

The Forncett hoard

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A hoard of 381 silver coins was found at a location in the vicinity of Forncett, Norfolk, between 1996-97. This large and spectacular deposit is unusual in that it contains not only Iron Age silver units but also Roman silver *denarii*. This hoard, together with many other deposits buried in the south Norfolk and north Suffolk area, can be associated with the historical events of the Boudican revolt and its associated upheavals.



1. Dr Graham Webster writes: "When Queen Victoria travelled on her exciting tour of northern Scotland in 1872, she found many roads decked with triumphal arches bearing messages in Gaelic AR BUIDHAESCHAS DO'N BHUADHAICH - 'To Victoria, our gratitude.' Here the Gaelic shows the connection with the distant Celtic tongue, in the word for victory - bouda, which in modern Welsh is buddug. The name of the famous queen of the Iceni was actually Boudica, which meant precisely 'Victoria'. The word appears in similar forms on inscriptions, one of the most interesting of which was found in Bordeaux in 1921. It is an altar to the goddess Tutela Boudiga, the local deity called 'the victorious.'" (Boudica, the British Revolt against Rome AD 60; (1978, p.15). Drawing by Aylett Sammes from *Britannia Antiqua Restaurata*, 1676.

Once the conquest of south-east Britain had been completed, the Emperor Claudius travelled to Britain and received the submission of eleven British chieftains, among whom was Prasutagus, a king of the Eцени tribe. The area of Norfolk and northern Suffolk subsequently became a Client Kingdom, under which system it retained its own laws and a degree of independence. In AD 60 this period of peace and security came to an end, on the death of the king. A rebellion was ignited under his widowed Queen Boudica. Archaeology, aerial photography and the surface recovery of artefacts are now showing increasing evidence for military activity in the area at this time. There are more than ten known silver coin hoards from Norfolk which can be dated to these troubled years. Half of these, coming from the south Norfolk area, contain a mixture of Eцениan silver units and *denarii*. The Forncett hoard can be added to this important hoard category of the early Romano-British period.

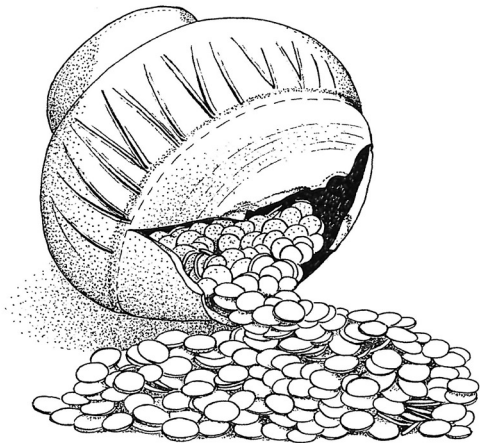


2. An unusual variant of the Norfolk God type from the Forncett hoard. No.41 in this list.

The Forncett hoard contained 336 Iron Age silver units, all issued of the Eцени tribe. They comprise the more common types produced by the tribe, as follows:

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Boar-horse | 25 |
| Can Duro | 2 |
| Early Face-horse | 1 |
| Face-horse | 28 |
| Early Pattern-horse | 3 |
| Pattern-Horse | 240 |

The remaining 45 are all silver *denarii* dating from the period of the Republic to that of the Emperor Tiberius. A total of 32 date from Republican years, with the earliest having been struck in 128 BC. Seven were coined under Augustus and six under Tiberius, with the latest dated to AD 36-37.



3. Today we get our stored cash from a 'hole in the wall'. 2000 years ago we got it from a hole in the ground. Many such 'bank deposits' were made during the Boudican revolt. Shown here is

a hoard of 872 Ecenian silver coins buried in a red pot c.AD 60-70 at Field Baulk, March, Cambs., and discovered in 1982. Drawing by Anne Holness.

These hoards of the Boudican period cluster in south east of Norfolk and north of Suffolk. There are clusters around Norwich and around Thetford, spreading eastwards along the valley of the River Waveney. Such evidence provides direct archaeological evidence for the rebellion against Rome that began in this part of northern East Anglia. The Forncett hoard is an important discovery which has increased our understanding of this famous period. It is also an example of a small group of mixed Ecenian/*denarius* hoards, which are known only from this part of Britain.

A selection of the better-grade Ecenian silver units from the Forncett hoard can be found in this catalogue (nos. 30-81).

Chris Rudd List 50, 2000.