

Malmesbury Coin Hoard Newsletter

November 2019



Over the last year the volunteers involved on the coin hoard have been active in recording and photographing the cleaned and conserved coins. In addition, they have been visiting museums to see other hoards, visiting local primary schools and having open days to promote the coins.

This Newsletter is to let you know what we have been up to over the last year.

First to recap with some background on the Malmesbury Coin Hoard Project.

- A Roman coin hoard of 1266 copper-alloy coins was found in an earthenware pot by a metal detectorist in 2012 in Milbourne near Malmesbury.
- The Athelstan Museum, with amazing support of local donations and grants from the V&A Purchase Grant and the Headley Trust, was able to acquire this treasure in 2015.
- Through a generous grant (around £47K) from the Heritage Lottery Foundation, grants from the Art Fund, the Malmesbury Area Board and continuing local donations we were able to start the programme to conserve and display the hoard in the museum.
- The Coin Hoard Project provides learning opportunities for volunteers from the community, giving them a chance to help record the coins, to take part in training and workshops to acquire skills while working closely with a part of history.
- The training of the volunteers and the start of the conservation and recording of the coins began in 2016.

Coin Hoard Details The coins are rare for this area and are unusual in that they are late Roman and were minted during a very short period when there were multiple Emperors. Most of the coins are a standard base metal denomination known as a nummus (pl. nummi) dating to the period 307-317. This time was dominated by two personalities: Constantine the Great (306-37), the first Christian emperor, and his pagan rival Licinius (308-24).

The emperors on the coins are Constantine I (the Great), Maximinus, Allectus, and Licinius I&II.

The coins were from around the Roman Empire, with the majority coming from just three mints - London, Trier and Lyon

Recording and conservation of the coins. The conservation and cleaning of the coins continues at Wiltshire Conservation Services in Chippenham. In the summer another batch of coins were sent to be processed, in total over 1200 coins have been sent.



The meticulous process means every coin needs to be treated individually to remove the centuries of corrosion on the coins. On the left you can see the coin before conservation, and on the right the coin after conservation.



By the end of October over 600 conserved coins have been catalogued and photographed by the volunteers at Malmesbury.

Activities during the year



Graham McDougal, one of the volunteers, reports: During this year the group's volunteers have visited three local schools to give the children the opportunity to see and learn about our Roman coins. The first school was at Minety followed a few months later by a visit to St. Joseph's in Malmesbury. The third school was at Oaksey. All the children who we met were very enthusiastic about seeing and understanding the Roman history of their local area. Hopefully we will have more visits to local schools lined up for the future.

We had two trips this year. First to Pompeii - what an amazing place! The volunteers had a chance to visit - well, not the actual Pompeii, but the fantastic exhibit being held by the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. It's truly stunning how many wonderful objects have been brought over for this display - you get a sense of the Roman town as their actual belongings really bring the people to life.



Secondly a few volunteers were fortunate enough to visit the La Hougue Bie museum in Jersey while there on holiday and had a chance to see some of this incredible find of over 70,000 coins and gold torcs and hear about the massive effort involved in their ongoing conservation. An inspirational visit and well worth the trip.



In July at the Crudwell Strawberry Fayre the coin hoard volunteers were happy to welcome many attendees to our stand to explain the hoard. And they even got to enjoy the terrific strawberries!

The wonderful Malmesbury Carnival held an Open Day for historic places across the town, and the



museum's lovely newly refurbished Julia and Hans Rausing Building was host to visitors throughout the day. Coins from the hoard were on display for everyone to view, including our simulated 1266 coins in a bottle - it's amazing how heavy the hoard was.

Once all the coins have been cleaned, conserved and catalogued they will be displayed in the museum along with the restored pot. We hope to be able to display the hoard early in 2020.

We will continue to keep you updated over the coming months.

This Newsletter was compiled by volunteers working on the coin hoard.

You can keep up to date by going to www.malmesburycoinhoard.uk or follow us on Facebook or Twitter (@Malmesburycoins).