CHAPTER 13

Coins

by Nicholas Cooke

13 Coins

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A total of 379 coins was recovered from the Framework Archaeology excavations at Stansted Airport. The majority of these are Roman in date, with two Late Iron Age coins, whilst a number of medieval and post-medieval coins and tokens were found on the LTCP excavations.

The Iron Age and Roman coins

All bar one of the coins are copper alloy, with the single exception (SF 783, found unstratified on the MTCP excavations) being a silver *siliqua* of Valens. Most of the Iron Age coins were recovered from the evaluation and excavations on the MTCP site (some 347 coins in all). The only exception to this is a single Roman coin recovered unstratified from the excavations on the LTCP site (SF 129, an *antoninianus* of Carausius minted AD 286 - 293).

In general, the coins are in fairly poor condition with the vast majority showing significant signs of wear (see Table 13.1). Indeed only two coins were considered unworn on both obverse and reverse. Most of the coins had seen a degree of corrosion, with some very badly corroded indeed. In general the condition of the coins indicates that the coins were probably in circulation for some time prior to their loss or deposition.

The Iron Age and Roman coins from Stansted Airport range in date from two late Iron Age copper alloy coins (SF 766 and 972) to 23 coins of the House of Valentinian (see Fig. 13.1). Some 278 of these could be assigned minting dates with certainty, with the remaining 69 dated on the basis of their size and shape (this allowed them to be broadly grouped into wide date spans – C1/C2, C1/C3, C3/C4 and C4). Figure 13.1 shows the coins from the Stansted excavations grouped into the 21 periods for Roman coin analysis devised by Reece (1991). As expected, the main grouping of coins lies in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, reflecting the rise to prominence of the settlement on the MTCP at this time.

The two Late Iron Age coins are a copper alloy coin of Tasciovanus (probably minted between 25 BC and AD 1 (SF 972) and a copper alloy coin minted either by Tasciovanus or Cunobelin in the first half of the 1st century AD (SF 766). In addition to these, there are two coins dating to the 1st century AD (SF 789 and SF 866), which are both Flavian in date and one dated to the 2nd century (SF 548, a sestertius of Faustina II). There are three further coins likely to date to the 1st, 2nd or early 3rd centuries AD, based on their size alone. Apart from these the remaining 339 coins date to the late 3rd or 4th century AD.

This pattern of coin loss need not indicate that the site was not in use during the 1st and 2nd century AD, as coins of this date are usually less common as site finds. Both of the Late Iron Age coins were found in later contexts, but their presence does confirm the Late Iron Age origins of the Roman settlement on the MTCP site.

The 3rd and 4th century coin loss is also interesting. As expected, the main peaks of coinage occur in Periods 14 (AD 275 –296) - and 17 (AD 330 – 348). Both of these contain a mixture of 'official' issues and contemporary copies, with Period 14 containing a very high proportion of 'Barbarous Radiates' and Period 17 containing copies of coins of the House of Constantine. The latter are mainly copies of the Gloria Exercitus issued depicting 2 soldiers either side of a single or double standard – 26 out of 40 coins (65%) – with smaller quantities of the celebratory Constantinopolis (7 coins – 17.5%) and Urbs Roma (2 coins – 5%) issues. Other copied coins include coins of Theodora (2 coins – 5%) and the Victoriaeddauggnn type depicting two facing victories holding wreaths (3 coins – 7.5%). Although there are fewer coins in Period 18, half of which are also copies – predominantly the 'Fallen Horseman' Fel Temp Reparatio issues of the AD 350's. All of these copies are contemporary copies of 'official' coinage, possibly struck to compensate for gaps in supply of coinage to Britain and to supply sufficient small change for the provinces needs. It is unclear whether these copies were officially sanctioned, if at all, but they are not uncommon as site finds, and seem to have circulated in the same fashion as officially struck coins.

