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# DAILY COIN RELIEF!

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

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Issue 14 by Andrew Brown – 2 April 2020

### **Faustina II and a new *Coin of British Association***

*Annia Galeria Faustina Minor*, more commonly known as Faustina the Younger or Faustina II (AD 147-175), was the youngest child of Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161) and his wife Faustina the Elder (died AD 141). Born in Rome in c.AD 130, she was the only child of Antoninus and Faustina to survive into adulthood and was initially betrothed to Lucius Verus (AD 161-169), the eldest son of Lucius Aelius (AD 136-138) who had been adopted by Hadrian as his first choice for heir to the Roman empire. Aelius and Hadrian both died in AD 138 and Hadrian's second adoptive son, Antoninus Pius, was elevated as his successor to the empire. Faustina's engagement to Verus was called off by Antoninus and instead in April or May AD 145 she was married to Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180), nephew of Faustina I, who had been adopted by Antoninus and Faustina I as their son – the two being adoptive brother and sister!



**Fig. 1:** Portrait head of Faustina II (© Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program)

Extensive coinage<sup>1</sup> was struck for Faustina II from AD 147 once she was granted the title of *Augusta* following the birth of her first child during the reign of Antoninus Pius (**Reece Period 7**: 194 coins on the PAS including 22 from the IARCW Welsh data) and continued through that of Marcus Aurelius until her death in AD 175 (**Reece Period 8**: 1075 coins on the PAS including 103 from the IARCW Welsh data). After her death a 'consecration' issue was also struck. All of her coinage is from the mint of Rome, with the full range of denominations represented on the PAS. I think it likely that the total number of coins on the database is actually more than the c.1200 suggested by searches under her name, as there will be many worn bronze coins of this period (particularly *dupondii* and *asses*) that can probably be attributed to her.

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<sup>1</sup> The standard references for Faustina II should be **RIC III** or the British Museum Catalogue (**BMC**) **IV**

## Marriage and family



**Fig. 2:** NMS-6C0C82

*Aureus* of Faustina II, c.AD 147-161

Obv.: FAVSTINA AVG-PII AVG FIL<sup>2</sup>,

Diademed and draped bust left

Rev.: CONCORDIA, A dove right

**RIC III, p. 94, no. 503b**

Coins struck for Marcus as Caesar and Faustina II point to the marriage between the two in AD 145 (**Figs. 2-3**). *Concordia* represents the married love between them and is fantastically represented on an *aureus* in the British Museum where she shelters the two small figures of Aurelius and Faustina (**Fig. 3**). There are no examples of this or other types on the PAS that overtly refer to the marriage, but an *aureus* of Faustina from Norfolk (**Fig. 2**; NMS-6C0C82) has a CONCORDIA reverse type with the dove of Venus representing their marriage.

**Fig. 3:** BM R.12557 © British Museum

Obv.: AVRELIVS CAE-SAR AVG PII F,  
Bare head right.

Rev.: CONCORDIA TR POT III, COS II,  
Concordia standing front, head left, sheltering  
figures of Marcus Aurelius and Faustina

**RIC III no. 441**



Faustina and Marcus had 14 children – 8 sons and 6 daughters (including two sets of twins) – only six of which lived beyond childhood but included in their number a future Empress in *Annia Aurelia Galeria Lucilla* (AD 164-169) and Emperor in *Lucius Aurelius Commodus* (AD 175-192). Lucilla was married to Lucius Verus, Marcus' adopted brother, in part to secure the relationship between the two brothers once they rose to power following Antoninus' death in AD 161. Commodus, of course, rose to power following his father's death in 180 and is perhaps remembered more for his megalomania than anything else!

Faustina and Marcus' children appear on both of their coinages, with examples in silver and bronze recorded on the PAS (**Figs.**). One type carries the legend SAECVLI FELICIT (*Happiness of the Age*) and depicts two children on a throne, probably Commodus and his twin who died in infancy, Antoninus (**Figs.**). There are 13 PAS examples, 4 *denarii* and 9 *sestertii*.



