
DAILY COIN RELIEF!

A BLOG FOR ANCIENT COINS ON THE PAS
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The IOVI CONSERVATORI *nummi* of AD 317-24



In AD 313, after the death of Maximinus II at Tarsus, Constantine I (AD 306-37) and Licinius I (AD 308-24) became joint *Augusti* of the Roman Empire: Constantine in the West and Licinius in the East. However, relations were never good. In 317, in an attempt to ensure the continuation of their respective dynasties, they agreed to the promotion of Constantine's two sons, Crispus and Constantine (II), to Caesars, and of Licinius' son Licinius (II). Between 317 and 324, when Licinius was finally defeated by Constantine, there was a continued strain in relationships.

After the SOLI INVICTO COMITI coinage, with Sol the Sun God, ended by AD 320, the coinage in Constantine's realm became generally devoid of religious symbolism with types referring to Victory, the army and the '*blessings of peace*'. Constantine had taken to Christianity so was not proclaiming pagan gods, but was probably not proclaiming Christianity so as not to alienate the many pagans in the Empire.

Licinius, however, although he signed the 'Edict of Toleration' with Constantine at Milan in AD 313, was to favour paganism. This is seen on the coins struck in his realm, from Heraclea to Alexandria, where Jupiter is pre-eminent. IOVI CONSERVATORI AVG(G) / CAESS ('*To Jupiter the Protector of our Augusti / Caesars*') and IOVI CONSERVATORI ('*To Jupiter the Protector*') are were the most common legends. These coins were struck for Licinius I and II, as well as for Constantine I and II and Crispus. This was the last major issue of coins extolling a pagan god struck in the Roman Empire.

IOVI CONSERVATORI AVGG; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe in right hand and vertical sceptre in left. AD 317-20

This type was struck at Nicomedia, Cyzicus, Antioch and Alexandria. The coins on the PAS Database were struck for Licinius I (**Fig. 1**) and Constantine I (**Fig. 2**) from the mint at Antioch.



Fig. 1. Copper-alloy *nummus* of Constantine I (AD 306-37)

Mint of Cyzicus, AD 317-20

Obv. IMP LICINIVS AVGG; Laureate and draped left, holding mappa in right and globe in left

Rev. IOVI CONSERVATORI AVGG; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe in right hand and vertical sceptre in left.

Mintmark: Wreath A // SMK

RIC VII, p. 644, cf. no. 9.

(IOW-E8F517)

Fig. 2. Copper-alloy *nummus* of Constantine I (AD 306-37)

Mint of Cyzicus, AD 317-20

Obv. CONSTANTINVS AVGG; Laureate and draped left, holding *mappa*¹ in right and globe in left

Rev. IOVI CONSERVATORI AVGG; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe in right hand and vertical sceptre in left.

Mintmark: Wreath A // SMK²

RIC VII, p. 644, no. 8

(DOR-F9F824)



¹ The *mappa* was the cloth thrown down by the emperor to start chariot races in the circus. I am convinced that the idea was taken up by an American academic for the towels thrown down by umpires in American Football.

² SMK = Sacra Moneta Cyzici, 'The Sacred Money/Mint of Cyzicus'

IOVI CONSERVATORI CAESS; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe and vertical sceptre; to left, captive. AD 317-20

This type was only struck at Antioch and the only coins on the PAS Database are for Licinius II (Figs. 3-4)



Fig. 3. Copper-alloy *nummus* of Licinius II (AD 317-24)

Mint of Antioch, AD 317-20

Obv. D N VAL LICIN LICINIVS NOB C; Laureate and draped left, holding mappa in right hand and globe and sceptre in left.

Rev. IOVI CONSERVATORI CAESS; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe and vertical sceptre; to left, captive

Mintmark: Wreath Γ^3 // SMANT

RIC VII, pg.680, no.29

(DOR-8D2479)

Fig. 4. Copper-alloy nummus of Licinius II (AD 317-24)

Mint of Antioch, AD 317-20

Obv. D N VAL LICIN LICINIVS NOB C; Laureate and draped left, holding mappa in right hand and globe and sceptre in left.

Rev. IOVI CONSERVATORI CAESS; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe and vertical sceptre.

Mintmark: Wreath H⁴ // SMANT

RIC VII, pg.680, no.29

(BH-562597)



³ Γ denotes this coin was struck in the third workshop at Antioch

⁴ H denotes this coin was struck in the eighth workshop at Antioch



Fig.5. Fourth Century Mints in the Roman Empire

IOVI CONSERVATORI; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe and eagle-tipped sceptre; to left, eagle with wreath in beak; to right, seated captive.

