

A hoard of Iron Age class II potin coins from New Addington, Surrey

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Later Iron Age potin coins are divided into two classes. It has been suggested that the classes had different purposes as class I coins were hoarded, but class II appeared not to be. The New Addington class II hoard suggests that there was little difference and that the potins were always intended as a special purpose coinage (not money) circulating in parallel with gold coins. Recent works on the typology and technology of the coins are also discussed.

The discovery of the hoard

In 1978 a metal detector user discovered nine later Iron Age potin coins in a 20' (c 6m) area in the woods at Castle Hill Ruffs, New Addington in the London Borough of Croydon. Discovered at the same time were what were described as 'two small rims sherds of pottery' (Shaw 1978, 5). The next year a further eleven coins were found in the same area. Of these coins six were 'complete, three incomplete and two fragmentary' (Shaw 1979a, 3).

The find has already been briefly noted. It was first published in the newsletter of the local archaeological society where the findspot was mistakenly ascribed to Kent (Shaw 1978; 1979a). The find has also been included in a gazetteer of Celtic coins found in Britain between 1977-82 (Haselgrove 1983, 124) where it was correctly attributed to Surrey, and in a recent review of the Iron Age of Surrey where it was ascribed to Croydon (Hanworth 1987, 152; cf Shaw 1979b).

It is not certain that all the coins were recovered and unfortunately the coins have since been stolen, but not before members of the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society had made a partial photographic and drawn record of the hoard. This provides details of the obverses and reverses of three coins (nos 2, 7, 15; fig 1) and either the obverses or reverses of a further 13 coins. The three coins fully recorded were also shown at the British Museum. Haselgrove subsequently included the coins in his category of 'multiple find', suggesting that the coins might be, or derive from, a hoard found at Addington, Palace Estates (1987, 117-22, 311). He also raised the possibility that a fourth coin was related to this find. That coin is a class I potin, type L, found in 1969 or before in Court Wood Lane, Addington and is in Croydon Museum (Allen 1971, 145; Shaw 1978, 5). Castle Hill Ruffs and Court Wood Lane are c 2.5km apart and the precise provenance suggests a separate find.

At the time of their discovery the New Addington coins were interpreted as a hoard and this still seems probable. The number of coins (20) would be large for a site assemblage (although the Stansted hoard was found in a settlement), their restricted distribution (within c 6m), and the discovery of pottery (albeit undated) all support the interpretation of the coins as from a hoard perhaps contained in one or more pots. The much larger Sunbury, Middlesex, hoard was placed in three pots (Allen 1971, 148). There is no evidence to suggest that the New Addington coins were offerings at a shrine.

Some 16 of the 20 or more coins found in 1978-79 can now be identified. The coins were not weighed and the pottery does not appear to have survived. The photographic record is not of sufficient quality to be published here but prints are held in the Index of Celtic Coins at the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford University, where they may be consulted by appointment. Although the coins may more properly be referred to as 'cast bronze' (Van Arsdell 1986, 205; 1989, 52), with Haselgrove (1988, 100), the widely accepted term potin is retained here.

The composition of the hoard

The coins are listed here according to their order in the original photographic record, and identified according to Allen's 1971 typology (table 1). Those coins described by Shaw (1979, 3) as 'incomplete' may have been broken in use or after deposition. If the damage had occurred in separation from the casting sprue the coins are likely to have been recast. Instead, their 'fragmentary' condition may be deliberate, for Haselgrove has noted what appears to be the halving or quartering of potin coins (1979, 205; 1987, 145, 159; 1988, 118). This is common enough at Canterbury to suggest that it was deliberate rather than

Number	Obverse Type	Reverse Type	Comments	Oxford Index No	Figure
1	N	—		89/33	
2	M	M		89/34	fig 1,2
3	O	—		89/35	
4	—	P		89/36	
5	—	P	Halved?	89/37	
6	—	P	Halved?	89/38	
7	O	O		89/39	fig 1,7
8	—	O		89/40	
9	—	N		89/41	
10	—	P		89/42	
11	N	—		89/43	
12	—	P		89/44	
13	—	N		89/45	
14	—	M		89/46	
15	P	P		89/47	fig 1,15
16	—	P		89/48	
17	—	—	Not recorded	—	
18	—	—	Not recorded	—	
19	—	—	Not recorded	—	
20 +	—	—	Not recorded	—	
TOTAL	20 +				

TABLE 1: Identification of the New Addington potin coins (after Allen types)