**Fig. 4:** LIN-53F5C4

*Denarius* of Faustina II, c.AD 161-175

Obv.: FAVSTINA AVGVSTA, Draped bust right

Rev.: SAECVLI FELICIT, Two children  
seated on a throne, probably Antoninus and  
Commodus.

**RIC III, p. 271, no. 712**

<sup>2</sup> The long obverse legend on coins struck under Antoninus FAVSTINA AVG[usta] PII AVG[ustus] FIL[ia] references her father Antoninus: *Faustina Augusta, daughter of the pious Antoninus*

**Fig. 5:** WAW-3901D4

*Sestertius* of Faustina II, c.AD 161-175  
Obv.: FAVSTINA AVGVSTA, Draped bust right.

Rev.: SAECVLI FELICIT, S C, Two children seated on a throne, probably Antoninus and Commodus.

**RIC III, p. 346, no. 1665**



Other issues depict Fecunditas personified as the fruitfulness of the Imperial marriage, alongside anything from one to four children. There are approximately 20 examples on the PAS database carrying the legend FECVND AVGVSTAE (*to the fertility of the Empress*), 6 *denarii*, the remainder bronze denominations, including five IARCW records. The distinctive reverse type (**Fig. 6**) shows Fecunditas standing left between two girls, an infant in each arm.



**Fig. 6:** BH-390801

*Denarius* of Faustina II, AD 161-175

Obv.: FAVSTINA AVGVSTA, Draped bust right

Rev.: FECVND AVGVSTAE, Fecunditas standing left between two girls, an infant in each arm.

**RIC III, p. 268, no. 676**



As the Imperial family grows, so too do the numbers of children on the coins, this time Felicitas represented with six of the children! (**Fig. 7**). There are c.10 PAS examples in silver and bronze.

**Fig. 7:** SUR-C03D6E

*Denarius* of Faustina II, c.AD 161-175

Obv.: FAVSTINA AVGVSTA, Draped bust right

Rev.: TEMPOR FELIC, Felicitas standing left between four children, infant in each arm.

**RIC III, p.271, no. 719**



Faustina's coinage is typically linked with the life of the imperial family but also to the major Roman goddesses. Be careful when looking in particular at the worn bronze coinage of Faustina, her features are very similar to that of her daughter Lucilla and the two can easily be confused.



### A new Coin of British Association (Fig. 8)

One of the huge benefits of the PAS data and the volume of Roman coinage recorded through the Scheme is the potential for new discovery. In 2010 five *dupondii* and *asses* were identified for Faustina II of a type that is unlisted in RIC or BMC<sup>3</sup>. They have a reverse type depicting Venus that is similar stylistically to coins of Marcus Aurelius and dates to the period c.AD 153-155, the point at which Britannia receives extensive batches of bronze coinage from Rome. Their findspots all in Britain led to the suggestion that this is a new Coin of British Association like the Antoninus Pius Britannia types seen in **Daily Coin Relief no. 2**. The type is as follows<sup>4</sup>:

Obv.: FAVSTINA AVG PII AVG FIL, Draped bust right.

Rev.: VENVS AVG, S C, Venus standing left holding an apple and leaning on column<sup>5</sup>

Mint of Rome



Fig. 8: IOW-1358B4

All are *dupondii* and *asses*, although it can be difficult to distinguish between the two as PAS finds, particularly on worn examples. Since 2010 a number of new examples have appeared on the PAS and to date the total stands at 10 coins (including one from a hoard on the Isle of Wight – IOW-4DDD66) that can be securely identified and a further three that are worn but appear to be of this type, giving 13 examples in total. The best example remains the Isle of Wight coin (Fig. 8), but other coins display the details well (Figs. 9-12). Please remember to photo if you have any of these types for recording!



