

A fourth Cross and Pellets halfgroat of Drogheda

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One of us acquired a small coin recently, Figure 1, a detecting find from Lincolnshire, and approached the other for a second opinion on a suspected attribution to Drogheda. The coin, despite its poor condition, is of significance in that it is indeed a Drogheda Cross and Pellets halfgroat, S.6371,¹ and so deserving of record. Drogheda Cross and Pellets halfgroats are almost vanishingly rare, with only three specimens identified prior to this in a recent corpus and die study of the Drogheda mint.²



Figure 1. Drogheda halfgroat of Edward IV, the fourth specimen known to us.

Drogheda Cross and Pellets halfgroats, and Drogheda Cross and Pellets coin in general, are known only for Edward IV, the only reign for which the mint was active, except for a brief flurry for the Suns and Roses coinage of Edward V and Richard III in 1483. The attribution of this coin is therefore definitely to Edward IV, despite the complete loss of the regal name. Indeed nothing can be said of the obverse inscription, except that it ends in []ER (and so is consistent with the DNS HYBER/HYBERN title attested by the other Drogheda Cross and Pellets halfgroats); the initial mark on both sides is also unclear. The obverse features a crowned bust in an unfleured tressure, of which five arcs are visible and nine are implied, like the other three known specimens.

The inner reverse inscription is []-[]-DRO-GHE: The outer reverse inscription is almost completely lost, but what remains, []-[]-[]OR-[], is consistent with the POSVI-DEVMA-DIVTOR-EMEVM attested by the other Drogheda Cross and Pellets halfgroats. A quirk exhibited by the three other specimens (two of which are from the same reverse die) is that the outer reverse inscription starts at nine o'clock relative to the inner mint signature; this

¹ Sovereign Rarities 2025.

² Mac Conamhna 2026. One Drogheda Doubles groat (an equivalent denomination due to the devaluation implemented by the Doubles) is also known, Dolley 1972 24.

does not appear to be the case with the current specimen, where the start point of the POSVI etc. is implied to be a correctly-oriented 12 o'clock relative to the mint signature by the two remaining letters.

The new specimen is from a different obverse and reverse die to all the others; the four known specimens are therefore from four obverse and three reverse dies, indicating low survival of specimens and low coverage of the dies used for Drogheda halfgroat production by the extant corpus. The most similar of the previously-known specimens is NMIHC.2002:1072 in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI), Figure 2.



Figure 2. The Drogheda Cross and Pellets halfgroat NMIHC.2002:1072 in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland. © National Museum of Ireland.

Notably, this specimen also exhibits an abbreviated mint signature, VILL-LADE-DRO-GHE (the other two specimens, both from the same reverse die, have VILL-A:DE-DROG-HEDA). Furthermore, the H and possibly the R letter punch of the NMI specimen appear to be the same as those of the new coin. The NMI specimen was dated to 1475-9 by Mac Conamhna 2026; a similar date range is suggested, with some uncertainty, for the new specimen.

One final feature of the new specimen warrants comment, which is that its portrait punches demonstrate a marked similarity to those of Burns penny portrait H, Figure 3. The hair punch on the viewer's right appears to be identical, and the crown (albeit in a different state of wear on the specimens of Figure 3) may also be the same. The face punch, particularly the details of chin, lips and nose, appears to be very similar, although the details of the eyes and eye sockets appear to be different. This may be due to differences of sinking angle or depth of the punch in the die, or due to the wear of the specimens, or the face punch as a whole may indeed be different. The left hair punch and the shoulder punch are not visible on the new halfgroat.



Figure 3. Comparison of the new halfgroat portrait, left, to Burns penny portrait H, from a Dublin penny.

References

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