

Iron Age Coins in Britain – a digital typology

The Iron Age in Britain was a period of social change, from shifts in communal identities to increasing foreign influences, as evidenced by developments and innovations in technologies and material culture. This was also the period in which the first coins appeared. In Britain, Iron Age (or ‘Celtic’ in older terminology) coins, which feature ornate imagery and complex designs, were used and produced variably through time from around the 2nd century BC to the mid-1st century AD. They were originally imported but were quickly locally produced with their own striking iconography. Such complex imagery has made their purpose and function the subject of much debate, but they are doubtless a major source of information on late Iron Age society, trade, religious beliefs, and continental contacts. Yet coins have often been neglected in broader studies of Iron Age material culture, and any investigation of them requires a large dataset on which we can conduct detailed analyses.

Fortunately, a number of Iron Age coin resources exists, such as the Celtic Coin Index (CCI) at the School of Archaeology at Oxford, which contains around 70,000 index cards of around 50,000 specimens. We are currently in the process of scanning all the paper index cards in the CCI and digitising the data from the cards that are still entirely analogue. A detailed study of the CCI and other collections resulted in the key typology: *Ancient British Coins* (ABC), published in 2010. ABC includes 999 coin types and is now the leading typology of Iron Age coins found in Britain. The authors of this book were generous enough to grant the CCI permission to edit and digitise the typology and make it freely available online through a new dedicated website: Iron Age Coins in Britain (IACB).

The IACB website is built on the principles of linked open data espoused by the Nomisma.org community. Nomisma.org is a collaborative project which provides stable identifiers for numismatic concepts, such as production places, denominations, and political entities. Any database, regardless of native language, can implement these identifiers, as well as a standardised semantic data model, in order to contribute numismatic data through a centralised, multi-



A ‘Bury A’ silver unit from East Anglia, which depicts a face and a ‘serpent’ head on one side and a prancing horse on the other (Photo: Ian R. Cartwright, Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford)

lingual interface. This interface displays example specimens of each coin type, and queries of the underlying Iron Age knowledge graph to facilitate the visualisation of the production and circulation of these types over time and space.

At the time of writing, the IACB website now draws in over 37,000 coins from the collections of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the British Museum, the Münzkabinett in Berlin, and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. By early 2022, it will also include the remainder of the coins from the CCI. The IACB joins a group of ten coin typology websites which use the Nomisma identifiers to link coin collections from across the globe. It is, however, the first that focuses solely on Iron Age (non-Roman, non-Greek) coins. We hope that it will serve as a resource for anyone, from researchers to finds specialists, and will help further integrate coins into wider studies of Iron Age material culture.

Iron Age Coins in Britain website: <https://iacb.arch.ox.ac.uk/>
Ancient British Coins book: <https://celticcoins.com/shop/books/ancient-british-coins-2/>

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Kouvaras Cave: a new Early Holocene site in East Attica, Greece

The Kouvaras cave excavation and preservation project is currently underway, and material study as well as various laboratory analyses, are ongoing. Some interesting preliminary results are, however, available. The project is run by the Ephorate of Palaeoanthropology and Speleology, the directorate of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports responsible for the protection, preservation and research of caves and palaeontological sites.

The cave occupies a hilly inland location (173 m above sea level) in the outskirts of Kouvaras village in East

Attica. It has been formed in the ‘Lower Marble’ of the autochthonous unit of Attica (Jurassic), along a karstified fault zone. The fallen boulders found scattered near the entrance indicate that part of the cave’s roof has collapsed and likely extended further out in the past. Two trenches have been opened so far, both near the collapsed entrance. All the information presented here comes from Trench 1, excavated in 2019.

The geological stratigraphy of the cave consists of five soil horizons. The topsoil (about 50 cm thick) includes