

# **A Possible Coin from the Collection of the Notorious Forger John White**

Timothy Cook



In the eighteenth century, John White was a notorious figure known for making and dealing in forgeries of coins, antiquities, and genuine items. Some of these forgeries have survived to this day, as has his reputation for making them. However, White was not known to have begun his tooling of coins and artifacts until the 1770s and 1780s. When his collection was sold at an auction in February 1788 by John Gerard, none of the items in the auction were listed as suspicious. One coin that has been in several notable collections over the last century bears a striking resemblance to one reputed to have been in White's collection. The above groat is a recent addition to my collection, thanks to the dealer Mark Rasmussen. Previously, this coin was in the Motcomb Collection, R.C. Lockett Collection, and the F.A. Walters Collection. This

coin may have been part of White's collection, which was listed in reference works as early as 1756.

Before tracing the provenance of the coin, a look at the coin itself might be in order. Mules are fairly common in the coinage of Henry VI, and this coin also appears to be a mule. It looks to be a mule between a Cross-Pellet B, Whitton 67 obverse and Cross-Pellet A, Whitton 66a reverse, however, there are two differences on the obverse that make this coin stand out from other coins of Whitton 67. Whitton shows that for Cross-Pellet 67 there is a double saltire stop after ANGLI, which this coin does not have. The other more interesting difference can be found after HENRIC where there is a symbol that is not found on any other issues of Henry VI and is not mentioned by Whitton. The symbol on this coin does resemble one that is found as part of the date on coins dated 1494 issued by Perkin Warbeck. The symbol on the coin is pictured as follows:



The first mention of a coin with this symbol is in Withy and Ryall's 1756 publication *Twelve Plates of English Silver Coins from the Norman Conquest to Henry the Eighth*, where the coin can be found on plate VIII as coin number 4. Their description reads as follows: "4. HENRIC, 8, DI.GRA.REX.ANGLI.FRANCE. Posue,.devm,adiv.tore.mevm. Civitas, London." Along with this, there is an explanatory text that reads as follows: "No.4 and 6 weigh full 60 grains each,

singularity on the head side made the Owner [not identified but presumed to be John White] desirous of their being engraved in the plate, but we are doubtful whether they are ranged in the proper station.” This coin, along with coin No.6 was listed as being from the reign of Henry IV when they were both Henry VI. They possibly transcribed the symbol after HENRIC as the number 8. However, if you look at what is there, they could have been trying to show the symbol by using a number 8 without the bottom arc of the number [a picture of this is at the end of this article].

In 1763, Martin Folkes published his Tables of English and Silver Coins, where on the supplementary plate 1 coin 41 there appears to be the same coin listed as being from Henry IV. Here, the coin is described as “41. HENRIC IV[x] DI GRA REX ANGLI FRANC. Type as the former, with a cross on the neck; mint mark a cross fleury. CIVITAS LONDON. POSVI DVM ADIVTOREM MEVM. Usual cross and pellets without annulets. Weight 60[grains]. The [x] refers to the footnote where they describe the symbol behind HENRIC as “The Arabic figure of it, his last coinage”. The editors of the 1763 edition of Folkes’ work appear to have read the symbol as the Arabic equivalent of the Roman number IV.

The plates from Folkes were used in all three editions of Rev. R. Ruding’s Annals of The Coinage, 1817, 1819, and 1840. Here, as in the Folkes volume, the coin is listed as from the reign of Henry IV, and as in the Folkes volume, the symbol is referred to as an Arabic 4. Here, Ruding states that the authenticity of the coin is doubtful. The reason for his doubts is that the coin was listed in Withy and Ryall’s 1756 publication, where the plate with this coin is presumed to be, as stated in Ruding, from John White, and also stated that it was not known to exist.

In 1841, Edward Hawkins published English Silver Coins, in which he mentions the coin from Ruding in his discussion of the coinage of Henry IV, V, and VI. He concluded that the coin was a blundered or purposely altered die. This appears to be the last mention of this coin or a coin with the same symbol for 61 years.

