



Holmes, N M. McQ (2012)

The Roman coins from Newstead in context

In: A Roman Frontier Post and its People. Newstead 1911-2011. NMS Enterprises Limited - Publishing, Edinburgh, pp. 123-135. ISBN 9781905267750

<http://repository.nms.ac.uk/1028>

Deposited on: 03 February 2014

NMS Repository – Research publications by staff of the National Museums Scotland

<http://repository.nms.ac.uk/>

12. The Roman coins from Newstead in context

N. M. McQ. HOLMES

IN an Appendix to *A Roman Frontier Post and its People*, George Macdonald listed and discussed 249 Roman coins from the site,¹ a total which had been increased to 262 by the time Macdonald published his first survey of ‘Roman coins found in Scotland’.² The number of recorded finds of Republican and Imperial coins minted no later than the reign of Septimius Severus has now risen to 364, with new discoveries reported in the regular series of coin finds records published since 1918. All these coins are listed in Table 1, with the exception of the unpublished coins from the Bradford excavations. Unfortunately *dupondii* and *Asses* were not distinguished in some earlier records, with the category of ‘ÆII’ being adopted to cover both denominations. Although the presence of a radiate crown serves to distinguish *dupondii* during most reigns, this is not universally the case, so the old term has had to be adopted here.³

In searching for assemblages of coins to which the Newstead finds could be compared, Macdonald was obliged to settle on a hoard of *denarii* which had been found at Castle Bromwich, near Birmingham, in 1909, and a hoard of bronze coins found at Croydon (Surrey) in 1905. This simply reflects the scarcity of contemporary material available in the early years of the twentieth century, and Sir George, had he been alive today, would certainly have realised that the comparison of these coin groups was highly unlikely to be valid or informative. Hoards, by their nature, may well not be an accurate reflection of coinage in circulation at the time when they were deposited, and it would also be unrealistic to expect the internal distribution of the coinage in circulation among the soldiers in a fort on the northern frontier to be the same as that pertaining in ‘Romanised’ civilian areas of southern England.

As a northern frontier site with attested occupation in both the Flavian and the Antonine periods, however, Newstead has few sites with which it can be directly compared, and none at all from which similarly large coin assemblages have been recovered. A list of approximately 140 coins from Camelon (Stirlingshire) has been published,⁴ but many of those from the excavations of 1899–1900 and other old finds were

Opposite:
FIGURE 12.1
Coins found at Newstead.
(© National Museums
Scotland)

TABLE 1 (overleaf):
Newstead coin finds, Republic to Severus: For reasons explained in the text, *Asses* and *dupondii* are amalgamated in the ÆII category. These figures have been collated from Macdonald 1911, and from the following coin finds papers: Macdonald 1918, 1939; Robertson 1950, 1961, 1971, 1983; Bateson 1989; Bateson and Holmes 1997, 2003. Also included are previously unpublished coins now at the National Museum of Scotland, including items from the Cruickshank and Mason collections. [‘Unc. denom.’ = uncertain denomination.]

TABLE 1	<i>Aurei</i>	<i>Denarii</i>	<i>Sestertii</i>	<i>ÆII</i>	Other	Notes
Republic		12				
M. Antonius		13				
Augustus		1		1		the <i>ÆII</i> dubious (possibly Hadrian)
Tiberius		2				
Nero	2	1	1	1		
Galba		2				
Otho		1				
Vitellius		2				
Vespasian		28	1	29		
for Titus	1		2	3		
for Domitian		1		2		
Vespasian or Titus for Domitian				3		
Titus		3	3	2		1 <i>sestertius</i> and 2 <i>ÆII</i> may equally be Vespasian for Titus
for Divus Vespasian		1				
for Domitian		2	1			
Domitian		14	4	21		2 of the <i>denarii</i> from a hoard; 1 of the <i>sestertii</i> and 2 of the <i>ÆII</i> of uncertain attribution
Uncertain Flavian				3		
Nerva		3	1			
Trajan	2	22	28	8	1 unc. denom.	2 of the <i>denarii</i> from a hoard
Trajan or Hadrian			1	1		
Hadrian		25	14	17		
for Sabina			1	1		
Antoninus Pius	1	8	4	6		1 of the <i>Æ II</i> of uncertain attribution
for Marcus Aurelius		1	1	1		
for Faustina I				2		1 of the <i>Æ II</i> of uncertain attribution
for Diva Faustina I		7	1	5		
for Faustina II				3		
Lucius Verus		1		1		
Marcus Aurelius for Faustina II		2				
for Diva Faustina II				1		
for Faustina II or Lucilla			1			
Faustina II (unc. reign)				1	1 unc. denom.	
Commodus for Crispina		1				
Septimius Severus			1			
for Iulia Domna		2				
Uncertain		2	7	13	1 unc. denom., 1 <i>Æ</i> frag.	
Total	6	157	72	125	4	364 coins in all

