
DAILY COIN RELIEF!

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

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The Coinage of Eugenius (AD 392-394)

From AD 379 to AD 392, Valentinian II was the ruler in the West, effectively taking orders from Theodosius I (AD 379-395). One of the key characters in the Roman court in the West was Arbogast, a Frankish general in the service of Rome. Tensions between Valentinian II and Arbogast grew, until Valentinian was found hanging dead in his bedroom. Foul play was suspected, but Arbogast claimed it was suicide. In Valentinian's place, Arbogast appointed Eugenius, a former teacher of rhetoric and grammar, as emperor in the West. Eugenius was the last Roman emperor to support paganism, allowing the re-dedication of the Temple of Venus and Rome (next to the Roman Forum) (**Fig. 1**) and the return of the Altar of Victory to the Senate House (Curia).



Fig. 1. The Temple of Venus and Rome from the Colosseum © Sam Moorhead

Eugenius moved east in 393, occupying Milan and taking control of the mint there and in Rome and Aquileia. He sent an embassy to Theodosius I in Constantinople asking for acknowledgement as an emperor, but Theodosius bided his time, made his son Honorius *Augustus* in the west, and mustered an army. After a two-day battle at Lake Frigidus, Eugenius and Arbogast were defeated; both lost their lives.

The Coinage of Eugenius

Eugenius inherited the mints of Trier, Lyon (Lugdunum) and Arles (Arelatum) when he became emperor. He struck gold, silver and bronze at Trier and Lyon, but only bronze at Arles. He struck gold and silver at Milan, but only bronze at Rome and Aquileia. There are no gold coins for Eugenius on the PAS Database, but there are silver and bronze pieces which will be discussed by mint. The standard reference for Eugenius' coinage is *Roman Imperial Coinage* IX (1933); for the bronze coinage, *Late Roman Bronze Coinage* (1961) is also useful. The more recent publication of the coins from the Hoxne hoard (2005) is also extremely helpful for the silver coins.¹

The Portrait of Eugenius

Eugenius' pagan leanings are clearly apparent as he is depicted bearded on all of his coins. He has a full, pointed, beard on most of his portraits at Trier and Lyon (see **Figs. 2-4; 6**); at Milan, it can be slightly more rounded (see **Figs. 8-9**). He also has a long, and sometimes 'Roman', nose. His portrait should not be confused with that of Julian (AD 360-3) which is also sometimes bearded, but the beard tends to be less pointed; also note that Julian's *siliquae* have Vota reverses so can be easily distinguished from the figurative reverses of Eugenius which all show Roma seated left.

Clipping

Many of Eugenius' *siliquae* are clipped, some heavily (see **Fig. 4**). This is especially the case for coins found in hoards which terminate with AD 397-402 or Constantine III (AD 407-11) issues, notably the Hoxne Hoard. When the clipping of *siliquae* occurred has been much debated. There was some slight clipping in the fourth century, but it began in earnest after AD 402; in fact, Andrew Burnett and Richard Abdy believe it really became endemic after AD 407.² What is interesting is that, because a number of the Eugenius pieces on the PAS Database were apparently lost or discarded before the period of endemic clipping, a quite high proportion of them are unclipped or lightly clipped (see **Figs. 2-3**). The reason for clipping is not entirely clear, but it does appear to have been carried out at a time when silver stocks were probably dwindling. There are many contemporary copies of late Roman *siliquae* found in Britain and when tested they have the same fineness of silver as the official issues, suggesting that clippings could be used to make new coins. This also suggests that an official authority was involved in the process, a supposition possibly supported by the fact that the clipping never encroaches on the image of the emperor. Also, it is possible that clippings were melted down to make ingots (such as those found in the Coleraine Hoard, on display at the British Museum).

¹ P. Guest, *The Late Roman Gold and Silver Coins from the Hoxne Treasure* (British Museum Press 2005). This is an extremely useful book which should be acquired by FLO hosts if at all possible.

