The Ford Bridge Coin Mould Assemblage

by

Mark Landon

Contents.

Contents……Page 1
List of plates. charts and tables……Page 2
Synopsis……Page 3
Acknowledgements……...Page 4
Introduction…….....Page 5
Section 1: What is coin mould?...……..Page 7
Section 2: Methodology.....……..…....Page 9
Section 3: The assemblage……....Page 40
Section 4: Conclusions.....Page 60
Appendix: Synopsis of scientific report
by Henrietta Longden.....Page 65

List of plates, charts and tables.

Unless otherwise stated, the photographs in this report are ©Mark Landon, 2010.

Plates

Frontispiece	*Verulamium form pediment with 'guideline'*	
Plate 1	*Coin mould find sites, Braughing/Puckeridge (©HCC 2002)*	Page 5
Plate 2	*Completed record card*	Page 10
Plate 3	*'Verulamium' form tray*	Page 11
Plate 4	*'Puckeridge' form tray*	Page 11
Plate 5	*Experimental 'box mould'*	Page 13
Plate 6	*Experimental 'bowl mould'*	Page 13
Plate 7	*'Band and lines' edge marking*	Page 15
Plate 8	*'Verulamium' form pediment fragment*	Page 41
Plate 9	*'Band and lines' from Ford Bridge*	Page 43
Plate 10	*Mould lining marking*	Page 44
Plate 11	*'Puckeridge' form fragment with 'guideline'*	Page 45
Plate 12	*Hole slighting*	Page 46
Plate 13	*Chalk wash*	Page 51
Plate 14	*Grass marks*	Page 53
Plate 15	*Grain cast*	Page 54
Plate 16	*Moulded platform*	Page 58

Charts

Chart 1	*25 experimental hole diameters*	Page 20
Chart 2	*26 experimental hole depths*	Page 24
Chart 3	*Top diameter distribution*	Page 48
Chart 4	*Base diameter distribution*	Page 49
Chart 5	*Base diameter distribution by context*	Page 50
Chart 6	*Inclusions and tempers*	Page 56
Chart 7	*Chalk and shell tempers*	Page 56

Tables

Table 1	*Edge profile distribution*	Page 42
Table 2	*Base and top diameters compared*	Page 47
Table 3	*Key to Charts 6&7*	Page 55

Synopsis.

The Ford Bridge assemblage is placed in its local context, and it is demonstrated that the Braughing/Puckeridge Late Iron Age settlement is the largest known centre for the production of coin pellets in Europe. It is noted that of the three largest finds of coin mould from the Braughing/Puckeridge complex, this is the only one with a properly recorded find-site and context.

The assemblage is then examined in terms of each category of a standard coin mould recording protocol, highlighting both features unique to the assemblage and those held in common with other finds of coin mould. Evidence is presented for the presence of two tray forms within the assemblage, each linked with a particular range of hole diameters. The broad implications of observed variability in elaboration, edge profile and edge marking are explored.

It is concluded that the link between tray forms and particular hole diameter ranges may well be a rare example of differentiation which was significant to the makers and users of coin mould. It is further concluded that minor variation in tray form, elaboration, edge profile and edge marking probably signify that the material comprising the assemblage was produced by more than one hand. A possible function is suggested for the 'incised guidelines' noted on a proportion of the material, and a possible cause of the edge marking termed 'band and lines' is put forward. Finally, it is concluded on the basis of minor formal and stylistic similarities between the Ford Bridge mould and the two less-securely provenanced major assemblages of coin mould that these assemblages are firmly linked to a tradition of coin-pellet production in the Braughing/Puckeridge area, with many common features not noted on material from elsewhere in Britain or Europe.

Acknowledgements.

It is rare that a piece of research such as this should be the product of a single, isolated toiler, and this work is no exception to the general rule. Without the generosity, patience in the face of importunity, support and guidance of many kind people neither this report, nor the larger work of which it forms a part, would have been possible.

All of the people listed below deserve my thanks, and recognition for the contribution their information, advice, practical help and encouragement have made to this report.

My greatest thanks are due to Dr. Jonathan Hunn of Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd., whose initial leap of faith gave this project its birth.

Peter Boylan and the Braughing Local History Society; Dr. Stewart Bryant and Dr. Isobel Thompson of the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Unit; Dr. Amanda Chadburn of English Heritage; Professor John Collis of Sheffield University; D.S. Conway; Dr. John Davies of the Norwich Museum Service; Bridget Edgson; Vic Flintham; Gary Goulding; Professor Colin Haselgrove of Leicester University; Dr. Tom Moore of Durham University; David Parker BA of University of Leicester Archaeological Services; Dr. Matthew Ponting and Henrietta Longden MA of Liverpool University; Chris Rudd and Liz Cottam of Celtic Coins; Dr. John Sills at the Celtic Coin Index; John Talbot; Julian Watters, Hertfordshire Finds Liaison Officer of the Portable Antiquities Scheme; Dr. Simon West and Dr. Nicky Metcalf of St. Albans Museums Archaeology Unit.

To anyone I have inadvertently omitted, I offer my humblest apologies. With so much illustrious assistance, any errors that remain are entirely my own fault.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to my wife, Sue Landon BA, for not complaining too loudly about the unreasonable quantities of muddy bits occupying large areas of our house, and for invaluable advice about mineralogy; my son, Jermyn Landon BA, for supplying drawings and digital reconstructions; my daughter, Esmée Landon BSc, for her help with the statistical work; and to my father and mother, Nick and Liz Landon, who have had to wait an awfully long time for their son to show that the years of education they worked so hard to provide were not wasted.

