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## THE FROME HOARD HOW A MASSIVE FIND CHANGES EVERYTHING

### *Abstract*

*The Frome Hoard of 52,503 coins, discovered in 2010, is the second largest Roman coin hoard found in Britain. Not only is it of great numismatic significance, with over 850 pieces of Carausius (AD 286-93), but also it has had an enormous impact on broader archaeological and museological practices. The hoard was discovered by a metal detectorist, Dave Crisp, but he left the pot in the ground for professional excavation. This provided invaluable context for the hoard and enabled numismatists to determine that the hoard was buried in a single event. The sudden arrival of the coins at the British Museum was a catalyst for the Roman Coin and Metals Conservation sections at the British Museum to develop a new way of processing the 80 or so hoards which arrive annually. The apparent ritual significance of the hoard led to much academic and popular debate, resulting in a major Arts and Humanities Research Council research project between Leicester University and the British Museum. The worldwide publicity concerning the hoard enabled a major fund-raising campaign which secured the coins for the Museum of Somerset in Taunton. The high profile of the hoard also resulted in a British Museum video-conferencing activity for school children. Finally, the good practice of Dave Crisp, in calling for professional assistance, has resulted in numerous detectorists leaving hoards in the ground for archaeologists to excavate.*

### *Keywords*

*Rome, Hoard, Roman, Coin, British Museum, Museum of Somerset, Taunton, Portable Antiquities Scheme, Metal Detecting, Treasure, Archaeology, Conservation, Leicester University, Carausius, siliqua, radiate, ritual, stips, Art Fund, National Heritage Memorial Fund, Museum Education*

## INTRODUCTION

The Frome Hoard has been one of the most significant find of Roman coins made in Britain in recent decades.<sup>1</sup> It is the second largest coin hoard ever found in Britain (the largest in a single pot) and it has the largest surviving group of coins of Carausius (AD 286-93; about 850 specimens) from any known hoard. In addition, its discovery, subsequent excavation and survey work have provided an enormous amount of contextual data, adding valuable information for discussing the possible reasons behind the seclusion of the coins. Finally, the sheer size of the hoard has forced museum curators and conservators to rethink completely their way of dealing with such finds. As a result, the landscape of hoard processing has changed enormously since the discovery of the Frome Hoard in 2010. In addition, the hoard's discovery has led to a major research project and a bespoke schools' programme at the British Museum.

## DISCOVERY OF THE HOARD

The Frome Hoard was discovered by a metal detectorist, Dave Crisp<sup>2</sup>, in April 2010 (Image 1). He had been finding late Roman silver *siliquae* from a dispersed hoard<sup>3</sup>, scattered across a field in Somerset (south-west England), when he had an 'iffy' signal (Image 2). He would not normally have dug up the object, but thought it might have been a *siliqua* buried on its edge. Sometime later, with his arm fully extended into a hole in the ground, he started to pull out pot sherds and Roman 'radiate' coins. He then made a momentous decision: he decided to leave the hoard in the ground and refill the hole.<sup>4</sup> He contacted Katie Hinds, Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) for the

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<sup>1</sup> It is hoped that the hoard will be fully published within a few years. This article is a further interim account, following on from Moorhead, Booth and Bland 2010; undoubtedly, some details will be slightly different in the final publication. The find is recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme Database (finds.org.uk) as entry IARCH-ED5662 and SOM-5B9453, and has the official Treasure Number 2010T272. A summary listing appeared in *Numismatic Chronicle* 171 (2011), p. 416, no. 34. For an extensive account of the hoard's discovery by the finder, see Crisp 2012, 138-172. For a shorted account, see *Current Archaeology* 246 (September 2010), 12-19

<sup>2</sup> For more about Dave Crisp's experiences as a detectorist, see Crisp 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Over several years, 144 *siliquae*, one *miliarensis* and one half-*siliqua* have been found, terminating with the emperor Eugenius (AD 392-4) (see finds.org.uk : IARCH-B9A6B1 for Treasure Cases 2010 T278, 2011 T233, 2012 T732 and 2013 T785). It is quite possible that these coins represent an *addenda* to 111 *siliquae* found on the same farm in 1867, of which 6 survive in the Museum of Somerset, Taunton.

<sup>4</sup> It is possibly pure coincidence, but the author had given a lecture at the Melksham Metal Detecting Club in September 2009, where he spoke to Dave Crisp and two others about the importance of leaving hoards *in situ* for professional excavation, citing the Cunetio Hoard (Besly and Bland

Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in Wiltshire<sup>5</sup> who, realising that the find was in the county of Somerset, contacted her neighbouring FLO in Taunton, Anna Booth.



