
DAILY COIN RELIEF!

A BLOG FOR ANCIENT COINS ON THE PAS
BY SAM MOORHEAD & ANDREW BROWN

Issue 3 by Sam Moorhead – 20 March 2020

The silver denarius of Tiberius (AD 14-37)



This coin was struck for almost the entire reign of Tiberius. One could argue that it is the most common single type ever issued in the Roman period. It is often referred to as the ‘Tribute Penny’ because it was in the reign of Tiberius that Jesus preached and was crucified; in the Bible, Jesus asks to see a coin with the image of the emperor and says: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Mark 12, 17). Whether it is this coin or a Roman Provincial coin struck in the East will never be known, but people will probably always call this coin the ‘Tribute Penny’.

These coins are not rare. The PAS Database has around 260 on this search:

<https://finds.org.uk/database/search/results/denomination/25/ruler/244/objecttype/COIN/broadperiod/ROMAN/thumbnail/1/page/1>

Silver denarius of Tiberius (AD 14-37) (Reece Period 1)

Mint of Lugdunum (Lyons)

Obv. TI CAESAR DIVI AVG F AVGVSTVS¹ (retrograde); Laureate head right

Rev. PONTIF MAXIM²; Female figure (possibly Pax or Livia) seated right, holding vertical sceptre in right hand and branch in left. Single line below

RIC I, p. 95, no. 30 – Three examples of this coin are illustrated below.

Note: nearly all of these coins are of this type (RIC 30) with a single line below the seated figure. RIC 26 has a double line; RIC 28 has the female figure holding a spear, instead of a sceptre, and has a triple line below.

¹ TI[berius] CAESAR AVG[usti] F[ilius] AVGVSTVS – Tiberius Caesar, son of Augustus, Augustus. The term Augustus begins to effectively mean ‘emperor’ from now onwards.

² PONTIF[ex] MAXIM[us] – ‘Chief Priest’, a title assumed by the Pope in the Christian era.



YORYM-C83913



LANCUM-4EA65B



SUR-797C1C

Contemporary Copies

Not all of the 260 coins on the Database are official pieces. There is a significant number of plated copies which has been recorded.



SF-126A43

This coin is plated and of a rather crude style with poor lettering.



SOM-2C162A

On this coin, the copper-alloy core is clearly visible where the plating has been penetrated.

Finds of Tiberian *denarii* in Britain

Although these coins were struck before the Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43, most of them would have arrived after AD 43. The pay chests of the Roman army at this time would have been full of earlier Republican *denarii*, and *denarii* of Augustus and Tiberius. Because *denarii* of Caligula and Claudius are relatively rare and did not come to Britain in large numbers, many 'Conquest Period' (c. AD 43-50s) hoards in Britain terminate with coins of Tiberius.

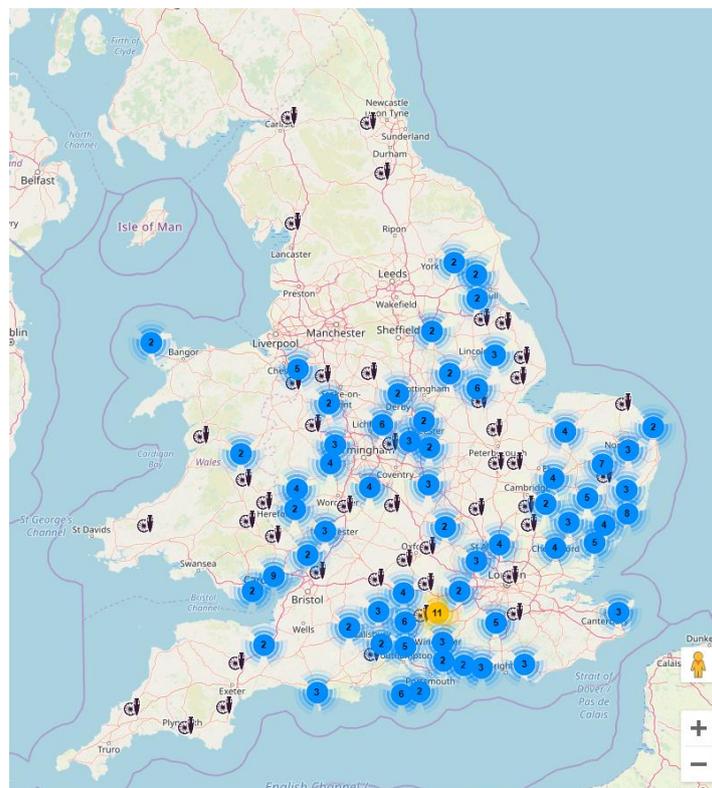


The Malpas Hoard (Cheshire: LVPL-DFD9E1 / IARCH-BCCA77), found in 2014, consists of 7 Iron Age gold staters and 28 silver *denarii* (of the Republican period, Augustus and Tiberius). You can see several Tiberian coins in the image. It was probably buried around AD 50. I have argued that this hoard might have been buried around the time that Caratacus was defeated in Wales and fled to Cartimandua in Yorkshire (c. AD 50).

See Sam's article on his academia page about the Malpas Hoard and Caratacus here: https://www.academia.edu/40375028/Sam_Moorhead_The_Malpas_Hoard_and_the_Flight_of_Caratacus_2017



This map shows the hoards on the PAS (IARCH) which terminate with Tiberius. We can discuss this more when we have looked at the map below which shows single finds of Tiberian *denarii* on the PAS Database, but there are clusters in the south and in the West Midlands.



This distribution of Tiberian *denarii* on the PAS Database shows concentrations in: Hampshire and Sussex; East Anglia; the Midlands / Welsh Marches and Wales; Lincolnshire up to York.

It is not clear why there is a concentration in Hampshire and Sussex, but this might be to do with the formation of a Client Kingdom under Cogidubnus (or Togidubnus) after the invasion. East Anglian finds probably reflect the initial advance on Colchester in AD 43 and the subsequent garrisoning of forts in and around Suffolk as a result of the Boudican Revolt in AD 60/61.

The cluster of finds and hoards in the Midlands and into Wales is very significant and this is a picture of coin-loss which has only really become apparent since the passing of the Treasure Act and the formation of the PAS in 1997. What we are seeing here is a strong Roman military presence in the West Midlands and on the Welsh border (with fortresses and forts such as Wroxeter, Clyro and Kinvaston) which was needed until the Romans finally subdued Wales under Agricola in the late AD 70s. It is interesting to note that much of this region (eg. Herefordshire and Shropshire) does not have significant coin-loss in later periods – it has its heyday in the conquest period as far as coin-loss is concerned (sorry Peter!).

That very few coins are found north of York should not surprise us. Between the coinage reforms of Nero in AD 64 and the reign of Hadrian (AD 117-38), earlier Republican and Imperial coins were withdrawn from circulation so were increasingly not (with the exception of Mark Antony *denarii*, which were of a baser silver) available for soldiers pay. By the second century, these Tiberian *denarii* have largely left circulation.

Greenwich, 20 March 2020