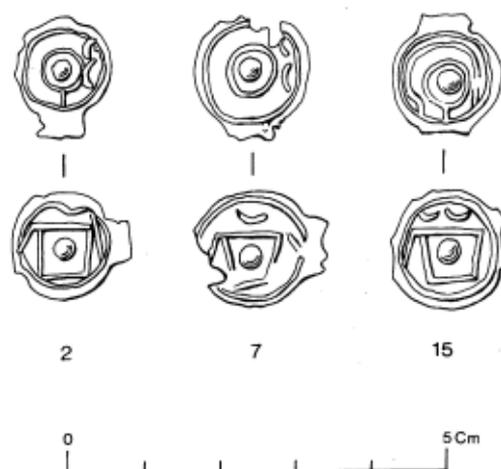


Fig 1. Class II potin coins from the New Addington Hoard. The numbers are those of the coins in the catalogue

being caused by the high tin content, and hence brittleness, of the coins. Certainty is impossible but two of the New Addington coins (nos 5-6) appear to be *deliberately* halved.

Assuming that the coins identified (80%) are representative of the hoard, they form a numismatically coherent group. The similarity between the photographed obverses and some of the reverses (eg nos 10 & 12) hints that some coins are from closely related batches as is often the case in hoards. The coins are exclusively of class II types and type P, the last of the fifteen types in Allen's typology, is the most frequent, with 44% (7/16) in the sample recorded. As the designs on each coin were made individually in every separate casting chain, too much emphasis should not be placed on this or any other typology: some of the differences in design may be geographical in origin rather than chronological.

While some potin hoards contained hundreds of coins, smaller hoards are also known. Although found over a larger area, the Boxley, Kent, hoard was discovered in similar circumstances to the New Addington find and contained approximately 20 coins (Haselgrove 1987, 279; 1988). If the Gunnersbury, Middlesex, hoard is an ancient find and not really part of the much larger Brentford hoard (Haselgrove 1987, 281), it comprised only twelve coins. Smaller groups, whose identification as closed hoards is not certain, have been recorded beside the river Thames at Kingston upon Thames (3+ coins) and Wandsworth (8+ coins) (both formerly in Surrey) (Haselgrove 1987, 286, 288).

The typology and technology of British potin coins

British potin coins have traditionally been divided into two classes, I and II, reflecting a discernible difference within the series. In class II the pupil on the obverse is very pronounced, increasing in size until it becomes a boss, while what was originally a bull on the reverse is ultimately reduced to a parallelogram. Allen (1971) subdivided class I into the lettered types A-H, J-L and class II into M-P. For clarity there was no letter type 'I'. These types were then subdivided by numbers. Although followed here, this typology may be capable of some amalgamation and these difficulties in categorisation have recently attracted some attention.

Haselgrove (1987, 248-9, 254) has suggested that the coins can be divided into two series which are subdivided by classes which are actually Allen's lettered types. Series 1 has a central point (or pupil) in the eye; series 2 does not. Series 1 is subdivided into earlier and later groups which correspond to Allen's classes I and II. Although type B has a point in the eye which might challenge Haselgrove's attribution of it to series 2 (cf Allen 1971, fig 31), on every other ground it is comparable to types C and D. Although Haselgrove's use of a single attribute to divide the series might be questioned, his suggestion that the typological changes in the series may not represent a single, simple, typological and chronological development may be endorsed (1988, 100-1).

The same difficulty in interpreting the designs on the coins occurs in trying to correlate the typology with Van Arsdell's five-fold distinction in the manufacture of the coins based on the methods used in making the moulds. These methods did *not* involve the use of papyrus (Van Arsdell 1986). Van Arsdell suggests that the five techniques yield a plausible chronological sequence and has ordered the coins according to them, taking the designs into account only when major stylistic differences occur (1989, 77). Van Arsdell's further subdivisions are essentially similar to Allen's. Class II coins (as at New Addington) are all included in Van Arsdell's fifth 'Adjustment Period' which are divided into early, middle and late types with 2, 2 and 1 types respectively.

The smaller, but thicker, size of class II coins may be explicable, at least in part, by their being an attempt to resolve casting difficulties. These included separately filling the last coin in the mould due to the width of the sprue leading to the mould not filling properly, and the coins rather than the sprues breaking on separation. The typological differences may be related, but perhaps unimportant, stylistic changes.

