iron Age date form consistently small proportions of the total coin assemblage from all types of site, but there are some notable differences, and in particular they form a considerably greater proportion of coins recovered from enclosed farmsteads than the other settlement types. This is an important point that reflects the chronology of the different forms of rural sites. While enclosed farmsteads were occupied throughout the Roman period, and in some regions were always the dominant settlement type, they were a continuation of a form of settlement that had prehistoric origins, and there is a tendency for them to decline in numbers throughout the Roman period (Smith and Fulford 2016, 394–5), meaning that they did not often receive the later Roman coinage.

While a small number of villas and farmsteads have yielded Iron Age coins, typically the numbers recovered are very low (generally just one or two coins), and they therefore usually make up tiny proportions of the total coin assemblages from these sites. Where larger groups of Iron Age coins are recovered, they are almost always from nucleated sites or sites with a religious focus. The increased proportions of Iron Age coins at roadside settlements therefore partly reflects the long histories of occupation at several of these sites, and also that in several cases Roman-period nucleated settlements developed out of late Iron Age *oppida*, some of which have yielded very considerable numbers of Iron Age coins, as at Braughing (Partridge 1981; Potter and Trow 1988) and Baldock (Stead and Rigby 1986) (both Hertfordshire). Some of the Roman-period roadside settlements were foci for ritual activity during the late Iron Age, and large concentrations of Iron Age coinage at such sites are often associated with votive deposition, as for example at Springhead, Kent (Andrews *et al.* 2011). The ritual deposition of objects, including coins, is a topic to be considered in more detail in Volume 3, but substantial deposits of Iron Age coins include a late Iron Age shrine at Harlow, Essex, which subsequently became the focus for a stone-built

Romano-Celtic temple (France and Gobel 1985), Wanborough, Surrey, where many thousands of Iron Age coins appear to have been placed as votive deposits at a shrine that was also later transformed into a Romano-Celtic temple (O'Connell and Bird 1994; D. Williams 2007) and Hayling Island, Hampshire (Briggs *et al.* 1992), is a further example. Indeed, many hoards of Iron Age coins are likely to have been votive deposits rather than savings or emergency hoards buried during times of strife (Haselgrove 1993, 50; Hurst and Leins 2013, 310–13), as certainly was the case at Hallaton, Leicestershire (Score 2011), and probably also at Pershore, Worcestershire (Hurst and Leins 2013). Together, major Iron Age ports, *oppida*, religious sites and sites that would go on to become major Roman nucleated sites (at which Iron Age phases are often poorly understood) account for 85 per cent of the Iron Age coins recorded, and there is little evidence to suggest that these coins were being used as currency by the wider rural population.

Indeed, it is important to stress that the function of Iron Age coins is not well understood, and it is not clear that all were used as currency in the same way Roman coins were (Haselgrove 1993, 50). Many Iron Age coins may have been struck specifically for ritual purposes; it has been suggested that coins may have been produced and deposited at political and cult centres as part of practices of gift exchange between rulers and their followers during ritual events, where the designs and inscriptions present on coins would reinforce ideas of power and community identity (e.g. Creighton 2000; Roymans and Aaarts 2009). We must also remember that the contexts of discovery of Iron Age coins, and indeed of Roman ones, whether deposited at sites or in the wider landscape, in hoards and at symbolic locations or otherwise in apparent ritual use, only tell us about their final use. The entry of some coins into the archaeological record often relates to the end of their cycle of use; the meanings they may have had and the ways in which they were used when they were in circulation are not well known. Iron Age coins were not used throughout Britain, and their use was essentially confined to the south and east. Nor were they uniform, and there was dynamic development of coins of different styles during the later Iron Age (see Haselgrove 1993 for an overview). There is considerable regional variation in the coin types that were struck, with distinctive regional styles often having been equated, problematically, with the different Iron Age tribes identified by Roman authors (e.g. Van Arsdell 1989; and see Haselgrove 1987; 1993 and Leins 2008 for useful discussions). Our understanding of the chronology of Iron Age coins is also hazy (Haselgrove 1987; 1993), and in

many instances they are found in Roman deposits, sometimes alongside Roman coins, indicating that, although the minting of British coins ceased with the conquest, they continued to be used, for whatever purpose, for at least a generation (Haselgrove 1993, 54, 62; Moore 2006, 199–204). The movement of the Roman army also had a significant impact on the redistribution of Iron Age coins (Haselgrove 1993, 62). Some coin hoards contain Iron Age coins alongside Roman issues, and they are sometimes found well outside their core areas of distribution; often these may best be seen as coins gathered and deposited by soldiers in the Roman army while on campaign, as is likely for the recently discovered mixed hoard of Iron Age staters and Roman *denarii* from Malpas, Cheshire (Moorhead 2016).

ROMAN COINS

FIGURE 6.5 presents a series of charts that show mean values for the percentage of each Roman coin phase (phases A–Dii) at principal settlement types (see Ch. 1 for a discussion of these phases). A number of observations can be made. Firstly, for coins of group A (early Roman coins up to A.D. 260) military *vici* stand out dramatically from the other site types; early Roman coins typically account for over 70 per cent of the coins from these sites, whereas at other site types they usually form around 25 per cent or less. The reason for this is clear: although *vici* are usually regarded as civilian settlements, they were directly associated with military sites, housing the dependants of the soldiers who occupied the forts, as well as providing goods, services and entertainment for soldiers and followers of the army. The payment of soldiers and other officials appears to have been the principal reason that coins were imported into Britain from the Continent in large numbers (Wolters 2001; Brickstock 2011, 31; Creighton 2014), and the relatively high frequency of early Roman coins recovered at these sites represents this pay being used and lost by soldiers, their dependants and followers – what may be regarded as a very insular use of coins, focused on the fort and its immediate extramural settlement. The abundance of early coins and the corresponding dearth of late Roman coinage at *vici* reflects the typically early date of these site types (indicated by a range of dating evidence, not only coins); most fell out of use in the second or third centuries A.D. (see, for instance, Brindle 2016a, 314; Brindle 2016b, 364), and many *vici* were therefore not in existence long enough for their occupants to acquire late Roman coins. Where military *vici* did continue into the late Roman period, as, for instance, at Lancaster (Leather 1972; Shotton and White 1998), late Roman coins occur widely, as they do at other

settlement types. The striking difference between *vici* and the other settlements in terms of their patterns of coin loss (as well as in other aspects of their material culture) emphasises how very distinctive these sites were from the other site types, and in social and economic terms they must be regarded as military and not rural.

Enclosed farmsteads also stand out as having higher proportions of coins of group A than other settlements, especially when they are compared with complex farmsteads, although, as noted for Iron Age coins, many enclosed farmsteads did not continue late into the Roman period, and these sites have correspondingly low mean percentages for coins of groups Di and Dii, reflecting their broad chronology.

Military *vici* and enclosed farmsteads aside, the other settlement types are represented by broadly similar proportions of each of the five coin phase groups, typically represented by low percentages of 25 per cent or under for group A, increased values of between 20 per cent and 31 per cent for group B, a reduction to less than 8 per cent in group C, a general rise above 30 per cent for group Di and reduced values of sub-20 per cent

for group Dii. Collectively, all site types other than military *vici* and enclosed farmsteads therefore conform to the expected broader provincial pattern of coin loss identified by Richard Reece (e.g. 1995; 2002).

There are, however, some subtle differences that warrant discussion. Roadside settlements have a somewhat high proportion of coins of group A compared with many other types of site. This partially reflects the early foundation dates for many of these settlements (with most founded during the mid-to late first century A.D.), as well as their position on the arterial road network of the province. The early adoption of coins at these sites is likely to have been stimulated by streams of regular traffic passing through the settlements, facilitating access to new forms of material culture and the promotion of coins as a method of exchange. However, several of these sites also had military origins, and some have relatively high early coin values that reflect this. At Sea Mills (*Abonae*), Bristol, for instance, it is believed that the port and roadside settlement developed out of an early military installation of some description (Boon 1945; Ellis 1987), and the site has yielded

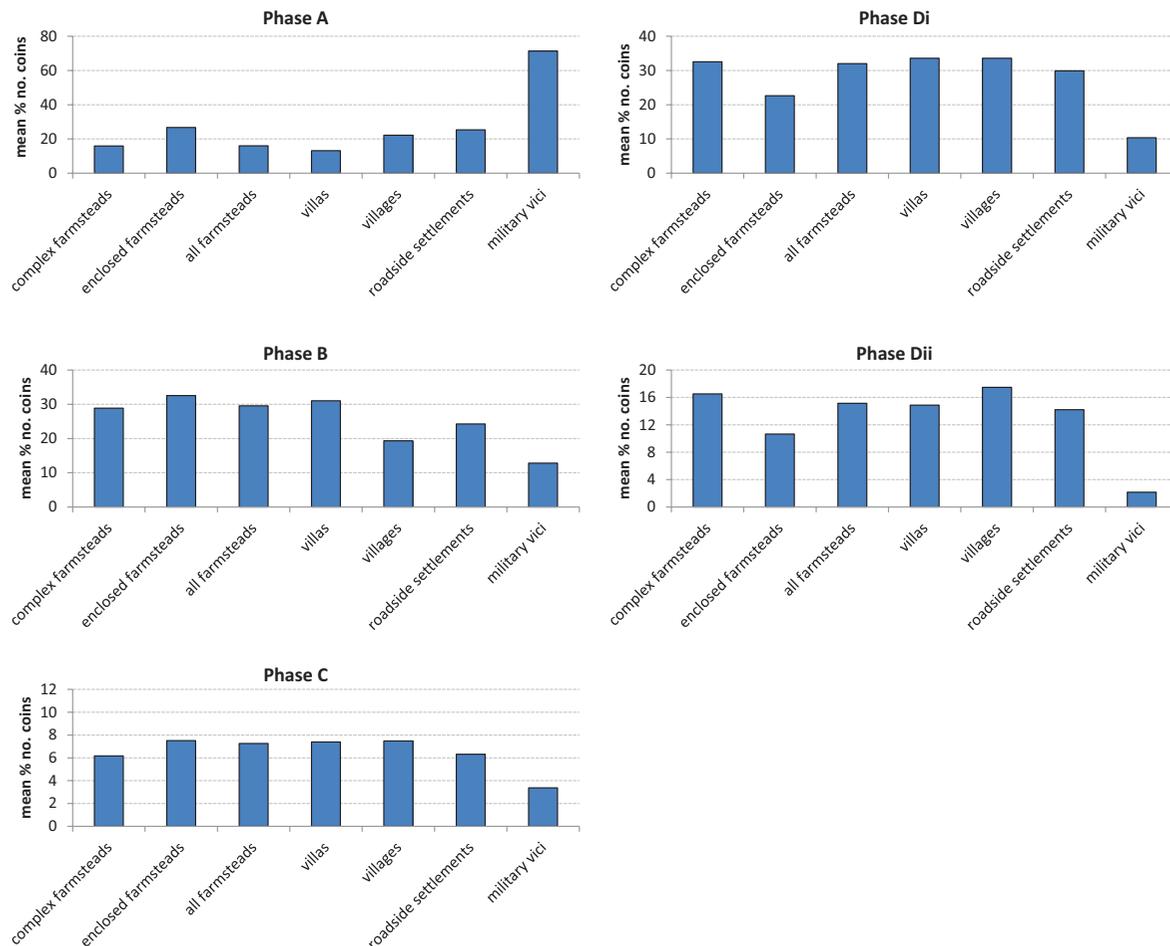


FIG. 6.5. Mean percentages of coins in each Roman coin phase by major settlement type

a correspondingly high proportion of early Roman coins. A number of other roadside settlements, especially in the Central West and the North, also had military origins, apparently being set up as supply depots or industrial settlements (see for instance Brindle 2016c, 290), and sites such as Holditch in Staffordshire (Charlton 1962; Rogers and Garner 2007), Wilderspool in Cheshire (Hinchliffe and Williams 1992; Rogers and Garner 2007) and Walton le Dale in Lancashire (Gibbons and Howard-Davis 2001) have coin assemblages with an emphasis on early Roman coins that align them more closely with military *vici* than most other roadside settlements. A number of roadside settlements in the east are also believed to have had short-lived episodes of early Roman military activity (see Smith 2016c, 223–4), although the evidence is often equivocal.

Although exploring coins by percentages of phases allows some important patterns to be recognised, the overall tendency for most rural sites to conform in broad terms to the provincial model can make it difficult to recognise some major differences. Lockyear has drawn attention to the problem of ‘closure’ with such a method, where the relative proportions of coinage in each phase are affected by particularly high values in earlier or later phases (Lockyear 2007, 217). An alternative way of exploring potential differences between site types is to consider the frequency with which coins have been recovered. This has been undertaken here by selecting a sample of 392 sites with a minimum of ten dated coins each, and dividing the number of coins for each phase at every site by the extent of the area excavated (where this information is available or can be calculated). Although this method is coarse, it allows some more nuanced distinctions to be drawn between different classes of sites: roadside settlements; villages; villas; complex farmsteads; and enclosed farmsteads. The advantage of this approach is that the frequencies of coins from each phase group can be compared across different types of site and the values will not be affected by especially high or low levels of coin loss in earlier or later phases, as they are with the mean percentages.

The first point to note is that because the sample has focused on sites with a minimum of ten dated coins, site types that are not typically well represented by coins are under-represented, just as they were in Reece and Walton’s lists. There are, for instance, only 20 assemblages from enclosed farmsteads (out of a total of 441 sites of this type), 47 assemblages from complex farmsteads, 94 from villas, 19 from villages and 108 from roadside settlements. This level of variation is, in itself, further evidence for the

distinction between these different types of rural site in terms of coin loss.

Considering early Roman coins of group A first, the charts in FIG. 6.6 present the frequency of coins/ha for each of the major settlement types with ten or more dated coins. It is possible to recognise some very clear differences between site types.

Again, military *vici* stand out as being radically different from all other types of site, and, proportionately, far more *vici* have yielded early coins at high frequencies than other site types. The most common range for roadside settlements is between 10–50 coins/ha, although considerable numbers of these sites have produced coins at greater frequencies – far more than any other class of site other than *vici*. Villages usually have far fewer early coins, and this is especially noteworthy when we consider that, when compared above by the percentage of site types with coins, villages, roadside settlements and villas appear similar. So, although it is fair to say that each of these site types usually yield coins, there is massive variation in the numbers that are recovered.

The relatively large number of roadside settlements with high volumes of early Roman coinage requires consideration. In a small number of cases the reason for exceptionally large numbers of early Roman coins is at least partly methodological. At Hacheston in Suffolk (Blagg *et al.* 2004), the coin lists include coins recovered during excavation and through subsequent metal detecting, and the use of a metal detector on site clearly has potential to inflate the coin lists dramatically. However, as discussed above, in several cases exceptionally high frequencies of early Roman coins are linked to early Roman military activity, as, for instance at Sea Mills (*Abonae*), Bristol (Boon 1945; Ellis 1987), Usk, Monmouthshire (Manning 1981; 1989; Marvell 1996; Marvell and Maynard 1998) Greensforge, Staffordshire (Webster 1981; A. Jones 1999), and perhaps at Wanborough, Wiltshire (Anderson *et al.* 2001), and this might suggest early Roman military activity at Hacheston also. In other cases, the precise reasons for the high frequencies of early Roman coins (compared with other types of rural site) are often uncertain, although the phenomenon is likely to be associated with the varying roles and functions that these settlements performed. While most are likely to have been essentially rural in character, many may have acted as important local hubs, with regular markets, shops and taverns. Some of the larger settlements may better be regarded as minor small towns, and may have been local or regional administrative centres responsible for administering justice, and where low-value denominations were perhaps taken to

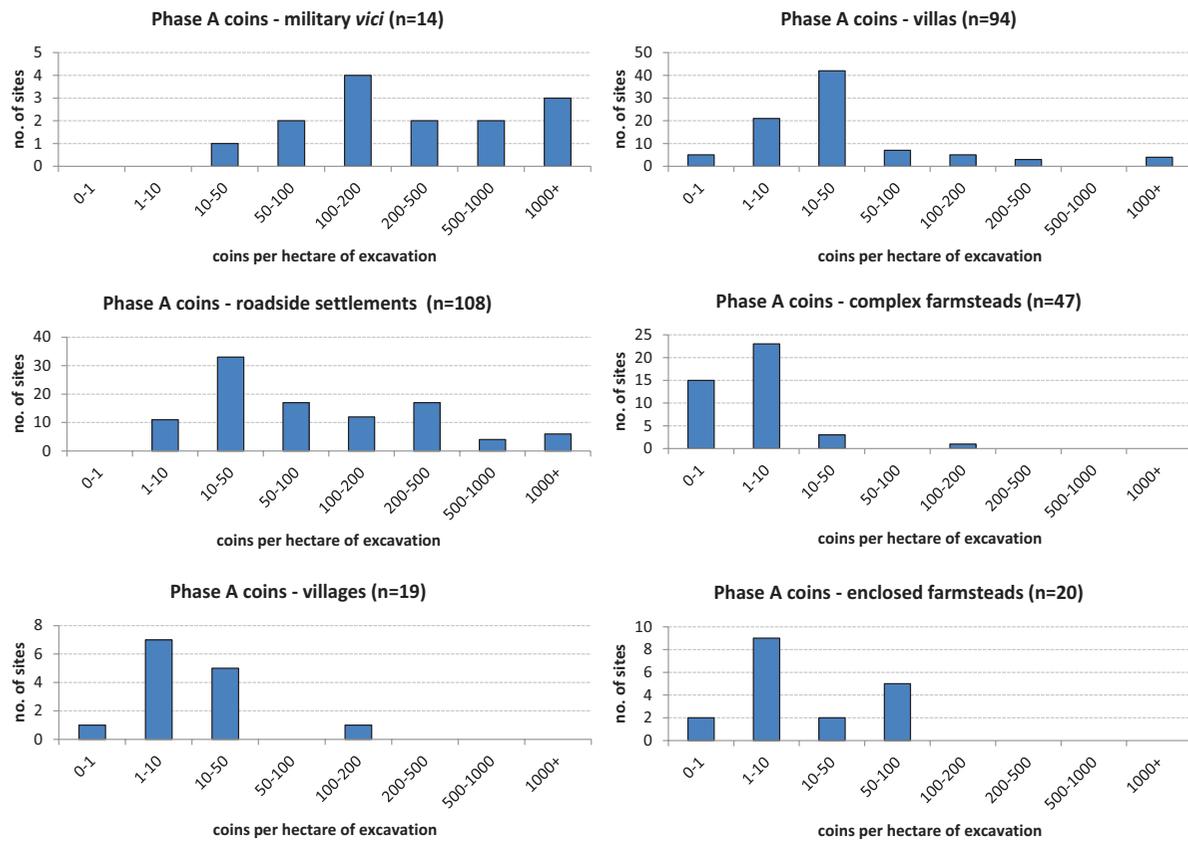


FIG. 6.6. Frequency of Republican to mid-third century coins (phase A) at the major classes of settlement type by coins/ha

moneychangers to convert into gold for the payment of taxes (Harl 1996, 238–9). The variation is likely to reflect the variability within this very broad class of settlement.

Very few of the other site types have yielded early Roman coins at high frequencies, although it is worth considering some of the exceptional examples that have. The only site defined as a village that has produced early Roman coins at a frequency greater than 10–50 coins/ha is the unusual settlement at Carvossa in Cornwall (Carlyon 1987). As with some of the roadside settlements, the high frequency of early coins may be associated with an early phase of military activity, and there are other aspects of the material culture from the site that may also suggest a military connection (*ibid.*, 106).

Of the villas that have produced exceptionally high frequencies of early coins, these are, unsurprisingly, typically early foundations, and as such are concentrated in the South region, where the earliest villas in the province tend to be situated (e.g. Allen and Smith 2016, 34–6). Examples include Bignor, West Sussex (Aldsworth and Rudling 1995), Darenth, Kent (Philp 1973; 1984), Manor Hall Road, Southwick, West Sussex (Winbolt 1932; Rudling 1985) and Fishbourne, West Sussex (Cunliffe 1971; 1998). The latter site

is particularly well represented by coins of very early Roman date, with a large number of Republican and Claudio-Neronian issues. This site is of course exceptional in many ways, representing the earliest and largest villa known from the province, yet the unusually high number of Republican and first-century coins from there seem, as with some of the other sites with pronounced frequencies of early Roman coins, most likely to be associated with a phase of early Roman military activity prior to the construction of the villa, when the site has been interpreted as a military supply base (Cunliffe 1971).

Several complex farmsteads have yielded early Roman coins, although these have typically been recovered in small numbers, with a notable exception being the site at Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes, Gloucestershire (Miles *et al.* 2007). Here, the high frequency is partially explained by the inclusion of metal-detector finds in the coin list, although, even taking this into account, the early coin assemblage is very large and makes up a high proportion of all coins recovered (24 per cent compared with the mean percentage for complex farmsteads of 10 per cent). The finds assemblage in general at this site is, however, unusually rich for a complex farmstead, with a range of objects that suggest a religious focus close to the settlement.

The atypically high frequency of early Roman coins (which occur alongside a number of Iron Age coins) may be associated with this possible ritual activity, although as most coins were unstratified it is impossible to determine precisely how they may have been deposited (King 2007, 247–8). The broad range of early coins, spanning the late Iron Age through to the late second century, suggests that the early bias here is not the result of a dispersed coin hoard.

As we have seen, coins are rare at enclosed farmsteads in general, although at a small number of sites relatively large early assemblages have been recovered. In some cases frequencies are clearly skewed by unusual circumstances at the sites. At Grimstock Hill, Coleshill, Warwickshire (Magilton 2006), for instance, an early Roman enclosed farmstead was replaced in the second century A.D. by a Romano-Celtic temple. The coin assemblage here, although of unusual size for a farmstead, was considered small for a temple assemblage, with no coins recovered from contexts that suggested ritual deposition (Seaby 2006), and here the change in function is likely to be the reason for the larger than usual number of coins, perhaps associated with an increase in the number of people visiting the site (and consequently more opportunities for coins to be lost). At other enclosed farmsteads, however, atypically large

early coin assemblages are sometimes part of generally rich material culture assemblages, a reflection of the diversity that exists within this settlement type, and that not all such sites were necessarily of similar status. At Plas Coch, Wrexham (N.W. Jones 2011), a large group of early Roman coins is part of an assemblage that also includes other indices of status including vessel glass, writing equipment and an unusually rich (especially for the Central West region) ceramic assemblage that included large numbers of BB1, samian and amphorae. The presence of rectangular masonry buildings with tiled roofs also distinguishes this site from other settlements in the surrounding area, and it certainly appears to have been a rural site of unusually high status. Similarly, at Boxfield Farm, Chells, Stevenage, Hertfordshire (Going and Hunn 1999), the numerous early Roman coins are part of a rich material culture assemblage, indicating that the site's occupants were wealthy, engaged in surplus production and well integrated into the market network (see below, p. 270).