Walters, in his 1902 Numismatic Chronicle article about the silver coinage of Henry VI, mentions a coin as being part of his collection and includes a picture of the coin. He discusses his coin and previous times that a coin that might be the same was mentioned. First, he refers to a similar coin in Ruding's Annals of The Coinage and states that the coin comes from John White. He continues to state that he is doubtful that his coin is the same, but that he believes it is possible. He then mentions Hawkins and his discussion of the coin, and Walters was unsure if Hawkins was referring to the saltire on the neck or the symbol in question with regards to it being a blundered or altered die. The coin was sold in the 1913 Walters sale and was lot number 372. The coin was next in the collection of Richard C. Lockett. As shown in his manuscript catalogue he purchased the coin from Spink, where it was coin number 11983 from the Numismatic Circular, for £3.10p with a discount of 20%. It was then sold in part IV of the sale of his collection in 1956 and was lot 1483. The last time this coin was sold at auction it was lot 69 in the Morton and Eden sale of the Motcomb Collection, 17 March 2016.

In both the Walters catalogue listing and the Lockett manuscript collection, the coin is listed as unique. It is unclear if Lockett was just quoting Walters or if he had also come to the same conclusion. Both Walters and Lockett accepted the coin as authentic, and Walters explicitly stated this in his 1902 NC article. Groats of this period were issued at a weight of 3.89gm, this coin is 3.68gm. While the coin is underweight, it is not excessively so. The coin is clearly struck and not cast. The lettering is no different than the lettering on coins in the previous or

subsequent issues of Henry VI. The portrait and other features of the coin are also not different from previous or subsequent issues. The coloration of the symbol matches the letters before and after it. David Greenhalgh examined a photograph at maximum magnification and came to this conclusion: "I can see nothing about it that causes me concern over its authenticity. There appears no evidence of tooling or alteration to the legend and the letter spacing bears this out, the letter fonts all appear legitimate all in all I have no doubts about the coin". Hugh Pagan also examined the photographs and came to the same conclusion that the coin was not a tooled forgery.

All this leads to the conclusion that this coin is indeed genuine, but the question remains is this merely a blundered die, or was this possibly intentional on the part of the die maker, and if so, what if any was the purpose? In an email exchange with Hugh Pagan, he surmised a possible explanation for the interpretation of the symbol offered by the editors of the 1763 edition of Folkes :

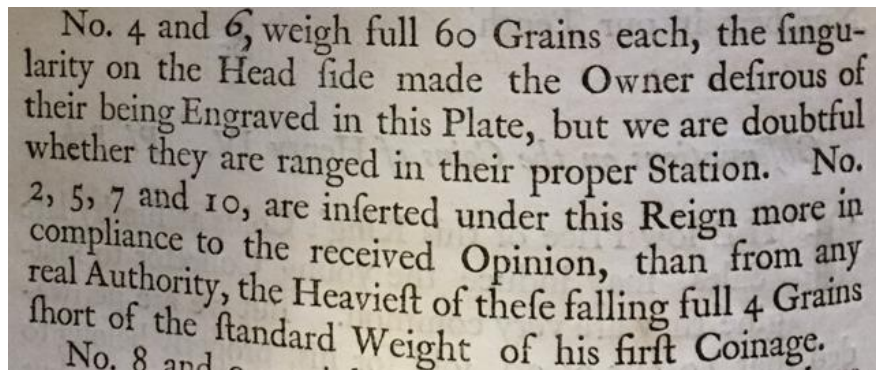
It has now occurred to me that they might have read the symbol as a Q, which would on that interpretation have been the first letter of the Latin word quartus, "fourth", indicating that the coin was issued by Henry IV. If so, it was not at all helpful of them to describe the symbol just as the Arabic equivalent of IV, without further explanation, but I can just about visualize their possible process of thought. As the coin is in fact of Henry VI, the symbol, on a similar interpretation, would have to be read as the first letter of the Latin word 'sextus', "sixth", but I cannot see any way at all that the symbol might represent the letter S

This coin appears to still be unique, as no other like it has come to light since Walters or Locket described it as such and is still the only coin to have been found like it. Given that no other coins

with this symbol have been discovered, it is highly likely that this is the same coin referenced in Ruding's work and was indeed part of John White's collection.

The following are excerpts from the works and collections cited in the article:

**Withy and Ryall, Twelve Plates of English Silver Coins from the Norman Conquest to Henry the Eighth, 1756, plate VIII**



No. 4 and 6, weigh full 60 Grains each, the singularity on the Head side made the Owner desirous of their being Engraved in this Plate, but we are doubtful whether they are ranged in their proper Station. No. 2, 5, 7 and 10, are inserted under this Reign more in compliance to the received Opinion, than from any real Authority, the Heaviest of these falling full 4 Grains short of the standard Weight of his first Coinage. No. 8 and 9





Courtesy of the British Numismatic Society

M. Folkes Tables of English Silver and Gold Coins, 1763(1978 reprint), page 178

## HENRY IV.

Species. Numb.

