

Durotrigan Quarter Staters

Dr David Robinson

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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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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"

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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 rationale 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.