Mark Landon
September, 2010

Ford Bridge Mint - Introduction

In June 2006, a single fragment of coin mould was found in the River Rib following the collapse of a section of bank, part of the eastern boundary of one of the Scheduled Areas south of Braughing. Subsequent examination of the loose soil of the talus revealed an additional 1.2 kilograms of coin mould. Stewart Bryant, the Hertfordshire County Archaeologist was informed, and he passed the news to Debbie Priddy, the regional archaeologist for English Heritage. A meeting was held on site, at which it was decided that the find was of sufficient importance to warrant evaluation by means of small-scale excavation prior to consolidation of the bank to prevent further damage to the archaeology through erosion.

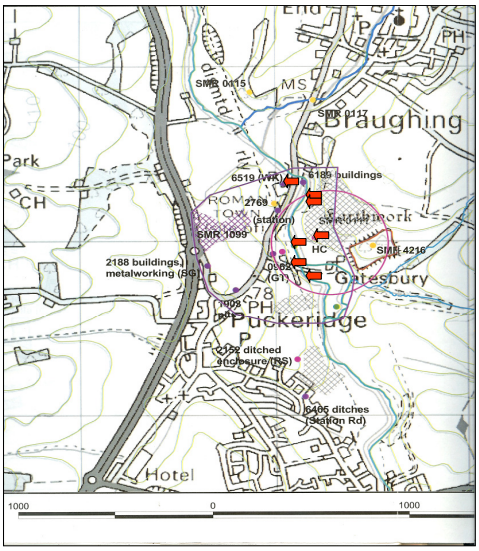

Plate 1: Known coin mould find sites.

Dr.Jonathan Hunn of ASC Ltd. was commissioned to carry out the project, and assigned funding for two days' work. A single trench was opened, 1.5m. x 3.0 m., and more than 8 kilograms of mould was retrieved, together with 6 kilograms of pot and bone[i]. Subsequently a metal detectorist dug illegally at the edge of this trench, and a further kilo of coin mould was retrieved from the spoil. In all approximately 10 kilograms has been extracted from the site. Since the deposit was increasing in thickness as it disappeared into the section, it seems reasonable to assume that at least another 10 kg., and probably more, remains in situ.

However, although at this point the Ford Bridge Assemblage was the second-largest find of coin mould ever made, it was neither the first such find in the area - nor was it by any means the last.

The earliest recorded find of coin mould from the Braughing area forms part of the Henderson Collection, and comprises 60 fragments of mould allegedly dug up in a field south of Gatesbury Wood at some point between 1935 and 1975. No record was made of the location or context of the find, which means that the Henderson Assemblage is effectively unstratified and barely provenanced. It was submitted to Craddock & Tite of the British Museum for analysis, and their extremely brief report is included in Partridge, 1981, 'Skeleton Green[ii].

Partridge himself made two small finds of coin mould, the first at Gatesbury Track (1979, report by Freestone)[iii], and the second at Wickham Kennels (1982, report by Cowell and Tite)[iv].

Between 2007 and 2010, four further small finds of coin mould have been recorded, all surface finds.

But it was in 2008 that Chris Rudd of Celtic Coins Ltd. first revealed the existence of the so-called Puckeridge Assemblage[v] – some 30 kilograms of coin mould, much of it in excellent condition: John Collis (pers. com.) has described it as the best preserved coin mould he has ever seen. Sadly, this superb collection of material comes with no certain provenance or context. The story confected by the original finder is demonstrably false at every point at which it can be tested.

This demonstrates one reason for the importance of the Ford Bridge Assemblage: although it may have been redeposited in antiquity, it is securely located within the Braughing/Puckeridge complex. The demonstration of several close stylistic and technical similarities, some on the most minute scale, between the Ford Bridge and the Puckeridge material enables us to state with confidence that the two assemblages of mould are the product of one tradition, peculiar in several respects to the Braughing area, and that – in at least one case – moulds were produced in each using the same tool. Furthermore, the existence of one significant difference between the assemblages enables us to suggest that they are not part of the same, single, episode of pellet manufacture.

That these suggestions can be made at all demonstrates the worth of a comparative study of the gross morphology of coin mould. No amount of work with electron microscopy or spectroscopy could have enabled these conclusions to be drawn.

In fact, no body of coin mould has been more thoroughly and comprehensively studied than the Ford Bridge Assemblage. It has been subjected to a programme of thin-sectioning, Scanning Electron Microscopy and spectroscopy by Henrietta Longden, MA, late of Liverpool University[vi], and has twice been submitted to systematic supra-microscopic examination. The evolution of the recording protocol during work on the Puckeridge Assemblage was such that it became obvious that the initial work on the Ford Bridge material was altogether inadequate. A synopsis of Longden's report is included as an appendix to the current work.

---

[i] Hunn, Jonathan R.; 2007: '*Remedial Excavation: River Rib, Ford Bridge, Braughing, Hertfordshire*'; Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd.

[ii] Partridge, Clive; 1981: '*Skeleton Green: A Late Iron Age and Romano-British Site*'; Britannia Monograph Series, 2; pp. 323 – 356.

[iii] Partridge, Clive; 1979: '*Excavations at Puckeridge and Braughing, 1975 – 79: Gatesbury Track.*' Hertfordshire Archaeology 7; pp. 97 – 132.

[iv] Partridge, Clive; 1982: '*Braughing, Wickham Kennels 1982*'; Hertfordshire Archaeology 8 (1980 – 82); pp. 40 – 59.

[v] Rudd, Chris: 2008: '*Coin Moulds found in Herts.*'; Coin News, November 2008; pp. 30 – 31.

[vi] Longden, Henrietta; 2008: ''*Coin moulds' from the Iron Age oppidum of Braughing: An investigation of Celtic coinage production techniques – Scientific Report*' unpubl. MA dissertation, University of Liverpool.