

A Contemporary Counterfeit of an Edward the Confessor Pyramids Penny of Wulfgar of London

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Though far from my normal series, the opportunity to examine the coin shown below recently arose. Without even looking at the tickets, the metal looks base and more like billon than good silver. The piece came with tickets, both old and new, which are also illustrated.



The coin might be described as follows.

Obv. **EADPARD**

Around a crowned bust facing left with sceptre in front.

Rev. **PVIIGR ON LVN**

Around a voided cross with annulet in centre, pyramids in the angles each with a pellet on top.

Details. 19.31 mm, 1.269g, 135°, looks to be struck from dies rather than cast. Edge looks good and typical of pennies of this period.

XRF analysis

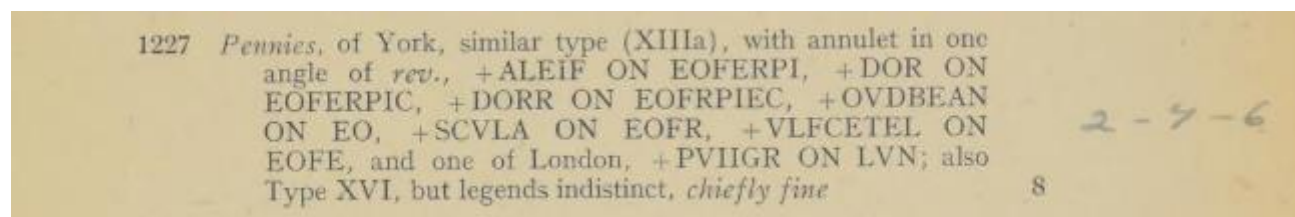
Obv. Cu 57.3%, Ag 27.5%, Zn 13.0%, Pb 1.3%, Fe, Sb, Si < 0.20%, Bi < 0.03%.

Rev. Cu 57.1%, Ag 27.9%, Zn 13.1%, Pb 1.4%, Fe, Sb, Si < 0.25%, Bi < 0.03%.

This is clearly a counterfeit, and probably contemporary.

The ticket on the left is typical of Lord Grantley with vertical and horizontal writing on the front and provenance and code for price paid on the back. The middle tickets, in the same hand (Peter Mitchell?) confirm the lot number in the Grantley sale.

Interestingly in the Grantley sale the piece is grouped with other Edward the Confessor pennies of the York mint of type XIIIa, with no mention of this being a type XVb⁽¹⁾.



The L.A. Lawrence provenance has been checked and the piece has not been found in any of his sales⁽²⁾ or his article regarding Anglo-Saxon forgeries published in the BNJ⁽³⁾.

An email from Hugh Pagan explained the coin's absence from the Lawrence catalogues.

This is a coin from L.A. Lawrence's first collection, from which Lord Grantley purchased what he wanted by private treaty in the winter of 1902-1903 (the rest being consigned to auction in a Sotheby sale of 24 February 1903). It features in L.A. Lawrence's manuscript catalogue of his first collection:

"London New type as IX but head reversed. PVLGR ON LVN 2 known fine".

The "type IX" refers to Hawkins' classification of the coins of Edward the Confessor, the Pyramids reverse design⁽⁴⁾. This becomes type XV in the British Museum catalogue and with the head facing left, type XVb⁽⁵⁾.

Wulgar is known as a London moneyer for type XV⁽⁵⁾. The second specimen noted by Lawrence has not yet been traced. The author will be interested to hear if other pieces from these dies are known in base metal or good silver and if a genuine type XVb exists for this moneyer at London.

References and Acknowledgements

- (1) Glendining. Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon coins, the valuable and extensive collection formed by the late Right Hon. Lord Grantley, The Priory, Old Windsor, sold by order of the executors, (third portion) ...3 March 1944. <https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/auctionlots?AucCoId=512958&AuctionId=533774>
- (2) H.E. Manville & T.J. Robertson. *British Numismatic Auction Catalogues 1710-1984*. Encyclopædia of British Numismatics volume I. A.H. Baldwin & Sons Ltd, Spink & Son Ltd, 1986.
- (3) L. A. Lawrence. *Forgery in relation to numismatics*. BNJ vol. 2 (1905), 397-409. (Anglo-Saxon – Harold II). https://www.britnumsoc.org/publications/Digital%20BNJ/pdfs/1905_BNJ_2_14.pdf
- (4) E. Hawkins. *The Silver Coins of England*. 1887. Firecrest facsimile reprint.
- (5) H. Grueber and C. Keary. *English Coins in the British Museum*. 1893, Seaby reprint of Volume 2, 1970, p416 no. 1072.

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