A HENRY VI/EDWARD IV MULE PENNY FROM THE LEITH HOARD

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The coin which provided the stimulus for this paper formed part of a hoard found during an archaeological excavation at Bernard Street, Leith, in 1980. It was tentatively identified as a possible mule by the first writer in his report on the hoard, which appeared in this journal. To the second writer belongs the credit for identifying the coin as of more than passing interest and for instigating our research into records of comparable pieces and their possible place in the numismatic history of the period.

The Leith coin reads as follows:

obverse: [henxRl] [X] [X] [X] [X]: pellets to left and right of crown; apparently no mark on breast, but coin is fairly worn
reverse: civiATAS/DVnOLIn : plain reverse, with no rings in centre of cross (pl. 25, 6)

Therefore, the obverse appears to be of Henry VI’s Leaf-Pellet issue (1445–54), and the reverse of Edward IV’s initial local coinage (1461–64/5).

Previous Discussion of Pennies of this Type

The earliest reference to these coins seems to be contained in Longstaffe’s consideration of pennies from the hoard found at Holwell, Leicestershire, in 1864. He described three coins from the same obverse die, one of which had rings in the centre of the reverse, and the other two no symbol and the mint name in the form DVnOLIn. The obverse is described as having dots at the side of the crown, no leaf on the breast, and illegible letters or stops after AnGLl, and as having an ‘accidental projection’ from one side of the crown. Longstaffe attributed these coins to a period of vacancy between the episcopates of Nevill and Booth. Hawkins (1887) included the above coins as types 7 and 8 of his Class IV (Pinecone-Trefoil coinage) of Henry VI, referring back to Longstaffe’s article. W. H. D. Longstaffe, ‘Of the distinctions between the pennies of Henry IV, V and VI’, NC NS 7 (1867), 20–42, at p. 40.

Walters, in 1902, mentioned these coins again, listing them under Class V (Pinecone-Pellet coinage). ‘There are’, he said, ‘some [Durham pence], however, without [Nevill’s] rings and also without the leaf on the breast; they read DVnOLIn and Hawkins puts them in Class IV, although they have the pellets at the side of the crown and read AnGLl × F.’ Walters dated these coins to 1457 or earlier, with later issues bearing the saltire and B of Bishop Booth. He made no further comment about the unmarked reverse issues in his updated discussion of the coinage of Henry VI some years later, but confirmed that the saltire and B pennies of Durham should be regarded as the latest.

Acknowledgements. We wish to express our thanks to Miss Marion Archibald, both for details and photographs of the two British Museum coins and for her helpful comments, and to Mr T. G. Webb-Ware, who kindly supplied details and photographs of the two coins in the C. E. Blunt collection and information on Edward IV local-die Durham pennies. Dr I. H. Stewart has kindly given permission to publish the photographs of the Blunt collection coins.

References:


2 W. H. D. Longstaffe, ‘Of the distinctions between the pennies of Henry IV, V and VI’, NC NS 7 (1867), 20–42, at p. 40.


The first writer to assign the 'mule' pennies to the reign of Edward IV was Whitton (1941). At the end of his discussion of the Leaf-Pellet issue, he mentioned the existence of Durham pence reading CIVITAS DVnOLIn on the reverse, but with obverses from Leaf-Pellet dies of Henry VI. No reference was made to any earlier publication of such coins, and the two examples listed by Whitton (pp. 432–3) both belonged at that time to the L.A. Lawrence collection.

The coins were again discussed briefly by Blunt and Whitton (1949), who concluded that the existence of the mules must indicate that at least some of the early Edward IV pennies of Durham must belong to the heavy coinage, despite the somewhat unhelpful evidence of weights. One mule penny was illustrated (Plate III, 1).

