Exploring Variation: Coins and other Artefacts at Rural Roman sites in South West England

Dr Tom Brindle
Distribution of coins in the South West

Percentage of sites with coins by county

Gloucestershire  Wiltshire  Somerset  Dorset  Devon  Cornwall
Artefacts at rural sites in the South West 1:

Gloucestershire

Wiltshire

Dorset

Somerset
Proportions of sites in the ‘east’ with individual Classes of object (presence/absence)

- **All Farms (which aren’t villas)**
- **Villas**
- **Nucleated sites combined**
- **Religious sites combined**

**Writing equipment**
- 8% 17% 41% 57%
- 5% 22% 43% 66%
- 2% 10% 23% 25%

**Religious objects**
- 38% 33% 75%
- 46% 48% 93%
- 56% 87% 91%

**Lighting equipment**
- 21% 29% 55% 68%
- 23% 34% 64% 70%
- 26% 39% 70% 77%

**Agricultural tools**
- 23% 43% 66% 74%
- 12% 19% 25% 51%
- 11% 26% 25% 47%

**Food production**
- 18% 39% 59% 66%
- 15% 25% 43% 64%
- 11% 25% 32% 47%

**Textiles**
- 13% 28% 57% 53%
- 12% 28% 45% 51%
- 11% 26% 61% 55%

**Coins**
- 8% 17% 41% 57%
- 5% 22% 43% 66%
- 2% 10% 23% 25%

**Brooches**
- 31% 34% 73%
- 27% 51% 59%

**Medals**
- 11% 15% 18% 31%
- 11% 12% 23%

**Military fittings/weaponry**
- 26% 28% 28% 25%
- 27% 19% 43%
- 28% 39% 34%

**Household**
- 56% 46% 38%
- 23% 43%
- 10%

**Bracelets**
- 25% 66%
- 66%
- 25%

**Finger rings**
- 57%
- 57%
- 57%

**Cosmetics and appearance**
- 25% 66%
- 66%
- 66%

**Knives/tools**
- 48%
- 48%
- 48%

**Weighing objects**
- 87%
- 87%
- 87%

**Equine/transport objects**
- 51%
- 51%
- 51%

**Recreation**
- 55%
- 55%
- 55%

**Security**
- 53%
- 53%
- 53%

**Other dress**
- 47%
- 47%
- 47%

**Religious objects**
- 43%
- 43%
- 43%

**Writing equipment**
- 51%
- 51%
- 51%

**Lighting equipment**
- 55%
- 55%
- 55%
Proportionate distribution of objects from farms, villas, nucleated and religious sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>All Farms (which aren't villas)</th>
<th>Villas</th>
<th>Nucleated sites combined</th>
<th>Religious sites combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food production</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighing objects</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooches</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knives/tools</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural tools</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetics and appearance</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger rings</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine/transport objects</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other dress</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bracelets</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting equipment</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing equipment</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military fittings/weaponry</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairpins</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coins</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious objects</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison of average values for finds at villas and farms (total object number divided by number of sites)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Villas</th>
<th>Complex Farms</th>
<th>Enclosed Farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knives/tools</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious objects</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighing_objects</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooches</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military fittings/weaponry</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food production</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regional trends in settlement morphology

- General trends of decline in enclosed farms, early Roman increase in complex farms and mid-late Roman increase in villa type farms
- The ‘whole regional’ pattern masks fundamental intra-regional differences
Coins and villa/farm chronologies

Proportion of sites with early Roman coins (before AD 260)

Frequency of early coins (total divided by number of sites)

Proportion of sites with late Roman coins (after AD 260)

Frequency of late coins (total divided by number of sites)
Ratio of early to late coins at farms and villas

Enclosed farms

Complex farms

Villas
Proportion of sites occupied in the late Roman period with late Roman coins

Coinage at sites occupied until at least AD 300

Frequency of late Roman coins (total divided by number of sites occupied during late Roman period)
Proportion of sites occupied during 2nd-mid-3rd century with early Roman coins

Coinage at sites occupied between AD 100 and AD 250

Frequency of early Roman coins (total divided by number of sites occupied during 2nd-mid-3rd century)
Aureus = 25 denarii

Denarius = 4 sestertii

Setertius = 2 dupondii

Dupondius = 2 asses

As = 2 semis

Proportions of early Roman denominations from villas

Proportions of early Roman denominations from complex farms

Proportions of early Roman denominations from enclosed farms

*Coins shown to scale*
The ‘value’ of villas, complex farms and enclosed farms occupied AD 100-250 expressed as sestertii
Roman Brooches in Britain:
A Technological and Typological Study
based on the Richborough Collection

Justine Bayley and Sarnia Butcher

Brooches in Late Iron Age
and Roman Britain

Volume I

D. F. Mackreth
Proportion of farms and villas with brooches (sites occupied up to AD 250)

Brooches at farms and villas

Frequency of brooches at farms and villas (sites occupied up to AD 250)
Five top ranking brooch types at farms and villas

Enclosed Farms

Complex Farms

Villas

In top five across all site types
Enclosed and Complex Farms only
Complex Farms and Villas only
Brooch types at enclosed farms, complex farms and villas

- Enclosed Farms
- Complex Farms
- Villas
Five top ranking brooch types at farms which go on to become villas

Occupy the top five ranking brooches across both site types

Occupy top five ranking brooches at only one site type
Artefacts at rural sites in the South West 2:

Devon

Cornwall
Relative frequency of artefact types at farms, nucleated sites, villas and shrines in the south west peninsula

