

A Richard II Early Type IB Penny from York.

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In considering the material available to him for his study of the small silver of Richard II Frank Purvey noted the following:- *'The number of minor coins of Richard II which have survived are pathetically small.....The general condition of the coins too, is very poor....'* The coin(s) described by this article exemplifies this description very well indeed. However, to dismiss it as a very badly worn, poorly executed piece would be ill-advised as it provides another example of a Type IB to scrutiny. Purvey examined 6 examples and concluded that only one set of dies were employed - this coin shows that at least two were utilised. The obverse of this type IB Penny is sufficiently different in detail to those illustrated by Purvey. The upper quarter of the Initial Mark is missing as is the top segment of the letter 'R' of **RICARDVS**. The Crown Ornaments are mere stumps and the central Lis is broken and is stylistically very different to either BNJ 31 Plate VI Nos 21 or 22. These significant differences indicate that this coin was struck using a previously unrecorded obverse die employed for the striking of Type IB Pence.



The coin is illustrated and described below:

Richard II Type IB Penny - York

Obv: Crowned bust facing: cross or Lis on breast with pellets at shoulder.
+R(ICARDVS xx REX xx) AnGLIE xx Z x
Double Saltire Stops (xx) ; Z reversed.

Rev: Long Cross quartered with Trefoil of pellets. Quatrefoil in centre of cross.
xCIVI / TAS / Pellet(?) E(BO / RAC)I

Additional tiny pellet in EBO quarter and Saltire before CIVI
First Period Type IB = North 1329(b) Very Rare - Bought eBay Sept 2010.

The reverse use of the Saltire before CIVI is known for York Pence of Richard II (first noted by Purvey for Type IA* but not for type IB) but on this example an additional Saltire (?) appears before the first half of the mint signature (EBO). As far as I could tell this use of a Saltire is not known for Ricardian pence - but is known for a reverse York die of the post Treaty period penny of Edward III (L.A.Lawrence's '*The Coinage of Edward III from 1351*' Part IV No 5 page 255). It is sufficiently unusual for an example in the Doubleday Sale to feature in the Catalogue (Doubleday Collection of Coins of Edward III - Plate XXV Lot 666)

**Not actually mentioned in the Purvey's text but clear enough from the Plates - and confirmed by Lord Stewartby's recent synthesis on English Coins 1180 to 1551 - page 266.*

My initial view was that this coin showed the possible re-use of an Edward III reverse die and was unusual enough to warrant further study. To do this I needed access to Frank Purvey's study of Richard II's Small Silver in the British Numismatic Journal No 31, 1962 and am grateful to Spinks for providing access to Frank Purvey's BNJ Article.

Purvey's study made it clear that the use of the additional small pellet in the EBO quarter on this example is unquestionably indicative of a true penny of Richard and of Type IB. Interestingly, the description of the reverse of Type IB given by Purvey indicates a Pellet (?) next to EBO but not a Saltire in front of CIVI as in this example - which examination of Plate VI Nos 21 & 22 does little to resolve, except that it is clear that there is no Saltire before CIVI on either of the two examples illustrated.

That this coin is attributable to Richard and York mintage is sound and the addition of the Saltire before CIVI confirms that this is a previously unrecorded Type IB reverse die (Purvey only recorded one Obverse and one Reverse die for this type). Any future example ** in better condition may resolve the mark before EBO in due course; holding out the possibility of increasing the known reverse dies employed on Type IB still further. The current example increases the number of dies to two Obverse and two Reverse dies:

Obverse Die 1 with Crown & Lettering intact & **Obverse Die 2** with Broken Crown (Dexter Lis) & Initial Mark

Reverse Die 1 = CIVI / TAS / . EBO / RACI &

Reverse Die 2 = xCIVI / TAS / . EBO / RACI

****N.B.** *A further example (illustrated below) of this Type IB has indeed come to light and confirms the mark **before EBO is in fact a pellet**; as such it corroborates the employment of a new reverse die for this York issue. The Obverse Crown also exhibits the malformed central Dexter Lis with a die crack forming on the upper portion of the Initial Mark. So, this new coin was struck from the same pair of dies (Obv 2 / Rev 2) but the latest example, as an earlier strike, shows that the later deterioration of R2 die through overuse was now becoming evident.*