**Image 1 – Dave Crisp visiting the British Museum during the ‘emperor count’  
© Trustees of the British Museum**



**Image 2 – A very rare half-*siliqua* (c. AD 375-92) from the Frome late Roman silver hoard  
(13mm diameter). © Museum of Somerset, Taunton**

1983) as an example of what happens when this does not occur. Such direct communication with the detectorist community has been essential for disseminating good practice.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the Portable Antiquities Scheme, visit: [finds.org.uk](http://finds.org.uk)

## EXCAVATION OF THE HOARD

Anna Booth, with Steve Minnitt (Head of Museums Services in Somerset), then organised a professional excavation of the site led by local archaeologist Alan Graham (Image 3). Over three days, Alan Graham, Anna Booth, Katie Hinds, Dave Crisp, other archaeologists and members of the landowner's family excavated the hoard (Image 4). Alan determined that the hoard was in a large grey-ware vessel with a black-burnished ware 'dog bowl' place over the top as a lid. The pot was so large and fractured that it was not possible to block-lift in the time available, so it was decided to excavate the coins in ten arbitrary layers (spits) (Figure 1).<sup>6</sup> Several bags of coins (containing up to 1000 pieces) were excavated from each level, resulting in about 60 different bags – ever since, each coin has been kept with its layer and bag number. The ultimate result was a meticulous section drawing of the hoard with the different layers clearly labelled.



**Image 3 – Alan Graham excavating the pot © Museum of Somerset, Taunton**

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<sup>6</sup> Some people have shown how block-lifting could have been achieved, but the funding and equipment were not available in this instance. Furthermore, security and conservation issues meant that the hoard should not stay in the ground for any length of time.



**Image 4 – From left to right: Simon Hughes and Naomi Payne (archaeologists with the Somerset Museums Service); Anna Booth (FLO Somerset); Steve Minnitt (Head of Somerset Museums Service); Katie Hinds (FLO Wiltshire); Aaron King (Dave Crisp’s grandson); Dave Crisp. © Museum of Somerset, Taunton**



**Image 5  
The excavation of the coins  
from the pot  
© Museum of Somerset, Taunton**

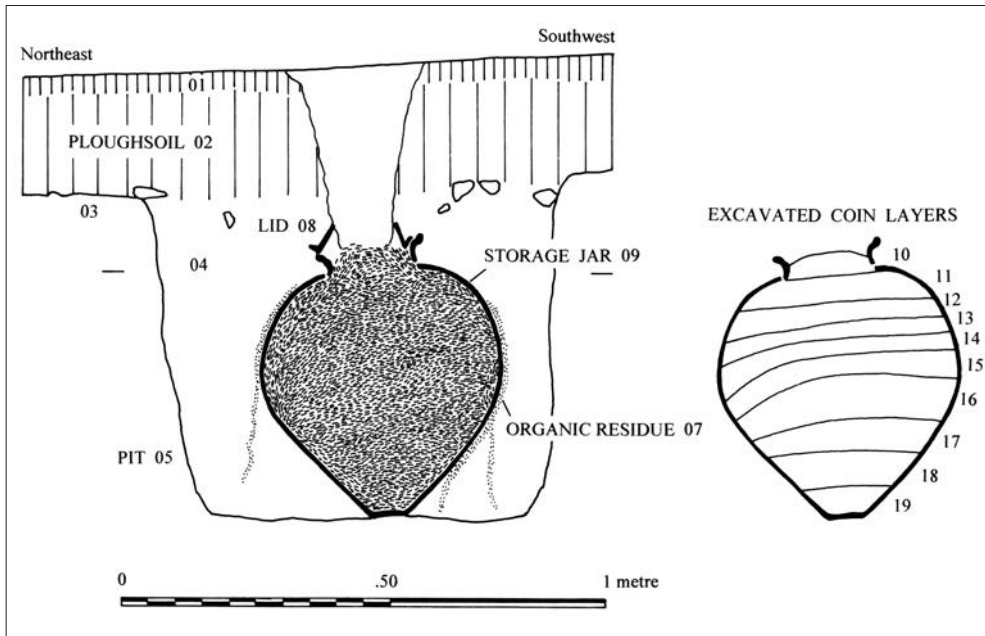


Figure 1 – Section drawing of the Frome Hoard excavation © Alan Graham and Anna Booth

## INITIAL CONSERVATION AND PROCESSING OF THE HOARD

The day after the excavations concluded, Roger Bland (then Keeper of Portable Antiquities and Treasure, British Museum) and Sam Moorhead (National Finds Adviser for Iron Age and Roman coins, British Museum) drove down from London to Taunton to collect the coins. The next day a meeting was arranged with the Head of Conservation (David Saunders) and the Senior Metals Conservator (Pippa Pearce MBE). Pippa insisted that the coins should be stabilised as soon as possible so over the next six weeks she and her staff washed the coins in distilled water and dried them in drying cupboards. By the end of this process, we knew that there were 52,503 pieces in the hoard, weighing around 160kg (Image 6). Some of the coins in the lower levels of the pot were corroded together and had to be separated very quickly whilst the coins were still damp. This was another reason for the swift delivery of the coins to the conservators.

