

Henry III – Posthumous Long Cross Class 6 Pennies of the Durham Mint

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In previous articles I have discussed the posthumous class 7 coins of Henry III and I am now turning my attention to class 6. Pennies of this class were very rare until the 1969 discovery of the second Colchester hoard containing 1,916 class 6 pennies of the Bury mint¹, all of the same dies. However, the class 6 pennies of London and Durham remain rare, despite a few additions through metal detecting in recent years. For London, I'm aware of only a small number of coins at this stage; just three coins are known for London at this stage; a cut half at the BM, a possible London cut half owned by Denis Martin, a full coin formerly in the collection of the late Jim Sazama but now owned by Bob Thomas and the possible existence of two further cut halves. However, here we are just looking at the coins of the Durham mint, issued under the Bishop of Durham. The original version of this article was uploaded to the BNS Blog on June 18th. Since then a further four coins have been noted, and hence this article has been substantially updated to incorporate them.

There are now eight known specimens of Class 6 coins from Durham of which I am aware, and they are all illustrated in the following pages. These include a cut half found in 2001.

The only specimen known for many years was the coin in the British Museum. In 2019 a further example appeared on the Portable Antiquities Scheme website, the coin having been found by a metal detectorist in the Church Fenton area of North Yorkshire. In 2020 a third specimen was sold at auction by DNW. The coin which originally prompted this article was one which the author acquired on Ebay in May this year; its provenance unfortunately unknown. Further coins added to this latest version of the article include a metal detector find acquired by Bob Thomas, and two relatively lesser quality coins owned by another collector ("CR"). Bob Thomas also provided images of the cut half which he had sold to the late Ron Churchill shortly before his death in 2020.

Before describing these Durham coins it is helpful to summarise the historical background. Henry's son Prince Edward left England for the Eighth Crusade in 1270, but Henry became increasingly ill; concerns about a fresh rebellion grew and the next year the King wrote to his son asking him to return to England, but Edward did not turn back. Henry recovered slightly and announced his renewed intention to join the crusades himself, but he never regained his full health and on the evening of 16 November 1272, he died in Westminster at the fairly advanced age of 65. He was succeeded by Edward, who slowly made his way back to England via Gascony, finally arriving on 2nd August 1274 and he was crowned at Westminster on 19th August. It was in the same month that the death of the Bishop of Durham, Robert Stichell occurred. He had attended the Second Council of Lyon in 1274, where he obtained the permission of Pope Gregory X to resign his See, but he died on 4 August 1274 near Lyons, before he was able to return to Durham to resign his See. He was buried at Savigny Abbey, although his heart was sent to Durham to be buried there². The new Bishop of Durham was another Robert, Robert de Insula, who was elected to the see of Durham on 24 September 1274, and was consecrated on 9 December 1274 at York.

Coins of class 5h are believed to be the type in production at the time of Henry's death³ and are believed to have continued for some time after his death, with continuing deterioration of style

¹ Bob Thomas, "Note on the 1916 Bury St Edmunds class 6 coins from the 1969 Colchester Hoard", BNS Research blog, Sept. 2021 ([link](#)).

² Wikipedia article ([link](#))

³ Churchill and Thomas, 2012, "The Brussels Hoard of 1908. The Long Cross Coinage of Henry III.2 chapter 3.

leading to the poor quality class 5i pennies. Churchill and Thomas stated that “... it is highly unlikely that coins from sub-class 5i appeared before 1275”. However, I think that it is possible that 5i appeared about 1274, and that it was the return of Edward in August 1274 to take up the throne which was the catalyst to improving the coinage – initially with the short-lived class 6 which may have been issued as early as 1275-76, and then replaced in about 1277 by class 7. The timing of class 7 has been discussed in a previous article⁴.

Coincidentally there were not only two bishops named Robert but they used only one moneyer who was also a Robert, and it is his name that appears on the coins of sub-classes 6 and 7. Unfortunately nothing is known of the identity of this Robert. The latest class 5 coins of Durham were from the moneyer WILLEM, with sub-classes 6 and 7 from the moneyer Robert – we unfortunately do not have the date of Robert’s appointment, nor Willem’s death, to help with unravelling the chronology.

The known coins are illustrated below.



Coin #1, Images courtesy of British Museum, item # 1950,0606.51. Weblink: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/727306001>



⁴ Rob Page, “Henry III (Posthumous), Class 7 Pennies from the London Mint”, BNS Research Blog, Aug. ‘20 ([link](#))

Coin #2, a metal detecting discovery from Church Fenton, Yorkshire. Reverse inscription: ROB[-----]VRh. Images courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, record # [YORYM-E79D29](#).



Coin #3, Images courtesy of DNW, lot 172, 10th March 2020.



Coin #4, A metal detecting find from Colne in Lancashire purchased by Bob Thomas in 2018 and which has not been noted in the PAS database. Not in very good condition and with about half the obverse legend legible and most of the reverse legend. Struck a little off-centre, quite worn, and with stress cracks across the centre where the coin may have been unfolded. On the obverse the inward facing sceptre and unusual ligation of "SR" is as seen on other coins, particularly coins #2 & #3. On the reverse the inner ring count is 8/8?/8.5/9? and in the 3rd quadrant "N" and "D" are ligated as in coins #1,2,3, and the 3q also shows the pellet touching the inner circle which is a characteristic of die R1. The reverse second quadrant is better seen than on the other coins, and appears to show "ERD" rather than "ERT" as being the end of the moneyer's name. In summary, this coin is another example of dies O1/R1.

