

Reverse dies of the Durham coins

There are three reverse dies, again distinguishable from each other in ways easily visible to the naked eye. If we orientate the reverse with **CIVI** in the second heraldic quarter, that is with **CIVI** between 12 and 3 o'clock, the points of the crown figure either to the right or to the left on the three dies, never in any other direction. The **N** is Roman, as in **DVNÆ/LMI**, or Lombardic, as in **DVNÆ/LMI**. This would give four possibilities, of which three have been noted.

Reverse 1

This is the most common reverse, occurring on thirteen coins. The **N** in **DVNÆ** is Roman and the points of the crown are directed to the right, in other words towards **CIVI/TAS**.

Reverse 2

Only known from four coins, this reverse has a Lombardic **Ń** in **DVNÆ**. The points of the crown are directed to the right as in reverse 1.

Reverse 3

This reverse is seen on six coins and has a Roman **N** in **DVNÆ**. The points of the crown are directed to the left, that is towards **DVNÆ/LMI**.

As the die study in Figure 10 makes clear five of the nine possible combinations of obverse and reverse dies are found on coins known to the author. Obverse A always occurs with reverse 1 only, whilst obverses B and C link with two reverses. Of course, any of the missing combinations may be discovered in the future.



Fig. 7. Reverse 1
(Ashmolean Museum)

Fig. 8. Reverse 2
(author's collection)

Fig. 9. Reverse 3
(© Baldwin's of St James's)

The total number of class 15d obverse dies known for all mints, excluding Reading, is only twenty-one, from a period covering at least five years, with the total number of coins identified by Woodhead being fifty-three.²⁵ This period was clearly one of low production of pennies and we might expect that the central stock of obverse dies was only slowly depleted and, possibly, never exhausted. Obverse dies may have remained ‘on the shelf’ for a considerable period of time.

If we place the Durham class 15d coins after the appointment of Bishop de Bury in 1333, and assuming that the writ of 1336 was carried out, we might wonder why the Durham coins do not carry the distinguishing features of the class 15d2 coins of Canterbury and York. We should, perhaps, be more comfortable in identifying the Durham coins as part of the class 15d1 output and seeking to explain the crown in lozenge reverse in some other way than having belonged to de Bury.

A placing of the Durham coins early in Edward III’s reign may be supported by the type of punctuation marks appearing on them. The pellet marks on a class 15c die of Bury St Edmunds also appear on class 15d1 issues of London and Canterbury, and on a Durham class 15d die (obverse C). The wedge marks on a Durham class 15c die and a Bury St Edmunds class 15c die also appear on a Durham class 15d die (obverse B). Figure 11 illustrates Durham coins of classes 15c and 15d with wedge punctuation marks.

The similarity of these obverse dies of classes 15c and 15d should be at least considered when examining the chronology of the Durham coins. An additional point can be made here. In the whole of the class 15d series, at all mints, wedge marks are only found on one Durham obverse die. Starting with the first production of London and Canterbury coins in 1328–9 pellet punctuation marks are the norm. If we place the Durham coins as the first issue of class 15d, predating the London and Canterbury coins, we get a smooth progression of the use of wedge punctuation marks from class 15c to class 15d for one of the Durham obverse dies.



Fig. 11. Durham class 15c with wedge stops (left) (author’s collection); Durham class 15d with wedge stops (right) (Ashmolean Museum)

Various authors have sought to identify the crown in lozenge as the personal mark of Bishop de Bury but recently some doubts have been expressed about this attribution.²⁶ It is now accepted that the initial phase of the Durham Florin coinage production in 1344 took place under the auspices of de Bury.²⁷ These early coins carry no episcopal marks and certainly not the so-called personal mark of de Bury. Why did the crown in lozenge mark not appear on the reverse of these coins? Following the appointment of Thomas Hatfield in 1345 the use of a bishop’s mark again becomes usual on Durham coins.

The events of July and August 1327 have been mentioned earlier and could have some relevance to the dating of the Durham coins. Among the forces of Edward III and Mortimer at Stanhope Park were a considerable number of mercenaries from Hainault. The army had set off from York in early July and by mid-July was in Durham.²⁸ By the beginning of August the English and Scottish armies had taken up positions at Stanhope Park, by the River Wear, about 30 km from Durham. A considerable army, including mercenaries, would possibly by

²⁵ Woodhead 1989, 65; Allen 2001, 300–1.

²⁶ Fox and Fox 1913, 107–8; Purvey, 1959; Allen 2003, 178; Stewartby, 2009, 145.

²⁷ Stewartby 2009, 191.

²⁸ Rogers 2000, 17.

Dies B1

4. F. Elmore-Jones sale, part 3, Glendining, 7 October 1986, lot 1889; wnr.
5. Baldwin's of St James's auction 7, 21 June 2017, lot 482; ex 'Baldwin's vault'; 1.29 g.
6. BM (E.2302); Brooke 1950, pl. XXIII, 28, this coin; 1.25 g.
7. BM (1935,0409.42); ex. C. Roach-Smith; 1.23 g.
8. St. James's Auction 38, 29 September 2016, lot 206; ex. R. Carlyon-Britton; Purvey 1959, pl. XXVII, C, this coin; 1.17 g.
9. *NCirc* December 2005, no. 2232; wnr.
10. Ashmolean Museum; ex. R.C. Lockett IV, Glendining, 11 October 1956, lot 1270; 1.05g.
11. DNW auction 58, 24 June 2003, lot 402; 1.00 g.
12. CNG auction 60, 22 May 2002, lot 2360; ex. W. Conte; ex P. Woodhead; ex Spink 1 July 1958; ex. L.A. Lawrence II, Glendining, 14 March 1951, 485; 1.20 g.
13. St James's Auction 5, 27 September 2006, lot 159; wnr.

Dies B2

14. P. Finn list 8 (1996), no. 184; wnr.
15. BM (1950,1001.82); ex L.A. Lawrence; 1.28 g

Dies C2

16. DMM 568; Baldwin's of St James's auction 7, 21 June 2017, lot 483; ex 'Baldwin's vault'; 1.24 g.
17. *NCirc* February 1984, no. 187; ex Sotheby's, 29 September 1983, lot 73; ex G.C. Drabble, Glendining, 13 December 1943, lot 1033; F.A. Walters II, Sotheby's, 24 October 1932, lot 166; wnr.

Dies C3

18. Baldwin's of St James's auction 7, 21 June 2017, lot 484; ex 'Baldwin's vault'; 1.02 g.
19. FM (CM.1990-1-1253); ex. C.E. Blunt; ex. J.S. Shirley-Fox; North 1989, no. 952; Stewartby 2009, pl. 6, 143; 1.15 g.
20. BM (1985,0782.359); ex. F. Elmore-Jones; Purvey 1959, pl. XXVIII, D, this coin; 1.24g
21. Stewartby sale, part 4, Spink, 29 November 2016, lot 1052; ex. J.J. North; ex T.W.J.D. Dupree; ex. G.V. Doubleday, Glendining, 7 June 1972, lot 325; ex R. Carlyon-Britton; 0.73 g.
22. *NCirc* December 2010, no. 4363; 0.99 g.
23. Private collection, ex. J. Mann; wnr.

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