

Presentation and Analysis of a Henry I Overstrike Penny

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Firstly, I would like to thank David Guest for the opportunity to analyse the coin presented, the mental challenge that followed in analysing the details, and for his guidance in this process and the photos.

During 2018, a silver penny of Henry I was found near Marlborough, Wiltshire and recorded in the Corpus of Early Medieval Coin Finds/Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles database (EMC/SCBI) and identified as Type V – Voided Cross and Fleurs (North 861; S. 1266) with uncertain mint and Moneyer. This coin was re-recorded again in 2108 with a findspot near Stockbridge, Hampshire and then yet again for a third time in 2020¹. The 2020 listing on the EMC/SCBI restates the find date of March 2018 and find spot location as Stockbridge, but then modifies the state of preservation of the coin as being double-struck. However, upon closer examination this coin is not a double strike but is actually an example of an overstrike of a Type V upon a Type IV – Annulets and Piles (North 860; S. 1265).

This is significant as it not only provides further evidence of the chronology of the types under Henry I, but also as an overstrike it is exceedingly rare. George C. Brooke was not aware of any overstrikes as of 1916 upon the publishing of Volume 1 of 'A Catalogue of English Coins in the British Museum – The Norman Kings' as detailed on page xxxv of the introduction. Further, neither the most recent study of Henry I chronology by Mark Blackburn² nor details of the Mints and Moneyers from Martin Allen³ detailed any examples of overstrikes to assist with the ongoing debate on the exact chronology of types from the reign of Henry I. Thus, this research is providing an example of an overstrike of Henry I and includes an attempt of a reading of additional Moneyer and mint combinations not yet known for both types for the series.

Before beginning the analysis of the coin, we will start with a quick description and some illustrations of some Type IV and Type V examples, a brief discussion on the typography detailed by George C. Brook, and then the methodology used by the author as these are all pertinent to the forthcoming analysis.

Description and Illustration of Type IV and Type V Henry I coins as per George C. Brooke⁴

The Type IV of Henry I is described as the 'Annulets and Piles' type and has the following descriptions for the obverse and reverse, respectively:

- Bust facing, crowned and diademed, holding sceptre over right shoulder
- Four annulets between four piles which rest on the inner circle and are surmounted each by one pellet; in centre an annulet. Around, inscription between two beaded circles.

Figure 1a: Two Examples of Henry I Type IV – Annulets and Piles type



¹ Please see the EMC at: <https://emc.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/full-record/20180047>; <https://emc.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/full-record/20180094>; and <https://emc.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/full-record/20200150>. Please note the EMC now references all three as being the same coin.

² M. Blackburn, 'Coinage and currency under Henry I: a review', *Anglo-Norman Studies* XIII (1990); M. Blackburn, 'Some Unpublished Coins of Henry and Stephen', *BNJ* 75 pgs. 164 – 169, 2005

³ M. Allen, 'The Mints and Moneyers of England and Wales, 1066–1158', *BNJ* 82 pgs. 54 – 120, 2012; 'The Mints and Moneyers of England and Wales, 1066–1158: Addenda and Corrigenda' *BNJ* 86 pgs. 164 – 190, 2016; 'The Mints and Moneyers of England and Wales, 1066–1158: Addenda and Corrigenda (2)' *BNJ* 91 pgs. 77 – 102, 2021

⁴ Source: George C. Brooke, 'A Catalogue of English Coins in the British Museum – The Norman Kings' – Vol 2, 1916, pages 275 and 276 for the descriptions and Vol 1, 1916, Plates XXXIX and XL for examples of the types.

The Type V of Henry I is described as the ‘Voided Cross and Fleurs’ type and has the following descriptions for the obverse and reverse, respectively:

- Bust facing, crowned and diademed, right hand holding over shoulder a sceptre surmounted by a cross pattée. Star in field to right.
- Cross pattée voided, annulet in centre, in each angle a voided trefoil with an annulet at its base. Around, inscription between two beaded circles.

