

Sam Moorhead: *The Roman Imperial Coinage*. Vol. V.5: Carausius and Allectus. 2 vols. London: Spink Books 2025. XLVIII, 782 p., 285 ill., 20 maps. £ 195.00. ISBN: 978-1-911718-06-2.

This new version of “The Roman Imperial Coinage” Vol. V.5 catalogues and considers the coinages of the rebel emperors Carausius (285/286–293) and Allectus (293–295/296) based in Britain but with an area of north-western Gaul also subject to Carausius. The volume is in the recent and expanded quarto format of the RIC series; moreover, it is itself divided into two fascicules. The first fascicule contains the front matter (pp. I–XXI) and the bibliography (pp. XXIII–XLVIII) running to 48 pages, then 259 pages of the General Introduction (pp. 1–259), divided into seven sections, followed by the catalogues running to 397 pages (pp. 263–660). The 122 pages of the second fascicule contain the Concordances (pp. 661–741) and Indices (pp. 742–782) then the 176 Plates with obverse and reverse illustrations of all the identified types and variants. This gives some impression of the sheer amount of information and discussion presented between these covers. The covers themselves, underneath the wrappers with their glossy photographs of the forts at Portchester and Pevensey, are reassuringly in the green buckram with gold blocking familiar ever since the first volumes of the series.

So, the first thing to do is to stand in awe of the prodigious efforts by Sam Moorhead in compiling all this information, reducing it to a logical order and laying it out systematically and comprehensibly. He has identified 3,664 types for Carausius (including types struck for Diocletian or Maximian and the famous type with three jugate busts of *Carausius et fratres sui*) compared with 590 types for Allectus. Allectus’ reign was only half the length of that of Carausius but even allowing for this the disparity between the numbers of types for the two reigns must be telling us something about Carausius and his coinage, to which we shall return. Moorhead cautions that there is a considerable margin of uncertainty about some types, either because of inaccurate earlier recording or because of the presence of contemporary copies which are sometimes hard to distinguish from official issues. He has, rightly, tended to err on the side of inclusion, so the numbers of types may be somewhat inflated, however the orders of magnitude should stand. The sources for all this are laid out in Section 3 “The Material” (pp. 21–65) of the General Introduction, supplemented by Section 2 “A Summary of Past Research” (pp. 15–20) and instanced by the “Abbreviations and References” (pp.

XXIII–XXIX) pages in the front matter. The sources of course include antiquarian literature, which still retains value as a source for otherwise unrecorded types. Then there are “The Trade: Sales, Dealers and Internet Sales” (p. 33) and “Private Collections” (pp. 33–34). The Trade can be questionable; the Internet is full of snares and delusions along with the occasional bit of reliable information. To have mastered so much of this is a testimony to his persistence in combing such sources. He and we are on safer ground with collections in “Museums and Archives” both in the United Kingdom and on the Continent. Then there are the coins themselves. Moorhead’s discussion here depends heavily on hoard material, site-finds do not really figure. This is understandable since material in the hoards, a few of which run to hundreds of coins though most are under 100, are sufficiently numerous that together they should give a conspectus of the range of Carausian and Allectan issues. It is a pity that the treatment of the hoards found in Britain (Map 3) differs from that of those in Gaul and Germany (Maps 4, 5), based on the work of the late Xavier Loriot; maybe someday somebody will be able to reconcile the two regions. Another difference in treatment between Britain and Gaul is that Britain profits from the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) whereas for legal reasons the authorities in France and Belgium cannot sanction such a scheme (the Portable Antiquities Netherlands – PAN – scheme as yet has few examples of such coins). The PAS allows the mapping of the find-spots of hundreds of single (sometimes more than one) coins for Carausius (Maps 6a, 6b) and Allectus (Maps 7a, 7b) in Britain, showing a bias towards the East and South of the island with ‘hotspots’ in East Anglia and Wessex and to a lesser extent through the East Midlands up to around York. In general terms this reflects the overall distribution of PAS records of Roman coins and other metalwork;¹ the Wessex ‘hotspot’ matches that apparent in the recent publication on Tetrarchic coin hoards from Britain.² The plates with images of all the types are a crucial resource. Of course, the quality varies: some are reproductions of antiquarian drawings, many are images from older publications, from catalogues and off the internet that are of less good quality than could be wished. Even so, one can argue that the images