For coins of group B (A.D. 260–296) (FIG. 6.7) few military *vici* have produced coins at high frequencies, reflecting the previously discussed widespread (but not universal) abandonment of these sites prior to the late third century. Across all other settlement types there is a general increase

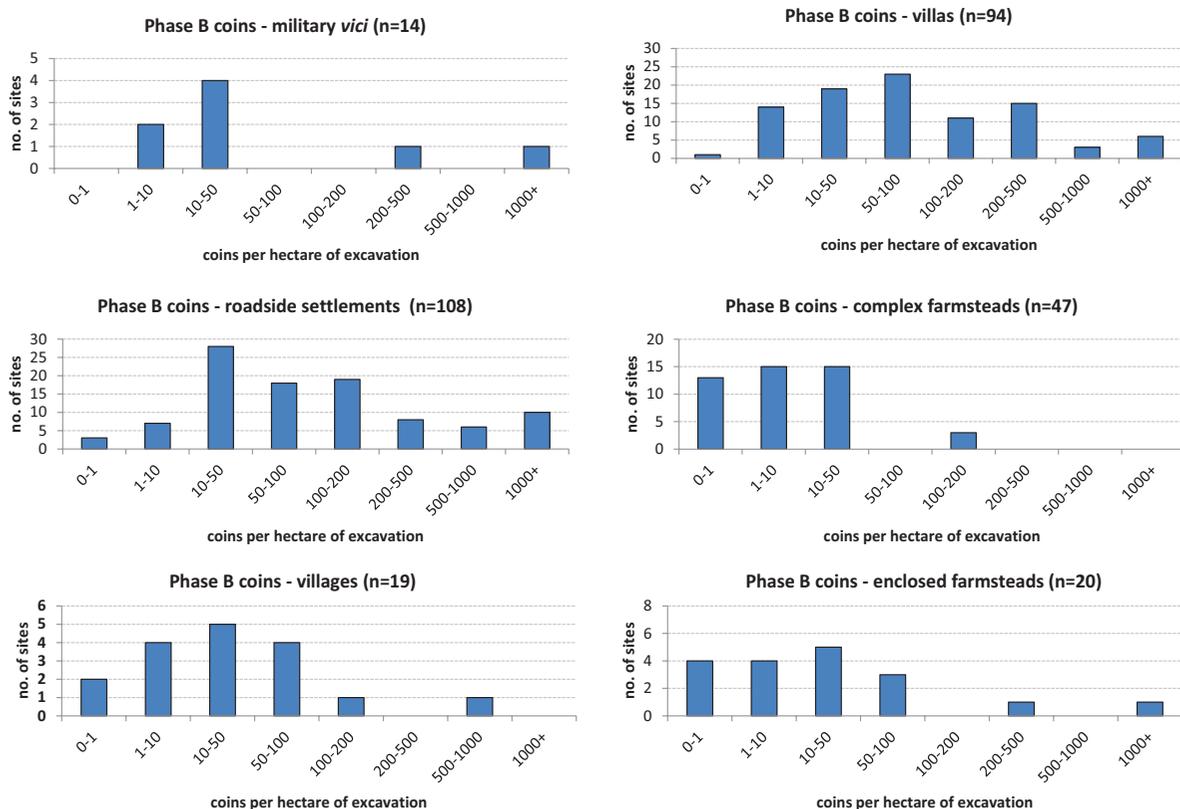


FIG. 6.7. Frequency of late third-century coins (phase B) at the major classes of settlement type by coins/ha

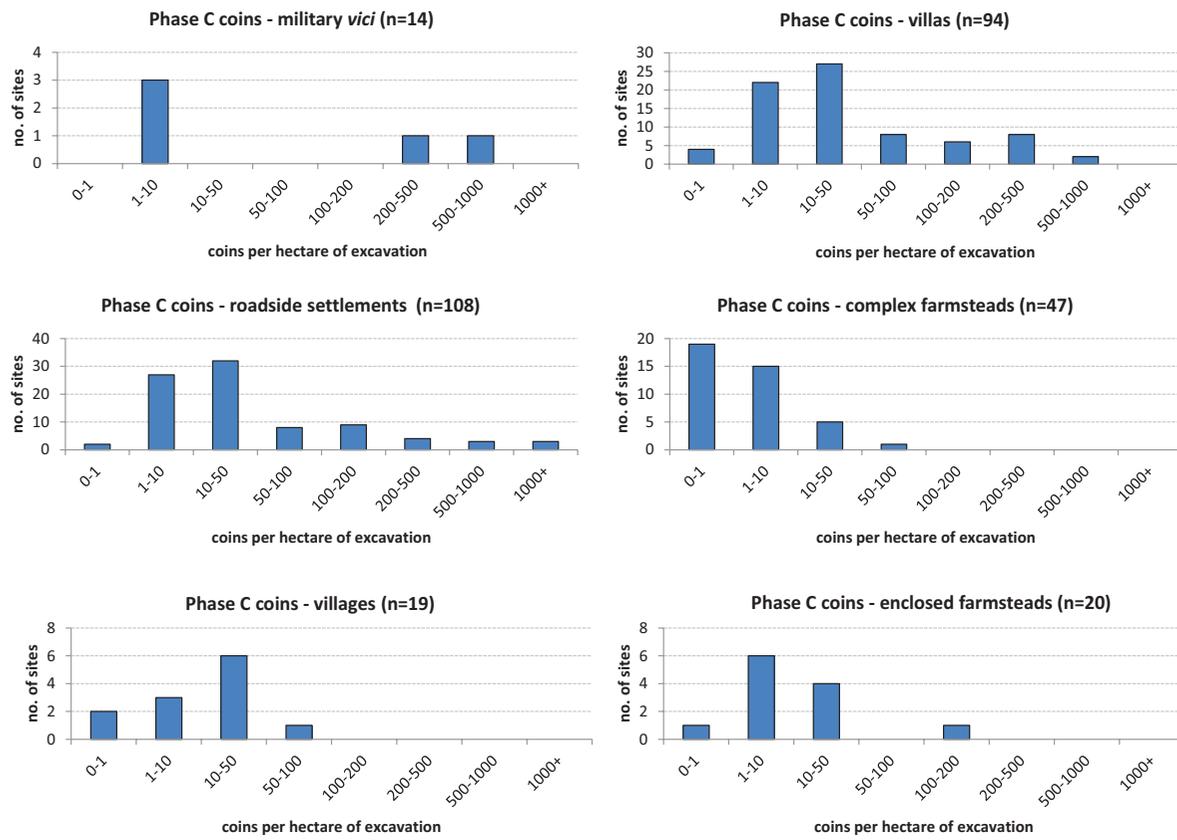


FIG. 6.8. Frequency of early fourth-century Roman coins (phase C) at the major classes of settlement type by coins/ha

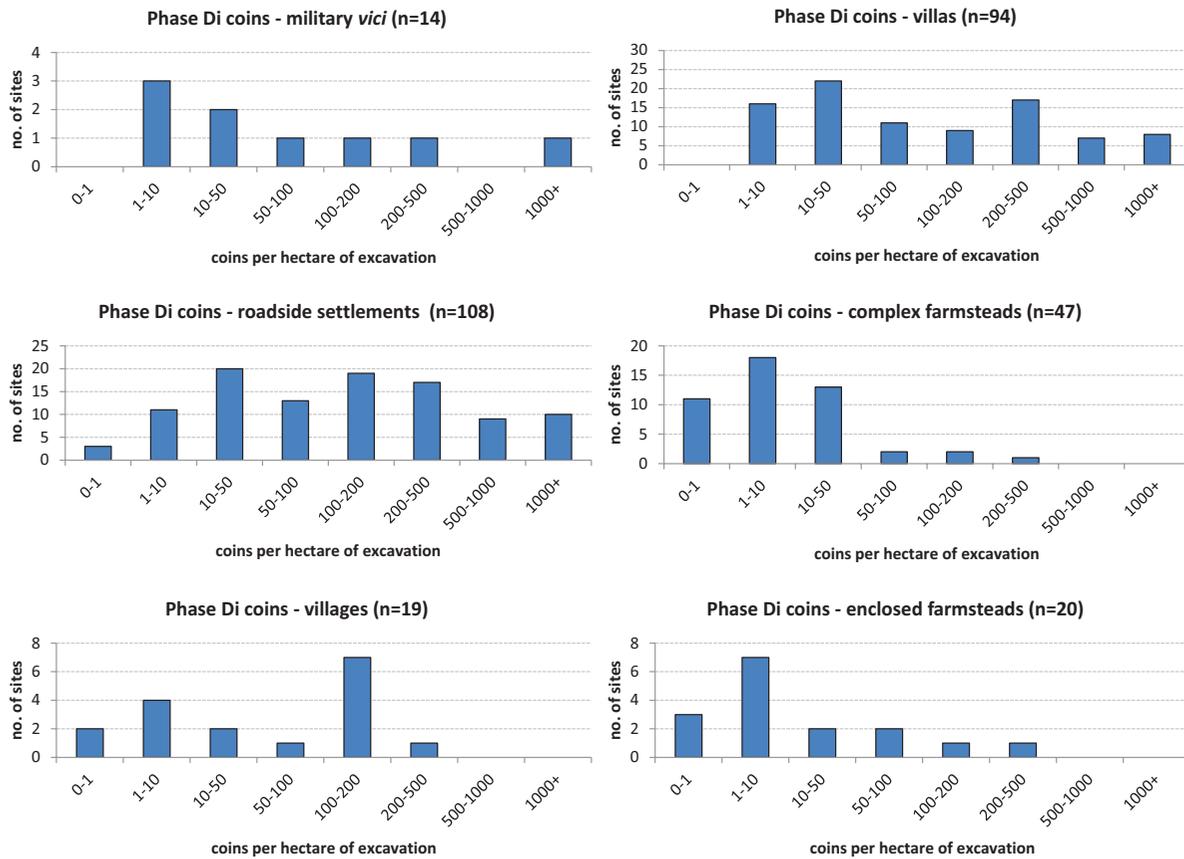


FIG. 6.9. Frequency of mid-fourth century Roman coins (phase Di) at the major classes of settlement type by coins/ha

in the number of sites that yield higher frequencies of coins. This rise in coin loss reflects major changes to Roman coinage in the third century A.D. that resulted in the replacement of the long-lived Augustan coinage system by the debased, billon, radiate coinage of the late third century, with the result that individual coins were of low intrinsic value, and were minted and circulated in large numbers (Reece 2002, 20). Although considerably more sites of all types produce higher frequencies of these coins than coins of earlier date, the above discussed hierarchy remains in place. For instance, while just one complex farmstead yielded coins at a rate of 10–50 coins/ha in phase A, in phase B this rises to fifteen sites. Correspondingly, where just three villas produced coins at a rate of 200–500 coins/ha in phase A, in phase B this rises to fifteen, yet no complex farmsteads have yielded coins at this level of frequency.

The patterns presented above for coin phases A and B are essentially repeated for coins of groups C, Di and Dii, and the general hierarchy is repeated, with frequencies in each case fluctuating in line with the wider provincial pattern (FIGS 6.8–6.10). There are, however, some points of note. At some classes of site the most significant phase of coin loss is the mid-fourth century A.D.

(phase Di), and greater numbers of roadside settlements, villages and villas yielded coins at higher frequencies than they had done previously. However, the mid-fourth century increase in the frequency of coins is less clear-cut at farmsteads, and this reflects the situation in many of the areas where coins circulated most widely in the countryside, that increasing numbers of farmsteads were being abandoned during the late third and fourth centuries A.D., whereas, at least in parts of the Central Belt (e.g. the Cotswolds), villas reached their *floruit* at this time (Smith 2016a, 160).

OTHER OBJECTS ASSOCIATED WITH EXCHANGE

Coins are not the only type of object associated with exchange to be recovered from rural sites, and the distribution of artefacts associated with weighing is also of relevance for our understanding of rural commerce – the ability to measure goods accurately was a fundamental aspect of trade in the Roman world. Objects likely to be associated with weighing were recovered from 13 per cent of domestic settlements, although many of these were lead weights that could perform a range of different functions and need not all be associated

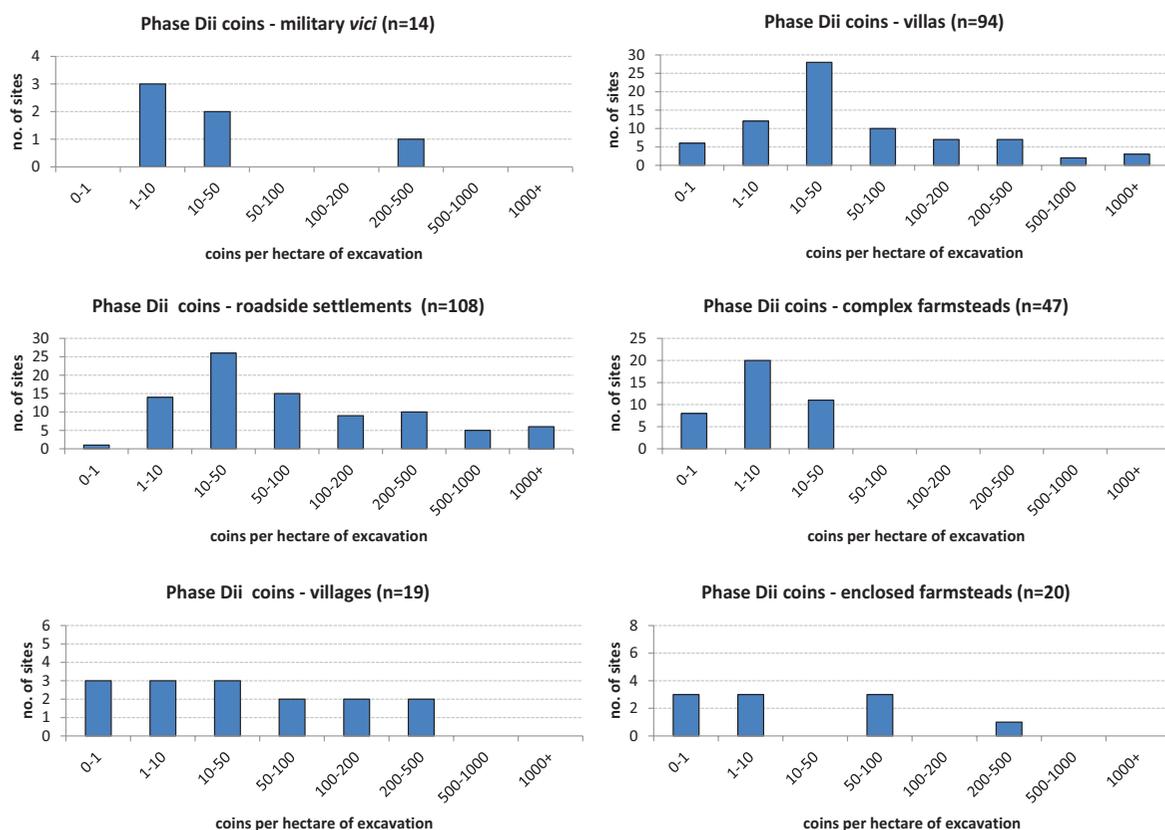


FIG. 6.10. Frequency of late fourth-century Roman coins (phase Dii) at the major classes of settlement type by coins/ha

with commerce (examples include plumb-bobs and net weights, for instance). It is therefore more instructive to consider objects that are most likely to have been used specifically for weighing goods during commercial transactions – notably scales, balances, steelyards and weights specifically interpreted as steelyard weights. As would be expected, these sorts of object follow a similar hierarchy to coins in terms of their social distribution (FIG. 6.11), with roadside settlements and military *vici* at the top, followed by villas, then by villages and complex farmsteads, while open and enclosed farmsteads are very poorly represented. The distinctions between the distribution of these objects at rural sites, so similar to the distribution of coins, is linked to the differing roles the sites played in the rural economy, providing further evidence for the role of at least some roadside settlements as important local commercial centres. In this regard it is of interest that several of the sites with the highest frequencies of coins are also those that yielded objects associated with weighing (e.g. Hacheston, Suffolk; Braughing, Hertfordshire; Shiptonthorpe, East Riding; Wanborough (*Durocornovium*), Wiltshire; Scole, Norfolk; Sandy, Bedfordshire; Sea Mills (*Abonae*), Bristol). It is important to note, however, that most of these sites also included metal detecting either prior to or as part of the investigation strategy, and so the recovery of weighing equipment alongside large numbers of coins may also be in part methodological.

Beyond representing evidence for industry (see Ch. 5), ingots of precious and base metal are further types of object related to exchange of resources. In particular, silver ingots sometimes form a component of late Roman hoards, and ingots seem increasingly to have been used as a store of wealth and as a means of payment in the late Roman period (Brickstock 2011, 41; Walton and Moorhead 2016b). The high value of such ingots means that they have rarely been recovered

from rural settlements, although a silver example was recovered from the farmstead at Din Lligwy, Anglesey (Baynes 1908). In addition, Hobbs (2007) has drawn attention to a consistent range of weights for silver vessels, and weight inscriptions placed on many silver vessels indicate that they may sometimes have performed a function as bullion, used in elite gift exchange. Hobbs (2015) has also recently observed how a type of flanged bowl that appears in the *Notitia Dignitatum* falls into weight categories that run on neatly from the silver coinage introduced by Diocletian, forming an extension of the Roman currency system. Such objects seem therefore to have been an important aspect of high-value exchanges. Silver vessels are, unsurprisingly, rare finds at rural settlements, more often recovered from hoards such as the famous examples from Mildenhall (Hobbs 2016) and Hoxne (Guest 2005; Johns 2010) in Suffolk, although three silver bowls were recovered as part of a hoard from an aisled building at the villa site at Groundwell Ridge, Swindon (Brickstock *et al.* 2006, 9).

The mid- to late Iron Age range of objects traditionally referred to as ‘currency bars’ also warrant brief discussion, if only because of the inherent implications associated with this term. The interpretation of the role of these objects as currency rests principally on Caesar’s description ‘They use either bronze, or gold coins, or instead of coined money tallies of iron, of a certain standard of weight’ (*BGall*, 5.12). It is true that many of these types of object have similar weights and they seem clearly to have been associated with the trade and exchange of iron. However, Crew (1994) has identified that the standardised weights of particular types are more likely to represent evidence for the production of these objects in a small number of workshops, each with established methods of manufacture that consistently produced similar results, rather than adherence to set measures of weight to facilitate use as currency.

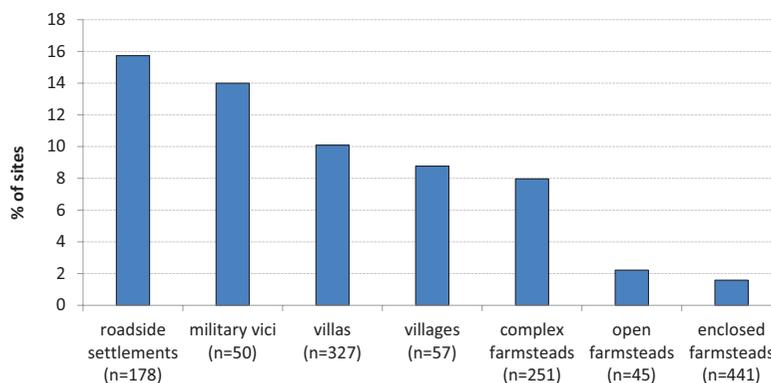


FIG. 6.11. Frequency of sites with objects associated with weighing

Relatively few examples have been recovered from excavated rural sites recorded on the project database, although there is a strong emphasis on hillforts where they have been recorded. Most were recovered as hoards, sometimes with other objects, often having been deposited in pits or ditches. The reasons for the deposition of these objects have been considered by Hingley (1990; 2005), and, as with Iron Age coinage, the act of depositing these objects in the ground may often have been of greater social and ritual than economic significance.

REGIONAL CASE STUDIES

The above discussion has presented a broad overview of the geographical and social distribution of coins and other aspects of material culture associated with exchange at rural settlements in Britain. We have seen how coins are very unevenly distributed, chronologically, regionally and socially. However, a province-wide overview is unable to do justice to some of the more nuanced patterns in the way that coins circulated in the

Romano-British countryside, and in order to explore this further the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to three regional case studies. Reece has previously shown how, even in areas where coins circulated widely, settlements in the west behave rather differently in terms of their patterns of coin loss to those in the east, with the former typically better represented by later coins (Reece 1991; 1995; 2002), and the first two case studies have been selected to explore this pattern further. Case Study One focuses on what is essentially the western part of the Central Belt region (cf. Smith 2016a), using boundaries defined by Natural England's 'Natural Areas', incorporating the Cotswolds, the Thames and Avon Vales, the Severn and Avon Vales, the Bristol, Avon Valleys and Ridges and the Midvale Ridge (FIG. 6.12). Case Study Two focuses on an eastern zone that incorporates the entirety of the area defined in Volume 1 as the East region (Smith 2016c), with the addition of Natural England's Fenland landscape zone (see below, FIG. 6.27). Case Study Three focuses on the area defined in Volume 1 as 'the North' (Brindle 2016a), which has been

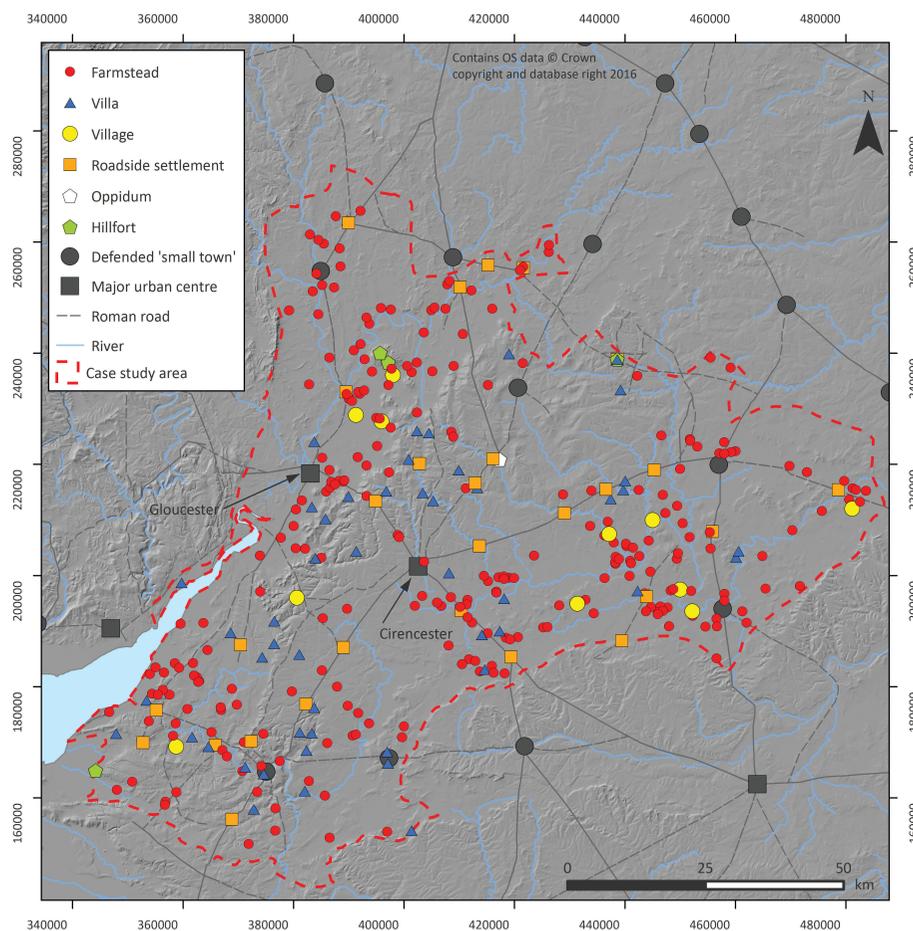


FIG. 6.12. Case Study One: the Western Central Belt

selected in order to explore the role that coins may or may not have played in the lives of the rural inhabitants in an area where coins are generally uncommon finds at rural sites.