Figure 1-b: Two Examples of Henry I Type V – Voided Cross and Fleurs Type



Brief Discussion on Typography and Lettering Layout

For the newer or less experienced student of Norman coinage, it would be beneficial to discuss the typography of the two Types detailed by George C. Brooke⁵ as well as the general layout. Brooke’s epigraphical table (hereafter referred to as Epigraphical Table) is below in Figure 2 for ease of reference:

Figure 2: Epigraphical Table Published by George C. Brooke

EPIGRAPHICAL TABLE (see pp. xiii–lxxv)									
SERIES I WILLIAM I Types I–VIII		SERIES II WILLIAM II Types I, II, III		SERIES III WILLIAM II Types I, II, III		SERIES IV HENRY I Types II, III, IV		SERIES V HENRY I Types V–XI	
A	U	A	U	A	U	A	U	A	U
B	E	B	E	B	E	B	E	B	E
C	I	C	I	C	I	C	I	C	I
D	E	D	E	D	E	D	E	D	E
E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
F	E	F	E	F	E	F	E	F	E
G	O	G	O	G	O	G	O	G	O
H	O	H	O	H	O	H	O	H	O
I	O	I	O	I	O	I	O	I	O
K		K		K		K		K	
L	I	L	I	L	I	L	I	L	I
M	H	M	H	M	H	M	H	M	H
N	H	N	H	N	H	N	H	N	H
O	H	O	H	O	H	O	H	O	H
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L	R	L
S	2	S	2	S	2	S	2	S	2
T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ	θ
/E	/E	/E	/E	/E	/E	/E	/E	/E	/E
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

As laid out by Brooke, the Type IV of Henry I should contain the lettering style of Series IV, whilst the Type V should contain those of Series V. Further, a few general observations from the author of layout between the two types when reviewing examples both on the EMC/SCBI database as well as the plates in Brooke’s 1916 publication are as follows:

- The Type IV coin legends appear to have a more sporadic layout, and instances of ligated lettering.
- The Type V coins appear to be more organized, compact, and have a cleaner appearance with the lettering. There are also more instances of punctuation within Type V (e.g. periods and colons).
- After reviewing various Type V examples on the EMC/SCBI, the author noted the average number of characters (which is defined as letters, punctuation, and the starting cross) for the reverse legend are generally between 13 and 16.
- There are many deviations from the Epigraphical Table, and the Table is meant to serve as a guide in analysing options as opposed to providing axiomatic rules on typography.

⁵ Source: G.C. Brooke, ‘A Catalogue of English Coins in the British Museum – The Norman Kings’ – Vol 1, 1916, page cclvi

Methodology Employed by the Author

The author utilised the following methodology presented in a prior research note (published on the BNS blog on December 18, 2024) to analyse the coin and the two strikes:

- Review the example at a high-level to identify overall features, markers, or other reference points
- Establish inner and/or outer design borders as a reference point
- Establish placement of the starting cross for the obverse and reverse legends, and the copulative (e.g. the “ON” or “MΩO”) which occurs between the Moneyer and the mint signature.
- Draw/document what can be discerned in terms of design features and the lettering of the legends
- List options of potential/viable letters when lettering is not 100% definitive
- Look for die duplicates and other examples within the EMC/SCBI database or other resources

Following the synthesis of the above information, data points, observations, and methodology, an analysis of the coin begins with its initial illustration in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Presentation of the Henry I Overstruck Coin to be Analysed



Initial Commentary and High-Level Observations:

In an initial review of the obverse, we can clearly see the king's face, crown, his right hand holding a sceptre, and the mantle of his cloak as would be expected for coins of Type V. The legend appears convoluted in that we cannot see any clear lettering, and to the right of the king we can see something extending from the inner circle down towards his shoulder. Now turning to the reverse, the voided cross and fleurs are visible in the centre, but the legend continues to be convoluted akin to the obverse. However, some lettering is discernible and will be detailed shortly. As an aside, the first indications of the initial Type IV strike can be seen on the reverse where two of the piles can be seen on the left and right arms of the voided cross.