Throughout the reign of Richard II there was an acute shortage of silver bullion available to the mint for coinage. This trend began in the latter part of Edward III's reign and continued until the early years of Henry V. The Post Treaty years from 1369 to the end of Edward's reign a meagre £8,900 was minted at London with no silver minted at Calais. A similar picture emerges for Richard's early years 1377 to 1389 when only £9,697 of silver coin was issued according to mint accounts for London.

It has long been recognised that in Richard's reign the smaller denominations (pence) from the mints of London and Durham are particularly rare with the majority of pence being supplied from the mint at York. This scarcity today reflects both the small numbers of coin minted combined with survival rates to the present. However, it is clear that due to the effects of metal detecting the retrieval rates of coins of the period are providing some interesting data on the mintage of pence at the end of the 14th Century.

Despite the fact that current Pence survival / retrieval rates are expanding the numbers available for study, this expansion continues to confirm the validity of earlier studies. Even with a smaller population of coins the paucity of coin from London and Durham was clear and continues to be demonstrated despite the increased population of surviving coins arising from metal detection.

These same factors also reflect the relative abundance of Richard's coins from York - this relationship continues to be accurately mirrored by results gained for both the pre and post advent of metal detection when higher yields of surviving coin from all sources continues to support this ratio of York derived material relative to London and Durham.

The comparative abundance of York Pence has tended to confirm, despite a lack of mint accounts, (i) a greater supply of bullion to the York mint & (ii) heavy use of the coin dies. The fact that official dies supplied by the establishment in London to the Archbishop's mint appear to have been insufficient to meet the demand poses the question 'Why were further dies not supplied?' Was it that the establishment in London was not inclined to support a rival establishment in York over and above their initial obligations? If so, is this an example of an early demarcation dispute? Or was it merely an early instance of obstructive officialdom? That London supplied dies were augmented by a significant number of locally made dies for use in the Archbishop's mint is clear. Many of the surviving examples from the York mint are products of these local dies.

The uniformly poor condition of surviving examples from York of this period does not necessarily suggest that these coins remained in circulation for an extensive period but rather that they were struck, in many cases, from worn dies. Indeed, the York pence tend to show that die usage extended well beyond that normally expected - procurement difficulties combined with their asset value & utility in generating coin and thus profit to the mint authority ensured employment to the maximum - even to the point of destruction.

References:

1. F. Purvey British Numismatic Journal Volume 31 (1962) pp 88 - 108. The Pence, Half-Pence and Farthings of Richard II of the Mints of London, York and Durham.
2. L.A. Lawrence. Numismatic Chronicle Volume XIII 1933 The Coinage of Edward III from 1351 Part IV
3. Glendining Catalogue of the Gordon V Doubleday Collection of Coins of Edward III (1327 to 1377) 7th/8th June 1972.
4. J.J.North, English Hammered Coinage Volume 2 Edward I to Charles II 1272 to 1662 Third Edition Published Spink.
5. Lord Stewartby. English Coins 1180 to 1551 - Published Spink 2009.

Note: The coins illustrated are in the Author's Collection.

Between the original publication of this Article in the Numismatic Circular in May 2011 and early 2017 I had not seen any further examples of this new type IB when a further example came to light on eBay which I subsequently acquired. See image attached below:-



This coin confirms all the details described on the other poorer examples of the new Type IB Obverse and Reverse Dies with greater certainty - it also highlights the rather slapdash production methods prevalent at the York Mint at this period although the coin itself was struck before deterioration of the dies became significant. The rather odd misalignment of one arm of the cross into the field of the TAS Quarter due to a 'double striking' and again indicates poor Quality Control.

Bought eBay, January 2017. Weight = 1.02 gms.

If readers of this Blog are aware of any further examples please leave a comment / image.

