THE LAST SHORT-CROSS ISSUE OF HENRY III (CLASS 8)

By F. Elmore Jones

Two unpublished late Short-Cross coins have recently come to light which to my mind prove conclusively that Class 8 is correctly placed at the end of the series covering the period of roughly 1242-7 during the reign of Henry III.

As it has recently been suggested that the coins of this class may fit the period of 1215-17 at the close of the reign of John, when London was in the hands of the insurgent barons and the king himself had fled the capital, I feel that the evidence afforded by these two new coins may justify a short paper on the subject; also some remarks on Class 8 generally. As several coins are illustrated in these notes I do not intend to take up time by a description of types 7 and 8 of the L. A. Lawrence classification of the Short-Cross series, and I propose to pass straight on to a discussion of the two unpublished coins figured below.

I think it certain that neither was known to Dr. Lawrence at the time of the publication of his classification and neither is represented in his own extensive collection; nor is there a specimen of either in the British Museum. The first of these two coins (Fig. 1) is a very late Class 7c of Bury St. Edmunds by the moneyer John. Hitherto this moneyer has only been known in Class 8.

It will be remembered that the evidence of the one-moneyer mint of Bury played a vital part in the ‘build-up’ of Dr. Lawrence’s classification and that the author was the first to identify the moneyer John of the Bury Short-Cross coins of Class 8 with the John of the early Long-Cross coins of St. Edmundsbury, thus for the first time linking up the two series. This new type 7 coin forms the missing link at the other end of the chain and connects Class 8 with Class 7 through the incidence of this moneyer’s name. It also indicates that all the moneyers known to have been striking in Class 8 also struck in Class 7; hitherto Bury has been the only exception in this respect.

The second coin (Fig. 2) is perhaps an even more conclusive piece of evidence that Class 8 followed Class 7 and is a mule of the two

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types 7/8. Short-Cross mules are rare and are usually difficult to identify with certainty because of the gradual fading of one class into another. In this instance the entirely different lettering of the two classes plus the different initial cross on the reverse (i.e. mint-mark) made detection fairly easy.

The reverse of this coin is a very early Class 8 die with m.m. cross pommée which well shows the distinctive lettering of the type.

This is an open form of the letters C and E, a peculiar R, quite a different S from that of Class 7 and a different letter N having the uprights curved inwards in the middle. This distinctive lettering is even better shown on the next coin (Fig. 3), a very early Class 8 on which the open C and E are clearly shown. Compare these two letters with those found on Class 7c which are exaggeratedly closed—the form of the X in REX is also different in the two classes and is another aid in the detection of muling.

The coins figured above as Nos. 3–7 are Class 8 coins which well show the characteristics of the type. No. 3 should be specially noted, being an example of the excessively rare Class 8 with m.m. cross
pattée. This coin is in Mr. Fred Baldwin’s collection and I am grateful to him for permission to illustrate it. It shows the Long-Cross form of X in Rex particularly well—also the important feature of the good style and engraving (modelled on Class 5) of the earliest coins of Class 8. Dr. Lawrence hardly does sufficient justice to this feature and Brooke ignores it entirely; the latter’s description of the class as “Very degraded; portrait is a travesty of human features with round staring eyes and heavy beard of long lines” only really fits the coin Fig. No. 7 which is illustrated to show the final stage of degradation of style to which the type descends.

It is difficult to assess the rarity of the cross pattée variety which, to distinguish it from the main group of cross pommée coins, should perhaps be labelled 8A. This is the only specimen I recollect having seen, but others must exist and were known to Dr. Lawrence when he wrote that the mint-mark on the earliest varieties of Class 8 “is still a cross pattée but this is not long retained and a cross pommée soon takes its place”.

Dr. Lawrence does not, however, illustrate the variety, which is surprising considering the excellence and fullness of his plates. By reason of this omission the variety has long been something of a puzzle to students of the series.