Analysis of the Obverse and the Initial Type IV Strike

To analyse the obverse of the type from the initial strike, the coin needs to be rotated 180 degrees and then the following can be observed:

- Starting at the 8 o'clock position, a cross can be discerned continued by the following lettering (which is relatively clear considering it has been struck over): + HENRIC REX with ligated letters underlined;
- Clothing lines at the bottom of the coin near the edge;
- The sceptre through to its top on the left side; and
- Some features of the crown hiding within the upper areas along with the bottom of the crown/top of the forehead.

To illustrate the obverse of the first strike more clearly, the Type IV features have been drawn over the obverse, and then shown separately within Figure 4.

Figure 4 – Presentation of the Obverse of the Type IV Initial Strike



Following the Figure 4 illustration, it should be noted the facial features and other elements of the obverse design of the Type V coin are more clearly detailed. Therefore, it is evident that the Type V penny was struck over the Type IV penny. Now that the under-type has been definitively established as Type IV, the next step is to analyse the reverse.

Analysis of the Reverse – Initial Observations

- Although the reverse legend is not clear, there are some discernible letters which include: “O”, “A”, “H/N”, a cross, “S” (backwards), and two “I”s
- Following the two “I”s there is another letter which appears to be round followed by a colon
- The initial letter “O” appears to have a series of dots within it, which becomes important shortly
- There are also two piles that are discernible from the initial strike of the Type IV reverse

Figure 5 has the above items highlighted for reference.

Figure 5 – Placement of Discernible Letter of Features of the Reverse



From here, the next key step is to establish the positions of the inner and outer design borders for each type as this will help determine which letters belong to the corresponding legends for each type.

Analysis of the Reverse – Establishment of the Inner and Outer Design Borders

The first place of interest in deriving placement of the inner borders for each type begins with the letter “O” from the initial observation of the reverse. Brooke detailed within his description for each type that the reverse contains legends between two beaded circles. As there is a series of dots (or beads) within that letter “O”, we can deduce one of the inner borders is running through that letter. If these beads are followed counterclockwise in an arc towards the base of the fleur and beyond, the formation of an inner border is established which would belong to the Type V strike as it encompasses the voided cross. Moreover, the “O” will belong to the Type IV strike, and the inner border for that type would be just beneath. Additionally, as the base of the piles would be resting on the inner circle as per Brooke’s description of the Type IV reverse, we can begin to plot the inner border for that type. Lastly, assuming uniform distance between the inner border and edge along with considering the diameter of the coin, we can estimate the edge of the legend for each type. Figure 6 illustrates the progression of the analysis on the positioning of the inner and outer design borders. In the third picture, the Type IV borders along with two piles are illustrated in red whilst the Type V borders are illustrated in yellow.

Figure 6 – Presentation of Inner and Outer Design Borders for Each Type



With the establishment of the inner and outer borders, the following observations are noted with respect to the legend lettering:

- The letter “O” at the 8 o’clock position belongs to the Type IV legend as established above.
- The letter “A” appears to belong to the Type V as the Type IV outer border would cut off part of the letter. The style of the letter “A” also aligns to the Series V typography as detailed by Brooke.
- The “H/N” at the 12 o’clock position, as well as the cross to the right, would appear to correspond more to the Type IV position, as each would be cut-off by the position of one of the Type V borders.
- The backwards “S” would belong to the Type IV as the Type V outer border boundary would cut it off. Additionally, the typography aligns to the Series IV style of lettering for Type IV detailed by Brooke.
- The two “I”s could be aligned to either type.
- The other round letter near the colon would also have to belong to the Type IV legend due to its proximity of the Type V inner border which would cut through it.
- As general observation, given the strike of each type is off-centre, we can expect part of the tops of each legend to be absent.