² I summarise the arguments for the dating of clipping in S. Moorhead, 'The Coinage of the Later Roman Empire, AD 364-498', in W. Metcalf (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage* (2012), pp. 612-4

Eugenius Coins on the PAS Database

There are no gold coins for Eugenius on the PAS Database, but there are around 50 silver *siliquae* from the Mints of Trier, Lyon and Milan. These are often quite well preserved and generally easy to attribute to mints.³ There are also about 50 bronze *nummi* (which includes 36 Welsh IARCW records, all for coins from the excavations at Caerwent where thousands of late-4th century *nummi* were found in hoards and as site-finds). These *nummi* are normally poorly preserved and identifying a coin as being of Eugenius can be a challenge; identifying a mint is even more difficult and very few coins can be attributed to mints.

Mint of Trier, AD 392-4

Trier has the largest number of silver *siliquae* with 26 pieces.⁴ They are all of the VIRTVS ROMANORVM type with Roma seated left (Figs. 2-4).



Fig. 2.

An unclipped silver *siliqua* of Eugenius (AD 392-4)
Mint of Trier, AD 392-4
Obv. D N EVGENI – VS P F AVG; Pearl-diademed, draped and cuirassed right
Rev. VIRTVS RO – MANORVM; Roma seated left on cuirass, holding Victory on globe and reversed spear.
Mintmark: - // TRPS
RIC IX, p. 33, no. 106d
LIN-78FD53

Fig. 3.

A lightly clipped silver *siliqua* of Eugenius (AD 392-4)
Mint of Trier, AD 392-4
Obv. D N EVGENI – VS P F AVG; Pearl-diademed, draped and cuirassed right
Rev. VIRTVS RO – MANORVM; Roma seated left on cuirass, holding Victory on globe and reversed spear.
Mintmark: - // TRPS
RIC IX, p. 33, no. 106d
DOR-1C9031



³ There is still some editing to do on pieces where clipping has removed the mintmark. The author will compare pieces against specimens in the Hoxne Hoard, held at the British Museum.

⁴ Note that the figures might change slightly when heavily clipped coins are checked for style against coins in the Hoxne Hoard.



Fig. 4.

A heavily clipped silver *siliqua* of Eugenius (AD 392-4)

Mint of Trier, AD 392-4

Obv. (D N EVGENI – VS P F

AVG); Pearl-diademed, draped and cuirassed right

Rev. [VIRTVS RO –

MANO](RVM); Roma seated left on cuirass, holding Victory on globe and reversed spear.

Mintmark: - // (TRPS)

RIC IX, p. 33, no. 106d

WILT-FFC437

There are possibly three *nummi* of Eugenius from Trier on the PAS Database. One has no image and the other two are poorly preserved coins with very unclear mintmarks. However, the coin illustrated (**Fig. 5**) has the variant reverse legend of VICTORI – A AVGGG (instead of the more usual VICTOR – IA AVGGG) which is only recorded at Trier.



Fig. 5.

Copper-alloy *nummus* of Eugenius (AD 392-4)

Mint of Trier, AD 392-4

Obv. [D N EVGENI] – VS P F AVG; Pearl-diademed, draped and cuirassed right

Rev. [VICTORI -]A AVGGG; Victory advancing left, holding wreath and palm

Mintmark: - // (TR?)

RIC IX, p. 34, cf. no. 107d; LRBC, p. 48, cf. no. 172

GLO-46FFBA

Mint of Lyon, AD 392-4

Silver coins from Lyon are much scarcer than those of Trier, with only four on the Database. They also have a different reverse legend of VRBS ROMA, although with the same type of Roma seated left (**Fig. 6**). There are only two *nummi*, one from Caerwent (IARCW-63DAE6D60) and the other from Norfolk (NMS-FA8F), but neither have images.



Fig. 6.