As the coins were stabilised, bags were delivered to Sam and Roger who, with Richard Abdy (Curator of Roman coins at the British Museum), conducted an ‘emperor’ count that took ten weeks. This resulted in a summary of the hoard by emperor and confirmed that the latest emperor represented was Carausius (AD 286-93),



**Image 6 – Pippa Pearce with Frome Hoards coins drying in the fume cabinet in the Conservation Department © Trustees of the British Museum**



**Image 7 – A group of stabilised coins ready for sorting by emperor © The Trustees of the British Museum**

**Figure 2 – The contents of the Frome Hoard by Emperor after the initial sort (2010)\***

<b>Central Empire</b>	Valerian & Gallienus**	253-60	46
	Gallienus (sole reign)	260-8	6,091
	Salonina	260-8	404
	Claudius II	268-70	5,421
	Quintillus	270	333
	Aurelian	270-5	266
	Severina	270-5	13
	Florian	276	10
	Probus	276-82	619
	Carus	282-3	8
	Divus Carus	283	5
	Magnia Urbica	283-5	2
	Numerian	282-4	12
	Carinus	283-5	19
	Diocletian	284-305	38
	Maximian	286-305	22
		<b>14,788</b>	
<b>Gallic Empire</b>	Postumus	260-9	257
	Laelian	269	4
	Marius	269	35
	Victorinus	269-71	7,494
	Divus Victorinus	271	14
	Tetricus I	271-4	12,416
	Tetricus II	271-4	5,203
			<b>28,377</b>
<b>British Empire</b>	Carausius***	286-93	<b>766</b>
<b>Contemporary Copies</b>			<b>314</b>
<b>Illegible</b>			<b>8,258</b>
	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>52,503</b>
<p>* The figures given here are of the initial sort in 2010. Most of the illegible coins have been identified since conservation, but final totals will not be adjusted until the final catalogue has been completed.</p> <p>** Amongst the illegible coins, there is one of Trebonianus Gallus (AD 251-3).</p> <p>*** The total for Carausius is presently standing at around 850.</p>			



**Image 8**  
**Silver denarius of Carausius**  
**from the Frome Hoard**  
**(diameter 22mm, excluding spur)**  
**(Photo by Stephen Dodd)**  
 © The Trustees of the British Museum

giving the hoard a similar *terminus post quem* to the Normanby Hoard, of around c. AD 290 in the middle of the emperor's reign (Image 7 and Figure 2).<sup>7</sup> At this stage, so as to have good quality coins for publicity purposes, a small number of pieces were fully conserved by Pippa and Dr Duygu Çamurcuoğlu, and photographed by Stephen Dodd in the Department of Coins and Medals (Image 8).

## PROMOTION AND ACQUISITION OF THE HOARD

On the day that Sam Moorhead and Roger Bland collected the coins from Taunton, it was agreed with Steve Minnitt that the Museum of Somerset would attempt to acquire the hoard. Under the Treasure Act (1996) in England and Wales<sup>8</sup>, there need to be two or more silver, or ten or more base metal, coins over 300 years old; with 5 silver *denarii* of Carausius and 52,498 radiates, there was no doubting that the Coroner in Frome would declare the find 'Treasure'. This then enabled the Museum of Somerset to start raising funds to pay the value of the hoard to the finder and landowner (who each received 50% of the official valuation).<sup>9</sup> In this case, the hoard was valued at £ 320,000.

So as to raise such money, there had to be a major fund-raising and publicity campaign. In the first instance, Dan Pett (IT Officer for the PAS Website and Database) built a micro-site for the find, including blogs by Katie Hinds and Anna Booth.<sup>10</sup> The news about the hoard was then broadcast by the Today Programme on BBC *Radio 4*

<sup>7</sup> Bland and Burnett 1988

<sup>8</sup> For more on the Treasure Act (1996), see [finds.org.uk/treasure](https://finds.org.uk/treasure)

<sup>9</sup> A market value for the hoard was set by the independent Treasure Valuation Committee which meets regularly at the British Museum.

<sup>10</sup> The microsite is no longer available online, due to subsequent rebuilding of the site. One news story is still available at: <https://finds.org.uk/news/index/index/page/10>

and launched simultaneously on the BBC News Website<sup>11</sup>. Over the next forty-eight hours numerous television, radio and newspaper organisations carried news of the story with the finder, Dave Crisp, Roger Bland, Richard Abdy and Sam Moorhead dealing with a host of media requests. In addition, the BBC 2 programme *Digging for Britain* filmed various elements of the story in Somerset and at the British Museum, for broadcast in August.<sup>12</sup> There was also a major event in Frome Public Library, where some of the coins were on display to the public, which attracted many media organisations and 2,000 visitors over about 4 hours.