Analysis of the Reverse – Determining the Type IV Legend of the Mint and Moneyer

The first step to derive the legend is to determine the placement of the starting cross and the copulative. Part of this is very easy given the base assumption from above that the following characters belong to the Type IV legend: O, N, + (the starting cross), and the backwards S. Further, we can postulate the “O” would belong to the copulative between the Moneyer and the mint signature given its position relative to the starting cross. Progressing to that area of the reverse between the discernible letter “A” and the “N” we can see the semblance of a “V” shaped indentation which suggests this could be the letter “V”. This is noted in Figure 7 encircled in blue in the left picture. Thus, it appears the mint will be a short name ending in VH/VN to which London immediately stands out (e.g. LVN). Upon reviewing several examples on the EMC/SCBI database, there are several examples where the “N” of the copulative and the “L” of the mint signature for London are ligated⁶.

⁶For examples of layout and ligation of lettering please see: <https://emc.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/full-record/10201512>, <https://emc.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/full-record/12000720>, and <https://emc.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/full-record/19870182>.

Upon further examination of the legend, we can discern where a ligated NL can be placed and that the base of the “L” is aligned to the inner circle of the Type V reverse. Figure 7 shows the progression of the preceding discussion. Based upon this analysis, it appears likely the Type IV penny was minted in London.

Figure 7 – Type IV Mint Reading as ONLVN (London)



Now that we have the mint of London, we can analyse the Moneyer. In reviewing ‘The Mints and Moneyers of England and Wales, 1066–1158’ by Martin Allen in the BNJ of 2012⁷, the Moneyer to focus upon is Sigar(us)/Sighar/Sigher. This is due to the backwards “S” belonging to the Type IV strike and there are no initial traces of an “M” or “P” appear to suggest Smaewine, Sperlig, or other forms of spellings of either of those Moneyers. Going back to the round letter first detailed in Figure 5 and reviewing the Epigraphical Table for Series IV lettering, it appears potential letters would be an “O” or a “G”, with “G” being the most logical to align with Sigar, plus there are remnants of the extension of the “G” interacting with the lower part of the colon. From this, there should be an “I” between the “S” and “G” and traces of it can be seen. However, for the sake of brevity, Figure 8 demonstrates the placement of the letters for the Moneyer, which is a form of Sigar spelt as SIGIER. This conclusion was reached during online research whereby two Type III pennies appeared in past auctions of DixNoonanWebb⁸ which provide support of the “SIGIER” spelling. It should be noted the second “I” is not visible, but there are some remnants of the letter “E” along with some remnants of the curvature of the lower arm of the “R”. The “R” becomes a bit more visible when the contrast and lighting are changed (see the black and white portions of Figure 8). However, it appears the “R” is largely obliterated from the Type V strike.

Figure 8 – Type IV Moneyer Reading of SIGIER



⁷Please see page 94 of the publication at: https://www.britnumsoc.org/publications/Digital%20BNJ/pdfs/2012_BNJ_82_5.pdf.

⁸Please see the current Noonans Mayfair site at: <https://www.noonans.co.uk/auctions/archive/lot-archive/results/339540/> and <https://www.noonans.co.uk/auctions/archive/lot-archive/results/315615/>. N.B. Moneyer is detailed as Sigegar and Sigar, respectively.

An additional point of consideration is to understand which mints and Types have the Moneyer Sgar (and spelling variations thereof). When reviewing the ‘The Mints and Moneyers of England and Wales, 1066–1158’ (including the Addenda and Corrigenda) from Martin Allen, the following are noted:

- Sgar is a known Moneyer of the London Mint for 10 of the 15 Types of Henry I, of which examples exist for Type III and Type V.
- Sgar is not detailed for any other mints, which strengthens the position that the current coin under review is an example from the London Mint.

Analysis of the Reverse – Determining the Type V Legend of the Mint and Moneyer

Unlike the Type IV reverse where a more certain position can be taken of the mint and Moneyer, the Type V analysis is a working hypothesis with options presented below. This occurs due to incomplete lettering resulting from the off-centre strike, non-standardised mint spellings, and lack of clear, distinct letters.