CASE STUDY ONE: THE WESTERN CENTRAL BELT

The project has records for 376 individual rural settlements in the Western Central Belt, and of these 250 (66 per cent) have yielded Iron Age and/or Roman coins. Compared with the broad regional patterns for the percentages of sites with coins presented in FIG. 6.1, sites in this case study area can therefore be seen to be among the best represented parts of the province for coins. The social distribution of the coins repeats the wider provincial pattern, with roadside settlements, villages and villas at the top, followed by complex farmsteads, and then by enclosed and open farmsteads (FIG. 6.13).

In terms of the chronology of coins in the case study area, Iron Age coins are rare. Moore (2006, 38, 199–204) presents a useful overview of the distribution and chronology of Iron Age coins in the area, making the important point that where such coins are stratified, they are usually found in Roman-period contexts (see also Haselgrove 1987; 1993; and Selwood 1984). Iron Age coins comprise less than 1 per cent of the mean percentage of coins from all classes of settlement, and present at just 36 (10 per cent) of the sites. Roadside settlements are the sites best represented by Iron Age coins (present at 25 per cent), and Iron Age coins are represented at similar proportions of all other settlement types (14 per cent of villas, complex farmsteads and enclosed farmsteads, and 11 per cent of villages). Very few sites have yielded Iron Age coins in large numbers, and the only sites with greater than ten examples are at Allesborough, Pershore, Worcestershire,

where several hundred coins were recovered from hoards that are believed likely to represent ritual activity (Hurst and Leins 2013), and Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes, Gloucestershire, which, again, may also have had a ritual focus (Miles *et al.* 2007).

FIGURE 6.14 presents mean percentages of coin loss for Roman coins of phases A–Dii for all sites in the case study area as a whole, derived from a sample of 81 settlements with a minimum number of ten coins that could be assigned a phase. The resultant coin profile presents low values of 8 per cent for phase A, increased values to 23 per cent in phase B, a return to 8 per cent in phase C and a substantial increase to 40 per cent and then 20 per cent for phases Di–Dii. The profile is a classic example of the ‘rural pattern’ of coin loss recognised by Reece, who noted that rural sites typically produce fourth-century *nummi* at three times the rate with which they produce late third-century radiates (Reece 2002, 102). The pattern produced by coins recorded by PAS is, as would be expected, quite similar, although phases A, B and C are somewhat elevated compared to the excavated rural sites, whereas phases Di and Dii are slightly reduced (FIG. 6.14). The reasons for the slight discrepancy are currently unclear, although it may be associated with a perception among some detector users that common fourth-century *nummi* are not worth reporting (e.g. Walton 2012, 7) and, perhaps, that many of the poor-quality, small contemporary copies of the fourth century can be difficult to recognise as such to the untrained eye. It is possible that the PAS data include some unrecognised dispersed hoards, which perhaps skew the pattern. The PAS pattern may also be affected by ways in which coins were used or deposited in non-settlement contexts, deposited at shrines or other sacred sites in the wider countryside for ritual or religious purposes (see below, p. 263). The reality may be a mixture of these processes.

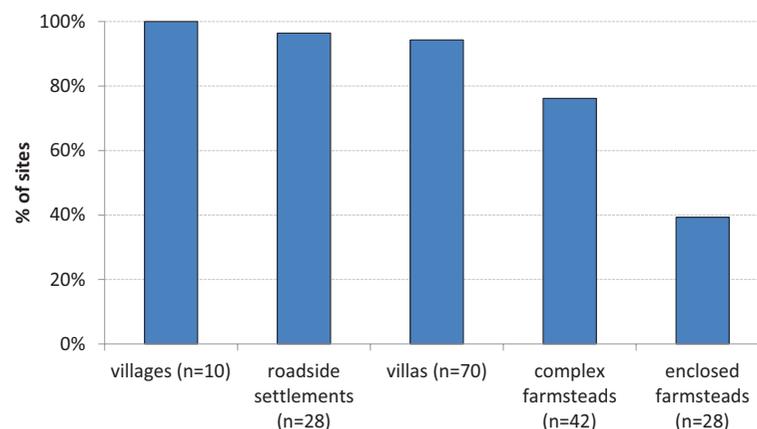


FIG. 6.13. Percentage of sites with Iron Age and Roman coins by major settlement type in the Western Central Belt

Most excavated rural sites conform to the broad regional pattern, although there are some important distinctions between different classes of site, as shown in FIG. 6.15. Firstly, it is important to note that the chart in FIG. 6.15 does not include enclosed farmsteads, and this is because enclosed farmsteads seldom produce large enough assemblages of coins to consider statistically, and these sites immediately, therefore, stand out as different. Villages are also omitted from FIG. 6.15 as only four sites had ten or more dated coins, although, in general, it is fair to say that they adhere to the typical rural pattern. Roadside settlements, villas and complex farmsteads all conform to the broad pattern, although there are some notable differences. Villas are substantially less well represented by coins of phase A than either roadside settlements or complex farmsteads, while complex farmsteads are more poorly represented by coins of phase Dii than either of

the other two settlement types. This pattern for the most part represents the different chronologies of the site types, with roadside settlements and complex farmsteads often beginning earlier than villas (and some villas developed out of complex farmsteads), while villas and roadside settlements tend to continue longer into the late Roman period than complex farmsteads.

As this volume is a study of the Romano-British rural economy, the evidence from coins from urban sites has not been considered in detail. Nevertheless, it is instructive to consider how the rural pattern of coin loss within the case study area compares to that from excavated urban sites, and FIG. 6.16 presents the mean level of coin loss from a selected group of Roman urban sites in the region, including the walled 'small towns' (and in some instances their extramural areas) of Alchester, Dorchester-on-Thames and Worcester, and the major settlements of Gloucester and Cirencester

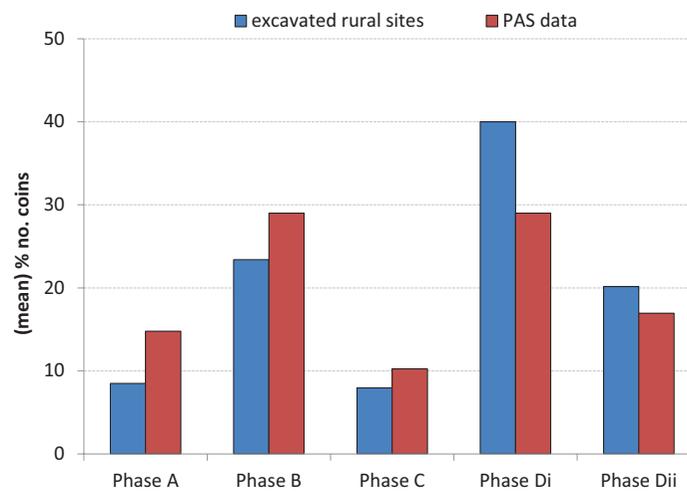


FIG. 6.14. Mean percentage of Roman coins by phase at excavated rural sites with percentages of coins recorded by Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in the Western Central Belt

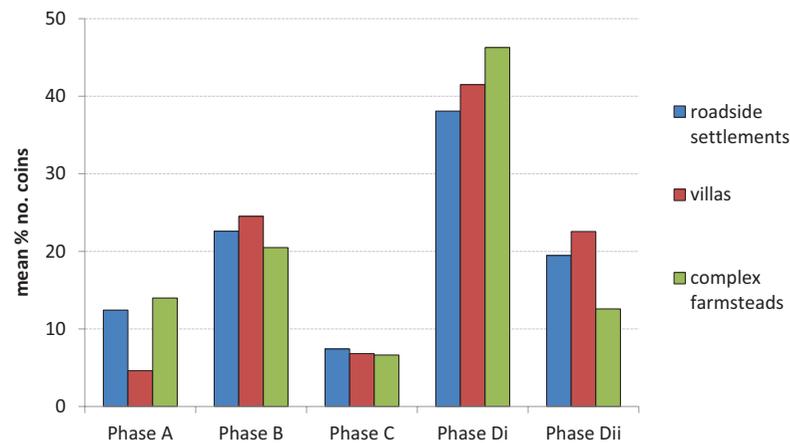


FIG. 6.15. Mean percentages of coin loss by site type in the Western Central Belt

(the latter using data compiled by Reece 1991). The patterns are clearly very similar, and so it is fair to say that the pattern of coin loss displayed by both towns and rural sites in this region principally reflects a broader regional pattern of coin loss, although towns stand out as having higher proportions of coins of phase A than any of the rural sites (which is likely to be skewed by the military origins of both Cirencester and Gloucester). Reece has previously referred to Cirencester as a ‘bad town’ (1995; 1998; 2002; Reece and Guest 1998), in that it has a pattern of coin loss more characteristic of rural than other urban sites. However, the broad similarity between urban and rural sites in the region means that it is probably more likely that the pattern of coin loss at towns had a strong influence on the rural settlement pattern.

The differences between rural site types are explored further here by using the same measure of coins/ha used above. However, it is important to note that as the sample includes only sites with at least ten dated coins it is already strongly biased

against most farmsteads, and this in itself is instructive (FIG. 6.17). Most roadside settlements have produced more than ten dated coins, as have between 40 and 50 per cent of villages and villas. For complex farmsteads, however, this drops to 26 per cent and for enclosed farmsteads it is especially low, at just 7 per cent (two sites). The farmsteads in the sample used for more detailed analysis are therefore already exceptional because they have yielded coins in double-digits. The small number of farmsteads with groups of ten or more coins (in an area of generally very high coin use) is particularly noteworthy given that Walton (with some exceptions in areas where coins are scarce) focused on parishes where a minimum of 20 coins had been recorded by the PAS (Walton 2012; 2015). The use of this relatively high numerical threshold, selected for entirely valid statistical purposes, means that farmsteads are likely to be extremely poorly represented in Walton’s PAS dataset.

There is little value in presenting detailed data for each phase, as although the frequencies change,

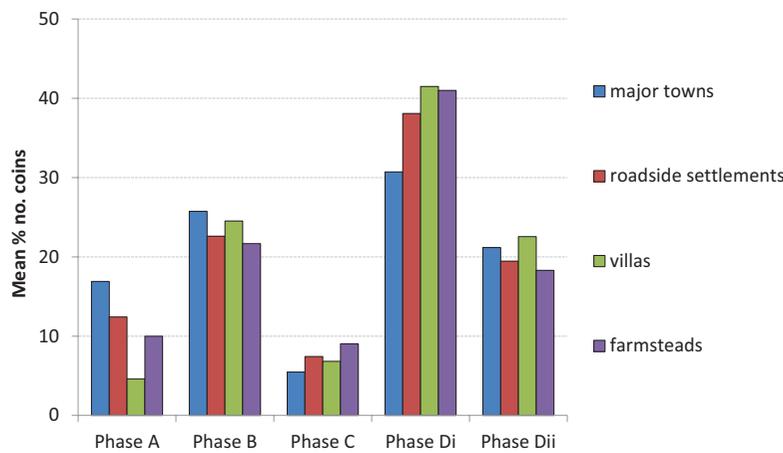


FIG. 6.16. Mean coin loss at rural sites and urban sites in the Western Central Belt

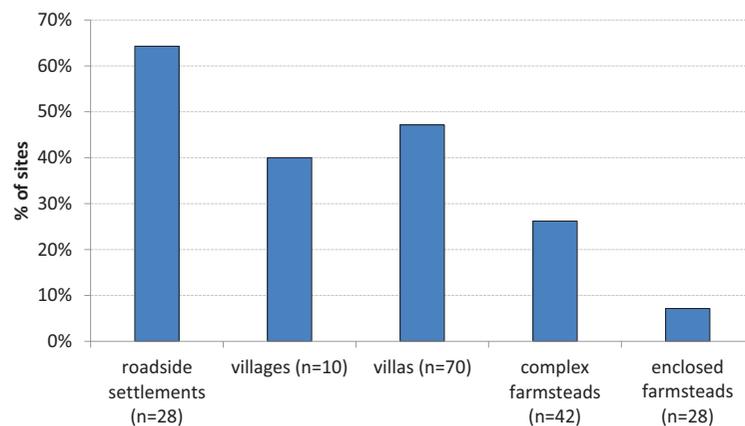


FIG. 6.17. Percentage of major site types in the Western Central Belt with ten or more phased coins

the broad patterns between the different classes of site are very similar throughout, and phase Di (the phase best represented by coins in general) is presented as an example in FIG. 6.18 (villages and enclosed farmsteads are again excluded because the sample contained low numbers of these site types). It is clear that large groups of coins are by and large restricted to nucleated roadside settlements and villas. Even in an area where coins circulated widely, in the phase when most coins were in use, coins were typically lost at farmsteads in only very small numbers.

Likely reasons for the higher frequencies of coins at roadside settlements have been discussed above, reflecting the importance of Roman roads in terms of the distribution of goods (and coins as the means to acquire them), as well as the role that many of these sites are likely to have had as important local hubs, market centres and perhaps centres for tax collection. However, we must remember that, although these settlements stand out above all other rural sites as being best represented by coinage, most should probably still be regarded as settlements of essentially rural character, usually lacking the defences, monumental architecture, public buildings and networks of streets that characterise urban sites. Although the total area of excavation is unknown,

the sheer volume of coin recovered from Cirencester, which has yielded nearly 10,000 coins (Reece 1991; Reece and Guest 1998) (although it is important to note that 6609 of the Cirencester coins are from the Corinium Museum collection and were not recovered during controlled modern excavations), outstrips the roadside settlement with the next highest number of coins, at Nettleton, Wiltshire (Wedlake 1982), a site that also had a religious focus, which had just over 2000 coins, by a very considerable margin.

The high frequency of coins at villas in this area requires consideration. What is it about these sites that sets them apart from the vast majority of farmsteads? The first point to make is that not all sites defined as villas were the same, and the term 'villa' encompasses a range of different types of site, ranging from 'lower-order' cottage-type buildings as at Barton Court Farm, Oxfordshire (Miles 1986), at one end of the scale to large, opulent palatial complexes (by British standards) such as Chedworth, Gloucestershire (Richmond 1959; Esmonde Cleary 2013), at the other (although even Chedworth is modest compared to many villas in Gaul), and these different types of site may have had very different types of occupants and functions. The plans of many villas are uncertain, although of those for which the form is known there is a strong correlation between the winged corridor form and high frequencies of coins (of all phases). This pattern for the most part reflects how common this particular style of villa is, with winged corridor villas being the most numerous and widespread type in the province (Smith 2016b, 73). It may also, however, reflect the situation in the region that few of the courtyard or palatial villas known have been excavated to modern standards, often having been the focus of antiquarian or early archaeological investigations, and which therefore lack adequate coin lists.

A likely explanation for the high frequency of coins at villas is that many villa buildings were central places within landscapes that were often hives of activity, involved in surplus production, both agricultural and industrial, and the number of coins recovered from several sites suggests that some villas may have held periodic market fairs. Some perhaps had a function in tax collection in the countryside, and such a role might be supported by the increased rate at which coin hoards have been recovered from villas compared with farmsteads (although we need to be cautious of interpreting all coin hoards necessarily as stores of wealth, see below, p. 263). It has been suggested that the process of tax collection was devolved to prosperous landowners and local town councillors (Hopkins 1980, 121), and documentary evidence from other provinces indicates that landowners

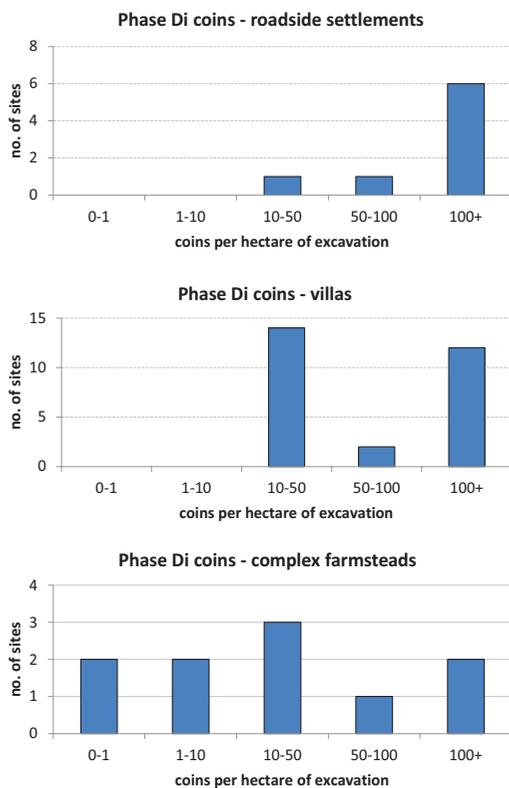


FIG. 6.18. Coins per hectare for coins of phase Di (A.D. 330–364) at roadside settlements, villas and complex farmsteads in the Western Central Belt

sometimes borrowed to pay taxes in advance and extracted what they could from the peasant population as reimbursement and possibly profit (Harl 1996, 233). Fairs held at villas may have represented a temporal and geographical focus for purposes of tax collection, and the social distribution of weighing equipment at sites in the region may represent further evidence for this (see below). This may suggest a level of economic dependency between farmsteads and villas in areas such as the Cotswolds, at least during the late Roman period, when villas reached their *floruit*. If so, however, this was certainly not the case everywhere, as there are areas where villas are less common (cf. Smith 2016a, 157-60).

An exceptionally large coin assemblage with hundreds of coins was recovered from the villa at Kingscote, Gloucestershire (Timby 1998), where there were high frequencies of coins of all phases (though the numbers are likely to be skewed by metal detecting and the possibility that the site is a roadside settlement). Here, the site produced a range of evidence for large-scale production, including metalworking workshops, a corndryer, millstones, and one building contained a range of ovens and hearths. This extensive site with a large number of buildings has been interpreted as part of an estate centre, and the evidence for productivity at the site suggests that it would have had a large workforce and seen high volumes of traffic. Similar evidence for productivity, albeit often at a lesser scale, has been identified at almost all other villas with very high frequencies of coin loss, ranging from corndryers to metalworking workshops and pottery kilns, and these sites often have evidence for broad economic diversification. It appears likely that many villas would have had numerous workers, engaged in a range of activities (though where such workers lived remains open to question). We cannot know whether workers on such estates were slaves, serfs (or their Romano-British equivalent), casual employees or (as seems likely) a variable mixture, but the possibility exists that some estate workers were paid in coin (although Richard Reece suggests, if so, these coins would probably have been of higher value than those found on site – Reece pers. comm.). With a range of specialist workers, the need for regular exchange of goods and services at the larger villas may have facilitated widespread coin use among villa populations in ways that may not have been necessary at most of the smaller farmsteads, where the occupants grew the bulk of their own food, and had only occasional relationships with markets. The large number of coins may also reflect the possibility that sites such as Kingscote were themselves places that people went to buy produce directly, rather like a farm shop.

The small number of farmsteads that have produced atypically large coin assemblages perhaps can be seen in similar ways, and, certainly, several have produced evidence for surplus agricultural production or industrial activity. The sites at Farmoor, Oxfordshire (Lambrick and Robinson 1979), Cotswold Community, Gloucestershire (Powell *et al.* 2010), Neigh Bridge, Gloucestershire (Miles *et al.* 2007) Claydon Pike, Gloucestershire (*ibid.*) and Chew Park (Rahtz and Greenfield 1977) for instance, all had corndryers. Indeed, we must remember that the distinction between a villa and a wealthy farmstead is fluid, and it may be that some sites (e.g. Claydon Pike and Chew Park, which both had well-appointed masonry buildings) are better regarded as lower order villas than farmsteads, even if they lack some of the finer accoutrements (e.g. mosaics, painted wall plaster) of the larger and more wealthy villas. Some of these sites may, therefore, have been central places within the local landscape and the increased frequency of coins may reflect this. The evidence for an emphasis on connectivity and surplus production at sites in the countryside that have produced substantial numbers of coins suggests that coins ended up at some of these sites because their occupants were engaged in types of economic activity that differed from people at other settlements, and these types of activity demanded the use of coinage.

The social distribution of steelyards and other objects associated with weighing goods supports this. These were present at 16 per cent of villas, 14 per cent of roadside settlements and just 5 per cent of farmsteads. Of those farmsteads that did yield these objects, most were of complex form (where classified), and they are typically the sites where larger groups of coins and evidence for surplus production have been recovered (e.g. Chew Park; Farmoor; Neigh Bridge; Claydon Pike). The same is true for villas; those with steelyard weights/balances are often those with the highest number of coins by area (e.g. Barnsley Park; Kingscote; Frocester Court), adding weight to the suggestion that villas typically yield more coins because they were engaged in surplus production that required precise measurement, and that some may also have been the focus, at least sometimes, for financial transactions.

