

KING JOHN'S RECOINAGE AND THE CONFERENCE OF MONEYERS IN 1208

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FOR more than a hundred years differing views have been held about the implications of the writ of October 1207 summoning the moneyers and others concerned with the coinage to appear at Westminster in the following January, and about its relevance to the dating of John's recoinage. In working on the later coinage of John, I have been concerned to establish when the last of the Short Cross classes attributed to his reign, class VI, replaced class V, which covered the recoinage that was introduced in 1204/5. In due course I hope to publish a further part of my paper on the coinage of the subsequent period,¹ and I had intended to include in that some observations about the recoinage and its duration. However, although these considerations remain relevant to the dating of class VI, they may reasonably be regarded as constituting a separate subject; and in view of the work being currently undertaken by others on class V, I feel it might be more useful to set out my ideas about the recoinage now, without waiting for the opportunity to include them in a further instalment of the other paper.

The arrangements for the recoinage of 1205 are known in some detail.² The reform was initiated by a Letter Patent issued on 9 November, 1204 and addressed to every sheriff, which provided that no one was to have clipped money after 13 January, 1205, and laid down various procedures and penalties. Under the terms of a further Letter Patent, of 26 January, old money lacking not more than 2s. 6d. in the pound was permitted to remain current, weights were to be provided by the mint until Whitsun, and coin could only be exchanged at London and Canterbury; deficient coin was to be bored through, presumably pending recoinage. These preparations were followed in the summer by the opening of a number of regional mints and exchanges, and the Pipe Rolls contain extensive material relating to the terms on which they were farmed. The Pipe Rolls each covered one exchequer year, from one Michaelmas to the next, although being compiled later they sometimes refer to receipts or events subsequent to the twelve months that they cover. The first Pipe Roll of John covered the year ended at the first Michaelmas of his reign, and since Richard I died in May 1199, most of it in fact refers to the previous reign. John's second Pipe Roll runs from Michaelmas 1199 to Michaelmas 1200, his third covers Michaelmas 1200/1, and so on. Those of most direct relevance to the recoinage are the seventh, Michaelmas 1204/5, the eighth, 1205/6, and the ninth 1206/7.

Although the records are incomplete, it is clear from the Pipe Rolls that the exchanges attached to the mints were put out to farm during the recoinage. Profits of £378 had been accounted from the exchange of all England for the period from 6 April, 1203 to 13 January, 1205 by Reginald of Cornhill. For the next year, to 13 January, 1206, Reginald and William of Wrotham, who were two of John's most trusted financial agents, took

¹ Stewart I., 'English coinage in the later years of John and the minority of Henry III', *BNJ* 49 (1979), 26-41 and 51 (1981), 91-106.

² *Pipe Roll 7 John*, edited by S. Smith, (1941), pp. xxvii-xxxii. For later years see *Pipe Roll 8 John*, 1205/6, edited by D. M. Stenton (1942), pp. 27, 50-1, 56, 62, 77 and 175; *9 John*, 1206/7, edited by A. M. Kirkus (1946), pp. 33,

39, 50, 87, 165 and 171; *10 John*, 1207/8, edited by D. M. Stenton (1947), pp. 97, 149-50, 158 and 169-70; *11 John*, 1208/9, edited by D. M. Stenton (1949), pp. 29, 30, 134 and 149; *12 John*, 1209/10 edited by C. F. Slade (1951), pp. 10, 47, 86, 139, 154 and 180; and *13 John*, 1210/11, edited by D. M. Stenton (1953), pp. 19, 106, 134 and 154. Most of the later entries are repetitions of accounts outstanding.

charge of the exchange of London and accounted for £710. 16s. 9d.; this was nearly twice as much in twelve months from one exchange as had accrued from London and Canterbury (and possibly others) in the preceding twenty-one months, and is an indication of the scale of the recoinage.

Some idea of the relative importance and expected output of the other mints can be gained from the rents which had to be paid to the Exchequer, through Reginald and William, for the farms of their respective exchanges. The greatest of these was Canterbury, where the exchange relating to the king's and archbishop's coinage was farmed to archbishop Hubert Walter for the year to 13 January, 1206 for 100 marks. However, the archbishop died in July, 1205 and entries in the eighth and ninth Pipe Rolls show that his debt remained unpaid. On his death the whole of the Canterbury exchange, royal and episcopal shares together, was farmed to Reginald and William for 400 marks for the eighteen months to 13 January, 1207; this was a much higher annual rate than the archbishop had been charged and perhaps implies that the volume of recoinage exceeded original expectations.