Weight.

- Gros. 40. HENRIC D G REX ANGL ET FRANC D HY. In a double treffure of nine curves, pointed with trefoils or flower de luces, a full face and open crown fleury. 71 Gr.  
CIVITAS LONDON in the inner limb; POSVI DEVM ADIVTOREM MEV in the outward limb. An annulet joins the three pellets in two transverse quarters [m].
41. HENRIC IV [x] DI GRA REX ANGLI FRANC. Type 60, as the former, with a cross on the neck; mint mark a cross fleury.  
CIVITAS LONDON. POSVI DEVM ADIVTOREM MEVM. Usual cross, and pellets without annulets.

## EDWARD IV.

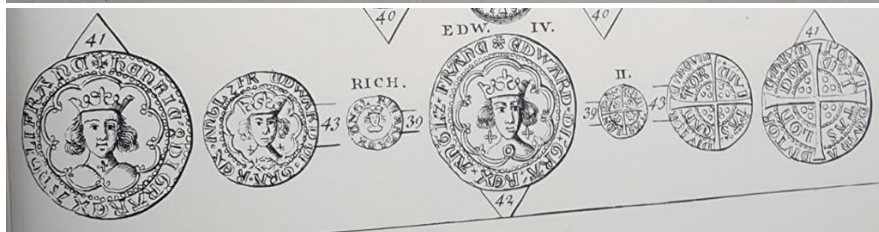
42. EDWARD DI GRA REX ANGL ET FRANC. The same 59. type; on the breast an annulet, and on each side the neck a cross [y] mint mark.
- Two Pence. 43. EDWARD DI GRA REX ANGL ET FR. As the former; 23. on the breast a remarkable figure [z].  
CIVITAS CANTOR . . . . . DIVTOREM MEVM.  
The same type [b].

[x] The Arabic figure of it; his last coinage.

[y] Probably designed for a flower de luce, or rose of four leaves, as Silver Plate V. 1—9. Struck before his 4<sup>th</sup> year. Reverse like one of those. In the collection of — Hannot Esq.

[z] Perhaps a wreath. Struck after his fourth year. Mr. White has one of the first coinage struck at London, with an annulet on the breast, and rose for a mint mark, weight 30 grains. *Witby*, Pl. X. num. 10.

## SUPPLE-





Species.

41. Obv. HENRIC 8<sup>o</sup> DI GRA REX ANGLI FRANC. Type as N<sup>o</sup> 40, but  
with a Cross upon the neck. M. M. a Cross fleury.

- 60

Rev. POSVI, &c. CIVITAS LONDON. Cross and Pellets.

the Obverse HENRIC D G REX ANGL Z FRANC. D HY.

o The Arabick figure of 4; his last Coinage\*. [A.] The authenticity of this Coin is extremely doubtful. It first appeared in Withy's Plates, from the communication of Mr. John White; and is not, I believe, now known to exist. If the Coin in this Plate be copied from Withy, it is not a correct imitation. The explanation of the Plates is silent as to the owner of it.

p Probably designed for a Fleur de Lis, or Rose of four leaves, as Silver, Plate V. 1—9.



Rev. R. Ruding Annals of The Coinage, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1819, Vol. V, page 267

Pellets in two transverse quarters are united by an Annulet<sup>n</sup>. 71

41. Obv. HENRIC 8<sup>o</sup> DI GRA REX ANGLI FRANC.  
Type as N<sup>o</sup> 40, but with a Cross upon the neck. M. M. a Cross fleury.

Rev. POSVI, &c. CIVITAS LONDON. Cross and Pellets. 60

z FRANC D HY.

o The Arabick figure of 4; his last Coinage\*. [A.] The authenticity of this Coin is extremely doubtful. It first appeared in Withy's Plates, from the communication of Mr. John White; and is not, I believe, now known to exist. If the Coin in this Plate be copied from Withy it is not a correct imitation. The Explanation of the Plates is silent as to the owner of it.



Courtesy of the British Numismatic Society



41 Obv. HENRIC 8<sup>6</sup> DI GRA REX ANGLI FRANC.

Type as No. 40, but with a cross upon the neck. M.M. a cross fleury.