Although the individual manufacture of potins seems not to lend them readily to precise

metrology, both Haselgrove and Van Arsdell note that the weights of the class II coins are similar to those of the immediately preceding Class I types, Allen types J–L (Haselgrove 1987, fig A 6: 2; 1988, 110; Van Arsdell 1986, 218–19). In general, however, there is a clear difference in the modal weights: with class II coins being lighter (Haselgrove 1987, 310). Haselgrove has proposed that there is an association between the weight of potins and gold coins. The change in potin size for class II coins may also be related to a change in the types of those gold coins in circulation, perhaps the appearance of certain gold quarter-staters (Haselgrove 1987, 191, 249; 1988, 110).

The significance of the hoard

In 1970 no hoards which certainly contained class II coins had been discovered. Although Allen was not explicit, it appears that this was one of the reasons why, despite some reservations, he maintained the distinction between class I and II coins (1971, 138, 147 *sv* Bardwell; cf Haselgrove 1987, 283). Accordingly he was unable to date class II as early as the eight hoards of class I coins which he suggested were deposited at the time of the invasions of Julius Caesar in 55 and 54 BC. Instead Allen suggested that the manufacture of class II coins continued down to the Claudian conquest (1971, 139–40), a view followed by Nash (1987, 38, 122). However, Rodwell was almost certainly correct in interpreting class II coins in Romano-British contexts as redeposited and in arguing that the series dated to the 1st century BC (1976, 206–7). Haselgrove's study supports this and provides a full discussion of the date and functions of the whole series, which starts in the late 2nd or early 1st century BC (1987, 100, 139–45, 189–91, 248–9; 1988). Van Arsdell's claim that the British potin series appears to be earlier than the Gaulish ones (1989, 52) from which it probably derives is unsubstantiated.

The difference in hoarding patterns was interpreted by Collis (1974) as suggesting that as Class I were hoarded they were a valuable coinage which were used for the storage of wealth, but not as 'money'. As Class II coins were apparently not hoarded, Collis suggested that this indicated a change in use with potins being downgraded to become a medium of exchange. This has been questioned by Rodwell (1976, 207–8) and Haselgrove (1979, 207, n 5) and Collis has conceded that the evidence was inconclusive (1981, 54). Class I coins are found widely in southern England but class II coins have a more restricted distribution in the south-east and are concentrated in east Kent, east Hertfordshire, the Essex coast and, to a lesser extent, the lower Thames including Surrey. Partly because of this change in circulation, Haselgrove has argued that potin was used as an alternative to gold coinage, at least outside south-east England, while it was also used to discharge social obligations in that region. Collis' suggestion would therefore have greater merit if the distinction were applied to the function(s) between which potins were produced for and the function(s) they may have acquired after their issue (Haselgrove 1988, 110–19).

That is to say, despite being issued as a special purpose coinage (not money), they came to be used as a form of early cash or 'money' (Haselgrove 1987, 159–60, 217; 1988, 117–18). Furthermore, when examined more closely, the variety of types of coins within class I hoards is such as to suggest that they need not compromise a single, uniform, horizon deposited at the time of Julius Caesar's invasions (Haselgrove 1988, 108–9, fig 4; cf Collis 1981, 54). From a similar substantive perspective Nash suggests that potin was a local, lower-value, coinage designed for payments to dependents within the south-east (1987, 122). Conversely, Van Arsdell has followed Allen (1971, 143) in arguing that potins are simply the small-value coins which were needed to facilitate the trade of a market economy (1989, 7–8, 76).

Conclusions

Since Allen wrote a further four or five hoards of class I potins have been discovered (excluding 'multiple finds'; Haselgrove 1987, 311). However, the New Addington find is not the only hoard of class II coins. The Stansted (Airport Catering Site), Essex, hoard

(fig 2) was found in 1987 during the excavation of an enclosed rural settlement and is composed of 51 type M, class II, coins (Priddy 1988, 269; Haselgrove 1988, 108, app 1B, no 5).

The precise date of the last of the British potin series - class II - remains uncertain. While also eschewing any temptation to ascribe a Caesarian date to the hoards of class II coins, their issue certainly started within the 1st century BC and they were probably superseded by struck bronze coins. Van Arsdell suggests that this occurred in the 30s BC (1989, 16) and a date around this time may prove to be correct, but whether the two types of bronze coinage were issued for the same purposes is a different matter. Nonetheless, it may be relevant that, while coin hoards were deposited throughout the later Iron Age (Haselgrove 1987, 120), their size appears to decrease through time and the class II hoards form part of this.