At the same time, a selection of the coins was put on display in the central case in the British Museum's *Money Gallery* and Taunton sponsored an artistic impression of the burying of the hoard by Victor Ambrus (Image 9).<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Sam Moorhead, Roger Bland and Anna Booth started to write a short book on the hoard, which was published by the British Museum Press in September 2010, with 50p from every sale going to the Frome Hoard appeal.<sup>14</sup> Sam Moorhead, Roger Bland, Steve Minnitt and Dave Crisp were kept particularly busy with giving talks to encourage fundraising, most notably to the Somerset Branch of the *Art Fund*. The *Art Fund* in London had pledged that they would match every pound raised in Somerset which resulted in £80,000 being donated towards the acquisition target. Other funds came in from a variety of sources; finally, in March 2011, the *National Heritage Memorial Fund* (NHMF) generously made up the short-fall and the hoard was secured for the Museum of Somerset. In addition, the NHMF gave £100,000 to cover the cost of conserving 3/5ths (around 30,000) of the coins in the hoard.

The pot and a selection of coins were placed on display in the Museum of Somerset, Taunton in the autumn of 2011, only 18 months after their discovery (Image 10).<sup>15</sup> The hoard has since been the central piece in an exhibition on hoarding at the British Museum in 2015-6 – *Hoards: the hidden history of ancient Britain* (an integral element of the *Crisis and Continuity Project*, see below) – curated by Eleanor Ghey (Curator of Iron and Roman Coin Hoards, British Museum).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/mobile/10546960>. It is important to acknowledge the vital role of the British Museum Press Office under the leadership of Hannah Boulton, Olivia Rickman and Esme Wilson.

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2010/07\\_july/08/digging.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2010/07_july/08/digging.shtml)

<sup>13</sup> Victor Ambrus is a famous archaeological illustrator, best known for his work on Channel 4's *Time Team*

<sup>14</sup> Moorhead, Booth and Bland 2010. The book was generously printed in Frome by Butler, Tanner and Dennis at a remarkably reduced rate, making publication possible.

<sup>15</sup> The Frome Hoard pot and 'dog bowl' were conserved and reconstructed by Kathleem Swales (néé Magill) in the Conservation Department at the British Museum.

<sup>16</sup> For an overall account of hoarding in Britain, see Ghey 2015



**Image 9 – Reconstruction artwork by Victor Ambrus of the burial of the Frome Hoard  
© Victor Ambrus**



**Image 10 – The display of the Frome Hoard in the Museum of Somerset, Taunton, in 2011.  
Note that the enlarged coin images rather dwarf the pot. © Museum of Somerset, Taunton**

## CONSERVATION AND STUDY OF THE HOARD

There was a considerable differentiation in the preservation of the coins in the upper part of the pot from those at the bottom. Coins towards the top were much easier to conserve and have come out in excellent condition. Those at the bottom were much more heavily corroded because they had been periodically saturated with water over a long period of time – these included the bulk of the coins of Carausius, pieces which have the greatest numismatic importance.<sup>17</sup> Eleanor Ghey and Sam Moorhead had to go through the entire hoard *again* to choose 30,000 or so coins (as dictated by the £100,000 budget) that most needed conservation. This budget enabled the employment of two curators on fixed term contracts, Bryony Finn and Ana Tam (Image 11). An extra generous donation from Graham Barker enabled Natalie Mitchell to continue working on the hoard for longer, concentrating on important pieces of Carausius.

There was a major debate about the methods of conservation with discussions surrounding the relative merits of manual and chemical cleaning. The outcome was a refined system for conservation which enabled a constant through-put of coins at minimal effort. Most importantly, Pippa Pearce introduced ‘Coin Wednesday’ in the metals conservation section, which continues to this day, when all metals conservators work on ancient coin finds (Image 12). This also meant that Sam Moorhead and Richard Abdy could visit on a Wednesday and check through the conserved coins to see if any more essential work needed to be done. As a result, there has been a very close relationship between the Roman Coin Section and the Metals Conservation Section which has been of incredible mutual benefit in recent years. Most of the coins were finally conserved by the end of 2013; a few pieces of Carausius have been worked on since. As the conserved coins returned to the Department of Coins and Medals, they had to be re-integrated into the existing archive, another logistical challenge.