Coins from the MTCP (BAACP99 and BAACP00)

The size of the Roman coin assemblage from the MTCP is sufficiently large for it to warrant comparison with other large coin assemblages from Roman Britain. Reece (1991) has compiled lists be period of coin assemblages from 140 sites in Britain, each of which contained a significant number of coins identifiable to period. Some 277 of the coins from the MTCP could be identified to period (with the 278th from the LTCP). A comparison between the proportion of coins lost on the MTCP and the average ration of coins lost per period on Reece's 140 sites shows a number of interesting patterns (Fig.13.2).

Overall, as expected, coin loss for the period up to AD 260 is lower than average for British sites. This occurs despite the fact that the site contained a small settlement throughout this period. In the light of this, it seems likely that coins were not used frequently on the site, although taxes would presumably have been paid in coin. The sharp drop in Period 13, between AD 260 and 275, may be a function of the poor condition of many of the radiate coins, which precluded their close identification and led to their inclusion amongst the copies and possible copies assigned to period 14. This may go some way to explaining the large peak of copies assigned to period 14.

The pattern for the following periods is much as expected, before a further major peak of coin loss for period 17 (AD 330 – 348). This period probably coincides with the period at which the site was at its peak, and comes in marked contrast to the following periods, with the sharp fall in Period 21 probably indicating that the site had been abandoned by this time.

In his work, Reece established that a comparison of the ratio between coins on a site struck between AD 260 – 296 (Period B) and AD 330 – 402 (Period D) provided some clear differences between sites of different types. This work established that rural sites from the west of England often have greater proportion of late coins than their eastern counterparts, and that as a result of this the eastern sites have a higher than average ration of Radiate coins to late 4th century coins. The settlement at

Stansted follows this pattern, with an above average B:D ratio. The pattern established by Reece's work is an interesting one, with an apparent fall off in coin loss (and presumably use) in the latter half of the 4th century in Eastern Britain.

Distribution of coins

Most of the early coins from the site appear to come from features in the late Roman settlement, and are therefore residual, whilst many of the 4th century coins from the site were recovered from the dark tertiary fills of late Roman features. These probably formed as the result of ploughing of the site in the Post-Roman or medieval period. They were probably originally incorporated within occupation deposits in the area of the settlement itself. This may also go some way to explaining the mixed nature of the coins and pottery assemblages within these tertiary fills.

Residuality and coin loss

Many of features contained more than one coin within its fills. Those cases in which more than one coin could be assigned to a specific period are shown in Table 13.2 below. This demonstrates is that the fill sequences of some features contain a number of coins from different periods. Earlier coins, and in particular the radiate coins of the late 3rd century AD, often occur in later 4th-century features. This may be the result of a combination of factors. Whilst it is clear that some of these coins may still have been in circulation as small change well into the 4th century, other coins may have been incorporated within later deposits or features as a result of continued settlement activity on the same site. In other words, coins lost on the site in the late 3rd century may have been reworked into later features in the 4th century.

Some of the coins included within this may have became incorporated at different dates – some of the larger features such as wells and large ditches may have had a long period of use spanning the periods concerned, whilst in other cases, later coins will have become incorporated within the tertiary fills of the feature as a result of the incorporation of settlement and occupation deposits through later ploughing activity.

The implications of this are, unfortunately, that the dating provided by a single coin, or even a small number of earlier coins cannot be relied on as dating evidence without the corroborative support of other forms of dated material (principally pottery spot dates) or stratigraphic evidence. Coins from the tertiary fills are less likely to be reliable as direct dating for the use of the feature than those in the primary fills, deliberate backfills and placed deposits, whilst those from secondary fills are more likely to date the end of a feature's useful life or its first disuse.

Conclusions

The Roman coins from Stansted Airport (and in particular the MTCP site) represent a fairly typical assemblage for a rural site in Eastern Britain of the 3rd and 4th centuries. Within this picture however there a number of points of interest. The relative dearth of early coins from and of the early Roman settlements may point to a reluctance to adapt to the new coinage introduced with the conquest. It may equally

indicate that these settlements operated at a level at which the coinage available was not useful or necessary.

It is not until the late 3rd century that coins appear in any significant quantities on any of the sites, and when they are found, it is in association with a significantly expanded settlement complex on the MTCP site. This may either indicate that coin use had finally reached a level at which it became an important part of life on this new settlement, or even that the expanded settlement was not a natural expansion of the earlier settlement, but performed a different role.