Clipped silver *siliqua* of Eugenius (AD 392-4)

Mint of Lyon, AD 392-4

Obv. D N EVGENI – VS P F AVG; Pearl-diademed, draped and cuirassed right

Rev. VRBS ROMA; Roma seated left on cuirass, holding Victory on globe and inverted spear

Mintmark: - // [LVGPS]

RIC IX, p. 56, no. 46

LANCUM-697453

Mint of Arles, AD 392-4

The Mint of Arles only struck bronze *nummi*. Both coins are unclear and neither can be attributed to Arles with certainty. The piece from Somerset has a clearer obverse (**Fig. 7**) and CO does appear visible in exergue of the piece from London (PAS-AD9332; no image).



Fig. 7.

Copper-alloy *nummus* of Eugenius (AD 392-4)

Possibly Mint of Arles, AD 392-4

Obv. [D N] EVGE[NI]VS P F AV[G]; Pearl-diademed, draped and cuirassed right

Rev. [VICTORIA AVGGG]; Victory advancing left, holding wreath and palm

Mintmark: (P?)[CON?]

RIC IX, p. 70, cf. no. 30f; LRBC p. 57, cf. no. 567.

SOM-E812C6

Mint of Milan, AD 393-4

The Mint of Milan, along with Rome and Aquileia, started to strike for Eugenius when he crossed the Alps in AD 393. There are as many as 9 silver *siliquae* from Milan; a number of them have the mintmark clipped off the flan and require more research. They have the same VIRTVS ROMANORVM reverse type as we have seen at Trier (**Figs. 8-9**). No *nummi* were struck at Milan.



Fig. 8.

Clipped silver *siliqua* of Eugenius (AD 392-4)

Mint of Milan, AD 393-4

Obv. D N EVGENI – VS P F AVG; Pearl-diademed, draped and cuirassed right

Rev. VIRTVS RO – MANORVM; Roma seated left on cuirass, holding Victory on globe and reversed spear.

Mintmark: - // MDPS

RIC IX, p. 83, no. 32c

SF-04C95F



Fig. 9.

Clipped silver *siliqua* of Eugenius (AD 392-4)

Mint of Milan, AD 393-4

Obv. D N EVGENI – VS P F AVG; Pearl-diademed, draped and cuirassed right

Rev. VIRTVS RO – MANORVM; Roma seated left on cuirass, holding Victory on globe and reversed spear.

Mintmark: - // MDPS

RIC IX, p. 83, no. 32c

NMS-15AFD8

Mint of Rome, AD 393-4

The mint at Rome only struck bronze *nummi* with the reverse type SPES ROMANORVM, Victory advancing left holding wreath and palm. Only one coin of this issue is recorded on the PAS Database, from the Caerwent excavations (IARCW-63DAE6E49; no image). For a SPES ROMANORVM piece, see the illustration of the Aquileia piece (**Fig. 10**).

Mint of Aquileia, AD 393-4

As at Rome, Aquileia on struck bronze *nummi* of the SPES ROMANORVM type. There is one example on the PAS Database from Bedfordshire (**Fig. 10**).



Fig. 10.

Copper-alloy *nummus* of Eugenius (AD 392-4)

Mint of Aquileia, AD 393-4

Obv. D N EVGENI – (VS P F AVG); Pearl-diademed, draped and cuirassed right

Rev. [SPE]S RO[MANORVM]; Victory advancing left, holding wreath and palm

Mintmark: - // A(QP/S)

RIC IX, p. 107, no. 59; LRBC p. 68, no. 1108

BH-83FE90

Comparison of silver coins on the PAS Database with those in the Hoxne Hoard

Table 1 shows a breakdown of the *siliquae* on the PAS Database and in the Hoxne Hoard by mint. It does show quite similar percentages for each of the mints, strongly suggesting that the coins came from the same currency pool circulating in Britain.