Indeed, the relationship between sites with relatively large numbers of coins and high frequencies of other aspects of material culture is clear. Villas almost always produce rich finds assemblages and, as we have seen, they are also typically well represented by coins. The pattern is similar at farmsteads. Of the twenty most coin-rich farmsteads (by area of excavation, using a sample of sites with a minimum of 0.5 ha

TABLE 6.1: FREQUENCY OF COINS AND OTHER ASPECTS OF HIGH-STATUS MATERIAL CULTURE AT FARMSTEADS IN THE WESTERN CENTRAL BELT

Sites are listed in rank order by objects per hectare, based on a sample of sites with greater than 0.5 ha excavated. Note, Claydon Pike is listed as complex/enclosed since for most of its existence it was of complex form (see below, p. 256)

<i>Farmsteads with greatest frequency of coins per ha</i>	<i>Farmsteads with greatest frequency of vessel glass</i>	<i>Farmsteads with greatest frequency of amphora sherds</i>	<i>Farmsteads with greatest frequency of samian sherds</i>
Claydon Pike (complex/enclosed), 342 p/ha	Claydon Pike (complex/enclosed), 299 p/ha	Claydon Pike (complex/enclosed), 407 p/ha	Claydon Pike (complex/enclosed), 823 p/ha
Chew Park (complex), 169 p/ha	Chew Park (complex), 109 p/ha	Whelford Bowmoor (complex), 374 p/ha	Whelford Bowmoor a (complex), 662 p/ha
Cleveland Farm, Ashton Keynes (complex), 100 p/ha	Cleveland Farm, Ashton Keynes (complex), 18 p/ha	Bath Road, Worcester (unclassified), 26.5 p/ha	Chew Park (complex), 196 p/ha
Weavers Bridge (unclassified), 94 p/ha	Portway (complex), 8 p/ha	Whitelands Farm, Bicester (unclassified), 19 p/ha	South-east of Tewkesbury Area C (complex), 110 p/ha
Whelford Bowmoor (complex), 40 p/ha	Whelford Bowmoor (complex), 8 p/ha	Totterdown Lane, Horcott (complex), 13 p/ha	Blacklands, Staverton (unclassified), 107 p/ha
Grendon Underwood (Plot 5.03–05) (unclassified), 18 p/ha	Stonebridge Cross, Westwood (complex), 8 p/ha	Grendon Underwood (Plot 5.03–05) (unclassified), 12.5 p/ha	Appleford Sidings (enclosed), 96 p/ha
Yarnton (unclassified), 15 p/ha	Appleford Sidings (enclosed), 8 p/ha	South-east of Tewkesbury Area C (complex), 11 p/ha	Honeybourne to Wormington Natural Gas Pipeline (unclassified), 90 p/ha
Evesham Road, Upper Moor, Pershore (complex), 12 p/ha	Land off Greet Road, Winchcombe (unclassified), 6 p/ha	Stonebridge Cross, Westwood (complex), 10 p/ha	Grendon Underwood (Plot 5.03–05) (unclassified), 79.5 p/ha
Cotswold Community (complex), 9 p/ha	South-east of Tewkesbury Area C (complex), 5 p/ha	Arkell's Land (complex), 9 p/ha	Showell Farm, Chippenham (complex), 67 p/ha
Weedon Hill, Aylesbury (complex), 7 p/ha	Showell Farm, Chippenham (complex), 4 p/ha	Blacklands, Staverton (unclassified), 7 p/ha	Stonebridge Cross, Westwood (complex), 60 p/ha
Blacklands, Staverton (unclassified), 7 p/ha	Gloucester Business Park Link Road, Hucclecote (complex), 3 p/ha	Appleford Sidings (enclosed), 6 p/ha	Bath Road, Worcester (unclassified), 56.6 p/ha
Portway (complex), 7 p/ha	Land North of Brockworth (unclassified), 2.5 p/ha	Weavers Bridge (unclassified), 6 p/ha	Land off Greet Road, Winchcombe (unclassified), 49 p/ha
Coxwell Road, Faringdon (unclassified), 6 p/ha	Land at Fiddington (enclosed), 2 p/ha	Stoke Lane, Wychbold (enclosed), 5.5 p/ha	Chapel Farm, Blunsden (Lower Widhill Farm) (unclassified), 37 p/ha
Hatford Quarry, Sandy Lane, Hatford (unclassified), 6 p/ha	Brockworth Airfield (complex), 1.5 p/ha	Land off Greet Road, Winchcombe (unclassified), 5 p/ha	Chemistry Research laboratory/ Mansfield Road, Oxford (unclassified), 35 p/ha
Milletts Farm, Frilford (unclassified), 4 p/ha	South-east of Tewkesbury Area D (enclosed), 1 p/ha	Fox's Field, Ebley Road, Stonehouse (unclassified), 5 p/ha	Whitelands Farm, Bicester (unclassified), 35 p/ha
South-east of Tewkesbury Area C (complex), 4 p/ha	Cotswold Community (complex), 1 p/ha	Gloucester Business Park Link Road, Hucclecote (complex), 5 p/ha	Rudgeway lane, Walton Cardiff, Tewkesbury (complex), 34.5 p/ha
Chemistry Research lab./ Mansfield College, Oxford (unclassified), 3 p/ha	Brightwell-cum-Sotwell (unclassified), 1 p/ha	Honeybourne to Wormington Natural Gas Pipeline (unclassified), 3 p/ha	Fox's Field, Ebley Road, Stonehouse (unclassified), 28 p/ha
Land off Greet Road, Winchcombe (unclassified), 2.5 p/ha	Blacklands, Staverton (unclassified), 1 p/ha	Saxon's Lode Farm, Ripple (complex), 3 p/ha	Milletts Farm, Frilford (unclassified), 27 p/ha
Stubbs Farm, Kempford (enclosed), 2 p/ha	Long Marston (Area I) (unclassified), 1 p/ha	West Drive, Cheltenham (unclassified), 3 p/ha	Watchfield, Shrivenham (unclassified), 27 p/ha
Rudgeway lane, Walton Cardiff, Tewkesbury (complex), 2 p/ha	Whitelands Farm, Bicester (unclassified), 1 p/ha	Middle Duntisbourne (unclassified), 3 p/ha	Totterdown Lane, Horcott (complex), 23 p/ha

excavated), ten (50 per cent) are also in the top 20 for samian (TABLE 6.1), nine (45 per cent) are in the top 20 for frequency of glass vessel sherds and seven (35 per cent) are in the top 20 for sherds of amphorae (all calculated by area of excavation). Heavy coin loss and the presence of large quantities of costly goods at sites in the countryside are therefore often closely linked, and coins are just one aspect of material culture that reflects connectivity. Complex farmsteads dominate in all of the above classes of material culture (although some enclosed farmsteads are also represented), emphasising the distinction between the two types of site in terms of access to market goods. Many of the farmsteads are unclassified morphologically, yet the clear emphasis on complex farmsteads allows the suggestion that, on balance of probability, most of those that are well represented by coins, samian, amphorae, vessel glass and other high-status objects are likely to be farmsteads of complex form.

The geographical distribution of farmsteads with unusually high frequencies of coins is of note and FIG. 6.19 shows the distribution of the thirteen classified farmsteads with ten or more dated coins.

There is a strikingly clear focus on the Upper Thames Valley, where the proximity to Cirencester may be an important factor; nine of the sites are situated within 1.5 km of the River Thames or its tributaries, and the site at Latton Lands, Wiltshire (Powell *et al.* 2009), is also adjacent to a Roman road. Elsewhere, the complex farmstead at Evesham Road, Upper Moor, Pershore, Worcestershire (Vaughan 2005), is approximately 1 km from the River Avon, and the complex farmstead at Chew Park, Somerset (Rahtz and Greenfield 1977), sits next to a Roman road. The extent to which the Thames and Avon were used for transport is unclear, and such rivers may or may not have been a factor governing the distribution of sites with high numbers of coins. Certainly, Roman roads were important, and there are dense networks of trackways in the Upper Thames Valley that linked rural sites to major roads and larger settlements (Booth 2011); these undoubtedly represented the main mode of communication between sites. As we have seen, most sites with high numbers of coins appear to have been involved in surplus production, with products presumably destined for the market;

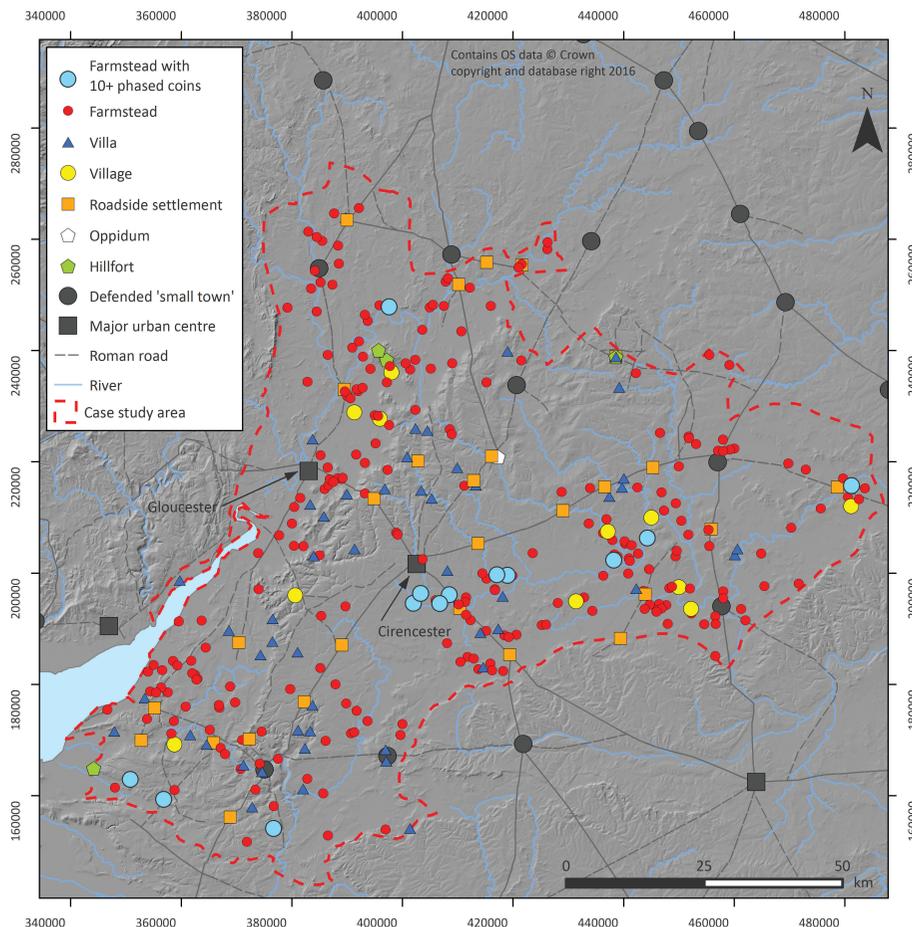


FIG. 6.19. Geographical distribution of farmsteads with 10+ phased coins in the Western Central Belt

their populations may have travelled more extensively, were better connected, and perhaps used coins more frequently than the occupants of many other farmsteads. The emphasis on the Upper Thames Valley is worthy of particular note, especially as Dorchester-on-Thames has been noted for a concentration of late Roman Theodosian coins recorded by PAS, and Moorhead has suggested that the region may have experienced late coin use as a result of links with the Continent associated with grain supply to the Rhineland (Moorhead and Stuttard 2012, 226–7; Moorhead and Walton 2014, 112). It is very rare for farmsteads to have coins of Reece period 21 (A.D. 388–402) (see below, p. 262), and it is therefore striking that of the fifteen that do eight are in the immediate Thames Valley area (FIG. 6.20). Almost all of these farmsteads with late Roman coins are precisely the same sites that have yielded unusually large numbers of coins (Claydon Pike; Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes; Cotswold Community; Cleveland Farm, Ashton Keynes; Latton Lands; Old Shifford Farm, Standlake, Site M; Farmoor). Many may perhaps be regarded as satellite settlements, within a few hours travel from

Cirencester, and the large number of late Roman coins from Cirencester is well known (Reece 1991; Reece and Guest 1998). Moorhead suggests that soldiers or other officials were stationed in the countryside to oversee grain production, linking the distribution of late military type Roman belt fittings, which are often regarded as being associated with officials (e.g. Swift 2000, 201; Bishop and Coulston 2006, 224; Leahy 2007, 134), with the distribution of late Roman coins (Moorhead and Stuttard 2012, 227; Walton and Moorhead 2016a). The evidence from excavated rural sites for late Roman official activity is ambiguous, although late second/early third century military material and a late Roman military buckle were recovered from Claydon Pike. Late Roman military objects were also found at Neigh Bridge, Somerford Keynes, although the nature of activity in the late Roman period at this site is very uncertain. However, the objects recovered from these sites do possibly hint at some form of military/official connection at some sites in the countryside surrounding Cirencester.

Although coin-rich farmsteads are rare, the very fact that coins are commonly recovered in small

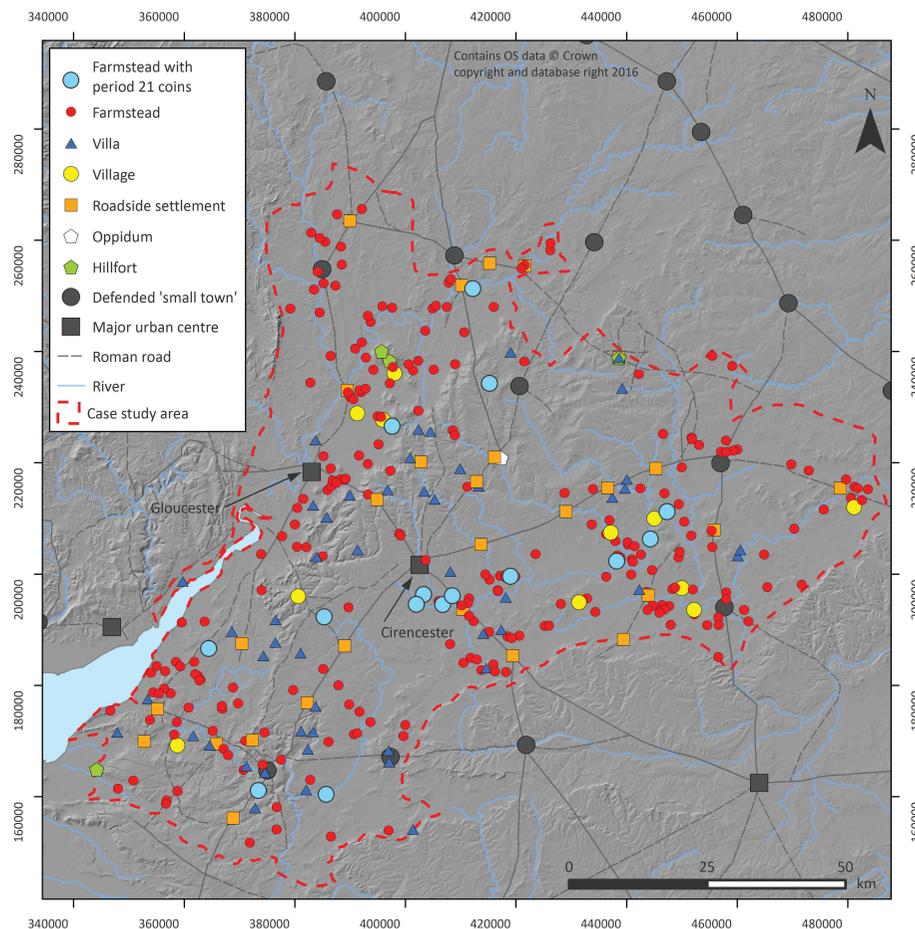


FIG. 6.20. Geographical distribution of farmsteads with coins of Reece Period 21 in the Western Central Belt

numbers from complex farmsteads in the case study region (76 per cent) indicates that, although they are less frequent finds than at villas and roadside settlements, coins played a part in the way of life of people at these sites, at least to some extent. The relatively early dates of some coins recovered from many farmsteads also suggest that coins began to be used at these sites early in the Roman period. Coins could, however, circulate for considerable periods of time after being struck, as indicated by the high levels of wear often seen on early Roman coins, and early Roman coins are also sometimes found in much later hoards (e.g. Shapwick, Somerset, which had a *terminus post quem* of A.D. 224, yet contained hundreds of *denarii* of Mark Antony: Abdy and Minnitt 2002). This

makes it somewhat difficult to establish precisely when coin use became most widespread. It is, however, notable that while copper-alloy coins of the late third and fourth century are numerically most common, in terms of percentages, sites with coins of phase A are actually slightly better represented at complex farmsteads than sites with coins of later dates (FIG. 6.21). So, although the number of coins circulating increased dramatically in the late third and fourth century, this late Roman boom in coin loss does not correspond with an increase in the proportion of sites yielding coins.

Exploring this in more detail, FIG. 6.22 presents the earliest dated coins by site type (i.e. the charts show only the earliest coin for each site) in the case study area for roadside settlements, villas and

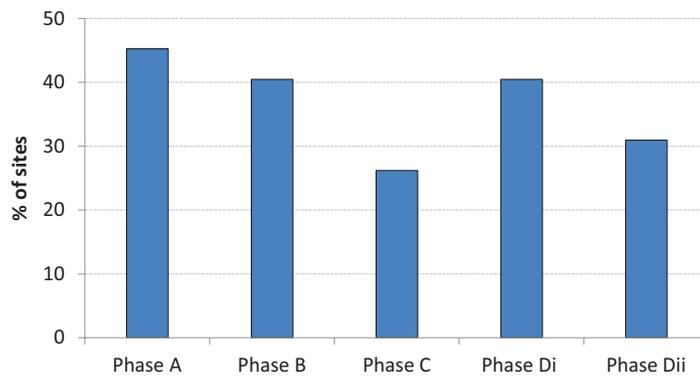


FIG. 6.21. Percentage of coins by phase at complex farmsteads in the Western Central Belt

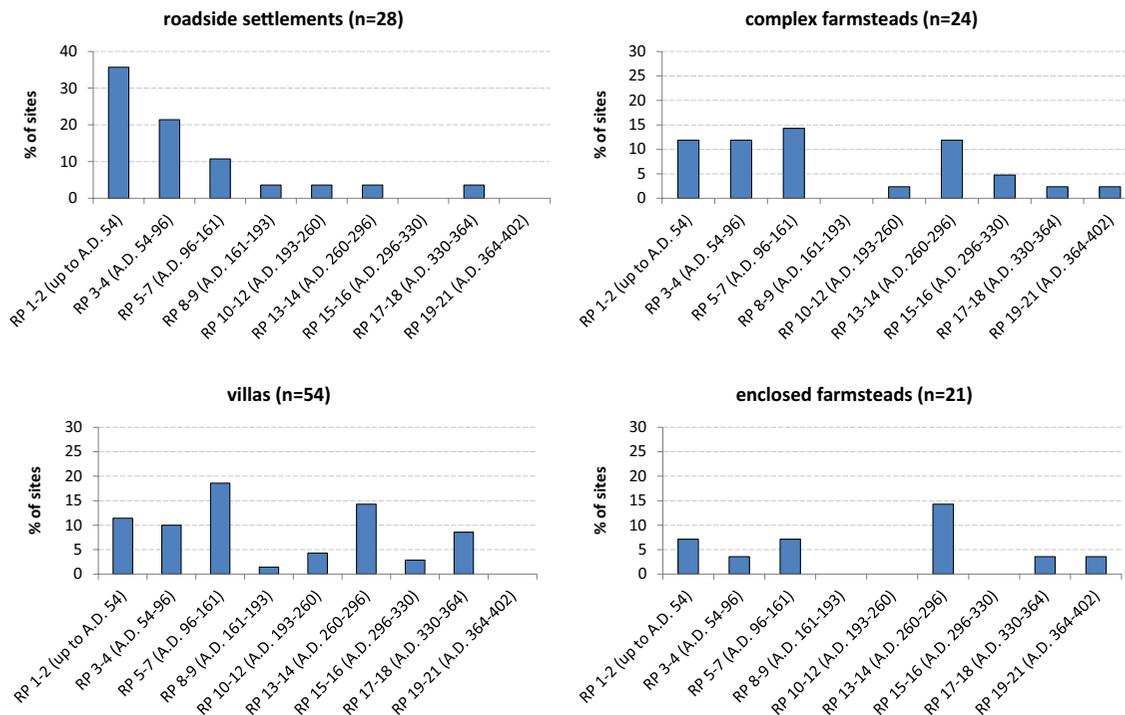


FIG. 6.22. Earliest phased coins at roadside settlements, villas and complex and enclosed farmsteads in the Western Central Belt, by Reece period

complex farmsteads (there are too few villages with dated coins to present these sites in the same way), amalgamating two to three Reece periods into a series of nine groups, and presenting the sites as percentages of the total number of each site type. At roadside settlements the phases with the most sites are Reece periods 1–2 (Republic to A.D. 54) and 3–4 (A.D. 54–96), reflecting the relatively early foundation dates (and often likely military origins) for these sites, with most established well before the end of the first century A.D., and that coins appear to have been used at these sites more or less as soon as they were established. The profiles for villas and complex farmsteads are somewhat different from those of the roadside settlements, yet very similar to one another, with 10–12 per cent of sites having their earliest coins in each of the Reece period groups 1–2 (Republic to A.D. 54) and 3–4 (A.D. 54–96), an increase to between 14–20 per cent in periods 5–7 (A.D. 96–161), a spike in periods 13–14 (A.D. 260–296), and again in periods 17–18 (A.D. 330–364). The relatively high proportions of sites where the earliest coins are of Reece period groups 1–2 (Republic to A.D. 54), 3–4 (A.D. 54–96) and 5–7 (A.D. 96–161) at villas and complex farmsteads indicates that the occupants of many of these site types came into contact with coins early in the Roman period, although, as noted above, we must remember that early Roman coins could circulate for generations after having been struck. This seemingly early adoption of coins is likely to be related to the major settlement and landscape changes that appear to have occurred in parts of the case study region during the early second century A.D., especially in the Upper Thames Valley, when new settlements were emerging, existing sites and field systems were reorganised (Booth *et al.* 2007, 56) and trackways linking settlements with one another, major roads and the larger centres increased in numbers (Booth 2011).

The reduced proportions of enclosed farmsteads where the earliest coins were of first to second century date emphasises the pattern presented above, that the occupants of these sites seem less likely to have engaged in the coin-using economy than those at villas and complex farmsteads. Of the few enclosed farmsteads that have produced early Roman coins, several are clearly very atypical. Claydon Pike in Gloucestershire is one such example, as this site only developed into what was clearly a high-status enclosed settlement in the late Roman period; in the earlier Roman period the site was of complex form, and the presence of a masonry-built shrine also marks the site out as being of unusual importance (Miles *et al.* 2007). Another site, at St John's, Worcester, produced an unusual finds assemblage, including Claudian coins and brooches, which is thought likely to be associated with a military presence, and the site has been interpreted as an enclosed farmstead that may have been re-used by natives trading with the suggested army base at Worcester (Wainwright 2010). Enclosed farmsteads with early Roman coins (or coins at all) are often, therefore, very clearly the exception to the rule.

Walton (2012) developed a method for comparing the denominational as well as the chronological composition of coin assemblages, and a similar approach demonstrates some noteworthy differences concerning the early denominations that circulated at different classes of rural settlement (FIG. 6.23). Firstly, bronze/brass denominations account for the majority of coins at all settlement types, and at all classes of site the lowest value *asses* and *dupondii* are more common than *sestertii*. The very lowest value coins, the *semis* (half-*as*) and the *quadrans* (quarter-*as*) are rarely recovered from sites in Britain, although they occur occasionally, usually at sites with an early military presence (see McIntosh and

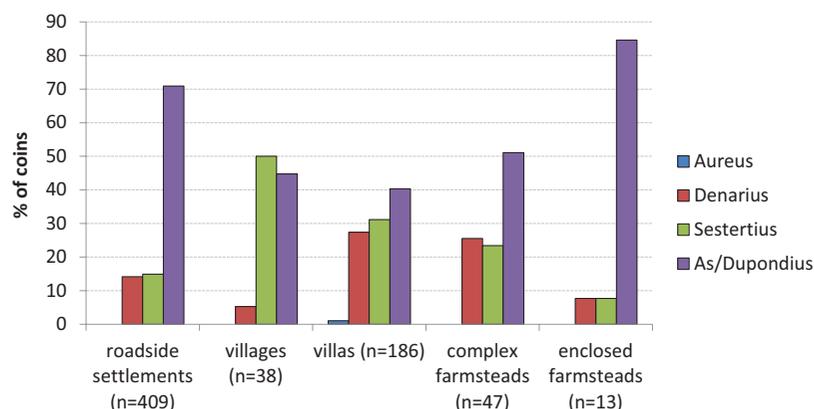


FIG. 6.23. Percentage of early Roman coin denominations at the major classes of rural settlement in the Western Central Belt

Moorhead 2011), and it is likely that inflation meant that by the time coins began circulating widely these denominations were essentially redundant (Burnett 1987, 109; Harl 1996, 18–20).

Dupondii and *asses* have been grouped together for the purposes of this analysis, principally because they often circulated for considerable periods of time and were very worn when lost, and, as they are of a similar size and weight, when the legend and busts are worn it is usually impossible to differentiate between the two. However, it is worth noting that at most sites where the denominations can be differentiated, *asses* usually outnumber *dupondii* by two or three to one, and positively identified *dupondii* are less common even than the higher value *sestertii* or *denarii*. *Dupondii* are also outnumbered by *asses* and *sestertii* in the PAS dataset, as well as in hoards, and this seems to be related to the rate at which the different denominations were struck (Bland pers. comm.; Moorhead pers. comm.).

