

A Romano-British rural site at Eaton Socon, Cambridgeshire

Specialist Report

Coins



by Nicholas A. Wells

THE COINS

By Nicholas A. Wells

Six coins were found in excavations at Eaton Socon. All are copper alloy of which five date to the Roman period, the other (SF 21) could possibly date to the late pre-Roman Iron Age (LPRIA), though this by far from certain. A full catalogue follows a brief discussion.

Although all are stratified, none are in particularly useful contexts – two (SF 3 and SF 51) are from the upper fill of Enclosure 3 ditch 76 (segment 891), one (SF 21) is from the secondary fill of Enclosure 1 ditch 891 (segment 816) while two (SF 57 and SF 58) were from the slow backfill of quarry pit 1026. Potentially of interest is SF 32 from Phase 1 refuse pit 845, however its fragmentary condition precludes any accurate identification, and the finds from the layer (846) were almost certainly contaminated with those from layers above and below.

The size of the assemblage is far too small to attempt statistical comparison with other site assemblages, and the coins themselves are typical of those found in Romano-British sites across the country.

The coins generally date to the late Roman period (AD 250-410), though there are two possible exceptions. SF 21 may date to the early 1st century AD – though the heavy corrosion on the coin makes this far from certain and it is safer to say that it is undated. As mentioned above, SF 32 is far too fragmentary to date accurately, though the fragments are clearly that of a *denarius*. This denomination was in general use up to c. AD 238 when they were replaced by the *antoninianus* (a name used by numismatists for want of information as to what the Romans called it). This new coin was most probably tariffed as two *denarii*, though it contained only 1½ times the bullion of a *denarius* thus making the state a hefty profit. The *denarius* (as any precious metal coinage) was subject to debasement throughout its long history, and at the beginning of the 3rd century it had become (from a coin of c. 98% pure silver in the early 1st century AD) an alloy containing only c. 40% silver. The corrosion on SF 32 is characteristic of *denarii* of this period and as such may have been issued during the Severan period (AD 193-235).

Coin catalogue

Each entry follows a standard format. After the site specific Special Find (**SF**) number is the **denomination** of the coin (*aureliani* and *nummi* are names given to these coins by numismatists for want of any information as to what the Romans themselves called them) followed by the **Issuer** where known (and dates). The **metal, diameter, weight and reverse axis** (difference of the axis of the reverse from the obverse) is then given followed by the **context** number and **description of layer**. The **inscription, description** and **degree of wear** of the **obverse** (heads) and **reverse** (tails) follows next. Any **mint** marks present then follow - **both field marks** and **exergue** (below the feet of the reverse design). The **issue period** during which the coin was struck is then given (NB. this is NOT the circulation period) followed by a **description** of any peculiarities of the coin i.e. size, flan, corrosion etc. Finally there is a **reference** to the appropriate concordance (RIC = Roman Imperial Coinage, LRBC = Late Roman Bronze Coinage – both followed by the volume number; see References).

SF 3

Æ 3 Nummus of VALENS (AD 364 - 378)

Cu alloy, 19mm diameter, 1.9g, reverse axis 0°

Context 896, upper fill of Enclosure 3 ditch 76 (segment 891)

Obv. DN VALEN/S PF AVG

Pearl diademed bust facing right, draped.

Unworn.

Rev. SECVRITAS REIPVBLICAE

Victory advancing left holding wreath and palm.

Unworn.

Field Mark; OF/II

Exergue; CON

Mint; Arles

Issue Date; AD 364 – 367

Oval flan (17 – 19mm)

Reference; LRBC II 492/ RIC IX Arles 9b

SF 21

UNCERTAIN coin

Cu alloy, 13mm diameter, 0.9g

Context 818, secondary fill of Enclosure 1 ditch 891 (segment 816).

Obv. No details apparent

Rev. No details apparent

This coin is too corroded to make out any details (the X-Ray too shows no detail). However, it is slightly scyphate (bowl shaped) – a characteristic feature of late pre-Roman Iron Age coinage in Britain, and as such could possibly date to the early 1st century AD.

SF 32

Denarius of Uncertain Issuer

Silver, 0.5g,

Context 846, fill of refuse pit 845 – possible contamination with layers above and below.

Obv.AVG C.....

Rev.NV.....

Mint; Probably Rome

Issue Date; late 1st to early 3rd century AD

Only three very small fragments of this coin remain, one with writing apparent. The style of the writing and the high copper corrosion evident on all three possibly suggests a date late in the above issue date range – perhaps Severan (AD 193 – 235).

SF 51

Æ 3 Nummus of CONSTANTINE I (AD 307 - 337)

Cu alloy, 17mm diameter, 2.3g, Reverse Axis 0°

Context 896, upper fill of Enclosure 3 ditch 76 (segment 891)

Obv. IMP CONSTAN/TINVS MAX AVG

Helmeted and laureate bust facing right, cuirassed.

Slightly worn.

Rev. VICTORIAE LAETAE PRINC PERP

Two victories holding a shield inscribed VOT/PR on altar.

Slightly worn.

Field Mark; *

Exergue; STR

Mint; Trier

Issue Date; AD 319

Corroded on both faces

Reference; RIC VII Trier 213

SF 57

Æ 2 Nummus of the HOUSE OF CONSTANTINE (AD 317 - 364)

Cu alloy, 20mm diameter, 2.3g, Reverse Axis 180°

Context 1027, long term silting in quarry pit 1026.

Obv. Pearl diademed bust facing right.

Slightly worn.

Rev. Emperor facing left, spearing fallen horseman.

Slightly worn.

Uncertain mint.

Issue Date; AD 348 – 364

Irregular, almost squared flan. Contemporary copy of a FEL TEMP REPARATIO Fallen Horseman type.

SF 58

Aurelianus of CARINUS as Caesar (AD 282 - 283)

Cu alloy, 21mm diameter, 2.9g, Reverse Axis 0°

Context 1027, long term silting in quarry pit 1026.

Obv. CARINVS NOBIL CAES

Radiate bust facing right, draped and cuirassed.

Unworn.

Rev. SAECVLI FELICITAS

Carinus facing right holding spear and globe.

Unworn.

Field Mark; /D

Mint; Lyons

Issue Date; AD 282 - 283

Corroded on both faces, but with traces of silvering still present on part of the obverse.

Reference; RIC V Carinus Caesar 152

References

Bruun, P.M., 1966, *The Roman Imperial Coinage, Vol VII, Constantine and Licinius*, Spink & Son (RIC VII)

Carson, R.A.G., Hill, P.V. & Kent, J.P.C., 1978, *Late Roman Bronze Coinage AD 324 – 498*, Sanford J. Durst (LRBC I & II)

Pearce, J.W.E., 1933, *The Roman Imperial Coinage, Vol IX, Valentinian I to Theodosius I*, Spink & Son (RIC IX)

Webb, P.H., 1933, *The Roman Imperial Coinage, Vol V Part 2, Probus to Amandus*, Spink & Son (RIC V)



WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.

Registered Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

London Office: Unit 113, The Chandlery, 50 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7QY.

Tel: 020 7953 7494 Fax: 020 7953 7499 london-info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

