



Coins and the Tetbury Coin Hoard

Coins: What's the point anyway?

- ▶ 'Roman coinage' ancient coins minted under administration, outwardly used for economic function.
- ▶ In practice, used by the state as a way to facilitate state expenditure, but also to promote the state's message.
- ▶ Under Gallienus for example a coin was minted in 263/264 A.D. with the words 'securitas orbis', or 'the safety of the world'. This was an important message given the instability of his reign at the time. The cuirass he is depicted as wearing on this coin serves to show his willingness to fight for the 'security of the world'.
- ▶ Another message displayed on his coins is 'conservator Augusti' accompanied by the image of a number of different gods. This appears to be Gallienus conveying to his audience that he, as the emperor Augustus, is under the protection of the god shown.
- ▶ The western Empire depended on the Roman mint because unlike the Eastern provinces they were without mints which produced much silver or any golden coins.
- ▶ Denominations were established under Augustus in relation to the silver Denarius, notable alterations to the standardisation came due to inflation and debasement of coins. For example the Antoninianus, twice the worth of a denarius but only 1.5 times the weight.

The Tetbury Coin Hoard

This coin hoard was discovered split between two pottery vessels with the vast majority found in the smaller of the two. The coins of the Tetbury hoard were dated between the 260s and 280s A.D. and spanned the reigns of twelve different emperors.



This particular hoard was originally thought to have been buried as part of a grave which would have been the first case of a coin hoard being found in this context in Roman Britain. However this was not the case as the bone found in the containers did in fact belong to a rat and *not* a human...

Other explanations for the find could be that it was buried as part of a 'money deposit' for retrieval at a later date, which is a convincing proposition when the debasement of the coinage over this period is considered.

It may also have been buried as part of a dedication to the gods however the remoteness of the site would seem to suggest otherwise.

As there is no definitive answer the purpose of the Tetbury Coin Hoard is anyone's guess...

Gallienus and His Coins

- Gallienus was the Roman Emperor between 253 A.D. and 268 A.D., ruling for a time in co-operation with his father.
- Despite a successful start to his reign Gallienus faced great instability towards the end including in the Roman economy, which had been declining in the years prior.
- The golden aureus under Gallienus can be seen to have first been reduced in weight, to some weighing less than one gram under Gallienus, and second to vary in weight considerably when compared to their predecessors, notably under Nero through Caracalla.
- In 253 A.D. when Gallienus and his father, Valerian, came to power debasement of the aureus spiked taking the gold content down to an average of 89%, and minimum of 66%, from 98% *or above* before 253 A.D.
- The silver radiate meanwhile fell from a consistent weight of around 4.5g and silver content of 42% under Gordian (438 A.D.) down to a weight of 2.9g and a silver content of 2.5% by 268 A.D.
- In the years following the date of the coins in the Tetbury Hoard and through the 4th century A.D. coins in the empire were increasingly struck by provincials and tribes wishing to emulate the central, and official, Imperial Roman coinage.



Reverse: GLORIA ROMANORVM

Emperor dragging captive, and holding labarum.

Minted in Lyon, found in Cirencester, 19th century.



Emperor Gratian(367-383AD)

Obverse: D N GRATIANVS PF AVG

Gratian bust



Reverse: VICTORIA AVGGG:
Victory to l., holding labarum
and trophy.

Minted in Milan. found by Mr.
Roger J. Fox between
Daglingworth and Bagendon
during the A419/A417 Swindon to
Gloucester DBFO Road Scheme
in 1996.



Gold solidus of Honorius
(AD 393-423)

Obverse: D N HONORIVS
P F AVG

Honorius bust