Gold *aurei* are extremely uncommon as site finds at rural sites (although they are occasionally found as metal-detector finds or in hoards; e.g. Bland and Loriot 2010), reflecting of course the high value of these coins, and that considerable care would have been taken over them; the only sites where gold *aurei* were retrieved as site finds within the case study area were the villas at Box in Wiltshire (Hurst 1987) and Kingscote in Gloucestershire (Timby 1998). Silver *denarii* are relatively common finds at villas, complex farmsteads, and roadside settlements, accounting for 27 per cent, 26 per cent and 14 per cent of the percentage of denominations at these site types respectively. *Denarii* are, however, exceptionally rare at enclosed farmsteads, and indeed, the only *denarius* recovered from such sites was a coin from the above-noted anomalous and clearly high-status site at Claydon Pike (and this was not from the enclosed phase of the settlement). The highest value bronze coin, the *sestertius*, is also rare at enclosed farmsteads, and again only one example was identified, at Stubbs Farm, Kempford, Gloucestershire (Miles *et al.* 2007). The scarcity of high-value bronze and silver coins at enclosed farmsteads is striking; not only did the occupants of these sites seldom lose coins (presumably because they did not often use them, had fewer of them to lose, and went to considerable trouble to retrieve them if they were dropped), when they did, they were of low value. The general lack of *denarii* from villages is also noteworthy, with just two coins recorded (both from Gill Mill, Oxfordshire; Booth and Simmonds forthcoming), although the sample size is small, restricted to 38 early coins from nine sites where denominations were identified.

Although the higher value denominations occur more frequently at roadside settlements, villas and complex farmsteads, there are also some striking differences between these site types. *Denarii* make up quite substantially greater proportions of the coins at complex farmsteads and villas than they do at roadside settlements, which are better represented by *dupondii* and *asses*. This difference seems most likely to reflect the varying chronologies of these settlement types, and the dates of the coins that were lost, as outlined above (FIG. 6.22). As we have seen, roadside settlements were often established earlier than villas or complex farmsteads, and these sites therefore typically witnessed the earliest use of Roman coins in the province, outside towns and military sites. Although early coins could circulate for many generations, the coins being lost at complex farmsteads and villas were often somewhat later, and gradual inflation over time meant that the lowest value denominations fell out of use, and the *denarius* became increasingly common (Bland forthcoming; Brickstock 2011, 23; Harl 1996, 18–20, 216; Reece 2002, 18; Hopkins 1980, 115), of poor quality under Commodus and heavily debased under Septimius Severus (Duncan-Jones 1994, 223–8; Harl 1996, 7; Reece 2002, 19–20; Harris 2008, 200). Many of the *denarii* recovered from villas and complex farmsteads date to the late second or early third century A.D., and it is therefore the chronology of these sites and the silver content of the coins that the occupants were using that accounts for the denominational differences between these classes of settlements.

A denominational profile produced from PAS data in the case study area is surprisingly different (FIG. 6.24). Although bronze coins continue to outnumber *denarii*, the silver coins form a far greater proportion of the total in the PAS data, and *sestertii* outnumber *dupondii/asses* by a narrow margin. The emphasis on *denarii* in the PAS dataset may partly reflect recovery/reporting bias,

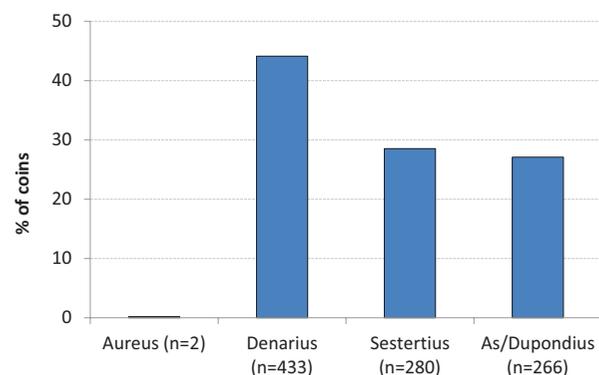


FIG. 6.24. Percentages of early Roman coins recorded by PAS in the Western Central Belt (n=no. coins)

with detector users perhaps more likely to report silver rather than bronze coins (e.g. Davies and Gregory 1991, 79; Walton 2012, 29), with *sestertii* perhaps better represented than *dupondii/asses* because of their size and weight (making them easier to find with a metal detector). It may also reflect bias introduced by Finds Liaison Officers, who with tight workloads may prioritise better preserved or interesting coins over others (Walton 2012, 30; Brindle 2014, 18). The *denarii* may also be better represented in PAS because of the presence of some unrecognised dispersed hoards, and certainly the vast majority of early Roman coin hoards are of silver (Bland forthcoming). The pattern may also to some extent be associated with the rise in inflation discussed above, which reduced the importance of the lower value denominations over time. Indeed, when the *denarii* recorded by PAS are examined by Reece period, it is possible to recognise a dramatic increase in the number of *denarii* circulating from period 10 (A.D. 193–222). This is likely to be a response to the debasement of the silver by Septimius Severus, and also increased numbers brought to Britain during the historically attested Severan military campaigns (e.g. Creighton 2014, 139), and coins of period 10 and later make up 40 per cent of all single finds of *denarii* recorded by PAS (FIG. 6.25) (see also Bland forthcoming). It has also been suggested that silver coins may have been deposited in small groups or individually in the wider rural landscape, perhaps as ritual practices associated with ensuring the fertility of the soil (Walton pers. comm.). There may be a number of factors at play.

While discussing early Roman denominations, it is worth commenting on the social distribution of copies of the bronze coinage of Claudius I. Claudian copies are a well-recognised phenomenon (for an overview see Walton 2012, 79–80, while further work is in progress by Richard Reece), and

appear to have been a response to the low numbers of bronze coins struck during the Claudian period and the early years of Nero's reign, resulting in the production of copies of the existing lower value denominations of Claudius. It is generally believed that copying base-metal coinage was tolerated in such circumstances, and the widespread occurrence of copies of Claudian *asses* and *dupondii* at military sites suggests that the army were responsible for their production. Because of their military association, finds of Claudian copies have sometimes been suggested as evidence for early Roman military activity at sites that are otherwise lacking in evidence for the presence of the army, and, in some cases, this may be the case. However, Claudian copies have been identified at twelve sites within the case study area, and while some (Sea Mills (*Abonae*), Bristol; St John's, Worcester) have certain or likely early military phases, others have produced little evidence for military activity. It seems that where coins were being used at civilian sites in the mid- to late first and second century A.D. Claudian copies were widespread and accepted tender, correlating with the pattern recognised by Walton (2012, 87). As with all early coinage, these coins are most likely to occur at roadside settlements and villas, although examples were recovered from the complex farmsteads at Cotswold Community, Gloucestershire (Powell *et al.* 2010) and Weedon Hill, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire (Wakeham and Bradley 2013), and from the aforementioned (unusual) enclosed farmstead at St John's, Worcester (Wainwright 2010).

Copies of other coins occur occasionally throughout the early Roman period, and plated forgeries of third-century *denarii* are quite common. These are sometimes identified at rural sites, although they are not always recognised as such in site reports, yet finds recorded by PAS

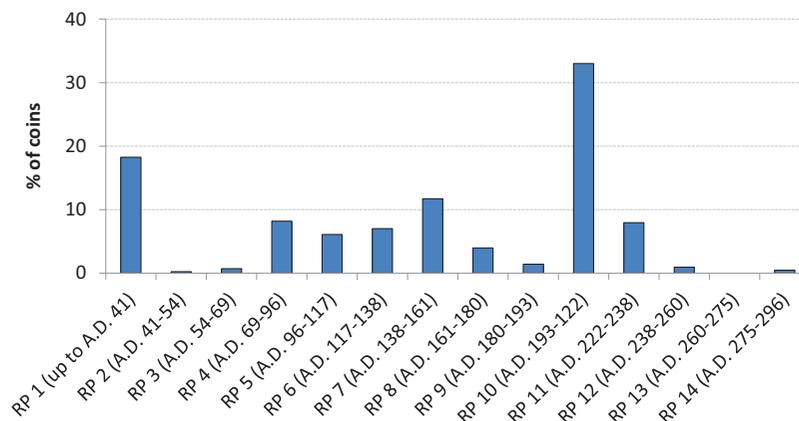


FIG. 6.25. Frequency of *denarii* of different dates recorded by PAS in the Western Central Belt, shown by Reece periods

indicate that around 20 per cent of the coins in general circulation may have been plated copies (Bland forthcoming). Unlike the Claudian copies, these are generally regarded as unofficial forgeries (e.g. Creighton 2014, 134). However, it is in the late Roman period when copying official coins became most widespread (e.g. Boon 1988), and irregular copies of late third-century radiates and fourth-century *nummi* are common at most of the settlement types in the case study area. The only sites at which they do not often occur in large numbers are open and enclosed farmsteads, which, as we have seen, do not typically continue long enough into the Roman period to have used such coins. Late third and fourth-century copies occur at sites in varying numbers, but they often make up significant proportions (sometimes the majority) of the total coin assemblages for phases B and Di across all of the major site types. The copies range in quality: some are very good copies of the coins they are intended to replicate. Many of the fourth-century copies in particular are difficult to distinguish from regular issues, whereas others, especially the barbarous radiates, often bear only a passing and abstract resemblance to the regular coins. It is widely considered unlikely that copies were intended to deceive, but, rather, are likely to have been officially tolerated and accepted as token currency in response to periods when little official 'small-change' was available, as with the earlier Claudian copies. Although late third and fourth-century copies are widespread, the recognition that copies of early Roman coins appear to have been made specifically as votive tokens at Piercebridge and Bath (Walton and Moorhead 2016a; Walton forthcoming) indicates that copying could have been undertaken for a number of reasons, and not all copies necessarily served the same purpose. The value of contemporary copies is uncertain, although the numbers in which they occur at some sites suggest that they were individually of very little value indeed. It is not usually clear where these coins were manufactured, but the huge variety in size and quality of execution is indicative of many individual, local, production sites, and they are likely to have been struck in different numbers and at different times, according to local requirements (Davies 1982, 23). Some production sites have been recognised (see also Ch. 5, p. 192), including evidence for over 300 coin moulds for copies of coins of the Emperor Carausius from a complex farmstead at Lyde Road Yeovil, Somerset (Clelland 2011), and similar evidence from a villa at Stanion, Northamptonshire (Walker 2012). Production sites for copies of fourth-century coins have been identified at White Woman's Hole, Somerset, where a cave appears to have been the

focus of such activity (suggesting, in this case, that the copying may have been furtive), and at the villa at North Leigh, Oxfordshire, where a 'counterfeiter's hoard', was deposited in the room of a former bathhouse after it had gone out of use (Esmonde Cleary 1999).

A further comment to make concerning the denominations circulating in the case study area concerns late Roman precious metal coinage, occasionally recovered as site finds. Gold coins, as in the early Roman period are rare, and there are no gold *solidi* recorded from any of the sites on the database. The circulation of late silver in the countryside has been given recent attention by Bland *et al.* (2013), who have noted that later fourth-century *siliquae* appear to have circulated to a far greater extent in the countryside than at urban sites. Their observation, based on metal-detector finds, is somewhat at odds with the evidence from the excavated sites. Later fourth-century silver *siliquae* certainly do occur occasionally at excavated rural settlements, but they are very rare, present at just fourteen sites in the west (4 per cent of the total), while no *miliarenses* have been identified. It is possible that the emphasis on *siliquae* in the metal-detector finds is a product of the preferential reporting of silver over bronze coins by metal detectorists, especially as the same phenomenon occurs with the early Roman denominations (see above, p. 260), although Walton (pers. comm.) and Moorhead (pers. comm.) both believe the phenomenon to be genuine, based on their experiences recording large numbers of complete metal-detector assemblages where bronze coins were not omitted. The reason remains elusive, although it seems that some of the large rural coin assemblages recorded by Walton and Moorhead may be under-represented in the excavated sites, suggesting forms of activity that took place in the countryside, perhaps away from settlement *foci*, which did not leave significant archaeological traces. If so, whether these were ritual/religious, economic (see *Conclusions*, p. 277), or both, remains uncertain.

As with all coins, late silver at excavated sites is heavily biased towards villas and roadside settlements, although the village at Inns Court/Filwood Park, Knowle West, Bristol (R. Williams 2007) and the complex farmsteads at Brockworth, Gloucestershire (Rawes 1981), and Chew Park, Somerset (Rahtz and Greenfield 1977), have yielded examples. As with several other farmsteads with atypically prolific or unusual coin assemblages, the latter site had many features (including a winged corridor building with painted wall plaster) that suggest it could be viewed as much as a 'lower-order' villa as a wealthy farmstead,

emphasising the connection between high-status rural sites and *siliquae*. The distribution of rural sites that have yielded *siliquae* are strikingly closely associated with the major communications routes (FIG. 6.26), notably the road network, with eleven of the fourteen (79 per cent) situated within 2 km of a major Roman road. This compares with 57 per cent for sites with late fourth-century coins (phase Dii) in general. The distribution (both social and geographical) of the excavated examples has important implications for our understanding of the coins recorded by PAS.

Walton, relying principally on coins recorded by the PAS, has observed a late Roman retraction in coin-loss, away from the wider countryside, back towards the major road network (Walton 2012, 109; 2015; Moorhead and Walton 2014, 104; Walton and Moorhead 2016a). The pattern is supported by the data from excavated rural sites, although the excavated coins suggest that the phenomenon is more likely to be representative of the broader chronology of occupation at settlements in the countryside. Although coins are themselves an important set of evidence for dating sites (and there is therefore a danger of circular

argument), the combined available evidence from coins, pottery and radiocarbon dating suggests that most farmsteads went out of use by the mid-fourth century, and that a lack of late coins may be more likely to represent abandonment of settlements rather than the cessation of coin use by people still living in the countryside. However, this view may change as more radiocarbon dates become available, and we require more robust evidence for the end dates of farmsteads in the late Roman period before we can confidently determine whether an absence of late coins reflects settlement abandonment rather than a lack of engagement with the coin-using economy. As we have seen, where sites produce coins of phase Dii they are often villas, and villas have a demonstrably closer spatial association with the road network than farmsteads (57 per cent of villas are within 2 km of a Roman road, compared to 40 per cent of farmsteads), which may have had an impact on levels of coin use at these sites.

The latest coins from excavated sites in the case study area date to Reece's period 21 (A.D. 388–402), and 56 of the 378 sites in the case study area (15 per cent) yielded coins of this date. Few have

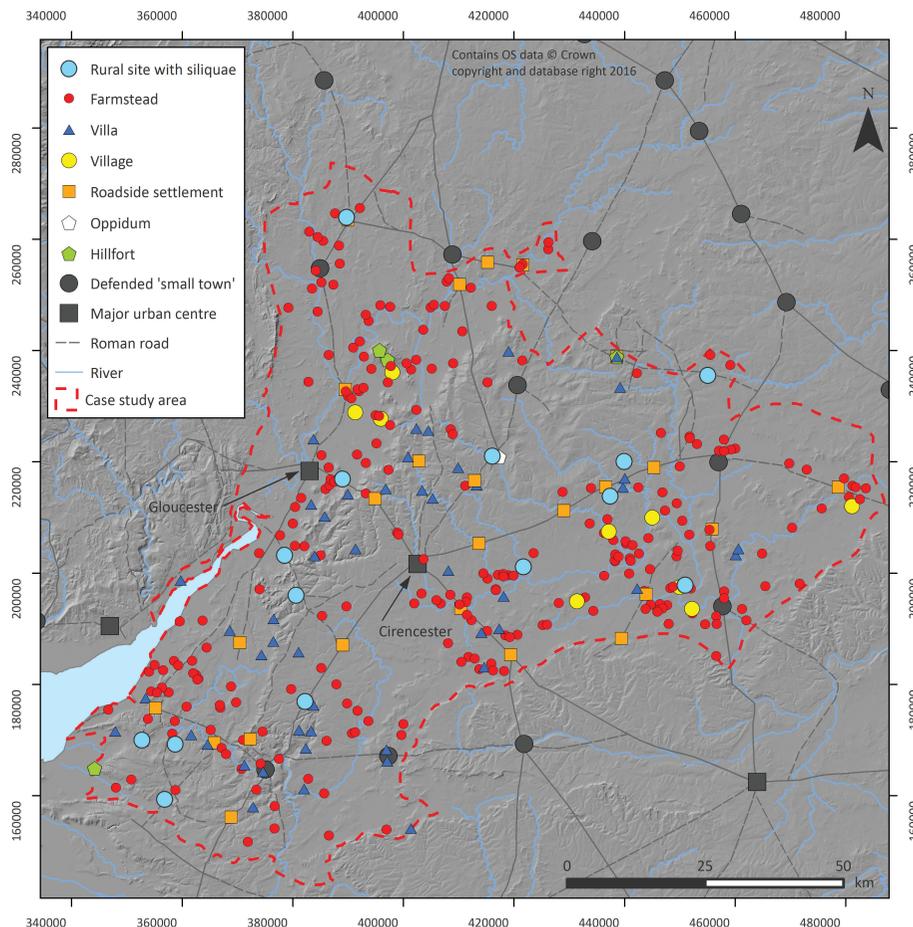


FIG. 6.26. Geographical distribution of excavated *siliquae* at rural sites in the Western Central Belt

been recovered from farmsteads: only 6 per cent of all farmsteads had coins of this date, whereas the proportions are far greater for roadside settlements (50 per cent), villas (33 per cent) and villages (30 per cent), reflecting the general trend for these types of site to continue later into the fourth century than most farmsteads. As is typical, the farmsteads that have produced such coins are usually clearly high status or otherwise very atypical. Claydon Pike yielded a relatively large group (recovered from the area of a shrine, and likely part of a religious deposit, see below), and a large group of metal-detector finds, including a number of period 21 issues, were recovered from Welford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, where a poorly understood site classified as a farmstead is, on the basis of finds of concentrations of limestone, roof and box-flue tile, as well as a wealthy burial in a lead coffin, likely to be a further villa (Booth 1994). The other examples also typically produced evidence for being either high status or having a religious emphasis.

A further aspect of the evidence for coin use in the west requires discussion, and that is coin hoards. Hoards are the focus of limited attention here, mainly because the evidence for this chapter is drawn principally from excavated settlements, and very few hoards have been recovered from excavated sites. Indeed, within the case study area just 24 (6 per cent) domestic settlements yielded coin hoards, compared with 273 coin hoards (253 Roman and 20 Iron Age) recorded from the same area by a recent collaborative project between the University of Leicester and the British Museum (see Bland 2013; 2014; 2015; forthcoming). As with the general social distribution, hoards are biased towards roadside settlements (21 per cent of all roadside sites) and villas (17 per cent), and only a tiny proportion (1.5 per cent – four sites) of farmsteads have produced coin hoards. The lack of coin hoards at farmsteads is, in itself, instructive and suggests that, although coins were used by the occupants of most farmsteads, however infrequently, the inhabitants of many of these sites may not have been able to amass large numbers of coins. However, the University of Leicester/British Museum project has indicated that many coin hoards appear to have been deposited in the wider countryside, away from settlements, and some locations appear to have been more desirable than others (Chadwick pers. comm.). The lack of hoards at farmsteads may therefore also reflect attitudes towards the most desirable locations to deposit groups of coins. If coin hoards are seen as savings deposits or emergency hoards then the wider landscape may have been considered safer than the home, perhaps especially for tenant farmers who did not own the land on which they

lived. However, hoards may have been deposited for a range of reasons beyond the economic; there is increasing recognition that while some may represent the hiding of wealth for safe-keeping, others may have been deposited for social or religious purposes (e.g. Aitchison 1988; Guest 1994; Hobbs 2006, 120–34; Bland 2013) and neither are the interpretations necessarily mutually exclusive. The deposition of hoards at particular places in the wider countryside may have represented continuity or development of Iron Age traditions regarding the deposition of objects in symbolic locations (see above, p. 248).

The emphasis in this chapter is on coins from domestic sites, but a further important element of coin use that has not yet been addressed is the use of coins as objects for votive deposition. This topic will be given fuller attention in Volume 3, although the importance of coins as religious objects merits brief discussion here. Many excavated temples and shrines have produced substantial coin lists (Smith 2001; 2016d). Bath (Cunliffe and Davenport 1985; Cunliffe 1988), for instance, is situated within the case study area, and this is perhaps the most well-recognised site in the province where coins performed a ritual purpose, with many thousands of coins deposited during prayers or as offerings, fulfilments of vows made to a deity in return for divine assistance (e.g. Derks 1995; Kiernan 2001; see Vol. 3). Coins also served as votive objects at several other important temples within the case study area, including Uley (Woodward and Leach 1993) and Lydney Park in Gloucestershire (Wheeler and Wheeler 1932; Casey and Hoffman 1999), Nettleton in Wiltshire (Wedlake 1982), and Marcham/Frilford (Kamash *et al.* 2010) and Woodeaton (Goodchild and Kirk 1954; Harding 1987) in Oxfordshire. Major temples were not the only places at which coins functioned as votives, and at the farmstead at Claydon Pike in the Upper Thames Valley, a site well represented by coins of all phases, a large group of late fourth-century coins were recovered from the area of a masonry shrine (Miles *et al.* 2007). Coins therefore served an important role during religious transactions with the divine world, and were not simply tokens of exchange for market-based commercial activity. Walton has recently recorded a large coin assemblage from a temple site in Wiltshire, several of which had been mutilated or pierced with nails, suggesting ritual activity of some sort (Walton 2015, 117), and similar instances are recorded from other ritual sites in Britain and on the Continent (e.g. Kiernan 2001). The precise contexts of some coins, even when they are not associated with sites with any obvious religious significance, also suggest meaningful deposition. At Allesborough, Pershore,

in Worcestershire, two Dobunnic Iron Age coin hoards were recovered, and the second, apparently deposited during the third to fourth century, was placed in the fill of the flue of an oven (Hurst and Leins 2013). This appears to be part of a wider emerging pattern where coins (as well as other objects) were sometimes placed in the flues of pottery kilns ovens or corndryers, perhaps as closure deposits (as at, for example, Burnby Lane, Hayton, East Riding (Halkon *et al.* 2015) and East Anton, Andover, Hampshire (Firth 2011) (see Vol. 3). In these cases the coins appear to have functioned very differently from those that are likely to have been lost during commercial activity at the markets held at towns, roadside settlements and elsewhere, and the precise context of discovery is of immense importance for our understanding of how and why coins were used.

CASE STUDY TWO: THE EAST

The project database has records for 245 sites in the East (FIG. 6.27), of which 161 (66 per cent) have produced coins. The proportion of sites with coins is therefore exactly the same as in the case

study presented above, and the area is among the best represented for coins in the province. As in the Western Central Belt, the provincial hierarchy in terms of the social distribution of coins is repeated (FIG. 6.28). Almost all roadside settlements, villas and villages have yielded coins, as have the large majority of complex farmsteads. Proportionally fewer enclosed farmsteads have produced coins, although a substantially larger proportion of these sites have coins in the east case study than in the west (59 per cent in the east, as opposed to 39 per cent in the west). In several cases, however, single or small groups of unstratified late Roman coins were recovered from enclosed settlements that appear to have gone out of use long before the coins were in circulation, and while the presence of coins in such circumstances is indicative of later activity of some description, the coins appear not to have been associated with the Romano-British settlements themselves. At Bloodmoor Hill, Carlton Colville, Suffolk, for instance, the enclosed farmstead is thought to have fallen out of use by the mid- to late third century, yet fourth-century coins were recovered from Saxon contexts (Lucy *et al.* 2009).

