

WINSUM-BRUGGEBUREN, FIRST REPORT ON THE EXCAVATION  
AN EARLY ROMAN OUTPOST AMONG THE FRISIANS? PART ONE: THE ROMAN COINS

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**ABSTRACT:** The early Roman pottery fragments discovered at Winsum (Friesland) have long been interpreted as an indication of the presence of the Roman army. Recent discoveries in other sites (e.g. Velsen) have led to the questioning of this interpretation and when the possibility to excavate at Winsum-Bruggeburen was presented, the Groningen Institute of Archaeology took this opportunity. The excavation brought to light many different early Roman objects (Augustan/Tiberian) and also pottery and coins dating to the second and third centuries AD.

This first report presents the Roman coins dating from the Republic into the third century. Although in some instances a relation between the coins and archaeological features dating to the Roman Iron Age could be attested, clearly Roman features lacked completely. Still the presence of the early coins and other artefacts at this site so far north and close to the sea has to be connected with activities of the Roman army in this part of the world. The date and type of the early Roman coins, denarii and asses (often halved and countermarked), strongly points to a relation between Frisians and the Roman army while the coins of the later period strengthen the view of the existence of a kind of monetary exchange of goods and services between (and maybe among) Frisians and Romans.

**KEYWORDS:** Winsum, Frisians, early Roman frontiers, Augustan/Tiberian period, Roman coins, Roman army campaigns.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Winsum, a village in the Dutch province of Friesland, was associated with military activities of the Augustan/Tiberian period when Roman artefacts were recovered during commercial digging in the late nineteenth century. While Roman artefacts are not unknown in this region, their date, type and location has made Winsum an important site. In 1997 an opportunity to investigate the site occurred when plans to build houses in an undeveloped part of the village were proposed.

Thanks to the attentiveness of J. Scheffer, a local resident and member of the *Archeologysk Wurkerbân* of the *Fryske Akademy*, the Groningen Institute of Archaeology carried out an excavation, with the co-operation of the regional foundation *ArgHis*.

The excavation took place in the summer of 1997 under the management of Dr J.M. Bos. Drs M.J.L.Th. Niekus was the field director, Drs T.B. Volkers the finds administrator and J.H. Zwier and K. Klaassens formed the technical staff. Soon after the excavation two publications for interested readers appeared (Bos, Niekus & Scheffer, 1997; Bos, Niekus, Scheffer & Volkers, 1998).

This is the first in a series of publications, which detail the results of the excavation. While this report focuses on the Roman coins from the site, it includes a general introduction on the settlement, the region

and relevant archaeological research. Publications will follow detailing the other finds from the excavation.

## 2. SETTLEMENT HISTORY OF THE REGION

The village of Winsum is part of the municipality of Littenseradiel, formerly Baarderadeel, in the Dutch province of Friesland. The village is situated in Westergo, which is the name of an old political-geographical area in the northwestern part of the province of Friesland (fig. 1). Westergo is characterized by a number of different geological-geographical areas (Stiboka, 1976: p. 36). For the archaeology of Winsum two areas are of importance: the so-called knip-clay (heavy sticky clay) and the old salt marsh. Winsum is situated near the border of two areas; south of Winsum lies knip-clay while the site itself is situated in the old salt marsh, an area characterized by salt-marsh ridges (Vos, 1999: p. 37). It is located on the southernmost point of one of these ridges, which runs roughly north south and has a length of c. 10 km (fig. 2). The ridge is c. 0.5 m higher than its surroundings and is used as arable land (farmland) while the lower lying areas on either side are now mainly in use as pasture (Stiboka, 1976: p. 37 and fig. 12). Winsum-Bruggeburen is one of the many *terpen* (artificial dwelling mounds) that

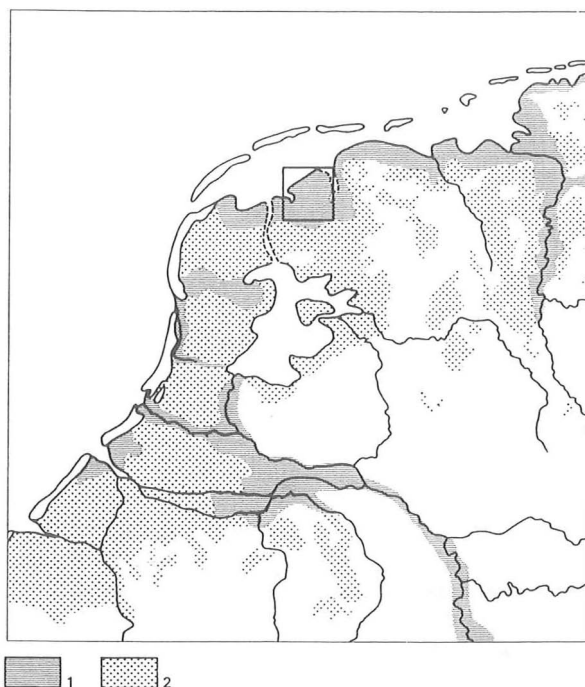


Fig. 1. Map of the Netherlands, around the beginning of our era. The area of Westergo shown in figure 2 is outlined. 1: clay; 2: peat (after, Hiddink 1999, with modifications) (drawing J.H. Zwier).

were situated along these ridges, like a string of beads. Even today the roads follow these ridges, with farms spaced at regular intervals along them.

