

Roman Coins

Set 1: The Invasion of Britain



Denarius of Caesar



Gold Stater of Catuvellauni

At the time of the invasion, the basic pay of a legionary soldier was about five denarii a week. A Roman Centurion would have been paid about seventy denarii per week. He would have been paid in silver like the Denarius of Caesar.

DENARIUS OF CAESAR

Julius Caesar, never an emperor, was a dictator of Rome.

He made two military expeditions to Britain but withdrew each time. In 55BC he landed with two legions in Kent but quickly returned to Gaul (France). In 54BC he again landed, this time with five legions and 2000 cavalry, and succeeded in crossing the Thames before withdrawing. The front of our coin, a silver denarius, depicts an elephant and serpent representing Caesar's achievement - The conquest of Gaul. The reverse illustrates sacrificial implements publicising his office as Chief Priest (ponifex maximus).

GOLD STATER OF CATUVELLAUNI BC45–20

At the point of Caesar's foray into Britain in 55BC, the country was split into areas ruled by various Celtic tribes, such as Catuvellauni. Some of these tribes put up strong resistance to Roman forces. The gold coin bears a horse on the reverse and a decayed wreath from a bust on the obverse.

Roman Coins

Set 2: The Romans in Britain



Denarius of Vespasian



Aureus of Domitian

Aureus of Domitian

Domitian, younger son of Vespasian, continued his father's policy of attempting to conquer the whole of Britain. Agricola, Governor at the time, led the Roman army at least as far north as Inverness. The coin, a gold aureus, shows a cornucopia (horn of plenty) reflecting the prosperity of the time.

DENARIUS OF VESPASIAN

Vespasian served as a legate to the second Legion Augusta during the campaign in Britain of the Emperor Claudius in AD43 and later. Charged with the conquest of South West Britain, he pushed west conquering the Isle of Wight and such warlike tribes as the Durotrigues of Dorset in their well-fortified hill-forts of Maiden Castle and Hod Hill. By AD51 the achievements of Vespasian had caused him to be elected consul at Rome and won him the respect of the army, so much so that in AD69 he was proclaimed emperor by the troops in Egypt. It was under his rule that the Romans conquered Wales and established legionary fortresses at Caerleon, Chester and York. Our coin is a Silver Denarius, the reverse showing Vespasian's sons, Domitian and Titus.

Roman Coins

Set 3: Military Campaigns & Rebellion



Sestertius of Nero



Denarius of Titan

SESTERTIUS OF NERO

During Nero's reign Boudicca, Queen of the Iceni tribe in East Anglia, led her famous rebellion. Following the death of her husband, King Pratsutagus, the Romans decided to take the tribal territory for themselves in spite of the late king having willed his kingdom jointly to his two daughters and the emperor. The Romans were extremely brutal, forcing Boudicca to lead her tribe and the neighbouring Trinovantes in revolt against Colchester and then to London. Both Cities were burned and the people massacred before the rebels turned north to engulf St. Albans. Suetonius Paulinus, Roman governor, led two legions to crush the rebellion. It is said that 80,000 Britons died to 800 Romans. Boudicca escaped only to take poison. The rebellion was over. On the reverse of this coin Nero reinforces his military strength by picturing himself and a soldier on horseback in "decursio" or combat.

DENARIUS OF TITUS

Titus was the son of the Emperor Vespasian. Wales and the South West of Britain were conquered during his rule. The reverse of this coin shows an eagle. This was usually associated with a dead emperor being taken to heaven. As Titus was still alive, the deification was to his father.

Roman Coins

Set 4: The Roman Occupation



AS of Claudius



Aureas of
Claudius



Dupondius of
Hadrian

The Romans invaded Britain in 43AD when about 40,000 troops crossed the channel under the command of Aulus Plautius. Claudius himself arrived in Britain to take command of the later stages of the campaign and earn an official triumph.

Throughout the Roman occupation of Britain the Romans were responsible for building many monuments, cities and roads, some of which can still be seen today. The road network constructed was first laid out to support the lines of military advance across England, Wales and finally Scotland. The roads were very straight and continually needed repairing. This proved to be very expensive and so the Romans continued to manoeuvre large heavy loads over long distances by water whenever possible. This road network also enabled provisions and supplies to be moved quickly and efficiently. Consequently many settlements, villages and civitas (capital cities) grew. In the civitas many public buildings were built such as forums, bath houses and amphitheatres. Examples of these Roman remains can be seen today like the Roman Theatre in St. Albans (Verulamium). Shops were always numerous in the centre of a settlement like a market, providing services for the towns own inhabitants and neighbouring countryside. Butchers, wine merchants and blacksmiths were commonplace.

Roman Coins

Hadrian became Emperor in 117AD after the death of Trajan and set about implementing significant changes which marked a turning point in both Roman and European history. His new policy aimed to consolidate the frontiers and restore order which was in itself difficult for there were many who questioned Hadrian's succession as, during the second century, emperors nominated their own successors. There were suspicions that Trajan had not named Hadrian, causing discontent among the late emperor's senior generals. An alleged conspiracy was promptly quashed by the senate ordering the execution of those involved.

Evidence of Hadrian's strengthening and consolidation can be seen between Wallsend and the river Tyne to Bowness on the Solway. Hadrian's Wall took fifteen years to complete, spanning some 73 miles. and was approximately 10 foot wide and 15 foot high. This fortified frontier had fortresses at regular intervals. Between the forts were Mile Castles (fortified turrets). Substantial remains can still be seen including forts at Chesters, Housesteads, Carvoran and Birdoswald. Whether used as a barrier intended to control the native population or as a lasting memorial to Rome's most northerly point, Hadrian's Wall is regarded as one of the finest examples of achievement and has provided historians with an abundance of evidence enabling us to have a clear understanding of the Roman occupation.

ROMAN COINS AS NEWSPAPERS

Roman coins were not just a means of paying for goods. The reverse of the coins were used to communicate great events. Alternatively, the reverse was used to promote the image and status of the emperor to his people. For example the emperor may have depicted a god that has attributes with which he wished to be associated. The coins were circulated throughout the empire bringing news, perhaps of events that has taken place far away.

MAKING A ROMAN COIN

PREPARING A BLANK COIN

The moneyer first prepared the chosen metal alloy for the coin that was to be minted. Gold, silver and copper alloy were usually used for coins. Blank coins were cast by pouring molten metal into moulds to make a round disc.

MANUFACTURING OF COIN DIES

The design of the coin was cut into the surface of a die. One die was needed for the "head" side or obverse and one for the "tail" or reverse side.

STRIKING A COIN

A heated blank coin was placed between two dies, supported on an anvil and the upper die was then struck once with a heavy hammer. The minting of coins was normally all done by hand. Coins were regularly recalled and melted down to make new issues of coins.