

# Some observations on the Class 6a2 pennies of Edward I

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## Background

The earliest reference to what we now call coins of class 6a2 (VIa2) is in a British Numismatic Journal article by Tatler and Stewart in 1962<sup>1</sup>. They illustrate two coins relevant to this blog as coins 5 and 6 on plate V. They chose to refer to the obverse dies as “VI” indicating some doubt in their minds as to the position of the coins in the Fox classification<sup>2</sup>. By the time J.J. North produced his Sylloge 39 volume in 1989<sup>3</sup> the same two coins were illustrated and located as both being in the British Museum collection. North, in his own words, stated ‘.....this variety is at present only known from two coins (both from the same obverse die).....’. He chose to include the coins as a separate sub-class of class 6 which he called 6a2 placing them between 6a1 and 6b.

When Lord Stewartby published his book on hammered coinage in 2009<sup>4</sup> the position seemed to have remained little changed. He includes class 6a2 as part of his discussion of class 6 but he makes the ambiguous statement *‘Except for a single pair of dies of finer execution(VIa2)....’*<sup>5</sup> This could be construed as referring to the dies of the one true coin which was known to North as having a 6a2 obverse and reverse, the other coin being a mule with a reverse of class 5. On the other hand it could suggest that Stewartby knew that there were in fact two different obverse dies.

The meaning of Stewartby’s statement in italics above perhaps became clear when a 6a2 coin appeared in the Stewartby sale in 2016<sup>6</sup>. This coin carried a provenance dating back to Elmore-Jones, then Woodhead who obtained it in 1961 and then North. Stewartby bought the coin when North’s coins were dispersed in 1998. It would seem improbable that the perceptive eye of Stewartby had not noticed that the obverse die of his newly acquired coin was different from the two coins stated by North in the sylloge to be from the only known obverse die. I do believe that Stewartby knew of the existence of two obverse dies when he wrote the uncharacteristically ambiguous words above.

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<sup>1</sup> [Tatler and Stewart](#), BNJ, Vol. XXXI, 1962, pp 80-87 and Plate V.

<sup>2</sup> This classification is essentially the one used in the Spink Standard Catalogue of British coins.

<sup>3</sup> J.J.North, 1989. The J.J.North Collection: Edwardian English Silver Coins, 1279-1351, SCBI 39.

<sup>4</sup> Lord Stewartby, 2009, English Coins, 1180-1551.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p127.

<sup>6</sup> Spink, The Academic Collection of Lord Stewartby, Part 2, 28/6/2016, Lot 758.

## The two obverse dies of 6a2

The coin illustrated in Fig. 1 is a class 6a2 with the only obverse die known to North and earlier writers.



**Fig 1 Edward I Class 6a2 Author's collection. Obverse A**

This obverse die A can be distinguished, among other things, by the large gap between the y and B in hyB at the end of the legend just before the initial cross. The diagnostic features of this class are clearly seen, among other things the fine execution, the straight uprights in the N's, L's etc., and the almond eyes also characteristic of class 7. This reverse is for London, the only mint which produced this class.

The coin shown in Fig 2 is the obverse die which only seems to have been identified in the last twenty or so years. A chance to be the first to spot this die fell to Patrick Finn when a coin with the same obverse die as Fig 2 appeared in his List 12, coin 131, in 1998. However, it was advertised as being from the same dies as one of the coins in the North sylloge, i.e. obverse A.



**Fig 2 Edward I Class 6a2 Author's collection. Obverse B**

This obverse die is most easily distinguishable from obverse A by the fact that the y and B are close together in hyB. Other more minor differences are apparent but the main diagnostic features are the same as on obverse A.

## The reverse dies

There are still only two obverse dies for this class but the reverse dies are more numerous. Both obverse A and obverse B can be muled with a different reverse die of class 5. I have identified four different true 6a2 reverse dies linked with obverse A giving a total of five reverse dies. I have only identified one true reverse 6a2 die for obverse B giving a total of only two reverse dies. This gives seven possible reverses for class 6a2 which includes two class 5 dies.

When it comes to the total number of coins which I have recorded over the years it seems that there are more coins using obverse B, (7 coins) than for obverse A (5 coins). Although only one 6a2/5 mule for obverse A is known, a British Museum coin, surprisingly, four 6a2/5 mules are known for obverse B, all four of which are in private hands. I have not come across a specimen where the same reverse die has been used for both obverse A and B.

There are certainly other coins of this class out there in private collections, possibly unrecognised, and it would be interesting to know if there is another obverse die waiting to be spotted.