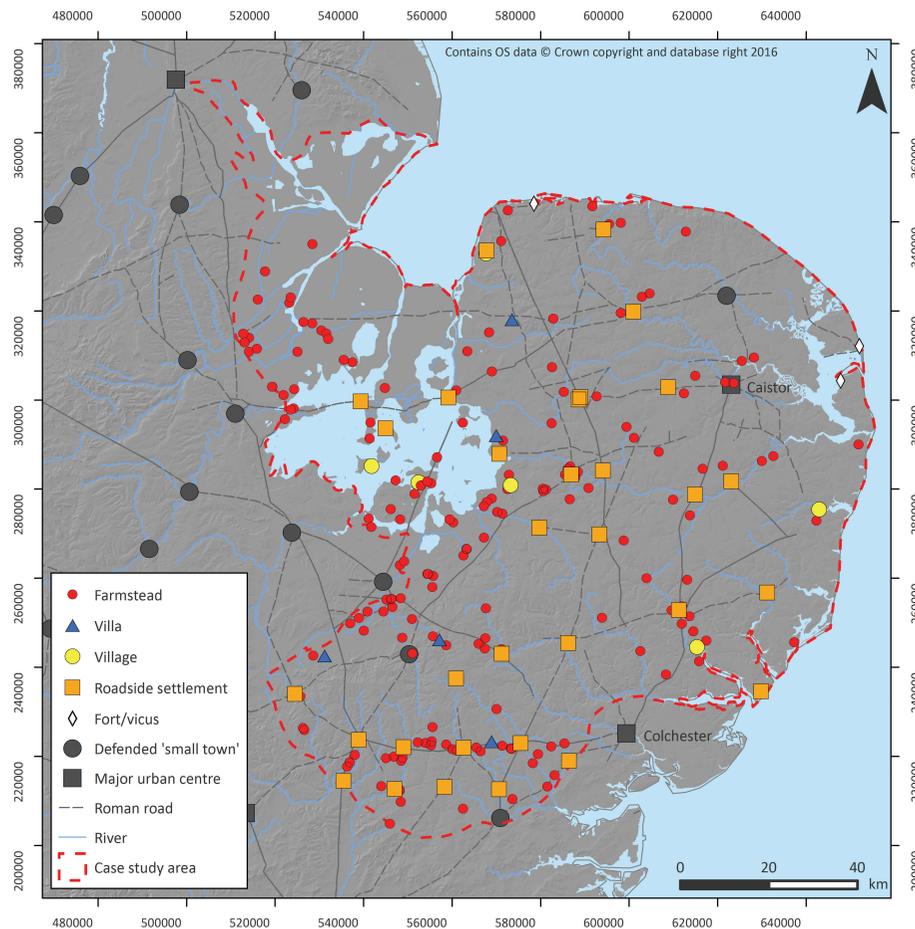


FIG. 6.27. Case Study Two: the East

At Low Park Corner, Chippenham, Cambridgeshire, the settlement is believed to have been abandoned by the end of the second century A.D. (Atkins 2013a), yet a fourth-century coin was recovered, and the presence of an Anglo-Saxon building suggests that this too may have been related to much later activity. Other examples of enclosed farmsteads where coins apparently post-date the life of the settlement include Bourne Hill, Wherstead (Gill *et al.* 2001), and Wixoe Pipeline WIX021 (Atkins 2014) (both Suffolk), as well as Wighton and Thornham (Gregory and Gurney 1986) (both Norfolk). The apparently greater tendency for eastern enclosed farmsteads to produce coins is therefore largely illusory, although it is nevertheless notable that unstratified late Roman coins are not recovered from enclosed farmsteads in the west to nearly such an extent. This may suggest regional differences in late Roman and post-Roman land use that resulted in the wider distribution of coins in the countryside in the east, and one possibility is that midden waste from nucleated settlements was used for manure, resulting in low-level scatters of coins in arable fields that had previously been occupied by farmsteads in the early Roman period. However, it is possible that there may be regional methodological differences at play, such as an increased tendency for archaeological contractors in the east to use a metal detector to aid recovery of metal objects from the topsoil/subsoil prior to machine stripping, or from the spoil heap following stripping of the topsoil. Certainly, this was the case at Low Park Corner, Chippenham (Atkins 2013a), and at Bourne Hill, Wherstead, most coins were also unstratified metal-detector finds (Gill *et al.* 2001).

A further distinction between east and west concerns the frequency with which Iron Age coins have been recovered from excavated sites. They

are somewhat more common in the east than in the first case study area, present at 40 (16 per cent) sites, and making up a substantially greater proportion of the mean percentage of coins from all sites in the east than in the west (8 per cent compared to 0.9 per cent). Roadside settlements are particularly well represented, with 42 per cent of the sites producing Iron Age coins, some in large numbers (e.g. Braughing (Partridge 1981; Potter and Trow 1988) and Baldock (Stead and Rigby 1986) in Hertfordshire, and Harlow, Holbrooks in Essex (Conlon 1973)). Indeed, all site types are better represented than those in the west, although it must be said that the recovery of Iron Age coins from eastern rural contexts is still rare, and farmsteads, villas and villages never produce them in the numbers at which they are seen at some of the nucleated settlements, temples or shrines. Iron Age coins are also considerably more frequent in the PAS dataset for the east, accounting for 29 per cent of all Iron Age and Roman coins, compared with 16 per cent in the west.

FIGURE 6.29 presents the mean percentage value for coins from the East, established from a sample of 65 sites with a minimum of ten dated coins, and compares it with the profile from the Western Central Belt. The east shares some similarities with the west in that the overall proportions of fourth-century coins are greater than those of earlier phases, yet there are, nonetheless, some very clear distinctions, with early Roman coins being particularly well represented in the east (23 per cent compared to 8 per cent in the west). The two regions have broadly comparable mean percentages for coins of phase B and C, yet for coins of phase Di and Dii, the proportions are considerably greater at sites in the west, repeating the pattern previously identified by Reece (1991, 106–7; 1995; 2002).

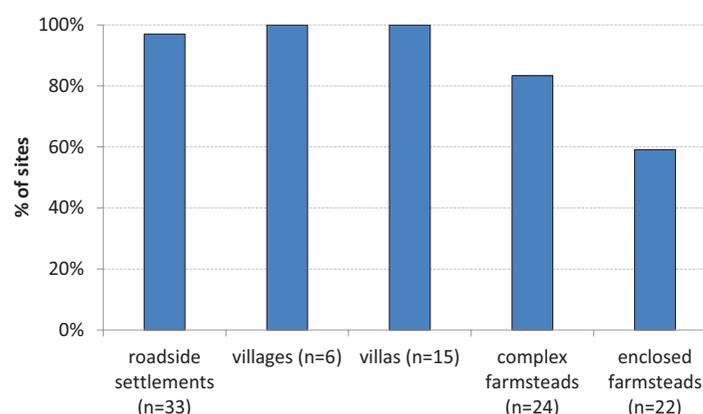


FIG. 6.28. Percentage of sites with Iron Age and Roman coins at excavated sites by site type in the East

The pattern in the PAS data is similar (FIG. 6.30), although the metal-detected coins have lower proportions of phase A, higher proportions of phase B, and reduced proportions of phase Di. This is slightly different from the pattern in the west, where coins of phase A were better represented in the PAS dataset than in the excavated assemblages. The reasons for this discrepancy are uncertain, although it seems possible that they are associated with increased recovery/reporting rates of silver coins by metal-detector users, discussed above (p. 259), and, as detailed below (p. 270), *denarii* are proportionally more common in the west than in the east.

Viewed by site type, the distinctions between east and west become more nuanced, and FIG. 6.31 presents the mean percentages for coin loss by site type in the East, compared with those from the west. Again, enclosed farmsteads are omitted as too few sites produced large enough coin assemblages, and, as noted above, where coins have been recovered from these sites they often

post-date the settlements themselves. Villages are also omitted, as only four have produced ten or more coins.

All three site types in the east have higher proportions of coins of phase A, notably so for roadside settlements (24 per cent compared with 12 per cent in the West), and at villas the distinction is even clearer (27 per cent to just 5 per cent). The reasons for these differences require consideration. The large number of early Roman coins at roadside settlements and villas in the east appears reflective of two things: partly that early Roman coins are somewhat more common at rural sites in the east, and, most importantly, that there are major differences between the two regions in the *late* Roman period, particularly during phase Di (mid-fourth century), when sites in the west lost far more coins than those in the east. The pattern, of course, varies for individual settlements, but for comparison, there is only one villa out of 59 (2 per cent) in the west where early Roman coins outnumber those of the mid-fourth

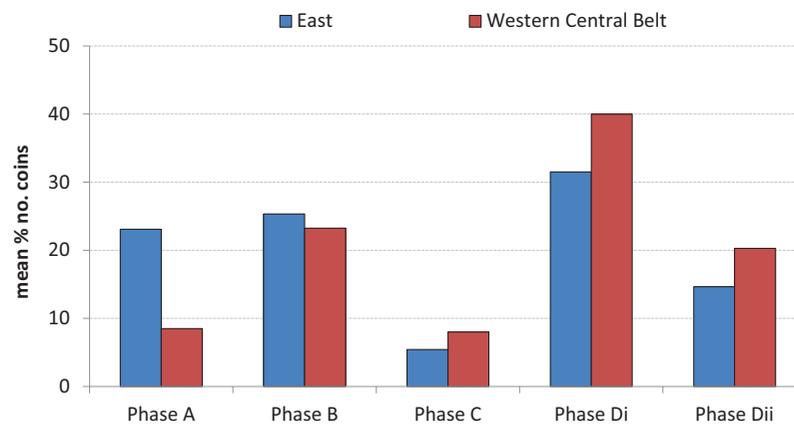


FIG. 6.29. Mean percentage of Roman coin loss from all sites in the East and Western Central Belt

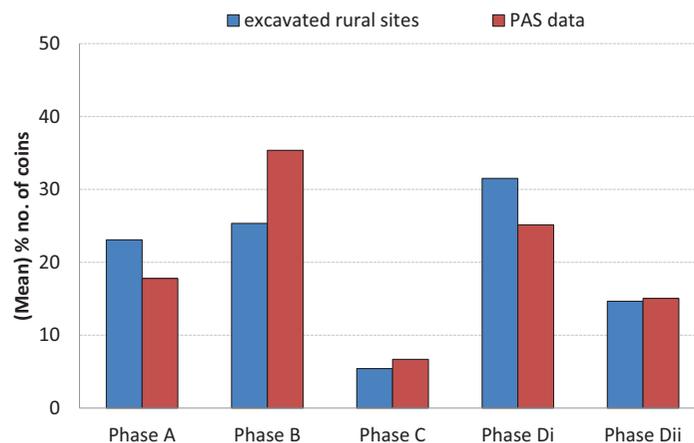


FIG. 6.30. Mean percentage of Roman coins by phase at excavated rural sites with percentages of coins recorded by PAS in the East

century, whereas in the east phase A coins are more common at four out of the nine villas (44 per cent). The pattern is similar for roadside settlements. Only two in the west (11 per cent) have early coins that outnumber those of phase Di, whereas in the east there are eight (38 per cent). The pattern seems partially to reflect greater numbers of early coins circulating at roadside settlements and villas in the east, but it seems for the most part that the circulation of large numbers of late Roman coins at sites in the east was considerably more variable than in the west. It is important to note that even where fourth-century coins are poorly represented at eastern roadside settlements and villas, they are nevertheless present in small numbers, and there is usually little to indicate that the sites themselves had been abandoned. However, although most eastern roadside settlements appear to have continued in some form into the late fourth century, a number have produced evidence to suggest they were in economic decline long before this, and the low frequency of late Roman coinage at several of the sites appears indicative of a wider pattern of late Roman settlement decline in parts of the region (Smith 2016c, 224, 240–1). Indeed, the

geographical distribution of roadside settlements with low proportions of fourth-century coinage is noteworthy (FIG. 6.32), and there is a strong emphasis on the south of the case study region, in the north Essex area, where a pronounced episode of late Roman decline is increasingly being recognised (Allen 2016a, 139; Smith 2016c, 214).

As in the Western Central Belt, comparison of the above rural pattern with the urban pattern is instructive, and a mean percentage for towns has been calculated from coin lists from a group of towns. As relatively few towns with coin lists in the case study are available the selection includes a number of towns that fall just outside the study area, including Ancaster, Godmanchester, Cambridge, Water Newton and Colchester (the latter two from the lists compiled by Richard Reece 1991), and the only towns within the case study area with adequate coin lists are Chelmsford, Great Chesterford and Caistor-by-Norwich (the latter from Reece 1991). The rural and urban patterns presented in FIG. 6.33 fit together rather less neatly than in the equivalent chart shown in the Western Central Belt, and this reflects the greater variability witnessed in the east. Farmsteads in particular stand out as being considerably less

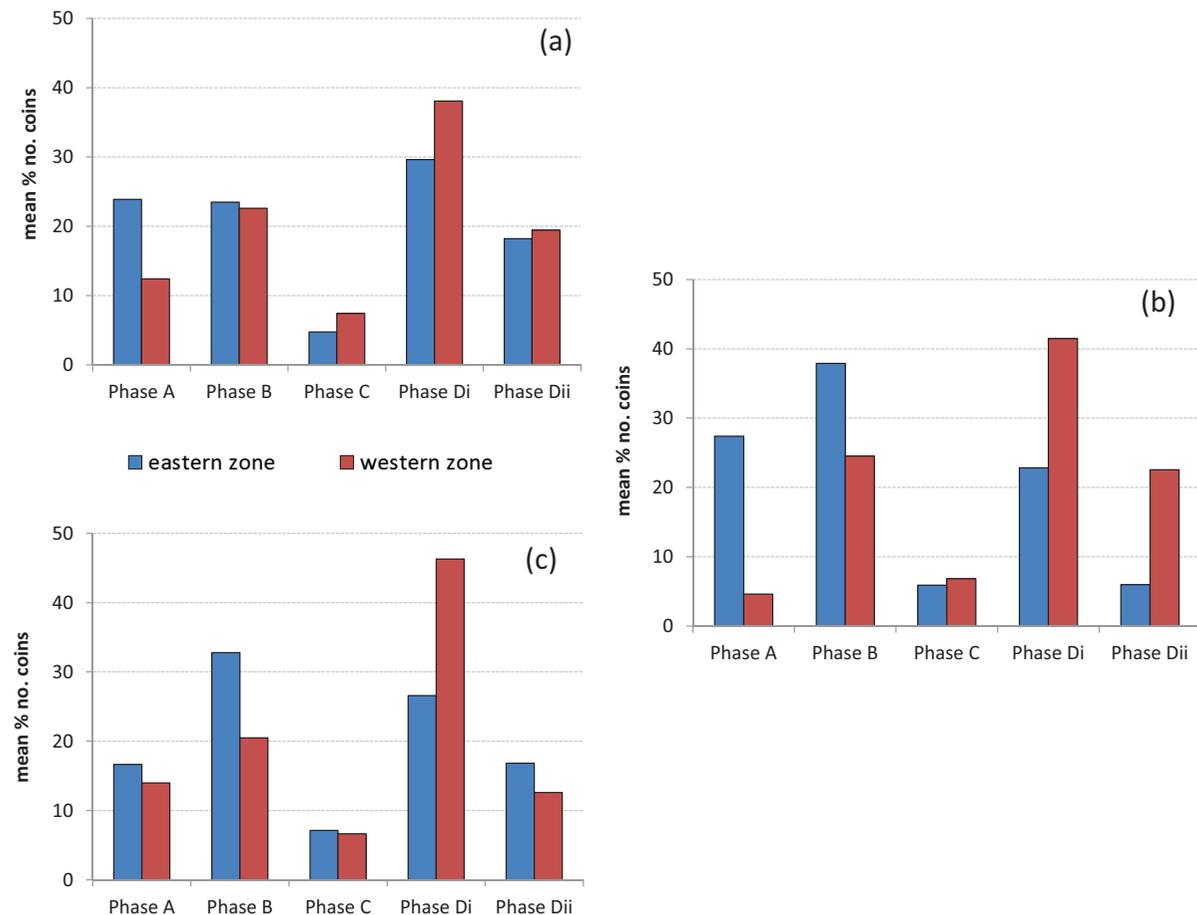


FIG. 6.31. Mean percentages of coin loss by site type in the East with those in the Western Central Belt at (a) roadside settlements, (b) complex farmsteads and (c) villas

well represented by coins of phase A than the other sites, and are correspondingly better represented by coins of phase Di. This is partly because farmsteads typically receive fewer early Roman coins, and partly because a fair number of farmsteads in the east are represented by good quantities of late Roman coins. The roadside settlements follow the towns most closely, reflecting their position on the communications network. The reduced proportion of late Roman coins at towns repeats the pattern outlined above at roadside settlements and villas, and only two of the eight towns are better represented by coins of phase Di than phase A – Caistor-by-Norwich, in Norfolk, and Great Chesterford, at the north-west boundary of Essex. While the pattern varies between individual settlements, the broad patterns in the circulation of coinage in the east, particularly at towns, roadside settlements and villas, seems to reflect an overall economic realignment from east to west during the mid- to late Roman period, and a strong east to west shift in focus in terms of settlement density has been demonstrated in Volume 1 (Smith and Fulford 2016, 406–8; figs 12.18 and 12.19).

In terms of the date at which coins began to proliferate in the eastern countryside (FIG. 6.34), the overall regional pattern is, for the most part, similar to that of the west. Roadside settlements are best represented by the earliest Roman coins (which may partly reflect military phases for some of these sites – Smith 2016c, 223), and the proportion of sites represented by coins of Reece periods 1–2 (Republic to A.D. 54) is very similar to the west (30 per cent compared with 36 per cent). The pattern for complex farmsteads is also similar between east and west, with around 40 per cent in both areas producing early Roman coins, and there is a peak in sites in both areas where the earliest coins are of Reece periods 5–7 (A.D. 96–161). There is, however, a somewhat greater distinction between complex farmsteads and villas in the east. While in the west the two site types were quite similar, in the east a considerably larger proportion of villas are represented by coins of Reece Periods 1–2 (Republic to A.D. 54) and 3–4 (A.D. 54–96). This seems likely to reflect the relatively early date of origin for some villa sites in the east; although (where they occur at all) villa buildings themselves are typically late in the

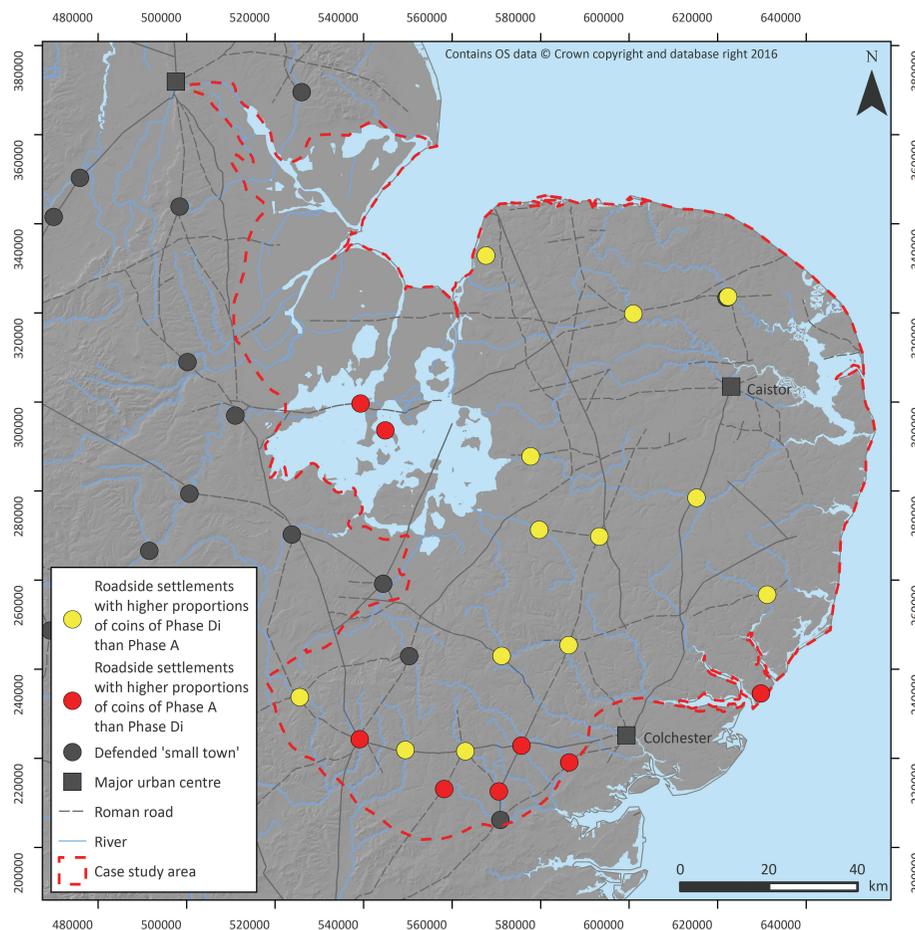


FIG. 6.32. Distribution of roadside settlements with greater proportions of coins of phase A than Di (red dots) and greater proportions of coins of phase Di than phase A (yellow dots)

region, they usually developed out of earlier, pre-existing farmsteads, sometimes with pre-conquest origins (Smith 2016c, 221). Some complex farmsteads also had early origins, although in the main they are a mid- to late Roman phenomenon (*ibid.*, 219). As we have seen, relatively few enclosed farmsteads have yielded coins, although where they have been found, the earliest coins are often of early Roman date. Again, as in the Western Central Belt, although they are typically heavily outnumbered by late Roman coinage, the fairly widespread occurrence of coins of the first and second centuries A.D. at sites in the countryside, albeit usually in small numbers, suggests that the

rural population engaged with the monetary economy to some extent, even if other forms of exchange existed. We should not, however, forget the way that Iron Age coins appear often to have been deposited at many sites, where even single coins, especially those of gold, may have been deliberate ritual deposits, rather than losses (Haselgrove 1993, 50). Given that many Iron Age coins were deposited during the Roman period, (see above, p. 240), even single or small numbers of Roman coins may also have been selected and deposited for non-economic reasons.

