

# Die Comparison – Explanatory Material

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The study of the dies of Winchester, Lincoln and Northampton is intended as a starting point for others who may yet discover dies not covered here. We have, however, initiated a form of description which should make it possible to be certain whether any coin is from the same set of dies as those described or not.

**The following information has been included in the articles on the mints of Lincoln and Northampton so that those articles can be read in isolation, and those already familiar with this material may wish to jump directly to the main Winchester article.**

Most of the descriptions which follow are straightforward, but one form may need clarification for those not familiar with the system and that is the “Ring Count”. The concept of counting pellets for die comparison was first introduced in an October 2020 blog article<sup>1</sup>.

Because the die sinkers were extremely good at copying existing dies onto new blank dies, in certain cases only minute differences make identification possible. One of the ways is by counting the pellets on the inner ring very accurately.

There are several counts available on the obverse;

1. Counting all the pellets, starting on the right just below the crown band and ending on the left where they cease below the crown band (This applies to all coins up to the end of Class 3; for later classes the count ends at the left neckline).
2. Counting the pellets up to the point of the letter V of hENRICVS.
3. Counting the pellets up to the point of the tail of the letters R. There are three counts in the case of Class 2. R<sup>1</sup> is the count up to the first letter R in hENR. R<sup>2</sup> is the count up to the letter R in REX and R<sup>3</sup> is the count up to the letter R in TERCI.
4. Counting to each neckline.

## Obverse Counts

The R,N and V counts on the obverse use a partial pellet system where the tail doesn't point directly at the next whole pellet. The first illustration below, fig. 1, shows a V count where the V is pointing at the centre of the pellet being counted. Typically, this might be the 13<sup>th</sup> pellet, hence we have count = 13 on fig 1 and 13.25 (just past the central point of pellet 13) on fig 2. Halfway between 13 and 14 would be written 13.5 (Not illustrated).

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<sup>1</sup> “Identifying Die Duplicates” – Ian Heavisides, BNS Research Blog, Oct 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. ([Link](#))



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

The final illustration, fig. 3, has a "V" nearly at the next pellet but not dead centre to pellet 14 and would be written 13.75. The small neckline that can be seen in fig. 1 would be  $N1 = 13.75$  and that in fig. 2 as  $N1 = 14.25$  (just past the centre of the 14<sup>th</sup> pellet).

### Reverse Counts

Whereas the obverse counts provide the **position** of letters against pellets, the reverse counts are concerned with the **number** of pellets in each quadrant which requires that attention is drawn to even quite small or fractional pellets which need to be counted in. To make this system accurate whilst avoiding over complexity, where a reverse pellet count is given, small or part pellets are described as .5 indicating that they are approximately the size of a half pellet or even less and occasionally .1 is included to indicate a tiny trace. Die wear and pellet sizes can fluctuate from coin to coin so the use of the decimal point is only a rough guide.

Below are some examples of what is meant by the counts used in this paper.

The first count, fig.4, would be written .5 +7 (Total = 8 pellets including the first tiny pellet) and the second, fig.5, 7.5 (8 pellets including the last partial pellet, since the small pellet is the last one encountered when counting). The third example, fig. 6, would be written .5+7.5 (Total =9 pellets or partial pellets, since there are smaller pellets both at the beginning and the end). Note that the last count could simply be written as 8 but the recognition of the two smaller pellets is provided to give confidence to anyone trying to determine whether two coins are from the same reverse die.

This said, to avoid subjectivity, all part pellets are counted as whole pellets when totalling up.



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

If two coins have most of these details in common they are probably from the same die and worthy of further comparison.

## Outer Ring Counts

Although it is rare to encounter a coin that has clear outer ring pellets all-round it, where we have encountered several coins from the same die it has sometimes been possible to create a whole outer ring count by patching partial scans together. These seem to indicate that the intention was to place two pellets above the end of each cross and fourteen pellets between these i.e. 64 pellets in total. As the outer ring was continuous this was clearly easier to achieve consistently.



## Reverse Counts and the Letter W – A Problem Resolved for Winchester

As has been stated some pellets in the reverse count appear to be tiny. This is largely because the reverse dies seem to have had the inner ring pellets struck in before the Long Cross was cut. As a result it is often possible to discern a pellet showing through the cross where most is part of the limb of the cross but a fraction still shows in the area being counted. As dies wore detail sometimes became blurred making it easy to mistake the count and either suggesting a new die and making it difficult to determine whether the reverse could be paired with one already known to exist.

Fortunately the letter W was produced in different forms as shown below and appears on every reverse of Winchester. Even more fortunately, just as the letters N, R and V can be used to achieve a count on the obverse the letter W provides a unique system for checking dies.

To achieve a meaningful count the pellets are counted to each “Elbow” of the letter W. Every pellet is counted as one including any part pellets and the result normally produces two unique numbers. Because of the different styles used in creating the letter this can sometimes produce one or even three numbers. Of course, for Willem there are two opportunities further increasing the accuracy and confidence in die comparison but we found that the W of Winchester was sufficient.

Below some of the different styles are illustrated along with the counts that they produce.

As can be seen on the first scan, a reverse of Nicole, Obverse Die 1a, the letter W is more or less an arrow shape and the count is clearly 7.



The second scan shows the same technique on a coin of Nicole, Obverse Die 2a, but the count is 7.75.

The third illustration is also a coin of Nicole, Obverse 4, where the technique is very different and produces a count of 6 and 7.75.



Finally, a coin of Huge, Die 2a, that has a letter that has its limbs so separated that it can be recorded as .75, 1, 1.25 and 2.75.

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