TABLE 2	<i>Aurei</i>	<i>Denarii</i>	<i>Sestertii</i>	<i>ÆII</i>	Other	Notes
M. Antonius		7				
? M. Antonius		1				
? Claudius				1		
Nero		1		1		
? Nero				1		
Galba		1	1			
Vitellius		2				
Vespasian	2	5				
for Domitian		1				
Vespasian or Titus				1		
? Vespasian or Titus for Domitian				1		
Domitian		4	1	2	1 unc. denom.	
Nerva		2				
Trajan	1	22	12	7		
? Trajan		2			1 unc. Æ	
? Trajan or Hadrian				1		
Hadrian	1	10	8	11		
? Hadrian		3	1	3	1 Æ frag.	
Hadrian for Sabina				3		
Aelius Caesar		1				
Antoninus Pius		4	2	8	2 unc. denom.	
for Faustina I		1	1			
for Marcus Aurelius		1		2		
? Antoninus Pius		2		1	1 unc. Æ	
Faustina I or II		1				
Marcus Aurelius				2		possibly during the reign of Pius
for Divus Ant. Pius			1			possibly a cast
for Lucilla		1				
? Marcus Aurelius				1		
? Faustina II		1				
Commodus					1 unc. denom.	
? Commodus				1		
Uncertain		2	3+1 frag.	1	2 Æ frags	
Total	4	75	30+1 frag.	48	6+3 frags	167 coins in all

TABLE 2: Antonine Wall site finds, M. Antonius to Commodus:

These figures have been compiled from the following publications:
 (a) regular coin round-ups: Macdonald 1918, 1924, 1934, 1939;
 Robertson 1950, 1961, 1971, 1983; Bateson 1989; Bateson and
 Holmes 1997, 2003, 2006 and forthcoming; (b) excavation reports:
 Macdonald and Park 1906, 107–10; Miller 1922, 62, Miller 1928,

33–35; Macdonald and Curle 1929, 550–53; J. Clarke 1933, 82.
 As with the Newstead finds, and for the same reason, *dupondii*
 and *Asses* have been listed together as *ÆII*. The figure for *denarii*
 includes ten imitations in tin, which were recovered from the well
 at the fort of Bar Hill.

A ROMAN FRONTIER POST AND ITS PEOPLE: NEWSTEAD 1911–2011

described only as ‘Æ’ or ‘brass’, without distinction between *sestertii* and smaller denominations.⁵ Only the coins found during the 1970s can be regarded as adequately described.⁶ These comprise 64 coins or fragments from the 1975–79 excavations in the South Fort as well as a small number from other sources or areas. Strageath (Perthshire) is also relevant; excavations from 1973–86 yielded 42 Roman coins.⁷ In order to provide some sort of context within which to assess the Newstead coins, it will therefore also be necessary to look at finds from sites on the Antonine Wall, where Antonine-period occupation only has been definitely attested. Although not involving direct comparisons, this may at least serve to indicate the extent to which ‘early’ coins continued to circulate well beyond the reigns of the emperors responsible for their striking, and thus how far the internal distribution of the Newstead finds can be regarded as a reliable indicator of activity at different periods.

Antonine Wall site finds, totalling 167, minted between 32 BC and the 180s AD, are summarised in Table 2. The term ‘ÆII’ has been used to cover all finds of *dupondii* and *Asses*, as with the Newstead finds. Again the records have been drawn from numerous sources,⁸ some of which contained clearer and fuller identifications than others. Coins are generally listed according to the name of the imperial personage whose image and inscription appears on the coin, but this may not always be an accurate pointer to the reign in which they were actually struck.

In order to facilitate comparison of the two coin assemblages, the raw data provided by number of coin finds has been broken down into chronological periods and processed to provide Currency Units in order to avoid misleading comparisons of coins of different denominations. Each Currency Unit (CU) has been assumed to possess the value of an *As*, and each *denarius* therefore has been taken to represent 16 CUs, each *sestertius* 4 CUs, and each *ÆII* 1.5 CUs. The latter figure is the average value of a *dupondius* and an *As*, and will clearly not be an absolutely accurate representation of the value represented by all these coins; but since the same process is being applied to both the Newstead and Antonine Wall finds, the figure should still be valid for the purposes of comparison.

The chronological periods being used in this exercise are as follows:

I	Republic
II	M. Antonius
III	Augustus to Vitellius
IV	Vespasian to Domitian
V	Nerva to Hadrian
VI	The reign of Antoninus Pius
VII	The reign of Marcus Aurelius
VIII	Commodus to Septimius Severus

The numbers of coins of each denomination in each of the above period groups, and the value of these expressed in CUs, are shown in Tables 3 and 4 for Newstead and the Antonine Wall sites respectively. A number of coins included in Tables 1 and 2 have been deliberately omitted from Tables 3 and 4, which will form the basis for comparison and discussion. These are (a) gold coins, which are very few in number but which would distort the figures enormously, with each *aureus* having the value of 400 CUs; and (b) coins of indeterminate reign and/or denomination. A small number of coins have been included even though their identification as to date can not now be verified, and these have been placed within the groups suggested by earlier numismatists. Even if these few coins were not correctly identified, their presence will not unduly distort the overall picture.

Figs 12.2 and 12.3 show the CUs represented by the finds from Newstead and the Antonine Wall sites divided up by period and denomination.

A period-by-period comparison of the contents of Tables 3 and 4 and Figs 12.2 and 12.3 will serve to highlight both the similarities and the differences between the coin finds from sites with only an Antonine occupation and from those, like Newstead, which also saw activity during the Flavian period. Where relevant, the evidence of finds from other sites will also be mentioned.