Coin #5, the obverse appears to be from the same die as the other coins described in the main article. The reverse, which reads OND/VRh, appears to have the "N" and the ligated, making this likely to be another example of reverse die R1, the same as the three coins. This conclusion is reinforced by looking at the bottom pellet in the OND quadrant – it is relatively large and touches inner circle, and when compared to the images of the reverses of coins #1-3 is seen to be identical. Thus the coin is another example of the O1/R1 die combination.



"D"
first
the
to



Coin #6 – Obverse: Comparison of the crown-band with the Church Fenton coin (coin #2) suggests obverse die O1. Reverse: "OB" suggests ROBERT which in turn suggests Durham. The 3rd quarter ligation is unclear. Possibly not a match to die R1, but cannot compare to R2 as the only specimen does not have the corresponding detail preserved.



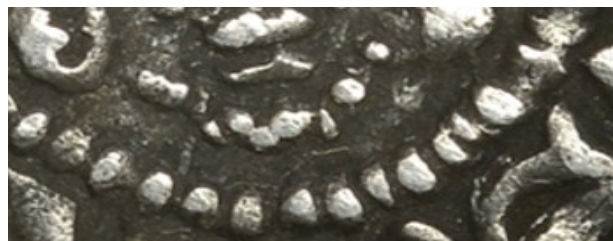
Coin #7 (previous page) - It is not clear whether SR is ligated as in Durham die O1. Overlaying a semi-transparent version on the obverse of coin #3 suggests it is, and that this is probably Durham obv die O1.

"ON" ligated, so this could be a specimen of Durham reverse die R2. Semi-transparent overlay suggests it is.



Coin #8 Ebay, May 2022, acquired by the author. Little of the lettering is clear on both obverse and reverse, though on the obverse it is clear that the "S" & "R" are ligated. The sceptre is inward slanting as on the other specimens.

The obverse die of all coins appears to be the same, this is strongly suggested by examining the detail around the king's chin, as in the illustrations of coins #1,2,3 & 8 below.



Whilst it is fairly clear that there is only one obverse die represented by all eight coins the situation is different for the reverses. A good place to start when comparing reverse dies is in counting the pellets of the inner circle in each of the four quadrants; this has been done and is tabulated below. The condition of the coins makes this a challenging exercise, but from pellet counts the first three coins could be from the same reverse die but several other coins (# 6 & #7) appear to be from a different reverse die. This is confirmed by looking at the ligation in the third quadrant; coins 1 & 3 show OND, the second coin unclear, and the seventh and eighth coins are clearly OND. The conclusion is that the first six coins are from the same reverse die, die R1, and the last two coins demonstrates the existence of a second reverse die, R2.

The reverses of all eight coins are summarised in the table below:

	Coin #1	Coin #2	Coin #3	Coin #4	Coin #5	Coin #6	Coin #7	Coin #8
ROB	7-8?	8?	8	8	(Absent)	Unclear	Unclear	?
ERT(D?)	7-8?	7?	7-8	8?	(Absent)	Unclear	Unclear	?
OND	9?	9?	8-9?	8.5	Unclear	Unclear	Unclear	7?
VRh	9?	9?	9	9?	9?	Unclear	7.5	7-8
3q Ligation	ND	?	ND	ND	ND	Unclear	ON	ON
Die	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1	R1?	R2	R2

Coin summary:

#	Provenance	Weight (gm)	Condition	Obv Die	Rev. Die
1	British Museum, 1950,0606.51	1.29	Fair, holed, about 30% of lettering visible.	O1	R1
2	PAS, 2019, YORYM-E79D29	1	Fine, about 60% of lettering visible	O1	R1
3	DNW lot 172, March 2020	1.04	Fine, chipped, about 80% of letters visible	O1	R1
4	Bob Thomas	1.31	About fine with some of the lettering unclear	O1	R1
5	Ron Churchill, ex Bob Thomas	?	Cut half, good condition.	O1	R1
6	CR#1	?	Poor condition; about 25% of legend showing on both sides. Worn, cracked.	O1	R1?
7	CR#2	?	Fair condition; some legend visible.	O1	R2
8	RP, Ebay, June 2022	1.45	Good, struck off centre, about 30% of letters visible. Full weight.	O1	R2

The coin which is clearest is the one sold at the DNW auction in 2020; it went for a hammer price of £1,400, and with the buyer's premium would have cost the purchaser about £1,750. The auction estimate was only £150-200!

Given the lack of other obverse dies it may well be that this was a very limited issue with only the one obverse die, and when the original reverse die broke it was replaced, probably fairly late in the issue. It remains to be seen whether any further detecting discoveries continue to support this conclusion.

If anyone has images of further specimens of this scarce coin, or class 6 coins of London, the author would appreciate seeing them.

Acknowledgments: Thanks to Bob Thomas for his review of this article, and for the use of his images; any errors are of course mine alone. Also, thanks to Josh Cattermole for bringing coin #8 to my attention.