Settlement in Westergo is considered to have started in the sixth century BC (Taayke, 1990: p. 188). In the period before permanent occupation, the territory may have been used as summer pasture (Van Gijn & Waterbolk, 1984). However, pottery from the seventh or eighth century BC found in a well in Stapert, a *terp* in central Westergo, suggests an earlier date for the settlement of the region (Bos, Scheffer, Taayke, Waterbolk, 1995; Taayke, 1997: pp. 169-170). The inhabited area consisted of the higher silted-up marshes in the southernmost part of Westergo (Vos, 1999: p. 37). Early settlers preferred the ridges that were formed on the borders of the former peat areas (Taayke, 1990: p. 189). However pottery dating to the sixth century BC has been discovered in northern Westergo, the area including Winsum. This may suggest the marsh ridges in this area where also inhabited at this time (Taayke, 1990: fig. 7; Fokkens, 1998: map VII). La Tène glass bracelets found at Beetgum, Besseburen and Dronrijp (Peddemors, 1975; Hiddink, 1999: fig. 3.11) illustrate the external contacts of this area.

From about 500 BC the landscape no longer provided safety against floodwater and it was necessary to build artificial dwelling mounds, called *terpen*. In

the period of transgression a layer of clay varying from 10-30 and at places 50-60 cm in thickness was deposited. The marsh ridge on which Winsum was situated hardly received any deposit because of its height (Ter Wee, 1974: p. 37). Around 400 BC the *terpen* row Sopsun-Hitzum-Tzum was built on the transition between salt marsh and tidal flat (Vos, 1999: p. 59 and fig. 23). Also the lower area north-east of Winsum became inhabited for the first time (Taayke, 1990: p. 189). In the late Iron Age, around 200/150 BC-50 AD, the occupation gradually moved further northwards. Around the beginning of the first century AD the occupation extended to the line Midlum-Herbaijum and Schalsum-Peins-Beetgum. Recent investigation has shown that a small tidal area existed in between these ridges. This funnel-shaped tidal basin probably was the former Boorne estuary (Vos, 1999: p. 56). The actual coastline was further northwards (Vos, 1999: p. 63 and fig. 23e) (fig. 2). Pottery fragments, discovered at Schingen and Schalsum, show evidence of human activity on these *terpen* (Taayke, 1990: p. 190). From this period onward the number of *terpen* was growing, but these were primary so-called house *terpen*, smaller units containing only one or two farmsteads (Taayke, 1990: p. 190; Fokkens, 1998: p. 130). In contrast Groningen and north Germany also had a number of village *terpen* by this time (see also Hiddink, 1999: p. 108-112).

The position of Winsum at the beginning of the first century AD was almost in the centre of Westergo and at the southern end of a slightly elevated ridge. This position seemed at first sight not very favourable for external connections, the coastline was c. 10 km away to the north and it was not clear how Winsum could be reached by ship. However, recent investigation has shown that in the north-western part of Westergo a small tidal basin existed which was navigable during high tide. There probably were also navigable connections with the hinterland and also the Boorne may have been one of the rivers that discharged into this tidal basin (Vos, 1999: pp. 56-57, 59 and fig. 23e). This central position in combination with navigable waterways to different directions, probably also in a southerly direction, may have accounted for its favourable position in Westergo (fig. 2).

Supra-regional contacts with the southern part of the Netherlands were possible via the tidal basin, across the Waddenzee and through the mouth of the palaeo-Boorne Valley, which was located at the modern island of Terschelling (Vos, 1999: p. 59). To the east of Terschelling was an opening in the barrier between Waddenzee and North Sea, formed by the Wadden Islands. Part of the Waddenzee was in existence long before the Roman period, but during the late Iron Age and the Roman period also the former peat area in the western part of the Waddenzee was

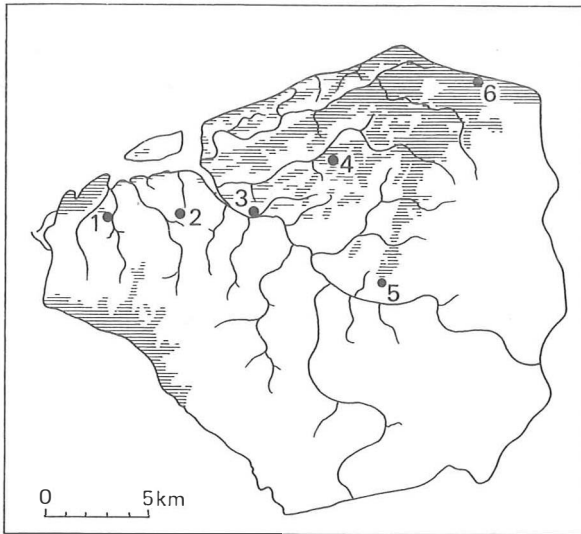


Fig. 2. Westergo around the beginning of our era. Old salt-marsh ridges are shaded. 1: Midlum; 2: Herbaijum; 3: Franeker; 4: Peins; 5: Winsum; 6: Beetgum (after Vos, 1999) (drawing J.H. Zwier).

inundated and changed into a tidal area (Vos, 1999: p. 58). The Waddenzee is a tidal flat area where the water depth fluctuates drastically according to the tide. The Roman historian Cassius Dio (LIV 32,2) mentions Roman ships sailing the Waddenzee and the problems they faced, running aground when caught at low tide. Fortunately they were often saved by the Frisians who had a good relationship with the Romans at that time. While we do not know in which part of the Waddenzee these events took place they do suggest at least part of the Waddenzee must have been accessible, in the short period of high tide, to Roman warships.