Farmsteads in the east are typically poorly represented numerically by coins, and only seven

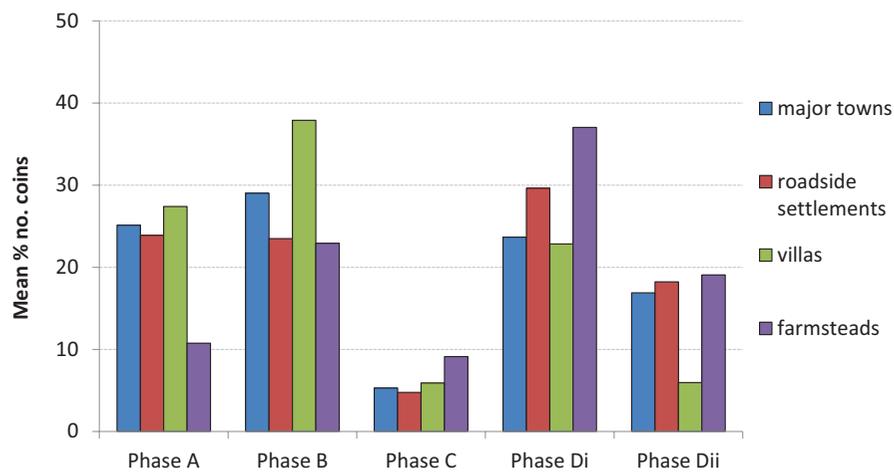


FIG. 6.33. Mean coin loss at rural sites and urban sites in the East

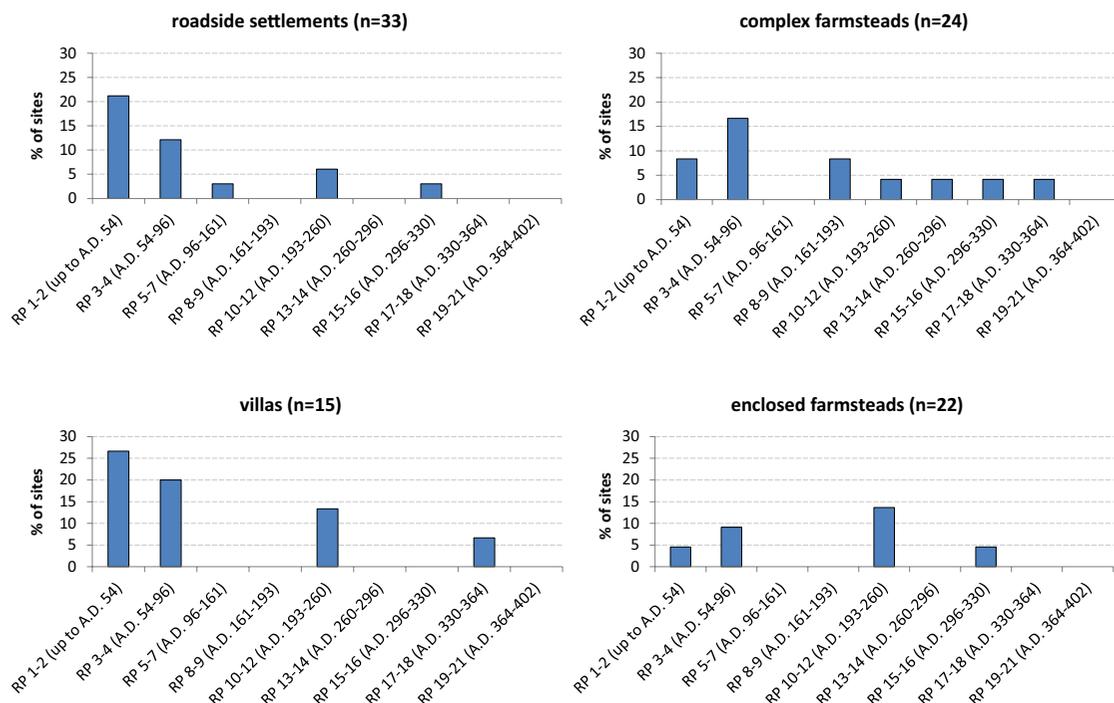


FIG. 6.34. Earliest phased coins at roadside settlements, villas, complex farmsteads and enclosed farmsteads in the East, by Reece periods

(32 per cent) of enclosed and seven (29 per cent) complex farmsteads yielded ten or more coins. Again, there is an emphasis on surplus production for those sites with unusually high numbers. Such evidence includes a building interpreted as a metalworker's workshop, along with a hoard of tools associated with metalworking (and a rich finds assemblage in general) at Kilverstone, Thetford, Norfolk (Garrow *et al.* 2006), and corndryers at Stansted 99–04 Site MTCP, Essex (Cooke *et al.* 2008), and Myrtle Road, Hethersett, Norfolk (Shelley and Green 2007). Enclosed farmsteads are somewhat better represented by coins in the east than in the west, although those that have yielded coins are usually atypical. At Boxfield, Farm, Chells, Stevenage, Hertfordshire (Going and Hunn 1999), a substantial finds assemblage including high-status objects and several items of agricultural equipment, along with the presence of a late Roman corndryer, suggests that this site was an unusually wealthy settlement engaged in surplus production. At Bourne Hill, Wherstead, Suffolk (Gill *et al.* 2001), early Roman coins seem likely to be associated with an early phase of pottery production, between *c.* A.D. 50–70, prior to the construction of the enclosure. Material from the enclosed site at Coggeshall in Essex (Clarke 1988; Isserlin 1995) included decorative stonework, painted wall plaster and a considerable quantity of roof and box-flue tile, suggesting the presence of a building with a heated room in the near vicinity, and the site is almost certainly actually a villa.

Weighing equipment is most closely associated with roadside settlements and villas in the east. It is present at 36 per cent and 20 per cent of these sites respectively, but these objects occur at just 4 per cent of farmsteads; the social distribution is therefore very similar to that of coins. Where such objects do occur at farmsteads they often correspond with increased coin loss and evidence for surplus production, including the above-mentioned examples at Kilverstone, Thetford and Boxfield

Farm, as well as Flixton Park Quarry in Suffolk, an unclassified farmstead with a high number of coins and evidence for pottery production. The correspondence between these forms of evidence indicates that these farmsteads were engaged in types of activity that required the use of coins in ways that many other rural sites did not.

As in the west, there are some important differences between the classes of sites in terms of coin denominations (FIG. 6.35). All sites are dominated by base-metal coinage, predominantly by *asses* and *dupondii*. Unlike the west, however, villas in the east do not stand out above other sites as having especially high frequencies of *denarii*, although *denarii* do make up a much larger proportion of the early coins at complex farmsteads. Again, where *denarii* occur at these sites they are usually late second or early third century in date, after debasement and inflation had reduced the value of the *denarius* in real terms, and *denarii* at these sites are rarely early. Enclosed farmsteads are better represented by *denarii* in the east than in the west; this is due to relatively large numbers occurring at unusual sites, as at Boxfield Farm, Chells, Stevenage (Going and Hunn 1999), and the silver coins tend not to occur at enclosed farmsteads in general. The discrepancy between the proportions of *denarii* at villas (and to a lesser extent the complex farmsteads) in the east and west is likely to reflect broad differences in the chronology of the settlement pattern in the two areas. As outlined above, and demonstrated in Volume 1, there was a strong shift in emphasis from east to west by the late Roman period, heralded by a major growth in the number of villas during the late second century in the west, particularly in the Cotswolds (Smith and Fulford 2016, 408), and the increased numbers of predominantly late second and early third-century *denarii* at villas in the west reflects this shift in the economic importance of the two areas.

The denominational distinction between east and west is also visible in the coins recorded by

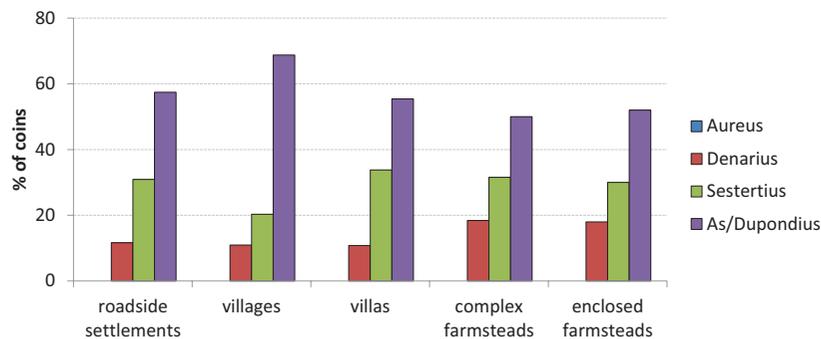


FIG. 6.35. Percentages of early Roman coin denominations at the major classes of rural settlement in the East

PAS, with *denarii* making up 44 per cent of the early coins in the west against 33 per cent in the east (FIG. 6.36). Again, this pattern can be shown to be chronological; FIG. 6.37 shows how, while inflation and debasement of the silver coinage resulted in increased numbers of *denarii* circulating in the late second/early third centuries in both areas (particularly in Reece period 10 – A.D. 193–222), the earlier *denarii* are substantially better represented in the east.

As befits a region where early Roman coins are more common, Claudian copies are somewhat better represented in the east than in the west, although they are still rare, identified at 14 sites (6 per cent), compared with 12 sites (3 per cent) in the west. As in the west they are most commonly recovered from roadside settlements that have an early Roman focus, although they have also been recovered from villas (Rivenhall: Rodwell and Rodwell 1993, and Gestingthorpe: Draper 1985, in Essex), villages (Handford Road, Ipswich: Boulter 2005, and Snettisham, Norfolk: Flitcroft

2001), the unusual enclosed farmstead at Bourne Hill, Wherstead, Suffolk (Gill *et al.* 2001), and unclassified farmsteads at Flixton Park Quarry, Suffolk (Boulter and Walton Rogers 2012), and The Oaks, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich (Trimble 2006). Early military activity has been suggested at some of the roadside settlements at which they occur, notably Kelvedon in Essex and Billingford in Norfolk, where first-century A.D. forts are postulated (Smith 2016c, 223–4). There is, however, little evidence for military activity at most sites with these coins, and their presence seems to be more reflective of early coin use in general than occupation by the army. Later copies of coins are also widespread in the east and barbarous radiates and fourth-century contemporary copies form (sometimes large) components of the assemblages at most sites with late Roman coins. Copies appear to have been widely accepted, and there is nothing to suggest that they were either favoured or rejected at different classes of sites in the east.

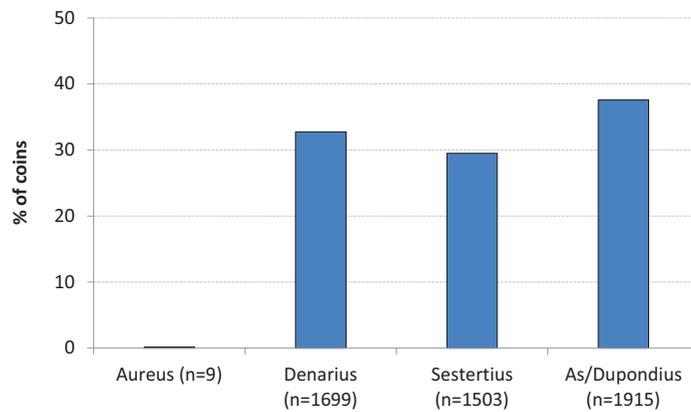


FIG. 6.36. Percentages of early Roman coins recorded by PAS in the East

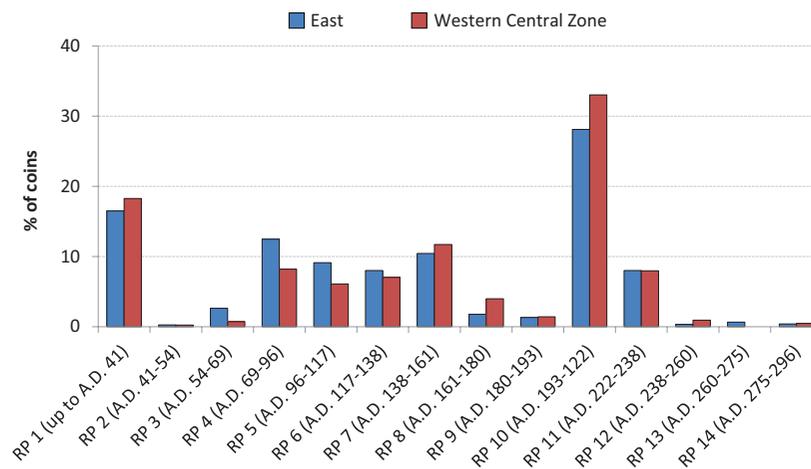


FIG. 6.37. Percentages of *denarii* recorded by PAS in the East and Western Central Belt, presented by Reece periods

In terms of fourth-century denominations, assemblages are overwhelmingly dominated by copper-alloy *nummi* (and their local copies), and silver and gold coins are again very rare. Gold *solidi* are absent as site finds, and silver *siliquae* have only been recovered from twelve sites (5 per cent), a similar proportion to the west. There is, however, a striking difference in the social distribution of *siliquae* between the two regions; most sites in the west with *siliquae* were villas, whereas none have been identified from the smaller number of villas in the east. A distinct difference in terms of status has been recognised between the villas in the east and west, at least in terms of architectural elaboration (Smith 2016c, 229), yet this does not seem to explain the lack of late silver coins from the region, since where they do occur they have a wide social distribution. Indeed, the lack of *siliquae* at villas is part of the wider pattern of lower levels of very late Roman coinage at villas in the East than at other site types, and coins of phase Dii make up a substantially lower proportion of the mean percentage (6 per cent) at villas than they do at either roadside settlements or complex farmsteads (both 16 per cent). The pattern is the opposite of that seen in the west, where villas were the best represented sites for coins of phase Dii. The reason for the lack of *siliquae* (and late coins in general) at villas in the east is not clear. Our understanding of the chronology of several of the villas in the East is very limited, but there is no obvious episode of widespread villa abandonment that explains the lack of late coins. Although some villas in the east did go out of use during the late third or early to mid-fourth century (e.g. Little Wymondley, Hertfordshire: Went and Burleigh 1992; Hunn 2001; Exning, Cambridgeshire: Webster 1987), others apparently continued until the end of the fourth century, and sometimes beyond (e.g. Rivenhall, Essex, although it also did not produce coins of phase Dii). However, there is evidence that at some villas where activity continued into the late and post-Roman periods they witnessed a change in use. At Rivenhall, the final phase of the main villa building (late fourth or early fifth century) saw a 'conscious reduction in living standards or the conversion of the building from domestic to agricultural use' (Rodwell and Rodwell 1993, 65), and this was followed by a period of Anglo-Saxon occupation in the fifth century. At Caistor St Edmund, Norfolk, the final phase of the villa building (late fourth/early fifth century) was associated with blacksmithing (Bowden 2011). The general dearth of late Roman coins at villas in the east therefore seems in many cases to reflect either abandonment or a major change in use.

The latest Roman coins from rural sites in the case study area belong to Reece period 21 (A.D. 388–402), and these were recovered from 31 of the sites (13 per cent), a not dissimilar proportion to the west (15 per cent). More than half of these sites were roadside settlements, and period 21 coins are rare elsewhere, occurring at only two villas (13 per cent) and eleven farmsteads (6 per cent, exactly the same as in the west), which (where classified) were predominantly of complex form. Although few in number, sites interpreted as villages seem, as in the west, to be surprisingly well represented by coins of period 21, with two of the six examples having these very late coins. The site at Handford Road, Ipswich, in particular, had a relatively large group of fifteen period 21 coins. In some ways the pattern for the latest coin use in the east is therefore similar to the west, with an emphasis on continued coin loss at roadside settlements and other nucleated sites, and it is chiefly with sites in the wider countryside, especially the villas, where the major differences lie.

In the East, as in the west, coin hoards are rare at rural settlements, present at just eight domestic sites (3 per cent), although the University of Leicester/British Museum project has recorded rather more hoards from the East case-study region than the west, with 412 recorded (333 Roman, 79 Iron Age). At excavated sites roadside settlements again dominate, and hoards are rare from all other types of excavated domestic settlement (one villa and three farmsteads), indicating that most hoards were deposited outside areas of settlement activity. Several, however, have been recovered from sites with likely religious associations, as at Ivy Chimneys, Essex, where three hoards of barbarous radiates were recovered from a site interpreted as a shrine (Turner 1999). Indeed, as in the west, shrines were sometimes the focus for deliberate deposition of coins (whether they have been interpreted as hoards or not), and at Hockwold cum Wilton, Leylands Farm, Norfolk (Gurney 1986), many coins were recovered from a feature interpreted as a shrine, and where groups of other material (including three hoards of pewter vessels) are suggestive of votive deposition. The role of coins in the east went beyond their use for market-based exchange, and they also played an important role in transactions between the earthly and the divine worlds (a subject for fuller discussion in Volume 3).

CASE STUDY THREE: THE NORTH

The preceding two case studies have focused on areas where finds of Iron Age and Roman coins are common. It is, however, worthwhile considering the role that coins played in other parts of Britain, where coins are less frequently recovered from

rural sites, and this final case study focuses on the extensive area defined as the North in Volume 1 (Brindle 2016a; FIG. 6.38). Coins from excavated sites in the north are overwhelmingly from sites associated directly with the military. Out of 635 coins recovered, only 22 were from farmsteads, and only 8 out of 81 (10 per cent) farmsteads yielded coins at all. The chart in FIG. 6.39, which shows the mean percentage for coin loss in the North, is therefore overwhelmingly dominated by sites associated with the Roman military, and as such it cannot be regarded as a rural coin loss profile at all. The resultant profile is distinctively different from those in the east and west case study regions presented above, with coins of phase A dominating, similar in many respects to Walton's coin profile for her 'Northern zone', which was also represented by a high proportion of early Roman coins (Walton 2012; 2015). The distinctive profile primarily reflects the chronology of most military sites in the north, which witnessed a fundamental decline during the second half of the third century A.D., when many military *vici* fell out of use (Bidwell and Hodgson 2009, 33–4; Brindle 2016a, 313). A profile for PAS data in the North

is strikingly similar (FIG. 6.39), and this suggests that the majority of coins recovered by metal-detector users in the North are associated with military and not rural activity, and there is little evidence for widespread monetisation of the rural population (Walton and Moorhead 2016a; Walton 2015, 113).

Besides the difference in chronology, there are also differences regarding the denominations that circulated, with the *denarius* making up a greater proportion of the coins in the north than in the east or west (28 per cent compared with 12 per cent and 18 per cent respectively). *Sestertii* are slightly under-represented compared to the east though similar to the west, while the lower value *asses* and *dupondii* are quite substantially less well represented. This echoes the pattern identified by Walton, who has previously recognised a preference for *denarii* over all other denominations in the area to the north of the Fosse Way (Walton 2012, 50–56; 2015, 111–12). There is, in the north, a much stronger emphasis on *denarii* of the early to mid-second century in the PAS dataset than in the east and west, where there is greater emphasis on the third century, particularly Reece period 10

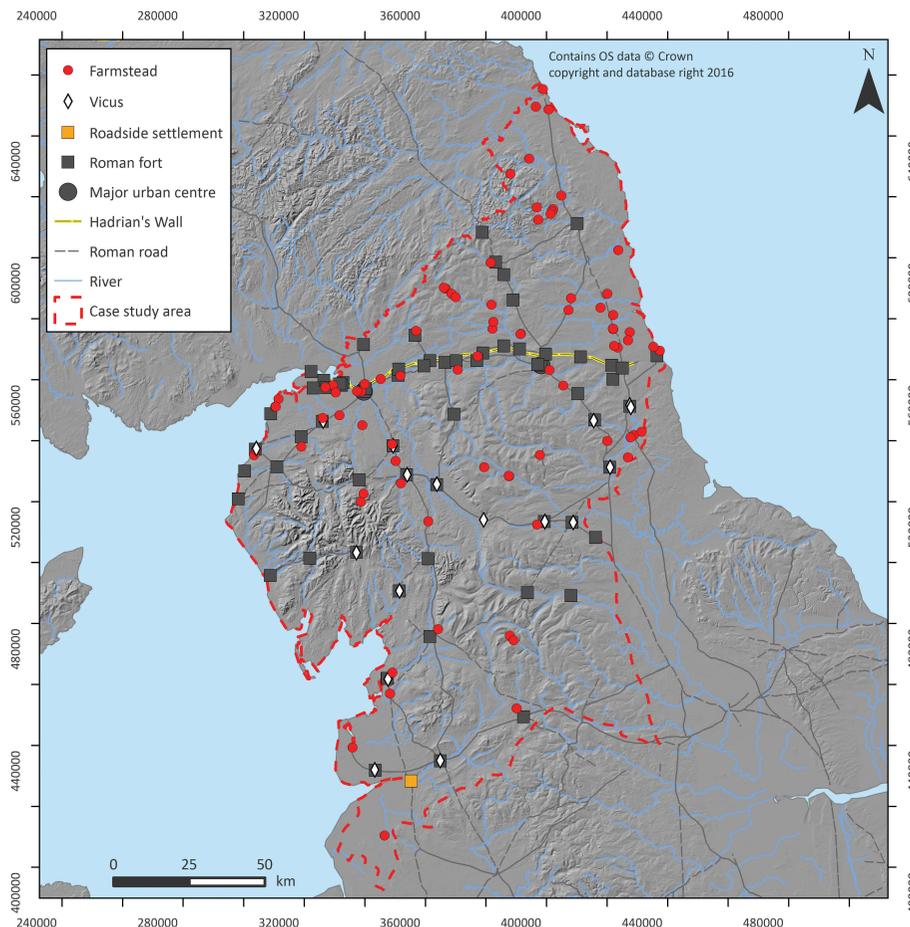


FIG. 6.38. Case Study Three: the North (note that *vici* on Hadrian's Wall were not included in this study)

(A.D. 193–222) (FIG. 6.40). It seems unlikely, therefore, that the emphasis on *denarii* in the north can be explained purely by inflation and debasement of the silver coinage (as has been suggested for the difference between the east and the west regions), but, rather, that the increased proportion of silver coins reflects the point at which new issues of *denarii* were entering the province, as the pay of the army, principally in silver and gold (Wolters 2001; Creighton 2014), and greater proportions of high value coins are a well-recognised phenomenon of military sites (Hobley 1998, 128; Walton 2015, 113). The presence of comparatively well-paid soldiers (Harl 1996, 274–5) perhaps meant that prices were higher at the northern military *vici* than they were in the markets of the south of the province, and it seems likely also that the additional cost of

transporting at least some produce and goods by road, much of which may have come from the south (e.g. Black-Burnished ware from Dorset; Allen and Fulford 1996), generated increased costs that resulted in inflated prices (e.g. Temin 2001, 179–80). Perhaps this is part of the reason that surviving accounts at Vindolanda employed the *denarius* rather than the more usual *sestertius* as the principal unit of accounting (Temin 2001, 180; Walton 2012, 55; 2015, 113; Bland forthcoming).

