

An Intriguing Edward I Penny mule of Berwick

Denis Martin

In a BNJ article of forty years ago Christopher J Wood published a die analysis of the early pence of the Berwick mint under Edward I ¹ which covers types Ia and b, IIa, b and c and IIIa using the nomenclature developed by C.E.Blunt in the 1930s². The two type I varieties are distinguished by obverses which read hyB for Ia and hyD for Ib. Wide face and narrow face varieties occur with both types. Of relevance to this article is the reverse of type IIa which is of crude style and has B's and R's consisting of lines and pellets. This reverse also has closed gothic E's which distinguishes it easily from type I reverses which have roman E's.

On page 143 of his article Wood analyses the different dies from the type I coins he had seen. Intriguingly, one obverse die of type Ia, narrow face, is described in the accompanying table as "hyB' + + (m)", the (m) denoting that the coin is a mule with a reverse of type II. He writes below the table:

"Of the narrow-face dies only one has a terminal apostrophe to the legend and that is the anomalous die with a double (not double struck) initial cross"

Unfortunately, Wood neither referenced the whereabouts of this double cross coin nor added any illustrations to his article. The author has now discovered two examples of this coin. The first one, purchased a few years ago, is clearly a type Ia/IIa mule, narrow face variety and has the terminal apostrophe mentioned by Wood. Unfortunately the position of the initial cross is not struck up well enough to give more than a hint that the cross is a double one. The author was fortunate enough to obtain another specimen recently which clarified matters.

Fig. 1 shows the obverses of the two coins mentioned above, the earlier acquisition being on the left. The apostrophe after hyB is clearly visible on both but it is only the coin on the right, the recent purchase, which shows an unmistakeable double cross. It should also be noted that these obverses are from the same die, as are their corresponding type IIa reverses (not illustrated).

Fig. 2 shows an enlarged image of an area of the coin on the right of Fig.1 which shows the nature of the double cross on this die.

¹ C.J.Wood, BNJ 1977 Vol. XLVII, 141-44, Preliminary results of a die analysis of approximately one hundred early Edward I pence of the mint of Berwick-on-Tweed.

² C.E.Blunt, NC 1931 28-52. The mint of Berwick-on-Tweed under Edward I,II and III.



Fig. 1 Type Ia/Ila obverses (Author's collection)



Fig. 2 The double cross

It is now clear that this “anomalous” die carries two crosses not separated but joined by their horizontal arms. It would be interesting to know if any collector or museum curator knows the whereabouts of the coin with these features which must have been studied by Wood or, indeed, whether other examples, possibly with the upper part of the obverse more clearly struck up, have been recognised.