- 1 T. Brindle: *The Portable Antiquities Scheme and Roman Britain*. London 2014 (The British Museum Research Publication 196).
- 2 A. Brown: *Tetrarchic Coinage in Roman Britain*. In: E. Ghey (ed.): *Recent Discoveries of Tetrarchic Hoards from Roman Britain and their Wider Context*. London 2024 (The British Museum Research Publication 236), Chapter 2/pp.16–83, fig. 2.8.

could have been digitised and uploaded to the internet to allow them to be examined in as much detail as the image quality allowed. But the achievement represented by the catalogue and all the supporting material is a formidable and laudable piece of work. Any reviewer will have their own interests and therefore their own approaches as to how to interrogate this treasure trove of information. This reviewer is no different, so what will be discussed here is a number of themes that struck me as I read through the volumes, relating principally to the reign of Carausius.

By the time of the usurpation of Carausius the old duopoly in the West of the mints of Rome and Lyon had broken down, largely due to regional emperors/usurpers needing to be able to strike coinages to fulfil their fiscal obligations; this also allowed rulers to keep their mints close to them, for instance Gallienus' mint at Milan in the 260s or the contemporaneous mint of the Gallic emperors at (most probably) Trier. Carausius' territories at the time of his taking power contained no mints, therefore the necessary infrastructure of location/s, personnel, equipment (dies etc.), metal resources for striking, as well as officials involved in the choice of obverse and reverse types and the initial organisation and the subsequent operation of the mints and the distribution of their outputs all needed to be found and set up. Such dating evidence as there is suggests the establishment at the start of the reign of a mint with the mark RSR generally thought to be at Rouen (also known as the Continental or Travelling mint). The major mint was established at London, and as the find-spots in Britain of nearly all of the latest Rouen issues lie in Britain it is argued that the Rouen organisation moved to Britain with Carausius. The London mint signature was ML. Another mint had the signature C, which has provoked a long-running literature over its location (e.g. Camulodunum/Colchester) but Moorhead prefers simply and sensibly to leave it as the "C" Mint. Later coins marked SC or SP made their appearance, the former typologically linked to the "C" Mint the latter to London. The two main mints then moved to marks reading SP//MLXXI and SP//C. Other mint-marks include BRI. In addition there was a continuing and considerable output of coins with no mint-mark.

Given that Carausius' usurpation was a military one the absolute need to strike coins to pay the army and fleet was obvious. With no coin die-cutters in Carausius' territories presumably experienced metal-engravers, perhaps also engravers of ring signets and other jewellery were probably pressed into service and corralled, apparently at Rouen. Whence was the metal stock pro-

cured? The amount of silver in particular required would have been considerable. Who made decisions as to obverse images and titulature and reverse types and legends? On p. 188 choice is attributed to a die engraver, but that would seem a recipe for a free-for-all in coin types when the existence of mints and workshops suggests something far more organised and under high-level control as one would expect.