Fig. 9: SUSS-D335F5



Fig. 10: HAMP-77EDC5



Fig. 11: SWYOR-A6D626



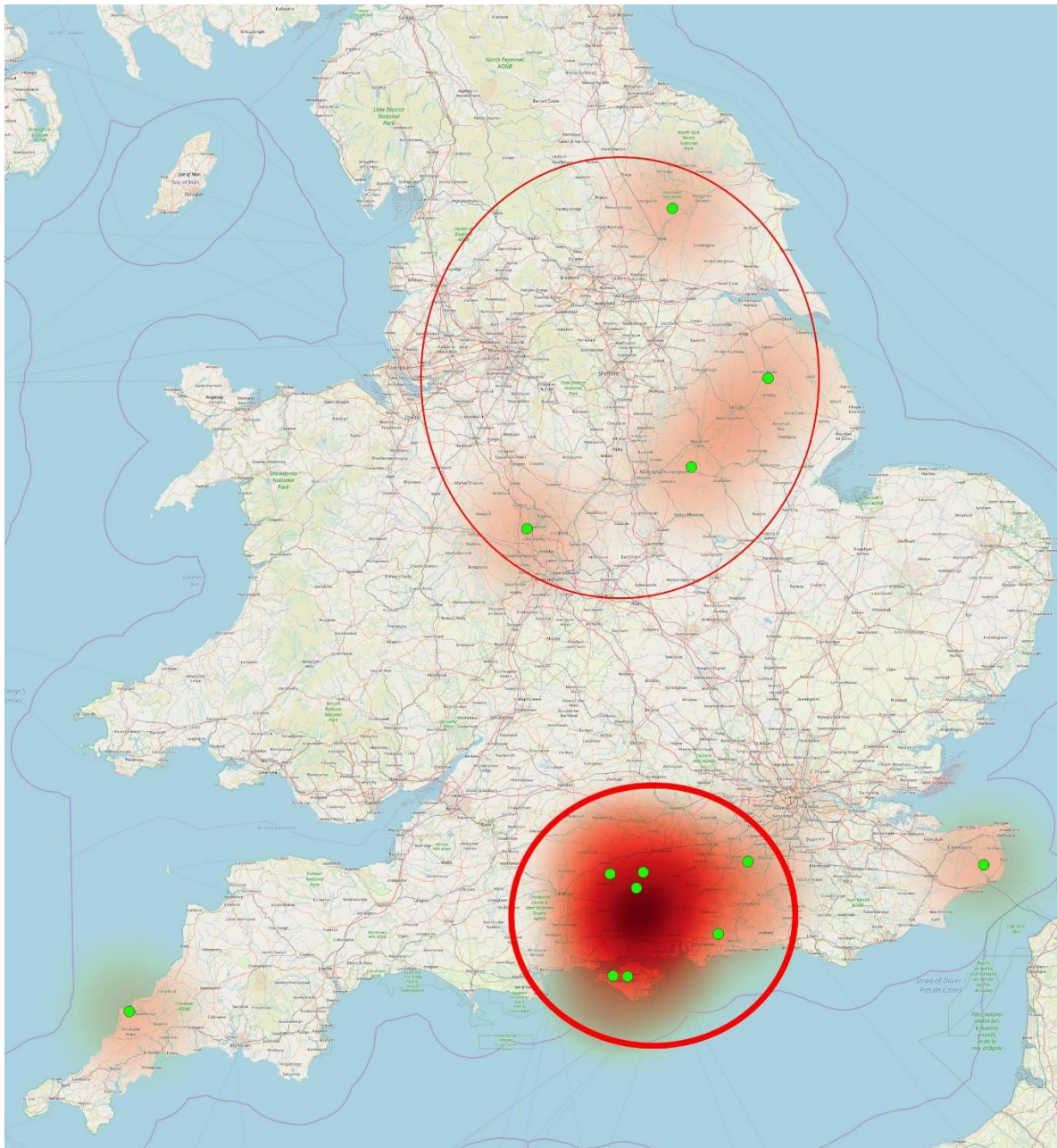
Fig. 12: CORN-DC7103

<sup>3</sup> See S. Moorhead, 'Coin Register', *British Numismatic Journal* 81 (2011), p. 270, nos. 28-31

<sup>4</sup> See also S. Moorhead 'Coins of British Association' on Sam's Academia page: <https://tinyurl.com/v9gu4zz>

<sup>5</sup> Note – the column on some examples is quite thin and could easily be confused with drapery.