For contacts between Frisians and Romans in the early Roman period but also in the course of the following centuries a navigable opening between the Waddenzee area and the Flevo Lake, the modern IJsselmeer, was of great importance. This would have allowed the journey to be made without risking the dangers of the North Sea. This connection came into existence around 2000 BP (Beets, 1994: p. 12) but unfortunately its enormous expansion in the period after 800 AD destroyed any indication of its size in earlier periods. Some archaeological maps reconstruct the Flevo Lake as an area closed off from the Waddenzee, while others reconstruct an opening in Roman times. P. Vos (1999: pp. 58 and 63, and personal communication) is of the opinion that with the closing of the Oer-IJ, in the province of North Holland, around the beginning of the first century AD and the clearing away of large areas of peat in the western part of the Waddenzee, there must have been an opening which connected the Flevo Lake with the Waddenzee (fig. 1).

The Roman period in Westergo is characterized by a continuous expansion of the inhabitable area until the third century AD. During the second century the ridge of Wijnaldum-Voorrijp and the ridge of Dongjum-Ried-Berlikum were occupied (Vos, 1999: p. 63). From the third century onward, however, the effects of the Dunkirk II transgression are evident in the coastal area of the Netherlands. In the province of Groningen the small *terpen* near Paddepoel were abandoned but it is unclear whether this transgression had the same impact in the province of Friesland. While the negative effects on the landscape were not the same everywhere (Gerrets, 1999: pp. 102-103), the lack of pottery datable to this period however shows that the number of inhabited *terpen* decreased strongly. This has led Taayke (1990: p. 191) to the conclusion that parts of Westergo were completely abandoned in the course of the third or early fourth century AD. Excavations at Wijnaldum, in northern Westergo, have shown that the area was abandoned around 300/325 AD and re-occupied some hundred years later (Gerrets, 1999: pp. 99-103; Vos, 1999: p. 63). It is assumed that the original Frisian population moved out and after a period of circa hundred years new colonists came to settle, becoming the Frisians of the medieval period (Hiddink, 1999: p. 156 and n. 908). It is debatable whether this gap in habitation effected the entire province or whether settlement remained possible on the higher ridges of Westergo (Taayke, 1990: p. 191) and those forming the coastline of Oostergo (Galestin, 1997a).

### 3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN THE AREA AROUND WINSUM

Winsum's *terp* was originally one of the largest and highest in Westergo (Halbertsma, 1963: p. 98). It is recorded as 'Winsumer Hoechterp' in the Atlas of Eekhoff (Galestin, 1993: p. 258; fig. 2). Like many Frisian *terpen* it became the subject of systematic quarrying in the second half of the nineteenth century (Arjaans, 1991). The fertile soil that made up the body of the *terp* was removed and according to Boeles (1951: p. 128) this process was completed at Winsum in the years 1888/1889. Very few finds came to light during the commercial digging of the *terp*. Boeles believed this was due to the early date the exploitation took place, just after the middle of the nineteenth century. Other *terpen* that were excavated later yielded many more finds. These finds were initially kept by the Historical and Archaeological Society but were later transferred to the collections of the Fries Museum at Leeuwarden.

Although small in number, the objects attracted much interest. Among them are fragments of Roman amphora's, smooth ware, mortaria and a terra sigillata sherd with the stamp of Ateius. The finds were

published by Boeles and dated to the first thirty years of the first century AD. He compared them to finds from Haltern and Hofheim in Germany and emphasized their special nature. These fragments were not stray finds, they were a group of objects typical for a Roman site. He also mentioned the visit of the German archaeologist Karl Schuchhardt who had come to the site with Boeles in 1906. On this occasion he even suggested that Winsum might be identified with Castellum Flevum (Boeles, 1951: p. 129). The possible identification of Winsum with Castellum Flevum became less probable after the discovery of the Roman fleet station near Velsen (prov. North Holland). The finds from Winsum were no longer interpreted as indicating the presence of the Roman army (Schönberger, 1985: pp. 334 and 426). However, despite the change of interpretation Winsum is still one of the very few sites in northwestern Europe to have produced a number of different Roman artefacts from the Tiberian period. Wiegels (1993: p. 251) mentions that apart from the camp of Velsen I and Bentumersiel, the finds from Winsum are almost unique in this region. As a possible link in the chain of support stations during the early Roman military campaigns it cannot be overlooked (Galestin, 1997b: p. 349).