	Trier	Lyon	Milan	Totals
PAS	26 / 66.7%	4 / 10.2%	9 / 23.1%	39
Hoxne	379 / 60%	68 / 10.8%	185 / 29.2%	632

Table 1. A comparison of *siliquae* of Eugenius, by mint, on the PAS Database and in the Hoxne Hoard

The Distribution of silver *siliquae* of Eugenius in England

Fig. 10 shows a map of the Eugenius *siliqua* finds in England. They follow very much the distribution of late-Roman *siliquae* as a whole, so there is no particular significance that one can attach to this distribution of Eugenius' coins.

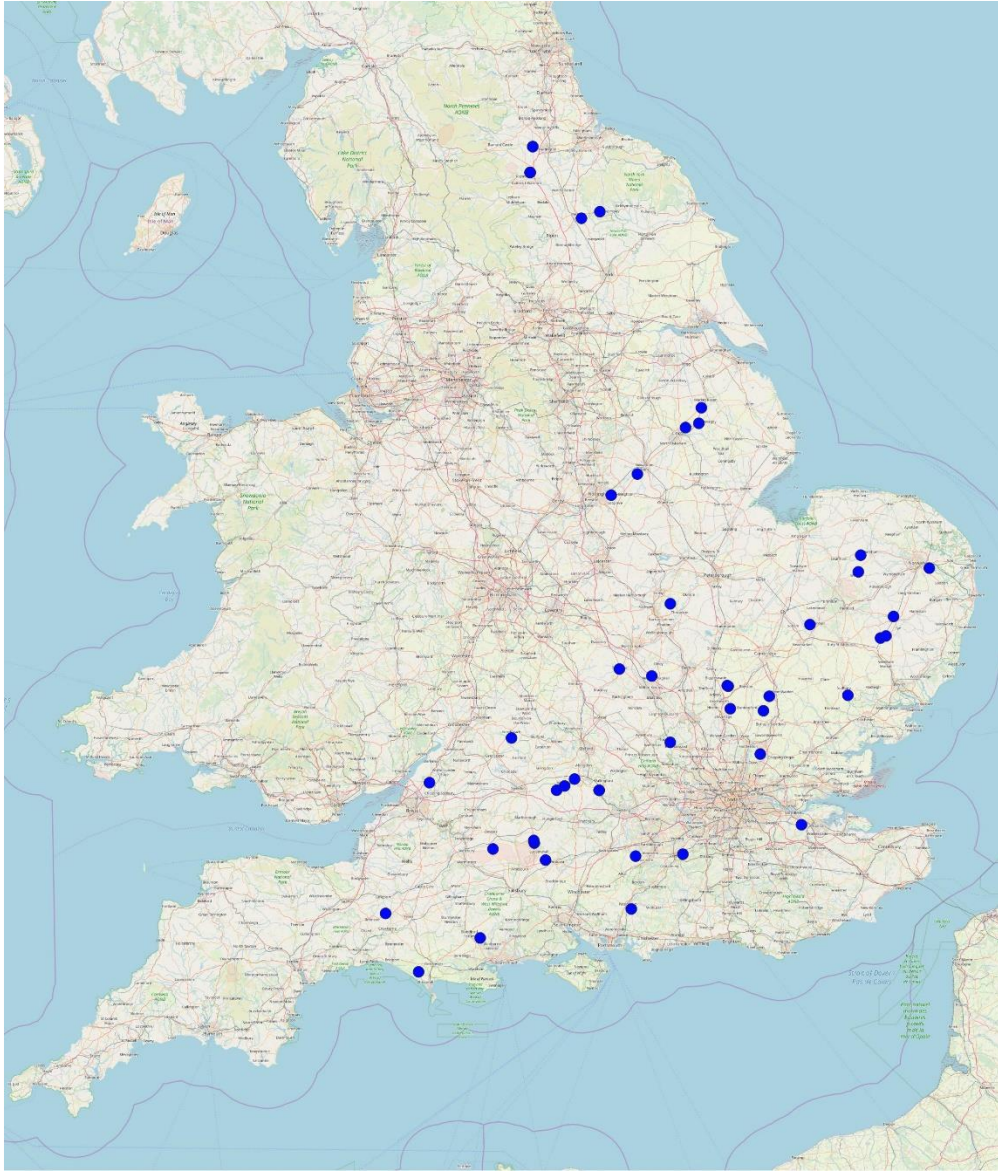


Fig. 10. Distribution of the 50 *siliquae* of Eugenius on the PAS Database (© A. Brown).

