Durotrigan Quarter Staters

Dr David Robinson

If you have any coins or information that you think will contribute to the die study, then please contact me at claonaite@googlemail.com

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Acknowledgements

Reviewing books is a tedious and time consuming task, so I have a huge appreciation for my reviewers John Sills, Colin Haselgrove, John Talbot, James Withers, Mat Humphrey, and Suzie Robinson. I want to apologise for subjecting them to so many mistakes, but despite their heroic efforts, I'm confident that I have put enough in for everyone. Any that remain are my fault and my fault alone. If you find any, I'd appreciate it if you could let me know.

This book is the culmination of a weekend project that has taken almost four years. I would probably have finished it, to its detriment, in a weekend if it wasn't for the support of a large number of strangers. I want to start by thanking the following academics, collectors, dealers, and metal detectorists, for providing me with information about coins for the study, and in some cases, even lending me their coins to examine in-hand:

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The information they have given me has been absolutely essential to the die study, and it's hard to adequately express how grateful I am to them. The conclusions would have been very different without it. Many of the contacts I have made have come through the "Iron Age coins from the Celtic Tribes of Northern Europe" group on Facebook. My heartfelt thanks go to Mat Humphrey and James Withers for creating the group and letting me run it with them.

More generally, I want to thank everyone who has ever recorded a coin with the Celtic Coin Index or the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Coins are our best source of information about the later Iron Age in Britain, and even the most innocuous of coins can be conclusion changing. It's important that every coin, and all information about it, is recorded. It's all we have and when it's gone, it's gone forever. Staying with the Celtic Coin Index, special thanks go to Dr Courtney Nimura and Dr Molly Masterson for giving me a level of access and support that I could never have dreamed of.

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coins available and discussing aspects of it with me, and Professor Andrew Fitzpatrick for providing a first hand account of the excavation of the Westhampnett grave containing a Stippled quarter. I want to thank Professor Colin Haselgrove for his review, and for his information and advice on a range of topics, and Dr Philip de Jersey for writing CHIAAB (an absolutely essential book) and for providing information on coins from the Le Câtillon II hoard.

My thanks go to Dr John Talbot for help in a number of areas. His book, Made for Trade, inspired me to start the die study in the first place, and contained numerous technical details on what's required. He shared unpublished information with me about his Durotrigan stater die study, enabled access to the digital Celtic Coin Index well in advance of it becoming public, and facilitated researcher level access to the Portable Antiquities Scheme database. I can't stress just how important access to these two databases has been to the work. John is also the reason why the die study doesn't just cover Geometric classes 1, 2, and 3, which is where I had planned to stop before things got difficult.

And finally, Dr John Sills. It's not possible to fully enumerate the help John has given me. In addition to writing Divided Kingdoms which provides the foundation for this work, he has responded in detail to an insane number of questions on a wide range of topics, looked up the obscurest of references, reviewed the text in detail, and committed to the thankless task of creating the additional 1,110 CCI cards required to document the full die corpus. Thank you John!

Before I finish, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has taken the time to write about Celtic coins. Time has given me data that they didn't have, which allows me the luxury of disagreeing with some of their conclusions, but even where I disagree, their conclusions helped me form my own. In this work the data is everything, and many conclusions that seem air-tight now will not survive as new coins are found. That's just the nature of the game and it's important we keep presenting our theories, even if they do ultimately turn out to be wrong. That's how knowledge grows.

This book is dedicated to my wife Suzie and my children Cairn and Sylvia

‘A thousand years ago we thought the world was a bowl,’ he said. ‘Five hundred years ago we knew it was a globe. Today we know it is flat and round and carried through space on the back of a turtle.’ He turned and gave the High Priest another smile. ‘Don't you wonder what shape it will turn out to be tomorrow?’

– Lord Vetinari, The Truth. Terry Pratchett

It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you into trouble. It’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so.

– Possibly Mark Twain

Abbreviations

ABC	When used on its own it refers to the book Cottam, E., de Jersey, P., Rudd, C. and Sills, J., 2010. “Ancient British Coins”
	When used with a number it refers to a type defined in that book
BM	British Museum
CCI	Celtic Coin Index
CHIIAB	de Jersey, P., 2014. “Coin Hoards in Iron Age Britain”
DK	Sills, J., 2017. “Divided Kingdoms: The Iron Age Gold Coinage of Southern England”
	Sometimes just referred to as “Divided Kingdoms”
PAS	Portable Antiquities Scheme
VA	Used to refer to types defined in Van Arsdell, R., 1989. “Celtic Coinage of Britain”

Contents

List of Figure, Maps, and Tables

Figures

Maps

Tables

Introduction

Background

This book focuses on the quarter staters traditionally assigned to the Durotriges tribe, who are thought to have lived in and around modern-day Dorset in the south west of England. The attribution of some of these coins to the Durotriges is likely to be incorrect, if for no other reason than the fact that some of them didn't circulate in Dorset. Their existence as a tribe who could have minted the coins that are found in Dorset is also debatable, and that will be examined later, but for now there should be no assumption that the people who minted the coins were actually called the Durotriges.

It all started out as a small technical die study aimed at answering a few basic questions about the size and organisation of Durotrigan quarter staters. Simple things like how do I tell the types apart, how many dies are there, which ones are rare, and how nice do they get? As a collector I wanted to know which coins were worth chasing to high prices if they came up for sale, and which ones I could ignore unless they were particularly cheap. It was not my aim to challenge any of the theoretical underpinnings of the coins such as who minted them, when they were minted, the order they were minted, why they changed to silver, and how they associate with staters. These were answered questions and the published rational behind them made perfect sense. At some point along the way I was no longer able to reconcile these answers with what I was seeing in the data, and giving them some thought became unavoidable. The answers are not what I thought they would be.

The book is in two parts, the first of which presents the results of the detailed die study. I have tried to be as factual as possible here, presenting the data without any interpretation. There are some difficulties in places where there just aren't enough coins to be sure of the die order, and some unlinked coins have had to be assigned to classes based on gut feeling, but it's as factual and unequivocal as it can be with the data that's available today.

The second part wanders into speculative interpretations of the facts. It starts benignly enough by documenting and discussing the various theories there have been about the imagery used on the coins, but by the end of the conclusions I will have argued that the Gallic Wars made no real contribution to the development of Durotrigan coins and that the Durotriges as we understand them today didn't exist. Some may nod in agreement and others may vehemently disagree, but I believe publishing an attackable theory is better than sitting on the fence, just waiting for one more bit of evidence that may never appear. If I ultimately turn out to be wrong then the first part of the book will continue to be of use to collectors and researchers, and the second part may provide you with amusing examples of why researchers should sit on the fence, waiting for one more bit of evidence.