Because the hoard was acquired by the Museum of Somerset in 2011, there has not been the urgency to catalogue the coins because they are now always available for study. Furthermore, with up to 80 Roman coin hoards arriving in the British Museum annually, there are many other hoards which urgently need cataloguing because they are not being acquired by any museum.<sup>18</sup> However, over the years, a variety of scholars have helped with the cataloguing of the coins. Richard Abdy and Fernando López Sánchez have worked on the *aureliani* from Aurelian to Diocletian and Maximianus;

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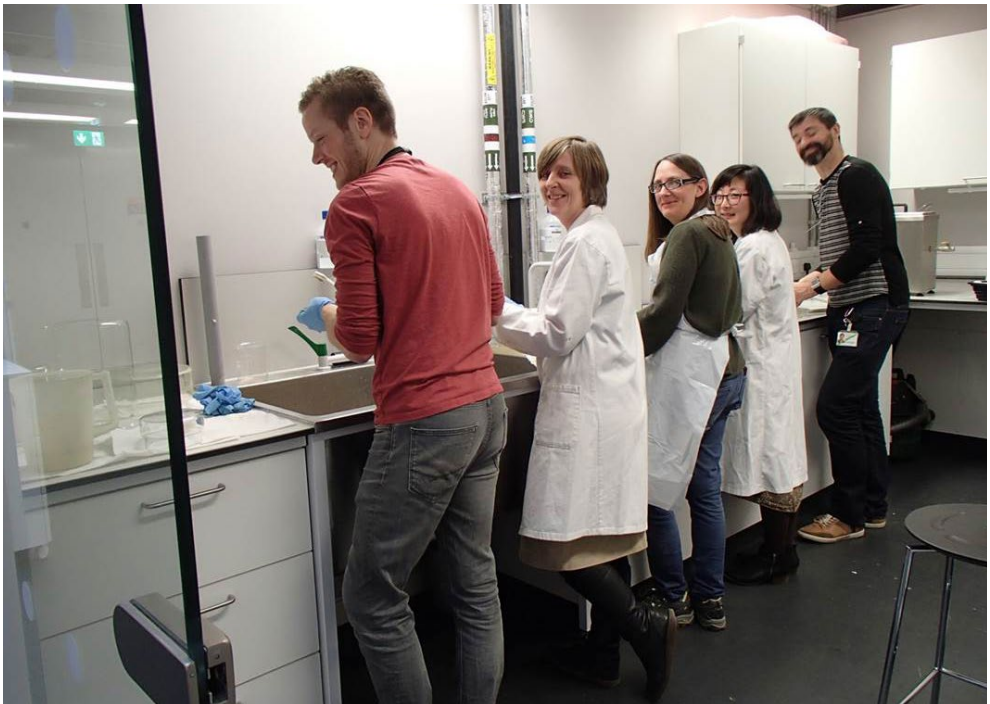
<sup>17</sup> The final publication will highlight the importance of the Carausian coins for numismatists, but the author has made some preliminary observations, including the possibility that the C Mint was in fact a mint that travelled with the emperor (Moorhead 2015).

<sup>18</sup> For more information on Roman hoard processing, see Eleanor Ghey’s article in this volume.



**Image 11**  
**Ana Tam working on a coin**  
**from the Frome Hoard**  
© Trustees of the British Museum

**Image 12**  
**‘Coin Wednesday’ in the Metals**  
**Section in the Department of**  
**Conservation, British Museum**  
© Trustees of the British Museum



Vincent Drost, Sam Moorhead's Deputy from 2014 to 2016, catalogued the Gallic Empire pieces. Sam Moorhead's present deputy, Andrew Brown, has just finished Gallienus and is now working on the final emperor, Claudius II. Sam Moorhead has catalogued the Carausian pieces, many of which will be new entries in the author's forthcoming updated edition of *Roman Imperial Coinage* for Carausius and Allectus. It is hoped that during 2019 a final catalogue will be produced and that final publication should occur sometime in 2020.

It should be noted that one effect of the size of Frome Hoard has been to force us at the British Museum to consider the manpower available to process Iron Age and Roman coin hoards, and other coin finds relating to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. From 2010 to 2013, the Museum funded a part-time Project Curator for Roman coin hoards. However, in addition, since 2011, the British Museum has received generous backing from private donors to provide a deputy to Sam Moorhead and Richard Abdy; the position has been held in sequence by Philippa Walton, Vincent Drost and Andrew Brown (presently in post). We are all extremely grateful to the generosity of Richard Beleson and Graham Barker who have made this post possible.<sup>19</sup>

## INVESTIGATION / SURVEY OF THE FROME HOARD FIND-SPOT

Immediately after the excavation of the hoard, the Somerset Museums Service commissioned GSB Propsection in Bradford to conduct a geophysical survey of the immediate vicinity of the hoard's find-spot (Image 12). No features of any significance were found. As part of a major Leicester University and British Museum AHRC-funded project – *Crisis or Continuity: Hoarding in Iron Age and Roman Britain with special reference to the 3rd century AD* (see below) – Adrian Chadwick and Adam Rogers returned to the site in 2015 and carried out more geophysical work.<sup>20</sup> They managed to locate the source of a spring and the resulting ancient watercourse that ran past the find-spot. They also located features of an extensive settlement a few hundred metres away. This provides important additional information for a discussion of the hoard's function.