**Coins and Dies Recorded (summarised in Table 1)**

It is clear that the number of recorded examples of these mule pennies is very small, but because not all of them have been recorded photographically, it is very difficult to estimate exactly how many have been identified. Longstaffe described his two specimens (Table 1, 1 and 2) as being from the same obverse die, with no leaf on the breast, reading henxRIC, and with either ×VI' or × I' after ANGLI. Since he did not describe the reverses as being from the same die, it must be assumed that they were not. Walters did not identify particular specimens, but corrected the reading of the obverse legend to ANGLI × F. One penny of this type (Table 1, 3) formed part of lot 361 in the 1913 sale of Walters's collection, but it is not clear whether this was one of the two coins seen by Longstaffe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coin no.</th>
<th>Rev. die</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>History</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Holwell find (Longstaffe 1867)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Holwell find (Longstaffe 1867)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>F. A. Walters sale 1913, lot 361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>L. A. Lawrence colln. (Whitton 1941, 432–3, β); C. E. Blunt colln.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Shirley-Fox colln. (Blunt and Whitton 1949); C. E. Blunt colln. (1951)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10.16 gr.</td>
<td>L. A. Lawrence colln.; British Museum (1936)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>12.32 gr.</td>
<td>T. B. Clarke-Thornhill colln.; British Museum (1935)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>12.20 gr.</td>
<td>Delmé-Radcliffe sale 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10.32 gr.</td>
<td>Leith hoard 1980 (Holmes 1983, 96, no. 9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As has been mentioned, the two coins listed by Whitton (Table 1, 4 and 5) belonged to the L.A. Lawrence collection. Neither is illustrated, but the catalogue descriptions indicate that both obverses were largely illegible (henxRI . . . . . . . . . . I, and . . . . . . . REX × . . . . . . . . . . L1). Both these coins can be identified with some certainty in later contexts, despite the absence of photographs in Whitton's article. The first has, in fact, been offered for sale twice – first by B. A. Seaby Ltd in 1959, when it was described as ex L. A. Lawrence and

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8 Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge sale, 26–30 May 1913 (F. A. Walters Esq. sale). Lot 361 was sold on Wednesday, 28 May.
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Raymond Carlyon-Britton collections. The illustration, although of mediocre quality, seems to confirm the obverse reading. The same coin then appeared in Sotheby's sale on 29 September 1983. The second Lawrence/Whitton piece was purchased privately in 1951 by C. E. Blunt (pl. 25, 1). The coin described and illustrated by Blunt and Whitton is now also in the Blunt collection, having been acquired from the Shirley-Fox collection (Table 1, 6, pl. 25, 2). A full obverse legend reading was given (henRIC Rex AnGLI), although the photograph shows that much of the legend is, in fact, missing or illegible.

The British Museum possesses two examples of this issue, both unpublished. One of these is a third ex-Lawrence piece, which was obtained by exchange in 1936, and which Whitton apparently did not see when he was preparing his article (Table 1, 7, pl. 25, 3). The other was acquired in 1935 from the T.B. Clarke-Thornhill Bequest (Table 1, 8, pl. 25, 4).

An unprovenanced example appeared as lot 171 in the Delmé-Radcliffe sale of 1985. Most of the obverse legend is missing or illegible, with only . . . nGLl clear on the photograph (Table 1, 9, pl. 25, 5). The specimen from the Leith hoard is the tenth, and so far the last, recorded example of this issue of coinage (Table 1, 10, pl. 25, 6). There must be a strong possibility, however, that some of the earlier discoveries have been recorded more than once. Walters may have acquired one of those described by Longstaffe, for instance, and none of the three coins which passed through the Lawrence collection had provenances. The Delmé-Radcliffe specimen is also unprovenanced, but since the end of the obverse legend is missing in this case, it cannot possibly be the same coin as any of the Longstaffe or Walters examples. Both continued the reading of the obverse legend to include stops and letters after AnGLI.

The seven coins which are available for study today, or which have been recorded photographically, were all struck from a single obverse die, which reads [+henRIC Rex AnGLI]. Allowing for misreading of the last stop and letter by Longstaffe, corrected by Walters, there is nothing in the description of the two die-linked pennies from Holwell which would prevent them from being products of the same obverse die as all the other specimens. Although Whitton did not indicate that anything followed the final I on either of the Lawrence coins he examined, this must have been because of their general illegibility, as it is clear that both are from the single known obverse die. Likewise the full reading given by Blunt and Whitton for their illustrated specimen does not include anything after the final I, but again the photograph shows that the coin is from the same obverse die.

