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Bearsden

A Roman Fort on the Antonine Wall

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Chapter 12

COINS

ANNE S ROBERTSON[†]

1. *Denarius*. Most likely a legionary denarius of Mark Antony (c 32–31 BC). BMCRR 196.
Extremely worn. AR Wt 2.781g. Size 18mm. Axis ↖.
Obv: ANT AVG above galley III VIR R P C below
Rev: LEG V Aquila r between two standards.
NK73CI; building 3, room 2, hearth.
2. *Dupondius* of Trajan; c 115–16. C 353. RIC 674. BMC 1027f.
Corroded. Fairly worn. AE Wt 7.39g. Size 26mm. Axis ↓.
Obv: IMP CAES NER TRAIANO OPTIMO AVG GER DAC
P M TR P COS VI P P
Bust of Trajan, radiate, draped, r.
Rev: SENATVS POPVLVSQVE ROMANVS
S C (l and r in field).
Felicitas, draped, standing l, holding caduceus and cornucopiae.
NK73FC; bath-house, first warm room, between flagstones of lower floor.
3. *Denarius* of Trajan; c 115–16. RIC 318. BMC 577. Fairly well worn. AR. Wt 2.55g. Size 19mm. Axis ↓.
Obv: IMP CAES NER TRAIANO OPTIMO AVG GER
DAC
Bust of Trajan, laureate, draped, r. drapery on left shoulder.
Rev: P M TR P COS VI P P S P Q R FORT RED (in exergue)
Fortuna, veiled, draped, seated l, holding rudder on ground, and cornucopiae.
NK74AA; building 1, west end, topsoil.
4. *Denarius*, possibly of Trajan; c 116–17. RIC 331. BMC 617.
Much corroded; burnt? AR. Wt 3.06g. Size 19mm. Axis ↓.
Obv: IMP CAES NER TRAIAN OPTIM AVG GERM DAC
Bust of Trajan, laureate, draped, r.
Rev: PARTHICO P M TR P COS VI P P S P Q R
Mars, naked except for cloak round waist, advancing r, holding transverse spear, and trophy over l shoulder.
NK74BL; building 6, topsoil.
5. *As*, probably Hadrian. Possibly BMC 1174.
Much corroded.
NK73CD; bath-house, cold room, burning overlying flagged floor.
6. Possibly a very much corroded *As*. May just possibly be of Trajan, or early Hadrian (from its 'look').
Surface all gone. AE Wt 8.804g. Size 27mm. Axis uncertain.
NK73Cu; building 7, room 1, northern end of room.
7. *Dupondius* of Antoninus Pius. 154–5. RIC 933. BMC 1970.
Edges of coins much corroded; almost unworn. AE Wt 11.013g. Size 27mm. Axis ↘.
Obv: ANTONINVS AVG PI VS P P TR P x VIII
Bust of Antoninus Pius, radiate r., drapery on l. shoulder.
Rev: LIBERTAS COS IIII; S C (l and r, low in field)
Libertas, draped, standing l, holding pileus and sceptre.
NK73DS; bath-house, rubble overlying hot bath.
8. *As* of Antoninus Pius 140–4 (COS III) or 145–61 (COS IIII). RIC 684 (COS III); RIC 823 (COS IIII); cf BMC 1753 (COS IIII)
Fairly worn. AE Wt 6.443g. Size 25mm. Axis ↙.
Obv: ANTONINVS AVG PIVS P P TR P COS III or IIII;
Head of Antoninus Pius, laureate, r.
Rev: PIETAS AVG; S C (l. and r. low in field)
Pietas, draped, standing l, raising r, hand, l hand on side.
NK73FC; bath-house, warm room 1, in the build up for the upper flagged floor.
9. *Dupondius* or *As* of Marcus Aurelius, Caesar. 153–4 (TR P VIII) or 154–5 (TR P VIIII). BMC 1960 (TR P VIII). BMC 1985f (TR P VIIII). RIC 1321 (TR P VIIII).
Almost unworn. AE Size 24mm. Axis ↑.
Obv: AVREL[IVS] SAR AVG PII FIL
Bust of Marcus Aurelius, Caesar, bare-headed, draped, r.
Rev: TR POT [VIII or VIIII] COS II S C (l and r, low in field).
Minerva, helmeted, draped, standing l, holding owl and spear; to r, shield.

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NK82AA; bath-house, changing room, in back-fill over south wall.

10. As, fragments. Illegible.
NK73AJ; annexe, south-west of bath-house.
11. Possible As.
AE Size about 22mm.
K73CB; *via praetoria*, rubble lying to east of building 4.
12. Bronze disc, possibly a coin.
NK73Cu; building 7, room 1.

Discussion

The coins fit neatly into the pattern of Roman coinage current in the Antonine period in Scotland. Long-lived legionary *denarii* of Mark Antony, minted *c* 32–31 BC, have been commonly found in both Antonine and Severan forts in Scotland, but not apparently on purely Flavian sites. The absence of Flavian silver and bronze from Bearsden is also in agreement with evidence from other Bearsden material in indicating no first century occupation.

Of the remaining datable coins from Bearsden (excluding three of uncertain emperors), there are two *denarii* and one *dupondius* of Trajan, one probable *as* of Hadrian, one possible *As* of either of Trajan and Hadrian, one *dupondius* and one *As* of Antoninus Pius, and one *dupondius* or *As* of Marcus Aurelius

as Caesar. To these may be added two earlier, isolated finds, a *dupondius* of Trajan, and a *denarius* of Hadrian (Macdonald 1918: 225–6; 1939: 242).

The sum total of five coins of Trajan and Hadrian, plus two possibles, confirms that coinage current in the reign of any one emperor was almost always made up of a higher proportion of coins of his immediate predecessors than of himself.

The three coins dating to the reign of Antoninus Pius are a fairly worn *As* of Antoninus Pius of 140–4 or 145–61, a *dupondius* or *As* of Marcus Aurelius, Caesar, of 153–4 or 154–6, and a *dupondius* of Antoninus Pius of 154–5. The last two were almost unworn, and seem to have reached Bearsden just before the end of the occupation of that site.

The *dupondius* of Antoninus Pius of 154–5 has also a peculiar interest of its own. The smaller denomination of the same year, the *as*, has as its commonest reverse the legend and type *BRITANNIA*, Britannia seated left. Several of these form an easily recognisable group of asses found in Scotland. It has been shown that the bronze currency in the hands of Antonine troops in about 155 also included *sestertii* and *dupondii*, almost monopolised by the reverse *LIBERTAS*. Bearsden has provided an example of this group.

ADDENDUM

An *antoninianus* of Probus (276–80) minted at Antioch, was found in the 1990s ‘at the latrine outlet’ (Bateson and Holmes 2006: 162). This area had previously been completely excavated.