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<sup>19</sup> We are very grateful to Clemency Horsell and her colleagues in the Development Department at the British Museum for their assistance with this post. The Museum also funded a part-time Project Curator for Roman coin hoards from 2010-13, also in response to the increased number of finds.

<sup>20</sup> Chadwick 2017. Due to the extreme sensitivity of the site, exact locations and maps are not being published at present.



**Image 13 – Geophysical survey being carried out by GSB Prospection in 2010  
© Museum of Somerset, Taunton**

## WHY WAS THE FROME HOARD BURIED?

The traditional reasons given for Roman coin hoarding tend to fall into two broad categories: emergency hoards buried in times of unrest; savings hoards buried for safe-keeping.<sup>21</sup> In both cases, the implication is that the contents of hoards were viewed in monetary terms and could be of economic use in the future. From very early on, it became clear to Sam Moorhead that neither explanation was satisfactory, for a variety of reasons, and was moving towards a religious or ritual explanation<sup>22</sup>:

a) The hoard was extremely large, but buried in a thin-sided grey-ware vessel which would almost certainly have broken if any attempt was made to move it when full of coins. Therefore, the pot would have needed to be placed in the ground prior to filling. This immediately highlights the great inconvenience that would have been faced if someone needed to recover the coins at a later date.

b) The stratigraphy of the hoard shows that the coins were deposited in a single act, from a series of different containers, rather than having been saved over time. This is apparent because the latest coins, a large group of around 700 Carausian pieces, were found in the middle of the container – one can assume that they represent a single batch of coins from one container deposited about half way through the process of filling the pot. (Figure 3). Had the hoard been put together over a period of time, these Carausian pieces would have been in the upper part of the pot. Furthermore, it does seem that the five silver *denarii* of Carausius were strategically placed amongst the last coins to be placed at the top of the container (see Image 8).

c) As noted in Adrian Chadwick's survey (see above), the hoard was found on high ground, next to an ancient watercourse, just below its source/spring. Prehistorians have often noted watery places as popular spots for votive offerings and coin finds from the Sacred Spring at Bath, Coventina's Well and the River Tees at Piercebridge are clear examples of votive offerings to the gods in the Roman period.<sup>23</sup> The fact that a later *siliqua* hoard (see above) was found in the same area might reinforce the religious importance of the site.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> For the most recent and comprehensive overview of Roman coin hoarding in Britain, see Bland 2018, especially 7ff.

<sup>22</sup> This started with an article in the popular archaeology press – see Moorhead, Bland and Pett 2010

<sup>23</sup> For prehistoric hoarding, see Bradley 1998; for Bath, see Walker 1988; for Coventina's Well, see Allason-Jones and McKay 1985; for Piercebridge, see Walton 2008

<sup>24</sup> It is worthy of note that the *siliqua* hoard has an unusual *terminus post quem* of coins struck by the last pagan Roman emperor Eugenius (AD 392-4).

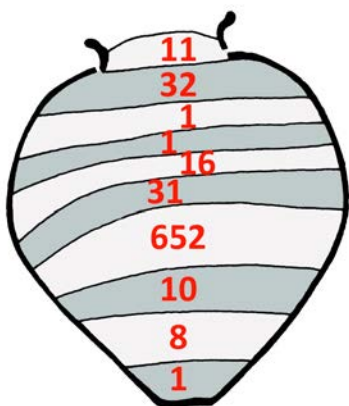


Figure 3

Section drawing of the pot with the numbers of coins of Carausius in each layer – the latest coins of Carausius are all in the central part of the pot; the ones towards the top are from the beginning of his reign

© Alan Johnson, Anna Booth, Roger Bland and *Current Archaeology*

d) It goes without saying that the hoard was not recovered in antiquity. But, if it was intended as a votive offering, then this should come as no surprise.

e) It would be quite normal for an academic to suggest that this hoard represents the savings of a wealthy local landowner. But, as stated above, it is not a very practical way of secluding one's wealth. The presence of one distinct group of Carausian coins in the centre of the pot does strongly suggest that the pot was filled from a series of other containers. Did all these containers have to belong to one person? Could it not have been a group of people, possibly representing a wider community, who contributed their own money? Were these people from the nearby settlement, discovered by the geophysical survey?

f) We know from various ancient writers about the 'stips' (pl. 'stipes') when local communities would make joint offerings of low value coins to the gods.<sup>25</sup> Is it possible that the Frome hoard represented a related or similar tradition? What is interesting is that the 'stips' was specifically associated with a new 'saeculum' as offerings to Dis and Persephone, for example in 249BC when the *Ludi Saeculares* were celebrated, according to a comment by Pseudo-Acro on line 8 of Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*<sup>26</sup>. A number of coins of Carausius, some included in this very hoard, do promote the Secular Games, strongly suggesting that he held such Games in *Britannia* – this would fit in perfectly with Golden Age themes and imagery else-

<sup>25</sup> See for example, see: Varro, *De Lingua Latina* V 182; Suetonius *Augustus* 57; Seneca *De Beneficiis* IV 29 2; Justinian, *Digesta seu Pandectae* 50, 16, 27. I am very grateful to Graham Barker for alerting me to this religious practice.