THE ROMAN COINS FROM NEWSTEAD IN CONTEXT

TABLE 3: Newstead finds – periods, denominations and currency units (CUs)

	<i>Denarii</i>		<i>Sestertii</i>		<i>ÆII</i>		Total		
	Coins	CUs	Coins	CUs	Coins	CUs	Coins	CUs	% CUs
I	12	192					12	192	6.60
II	13	208					13	208	7.15
III	9	144	1	4	2	3	12	151	5.19
IV	49	784	11	44	63	94.5	123	922.5	31.72
V	50	800	45	180	27	40.5	122	1020.5	35.09
VI	16	256	6	24	17	25.5	39	305.5	10.51
VII	3	48	1	4	3	4.5	7	56.5	1.94
VIII	3	48	1	4			4	52	1.79
Total	155	2480	65	260	112	168	332	2908	99.99

TABLE 4: Antonine Wall finds – periods, denominations and currency units (CUs)

Period	<i>Denarii</i>		<i>Sestertii</i>		<i>ÆII</i>		Total		
	Coins	CUs	Coins	CUs	Coins	CUs	Coins	CUs	% CUs
I									
II	8	128					8	128	9.62
III	4	64	1	4	3	4.5	8	72.5	5.45
IV	10	160	1	4	4	6	15	170	12.78
V	40	640	21	68	25	37.5	86	745.5	56.03
VI	9	144	3	12	11	16.5	23	172.5	12.97
VII	2	32	1	4	3	4.5	6	40.5	3.04
VIII					1	1.5	1	1.5	0.11
Total	73	1168	27	108	47	70.5	147	1330.5	100.00

Period I: The Republic

No Republican issues appear among finds from Antonine Wall sites, and this is hardly surprising given that all the evidence suggests that very few such coins would have remained in general circulation by the middle of the second century AD. From the two multi-period site assemblages noted above, there is one possible Republican *denarius* from Camelon,⁹ and another possible from

Strageath,¹⁰ but neither of these is a definite identification. It is also worth noting that two very worn *denarii* minted in 87 BC were found by a metal-detectorist at Balgonie Farm, in the immediate vicinity of the legionary fortress at Carpow, Perthshire, although it cannot be proven that these coins were necessarily related directly to the military occupation of the fortress.¹¹ One coin of 83 BC formed part of the 1933 Falkirk hoard of over 1900 *denarii*, which is generally considered to have been

A ROMAN FRONTIER POST AND ITS PEOPLE: NEWSTEAD 1911–2011

largely a Severan assemblage, but the six Republican *denarii* which have been included in lists of finds from Cramond, Edinburgh, can not be substantiated, as their location is now unknown and their status as finds from the site is in considerable doubt.¹² The twelve Republican *denarii* found at Newstead can with some confidence therefore be accepted as Flavian losses on the site, but the possibility that one or two may have arrived in the second century can not be discounted.

FIGURE 12.2
CUs represented by the finds
from Newstead.
(© N. M. McQ. Holmes)

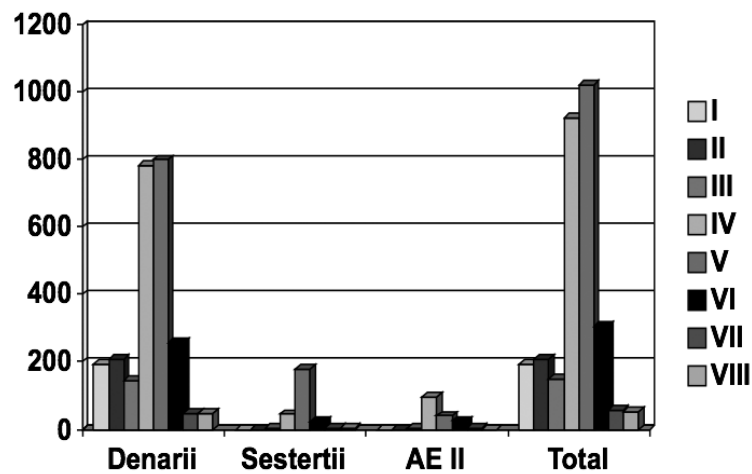
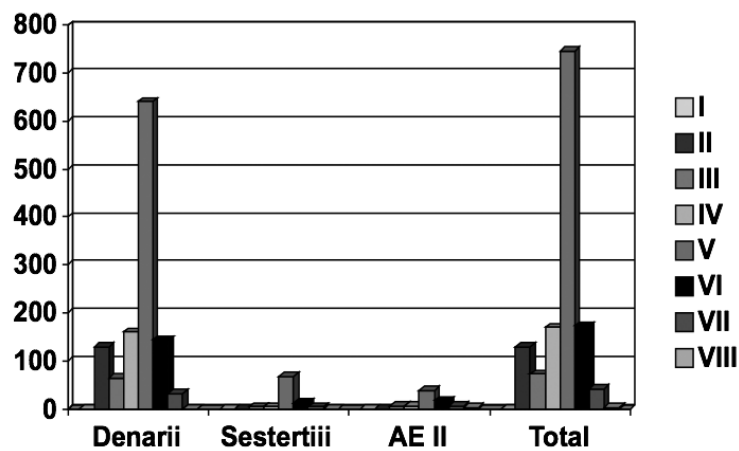


FIGURE 12.3
CUs represented by the finds
from Antonine Wall sites.
(© N. M. McQ. Holmes)



Period II: M. Antonius Legionary *denarii*

These coins have been placed in a group on their own, as they represent something of an anomaly in numerous coin assemblages, both site finds and hoards, from Roman Britain. They were minted in 32–31 BC by a mint travelling with Antony, and bear inscriptions and designs commemorating the various legions under his command.¹³ Under normal circumstances coins of this period would not be expected to form part of the circulating currency by the second century AD, but eight have been recorded as finds from Antonine Wall sites. From Camelon there are at least three, and from Strageath two definite and two possible. In addition, Robertson records seven specimens from the fort at Birrens, Dumfriesshire.¹⁴ Examples also occur regularly in assemblages and hoards from within the province of Britannia, including hoards from England buried in the last decade of the second century AD.¹⁵ In fact the eight specimens from the Antonine Wall form nearly 10 per cent of the total number of CUs from all the fort sites, whereas the twelve examples from Newstead make up only just over 7 per cent; it is clearly impossible even to guess at when they might have arrived at the site or been deposited.