The large peaks of coinage minted in the late 3rd century and the 330s and 340s AD are not unusual, although those from the MTCP site are slightly higher in proportion to the overall pattern of coin loss on the site than might otherwise be expected. There is no evidence to suggest that either of these might be influenced by deliberately deposited coins or a scattered hoard. The most likely explanation is that these are emphasised by the relative dearth of earlier or later coins. In other words, the pattern of coin loss is influenced by the history of the site, with the largest peaks of coin loss coinciding with the period at which the new settlement on the MTCP site was at its apogee, and that the settlement itself did not continue successfully until the end of the 4th century AD.

The history of coin use on the MTCP site is very much the history of the expanded settlement of the late 3rd and 4th century AD. Prior to this, coinage appears to have played little role in the Early Roman settlements on the MTCP or the LTCP sites.

The medieval and post-medieval coins, tokens and jetons

A single post-medieval coin, a half penny of William III (SF 1089) was recovered unstratified on the MTCP excavations, and probably represents a casual loss. The remaining thirty medieval and post-medieval coins, tokens and jetons were recovered from the excavations of the late medieval and post-medieval hunting lodge excavated on the LTCP site. These range in date from the late 15th century through to the second half of the 20th century.

The earliest of these comprise a group of seven copper alloy jetons struck in Nuremberg. The earliest of these is probably Object 1367, which imitates similar jetons, struck in Tournai in the first half of the 15th century. Neither of the other early jetons can be dated with certainty, but probably represent early developments of the ‘rose/orb’ type of jetons before the patterns became settled. This suggests that they date to the late 15th century. The majority of the remaining jetons (Objects 1165, 1286 and 1327) are ‘stock’ jetons of the ‘rose/orb’ pattern, which date to the first half of the 16th century AD. The latest of the jetons (Object 1403) was struck by Hans Krauwinckel II, who was Guild Master of the Nuremberg jeton makers from 1586 until his death in 1635. Many of these jetons were recovered from layers of cobbling associated with the hunting lodge.

Jetons were reckoning counters used in medieval accounting and mathematical calculations. They were used in conjunction with checkerboards or cloths in order to record values and sums of money. Specialist tokens for this purpose were produced from the late 13th century onwards, and they were in widespread use from the 14th

century until the late 17th century, when they were made redundant by the increasing spread of Arabic numerals. Nuremberg took over from Tournai as the main European centre for jeton manufacture in the 16th century. Prior to this, designs on jetons usually reflected those on contemporary coins, and jetons were often minted under government authority. The only controls on the minting at Nuremburg were those imposed by the Guild organisation, and new designs flourished. The presence of jetons on the site of the hunting lodge may indicate that some form of accounting or bookkeeping was taking place.

A small number of 17th-century coins were also recovered from the excavations, including a silver half groat of Elizabeth I (Object 1330) minted in 1601 – 2, found residually in a later pit fill. A small farthing of Charles I (Object 1238) was recovered from the topsoil, whilst two coins of William III (Objects 1153 and 1195) were also found, both from the gridded cleaning of the site.

Three 18th-century coins – a penny of George II (Object 1166) and two half pennies of George III – were also found, the latter two from the topsoil. The coin of George II was recovered during the gridded cleaning of the site. The remaining coins from the site were recovered from the topsoil, and where they could be identified, date to the late 19th or 20th centuries. Many of these, particularly those dating to the first half of the 20th century may represent accidental losses by troops using the wartime installations in the adjoining fields to the south-west and north (an anti-aircraft gun site and an accommodation site were located in these areas).

Conclusions

The late medieval and post-medieval coins from the hunting lodge indicate that the complex was in use from the late medieval period well into the 18th century, although none are especially useful in dating particular sequences or features. Most of the 20th-century coins on the site were probably lost by Allied airmen and support troops stationed at Stansted during the Second World War.

