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# DAILY COIN RELIEF!

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

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### Fortuna



Fortuna<sup>1</sup> (also Fors or Fors Fortuna) was the Roman goddess and personification of fortune, chance, or luck (good and bad!) and the counterpart to the Greek goddess Tyche. A goddess of fertility as bringer of the annual harvest, of female fecundity, gambling, and of military success<sup>2</sup>, she was the daughter of Jupiter.<sup>3</sup> Shrines and temples were dedicated to her in various locations and to her various guises. Notable are temples in Rome to *Fortuna Muliebris* (*Fortune of Women*), *Fortuna Huiusce Diei* (*Fortune of this day*), and an early temple next to the Tiber, later twinned with Mater Mutata (possibly in the *forum Boarium*), supposedly patronised by Rome's sixth king, Servius Tullius (575-535 BC), giving her an additional role as a kingmaker.

Important oracular cult centres appeared to her at Antium (Anzio, Italy) and Praeneste (Palestrina, Italy), the latter in her role as *Fortuna Primigenia* where she was worshipped as a mother-goddess (her cult also adopted at Rome). A statue here was described by Cicero as “*of the infant Jupiter, who is represented as sitting with Juno in the lap of Fortune and reaching for her breast, and it is held in the highest reverence by mothers*” (Cicero, *De Divinatione* 2.85). An urban festival of *Fors Fortuna* was celebrated in Rome on the 24<sup>th</sup> June with participants travelling down the Tiber by boat to her shrine, but she is also associated with other festivals such as those of *Fortuna Virilis* (1<sup>st</sup> April) and *Fortuna Publica* (5<sup>th</sup> April), Ovid talks of the latter noting that “*he who shall say, “On this day of old the temple of Public Fortune was dedicated on the hill of Quirinus” will tell the truth*” (*Fasti*, 4.375-376).

Fortuna features extensively on Roman coinage from the Republican period through to the first few years of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, most notably in the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. Typically her

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<sup>1</sup> A good introduction to Fortuna and her cults can be found in R. Joy Littlewood ‘Fortuna’ *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome* (2010), Vol 1, pp. 210-212; for coinage see also

<sup>2</sup> She is referenced on the *Ara Pacis* in Rome.

<sup>3</sup> Fortuna appears as an Italian goddess before being later conflated with the Greek goddess Tyche

attributes include a rudder and cornucopiae, sometimes a globe or a wheel, and occasionally other elements such as ears of corn<sup>4</sup>, a baton<sup>5</sup>, caduceus, etc. Numerous altars to Fortuna exist from Roman Britain – from the bathhouse at Risingham fort, in Manchester where she is *Fortuna Conservatrix* (*Fortuna the protector*), and Vindolanda where she is *Fortunae populi romani* (*Fortune of the Roman People*).<sup>6</sup> She is also prominent on Roman coins recorded through the PAS, with 1,115 records that reference her.

### ***Republican and Early Imperial Coinage***

Although Fortuna does appear on coinage of the Roman Republic, she is by no means as prominent as in the Imperial period.



**Fig. 1:** *Denarius* of Q. Sicinius, c.49 BC

Obv.: FORT P·R, Head of Fortuna populi Romani right, wearing diadem  
Rev.: Q·SICINIVS III·VIR, Palm-branch tied with fillet and winged caduceus in saltire, wreath above.  
Travelling mint.

**RRC 440/1** (WILT-156B18)



This is the only example of this coin type for Q. Sicinius on the PAS and depicts Fortuna in her guise of *Fortuna populi Romani* (fortune of the Roman people).



**Fig. 2:** **BM 2002,0102.4939**, *Denarius* of Augustus issued by Q. Rustius, c.19 BC

Obv.: Q RVSTIVS FORTVNAE ANTIAT, Jugate busts of Fortuna Victrix, with round helmet, and Fortuna Felix, with diadem, right on bar with rams' heads

Rev.: CAESARI AVGVSTO EX SC, Ornamented altar inscribed FOR RE  
Mint of Rome

<sup>4</sup>In her role as bringer of the harvest – there is a house in Ostia, the *Domus della Fortuna Annonaria* that preserves a statue that may represent *Fortuna Annonaria*, the abundance of grain particularly important for Ostia as Rome's port.

<sup>5</sup> Be careful not to confuse Fortuna with Providentia, who holds baton and globe!

<sup>6</sup> See *Roman Inscriptions of Britain (RIB)* nos. 575, 1210, and 1684. RIB records 37 inscriptions that mention Fortuna (<https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/>).

The example illustrated here is a British Museum coin – there is only one record on the PAS database with this coin type listed (WMID4117) but it lacks an image. The jugate bust on the obverse relates to the cult centre at Antium where she is depicted as two goddesses, the Sisters of Antium. This issue celebrates the return of Augustus from the East. **Fortuna Redux**, here abbreviated on the reverse as FOR[t] RE[divx], is a common legend that refers to Fortuna's role as the 'bringer-back', ensuring the safe return of the emperor from his journeys overseas.