Period III: Augustus to Vitellius

This grouping, comprising imperial coinage issued prior to the beginning of the Flavian period, is another which does not, on the surface, display the expected bias towards Newstead with its first-century occupation. The total of twelve Newstead finds provide 151 CUs, or 5.19 per cent of the total, whereas the eight Antonine Wall finds represent 72.5 CUs, or 5.45 per cent. These overall figures do conceal significant differences, however. Although coins of Nero (post-dating the coinage reforms of AD 64), and even of the short-lived emperors Galba, Otho and Vitellius, are not particularly rare in Scottish contexts, either as site finds or in hoards, issues of the earlier Julio-Claudian emperors certainly are. The Newstead assemblage includes one *denarius* of Augustus and two of Tiberius (as well as a fairly dubious *ÆII* of Augustus, which may actually be a damaged and misread issue of Hadrian). The Antonine Wall list includes

only a dubious *ÆII* attributed to Claudius. Definitely recorded finds from other sites comprise only a *denarius* of Augustus and an *As* of Tiberius from Camelon, another *denarius* of Augustus from Loudoun Hill, Ayrshire, and an *Æ* of Germanicus from Birrens.¹⁶ The coins of Augustus and Claudius listed for Cramond are as dubious as the Republican issues.¹⁷ Although the overall number of these pre-Neronian coins is very small, it is probably reasonable to assume that those found at Newstead and other Scottish sites may be associated with Flavian period occupation.

Coins of AD 64–79, and particularly *denarii*, constitute less reliable evidence, however. The Antonine Wall list includes four *denarii*, one *sestertius* and one definite and one possible *ÆII* from this period, the figures for Newstead being six *denarii*, one *sestertius* and one *ÆII*, as well as two gold *aurei* of Nero. The 1970s finds from Camelon included just a possible *dupondius* of Galba, although coins of Nero and Otho were included in older lists. Strageath has yielded a *denarius* of Nero and an *As* of Vitellius. As with Newstead, it would be dangerous simply to assume that these coins from multi-period sites were necessarily Flavian losses.

It should be noted at this point that coin evidence has been adduced as possible support for the theory that there was pre-Agricolan military activity in Scotland, as might also be deduced from the writing of Roman authors such as Statius and the Elder Pliny.¹⁸ Although the possibility of this must be accepted, it does seem equally possible at this time to reconcile the small number of coin finds with the more generally accepted version of history.¹⁹

Period IV: Vespasian to Domitian

With the advent of the Flavian period, we encounter coins which are commonly found in the context of both late first-century and mid-second-century site occupations. When attempting to assess roughly when an individual coin might have been lost, degree of wear is an obvious clue, but since this detail was not always recorded, particularly for early finds, it is of no practical use in studies such as this. Of greater value, in addition to the numbers of coins from sites or groups of sites, and the number of

A ROMAN FRONTIER POST AND ITS PEOPLE: NEWSTEAD 1911–2011

CUs represented by these, is how these figures are made up of silver and base metal coins. Inflation in the earlier Roman Empire led inevitably to a greater proportion of higher denomination coins circulating as time went on. By the early third century, soldiers' pay is likely to have comprised mostly *denarii*, and coin losses on Scottish sites of this period reflect this.²⁰

At Newstead, coins struck during the reigns of the three Flavian emperors comprised 49 *denarii* (784 CUs), 11 *sestertii* (44 CUs) and 63 *ÆII* (94.5 CUs), giving a total of 123 coins (922.5 CUs or 31.7 per cent of the total finds by value).²¹ From the Antonine Wall sites came, as well as two *aurei* of Vespasian, ten *denarii* (160 CUs), one *sestertius* (4 CUs) and four *ÆII* (6 CUs), giving a total of 15 coins (170 CUs or 12.8 per cent of the total finds by value). This is what one would expect to see: a site with Flavian occupation has far more Flavian coins than one not occupied until some half a century after the death of Domitian. (The normal situation, in which the coins of the emperor in power at the time of the initial occupation of a site are greatly outnumbered by those of his two immediate predecessors is invalidated in the case of Vespasian owing to the civil wars which immediately preceded his accession.)

