

## A Problem Coin of Henry III; a Matter of Class.

By Mike Shott

The coin illustrated below recently appear on eBay. The coin belongs to class 5 and was struck at the London mint, by the moneyer Ricard.

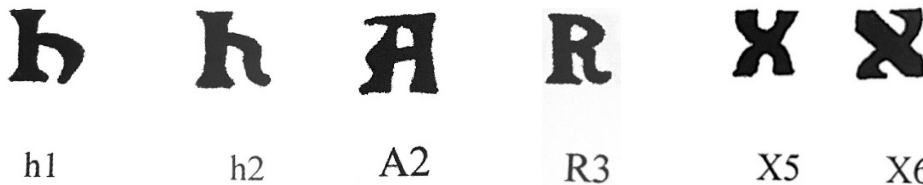


Obverse. hENRICVSREX III'

Reverse. RIC / ARD / ONL / VHD

The coin weighs 1.14g which is on the light side but within acceptable limits.

The key diagnostic features are the form of the letter h, letter A, letter R and the letter X.



The presence of these letter forms together with a broad crown band, places the class as later than class 5f (a sub class characterised by a distinct double band to the crown). This means that the coin falls into either class 5g or 5h. The distinction between these two subclasses is the form of the crown ornament. In class 5f and class 5g, this is a low set 'true fleur'. In class 5h, the crown ornament takes the form of pellets, with or without stalks or a combination of both.

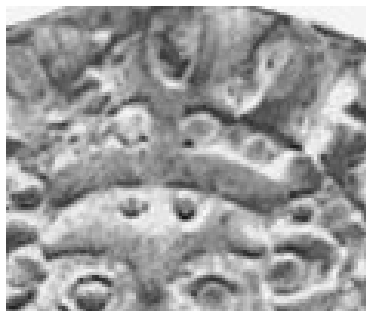
The arrangement of this coin is clearly one of an (elongated) central pellet on a stalk, flanked by two distinct pellets without stalks.



Under strict application of the current classification scheme, as published by Churchill & Thomas<sup>1</sup>, this coin must therefore belong to class 5h.

<sup>1</sup> Churchill R. & Thomas R., The Brussels Hoard of 1908, Baldwin's 2012 pp 46-47

A search of available resources failed to identify any other examples, the closest being a coin in the Scottish Museums (SCBI 53)<sup>2</sup>, shown below. The coin is listed as Class 5g - 5h.



On close inspection, the central fleur shows something other than pellets, much closer to the ‘true fleurs’ of class 5g, rather than the pellets of class 5h.

As at the time of writing, there is no record of any London mint coins of class 5h from any of the recorded moneyers, other than Reginald de Cantuaria. He appears to have been appointed sometime in 1262 and is recorded as striking in class 5g and 5h.

The London Exchequer was closed between February 1265 and September 1265, so it seems very likely that the mint was also closed. By the third quarter of 1265, following the battle of Evesham, the king’s party was very much back in control of London. Because of the city’s overt support for the baronial party, Henry exacted significant financial penalties over the city as a whole, as well as over some of the leading citizens individually. A number of those leading citizens were summoned to the king’s presence at Windsor in order to confirm letters patent by which the citizens would wholly subject themselves to Henry III “*as to life and limb, and as to all things movable and immovable*”.<sup>3</sup>

This group included two of the London moneyers, William of Gloucester (WILLEM) and Richard Bonaventure (RICARD), the subject of this note. Richard is specifically described in contemporary records as a “*sometime citizen of London the king’s enemy*”<sup>4</sup> Both Richard and William were punished by the loss of property (which they never subsequently recovered) and seemingly also by the loss of their position as moneyers. Such a scenario would mean that there should be no coins of class 5h from any of the London moneyers, other than Reginald de Cantuaria.

Under the circumstances, this coin can only be labelled as class 5g, albeit with a non-standard crown ornament. What this also highlights is a need for flexibility when determining the classification of a coin. There may also be a case for a broadening of at least some of the current definitions.

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<sup>2</sup> Bateson J.D., *The Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles*, Vol.53 Scottish Museums

<sup>3</sup> Churchill R., *Mints, Moneyers and Other Mint Officials during the reign of Henry III*, Baldwin’s 2012

<sup>4</sup> CPR1258-66 Westminster 16th March 1266, p569

## Addendum:

Since this note was first written, the coin below has been brought to my attention.



Obverse. hENRICVSREX III'

Reverse. WIL / LEM / ONL / VND

The coin is an obverse die duplicate of the coin discussed above; the reverse however identifies the moneyer WILLEM (William of Gloucester) also at the London mint. This means that Richard and Willem were active at the same time and shared the obverse die, which in turn suggest an extended period of usage rather than an isolated event.

It has also been suggested that the first coin might be a continental imitation, albeit an extremely good one. Although a little on the light side, the coin does not display any of the usual features associated with imitations such as blundered reverse legends and / or stylistic clues in the form of the portrait or lettering. This second coin (above) more or less negates the possibility in that it too shows none of the features associated with imitations. The chances of a continental die cutter randomly choosing, as templates, the correct reverses for two moneyers, active at the same time, in the same subclass and at the same mint, would seem to be very low indeed.