- **Agricultural_tools**: 0.7% (All Farms), 0.4% (Nucleated sites combined), 0.1% (Villas), 0.1% (Shrines)
- **Food production**: 17.6% (All Farms), 8.9% (Nucleated sites combined), 3.4% (Villas), 4.8% (Shrines)
- **Textiles**: 17.4% (All Farms), 10.8% (Nucleated sites combined), 6.8% (Villas), 1.8% (Shrines)
- **Knives/tools**: 22.9% (All Farms), 12.7% (Nucleated sites combined), 10.3% (Villas), 5.9% (Shrines)
- **Weighing_objects**: 0.7% (All Farms), 0.0% (Nucleated sites combined), 0.9% (Villas), 0.1% (Shrines)
- **Military fittings/weaponry**: 12.2% (All Farms), 17.2% (Nucleated sites combined), 0.0% (Villas), 5.6% (Shrines)
- **Household**: 4.8% (All Farms), 2.8% (Nucleated sites combined), 5.1% (Villas), 3.0% (Shrines)
- **Recreation**: 1.5% (All Farms), 2.8% (Nucleated sites combined), 0.7% (Villas), 0.7% (Shrines)
- **Bracelets**: 1.9% (All Farms), 1.3% (Nucleated sites combined), 0.9% (Villas), 2.8% (Shrines)
- **Equine/transport objects**: 0.4% (All Farms), 0.2% (Nucleated sites combined), 0.9% (Villas), 0.9% (Shrines)
- **Other dress**: 4.1% (All Farms), 4.2% (Nucleated sites combined), 8.6% (Villas), 4.3% (Shrines)
- **Writing equipment**: 0.1% (All Farms), 4.2% (Nucleated sites combined), 0.4% (Villas), 0.3% (Shrines)
- **Finger rings**: 0.9% (All Farms), 0.2% (Nucleated sites combined), 1.7% (Villas), 5.2% (Shrines)
- **Cosmetics and appearance**: 0.4% (All Farms), 0.6% (Nucleated sites combined), 2.6% (Villas), 0.9% (Shrines)
- **Coins**: 8.9% (All Farms), 28.8% (Nucleated sites combined), 39.4% (Villas), 15.0% (Shrines)
- **Brooches**: 4.8% (All Farms), 7.2% (Nucleated sites combined), 8.6% (Villas), 49.3% (Shrines)
- **Security**: 0.2% (All Farms), 0.4% (Nucleated sites combined), 3.4% (Villas)
- **Hairpins**: 0.5% (All Farms), 1.3% (Nucleated sites combined), 6.8% (Villas)
- **Religious objects**: 0.9% (All Farms), 0.9% (Nucleated sites combined), 0.9% (Villas), 0.9% (Shrines)
Stone objects a key feature of rural finds assemblages from Cornish sites

e.g. pebble hammerstones, polishing stones, sling shot...
Relative frequency of artefact types at farms, nucleated sites, villas and shrines in the south west peninsula

- Agricultural tools
- Food production
- Textiles
- Knives/tools
- Weighing objects
- Military fittings/weaponry
- Household
- Recreation
- Bracelets
- Equine/transport objects
- Other dress
- Writing equipment
- Finger rings
- Cosmetics and appearance
- Coins
- Brooches
- Security
- Hairpins
- Religious objects

- All Farms (which aren't villas)
- Nucleated sites combined
- Villas
- Shrines
Proportions of all coins in Reece periods A-D

East of the region

Reece Periods A-D

A - <260
B - 260-296
C - 296-317
D - 317-402

Devon

Cornwall
Relative frequency of brooch types at farms in Cornwall, Devon and the east of the region

Cornish farms
Devon farms
East Enclosed Farms
East Complex Farms
Brooch typology broad chronology

Date range

-50 0 50 100 150 200 250 300 350 400

Brooch Types

- nauheim
- la_tene
- eye
- penannular
- nauheim_derivative
- thistle_rosette
- langton_down
- colchester
- hod_hill
- aucissa_bagendon
- colchester_derivative
- Applied Hook
- Hook Norton
- initial_t_shaped
- aesica_fantail
- early_plate
- headstud
- developed_t_shaped
- trumpet_derived
- enamelled_bow
- zoomorphic_plate
- golden_hill
- wroxeter
- later_plate
- knee
- p_shaped
- crossbow
Distribution of Cornish sites with evidence for tin production/trade and coins and brooches in relation to the principal mineral lodes

Granite geology

Principal mineral lodes

Magor Farm Villa

St Mawgan-in-Pydar

Trethurgy

St Erme

Carvossa

Sites with evidence for tin production or trade
Sites with brooches
Sites with coins
New evidence for intensive exploitation of the Cornish tin resource from AD 100

‘Sustained elevated tin deposition is demonstrated clearly, with peaks occurring at 100-400 and 700-1000 calendar years AD - contemporaneous with the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods respectively’*

Conclusions

- **Distinct differences between finds assemblages in the peninsula and ‘the east’**

- **Clear evidence in the east for rural site hierarchy in access to and adoption of particular types of artefact. Partly chronological but partly about social status and cultural attitudes towards the use of different classes of object.**

- **Rural small finds assemblages in the peninsula compare more closely with enclosed farms to the east, but a striking feature is the dominance of stones used for a variety of tools.**

- **Objects which occur at complex farms and villas to the east are rare at farms in the peninsula, but they do occur in small numbers at a number of sites in Cornwall, but less so in Devon. This may reflect the importance of tin production for some sites in Cornwall.**