What is perhaps rather surprising is the extent to which the Flavian finds from Newstead are dominated by silver *denarii* almost as much as those from the Antonine Wall. The 49 *denarii* from Newstead represent almost 85 per cent of the CUs for the period, and the ten *denarii* from the Antonine Wall represent just over 94 per cent. This might possibly suggest that many of these coins did not reach Newstead until the time of the Antonine occupation, when *denarii* would have formed a much larger proportion of the circulating coinage.²² However, it is also important to remember that Newstead had a late Domitianic occupation phase, and the finds of *base metal* coins include examples of issues struck right through the reign of Domitian, in contrast to the well-documented conclusion of the coin record at Inchtuthil and other exclusively earlier Flavian sites with unworn *ÆII* of AD 86. (Indeed, all the Inchtuthil finds were of *ÆII* denominations.) Site finds from the excavation of a Flavian fort at Elginhaugh, Midlothian, in 1986–87 comprised, in addition to four Republican *denarii* and one of M. Antonius, 48 coins issued by

emperors from Nero to Domitian, only one of which (a plated hybrid *denarius*) was not a base metal denomination.²³

Finds lists from other multi-period sites show that six *denarii* (96 CUs), four *sestertii* (16 CUs) and 27 *ÆII* coins (30.5 CUs) definitely or probably of Flavian emperors were recovered at Camelon during the 1970s, with the Strageath 1973–86 list including six *denarii* (96 CUs) and 15 *ÆII* (22.5 CUs). Using the same criteria as previously, the CU proportion represented by *denarii* at the two sites is just over 67 per cent and just over 81 per cent respectively. A greater proportion of the Flavian currency comprised base metal coins at both these sites than at Newstead, therefore, although not by much in the case of Strageath, and this is likely to reflect the lack of a post-Agricolan Flavian occupation at Camelon and Strageath. It is of course debatable whether the numbers of coins in the samples are large enough for these figures to be significant, but a factor which seems to be common to all the assemblages analysed is that most of the base metal currency is in the form of *dupondii* and *Asses*, with *sestertii* being scarce everywhere.

Period V: Nerva to Hadrian

This group contains those coins which recognised patterns of coin loss would indicate must have arrived in large numbers on military sites during the initial stages of an early Antonine occupation phase. Consequently one would expect them to dominate among finds from Antonine Wall forts, occupied only during the reign of Antoninus Pius and arguably for a few years afterwards. This is indeed the picture which emerges, with 56 per cent of the total by value (745.5 CUs) of the Antonine Wall finds being made up of coins of this period. These comprise 40 *denarii* (640 CUs), 21 *sestertii* (68 CUs) and 25 *ÆII* (37.5 CUs). On multi-period sites such as Newstead one would of course expect the proportion of coins of this period to be smaller, as indeed it is, but they still make up the largest individual group (1020.5 CUs, or 35.1 per cent of the total). The figures for individual denominations are 50 *denarii* (800 CUs), 45 *sestertii* (180 CUs) and 27 *ÆII* (40.5 CUs).²⁴

The *denarius* is the denomination most frequently

encountered in this period, with nearly 86 per cent of the currency value of the Antonine Wall finds accounted for by *denarii*. This is somewhat less than the 94 per cent of the total for Flavian coins, and reflects the increasing role played by *denarii* in Antonine circulation at the expense of smaller base metal denominations; although Flavian coins were still in circulation in the mid-second century, most of these would have been *denarii*. Over 78 per cent of the value of the coins of this period from Newstead is made up of *denarii*, again slightly less than in the previous period. On both sites the number of *sestertii* rises strikingly in this period, making up a greater proportion of the currency by value than *dupondii* and *Asses*, and at Newstead in actual coin numbers as well.

Of the two other multi-period sites being used for comparison, the pattern of a sudden increase in the number of *sestertii* is repeated at both.²⁵ However, whereas at Camelon the currency value of coins of this period (potentially 240.5 CUs) greatly exceeds the 142.5 CUs represented by the Flavian coins, the picture at Strageath is very different, with a maximum of 56.5 CUs for coins of Nerva to Hadrian as opposed to 118.5 CUs for Flavian coins. The slight increase from 31.7 per cent to 35.1 per cent at Newstead thus falls about half-way between these two extremes. Although with the repeated *caveat* concerning the size of the samples, there is certainly a suggestion of differences in the extent of Flavian and Antonine occupations at these Scottish multi-period sites on the basis of coin finds.

Period VI: The reign of Antoninus Pius

As indicated above, evidence for the commencement of the occupation of a military site in the early years of the reign of Pius would normally be expected to consist of a large number of coins of Trajan and Hadrian, i.e. those which would have made up the majority of those in general circulation at the time. Coins of Antoninus himself would have been slower to arrive, and would not be expected to outnumber those of his predecessors for many years. Where abandonment of a site took place not long after Antoninus's death, as is generally considered to have been the case with the Antonine Wall forts,

THE ROMAN COINS FROM NEWSTEAD IN CONTEXT

this would never have occurred. The pattern shown by the Antonine Wall finds list is exactly as one would expect, therefore, with just 13 per cent of the coins by value (172.5 CUs) comprising coins of Antoninus.²⁶ At Newstead the figures give a total of 305.5 CUs, or 10.5 per cent of the overall currency value for the site.²⁷ The difference between the two sites is not statistically significant, therefore, and the proportions of coins of different denominations are also very similar. After a peak in the coinage of Trajan and Hadrian, the number of *sestertii* in comparison with *ÆII* falls back to earlier levels. The number of coins of this period from Camelon and Strageath is insignificant, with just three *ÆII* from the former and a single *denarius* from the latter.