The importance of the New Addington and Stansted hoards lies in their suggesting that class II potin coins may have been valued and used in ways similar enough to the earlier class I coins for them to be hoarded and/or deposited as votive offerings. This suggests a continuity in function between the two classes. The fact that most potins, both classes I and II, are settlement finds in contrast to gold coins, which are only rarely found on such sites, also suggests continuity. So too does the method of their manufacture (Van Arsdell 1986; 1989, 76-9). But the archaeological evidence lends little independent support to the suggestion that there was a market economy for the greater part of the 1st century BC.

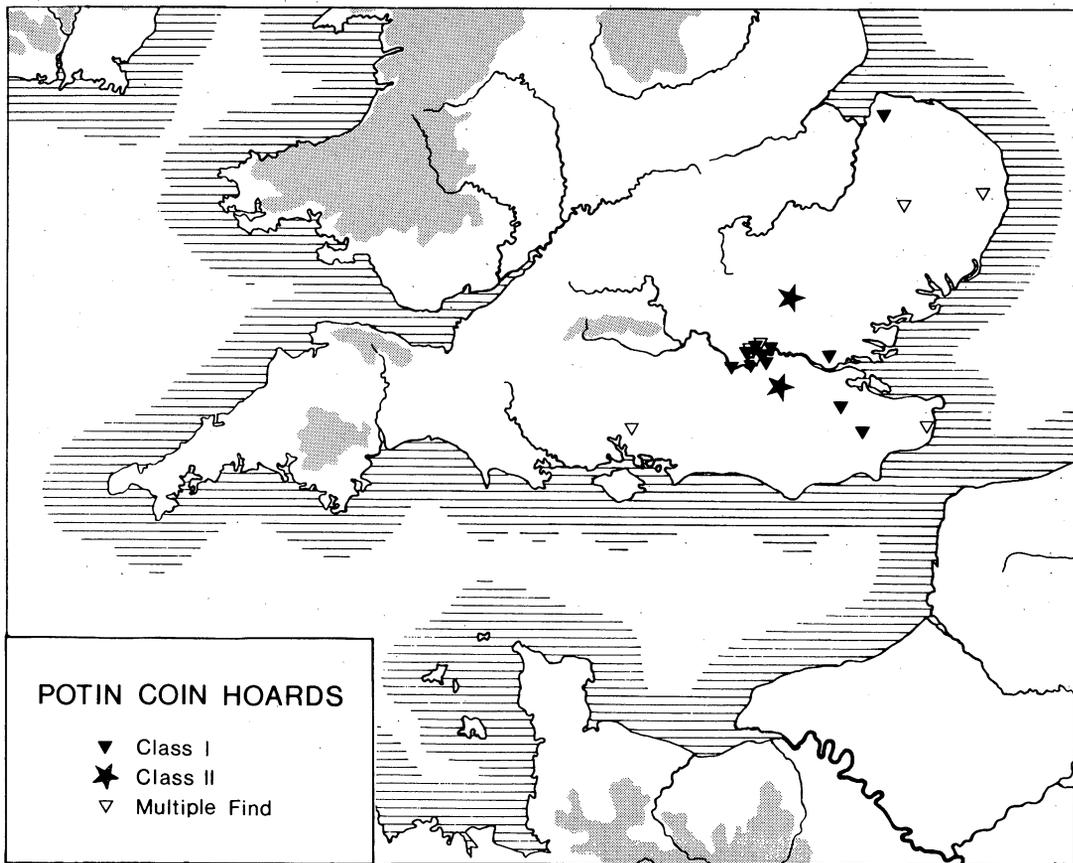


Fig 2. Distribution of hoards of British potin coins

In my opinion the most satisfactory interpretation of potin coins is Haselgrove's earlier suggestion that they were a special purpose coinage which was used only in certain activities and in certain spheres of circulation and not as an all-purpose early cash (Haselgrove 1979; cf Dalton 1977, 197-200). British potin coins may always have been issued as a special purpose currency whose uses were closely related to those of gold coins: they were not intended as an early cash. Only subsequently may they have acquired this role but they never became a fixed, fiduciary, unit of value. If the broken coins in the New Addington hoard (nos 5-6) were deliberately halved and not accidentally broken, then the hoard may suggest that such a transition may have taken place only at the very end of the series. But the coins were still valuable enough in the worlds of the Iron Age peoples to be offered to their gods.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper would not have been possible without the generous help of Muriel Shaw of the Archaeology Section of the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society who provided photographs of the coins and the correct location of the find. I am also grateful to Derek Harrison (Oxford Index of Celtic Coins) and John Leveson Gower for their help, Robert Van Arsdell for allowing me to read parts of his *Celtic coinage in Britain* while still in proof, and Colin Haselgrove for his comments on an earlier draft.

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