The extremely infrequent occurrence of coins at farmsteads in this region compared with those in the other case studies suggests that coins were rarely used by most of the rural population. Single coins were recovered from Bank Newton (Casswell and Daniel 2010) and New Ing Barn, Littondale (Maude 1999) (both North Yorkshire), and Bridge

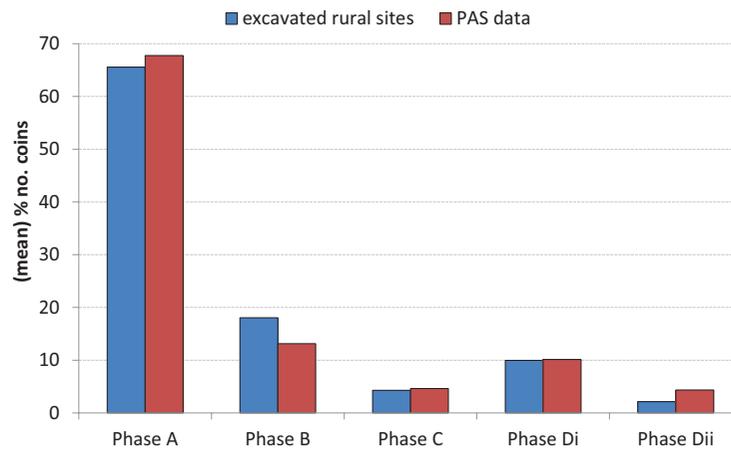


FIG. 6.39. Mean percentages of coin loss at excavated rural sites and percentages of coins recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in the North

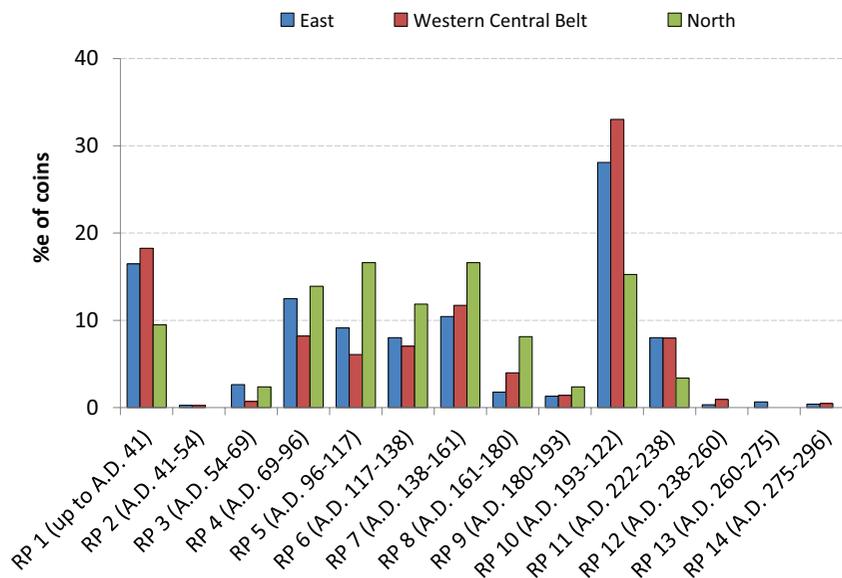


FIG. 6.40. Percentages of *denarii* recorded by PAS in the North, compared with the East and Western Central Belt

House, Wark (Jobey 1960) and Fawden Dean (Frodsham and Waddington 2004) (both Northumberland). In almost all cases the coins were early Roman, principally dating to the first and second centuries A.D., and where information on denominations is available they were predominantly low-value base-metal coins, with the exception of a late second/early third century *denarius* from Bank Newton. Exceptional sites include Dutton's Farm, Lathom, West Lancashire (Cowell 2003), where a small hoard of fourteen coins (perhaps a purse-loss), predominantly *denarii*, with a *terminus post quem* of A.D. 138 was recovered from the ditch of a trackway, believed to have been disturbed and accidentally redeposited in the Roman period. At Old Brampton, Cumbria (Blake 1960), an unusual, apparently high-status site, possibly associated with the nearby fort at Castlesteads, a third-century hoard is reported to have been found, although this was not discovered during excavation of the site. As with coins, other objects that provide evidence for exchange, steelyards and other weighing equipment, are absent from farmsteads, although as would be expected they are more common finds at military *vici* and roadside settlements with military associations.

It is of note that the few farmsteads that have yielded coins are situated either side of the Stanegate/Hadrian's Wall frontier zone, and Roman coins (and other material culture) are found at rural sites in Scotland (cf. Hunter 2001); the Wall did not necessarily act as a barrier to the movement of material culture. Indeed, native sites in south-east Scotland have been recognised as often having richer Roman finds assemblages than those nearer the Wall, suggesting that the Roman military exercised strong social control over the way material, including coins, was distributed in the frontier zone (F. Hunter 2016, 192).

Overall, the impression in the north is that forts and *vici* were the places at which money changed hands most frequently (as described in some of the Vindolanda tablets, e.g. *Tab. Vindol.* II, 343), although the presence of sherds of samian, amphorae, mortaria and BB1 at a number of rural sites suggests a degree of low-level interaction between the occupants of some rural sites and the military markets. It is unclear whether such goods were acquired through visits to the *vici* themselves, or perhaps through seasonal meetings at other foci within the landscape, where people could gather to trade and pay taxes. Such taxes need not have been paid using coin, and the lack of coin at rural sites in the north is a strong indicator that taxes were provided in kind, perhaps (given the lack of evidence for intensification of arable production at rural sites in the north), as livestock. Indeed,

Hopkins (1980, 103) has argued that taxes levied in kind limited the sphere of people's market or monetary transactions, as produce flowed in one direction only, and the (lack of) material culture (or environmental) evidence for widespread interaction between rural settlements and military sites in the north suggests that this was the case here (see also Brindle 2016a, 325).

The scant evidence for regular coin use from the rural settlements themselves suggests that members of northern rural communities predominantly continued to acquire goods and services among themselves, probably using traditional mechanisms such as reciprocal exchange and obligation, using coins very rarely, if at all, perhaps only when necessary during interactions in the *vici* or temporary markets. One can imagine a situation in which, if a visit to a *vicus* (or seasonal market) was required, produce could be taken and exchanged for coins that were then spent immediately to purchase necessities and occasional 'exotic' items such as salt and medicine or ceramic finewares and cooking pots, meaning that coinage seldom made it back to the rural settlements. If visits to such markets were as infrequent as the evidence from ceramics and other finds suggest, then it is likely to have made better sense for many people to use coins on useful objects rather than take them home, where they may have remained, with little purpose, for quite some time.

Coin hoards are comparatively rare from the north, with 178 (all Roman) recorded from the area by the recent University of Leicester/British Museum hoarding project, compared with 412 and 273 from the east and west case study areas respectively. Indeed, aside from the aforementioned probable purse loss from Lathom (and the possible example from Old Brampton) there are none recorded from excavated rural sites, and those recorded are overwhelmingly from military sites or their immediate hinterlands (FIG. 6.41). This indicates that coins, even if they were on occasion used, were not widely recognised as being the only, or the most important, way of storing wealth (or indeed, for depositing as ritual objects, see below, p. 277) for the non-military population, and that traditional concepts of value based on the ownership of cattle or other resources may have held sway in this region. There is not currently a great deal of evidence from rural sites in the north region to support Walton's suggestion (2012, 104; 2015, 114) that the emphasis on silver coins north and west of the Fosse Way may reflect the selection of silver and the rejection of bronze coins by the native population, although this is not to suggest that this may not have been the case in other areas. The region appears to contrast in this regard with

some other areas where coins are rare as site finds on rural sites, but where silver coins do seem to have been specially selected and deposited together in hoards, as has been recognised in south-west Wales (Guest 2008, 56), and in parts of Scotland (Hunter 2007).

It seems likely that one of the reasons so few coins have been identified from farmsteads in the north is because the late third-century radiates and fourth-century *nummi* that are so widespread at sites in the southern and eastern regions are virtually absent at rural sites here. If we recognise that the coins recovered from farmsteads in the west and east case studies were usually lost because they were being used to purchase items and services at markets, then the absence of these coins in the north can perhaps be fairly readily explained. While the military sites at Carlisle and Corbridge had developed into large and regionally important centres with sizeable civilian populations during the mid-Roman period (Bishop and Dore 1988; McCarthy 2002; Howard-Davis 2009), the North region lacks the dense network of roadside

settlements and villages, some of them likely local markets, which characterises much of the south and east of the province, where late Roman coins circulated very widely. Furthermore, the military *vici* attached to most forts, which seem likely to have acted as the principal markets during the early to mid-Roman period, witnessed a fundamental decline during the second half of the third century A.D., when many sites went out of use (Bidwell and Hodgson 2009, 33–4; Brindle 2016a, 313). Indeed, at a number of forts on Hadrian's Wall there is evidence to suggest that market activity moved inside the walls of the forts, in some instances after extramural settlements were abandoned. At South Shields, Wallsend, Carlisle and Vindolanda, large numbers of scattered coin finds from the forts have been seen as evidence for late Roman markets or '*emporia*' within the forts themselves (Bidwell and Snape 2002, 275–80; Brickstock 2002; 2013; Hodgson 2003, 166–7; Shotter 2009). Access to any such markets inside forts may have been tightly controlled, serving military communities only, and

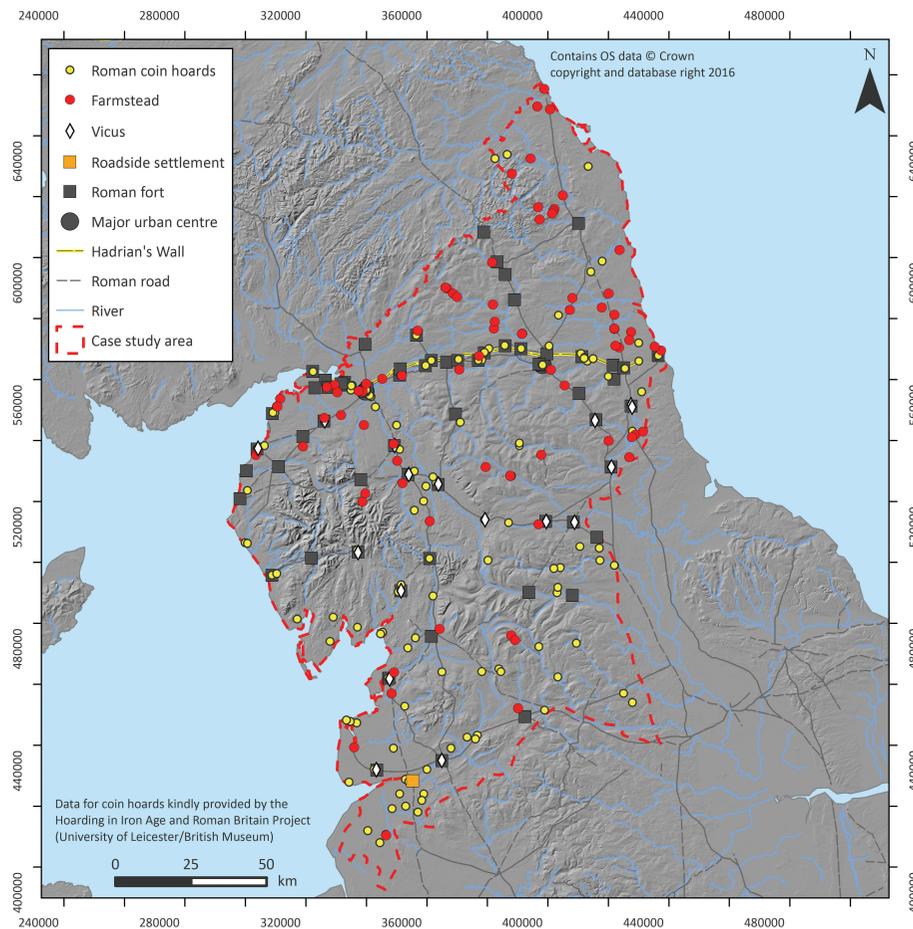


FIG. 6.41 Distribution of known Roman coin hoards from the north, shown against the military and excavated rural settlement pattern. (The hoard data was kindly provided by the 'Hoarding in Iron Age and Roman Britain Project' at the University of Leicester and the British Museum)

they would probably not have been open to the wider rural population; even if they were, they may very well have felt like unwelcoming and intimidating places to visit. The lack of roadside markets, the demise of many *vici* and restricted access to remaining markets held in forts may have meant that there was considerably less opportunity for the rural population of the north to acquire and use coins during the late Roman period, and therefore limited scope for them to make their way back to farmsteads. It is noteworthy that at late military sites in the north where coins were being used, as at sites in the other regions, barbarous radiates and fourth-century copies occur widely, and such copies are not simply a southern phenomenon. Their presence at sites associated with the military is perhaps a further indication that the copies were officially tolerated, and the discovery within the fort at Carlisle of forgers' blank flans for radiates hints at copying being carried out within the fort (Shotter 2009, 683).

It has been suggested that the lack of coins at rural sites in many parts of Britain reflects continuity of traditional attitudes towards coins as currency (Walton 2015, 117). This may be the case, and it seems likely that attitudes towards coin use did not change because there was little reason for them to. While coins may occasionally have been used by members of the rural population during the early Roman period, they appear to have been an irrelevance for most of the rural population in the north, certainly in the late Roman period. This is not necessarily because rural societies were 'backward' or closed to the idea of monetisation, but because very few of the sorts of centres at which coins circulated widely as currency in the south and east of the province existed beyond the mid-third century A.D. The low-value late Roman denominations that circulated widely in the south and east had little intrinsic value and would have served little purpose for the storage of wealth. With nowhere to spend them, it seems likely that, even if they occasionally came into contact with them, rural societies would often have regarded them as irrelevant and worthless discs of metal.

It is of note that while coins played an important role in negotiations with the divine world in the two previous case studies, in the countryside of the north this appears not to have been the case. Coins were certainly used as votive deposits at temples and shrines associated with military sites, as at Coventina's Well, near the fort at Carrawburgh Fort on Hadrian's Wall, where thousands of coins were deposited in a shrine (Allason-Jones and McKay 1985), and also at Piercebridge, Co. Durham (Casey 1989; Walton 2008; forthcoming), where many hundreds of coins were deposited in

the River Tees, yet coins were apparently not objects widely chosen for votive deposition by the inhabitants of rural settlements, despite evidence for the careful selection and placement of objects at several farmsteads that are suggestive of religious observances (e.g. Baldhowend, Matterdale (Loney and Hoan 2005), and Glencoyne Park, Ullswater (Hoan and Loney 2010), in Cumbria). The general absence of evidence for the special treatment of coins in such a way at rural sites represents further evidence for the lack of coin-use for most of the rural population of the north.

CONCLUSIONS

The above overview and case studies have demonstrated the enormous variability in the extent to which coins were used at sites in the countryside of Roman Britain. In some areas coins appear to have become part of the way of life of people early in the Roman period, particularly in areas where there is evidence for the circulation of Iron Age coins (Walton 2015, 117). Many of the rural population in the south and the east of the province used coins to some extent, and the evidence is greatest at roadside settlements and villas, where other forms of evidence for market-based exchange, steelyards and other weighing equipment, is also focused. At other types of settlements there are some very clear differences between those who occupied productive sites involved in the creation of surplus (principally complex farmsteads and villas), who are likely to have been well integrated with the market network, and those who occupied what may be regarded as more traditional types of enclosed farmsteads, which typically have less evidence for major surplus production, and which decline in numbers throughout the Roman period.

In the north and the west of the province the general lack of coinage at rural sites suggests that coins were used much less widely by most of the rural population of these areas, although the presence of occasional site finds and hoards indicates that in some areas coins may have performed some functions, even if traditional methods of exchange held sway on a regular basis.

The emphasis on the south and east of the province for coins, both at excavated sites and as chance finds recorded by the PAS, coincides in broad geographical terms with the distribution of non-military urban centres, small towns and nucleated rural settlements (FIG. 6.42), many of which must have served as local market centres. The dearth of coin finds in other areas, where these sites are scarce but where military sites are common, indicates that it is the presence of such markets that facilitated the widespread use of

coinage and that where these centres did not develop, coins were used far less regularly (although not necessarily never). The growth of market centres in the south and east of the province corresponded with the rise of villas and complex farmsteads in these areas, and the recovery of early Roman coins (and other objects; see below, p. 279) at most of these settlements suggests that these new types of sites engaged with the markets in ways that most traditional enclosed farmsteads appear not to have done, particularly from the second century A.D. onwards. This resonates with the suggestion by Katsari (2008) that it was not the militarisation of Roman provinces that led to widespread coin use, but urbanisation and the stimulation in trade that this generated.

The case studies included in this chapter have reinforced a pattern that is becoming increasingly clear, that there are important regional differences in the circulation of coinage in the Romano-British countryside, even in areas where coins are common. The difference between east and west,

previously identified by Reece, appears to be related to a western shift in economic emphasis during the mid- to late Roman period. Coins were lost at a greater rate in the west during the late Roman period, and this seems to be part of a broader trend linked to whatever was behind the growth of villas and increased settlement density that this part of the province witnessed during the fourth century.

Although the extent to which coins were used by the rural population has been questioned (e.g. Walton and Moorhead 2016a; Walton 2015), the widespread occurrence of coins at roadside settlements, villas and complex farmsteads (albeit often in small numbers at the latter), indicates that large numbers of the rural population in the south and east of the province had coins and used them. However, it remains difficult to assess the extent to which this can be said to represent the widespread monetisation of the rural population in these areas. It is unclear, for instance, whether the typically small numbers of coins at complex farmsteads represent small change only

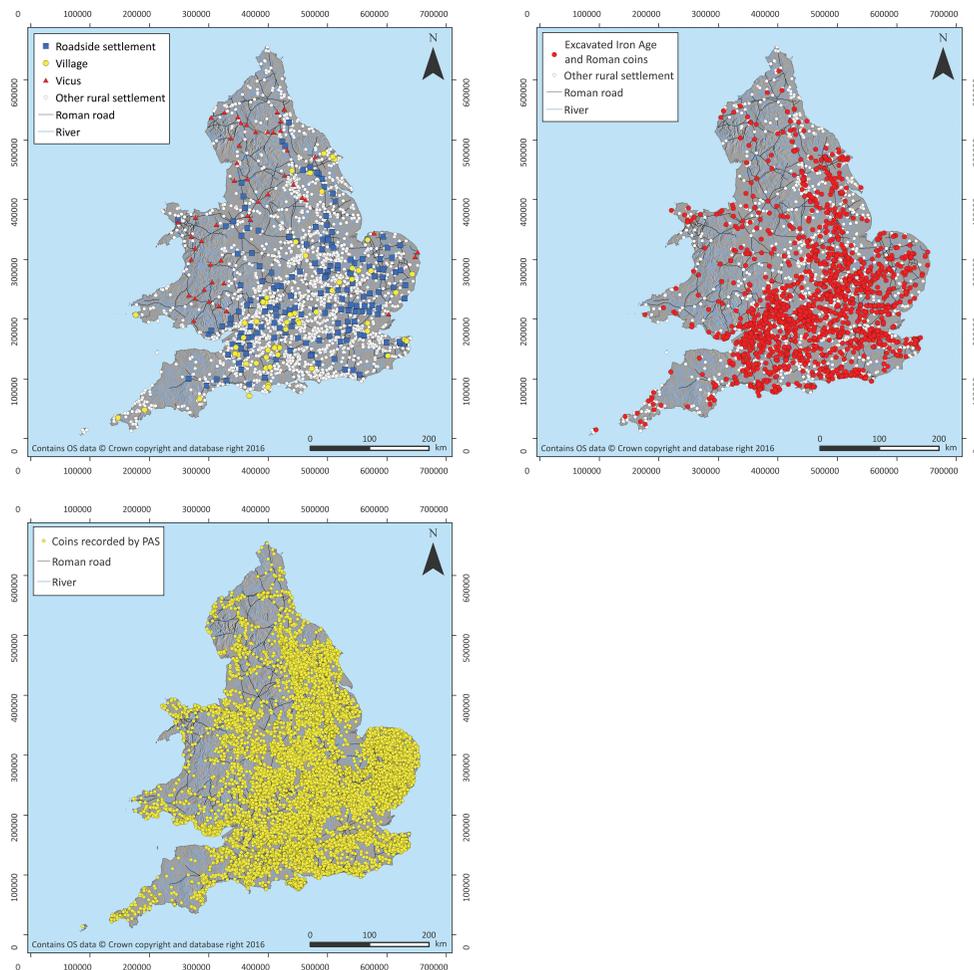


FIG. 6.42. Distribution of excavated rural nucleated settlements and military *vicci*, coins at excavated sites and coins recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme

occasionally lost after infrequent monetary transactions had taken place (perhaps the episodic payment of tax or rent), or whether they are infrequent finds because farmsteads were simply not the sorts of sites at which coins were typically used and lost, and the sites at which numerous transactions took place (markets at towns, roadside settlements, and perhaps at villas and temporary sites in the wider countryside) should be the places where we should expect most losses to have occurred (e.g. Casey 1986, 80–1; Harl 1996, 251). The social distribution of weighing equipment is likely to be part of the answer to this, focused as it is on roadside settlements, villas and the small number of farmsteads that have produced surprising numbers of coins, often alongside evidence for surplus production, suggesting that coins were most commonly lost, unsurprisingly, where they were taken to be spent. The poor occupants of many farmsteads may also have had different attitudes towards ‘acceptable loss’ than those occupying many other sites, and coins are likely to have been kept safe until they were needed to buy something from the markets or to pay taxes or rent. That low-value late third and fourth-century coins are so common at some sites also raises questions about the way in which these coins were used for payment. Were they handed over individually, or were they tipped from purses into scales until the required weight of coin needed for payment was met? This might help account for the large number of losses, and Harl has discussed batches of radiates and *nummi* being sealed in leather purses or wrapped in papyrus or skin to serve as multiple denominations (Harl 1996, 166, 289). The physical shape of some fourth-century base-metal hoards suggests coins were frequently bound up together in rolls or purses (Hendy 1985, 341–2).

We also need to question whether the frequency of coins at farmsteads is really in any way representative of the extent to which the occupants of these sites used coins. A monthly visit to the market may have involved an initial exchange of produce for coins, the payment of tax, subsequent exchanges of coins for necessities/luxuries, followed by a return home, after using coins all day, with no more coinage than one began the day with. Neither do we need to see all financial transactions as requiring the use of coins, and monetary exchange, even if expressed in *sestertii* or *denarii*, need not always have involved coinage. We know that the payment of rent and taxation could, in some parts of the empire, be paid in kind (Duncan-Jones 1994, 21; Harris 2008, 196), and most large-scale purchases (property; bulk acquisitions) are likely to have been documentary transactions (Harris 2008), although it is probably

fair to say that such transactions are likely to have been extremely rare for the majority of the rural population.

Barter and the fulfilment of social obligations almost certainly continued to serve as methods of exchange alongside coinage in the countryside, even in the areas where coins are best represented. All that can be said is that coins sometimes performed a function of some sort for the majority of the rural population in the south and east of the province, probably from at least the second century A.D. onwards, yet it seems unlikely that the rural population were ever ‘fully monetised’ in the sense that all transactions were undertaken using coinage on a daily basis. Indeed, the extent to which coins were used by members of the rural population may to a large extent have been dictated by the means through which they were required to pay rents and taxes, and this may have varied from region to region, from estate to estate, and, perhaps depending on fluctuations in agricultural/industrial output caused by changing environmental conditions, from season to season and year to year. One landowner may have demanded payment in coin, which required taking surplus produce to market to sell and convert into cash, while another may have required payment in grain, livestock, or a mixture of resources. The reality is likely to have been complex, as it was in Rome (Hopkins 1980, 104, n.14).

That coins are found in typically low frequencies at rural sites other than villas and roadside settlements raises some important questions concerning the large groups of coins often reported by metal-detector users and reported to PAS. These are often interpreted as rural sites of some description (e.g. Brindle 2014), and in many cases this is likely to be the case. However, Reece (2015) has recently urged caution regarding the interpretation of such findspots as sites, suggesting that some may represent temporary open markets with long periods of use, akin to the ‘productive sites’ recognised from the early medieval period (Pestell and Ulmschneider 2003). Such temporary centres for marketing and exchange remain a possibility for the Roman period.

Two important aspects of coin use, namely hoards and coins as votive deposits, have only been dealt with in a cursory manner in this chapter. The use of coins as votive offerings is to be considered in more detail in the forthcoming Volume 3, although it is important here to point out that besides their use for financial transactions between people, coins could play a role in their relationship with the divine world. As demonstrated in the case studies above, coin hoards are exceptionally rare discoveries from rural settlements, and where they have been recovered

they have principally been from roadside settlements and villas. Nevertheless, hoards are a crucially important set of evidence for our understanding of the relationship that the occupants of the Romano-British countryside had

with coins, and the results of the recent large-scale project exploring coin hoards in Iron Age and Roman Britain, undertaken by the University of Leicester and the British Museum, will be an important companion to this chapter.