Two features of the early coinage of Carausius call for comment. The first is the very high percentages for designs known only from a single specimen (p. 69): 90 % of early Rouen radiates; 82 % of early *denarii*; 94.6 % of laureates. The unmarked issues struck over some five years come in at 60.6 % of single-specimen dies. Moorhead suggests that many dies were engraved but few used, prompting the obvious question: why go to the trouble of cutting so many dies then hardly use them (theoretically there could also be some cut but never used)? Moorhead proposes “[...] somewhat random, or even chaotic, sharing of dies [...]” (p.83), but that still does not explain the profligacy in dies in the first place. One possibility might be that we are looking at an accession coinage designed to broadcast the new regime (a suggestion by Richard Abdy that this was the case for the silver RSR issues is noted on p. 83), But a smaller number of more frequently struck and circulated types would surely have been at least as effective (which is what other rulers of the second half of the third century tended to do)? It also raises the question, present behind the whole phenomenon of Carausius’ manifold designs, of the target/s of all these types. Who was the ‘readership’, given that what seem to be tiny issues would come to the notice of scarcely anyone, let alone that they would (in the words of the Book of Common Prayer) “read, mark, learn and inwardly digest” them? It suggests a decision or decisions taken at a fairly high level. It is tempting to implicate Carausius himself, but that may say more about our desire to ascribe actions to named individuals than about what actually went on. It might equally be that senior officials of the fisc oversaw this, but that does not solve the question of ‘why’?

The second feature is the ‘military types’ also called ‘legionary issues’, evoking specific, named legions and other units on the reverses (pp. 178–181). The units named are a rather eclectic bunch and the reasons for their inclusion are not always evident. II *Augusta*, VI *Victrix* and XX *Valeria Victrix* were the three longstanding legions of the British garrison: the coin issue is the last known mention of *legio XX*; only four coins have been identified for VI *Victrix*. Carausius will have had a Praetorian Guard, so an issue for a

Cohors Praetoria is understandable. But there was also an issue for II *Parthica* brigaded at Albano south of Rome; at 20.1 % it is the largest of all the military issues. Why should this legion have been so prominent in the military coinage of a usurper in Britain? Might the *Cohors Praetoria* have been at Rome? The remaining units evoked also raise problems. Four of them were stationed on the Rhine, VIII *Augusta* and XXII *Primigenia* in Upper Germany and I *Minervia* and XXX *Ulpia Victrix* in Lower Germany, yet neither of these provinces was ever controlled by Carausius. Even more remote was Upper Moesia where IV *Flavia Felix* and VII *Claudia* were in based. John Casey has suggested³ that these represent the attested practice by this date of pairing vexillations from legions. That vexillations from the Rhine legions may have been serving in Britain or northern Gaul is plausible but not otherwise attested: the presence of troops from the lower Danube is also otherwise unattested, yet IV *Flavia* seems to have been particularly favoured, with issues from the beginning to the end of the military series and the only two known silver pieces in the series. The fleet also appears, not named as such but represented by galleys on the reverse. Issues showing Neptune and Oceanus also clearly evoke Carausius' maritime commands. Many of these issues are marked RSR and date from the earlier part of the reign. In the future it would be interesting to analyse the distribution of the find-spots of all examples of these issues, not just the hoard material, to see if there is any significant patterning.

Mention of RSR brings us on to recent proposals concerning these initials and their possible expansion (pp. 181–183). Following a suggestion of Guy de la Bédoyère⁴ this is expanded to signify *Redeunt Saturnia Regna* (the Saturnian reign returns), a quotation from Vergil, *Eclogue* 4.6. It is then paired with the alphabetism I.N.P.C.D.A in the exergue position of a medallion (Cat. No. 3515): expanded by de la Bédoyère as the initial letters of the following line of *Eclogue* 4, *Iam Nova Progenies Caelo Dimittitur Alto* (now a new generation is sent from heaven on high). These are used to suggest a Carausian programme of the proclamation of a new Golden Age, indeed de la Bédoyère yokes them into a single statement RSRINPCDA. He also notes that some RSR reverses bear the legend *Expectate Veni* ("Come, O long-awaited

3 P. J. Casey: *Carausius and Allectus. The British Usurpers. With Translations of the Texts* by R. S. O. Tomlin. New Haven, CT/London 1994, pp. 92–94.