Table 13.1: Coin condition

	Unworn obverse	Slightly worn obverse	Worn obverse	Very worn obverse	Extremely worn obverse	Illegible obverse
Unworn reverse	2		1			
Slightly worn reverse	1	57	7	1		
Worn reverse	1	31	85	6	3	3
Very worn reverse		5	15	74	2	
Extremely worn reverse		1	2	7	47	
Illegible reverse						

Table 13.2: Features containing more than one coin identifiable to period

Cut SG	Feature	Fill type	Period 1	Period 4	Period 13	Period 14	Period 15	Period 16	Period 17	Period 18	Period 19	C3/C4	Total
306045	LIA/ ERB ditch	Tertiary fill			1				1			1	3
		Secondary fill				2						1	3
													6
306057	LRB pit	Secondary fill						2				1	**3**
306100	Post-med ditch	Tertiary fill							1				1
		Secondary fill							1				1
													2
306110	LRB ditch	Secondary fill				2			3			1	**6**
306147	C2 – C3 ditch	Secondary fill				1			1				**2**
306151	LIA/ ERB ditch	Secondary fill			1	2			4				**7**
306165	LRB ditch	Secondary fill				2			3			5	**10**
306175	LRB ditch	Tertiary fill				1	1		2			1	5
		Deliberate backfill				1			2				3
		Secondary fill					1	1					2
													10
309187	Unphased	Secondary fill				1			1				**2**
314194	LRB ditch	Secondary fill				1			1	1		1	4
		Placed deposit				2			1			2	5
													9
325030	C2 – C3 pit	Deliberate backfill				2				1			**3**
330151	LRB pit	Secondary fill							2				**2**
336087	LRB ditch	Secondary fill				1				1			**2**
336090	Medieval ditch	Secondary fill				1				1			**2**
338037	LRB pit	Tertiary fill				2			4		1	5	**12**
344018	LRB ditch	Secondary fill				3			4			3	**10**
344026	LRB ditch	Tertiary fill						1	1				2
		Secondary fill		1									1
													3
344052	LRB ditch	Tertiary fill	1										1
		Secondary fill				1							1
													2
344131	LRB ditch	Secondary fill				1	1		2	1			**5**
344137	LRB ditch	Secondary fill				2			1				**3**
344142	LRB ditch	Secondary fill				1			1			1	**3**
344151	LRB ditch	Secondary fill				5					2		**7**
344154	LIA/ ERB ditch	Secondary fill								2		1	**3**
344159	C2 – C3 ditch	Secondary fill	1			2			2				**5**
344170	LRB ditch	Secondary fill			2							1	**3**
344224	LRB ditch	Secondary fill				1				3			**4**
344239	LRB ditch	Secondary fill							2		1		**3**
344355	LRB gully	Secondary fill						1	1				**2**
344372	C2 – C3 waterhole	Secondary fill			1	3							**4**
344375	LRB ditch	Secondary fill				1		1					**2**
344379	LRB natural feature	Deliberate backfill							2				**2**
347041	LRB pit	Secondary fill				3				1	1	2	**7**
349054	LIA ditch	Secondary fill							2				**2**
350031	LRB pit	Tertiary fill				1			1	1	3	1	**7**
350050	LRB pit	Tertiary fill							2	1			**3**
350059	LRB well	Deliberate backfill				2			4	1		2	**9**
355060	LRB pit	Secondary fill							1		1		**2**