Table 1 shows that a total of three reverse dies are represented on the seven coins available for study. Reverse A is represented four times – on both the British Museum specimens and that from Leith, as well as on the Seaby/Sotheby ex-Lawrence piece. Reverse B occurs on two coins and reverse C once. Although the available sample is still very small, it appears likely, therefore, that this was an issue in which one old obverse die of Henry VI was used in connection with several Edward IV reverse dies. None of the coins appears to have displayed a leaf on the breast on the obverse. Its absence is specifically recorded by Longstaffe and Walters. It is possible either that this particular die never included a leaf, or that this small symbol had disappeared from the die through wear by the time these mules were struck.

9 SCMB, October 1959, 387 and Plate XLIV, no. 6809.
10 Sotheby's Ltd. sale, 29 September 1983, lot 87 (illustrated).
11 Glendining and Co. sale, Wednesday 17 April 1985 (Mrs M. Delmé-Radcliffe sale).
The Weight of the Coins

In theory the weight of the mule pennies should give some indication as to whether they were struck before September 1464, when the penny should have weighed 15 gr., or after, when it should have weighed 12 gr. Unfortunately circulation and clipping could have reduced considerably the weight of coins which may not in any case have been of the official weight when first struck. In discussing the Wyre Piddle hoard, Marion Archibald was prepared to accept that a Durham King’s Receivership penny weighing 13.2 gr. was of the heavy issue. This was partly because of the pellets by the crown and in the legend, and partly as a result of her findings in the Attenborough hoard. A similar coin, without the pellets, unclipped and weighing 11.7 gr., she attributed to the light coinage. Also in the hoard, weighing 11.7 gr. and appearing to have been clipped, was a York penny of Archbishop Booth of the heavy issue.

Table 1 shows that the weight of only four mule pennies has been recorded, and that this ranged from 10.16 to 12.32 gr. Examination of the illustrations shows that the two heaviest specimens appear to have been clipped, whilst the two lightest appear to be unclipped. It is therefore possible to make out a case for the issue to have been struck at either the 15 gr. or the 12 gr. standard, or possibly even both. Thus, the weight of the coins does not help in deciding whether they were struck at the time of the heavy or light coinage.

A Possible Date for the Striking of the Mule Pennies

Longstaffe attributed the first recorded examples of these coins to a period between the episcopates of Nevill and Booth (1457), on the basis of the absence of the known personal marks of either of the two bishops. No doubt further justification was provided by the presence in the Holwell hoard of a coin of Nevill from the same obverse die as the two mules. Walters accepted this attribution, and only in Whitton’s article in 1941 were the coins identified as Henry VI/Edward IV mules, on the basis that only the locally-made reverse dies of the early years of Edward IV’s reign contained the mint name in the form DVnOLIn. No evidence has since come to light that any dies of the reign of Henry VI bore this mint signature, and the basic concept of the coins as mules must therefore stand, although it must be said that no reverse die-links between any of the mules and heavy coinage pennies of Edward IV have yet been identified.

The obverse die was produced for the Leaf-Pellet issue of Henry VI, which at present is given a date range of 1445–54. Despite the troubles in the late 1450s, it has not yet been suggested that there was a need to obtain dies locally before the reign of Edward IV, and since the local dies logically form one issue, they must therefore be attributed only to Edward IV. It is unfortunate that, unlike the 1473–83 issue from local dies, there is no surviving record indicating that Durham was allowed to use local dies in the early 1460s. Blunt and Whitton suggested that the coinage was first struck under the authority of the king’s receiver, was continued after Booth recovered his temporalities, and was not replaced by the first issue struck from London-made dies until several months after the light coinage commenced. They considered that no coins were struck at Durham between the accession of Edward IV (March 1461) and the king’s receiver’s issue some time after December 1462. There seems, however, to be no reason why the local coinage should not have been produced before the king’s receivers were appointed, although the number of coins struck may have been very small.