4 G. de la Bédoyère: *Carausius and the Marks RSR and I.N.P.C.D.A.* In: *NC* 158, 1998, pp. 79–88.

one”), another Vergilian quote (*Aeneid* 2.283). Personifications on reverse types such as *Ops* (consort of Saturn), *Renovatio* and *Uberitas* are then linked to this proposition. Further ideas have been proposed by Donatien Grau (the footnoted reference does not appear in the bibliography). These arguments have attracted considerable attention, understandably since it is novel, remarkable and shiny. One must caution prudence: other interpretations are available. To start with, RSR by far the most common element. Until de la Bédoyère’s publication it had always been accepted as a mint-mark, partly because it appears in the exergue, home of the mint-mark, partly because, as Moorhead shows, the issues bearing it fit well into the typological and chronological sequence of Carausius’ coinage, especially with links to the London mint, suggesting that a mint at Rouen transferred thither. So can RSR in the exergue signify something different? Is it a mint-mark or is it a slogan, or even both? In most of the volume it is accepted as a mint-mark; if it were not, then this would pose major difficulties for the identification of the ‘Rouen’ mint. There are a few other Carausian issues with letterings in the exergue which clearly were not mint-marks, for instance CANC on the reverse of a naval issue (Cat. No. 383) where it appears under the depiction of a galley, of which it is thought to be the name *Canc(er)*, a ‘Rouen’ copper-alloy radiate of which just one example is known. This restriction to a single reverse type and metal to which it is relevant characterises other exergual lettering. But by contrast RSR occurs on gold, silver, copper-alloy coins across 172 reverse types (Table 39), the great majority of them standard types for the period and reign and not at all easily associated with Saturnian imagery. Moreover, if Saturnian imagery were so important, why conceal this quotation, having it masquerade as a mint-mark? Why not instead spell it out as the legend for a range of (appropriate) reverse-types? It is not as though Saturn needed to be concealed from hostile outsiders in the manner of Christ. This also comes back to the point made above about ‘readership’: the Saturnian expansion of RSR assumes at least some users who were highly literate and educated and would understand how the three letters were to be read. This is to stretch credulity beyond plausibility. One may apply the ‘Duck Test’ to RSR – ‘If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it is a duck’. RSR behaves entirely in the manner of a mint-mark so the onus remains on those who would argue RSR is not one. Return it to being a mint-mark, and the main prop of the Saturnian hypothesis is knocked away. INPCDA, on a medallion of which there is a single example, may, or may not, be from *Eclogue* 4 (it is paired with a markedly un-Saturnian

image, Victoria in a *biga*): perhaps Artificial Intelligence could search for other instances of the letter sequence in the (surviving) corpus of Latin. Again, why not spell it out in full? How many people would understand what it was saying? It is an odd ‘slogan’ to find without expansion.

The manifold coinages of Carausius were eclectic and rich in symbolism, all of which will need further work to understand fully. The number and variety of types seems to have been tailing off in the latter part of his reign, before the loss of his Gallic possessions and the great port of Boulogne to the Caesar Constantius apparently provoked his assassination and replacement by Allectus. By contrast, as noted above, the coinage of Allectus was much more limited in numbers and types, though in fact the variety of Carausius’ issues was tailing off later in his reign and Allectus announced his reign by a plethora of new types. The major innovation of Allectus’ reign was the introduction of a new denomination, the ‘Q-radiate’, so familiar to anyone who has dealt with Allectus’ coinage in hoards or from sites of for the PAS, particularly the ubiquitous reverse type of the galley signalling Allectus’ preoccupation with defence of the island of Britain. This was a coin in the same metal as radiate issues but smaller and two thirds the weight of the regular pieces: the evidence strongly suggests that it was tariffed at half the value of a radiate. Why should Allectus, who we are told had been *rationalis summae rei*, finance minister, to Carausius, or his fiscal authorities introduce this new denomination? It would seem in part to have been intended to replace the still-circulating poor-quality radiates (and imitations) struck in the 260s and 270s by both the ‘central’ and the ‘Gallic’ emperors. It is also suggested that they were also designed to “[...] facilitate commercial activity [...]” (p. 240), an argument that needs developing. Otherwise, Allectus struck little gold and the reverse types of his radiates were conventional and followed on from those of his predecessor. Also like Carausius’ coinage there was a high proportion of issues known only from single specimens, often between 40 % and 50 % (p. 222). The impression is of a coinage that, with the exception of the Q-radiate denomination, was conventional and serviceable, certainly by comparison with that of Carausius.