I am left with the impression, however, that Dr. Lawrence is hardly justified in saying that gradual alteration can be traced from Class 7 to Class 8. Class 5 certainly fades imperceptibly into Class 6, which in turn does likewise into Class 7, but Class 4, of course, does not fade into Class 5, nor I think does Class 7 fade into Class 8. As is well known, Class 5 represents a new coinage following certain important events of 1205; Class 8 may well, and I think does in fact, represent a new coinage following the partial “nationalization” of the royal mints of London and Canterbury. These were put in the sole charge of Nichole de Sancto Albano, who assumed an exceptional appointment at both mints in 1242.

Despite Brooke’s statement that a few other moneyers struck at both mints shortly thereafter, I am inclined to think that Nichole’s jurisdiction at London was supreme from the start. At Canterbury, however, the Archbishop may well have had a say in the matter as both William and John continued as moneyers there, jointly with Nichole, until quite late in the type as evidenced by the stage of degradation reached by some of their coins, and possibly continuously throughout the duration of Class 8.

I have seen Class 8 coins of the following moneyers, and this list may well be a complete one:

- Bury: John.
- Canterbury: John and William, Nichole.
- London: Nichole.

Nichole continued as moneyer at both the royal mints in the earliest Long-Cross issues, as did John at St. Edmundsbury.
I should like to say a few words about the main characteristics of 8B (i.e. cross-pommée m.m.) coins. As Dr. Lawrence observes, three forms of the letter X (in REX) are found, but his descriptions are hardly adequate, and curiously enough the evidence of all the coins I have seen is that the Long-Cross form of letter comes first and not last as he infers.

I consider the order to be:

1. The “Long-Cross” letter (Figs. 3 and 4). This is the letter found on Mr. Baldwin’s cross-pattée coin and those having it show the least deterioration in style.

2. The wedge-shaped letter (Fig. 5). This letter bears a superficial resemblance (but little else) to the St. Andrew’s cross form of the letter found on Class 5c. These coins show a gradual but marked deterioration in style.

3. The cross-pommée letter (Figs. 6 and 7). These coins start off by showing the least fineness and certainly the greatest deterioration of style. Incidentally they are more plentiful than those with the other two forms of letter.

In connexion with the Long-Cross form of X it is interesting to note that another Long-Cross feature occurs unexpectedly early in the Short-Cross Series, viz. a pellet-barred N which is found on some early coins of Class 7.

Again the Long-Cross feature of a horizontal bar to the letters N and M crops up fairly frequently in Class 7 but only occasionally in Class 8.

In the matter of punctuation Class 8 follows much the same general pattern as Class 7. There is no uniformity in the use (or absence) of stops, but the curious feature of either 1, 2, or 3 pellets is introduced and is used for the purpose. The earliest and the latest reverse readings show the general Class 7 feature of no stops at all; the unusual feature of three stops occurs on coins of moderately good style, but there seems to be no hard-and-fast rule.

The Bury coins conform generally to those of the two royal mints; they are very rare, but at least five pairs of dies are known. It has been suggested that the issue was too small to cover the five or six years from 1242 to 1247, but the number of London dies known does not seem to be inconsistent with such a period. One must take into account the circumstance that the two principal Short-Cross hoards which have come to light (i.e. Colchester and Eccles) appear to have been deposited shortly after the close of Class 7.

It will be noted that the Short-Cross coins of Rhuddlan which Dr. Lawrence assigned to Classes 7 and 8 are excluded from consideration herein. It is certain that these coins are not part of the regular English series and good evidence has recently been adduced for their removal from this period to that of the Welsh wars of King John’s reign some thirty years earlier.
I append a list of the seven coins figured here in illustration of these notes:

Class 7c + Ioan on sancta—Bury. Unpublished moneyer for Class 7 (Fig. 1).

Mule 7/8 + Nicholus on LVN—London (Fig. 2).

Class 8 + Nicholus on LVN m.m. cross pattée. Compare lettering with rev. of no. 2. Long-Cross form of X in Rex (Fig. 3).

Class 8. Same reading as no. 1, but cross-pommée m.m. Long-Cross form of X (Fig. 4).

Three typical Class 8’s each reading as no. 2 with or without punctuation.

Wedge-shaped X. : stops. (Fig. 5.)

Cross pommée X (Fig. 6).

Similar X and portrait described by Brooke as being typical of the class (Fig. 7).