These coins were struck at Heraclea, Nicomedia, Cyzicus, Antioch and Alexandria. They are quite common for Eastern mint coins in Britain with about fifty on the database (see **Table 1** below).⁵

In the reverse field are the letters XIII⁷ which stand for 12 and a half. This mark shows that the value of the *nummus* had been halved from 25 to 12.5 *common denarii* (a unit of account used in the Tetrarchic Reforms of AD 294/6). This drop in value of the *nummus* (which had become increasingly lighter since it was introduced in AD 294/6) is also shown by a papyrus record tipping someone off that the emperors were going to halve the value of the coins.⁶



Fig. 6. Copper-alloy *nummus* of Licinius I (AD 308-24) (GLO-AFE9F5)

Mint of Cyzicus, AD 321-4

Obv. IMP C VAL LICIN LICINIVS P F AVG;

Radiate⁷, draped and cuirassed right

Rev. IOVI CONSERVATORI; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe and eagle-tipped sceptre; to left, eagle with wreath in beak; to right, seated captive.

Mintmark: - X / - III⁷ // SMKB

RIC VII, p. 645, no. 15.

⁵ More editing is required to finalise total number of coins of the various types included in this piece.

⁶ Richard Abdy, 'The Tetrarchy and the House of Constantine', in W. Metcalf (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage* (2012), pp. 591-2

⁷ On these issues, the *Augusti* – senior emperors – Licinius I and Constantine I have radiate crowns.



Fig. 7. *nummus* of Licinius I (AD 308-24)
Mint of Nicomedia, AD 321-4
Obv. IMP C VAL LICIN LICINIVS P F AVG; Radiate, draped and cuirassed right
Rev. IOVI CONSERVATORI; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe and eagle-tipped sceptre; to left, eagle with wreath in beak; to right, seated captive.
Mintmark: - X / - IIIΓ // SMNΔ
RIC VII, p. 607, no. 44
LON-5C86A1

Fig. 8. *nummus* of Licinius I (AD 308-24)
Mint of Alexandria, AD 321-4
Obv. IMP C VAL LICIN LICINIVS P F AVG; Radiate, draped and cuirassed right
Rev. IOVI CONSERVATORI; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe and eagle-tipped sceptre; to left, eagle with wreath in beak; to right, seated captive.
Mintmark: - X / - IIIΓ // [S]MALB
RIC VII, p. 708, no. 28
BM-CC7996



Fig. 9. *nummus* of Licinius II (AD 317-24)
Mint of Cyzicus, AD 321-4
Obv. D N VAL LICIN LICINIVS NOB C; Helmeted, draped and cuirassed bust left, holding spear over shoulder in right hand and shield in left
Rev. IOVI CONSERVATORI; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe and eagle-tipped sceptre; to left, eagle with wreath in beak; to right, seated captive.
Mintmark: - X / - IIIΓ // SMKΓ
RIC VII, p. 646, no. 18.
BERK-1238E8



Fig. 10. Copper *alloy* nummus of Constantine I (AD 306-337)
Mint of Heraclea, AD 317-20
Obv. IMP C FL VAL CONSTANTINVS P F AVG; Radiate, draped and cuirassed right
Rev. Obv. D N FL CRISPVS NOB CAES; Laureate, draped and cuirassed right
Rev. IOVI CONSERVATORI; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe and eagle-tipped sceptre; to left, eagle with wreath in beak; to right, seated captive.
Mintmark: - X / - IIIΓ // SMHB
RIC VII, p. 548, no. 51
KENT-B49523





Fig. 11. Copper-alloy *nummus* of Crispus (AD 317-26)

Mint of Cyzicus, AD 321-4

Obv. D N FL CRISPVS NOB CAES; Laureate, draped and cuirassed right

Rev. IOVI CONSERVATORI; Jupiter standing left, holding Victory on globe and eagle-tipped sceptre; to left, eagle with wreath in beak; to right, seated captive.

Mintmark: - X / - IIIΓ // SMKT

RIC VII, p. 645. no. 17

SF-067CA1

Mints and Rulers

Table 1 shows a breakdown of 49 pieces of the IOVI CONSERVATORI type. It is immediately clear that Licinius I and II have the lion's share of the coins, with 82% of the identifiable coins. This should not surprise us as this was Licinius' territory and more coins would have been struck in the local emperors' names. The most prolific mint appears to be Cyzicus with 58% of the identifiable coins. Initially, one would assume that the mint at Cyzicus was the most prolific, but the excavations at Sardis had 8 coins from Heraclea, 10 from Cyzicus and 21 from Nicomedia, suggesting that Nicomedia had a greater output.⁸ This apparent contradiction requires more research.