The focus on hoards does allow reflection on two aspects of hoard composition which bear on the circulation and acceptability of Carausian and Allectan coins. The first is the phenomenon of the ‘legitunist’ hoard (p. 22), hoards which end with only a few coins of Carausius and Allectus, these sometimes the issues struck for Diocletian and Maximian. Issues of the Gal-

lic Empire tend also to be excluded (noted also to be happening on the continent). Those assembling these hoards can be seen as making either or both of two slightly differing choices: one was evidently to exclude as far as possible 'usurping' issues, while the other was to restrict themselves to issues of 'legitimate' emperors. Clearly these could be interpreted in political terms, the rejection of the money of a usurping regime and/or declaring loyalty to the legitimate regime. A crucial element here is chronology. Were the 'legitimist' hoards assembled during the usurpation, or after the recovery of the island by Constantius I? If it were the former, then there would seem to be a political motivation, if the latter then presumably the corollary was that the Carausian and Allectan coins cleansed from the hoard assemblages were disposed of otherwise. This might result in hoards containing only coins of Carausius and Allectus, hoards which we could interpret as 'rejectionist' or equally as 'loyalist' in their attitude to the usurping regime. Perhaps as some of the hoards we have because they were not recovered. Or were the coins of earlier 'legitimate' emperors deemed to be of superior metal content and separated for that reason? But in that case the question arises, as with all hoards, of why they were concealed (and not recovered)? Recent work has suggested a wider range of motivations besides the traditional threat of invasion and warfare or political expediency.

This relates to the second issue: at what point after the 296 suppression of the usurpation did issues of the regime cease to circulate? Was there *de iure* demonetisation of the coinages of Carausius and Allectus, or was there simply *de facto* demonetisation as holders of these coins decided they were too risky to hold or use? Here the dates of the latest coins are going to be crucial; one thinks of the hoards of radiates of the Gallic Empire which contain tell-tale later coins, down to early issues of Constantine I, suggesting they may have continued to circulate as 'small change' in the absence of central issues of low-value denominations. Indeed, we have seen above that one interpretation of the introduction of the Q-radiates was to suppress these still-circulating earlier issues. Are there Carausian/Allectan hoards which conform to this pattern of continuing circulation well after 296? And either way, why were coins of this illegitimate regime hoarded and buried rather than being melted down for some other purpose? Finally, the above questions tend to assume hoards were put together as a single act; what of the increasing evidence that hoards could be put together over time or as a series of 'lots': how might this influence interpretation of the hoarding phenome-

non? These are questions for the future by this volume gives us the tools to pursue them.

“The Roman Imperial Coinage” V.5 is an astonishing achievement, the fruit of years of profound and painstaking research, driven by a deep commitment to and interest in the material. All these shine through in the resulting fascicules. The sheer amount of detail is matched only by the attention to that detail, evidenced above all in such things as the catalogues and concordances. How much effort must have gone into assembling the 176 Plates illustrating the thousands of types of coins, both obverses and reverses? The presentation of these and of all the evidence and discussion in the text in a neutral way, as simply what is to be expected, dissimulates what all these actually represent in terms of labour and in terms of the resource the volume represents for researchers, who will undoubtedly be both stimulated and enabled to initiate new research projects based on our now much enhanced knowledge and understanding of the coinage of Carausius and Allectus. To Moorhead and to his colleagues the worlds of numismatics, Roman history, Roman archaeology, Roman Britain and beyond owe a huge debt.

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

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