In comparison to the finds from the early part of the first century AD the Roman finds from later periods were very sparse at Winsum compared to those from other terpen in the neighbourhood such as Hatsum (Galestin, 1992: p. 35). Only one single fragment of a terra sigillata vessel is known from the period of commercial digging at Winsum (Galestin, 1992: p. 35). There is, however, one exception. While converting a footpath into a more permanent road in 1861, workmen discovered a large lump of silver. The silver weighed more than three kilos and consisted of a number of silver plates and cups. A silver smith melted down the entire find and only a tiny fragment entered the collection of the Fries Museum at Leeuwarden. It could be identified as part of a Roman silver dish dating to the fourth century AD (Galestin, 1993).

More recently, a small rescue excavation was carried out in the terp (Elzinga, 1973). It took place prior to development in an open area near the centre of the modern village. Finds from various periods were recovered including fragments of early Roman pottery, terra sigillata and some amphora fragments.

#### 4. THE EXCAVATION OF 1997

The aim of the excavation was twofold: first to investigate whether the remains of a commercially quarried-away terp, the so-called *terpzool* (terp sole), still contains archaeological information and should be protected for research in the future; second to discover whether any more information could be found

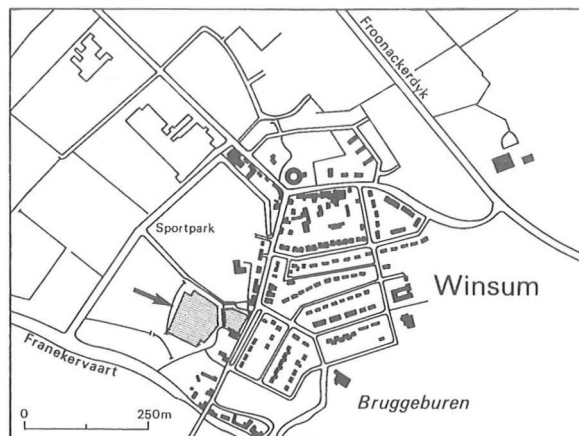


Fig. 3. Winsum. Plan of the village with the excavated area (drawing J.H. Zwier).

to provide new ideas on the early Roman material from this terp (Bos, 1995).

The excavation was located in the Bruggeburen quarter of Winsum where a new residential quarter called St. Jacobsvaart was planned as part of the development of the area. The area is situated to the west of Hegeterp Road and trenches were opened in the pasture north of the farmhouse of the family Bakker that was demolished and rebuilt a little to the south. Eleven trenches were opened in 1997 and a further one (trench 12) was excavated after the demolition of the farmhouse in 1998 (fig. 3). We may observe that trenches 4 and 11 are situated on the fringe of the former terp while trenches 1, 5, 8, 9 and 12 are in the central part of the original terp (fig. 4). The area covered by these trenches totalled c. 7.500 sq.m. The topsoil was stripped mechanically and the exposed surface was then cleaned by hand. After the removal of the topsoil a number of archaeological features were visible in the undisturbed subsoil. The excavated topsoil and the exposed surface of the trenches were examined with a metal detector and the finds were registered on the field drawing. All features were drawn and excavated by hand. It was evident from the archaeological features in the undisturbed subsoil of the marsh that the original ground level was not preserved and the features were all truncated by the commercial digging. The existing topsoil had been formed after the final demolition of the terp that took place towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Metal detection on the surface of the trenches recovered small objects from the archaeological features and from the marsh subsoil that was otherwise completely void of features. Those metal objects recovered from the otherwise undisturbed subsoil are probably the result of natural processes such as burrowing animals or cracks in the soil resulting from frost or drought. The small objects are not likely to

have originated from sealed contexts as the topsoil was formed at the time of the commercial digging and the small objects may have been moved when the fertile soil was taken away or during the period of re-exploitation and manuring of the (barren) area that was left after removing the fertile *terp* soil.

The excavation has shown that a *terpzool*, notwithstanding the almost total removal of the *terp* itself, may still contain information of past habitation. The excavation recovered many Roman artefacts, not only from the early first century AD but also of the second and third centuries AD. In addition to Roman pottery fragments, other Roman objects were discovered including Roman silver and copper coins. These first-century Roman coins and other artefacts are of particular importance as they are so rarely found in the province of Friesland.

For the greater part the archaeological features are remnants of ditches, with the exception of a well or a possible grave. In the southern part of the excavation and especially in trench 1, some of the ditches could be dated to the Roman period. Most ditches, however, contain a mixed fill including objects from different periods, from the pre-Roman Iron Age to the (early) medieval period. No stratification has been recorded in the fill of the ditches. Furthermore, in trench 10 there was a large oval depression containing many Roman objects together with modern fragments of wire and cans. This may be the result of dumping that took place after the removal of the *terp* soil, when loose objects were collected and deposited in an existing depression in the terrain. It may have taken place soon after the removal of the *terp* soil but may also have occurred later. Boeles, while visiting the site in 1906 mentioned the recovery of a fragment of a Roman amphora that was lying on the surface.

