

# Atypical single-cross sterlings of Alexander III

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In choosing to report some unusual coins from the single-cross series, I have limited selection to coins from my own collection. There is inevitably a bias as to what makes a coin sufficiently distinctive to warrant notice, especially in view of the many subtle design variables that characterise this very large coinage. Any addition to the corpus of knowledge of such a well studied series is inevitably small, but may suggest new avenues of enquiry.

The coins exhibit:

- (a) a die correction
- (b) a distinctive 'Be' bust,
- (c) a rare mule
- (d) a new variety of the very rare 21 points reverse
- (e) a classificatory challenge.

Weights are recorded in grains. A provenance is given where this is known.

## (a) Die correction

*Obv.* +ALE•XSANDER DE•I G'RA•

*Rev.* X ES|COS|SIE:|REX (pellets in interstices of X)

Class A1, 24 points. 20.0 gr.

The R in G'RA is over struck by S and I. This would appear to be an attempted correction of the G'RA error. "The G'RA error is understandable for a die-sinker used to the G/contractive/letter sequence of G'CIA"<sup>1</sup> or G'SIA as in this instance.



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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Mackay, 'Abbreviated GRACE on Alexander III's Second Coinage', *N. Circ.* (Aug. 2006), CXIV, 4, pp. 204-206

### (b) Atypical bust

*Obv.* ALEXANDER DEI GR'A

*Rev.* REX|SCO|TOR|VM+

Class Be, 24 points. 21.4 gr.

Ex R. M. Greig<sup>2</sup> and Lord Grantley collections  
(Glendining 18-19/5/1944, part of lot 1697)

A well preserved Class B coin illustrates Stewart and North's 'ornate punch' e, "the most complex punch in the whole series"<sup>3</sup>. Class Be coins are the scarcest of the B group, and available illustrations confirm Stewart and North's despair at the adequacy of a verbal description.



### (c) Rare mule

*Obv.* +ALEXANDER DEI GRA *Rev.* X ES|COS|SIE|REX (pellets in interstices of X)  
Class Ma/A1, 24 points. 21.6 gr.

Ex G. C. Drabble collection (Glendining sale 4/7/39, lot 793) and H. Hird collection (Glendining sale 6/3/74, lot 141)



<sup>2</sup> Ronald Mark Greig (1927-2001) was a former Honorary Numismatist to the Art Gallery of South Australia, and a keen student of the Scottish coinage.

<sup>3</sup> B. H. I. H. Stewart and J. J. North, 'Classification of the Single-Cross sterlings of Alexander III', *B.N.J.* (1990) 60, p. 52

This coin is an example of the classificatory confusion that may be engendered by mules. The coin would be subsumed under Class B, 5051 in the Spink catalogue but should rightfully be assigned to Class Ma, Spink 5053.

**(d) New variety**

*Obv.* +ALEXANDER DEI GRA *Rev.* REX|SCO|TOR|VM+  
Class E2/M, 21 points. 20.7 gr.

Ex S. V. Hagley<sup>4</sup> Collection



The six pointed star is in the first quarter, thus adding to the examples noted by Stewart and North as having the star in each of the other three quarters<sup>5</sup>. Given the extreme rarity of coins having a 21 points reverse, it is remarkable to have four groups of reverse dies, each distinguished by the placement of the six pointed star, perhaps indicating a larger mintage than that suggested by surviving numbers.

**(e) Classificatory challenge**

*Obv.* ALEXANDER DEI GRA *Rev.* REX|SCO|TOR|VM+  
Class Mc2/D, 24 points. 19.0 gr.

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<sup>4</sup> Sydney Vincent Hagley (1904-1972) was a prominent Australian collector.

<sup>5</sup> B. H. I. H. Stewart and J. J. North, p. 56.



The obverse is notable for the gap between the bust truncation and the inner circle, a feature not previously encountered other than on some coins with the Baliol bust (Class J). In other respects, the obverse is attributable to an Mc2 die, having the narrow neck with prominent shoulder, upswept hair, and a reversely barred N, the latter only noted for Mc2 coins, and occurring “occasionally”<sup>6</sup>. The coin illustrates the classificatory uncertainties that may be encountered in the single-cross series.



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<sup>6</sup> B. H. I. H. Stewart and J.J. North, p. 47.