

# A Second Coin of John Digge from the Canterbury Mint

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For a number of years, students and collectors of Henry III's long cross issues have wondered about the activity, if any, of the two elusive Canterbury moneyers, John Digge and Roger Le Assaur.

In 1912, L. A. Lawrence published, in the BNJ<sup>1</sup>, his seminal article 'The Long Cross Coinage of Henry III and Edward I'. In it, he listed all the known Canterbury moneyers with the notable exceptions of John Digge and Roger le Assaur. This despite the Fox brothers making specific reference to both their respective appointments in their account of the coinage of Edward I, II and III, published in 1910<sup>2</sup>,

Exactly why Lawrence took this view is unclear, as there are records of their appointment as the archbishop's moneyers on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1271 and 27<sup>th</sup> June 1275 respectively. The fact that no coins of either moneyer were known at that time may have influenced this, as well as the low output from the Canterbury mint at that time.

This situation changed in 2004 when the first coin of Roger le Assaur was discovered and reported<sup>3</sup>. Since then, two further examples have turned up. All three examples are from the same obverse die but from two different reverse dies.

In November 2023, Ian Heavisides reported<sup>4</sup> the identification of what is most probably the first known specimen of a coin that can be attributed to John Digge, the other 'missing' moneyer. The coin belongs to class 5h, the principal diagnostic feature being the central ornament of the crown, comprised of three pellets, in what appears to be a cannon ball arrangement, unlike the true fleur ornament characteristic of the preceding class 5g. As predicted by the title of Mr Heavisides' paper, a second coin, also attributable to John Digge has now been found and is the subject of this paper.

The new coin belongs to class 5h, the principal diagnostic feature being the crown ornament. This is composed of three pellets, joined to the crown band by vestigial stalks. The only other subclass with this arrangement is class 5c3.

There can be no confusion however, as the new coin features the letters X6 and R3, both of which are consistent with Churchill and Thomas' classification scheme for class 5h<sup>5</sup>. The coin weighs 1.21g, which is a little on the low side, but within acceptable limits.

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<sup>1</sup> BNJ Vols IX – XI, 1912-1915.

<sup>2</sup> BNJ Vol. 7 (1910), pp 91-142

<sup>3</sup> "A Coin of Roger from the Canterbury Mint" Spink Numismatic Circular Vol CXII No 1 pp 7/8.

<sup>4</sup> "A Currently Unique Coin of John Digge on Canterbury" BNS Research Blog, November 2023

<sup>5</sup> Ron Churchill & Bob Thomas, 2012, The Brussels Hoard of 1908. The Long Cross Coinage of Henry III, Baldwin's and The British Numismatic Society, London. pp 46-47

**R.**

R3

**X**

X6



First coin 1.29g



Mike Shott coin 1.21g

Obverse: hENR<sup>IC</sup>VSREX \\ III'Reverse: IOh / SON / CAN / TER

Closer inspection reveals that the two coins are not obverse or reverse die duplicates, however there are a notable number of similarities on both the obverse and reverse dies, sufficient to allow speculation as to whether the dies may be the work of the same die sinker<sup>6</sup>.

Although the attribution of these coins to John Digge seems reasonably secure, we cannot of course be absolutely certain, given the lack of information from surviving records. It is possible that the coins may represent the tail end of John Terry's output. It is however the case that in his 'Mints & Moneyers' volume

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<sup>6</sup> Personal Comment of Bob Thomas

(Appendix A)<sup>7</sup>, Mr Churchill noted that he believed John Terry to be dead by 1270. This is helpful, in that Ricard l'Espece, the archbishops moneyer and John Digge's predecessor, was appointed in 1268 and is only recorded as striking in class 5h<sup>8</sup>.

It is possible that John Terry's die passed on to Alan de Cambio, the Alein of the coins, sometime after 1262<sup>9</sup>. This is an attractive scenario in that Alein is recorded in class 5g with a few rare examples recorded in class 5h. If this is indeed the case, it would mean that John Terry ceased striking in class 5g which implies that the two new coins of IOhS in class 5h could be attributed only to John Digge.

The output of the Canterbury mint between December 1270 and June 1275 has been stated as being in the region of £1717<sup>10</sup> or roughly 412,000 coins, assuming 240 coins struck from one pound of silver. Experimental trials have indicated that as many as 75,000 coins could be struck from any one obverse die without any significant degradation, the estimated general survival rate from this number would be 5 coins<sup>11</sup>. This figure is of course significantly higher than other published estimates which are based on a comparison of recorded output figures against known dies. Given that we now know of two different obverse dies for John Digge, it would be reasonable to assume that there may be further coins awaiting discovery.

There is unfortunately very little in the form of helpful hoard evidence, in that hoards of Henry III long cross, closing in class 5h, are notable by their virtual absence. The final years of production of coins in the name of Henry III were peaceful and it is likely that most coins concealed in these years were retrieved and exchanged for coins in the name of Edward I in or after 1279. Of those currently published, the Coventry hoard<sup>12</sup> (1958) listed only four coins in class 5h (Ricard and Robert, Canterbury and two of Renaud, London), but also listed 44 coins of the London moneyer Renaud in class 5g, making this in every respect a 'late' hoard. The other is the Greywell hoard (1988 and 1993)<sup>13</sup> which listed three coins of class 5h (Renaud, London) plus two fragments from the Canterbury mint.

The only other, as yet unpublished<sup>14</sup>, late hoard is the Haarlo Hoard (1980). Although this is a continental find, the hoard included over 500 examples of Henry III long cross issues, including 43 in class 5h (including one of Alein, Canterbury and four of Ricard, Canterbury). Also included were 132 coins in class 5g.

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<sup>7</sup> Churchill R., 2012, *Mints & Moneyers During the Reign of Henry III, Baldwin's and The British Numismatic Society*, London, p 401.

<sup>8</sup> The three coins of Richard l'Espece recorded by the BM as class 5g are in fact class 5h.

<sup>9</sup> Churchill R., 2012, *Mints & Moneyers During the Reign of Henry III, Baldwin's and The British Numismatic Society*, London, p 401.

<sup>10</sup> Allen, M. (2012) – *Mints and Money in Medieval England* - CUP

<sup>11</sup> Personal Comment of Mr. David Greenhalgh

<sup>12</sup> Dolley R.H.M., *The 1958 Coventry Trove of Long Cross Pence of Henry III*, in NC Vol.18, 1958, pp 109-122

<sup>13</sup> Archibald M.M. and Cook B.J., 2001, *English Medieval Coin Hoards: I – Cross and Crosslets, Short Cross and Long Cross Hoards*, BM Occasional Paper Number 87, pp 62-66

<sup>14</sup> Although never published as an academic paper, there is a record in the form of an auction sale catalogue - Jacques Schulman B.V. - Auction Sale, February 1983, Catalogue 276 – 'Coins from the Hoards'