## 5. THE FINDS: THE ROMAN COINS

The finds that came to light during the excavation vary in date from the fourth century BC to the middle ages. The objects vary from local pottery to imports from the Roman Empire (pottery, coins and metal objects) and medieval Rhineland (pottery, coins and fibulae). Apart from the artefacts, a large number of bones were discovered.

In total fifteen Roman coins were discovered that are presented in the list below. They consist of denarii as well as copper coins. No Celtic coins were found. Coins are most useful if discovered in a sealed context as they can help to date the feature. It is then possible to link phases of occupation to specific features or patterns of features. Figure 4 shows the location of the coins in the excavation and it is clear that Roman coins were found over a large part of the ex-

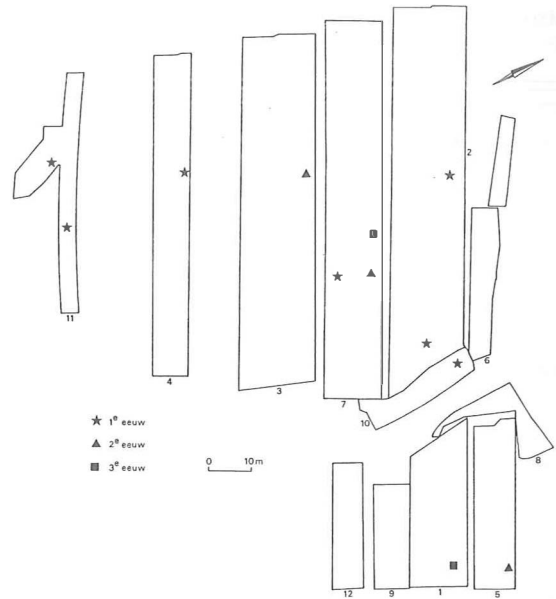


Fig. 4. Winsum. Excavated trenches with the location of the Roman coins. Three coins of the total of fifteen coins were left out. These were discovered in trench 7 but do not have an exact findplace (drawing J.H. Zwier).

cavated area, with a concentration in trench 7. Most of the first-century coins were discovered in the south-western part of the excavation while the second and third-century coins were discovered closer to the centre of the former *terp*. Find contexts vary from archaeological features and natural features like watercourses, to the virgin soil of the salt marsh. Those found in the virgin soil must have migrated from their original contexts as noted above.

Two of the first-century coins were found in the virgin soil of trenches 4 (Inv. 888) and 10 (Inv. 1501). One coin (Inv. 1593) was discovered in a natural watercourse (a so-called *priel*). The *priel* was discovered in the south-western part of the excavation in trench 11 and this may form the natural end of the inhabited area in the first century AD. Four of the first-century coins were found in trenches 2 and 7. Both coins from trench 2 were discovered in different features. One of these (Inv. 353) was found in an oval feature that also contained medieval sherds. The other (Inv. 379) was discovered in a feature that probably was the remnant of a ditch and was accompanied by finds (local pottery) dating to the (Roman) Iron Age. Of the two coins from trench 7 one was discovered in a feature with no datable finds (Inv. 1156) while the other (Inv. 1386) was found while removing the soil from layer 1.

The four second-century coins were found in trenches 1, 3, 5 and 7. One coin was found in the topsoil of trench 7 (Inv. 930) while two other coins were found in the virgin soil of the salt marsh: Inv. 616 in trench 3 next to a ditch and Inv. 1147 in trench 7

also near a ditch. The fourth coin (Inv. 1045) was discovered in trench 5 in a ditch containing medieval pottery fragments.

The two third-century coins were discovered in trenches 1 and 7. The first coin (Inv. 187) was discovered in a circular feature in trench 1 together with fragments of local pottery dating to the Roman Iron Age while the second coin (Inv. 1365) was discovered in trench 7 in a ditch with medieval finds.

From the context of the excavated coins it has become clear that only two coins were discovered in features that are datable to the Roman period while some other coins were discovered among medieval finds. The discovery of objects in odd places, like coins in the virgin soil of the surface of the salt marsh, illustrates the wandering of objects in a site like Winsum. We deal with a modern village on an ancient terp and the habitation in the long period after the Roman period has constantly affected the soil. Working the soil, moving the earth and even removal of part of the entire terp has had its effects on the archaeological record of the site. Although the arrival of these coins is very likely to have taken place

in the Roman period, it cannot be excluded that some coins were brought to Friesland in the medieval period (see for this problem also Van der Vin, 1999). Their presence in contexts together with later objects may be attributed to the vicissitudes mentioned above.

The list of coins (table 1) shows that the fifteen Roman coins (fig. 5) may be divided by date into three periods: from the late Republic to the early first century AD, from the late first to the beginning of the third century, and the end of the third century AD.

The coins from the first group comprise two silver coins and six copper coins (all asses), covering the late Republican and early Imperial period, 46 BC to AD 14. No coins of Tiberius were discovered but some of the coins were countermarked, suggesting they were in use after the period in which they were minted. These countermarks date the coins more closely and indicate that some of them must have been in use after the death of Augustus, as they date roughly to the period 14/15-22/23, the early period of Tiberius.