Distribution of *nummi* of Eugenius in England

Fig. 11. shows the distribution of the bronze *nummi* in England. They run in a belt from Somerset to Norfolk, wonderfully outlining the core rural region of greatest agricultural importance in late Roman Britain where the vast majority of *nummi* are found. In the Valentinianic period (AD 364-78), this region stretched up through Lincolnshire to East Yorkshire, but this distribution of Eugenius' coins does appear to show the shrinkage of the agricultural region of importance to the Roman authorities to this belt across lowland England by the 390s.

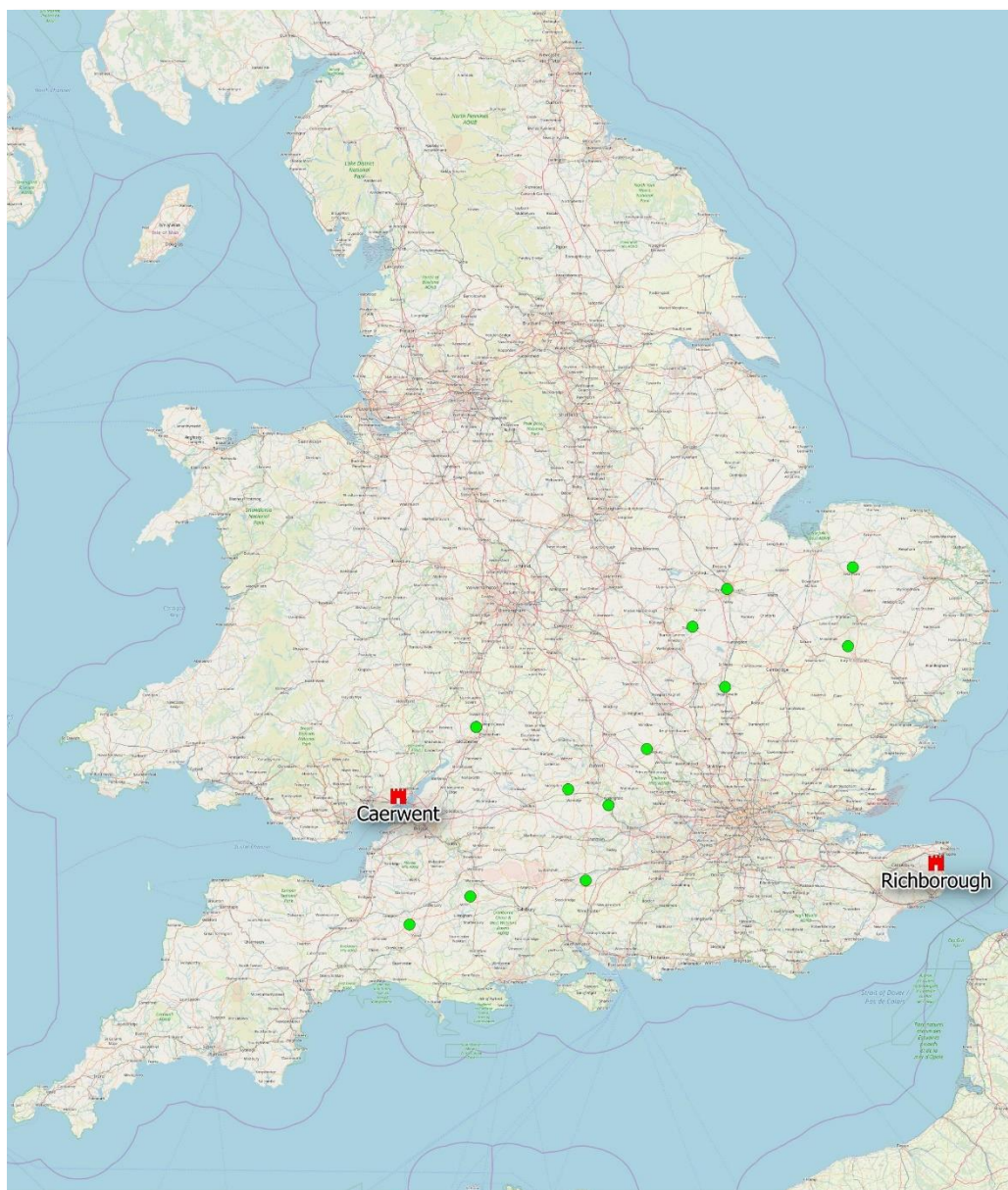


Fig. 11. Distribution of *nummi* of Eugenius in England. Note that large numbers of his *nummi* have been found on excavations at Caerwent (west of Chepstow in Wales; 36 coins) and at Richborough (east of Canterbury; 96 coins) (© A. Brown).

Summary

Looking at the finds from England only, it is clear that the silver coins outnumber the bronze on the Database, by 50 to 14. However, that the bronze did arrive in significant numbers is shown by the 36 pieces found at Caerwent and the 96 at Richborough. It will be possible to refine some of the silver records by comparing heavily clipped coins with those in the Hoxne Hoard. It is also quite likely that more bronze pieces of Eugenius will emerge on the Database as we edit more records. The distribution of the silver coins follows the general pattern for late Roman *siliquae*, but the distribution of *nummi* does appear to show the core region of agricultural activity of importance to the authorities.

Contemporary copies

