



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

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SOME LATE RICHARD NOBLES

LORD STEWARTBY AND T.G. WEBB WARE

AN escallop shell, symbol of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, appears on English coins on occasions from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. Late in the reign of Richard II (1377-99) it is found on some pence from the archiepiscopal mint of York (type III) and on some of the last gold (type IV). On nobles it was placed on the ship's rudder and on quarter-nobles above the shield. Now we have also found the escallop used on one noble die instead of the saltire stops before and after *Gra*. Before the reign of Henry VI the use of pictorial symbols within the inscription is a most exceptional occurrence.

We have noted three specimens from the die in question.

- (i) Glendining, 18 Nov. 1970, lot 148, now in Mr Webb Ware's collection; wt 119.1 gr. There is little sign of rust on the die, and this is the earliest of the known strikings. No mark on the rudder. Because of double-striking the escallop stops are not clear.
- (ii) Formerly in the collection of Mr H.H.S. Mygind. This is a later striking, with incipient rust marks above the foc's'le (and a die-crack along the sword?). It is not clear whether there was a mark on the rudder.
- (iii) From a recent find off the coast of Holland, via Baldwins, to Lord Stewartby's collection; wt 116.1 gr. The escallop stops are clear. Rust marks are more prominent and there may be a mark (escallop or lis?) on the rudder. (Fig. 1).

The hoard from which noble (iii) derives, apparently lost as a result of shipwreck, is said to have been discovered off the north coast of Holland, near Emden, c.2002. It consisted of more than one thousand gold coins of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, mostly Netherlandish and German gulden, but with more than one hundred English nobles. Several of the coins had iron deposits on their surface, of the kind produced by iron nails in seawater. The hoard has been recovered and dispersed gradually, through the agency of MPO, coin and stamp auctioneers of Ijsselstein, near Utrecht. The first parcel was sold at MPO's auction on 30-31 May 2003; further parcels containing nobles have been sold subsequently through the trade and at MPO's sale on 1-3 December 2005. We are indebted to Mr Edward Baldwin for this information. Record of this important find is held by the Dutch Money and Bank Museum in Utrecht.



Fig. 1.

Two nobles from another obverse die also deserve mention here, since the stops by *Gra* seem, possibly, to be saltires over escallops. This obverse die is very similar to the one with escallop stops.

- (iv) Formerly in the Mygind collection. There is no mark evident upon the rudder. There is a slight die-flaw in the first quarter of the shield of arms.
- (v) From the Reigate II (1992) hoard, Glendining, 8 Dec. 1992, lot 7; wt 105.1 gr, clipped. This has advanced die-flaws on the shield, and a small crescent on the rudder.

Late Richard nobles with an escallop (IVa) or a crescent (IVb) on the rudder are well-known rarities, but specimens with escallop stops do not appear to have been noticed previously. The question therefore arises where they should be placed in the sequence of Richard's nobles. An example without a mark in the field or on the rudder might be classed as type IIIa, types IIIb and IIIc both having marks added. Against this, however, the face punch on the escallop-stopped die is unlike that of the IIIa period, having a skull-like appearance, with sunken eyes. More generally, one would expect use of the escallop punch for stops to have been not far removed in time from its use as a ruddermark. The fact that the obverse of Reigate 7 had a crescent added on the rudder is also indicative of association with type IV nobles, which might now provisionally be subdivided as follows:

- IVa1 Escallop stops before and after *Gra*
- IVa2 Escallop on rudder
- IVb Crescent on rudder

In the Schneider collection there are two Richard nobles of type IVb. The second of these (*SCBI* 47 no. 187) exhibits mutilation of the first three letters of *Ricard* in a manner similar to that noted by Blunt on a late Richard halfgroat and on a London penny from a late Richard obverse die paired with a reverse of Henry IV.¹ The occurrence of a noble with the same feature lends support to Blunt's view that this was the result of deliberate defacement, and to his suggestion that the most likely circumstances in which it was done would have been shortly after Richard had been deposed by his cousin Henry in September 1399.

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¹ Blunt 1936.