Period VII: The reign of Marcus Aurelius

Very few coins minted after the accession of Marcus Aurelius in AD 161 have been found on Scottish sites, and this may be seen as reflecting the generally accepted scenario in which the Antonine Wall forts were abandoned in the early 160s. There is, however, a slight complication to the extent that *denarii* of the reign of Marcus tend to be much fewer in number than those of previous reigns in Scottish hoards deposited in the late Antonine or Severan period.²⁸ Antonine Wall site finds dating from the reign of Marcus comprise two *denarii*, one *sestertius* and three *ÆII*, giving a total of 40.5 CUs, or just 3 per cent of the total. These include a *denarius* of Lucilla, from Old Kilpatrick, which would appear to extend the occupation of that site to at least AD 164.²⁹ From Newstead there are three *denarii*, one *sestertius* and three *ÆII*, equating to 56.5 CUs or 1.9 per cent. These include an *ÆII* of Faustina II deified, which can not have been minted until at least AD 176. This would be consistent with a final date of abandonment for the site of c. 180, as postulated by S. Clarke on the additional basis of pottery evidence.³⁰ Neither Camelon nor Strageath has yielded any coins definitely minted later than the death of Antoninus Pius. The two 'Æ' of Marcus from Camelon were apparently struck during the reign of Antoninus, but the single 'Æ' of Faustina II was not identified to a specific reign.

A ROMAN FRONTIER POST AND ITS PEOPLE: NEWSTEAD 1911–2011

Period VIII: Commodus to Septimius Severus

The Newstead coin record includes four coins minted after AD180, but only one of these – a *denarius* of Commodus for Crispina – was found in the fort. This could have been struck at any time after Commodus's accession, and therefore does not require the date of the abandonment of the site to have been much later than 180. There are also two *denarii* of Septimius Severus for Julia Domna and a *sestertius* of Severus himself, but these were not found on the fort site. The significance of these Severan coins is difficult to assess, but they presumably indicate that there must have been some form of small-scale/temporary Roman presence in the area in the early third century, possibly connected with Severus's military campaigns.

A single coin of Commodus, of uncertain denomination, was recorded as a find from Kirkintilloch on the Antonine Wall in the middle of the nineteenth century, but this could have been a coin struck in Commodus's name by Marcus Aurelius as early as AD175, and its reliability as evidence of Roman occupation at the site is in any case unproven.³¹ Cramond and Carpow remain the only Scottish military sites with securely attested Severan period occupation, and the status of the latter as a purely Severan site has recently been cast into doubt as a result of the re-examination by Tomlin of a fragmentary building inscription and its reattribution to the reign of Commodus.³²

Late Roman and non-Roman coins

In addition to the coins already discussed, the Newstead finds record also includes eleven later Roman bronze coins as well as two items of Greek origin.

Late Roman coins³³

Victorinus	1 antoninianus (rev. PAX AVG)
Probus	1 antoninianus (rev. CLEMENTIA TEMP, Antioch mint)
Diocletian	1 (denomination unspecified)
Carausius	1 antoninianus (rev. PAX AVG, C mint)

Galerius	1 follis (rev. GENIO POPVLI ROMANI, Trier mint)
Maximianus	4 folles (2 x rev. SOLI INVICTO COMITI (Lyons and London mints), 1 x BEATA TRANQVILITAS (Trier), 1 x D N CONSTANTINI MAX AVG (Siscia))
Constantine I	1 ÆIV (rev VOT XV MVLT XX, uncertain mint)
Gratian	1 ÆIV (rev. VICTORIA AVGGG, Aquileia mint), 1 ÆIV (uncertain mint)
Theodosius I	

A small number of similar coins have also come to light at sites on the Antonine Wall.

Probus	1 antoninianus
Constantine I	1 follis
Magnentius	1 ÆIII
Justinian I	1 Æ (not a confirmed site find)

It is clear that none of these coins can be connected to any Roman military occupation, and at least some of them may represent modern losses, but the number of late third- and fourth-century coins recovered from Scottish soil continues to rise, and there is no doubt that many of them must have been lost in antiquity. It is still too early to speculate on the context and significance of these finds.

Greek coins

Silver coin, diameter 11 mm, attributed to Selge, Pisidia (unconfirmed).

Unidentified copper coin, diameter 12.5 mm, with helmeted head to right on one side and the other side worn flat.

These two coins may or may not represent ancient losses, but it is not impossible that they may have been brought to the site by Roman military personnel.

Forgers' moulds

Evidence is beginning to come to light of the presence of one or more coin forgers at Newstead. Nothing more definite than 'presence' can be suggested at this stage, as there is so far no evidence of actual activity by such people, but two clay moulds for casting counterfeit coins have been recovered from the site. One of these has already been published.³⁴ It bears the impression of the obverse of a *denarius* of Caracalla on one side, and on the other that of the reverse of an antoninianus of Aurelian, minted at Milan between AD270 and 275. Clearly coins of two different types and periods were being counterfeited by means of the same stack of clay moulds, therefore, and this must have been happening no earlier than AD270, i.e. at a time long after the site had been given up. A second mould from Newstead has recently come to light, this being an old find which has been for many years in the safe custody of John Casey. Unfortunately the details of its discovery and exact provenance are unknown. One side bears the impression of a *denarius* of Antoninus Pius. The surface is very worn, and the legend is only partially legible, but it appears to read [A]NTONINVS AVG – PIVS [.....]. Fig. 12.4 shows the mould and a cast taken from it. The other side of the mould is blank, indicating that it must have been used, or intended for use, at one end of a stack. Clearly it is not possible to establish whether the two moulds were in any way contemporary, but since

the first mould clearly indicates that *denarii* were being counterfeited as late as AD270, it is certainly possible that the second mould dates from a similar period.

Summary and conclusions

The following seem to be the key points which emerge from a study of the coins and related material so far recovered at Newstead.