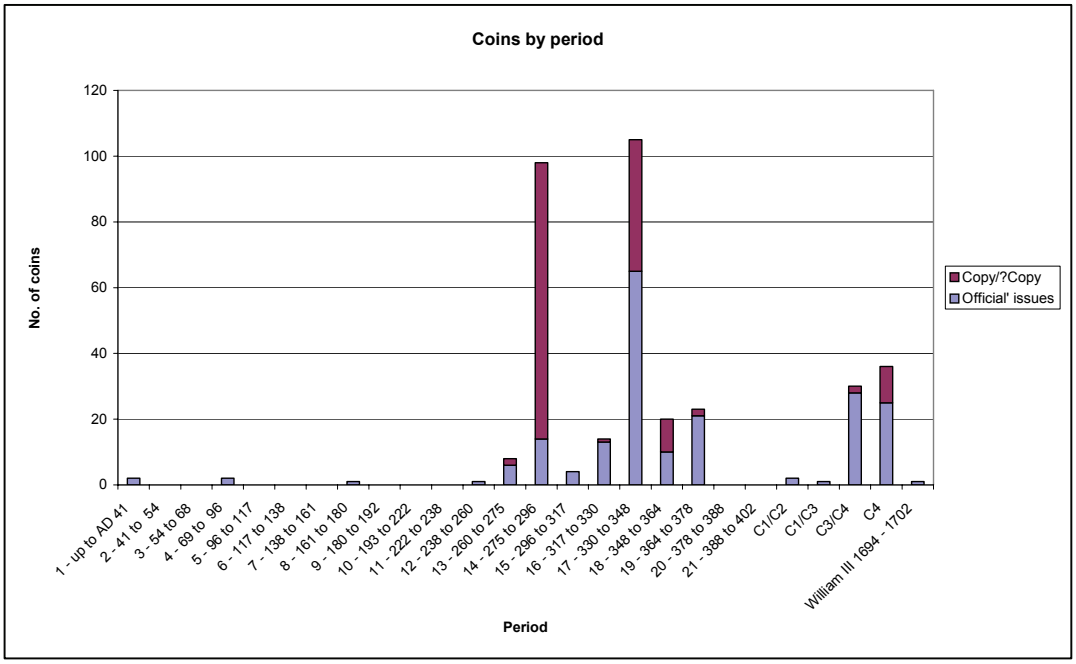


Figure 13.1: Number of coins from Stansted (all sites) by period

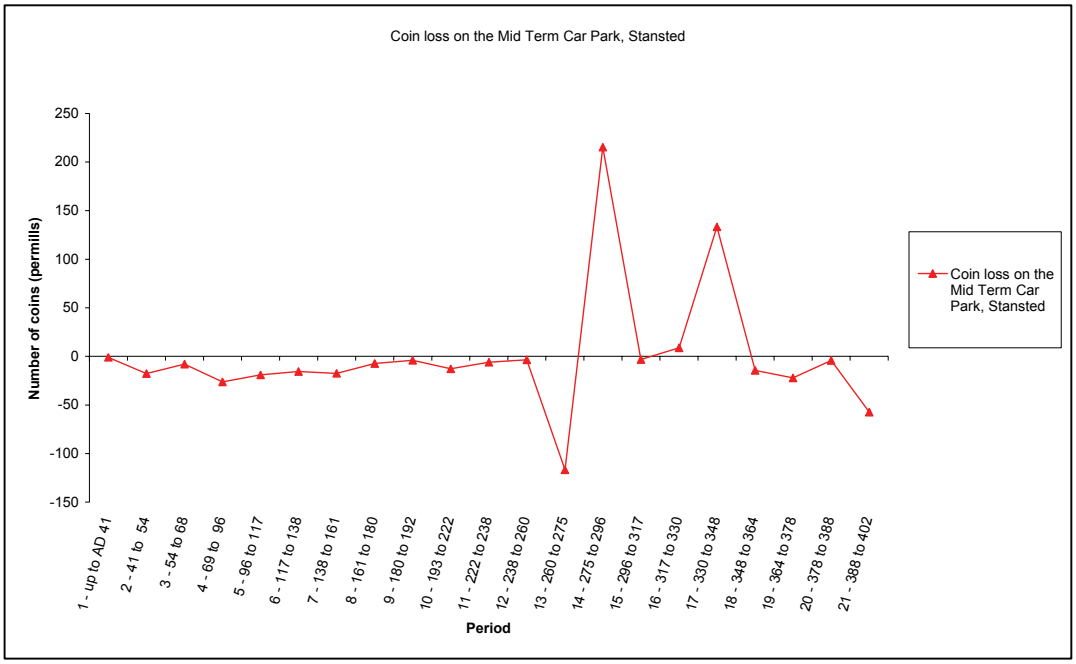
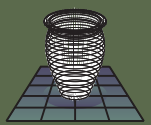


Figure 13.2: Deviation from the British mean of coins on the MTCP excavations



Framework Archaeology

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