The countermark CAES on a coin dates, accor-

Table 1. List of coins.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Mint</i>	<i>Emperor/Date</i>	<i>RIC</i>	<i>Inv. No.</i>	<i>Remarks</i>	<i>Trench</i>
Republican							
1	D	Rome	46 BC 63 1a/b	Crawford	1593		11
Augustus							
2	D	Lugdunum	12 AD	RIC 174	1156		7
Moneyeres							
3	As	Ro					
me	7 BC	RIC 432	888		4		
4	As	Rome	16-6 BC	RIC 373 e.v.	379	CAES	2
Augustus							
5	As	Lugdunum I	10-3 BC	RIC 230	1386	Halved	7
6	As	Lugdunum I	10-3 BC	RIC 230	1495	AVG, Halved	10
7	As	Lugdunum I/II	10 BC-AD 14	RIC 230 e.v.	353	TIB, Halved	2
8	As	Lugdunum	12 AD	RIC 245	1501		10
Titus/Vespasianus							
9	D	Rome	80-81	RIC 62	1676		11
Hadrianus							
10	S	?	?	?	930		7
Antoninus Pius							
11	D	Rome	c. 141	RIC 368	1045		5
Marcus Aurelius							
12	S	Rome	c. 175 e.v.	cf. RIC 1693	616		3
Septimius Severus							
13	D	Rome	c. 210	cf. RIC 233	1147		7
Victorinus							
14	Ant	Cologne	268-270	RIC 108-111	1365		7
Barbarian imitation							
15	Ant	?	end 3rd cent.	?	187		1

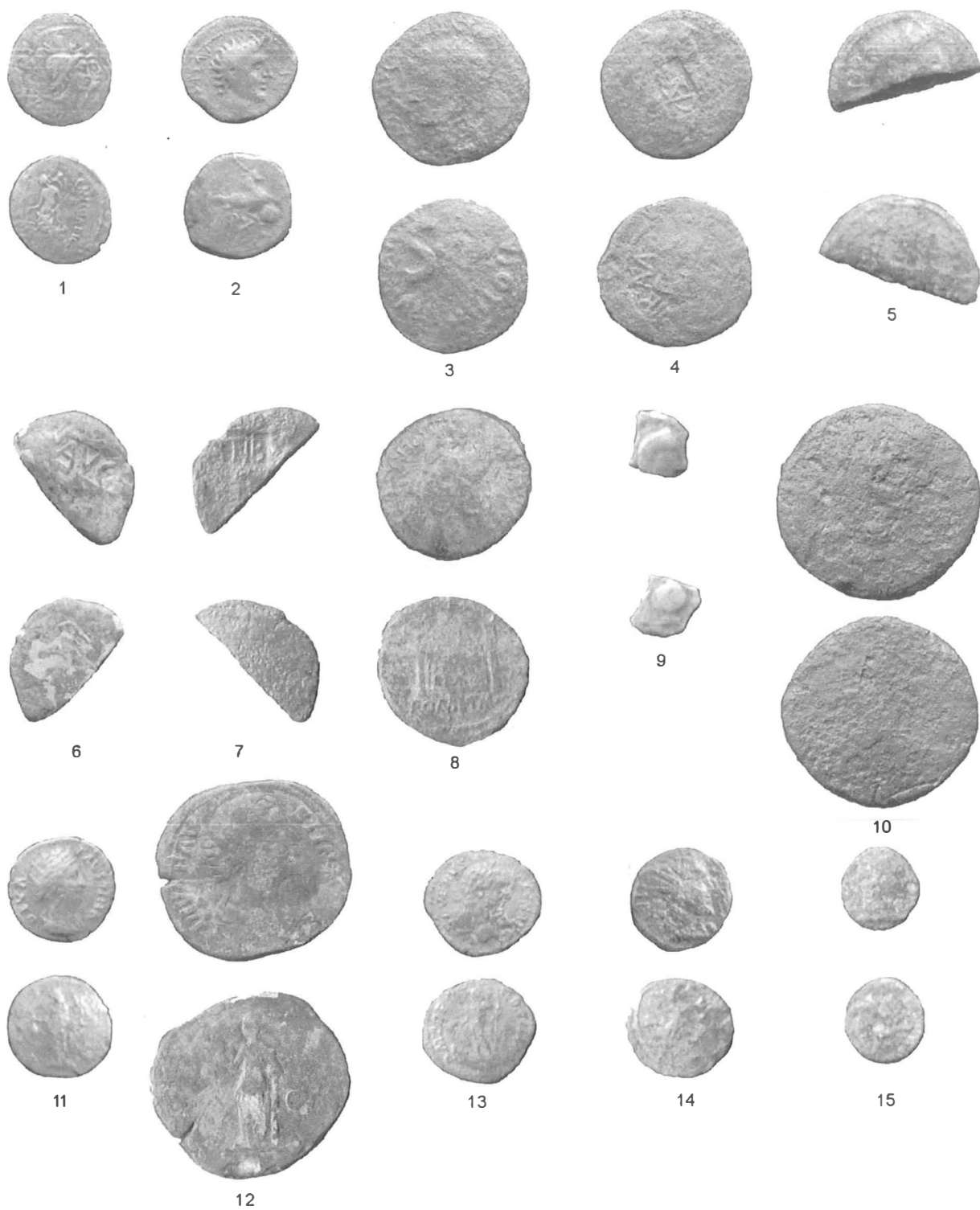


Fig. 5. Roman coins from the excavation at Winsum-Bruggeburen (H.J. Waterbolc).