Analysis of Mint: Assessing the mint signature begins with understanding its location on the legend and potential number of characters. This will be achieved by: 1) determining the positions of the starting cross for the legend and copulative; and 2) identifying the base position (i.e. the “feet”) of the lettering as the Type V strike is off-centre.

- The starting cross has some remnants, particularly the right and lower arms, and is aligned with one of the arms of the Type V voided cross. This alignment can be expected and is consistent with the layout of other examples in Plate XL of Volume 1 of ‘A Catalogue of English Coins in the British Museum – The Norman Kings’ as well as examples on the EMC/SCBI database.
- The placement of the copulative can be determined by going back to the location of the “G” in the Type IV Moneyer’s name of SIGIER (i.e. the round letter initially observed in Figure 5 by the colon). Upon closer inspection of that area, the squareness associated with the legs of the letter “N” can be seen, especially at the top edge of the coin. Additionally, remnants of the cross-bar can be seen within the middle part of the “G”. Given this observation, the two letter “I”s initially observed would represent the letter “O” whilst the colon punctuation would also belong to the Type V legend.
- Given the placement of the starting cross and the copulative, the location of the mint signature is now known. When analysing the area, the bases of five letters can be seen.

Figure 9 show the progression of the analysis of the above. The first picture has areas encircled in blue relative to the starting cross and copulative. The pictures on the right of Figure 9 shows an enlargement of where the mint signature is located along with corresponding feet of the lettering underlined.

Figure 9 – Placement of the Type V Starting Cross, Copulative and Mint and Letter Positions



From the above, it appears there are five letters to the mint, and to aid with possibilities, the Epigraphical Table was utilised. As the Type V is struck off-centre, there is also the dynamic we are missing the definitive details from the tops of each letter. Regardless, the working hypothesis of potential letters is detailed in the chart below, based upon the author’s primary, secondary, and tertiary thoughts on the lettering.

Position	1	2	3	4	5
Primary	L	R	I	E	H
Secondary	C	H	C	C	R
Tertiary			T	I	

Figure 10 shows an enlargement of the area along with lighting from two different angles, followed by the letters associated with the author's primary hypothesis of lettering. One of the issues that adds a level of complexity with identifying potential letters is the surface quality of the metal in that there are some hints of porosity and flakiness, which creates optical illusions and is a bit tricky to see what could have been from the striking of the lettering versus metal positioning (e.g. being the edge of the coin and having some waviness). Regardless, the primary reading would appear to be LRIEH, which means the Type V would have been minted in Leicester or even potentially Chester.

Figure 10 – Potential Lettering and Reading of the Type V Mint



Analysis of Moneyer: With the potential Mints of Leicester or Chester, ‘The Mints and Moneyers of England and Wales, 1066–1158’ (including the Addenda and Corrigenda) was again consulted and there are not many Moneyers noted for Type IV or V for either of those mints. Thus, a similar analysis was performed to ascertain the number of characters and then a higher reliance was placed on the Epigraphical Table to help derive a Moneyer. In determining a potential number of characters for the Moneyer, we consider the following two factors: 1) the prior observation the reverse legend generally has between 13 and 16 characters; and 2) there are nine characters already known (ON: LRIEH +). Therefore, we can expect the Moneyer to have between four and seven characters. The Epigraphical Table was used by scaling it and the reverse legends to the same size by focusing on the “A” as an anchor point. The chart of potential lettering is presented below:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Primary	S	A	O	P?	I?	N
Secondary	G		M?			D

Figure 11 shows the potential lettering as taken directly from the Epigraphical Table and the following observations/rational for suggested lettering are noted:

- The first letter appears to most likely be an “S” or a “G” given the curvature, but the “S” appears more likely as there is not as much of a circular curvature as suggested by the Epigraphical Table for the letter “G” in the Series V lettering style.
- The “A” is given and distinguishable as the second letter.
- In terms of the third letter, we can detect the outer curve of a feature easily along with a mirror image of the left curving feature on the “N” from the under-type. Thus, it would appear most likely this is the letter “O” and is in line with the expected form as per the Epigraphical Table. However, one point of consideration is that above the Type IV “N” there is a feature from the top of the rim coming down and to the right (highlighted in blue in Figure 12). This could be a stylised version of “M” from the Series VI style of lettering. Fortuitously, a Type IV half-penny of Henry I was found in 2023 with the Moneyer Gilemor which exhibits that stylised “M” (EMC 2023.0080)⁹. Therefore, it is not out of the realm of possibility this could be the letter “M” as this style was in use earlier in the Henry I series.

⁹ See <https://emc.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/full-record/20230080>.

- For the fourth letter, the “P” is derived because on the left arm of the cross, there is a slight notch and curvature that goes towards the left to the letter “N” and is highlighted in Figure 12. Also, once a copy of the “P” from the Epigraphical Table is placed in the spot, it coincides with the positioning.
- The fifth letter is a function of the amount of space in conjunction with the likelihood that the fourth and sixth letters are both consonants. As such, it would seem likely there should be a vowel. Given the amount of space and neatness of the Type V, Series V lettering style, we are left with the letter “I” which can be supported by two things: 1) it would be practically flush with the cross from the Type IV which is part of the reason we don’t see a lot of the letter, and 2) in the top right quadrant of the cross where the two arms come together, there is a slight hint of a letter peeking out (see Figure 12). Thus, when we see the style of the “I” potentially in the mint name, it fits within that space.
- Lastly, for the sixth letter, a crossbar can be seen between the Type IV cross and the Type IV backwards “S” (encircled in blue in Figure 12). As such, the possibilities are “N” and Eth (Ð), and we are able to exclude “H” as the style changed from Series IV to Series V lettering styles. Upon closer inspection of the backwards “S” there is no curvature present, which would be expected with the letter Eth. Thus, it would appear logical this last letter is an “N” but have not categorically dismissed Eth.

Therefore, given the potential letters, the current working assumption is the Moneyer for the Type V strike would be SAOPIN. The initial thought is a variation on Sawine/Sewine/ Sæwine, but is only a working theory at this point.

Figure 11 – Epigraphical Table Lettering Placement



Figure 12 – Areas of Interest for the Type V Moneyer



As an additional point of consideration is to understand which mints and Types have the Moneyer Saewin/ Sewin (and other spelling variations thereof). When reviewing the 'The Mints and Moneyers of England and Wales, 1066–1158' (including the Addenda and Corrigenda) from Martin Allen, the following are noted:

- Sewin is a Moneyer for Leicester under William II for Types II, III, and IV.
- Sæwine/Sewine is also a Moneyer for the following Mints: Exeter (William I and II, and Henry I Type II); Gloucester (William II and Henry I Types III and XV); Northampton (William I and II, and Henry I Types I through III); Wilton (William I and II, and Henry I Type II); Winchester (William II); and Worcester (William I and II).

Conclusion:

Following an examination and above detailed analysis of the coin in question, it would appear we can present the following:

- An example of an overstrike coin from the reign of the Norman King Henry I
- The overstrike is that of a Type V upon a Type IV, which supports the chronology of Types IV and V
- The Type IV understrike is likely from London Mint with Sigier (Sigar) being the Moneyer, of which the Moneyer is not yet recorded for this Type (but does exist for Henry I Types III, V, VI, and IX)
- The Type V overstrike would likely require additional examples to support the mint and Moneyer, but the current working hypothesis is the Leicester or Chester mint, and a potential Moneyer of Saopin (variation of Sawine/Sewine/Sæwine).

For illustrative purposes, Figure 13 on the next page shows the overlay of the reverse legends in their entirety based upon this research note.

Figure 13 – Overlay of the Type IV and Type IV Reverse Legends