After the reforms of Valentinian, c. AD 364-7, ensured the purity of silver coins, the number of plated copies effectively dries up. A few such copies of later emperors are known, but they are rare. Most contemporary copies were of good silver and were probably issued by the authorities (see above). However, on the PAS Database there is a copper-alloy core for a plated copy of a *siliqua* of Eugenius from Trier (**Fig. 12**).

Copper-alloy core for a plated copy of a siliqua Eugenius



Fig. 12

Copper-alloy core of a plated contemporary copy of a *siliqua* of Eugenius
Prototype Mint of Trier
Obv. D N EVGENI – (VS P F AVG); Pearl-diademed, draped and cuirassed right
Rev. (VIRTVS RO – MANORVM); Roma seated left, holding Victory on globe and spear
Mintmark: - // TRPS
RIC IX, p. 33, cf. no. 106d
DOR-46C8C2

Lead copy, apparently of a siliqua of Eugenius

This very unusual piece was found near Wallingford in Berkshire. It does appear to be a copy of a VIRTVS ROMANORVM piece of Eugenius, although absolute certainty is not possible. Why it was made is a mystery. Very kindly, the finder has donated the piece to the British Museum. We are very grateful to all finders who donate pieces to the National Collection; many of these pieces, like this one, are contemporary copies or unusual irregular pieces which we do not have in our collection.

Fig. 13: Lead contemporary copy of a late Roman *siliqua* (c. AD 355-402), possibly copying Eugenius (AD 392-4).
Obv: Traces of legend; a diademed bust facing right of late fourth century type. If bearded, it is probably copied from a coin of Eugenius.
Rev: Blundered letters, possibly retrograde copy of ORVM from VIRTVS ROMANORVM; Roma seated right, attributes unclear.
Mintmark: possibly a blundered -//TRPS
For a possible prototype, see **RIC IX, p. 33, no. 106d**
SUR-8F2FC5