Only one mule coin appears to have been found in a dateable context, and that is the

most recent discovery. The hoard found at Leith in 1980 was deposited during the period 1470–75. The coins must therefore have been produced between 1461 and 1475. To reduce this date range further it is necessary to speculate as to the conditions under which the coins were struck. There appear to be at least four possibilities:

1. The mules were not struck at the mint, the dies having been stolen.
2. They were struck at the mint, but an obverse die of Henry VI was used by mistake.
3. They were struck at the mint using an obverse die of Henry VI because no obverse die of Edward IV was available.
4. They were struck at the mint, deliberately using an obverse die of Henry VI, although an obverse die of Edward IV was available.

If theft was involved, this could in theory have occurred at any time within the previously established date range, but the probability must be that it took place after the local reverse dies went out of use in 1464. Obsolete dies would probably have been stored separately from those still in use, and since at least one obsolete obverse die was used for the mules, the three or more reverse dies, presumably stolen from the same place, are also likely to have been obsolete. Since none of the reverse dies show any evidence of damage or excessive wear, they are likely to have continued in use throughout the period of issue of the initial (local) coinage of Edward IV.

If the second possibility is correct, then it must be assumed that it was possible for the obsolete and current dies to be mixed together, and also that the local obverse dies were of so similar a size and shape that they were almost indistinguishable from the old, London-made, obverse dies. As the old obverse die is found muled with at least three different Edward reverse dies, the mistake would have to have remained undetected for some time. If this was the case, there is no reason to think that these coins would not have been produced at the same time as the other local die Durham pennies without a rose on the reverse and with the DVnOLln or DnOLIn mint signature. Only four examples of these have been recorded, of which two are in the British Museum, one appeared in the Delmé-Radclyffe sale, and one is in the collection of the second writer.

It seems extremely unlikely that an obverse die of Henry VI would have been used deliberately in the absence of one of Edward IV. It would have to be assumed that there was such a desperate need for coins that the mint authorities were prepared to use an obverse die in the name of the ruling king's enemy. The only time when this might have occurred is at the beginning of the reign, but it is difficult to believe that local obverse dies would not have been produced before or at the same time as the reverse dies. An Edward IV obverse die would have been of prime importance for the striking of new coinage, whereas any reverse die could have been utilised initially.

If the final possibility is correct, the most likely time for the coins to have been struck was when there was a chance that Henry VI would regain the throne. Lancastrian hopes in the north ended with the battle of Hexham in May 1464. No restoration coinage is known at Durham, and it would be strange if Durham had been required to use old dies at that time, whilst York was provided with new dies from London. The period of Henry VI's restoration can therefore be rejected. The coins are also unlikely to have been struck between December 1462 and April 1464, the period of the king's receivership.

Bishop Booth, who had been both the chancellor of Henry VI's queen, Margaret of Anjou, and Henry's keeper of the privy seal, seems to have made his peace immediately with Edward IV when he came to the throne, and was accepted enough to be summoned to Edward's first parliament. In October 1462, however, Margaret of Anjou landed in Northumbria, and shortly afterwards Alnwick castle was surrendered to Lancastrian forces. On 7 December 1462 Booth's temporalities were seized, and they were not restored until 17 April 1464. No reason for the seizure has been established, but it is highly probable that the two incidents were connected. Booth may well have reverted to his previous
loyalties, and if so, he may have been persuaded in the autumn of 1462 to have coins struck in the name of Henry VI. It is in any case highly improbable that he would have been foolish enough to do this in April or May of 1464, just after regaining his temporalities.

In the light of current knowledge it is not possible to determine which of the four possible scenarios provides the correct background for the striking of the mule pennies. The most that can be said is that they must belong to the period 1461–75, with a probability that they were struck deliberately rather than accidentally in c.1461–5, and with the latter part of 1462 providing a feasible context. A full investigation of the local coinage of Durham may throw more light on the issue.