***Fortunae augusti* – 'To the Fortune of the Emperor'**

Fortuna as the *fortune of the emperor* appears often on coinage from the 1<sup>st</sup> century onward. In the Flavian period, Domitian (AD 81-96) in particular produced large numbers of *dupondii* and *asses* that depict her in this guise – there are over 60 PAS examples (including 5 IARCW Welsh coins). The type typically depicts Fortuna standing left holding a rudder that she uses to guide the world (or the course of events) and a cornucopia to symbolise abundance and fertility.



**Fig. 3:**

Copper-alloy *as* of Domitian (AD 81-96), dating to c.AD 87  
 Obv.: IMP CAES DOMIT AVG GERM COS XIII CENS PER P P, Laureate bust right with aegis  
 Rev.: FORTVNAE AVGVSTI, S C, Fortuna standing left holding rudder and cornucopiae.  
 Mint of Rome  
**RIC II (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), p.302, no. 545**  
 SF-5A1BE1

**Fig. 4:**

*Dupondius* of Domitian, c.AD 95-96  
 Obv.: IMP CAES DOMIT AVG GERM COS XVII CENS PER P P, Laureate right  
 Rev.: FORTVNAE AVGVSTI, S C, Fortuna standing left with rudder and cornucopia  
**RIC II (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), p. 325, no. 801**  
 WILT-AAA276







**Fig. 5:**

*Denarius* of Nerva, c.AD 96-98

Obv.: IMP NERVA CAES AVG P M TR P  
COS III P P, Laureate head right

Rev.: FORTVNA AVGVST, Fortuna  
standing left with rudder and cornucopiae  
Rome

**RIC II, p. 224, no. 16**

LIN-4FEED8

There are 26 *denarii* with Fortuna types for Nerva on the PAS, mostly **RIC II nos. 4 or 16**

Only one *aureus* on the PAS has a Fortuna type:



**Fig. 6:**

*Aureus* of Vespasian, c.AD 71

Obv.: IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS  
AVG TR P, Laureate head right

Rev.: FORTVNA AVGVST, Fortuna  
left holding rudder and cornucopiae  
Lugdunum

**RIC II (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), p. 140, no. 1116**

NMS-7EB9E8

Don't forget that the legend could be abbreviated to FORTVNA AVG and that there are occasionally some oddities, like this example of Carausius:

**Fig. 7:**

Radiate of Carausius, c.AD 286-293

Obv.: IMP CARAVSIVS P F A[?],

Radiate, draped, and cuirassed bust right

Rev.: FORTVNA AVG, Half-length bust  
of Fortuna right holding olive branch and  
wreath? All within a wreath.

RSR mint

**Cf. RIC IV.2 no. 792var**

WILT-4BC67D



### ***Fortuna redvx (fortunae reduci) – for the safe return (of the emperor)***

Perhaps the most common Fortuna type seen on the PAS is as *Fortuna Redux*, in her role to ensure the safe return of the emperor to Rome. The legend can appear in various forms – *FORTVNA REDVX*, *FORTVNAE REDVCI*, *FORT RED*, etc. and Fortuna appears both standing and seated, occasionally with additional adjuncts that make her identification possible.

This type is particularly prevalent in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century coinage on the PAS database. Gallienus alone has over 150 *FORTVNA REDVX* examples, the majority from the mint of Rome of the same type that appears in large number (562 coins) in the Cunetio hoard (**Cunetio no. 1215**).



**Fig. 8:**

Radiate of Gallienus (sole reign), c.AD 260-268

Obv.: GALLIENVS AVG, Radiate head right

Rev.: FORTVNA REDVX, Fortuna standing left holding rudder on globe and cornucopiae

Rome: -  $\zeta$ /-

**Cunetio no. 1215**

WMID-16B067

**Fig. 9:**

*Denarius* of Vespasian, c.AD 70

Obv.: IMP CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG, Laureate head right

Rev.: COS ITER FORT RED, Fortuna standing left holding prow and cornucopia

Rome

**RIC II (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), p. 60, no. 19**

WMID-9ED725



Here Fortuna is depicted holding a ship's prow instead of a rudder to indicate the safe arrival of the new emperor, Vespasian, to Rome in AD 70.

She is also depicted seated and this *sestertius* of Clodius Albinus (**Fig. 10**) shows her clearly – in this instance she is to bring back Albinus from Britain to Rome. One thing to note here is a new adjunct – a wheel – beneath her seat. This appears first with the coinage of Albinus and Pertinax as 'Fortune's wheel' and it continues into later periods. Although the radiate of Aurelian (**Fig. 11**) below is in relatively good condition, bronze coinage can often appear quite worn, so the wheel may prove to be a very visible and useful diagnostic tool.



**Fig. 10:**

*Sestertius* of Clodius Albinus, AD 194-195

Obv.: D CL SEPT AL-BIN CA[ES], Bare headed bust right with drapery on shoulders

Rev.: FO[RT] REDVCI COS [II] [S C], Fortuna seated left holding rudder on globe and cornucopiae, wheel beneath seat

Rome

**RIC IV.1, p. 52, no. 53b**

SF-E50C81

**Fig. 11:**

Radiate of Aurelian, c.AD 270-275

Obv.: IMP AVRELIANVS AVG, Radiate and cuirassed right

Rev.: FORTVNA REDVX, Fortuna seated left holding rudder and cornucopiae, wheel beneath seat

DOR-A6BC76



It is worth remembering that sometimes the legend can be found beneath Fortuna's seat, as on these examples from Trajan (Fig. 12) and Hadrian (Fig. 13). The former was perhaps less than successful in calling for Fortuna's help, since Trajan died suddenly in Cilicia, Turkey, *en route* to Rome...!

