

A new obverse local die from the Durham mint of Edward I

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In a ground-breaking article written over 35 years ago J.J. North¹ examined the known obverse and reverse dies produced locally at the Durham mint. Dies of the large class 9 coinage of Edward I struck around 1300 were sunk in London and sent out to all the provincial mints which were operating at the time. This included the Durham mint which received large numbers of official obverse and reverse dies. Peculiar to the Durham mint, however, was that these official dies were supplemented by dies made locally. The reason for the need for these local dies remains a matter of conjecture.

In his article North identified three local obverse dies, a1, a2 and a3, loosely based on class 9a and two local obverse dies, b1 and b2, based on class 9b1. He also described local reverse dies (a1, a2, b1 and b2) associated with each obverse apart from obverse a3 which is only found with official reverses. Mules are found both ways, in other words, local obverses with official reverses and vice-versa.

Figure 1 below shows images of an official 9b1 obverse linked with a local reverse labelled b2 by North. He illustrates a similar example in his article, page 76, coin number 8.



Fig.1 Official obverse, local reverse. Author's collection

The obverse carries a plain cross rather than the cross moline of Bishop Bek but it is the local reverse that is the more interesting. This b2 reverse was described by North as having a “distinctive A and V”. In Fig. 1 these letters can be clearly seen in the TAS quarter and the

¹ J.J.North, BNJ 1984 Vol. 54, 74-80, Irregular Dies of the Durham Mint c.1300

CIVI quarter respectively. The same arrow shaped punch seems to have been used for both these letters.

As far as North was concerned the only use of this unusual A and V is on six different reverse dies all linked with official obverses marked with a plain initial cross. A few years ago the author came across the coin shown in Figure 2 in which these distinctive letters were found to occur on an obverse die.



Fig. 2 New local obverse, official reverse. Author's collection

This new obverse die also has a plain cross but, more relevantly to the point of this article, the A in ANGL at 4 o'clock and the "v" representing the "y" in the normal "hyB" at 10 o'clock are of the same distinctive form as those in North's b2 reverse. Since this is the only coin the author has ever seen with this obverse no general conclusions can be drawn on the possible reverse dies linked with this obverse. The one in Fig. 2 is an official reverse with normal lettering.

The author is very aware that many Durham local die coins lie unrecognised in collectors' trays so it may well be that other examples of this obverse exist. What would really be fascinating is if a true coin with both the obverse and reverse displaying the distinctive lettering were to turn up. The author would be pleased to hear from anyone with a further example of this newly discovered obverse die.