ding to Mac Dowall, Hubrecht & De Jong (1992: p. 48) to the period between AD 15 and AD 23, during and immediately after the campaigns of Germanicus. They believe Nijmegen is probably the mint where the countermark was struck in the early years of Tiberius. In contrast Bosman suggests the countermarks may well have been applied in Velsen in the period between AD 14 and 16, the period of the three campaigns of Germanicus (Bosman, 1997: p. 253).

The countermark TIB occurs most commonly on Altar II asses. The latest coins are of Tiberius and date to AD 12-14 (Mac Dowall, Hubrecht & De Jong, 1992: p. 49). According to Bosman (1997: p. 249) this countermark may have been applied even earlier, in the period before the reign of Tiberius when he was commanding in Germany in AD 4/5, i.e. the time when the military camp at Vechten may have been established (see also Tymann, 1996: p. 151).

The AVC countermark occurs on Altar I asses. It is found, at the latest, on an Altar II from Tiberius AD 12-14 according to Mac Dowall, Hubrecht & De Jong (1992: p. 49).

Four of the 8 coins from the first group date to the second half of the first century BC while the other coins all may be dated to the period c. AD 12-c. AD 25. The number of coins from Winsum is too small to draw conclusions regarding the percentage of copper coins from different mints as was done for early Roman camps by Tymann (1996: p. 150). The coins from Winsum may be compared with the coins from Velsen (Velsen I) dated to the period 14/16-30 AD (Bosman, 1997: pp. 250-251). The Velsen coins cover also a slightly later period because a small number of Tiberian coins were discovered there, which were not found at Winsum. The comparison with Velsen I may suggest that the first coins to arrive at Winsum coincide with the establishment of Velsen I, when Germanicus completed his campaigns. The small number of coins discovered at Winsum does not justify a comparison with copper coins from other, earlier, sites such as Vechten (Tymann, 1996), so a more precise date for the start of the coin supply cannot be calculated. Further valuable help for the establishment of the dating of the earliest finds may be expected from the study of the pottery sherds, especially the terra sigillata.

The second group of coins ranges from Titus (AD 80/81) via Hadrianus, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius to Septimius Severus (AD 209). Hadrianus and especially Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, are well represented among the coins in the province of Friesland (Van Es, 1960: p. 118; Van der Vin, 1996: fig. 3). The coin of Severus is rarely found in great quantities and illustrates the decline in contact between Frisians and Romans. However, its presence indicates that these contacts were not completely broken and other artefacts, such as sigillata, dating towards the end of the second century, support this

theory. The denarius of Titus may have arrived towards the end of the first century. Coins of Titus (and other first-century Emperors) have been discovered elsewhere in the province of Friesland. Their presence indicates a small influx of coins in this period, as may the gold coin of Nero discovered at Oosterend (FMRNI Friesland: No. 174), but they may also have arrived later, in the second century.

The two antoniniani, one of the Emperor Victorinus (268-270) and one unidentifiable barbarian, date from the third quarter of the third century. A large number of Antoniniani are known from a hoard from Driesum, in the north-eastern part of the modern province of Friesland; The hoard reportedly consisted of approximately 500 coins, among the remaining 90 coins there are 35 antoniniani of Victorinus (Van Es, 1960: pp. 91-93; FMRN I Friesland: No. 51).

## 6. COMMENTS AND INTERPRETATION

The presence of these early Roman silver and copper coins in a site as far north as Winsum-Bruggeburen is very exceptional. Early imperial copper coins are often interpreted as an indication of the presence of the Roman army. The absence of this type of coins has been used to suggest the absence of the Roman army in Friesland (Bosman, 1997: p. 320). This argument cannot be maintained since Augustan copper coins have been found throughout the region, as shown in Hiddink (1999: fig. 7.4). The many Roman pottery fragments discovered at Winsum and dating to the early first century strongly attest to the presence of the Roman army. The range of pottery from Winsum (Italic terra sigillata, amphoras, pompeian red, cork-urns and other types of pottery) is comparable to the pottery found at Velsen I (Bosman, 1997: p. 320). The harbour camp at Velsen is the Roman army camp closest to Winsum and some connection between the two sites seems very likely.

However, the lack of military equipment and any traces of the lay-out of a military camp put Winsum's military capacity in doubt. A very similar site, also on the northern coast, is Bentumersiel on the mouth of the Ems in northern Germany. Bentumersiel is a native site without indications of a military camp, but with a variety of early Roman pottery and fragments of military equipment (Ulbert, 1976; Schönberger, 1985: p. 333). Despite these artefacts the site has not been interpreted as a military site but as a supply camp or station for the Roman fleet. The absence of traces pointing to a military camp has led to the suggestion that the site was used by German auxiliaries of Germanicus (Berger, 1992: p. 72; Hiddink, 1999: p. 115). Another suggestion is that the Roman objects at Bentumersiel came from an army camp nearby



where the native people picked up the remnants of the debris that were left behind by the Roman army (Hiddink, 1999: p.115).