**Fig. 12:**

Denarius of Trajan, AD 114-117

Obv.: IMP CAES NER TRAIANO OPTIMO AVG GER DAC, Laureate and draped bust right

Rev.: PARTHICO P M TR P COS VI P P S P Q R, FORT RED (in exergue), Fortuna seated left holding rudder and cornucopiae

Rome

RIC II no. 315



**Fig. 13:**

As of Hadrian, c.AD 122<sup>7</sup>

Obv.: IMP CAESAR TRAIAN HADRIANVS AVG, Laureate, draped, and cuirassed bust right

Rev.: P M TR P COS III, SC, FORT RED (in exergue), Fortuna seated left holding rudder and cornucopiae

Rome

RIC II, p. 421, no. 617

ASHM-07B4D2



<sup>7</sup> This type was identified by D. Walker in his study of the coins from the Sacred Spring at Bath as a possible *Coin of British Association* for Hadrian



Some less common types

**FORTVNA OBSEQVENS** (*Fortuna following the emperor*) – for Antoninus Pius only (6 PAS examples)



**Fig. 14:**

*Denarius* of Antoninus Pius, c.AD 157-158

Obv.: ANTONINVS AVG PIVS P P TR P XXI, Laureate head right

Rev.: FORTVNA OBSEQVENS, COS IIII, Fortuna standing left holding rudder and cornucopiae.

Rome

**RIC III, p. 58, no. 271**

YORYM-3E1B18

**FORTVNAE MVLIEBRI** (*To the Fortune of Women*) – for Faustina II (4 PAS examples)



**Fig. 15:**

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

Obv.: FAVSTINA AVGVSTA, Draped bust right

Rev.: FORTVNAE MVLIEBRI, Fortuna seated left holding rudder and cornucopiae

Rome

**RIC III, p. 269, no. 683**

LANCUM-4FAE32

**FORTVNAE MANENTI** (*to Fortune which remains (with the emperor)*) (1 PAS example)



**Fig. 16:**

*Denarius* of Commodus, c.AD 186-189

Obv.: M COMM ANT P FEL AVG BRIT, Laureate head right

Rev.: FORTVNAE MANENTI, C V P P (in exergue), Fortuna seated left, holding horse by bridle and cornucopiae

Rome

**RIC III, p. 386, no. 191a**

BM-AA3304

**FORTVNAE FELICI** (*the happy fortune (that has made Julia empress)*) – 15 examples with several variants on PAS, all for Julia Domna

**Fig. 17:**

Plated copy of a *denarius* of Julia Domna, c.AD 196-211

Obv.: IVLIA AVGVSTA, Draped bust right  
Rev.: FORTVNAE FELICI, Fortuna seated left holding cornucopiae and rudder, child to her left

Copy of mint of Rome

**Cf. RIC IV.1, no. 554**

SF-50E163



**Latest examples**

The last Fortuna reverse types appear on *nummi* in the first few years of the 4<sup>th</sup> century with the First Tetrarchy. There are only five PAS examples, so these are not common coins.



**Fig. 18:**

*Nummus* of Galerius, c.AD 300-301

Obv.: MAXIMIANVS [NOBIL] CAESAR, Laureate head right

Rev.: FORTVNAE REDVCI AVGG NN, Fortuna standing left holding rudder over globe and cornucopiae.

Trier: - \*/BTR

**RIC VI, p. 192, no. 413**

SUR-9C7656

The reverse legend on this type, FORTVNAE REDVCI AVGG NN, indicates the call for a safe return of both *augusti* (AVGG) – this would presumably be Diocletian and Maximian. Note how Fortuna in this example very closely resembles Providentia with her baton/wand and globe, something to be careful of when identifying individual coins.

It is worth noting, too, that like many of the personifications and deities depicted on Roman coinage, Fortuna can appear with no reference at all made to her in the legend types. In these instances it is the attributes she carries with her noted above that identify her as Fortuna.

**Fig. 19:**

*Denarius* of Trajan, c.AD 103-111

Obv.: IMP TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P, Laureate head right

Rev.: COS V P P S P Q R OPTIMO PRINC, Fortuna standing left holding rudder and cornucopiae

Rome

**RIC II no. 122**

GLO-77CAFD





**Fig. 20:**

*Denarius* of Hadrian, c.AD 119-122

Obv.: IMP CAESAR TRAIAN

HADRIANVS AVG, Laureate bust

right, drapery on left shoulder

Rev.: TR P COS III, Fortuna

standing left holding rudder and

cornucopiae, leaning on column

Rome

**RIC II no. 86b**

WAW-F8CC27



Good luck searching for your Fortuna coins!

Anerley, 7 April 2020