Thirteen coins is not a huge number of coins to work with, although it represents c.10% of the total number of bronze coins so far identified for her during Antoninus' reign on the PAS. What is more interesting is the distribution of these coins. When plotted (**Fig. 13**), it is clear that there is a concentration, comprising seven of the known examples, in southern England – around Hampshire and the Isle of Wight in particular. The handful of other outliers do not show any coherent distribution pattern, although there is perhaps the beginning of a second grouping in the Midlands through to Yorkshire (but with just four coins this can't be fully substantiated at the moment). It remains for new examples to be recognised and identified in order to fully interpret what this means, but this new type of Faustina II does appear to have a very southern British distribution pattern.



**Fig. 13:** Distribution of all known examples of the new Faustina type, with concentrations in the south



## Death and legacy

Faustina's life was in many respects shrouded in intrigue. She had married at just 15 years of age and although Marcus remained very loyal to her contemporary accounts allege her adulterous nature and even that Commodus was illegitimate as a result: "*Many writers, however, state that Commodus was really begotten in adultery, since it is generally known that Faustina, while at Caieta, used to choose out lovers from among the sailors and gladiators*" ('Life of Marcus Aurelius' *Historia Augusta* 19.7). It seems though that Marcus even elevated some of her lovers to high rank. She did, however, travel extensively with Marcus and his army, earning their respect and making a home in the camps. She died in the winter of AD 175 at a military camp in Halala, Cappadocia (Turkey).

The devotion to Faustina by Marcus is demonstrated in a number of ways. Halala was renamed *Faustinopolis* in her memory, baths at Miletos (Turkey) were named after her, Marcus established a "*new order of Faustinian girls*" in her honour, and she was buried in the Mausoleum of Hadrian in Rome, deified, with a temple erected in her memory. An extensive posthumous coinage (Figs. 14-17; over 100 PAS coins), probably struck until Aurelius' death in AD 180, reflects this devotion and the respect she garnered from the army. Like her mother, she is given the title DIVA as well as PIA (*pius*), again drawing a link to her father. Of particular interest are coins that name her MATRI CASTRORVM (*To the Mother of the Camp*) showing her link to the army – we have just two examples on the PAS.



**Fig. 14:** HESH-4CAC04  
Sestertius, Diva Faustina II, c.AD 176-180  
Obv.: DIVAE FAVSTIN AVG [MATR CASTROR], Draped and veiled bust right  
Rev.: CONSECRATIO, A pyre with Faustina on the summit  
**RIC III, p.350, no. 1709**



**Fig. 15:** SUSS-B6BFD0  
Sestertius, Diva Faustina II, c.AD 176-180  
Obv.: DIVAE FAVSTINAE PIAE, Draped and veiled bust right.  
Rev.: MATRI CASTRORVM, S C, Faustina seated left on throne, three standards in front of her  
**RIC III, p. 350, no. 1711**



**Fig. 16:** NMS-A30CD6  
Denarius, Diva Faustina II, c.AD 176-180  
Obv.: DIVA FAVSINA, Draped bust right  
Rev.: CONSECRATIO, A peacock facing  
**RIC III, p. 273, no. 743**



**Fig. 17:** HAMP-68FC53  
Sestertius, Diva Faustina II, c.AD 176-180  
Obv.: DIVA FAVSTINS PIA, Draped bust right  
Rev.: CONSECRATIO, Deified Faustina ascending to heaven on a peacock, right.  
**RIC III, p. 349, no. 1702**