Rev. POSVI, etc. CIVITAS LONDON. Cross and pellets - - - - - 60

<sup>6</sup> The Arabic figure of 4; his last coinage.\* [A.] The authenticity of this coin is extremely doubtful. It first appeared in Withy's plates, from the communication of Mr. John White; and is not, I believe, now known to exist. If the coin in this plate be copied from Withy it is not a correct imitation. The Explanation of the Plates is silent as to the owner of it.



E. Hawkins *English Silver Coins, 1841*, Page 109

MM. Cross crosslet. Three pellets at each side of king's neck, and one small additional pellet in two quarters of reverse; leaf? on king's breast. *MB.* Without the additional pellets, and reads SIVITAS. *MB.* Another reads correctly and has MM. on rev. plain cross. *MB.* Additional pellets on rev. and one at each side of the crown, cross on king's neck, lozenge after HENRIC and GRA. (329). *MB.* There can be little doubt that a specimen of this coin, blundered or purposely altered, gave rise to the idea of the Arabic figure of 4 appearing upon a coin of any of the Henries. See Rud. Sup. I. 41. Another, similar, has also a pierced mullet after POSVI. *MB.*

## Provenance

F.A. Walters NC vol II(1902), 4th Series, p 262, plate XI, 11

these three positions, but without any mint-mark. A very curious groat of this type is figured in Ruding, Supplement, Pl. I., No. 41. It is described as of Henry IV, and has an object after  $\eta\text{ENRIQ}$  which strongly resembles the Arabic figure 4, as it appears on the Perkin Warbeck groat and elsewhere [Pl. XI, 11]. Ruding states in a note that the authenticity of this coin is extremely doubtful, and that "it first appeared in Withy's plates from the communication of Mr. John White, and is not,"

262

NUMISMATIC CHRONICLE.

he believes, "now known to exist." Hawkins alludes to this coin as a blundered or altered coin, but, apparently without the plate before him, seems to refer to the cross on the breast.

It so happens that I myself have a groat of Henry VI of the issue under consideration, which has the same figure after the name as the one in Ruding. It is, of course, possible that mine may be the identical coin so long lost sight of, although it seems hardly likely. If it is not, and mine is another coin, it would be an argument against its being an altered coin. It certainly is a genuine groat of Class VI, but what the object after  $\eta\text{ENRIQ}$  is, I am unable to suggest. It may possibly be an alteration, but if so, it is cleverly done. Perhaps some member of the Society may be able to suggest an explanation, now that the actual coin is forthcoming, after being so long lost sight of.