It is clearly difficult to compare Winsum-Bruggeburen with other military sites due to the lack of military artefacts or fortifications. While the temporary camp at Holsterhausen in Germany provided only one military artefact it was enclosed by a rectangular ditch (Müller, 1995: pp. 78-81). However the suggestion that the Roman artefacts at Winsum originated from another site (Bosman, 1997: p. 320) is unsatisfactory. The number, size and variety of the finds is too great and implies that the whole complex was transported to the native site only to be dumped again.

No other native site has produced such a variety of early Roman artefacts. Roman objects do occur in native contexts in northern Germany, often in graves which contain Roman bronze utensils that were presented to local chiefs (Hiddink, 1999: pp. 43-44). In Friesland, however, hardly any grave is known from this period and the social organization is thought to have been rather egalitarian though this has been questioned recently by Hiddink (1999: pp. 53-59). Furthermore the finds from Winsum are of a different kind: mainly pottery fragments and coins.

The most probable solution for the presence of early Roman finds at Winsum is that Winsum was a native site commandeered by the Roman army and functioned as some kind of post during the military campaigns in the early first century AD. Its precise function is not clear as the site lacks the essential elements that define a military camp. The reason why we do not have any traces of an enclosure is either that they have not been found yet, or that they have never been there. Still the lack of any form of defence is unusual as most other Roman sites have some form of defensive enclosure consisting of ditches placed at regular intervals in a regular pattern, even though some were quite small (Kühlborn, 1995: p. 22 and pp. 125-129).

Whatever sort of military post Winsum may have been, it is not unlikely that a military camp existed somewhere in the neighbourhood. The nearest campsite known to us is Velsen in the province of North Holland, some 250 kms away, only accessible by boat in favourable conditions in about two days. When sailing to the Waddenzee and the Ems scouts and other units like horsemen may have accompanied the fleet on its route eastwards. The Frisians themselves were not hostile as we may gather from the remarks of Cassius Dio (LIV 32) who describes the naval expedition of Drusus in 12 BC who, with the help of the Frisians, attacked the Chauci on the Lower Ems. The historian Tacitus (Ann. I, 59-62) mentions the campaign in AD 15 when forty Roman cohorts marched through the land of the Brukeri while Pedro led the Roman cavalry through the land

of the Frisians and Germanicus sailed with four legions across the ocean, all meeting at the same time near the river Ems. At the same time the Chauci were incorporated into the Roman army as auxiliary troops. Unfortunately, the historical information on the campaigns of Drusus and Germanicus to the northern coasts is not supported by much archaeological information. Of the three sites just mentioned, Velsen, Winsum and Bentumersiel, only Velsen shows evidence of a Roman military presence. On the other hand Roman finds dating to the beginning of the first century are very scarce in north-western Europe and we have to bear in mind that one fibula does not indicate a Roman army. However, three coin hoards from the Tiberian period are known from a relatively small area near the northern coast. One in central Friesland at Feins some 10 kms southwest of Winsum, near Wommels (FMRN I, 86), one in north-west Groningen near the coast at Zoutkamp (FMRN II, 1098) and the third from Bentumersiel (Berger, 1992: Abb. 32; FMRD VII, 2008). The presence of these coin hoards and the two sites with early Roman finds near the northern coast, Winsum and Bentumersiel, are the mute testimonies of the historically well-known presence of the Roman army in north-western Europe.

The presence of second and third-century Roman coins at Winsum does not come as a surprise because of the large number of Roman coins already known from the province of Friesland (FMRN I). These coins suggest close relations between Frisians and Romans and in this period indeed different kinds of relations may have resulted in the presence of Roman goods. Apart from the traditional explanation of some kind of monetary exchange between Frisians and Romans we may propose other explanations such as homecoming soldiers and payment by the Romans to local leaders. There is no reason to assume that trade was not possible because of the difficulty to reach the northern shores (Stribny, 1995: p. 225). As explained in the foregoing it was probably possible to approach Friesland across the Flevo Lake already in the early Roman period. This watercourse even may have been enlarged in the centuries after, facilitating a relatively easy access to the Frisian coast. The third-century antoniniani point to a renewal of the relations with the Roman Empire, expressed both in exchange of goods and in the recruitment of German leaders and their followers in the Roman army (Hiddink, 1999: pp. 207-210). It is noteworthy that the bulk of the antoniniani from Friesland comes from two hoards in Driesum and Drieterpen (FMRN I, 51 and 54), an area that has not yielded any piece of terra sigillata in the second or third century (Volkers, 1991: figs 3 and 4). It is possible that the contacts of Oostergo may have been of a different nature compared to the contacts that brought terra sigillata and coins to Westergo, at least

they cover a different period. This remote area of Oostergo does not seem to have had any contacts with the Romans before the third century while Westergo was in contact with the Romans since the early Roman period.

## 7. NOTE

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