Ruler / Mint	Heraclea	Nicomedia	Cyzicus	Antioch	Alexandria	Uncertain
Licinius I	5	4	11		1	3
Licinius II		1	7		2	3
Constantine I	2		1		1	
Crispus			2			1
Constantine II						1
Uncertain			1			3
Totals	7	5	22		4	11

Table 1. The IOVI CONSERVATORI, AD 321-4, coins on the PAS Database by Emperor and Mint

⁸ T. V. Buttrey *et al*, *Greek, Roman and Islamic Coins from Sardis* (Harvard, 1981)

Distribution of the IOVI CONSERVATORI coins

There does not seem to be any discernible pattern in the distribution of the coins from the Cyzicus Mint, although they do not appear to penetrate much north of the Humber.

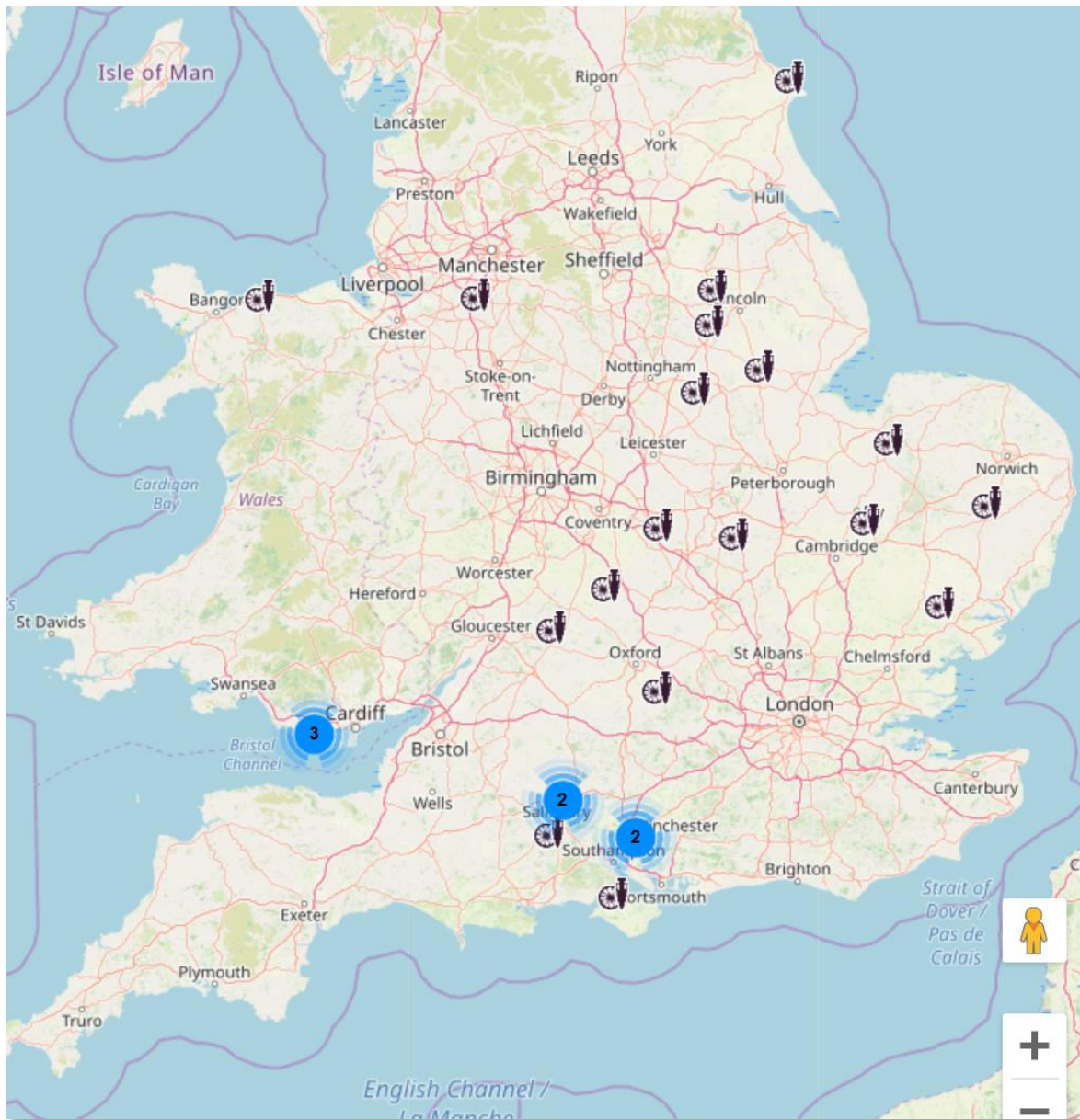


Fig. 12. Distribution of the IOVI CONSERVATORI, AD 321-4, coins from the Mint of Cyzicus

Greenwich, 3 April 2020