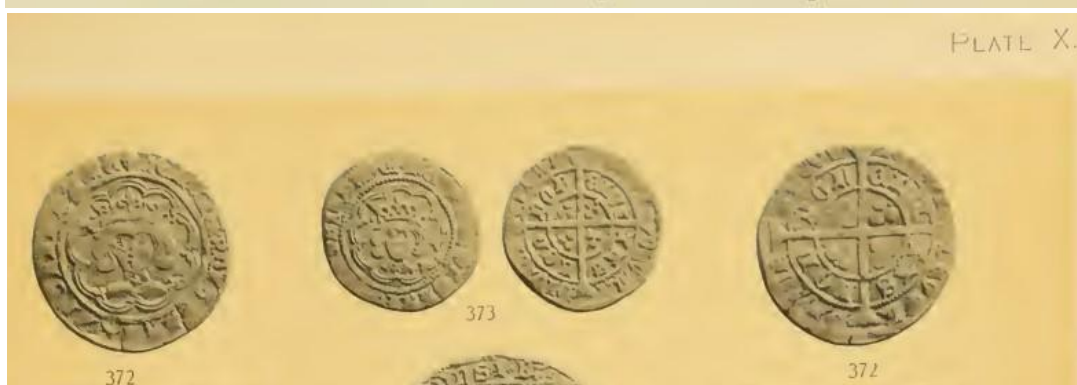
*Num. Chron. Ser. IV. Vol. II. Pl. XI.*





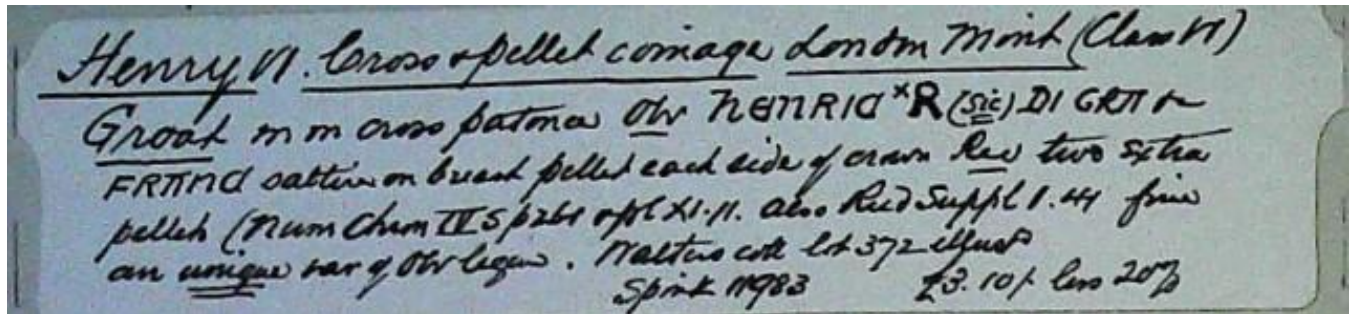
**F.A. Walters Sotheby Part One(28 May 1913), lot 372**

372 Groat, *Loudon*, Class VI, m. m. cross patonce, *obv.* henric × s (*sic*) DI  
GRA, &c., FRING, cross and pellets as previously, *rev.* two extra  
pellets (*Num. Chron. IV, S., p. 261, and pl. XI, 11, also Rud.*  
*Supp. I, 41*), *fine, an unique variety of obv. legend.* Another,  
usual legend, a lis upon the king's breast, *rev.* saltires after  
LONDON ×, two extra pellets (*Num. Chron. IV, S. II, pl. XI, 14 var.*),  
*very fine and rare, the last Loudon heavy Groat of this reign, and*  
*corresponding, except in name, with some of the first Groats of*  
*Edward IV (both illustrated)* [Pls. IX and X] 2



Richard C. Lockett

Richard C. Lockett Manuscript Collection



Courtesy of the British Numismatic Society

Lockett Sale Part IV Sold at Glendining (11 October 1956), lot 1483

14 0 0 1483\* Groats (4), (a) another as in last lot, mullet after HENRIC; (b) reading HENRIC (Walters article, Pl. XI-II); (c) masle after HENRIC GRA and mullet after POSVI, two extra pellets in quarters (Whitton 81a); (d) similar to last coin without pellets on rev. All very fine and the second coin extremely rare (b illustrated).



**Motcomb Collection sold at Morton & Eden 78(17 March 2016), lot 69**



69

69

**Henry VI**, Cross Pellet [B] Issue, Groat, 3.68g, London, m.m. cross IIIb/none, saltire on neck and pellets beside crown, & omitted, saltire stop after HENRIC before an unusual 'tie-shaped' mark (instead of mullet or mascle, *see detail above*), *rev.*, no stops, extra pellets in second and third angles (N. 1517; S. 1935; cf. Whitton 67 *et seq.*; Stewartby p. 326, Xb(i) *var.*; this coin published by Walters, NC vol, II, 4<sup>th</sup> series, p. 224-66, plate XI, 11), *scratch on cheek and with a couple of striking cracks, about very fine and very rare*  
£400-500

Ex F.A. Walters Collection and R.C. Lockett Collection (lot 1483, part; this coin illustrated).

## Bibliography

Hawkins, Edward, 1841. English Silver Coins  
Lockett, Richard C, Manuscript Collection with permission of the British Numismatic Society  
Folkes, Martin, 1763. Tables of English Silver and Gold Coins(1975 reprint)  
Manville, Harrington, 2005, Numismatic Guide to British and Irish Printed Books, 1600-2004  
Manville, Harrington, 2009, Biographical Dictionary of British and Irish Numismatics  
Ruding, Rev. Rogers, 1817. Annals of the Coinage, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition  
Ruding, Rev. Rogers, 1819. Annals of the Coinage, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition  
Ruding, Rev. Rogers, 1840. Annals of the Coinage, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition  
Walters, Frederick, 1902, The Silver Coinage of the Reign of Henry VI, NC 2, 224-266  
Whitton, Cuthbert, 1938-1944, The Heavy Coinage of Henry VI, BNJ Vol 23 and 24

I am grateful to Dave Greenhalgh and Hugh Pagan for their invaluable help and input. I also want to thank Rob Page, Steve Hill and Richard Ambrose for their corrections and guidance. Additionally, I am grateful to Bradley Shepherd for his efforts in locating and providing pictures of the Withy and Ryal volume and Ruding second edition.

Links:

For comparison, the Cross Pellet groats in my collection can be found [here](#).



©2025 Timothy D. Cook