1. The number of coins minted before the accession of Vespasian in AD69 is not large enough to demonstrate pre-Flavian occupation of the site. Those coins which are present could well still have been in circulation in Flavian times.
2. The corpus of Flavian coins from the site includes base metal issues from the latter part of the reign of Domitian. Since such coins, as opposed to silver *denarii* of the same period, are less likely to have been in circulation during the Antonine period, they may be regarded as supporting evidence for a late Domitianic occupation phase.
3. Between the Flavian and Antonine periods, coins in general circulation show an increase in the numbers of *denarii* and, in particular, *sestertii* at the expense of lower-value base metal denominations. This is reflected in the Newstead finds, and some of the Flavian *denarii* are likely to represent Antonine losses, as is the case on Antonine Wall fort sites. The large number of coins of Trajan and Hadrian at Newstead is consistent with a reoccupation of the site in the early Antonine period.
4. Continuation of occupation at Newstead until c. AD180 is supported by the presence of coins of the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Although few in number, their presence does indicate occupation



FIGURE 12.4

The second counterfeiter's mould from Newstead, and an impression taken from it showing a *denarius* of Antoninus Pius.

(© N. M. McQ. Holmes)

A ROMAN FRONTIER POST AND ITS PEOPLE: NEWSTEAD 1911–2011

well beyond the generally accepted date of the abandonment of the Antonine Wall. There is also one *denarius* of Commodus from the fort, which *could* have been minted as early as AD 180.

5. There are no Severan coins finds recorded from the fort site, but there are a few from the general vicinity. These may be taken to suggest some form of Roman activity in the general area at the time, rather than any specific occupation of the site.

6. A number of late Roman coins (late third- and fourth-century) have been found at Newstead, as elsewhere in Scotland, and as yet their significance can not be defined. Some may be ancient losses.
7. The recovery of two clay moulds for use in counterfeiting Roman coins indicates no more than the *presence* of persons possessing such items, with at least one of them dating from the later third century. As yet there is no evidence for actual counterfeiting at Newstead.

References

1. Macdonald 1911, 385–415.
2. Macdonald 1918, 210–11.
3. *ÆI* refers to the larger-diameter *sestertii*, *ÆII* covers both *dupondii* and *Asses*.
4. Robertson 1983, Table 2.
5. Macdonald 1918, 226–30.
6. Robertson 1983, 409–10.
7. Robertson et al. 1989.
8. In addition to the summaries of finds compiled by Macdonald (1918, 1924, 1934, 1939), Robertson (1950, 1961, 1971, 1983), and Bateson and Holmes (Bateson 1989; Bateson and Holmes 1993, 2003, 2006, forthcoming), these include J. Clarke 1933, Macdonald and Curle 1929, Macdonald and Park 1906, and Miller 1922 and 1928. A summary and discussion of Antonine Wall finds was published by Abdy (2002).
9. Robertson 1983, 409.
10. Robertson et al. 1989.
11. For a catalogue and discussion of the Carpow coin finds, see Holmes 1999. Occupation of the fortress has traditionally been assigned to the Severan period only, but it has been suggested by John Casey (2010) that the construction and initial phase of occupation may have taken place in the late Antonine period, with the well-known building inscription from the site referring to Commodus rather than to Caracalla. This view supports that of Tomlin et al. (*RIB* III, pp. 458–61).
12. Holmes 2003, 97.
13. For a summary of current knowledge and some discussion, see Keppie 2000, 78–81, but the statement on p. 80 that the Mark Antony *denarii* were of lower silver fineness than 'many contemporary issues' seems to be based on the erroneous results of outdated metallurgical analysis (*ibid*, note 53). For the purposes of comparison with other coins which circulated during the period of the Roman occupation of Trimontium it should be noted that the silver content of the Mark Antony *denarii* (now reckoned to be around 85 per cent), is similar to or higher than that of any issued after AD 79 (Reece 2008, 193).
14. Robertson 1983, Table 2.
15. For a discussion of this phenomenon, and a suggestion that the legionary *denarii* may have enjoyed a much longer period of circulation in Britain than elsewhere, see Holmes 2006, especially 16–20.
16. Robertson 1983, 409 and Table 2.
17. Holmes 2003, 97.
18. Shotter 2009.
19. Hanson 2007, 32; Breeze 2009, 59–60.
20. See Holmes 1999 and 2003 for Carpow and Cramond finds lists.
21. There is also a gold *aureus* struck in the name of Titus during Vespasian's reign.
22. An alternative explanation is that some of the copper and copper alloy coins may have corroded in the soil to such an extent that they were no longer recoverable by excavators, but the condition of most of those now preserved in the collections of National Museums Scotland suggests that this is very unlikely to be a significant factor.
23. Bateson 1989, 167.
24. Gold coins also appear in the record, with two *aurei* of Trajan from Newstead and one each of Trajan and Hadrian from the Antonine Wall.
25. The Camelton finds list from the 1970s contains 10 *denarii* of this period (plus one other possible *denarius* and one Lycian drachm, which would have circulated as a *denarius*), together with 11 *sestertii* and three *ÆII*. The Strageath list includes two *denarii*, four *sestertii* (with one more possible), and one definite and two possible *ÆII*.
26. This total is made up of nine *denarii* (144 CUs), three *sestertii* (12 CUs) and 11 *ÆII* (16.5 CUs).
27. There are 16 *denarii* (256 CUs), six *sestertii* (24 CUs) and 17 *ÆII* (25.5 CUs). A single gold *aureus* of Antoninus was also recovered.
28. See Holmes 2006 for analysis of the Birnie hoards and others of similar date.
29. Robertson 1983, 424–25.
30. Robertson 1983, 424; S. Clarke 1996; Breeze, this volume.
31. Robertson 1983, 425; Breeze, this volume.
32. *RIB* III 3512.
33. See also Smith 1854, 37–38.
34. Holmes and Hunter 2001.

