

Edward III Florin coinage of Durham

The “VILA” reverse die

Denis Martin

In a masterly article written sixty years ago F Elmore Jones established the still-accepted chronological order for the complex series of the Durham Florin or 3rd issue coinage of Edward III¹. Further studies by Allen² and Stewartby³ have re-examined aspects of this issue but the fact remains that the work of Elmore Jones has stood the test of time.

It is not the intention of this article to challenge the accepted ideas or chronology. Its purpose is to provide some additional information concerning the so-called VILA reverse die shown below in Fig. 1.



Fig.1 Image courtesy of the Fitzwilliam Museum

The reading on this die is VIL/ (crozier)/ADV/~~n~~OL/~~m~~ic starting at 12 o'clock. The crozier is attached to a limb of the long cross and there is a pellet in the centre. The crozier and the pellet are both episcopal marks used by Bishop Thomas Hatfield but strangely used together on these VILA dies. Allen's chronology for the Durham Florin series suggests that this issue should be dated between 1348 and 1351.

For anyone who is new to the complex Durham series of the Florin coinage one of the major problems is the nomenclature that is used to label the obverse and reverse types.

¹ F Elmore Jones, BNJ 1959 Vol. XXIX Part 2, 326-333, Edwardus Rex Ain.

² M Allen, 2003, *The Durham Mint*, BNS Special Publication 4 (London)

³ Lord Stewartby, 2009, *English Coins 1180-1551* (London)

A simple early system was used by J.J. North⁴. He labelled the obverse types D1-D4 and the reverse types as 1-6. Stewartby and Allen adapted this system putting the issue into classes XVIb4 (16b4), XVIb5 (16b5) and XVIc, (16c) and, like North, labelling the obverse types D1-D4 but sub-dividing the reverse types into d1-d6 depending on the form or lack of the Bishop's mark on the reverse die. Those readers who have already been confused by this will be gratified to know that it is sufficient from now on to refer to the VILA die as d6.

This d6 reverse is found on two types of coins both of which should be considered as mules. One type links this reverse with a Florin coinage obverse D3, i.e. D3/d6 and the other links d6 with an obverse from the Pre-Treaty coinage of 1351, i.e. Pre-treaty/d6. Examples are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 below.



Obverse: Florin die, D3.



Reverse: VILA die, d6.

Fig. 2 Courtesy of the Fitzwilliam Museum.



Obverse: 1351 Pre-Treaty die.



Reverse: VILA die, d6.

Fig.3 Author's collection.

⁴ J.J.North *et al.* 1989, *The J.J.North Collection:Edwardian English Silver Coins 1279-1351*, SCBI 39 (London)

Some questions surrounding this die can be briefly summarised. Why was the CIVITAS status of the city of Durham changed to VILA on this die when for six decades the city rather than town designation had appeared on the coins? Why is this die only used muled with other obverses? Does a true obverse for this reverse die exist? The author does not intend to discuss these still-unanswered questions.

In his 1959 BNJ article Elmore Jones states “*Two Villa Dies are known....*” It is the purpose of this article to expand on this statement by identifying the two dies and to use this information to produce a corpus of the coins.

Figures 4 and 5 show the two known VILA dies labelled A and B. The main distinguishing feature is the alinement of the pellets in the IIOL quarter as shown.



Fig. 4 VILA die A



Fig. 5 VILA die B

A VILA die is used on the reverse of the following coins known to the author:

VILA Die A with Florin coinage obverse. D3/d6

- 1) Author's collection, DMM 412.
- 2) Author's collection, DMM 586.
- 3) Fitzwilliam Museum, CM 1990-1-1293, ex. C.E.Blunt.
- 4) Ray Robinson sale, DNW 8 June 2016, Lot 243, ex. R. Carlyon-Britton, G.V.Doubleday.
- 5) Elmore Jones, 1959, BNJ Vol. XXIX Pt. II, Plate XXVII, 8.
Same coin as Shirley Fox, NC 1928, Plate 4, 7.
- 6) British Museum, 1897.1103.225, ex. Balcombe hoard.

VILA Die A with 1351 coinage obverse. Pre-Treaty/d6

- 7) Elmore Jones sale Part 1, Glendining, 13 April 1983, Lot 1281, ex. R.Carlyon-Britton.
- 8) Elmore Jones, 1959, BNJ, Vol. XXIX Pt. II, Plate XXVII, 9.
Same coin as Shirley Fox, NC 1928, Plate 4, 10.
- 9) British Museum, E4446.
- 10) British Museum, 1924.0507.34, ex. Baldwin.

VILA Die B with 1351 coinage obverse. Pre-Treaty/d6

- 11) Author's collection, DMM 562, ex. Stewartby sale, Pt. 4, 29 November 2016. Lot 1144, ex. Vosper.
- 12) Ray Robinson sale, DNW 8 June 2016, Lot 246, ex. F.A. Walters Pt 1, L.E.Bruun ,
F.A.Walters Pt. 2, R.C.Lockett Pt IV, Clonterbrook Trust.
- 13) Elmore Jones sale Part 3, Glendining, 7 October 1986, Lot 1910,
ex. R.Carlyon-Britton.

It is worth pointing out that, although this corpus is certainly incomplete, Die B seems to be used exclusively with the Pre-Treaty obverse. Stated in another way only die A is found associated with the Florin obverse D3. It would be interesting to see if this is still the case when more coins are added to the corpus. To pursue this matter further the author would be pleased to hear of any additional d6 VILA dies in museums or private collections.

