Marcham Roman coins: a note on the dataset

Paul Booth

The principal spreadsheet consists of standard data fields, some of which formed the basis of Ian Leins' record. To these, in addition to the expansion of context data to allow sorting by site area, have been added the fields for wear (useful as a guide, but a subjective assessment and therefore to be used with caution) and for Reece period. A comments field has been retained; these are exclusively my comments, unless specifically indicated – all other comments and provisional identifications from earlier work have been trimmed from the top version of the spreadsheet (but are retained elsewhere). Ian Leins' identifications are indicated as such (with very occasional (identified) modification in terms of the overall identification) and have generally not been reformatted (apart from the addition of data on wear and Reece period), though some of the reverse descriptions have been expanded, particularly in the light of additional cleaning. The incorporation of Ian Leins' records with minimal modification has resulted in some inconsistencies of presentation of basic data across the spreadsheet, which it would be ideal to resolve, but this could involve revisiting all the coins, resulting in better presentation of the list of identifications but with no modification of the identifications themselves, and without any other obvious material gain.

The principal inconsistences occur in the description in the 'obverse' and 'reverse' fields. My standard practice is to distinguish between visible and lost/concealed legends by the use of upper case for the former, with the missing parts of incomplete legends separated (as in common epigraphic practice) by the use of a square bracket, filling in the text where it is known. Lower case can be used where legends are completely lost but can be confidently restored. This applies particularly in relation to reverses where the type may be easily identified even if no legends survive. In these cases I would give the type in lower case (for example, 'Gloria Romanorum'). To me this approach gives the clearest indication of what is actually seen and therefore a fairer description of the assemblage, and in the case of incomplete legends may even provide a basis for reinterpretation. It appears that Ian Leins' identifications did not make these distinctions in the same way, so the appearance of legends in upper case in the parts of the dataset based directly on his records may not have exactly the same significance throughout. There is also inconsistency in the recording of the way in which legends are split on individual coins – for example whether continuous legends are separated into their component words, or words broken within a legend (eg CONSTAN S or GLOR IAEXER CITVS) are represented as such or simplified in the record. Again the identifications themselves, of course, are not affected. One further difference of approach should be noted. Ian Leins used the field 'Emperor' as a basic identifier. I do not find this particularly helpful or necessary since the information summarised in that field should all be obtainable from the contents of the 'obverse' and 'reverse' fields. However, it has been retained, and I have retrospectively added a comparable label for each entry from my original data (thereby substantiating the point just made), but there is room for some ambiguity in the application of the term and while every effort has been made to achieve consistency of approach this cannot be guaranteed in every case. There were also inconsistencies in the 'date' field (not least in Ian Leins' use of different date ranges for the same type in 2003 and 2004). It is hoped that these have now been removed (requiring a couple of executive decisions). Reece period attributions were and are not affected by these issues.

Note that the ‘mint’ field is used principally for the 4th century. Mint attributions in earlier periods are not comprehensive.

Regrettably it is inevitable that despite much cross-checking some typos will have escaped detection. It is hoped that more significant errors and inconsistencies within the main record have now been eliminated.