<sup>26</sup> This is extensively discussed in Forsythe 2012, 60-62

where on his coins (Image 14).<sup>27</sup> This is highly speculative, but we do have to start looking at coin hoards in a different way and the Frome hoard provides enough contextual and internal information to be a catalyst for this debate.



**Image 14 – Silver-washed radiate of Carausius (AD 286-93), SAECVLAR(E)S AV, Stag walking left. Frome Hoard (22mm diameter) © The Trustees of the British Museum**

#### CRISIS OR CONTINUITY? HOARDING IN IRON AGE AND ROMAN BRITAIN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE 3RD CENTURY (LEICESTER UNIVERSITY AND THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

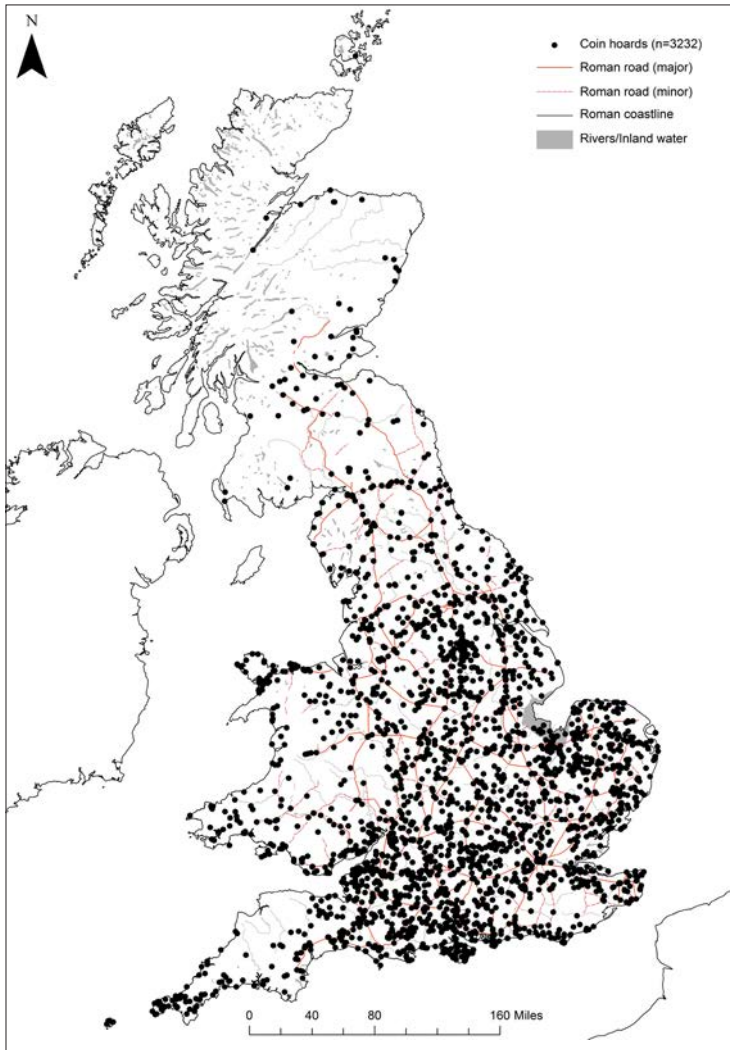
The author's suggestion that the hoard was in fact a votive deposit opened a lively discussion amongst colleagues, other scholars and members of the public across the globe. The result was that the British Museum and Leicester University won an Arts and Humanities Research Council award, beginning in 2013, to study Iron Age and Roman coin hoarding, with an emphasis on the 'reasons' for hoarding<sup>28</sup>. This enabled Adrian Chadwick and Adam Rogers to survey the Frome hoard find-spot and environs further (see above), but also led to extensive investigation of other hoard find-spots across England. This research has certainly highlighted the need to consider ritual motives behind some coin hoards and the results of the research are about to be published.<sup>29</sup> The project has also led to the inclusion of all known Iron Age and Roman coin hoards on the PAS Database by Eleanor Ghey; this means that with the ongoing addition of coin hoards on the database that all British and Welsh hoards

<sup>27</sup> Barker 2015 and 2016; de la Bédoyère 2005

<sup>28</sup> <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/research/previous-research-projects/hoarding-in-iron-age-and-roman-britain>

<sup>29</sup> Bland *et al* 2019 forthcoming

will be accessible from this single source in the future.<sup>30</sup> This work also provided the basis for extensive mapping by Katie Robbins, much of which is in the final publication and Bland 2018 (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4 – Map showing all Roman coin hoards in Britain, prepared by Katie Robbins in October 2015, using data provided by Eleanor Ghey  
© Trustees of the British Museum and Leicester University**

<sup>30</sup> Eleanor Ghey used Robertson 2000, de Jersey 2014 and a host of other sources to create a corpus of all known Iron Age and Roman coin hoards. All historical finds are on the PAS database (finds.org.uk) with a prefix IARCH and will be published to the wider world in 2019.

## EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES INVOLVING THE FROME HOARD

After the discovery and initial analysis of the hoard, the Learning Department in the British Museum created a Schools' activity around the discovery of the hoard which is still being offered: 'Roman Britain Treasure Challenge'.<sup>31</sup> An audio-visual and digital resource was developed in the Samsung Discovery Centre at the British Museum which enabled primary school children to roleplay, through video-conferencing, the various people involved in the discovery of the Frome Hoard. This has been assessed by Elizabeth Warry, an MA student at UCL.<sup>32</sup> This has enabled the British Museum to educate school children about the concept of Treasure, hoarding, the Romans and how professionals deal with major finds.

## THE LEGACY OF THE FROME HOARD

The Frome Hoard has had a major impact on archaeological and museological practices. From a numismatic point of view, the hoard includes a large number of new types and varieties, especially for Carausius, but the importance of the hoard reaches far beyond just the numismatic. From the outset, it has presented a model for publicity and fund-raising which has influenced subsequent campaigns by museums to acquire major hoards, notably the Wold Newton Hoard, acquired by the Yorkshire Museum in 2016.<sup>33</sup> At the British Museum the Frome hoard has been instrumental in shaping a new partnership between the Iron Age and Roman coin curators and the Metals Section in Conservation which facilitates effective processing of thousands of coins every year. The hoard has provided the catalyst for seeking funds to employ an extra member of staff to help with the increasing number of hoards and site-finds which require recording at the British Museum, and on the PAS Database. Furthermore, the hoard has figured in exhibitions in Somerset and at the British Museum. The debate over the reason for the seclusion of the hoard led directly to the AHRC-funded research project between the British Museum and Leicester University – *Crisis or Continuity* – which has resulted in an important monograph, but also the inclusion of all Iron Age and Roman coin hoards on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database. Frome has been the subject of a major schools digital video-conferencing project which is still being run by the British Museum.

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<sup>31</sup> [http://www.britishmuseum.org/learning/schools\\_and\\_teachers/sessions/roman\\_britain\\_treasure.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/learning/schools_and_teachers/sessions/roman_britain_treasure.aspx)

<sup>32</sup> Wary 2011.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.yorkshiremuseum.org.uk/wold-newton-hoard/>



**Image 15 – The excavation of the Bourne Valley Hoard by Arwen James, Edwin Wood and Andrew Brown, August 2018  
© The Trustees of the British Museum**

Finally, however, the most important legacy is probably that, since the discovery of, and publicity surrounding, the Frome Hoard, there has been a significant change in the behaviour and understanding of many metal-detectorists. Firstly, in many cases pots of coins are delivered to Finds Liaison Officers or museums with the coins still inside, thus enabling excavation in laboratory conditions. Secondly, a number of detectorists have actually left hoards in the ground for archaeologists to excavate. This is happening increasingly as metal detectorists become aware of the reasons and benefits of professional excavation. As recently as August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, a hoard of coins was found by Tony and Paul Hunt in a pot on a metal-detecting rally in Wiltshire. One of Dave Crisp's friends, Gary Cook, was present and insisted the hoard be left *in situ* for archaeologists to excavate. The next day, three of us from the British Museum (including a metals conservator Hayley Bullok) and three Finds Liaison Officers were able to excavate and lift the pot (Image 15). It went straight back to the British Museum Conservation Department and by the 13<sup>th</sup> October it was on display in an exhibition in Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum: *Hoards: A*

*Hidden History of Ancient Britain*.<sup>34</sup> The spirit of the Frome Hoard very much lives on in the public domain as well as at the British Museum and in broader academic circles.

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<sup>34</sup> Cook 2018. The Bourne Valley Hoard was excavated by Edwin Wood (former FLO for Sussex; Arwen James (FLO for Buckinghamshire), Katie Hinds (FLO for Hampshire) and Andrew Brown, with Sam Moorhead and metals conservator Hayley Bullock in attendance.

<https://www.salisburymuseum.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/hoards-hidden-history-ancient-britain>

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\* Note that the Cunetio and Normanby hoards have now been combined in a joint publication: Bland, R., Besly, E. and Burnett, A. with notes by Moorhead, S. 2018 *The Cunetio and Normanby Hoards* (Spink)

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