

A Rare Mint Error

By

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(Grunal Moneta)

Within the hammered series of coins there are numerous forms of mint errors from off centre, double struck coins, mules, over-struck coins and brockages. Of all the mint errors the one illustrated below is by far the rarest and give an interesting insight into the medieval mint practice.

A good few years ago I acquired from eBay a peculiar double headed penny of Edward III of pre treaty series D of indeterminate mint. On receipt of the coin and subjecting it to intense examination, under high magnification, it became obvious that this was a genuine piece and not, as I had originally suspected of, being a fabrication of 2 separate coins.

Since then it has been in my display of coins for the Grunal Moneta Travelling Mint. As I am now retired the coin can take its rightful place in my Edward III collection.

Both obverse dies come from the 1352-1353 period and were probably used at Durham. How this peculiarity came about I will explain below.



Edward III Pre treaty series D
IM cross 1, scroll tailed R
+ EDWARDVS   REX   ANGLI    
Straight backed E in Edward
L. A. Lawrence PTS D Durham 2 or 3

Edward III Pre treaty series D
IM cross 1, scroll tailed R
+ EDWARDVS   REX   ANGLI    
Round backed E in Edward
L. A. Lawrence PTS D Durham 1

The attribution to Pre Treaty Series D rather than C is the letter R which is just discernable as being scroll tailed which is only found on coins of Pre treaty series D onward.

The attribution to Durham mint lies in the obverse legend with the straight backed E which, according to Lawrence, is only found on the Durham pence of that series.

I am only aware of a couple of other similar pieces both being Edward I. One of which was in the collection of the late Peter Woodhead who had also a photograph of a second specimen.

The dies of the 14th century are forged with a spike to the base of the Pile to facilitate holding the die firmly and upright to the striking block. As such a normal obverse die could neither be mistaken for the reverse or trussel die or used as such because of the spike. At the end of a run of production the pile can be removed from the block by tapping the die repeatedly on the side with a hammer, this normally causes the die to rise out of the block. If the lateral hammering is too hard or there is a fracture point on the spike then the die can shear off leaving a die that closely resembles a trussel. If this were picked up and used by the Hammer man who struck the coins then the result would be a double headed coin.

Dies illustrated are modern copies of 14th century dies by Grunal Moneta.



Die set before use



Die set in use



Pile die with simulated shearing to the spike



Old pile now used as a trussel for new obverse die