Bibliography

- Abdy, R. 2002: 'A survey of the coin finds from the Antonine Wall', *Britannia* 33, 189–217.
- Bateson, J. D. 1989: 'Roman and medieval coins found in Scotland, to 1987', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 119, 165–88.
- Bateson, J. D. and Holmes, N. M. McQ. 1997: 'Roman and medieval coins found in Scotland, 1988–95', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 127, 527–61.
- Bateson, J. D. and Holmes, N. M. McQ. 2003: 'Roman and medieval coins found in Scotland, 1996–2000', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 133, 245–76.
- Bateson, J. D. and Holmes, N. M. McQ. 2006: 'Roman and medieval coins found in Scotland, 2001–2005', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 136, 161–98.
- Bateson, J. D. and Holmes, N. M. McQ. forthcoming: 'Roman and medieval coins found in Scotland, 2006–2010', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*.
- Breeze, D. 2009: 'Conclusions', in Breeze et al. (2009), 59–61.
- Breeze, D., Thoms, L. and Hall, D. (eds) 2009: *First Contact. Rome and northern Britain*, Tayside and Fife Archaeological Committee Monograph 7 (Perth).
- Casey, J. 2010: 'Who built Carpow? A review of events in Britain in the reigns of Commodus and Septimius Severus', *Britannia* 41, 225–35.
- Clarke, J. 1933: *The Roman Fort at Cadder* (Glasgow).
- Clarke, S. 1996: *Newstead Research Project 1987 to 1993. Gazetteer of Features and Interpretation of Phasing*, unpublished report (Bradford).
- Curle, J. 1911: *A Roman frontier Post and its People: the Fort of Newstead in the Parish of Melrose* (Glasgow).
- Dore, J. N. and Wilkes, J. J. 1999: 'Excavations directed by J. D. Leach and J. J. Wilkes on the site of a Roman fortress at Carpow, Perthshire, 1964–79', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 129, 481–575.
- Frere, S. S. and Wilkes, J. J. 1989: *Strageath. Excavations within the Roman Fort 1973–86*, Britannia Monograph Series 9 (London).
- Hanson, W. S. 2007: *A Roman Frontier Fort in Scotland. Elginhaugh* (Stroud).
- Holmes, N. M. McQ. 1999: 'Coins', in Dore and Wilkes 1999, 528–35.
- Holmes, N. 2003: *Excavation of Roman Sites at Cramond, Edinburgh*, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Monograph Series 23 (Edinburgh).
- Holmes, N. M. McQ. 2006: 'Two denarius hoards from Birnie, Moray', *British Numismatic Journal* 76, 1–44.
- Holmes, N. M. McQ. and Hunter, F. 2001: 'Roman counterfeiters' moulds from Scotland' *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 131, 167–76.
- Keppie, L. 2000: 'Mark Antony's Legions', in *Legions and Veterans. Roman Army Papers 1971–2000* (Stuttgart), 75–96.
- Macdonald, G. 1911: 'The coins', in Curle 1911, 385–415.
- Macdonald, G. 1918: 'Roman coins found in Scotland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 52 (1917–18), 203–76.
- Macdonald, G. 1924: 'Roman coins found in Scotland. II', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 58 (1923–24), 325–29.
- Macdonald, G. 1934: 'Roman coins found in Scotland (III)', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 68 (1933–34), 27–40.
- Macdonald, G. 1939: 'Roman coins found in Scotland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 73 (1938–39), 241–45.
- Macdonald, G. and Curle, A. O. 1929: 'The Roman fort at Mumrills, near Falkirk', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 63 (1928–29), 396–575.
- Macdonald, G. and Park, A. 1906: *The Roman Forts on the Bar Hill, Dumbartonshire* (Glasgow).
- Miller, S. N. 1922: *The Roman Fort at Balmuildy* (Glasgow).
- Miller, S. N. 1928: *The Roman Fort at Old Kilpatrick* (Glasgow).
- Reece, R. 2008: 'Choosing denarii', in V. Spinei and L. Munteanu (eds), *Miscellanea numismatica antiquitatis in honorem septagenarii magistri Virgilii Mihailescu-Birliba oblata* (Bucharest), 187–95.
- Robertson, A. S. 1950: 'Roman coins found in Scotland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 84 (1949–50), 137–69.
- Robertson, A. S. 1961: 'Roman coins found in Scotland, 1951–60', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 94 (1960–61), 133–83.
- Robertson, A. S. 1971: 'Roman coins found in Scotland, 1961–70', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 103 (1970–71), 113–68.
- Robertson, A. S. 1983: 'Roman coins found in Scotland, 1971–82', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 113, 405–48.
- Robertson, A., Reece, R. and Burnett, A. 1989: 'The coins', in Frere and Wilkes 1989, 139.
- Shotter, D. 2009: 'When did the Romans invade Scotland?', in Breeze et al. 2009, 15–19.
- Smith, J. A. 1854: 'Notices of various Roman coins found in the Red Abbeystead and adjoining fields to the east of the village of Newstead, Roxburghshire', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 1 (1851–54), 33–38.