Canterbury had been an active mint before the recoinage, but in the summer of 1205 there is evidence relating to the opening of mints which for many years had not been active, or only occasionally so. A charter granting the use of a die for coinage was issued on 12 June to the abbot of Bury St Edmunds, where coins had not been struck since the reign of Henry II, and the Pipe Roll records that he duly paid the sum of 500 marks for a variety of privileges including his die and the profits of the exchange at Bury. Contracts were agreed for twelve months from 24 June 1205 in the case of the mints and exchanges of Winchester, the farm of which cost 240 marks and a dole of Auxerre wine, and of Northampton, where four dies and the exchange were charged at 60 marks. Slightly later there is an entry for the important exchange of York which was farmed for 300 marks from 20 July, 1205 for a year. The bishop of Chichester, to whom the king had on 29 April granted the right to a die in the city so long as his own dies were in use there, farmed the profits of the royal dies and of the exchange for a year from 1 August for 30 marks. A debt of 60 marks³ by Reginald of Cornhill is recorded in the seventh Pipe Roll for having the exchange of Oxford for a year, and although dates are not specified this relatively large sum, which was settled in the following year, clearly relates to the farm during the recoinage of 1205 since the mint had been inactive since the recoinage of 1180. Though a number of other mints are known to have been operating during 1205, the Pipe Roll lacks entries relating to the farm of their exchanges.

When the contract for London expired on 13 January, 1206 the exchange, together with that of York, was farmed to Cornhill for £200 until 24 June, 1206, the quarter day on which the Northampton and Winchester farms (and perhaps others unrecorded) ran out. From that day most of the exchanges in England, and from 13 January, 1207, Canterbury, were farmed for 1600 marks, up to 29 September, 1207, to Terricus⁴ of Canterbury who sub-let all except those of London and Canterbury to other farmers. At Carlisle the exchange was farmed for the same period at 30 marks, apparently to Alan FitzAlan, although the name was later corrected to Tomas. The Chichester exchange was farmed from Terricus by one William Toht who owed 10 marks for the period to 29 September, 1207.⁵ Other entries for

³ Smith (p. xxxi) says 40 marks, but the text (p. 117) gives '1x m.' I am grateful to the Keeper of Public Records for confirming that the original roll (E372/51, Rot 10d m2) clearly says '1x m', not 'xlm'.

⁴ Mr. Allen has pointed out to me that this Terricus probably died on 2 June 1208 (W. Urry, *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, pp. 12 and 175), and so cannot be identified with 'Terricus le Chaungeor', recorded in 1221/2,

as I had suggested in 'Some German coins overstruck with sterling types', *Lagom*, edited by T. Fischer and P. Ilisch (Münster, 1981), pp. 205-10 (at pp. 209-10).

⁵ The bishop's farm was not due to expire until 1 August 1206 (cf. remarks on York below). Toht's debt remained unpaid in 1209 and 1210 (*Pipe Rolls 11 John* p. 30 and *12 John* p. 86).

the period of the Terricus contract relate to Winchester, where Wrotham was in charge although he appears never to have rendered account, and York where there is some confusion about the arrangements. In spite of the existing farm which was due to have run to 20 July, 1206, the York exchange is coupled with London in connection with Cornhill's payment for the period from 13 January to 24 June, 1206, from which date it was further farmed to William Fairfax under Terricus up to 29 September, 1207 for £100. For the year from 29 September, 1207 Wrotham was supposed to account to the exchequer through Cornhill for the actual profits of all the exchanges in England, but entries in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth Pipe Rolls show that by 1210 they remained unpaid and an account had not even been rendered.

The nature of the conference of moneyers in January, 1208 is itself a matter of dispute, and interpretations of its relationship to the recoinage have depended on views taken about the chronology of the coins. The writ convening the conference was issued by the king on 7 October, 1207, and addressed in similar terms to 'omnibus monetariis et examinadoribus monetae et custodibus cuneorum' of London, Winchester, Exeter, Chichester, Canterbury, Rochester, Ipswich, Norwich, Lynn, Lincoln, York, Carlisle, Northampton, Oxford, Bury St Edmunds and Durham, it charged them, at risk of their persons and their possessions, to seal up all their dies and appear with them at Westminster on 10th January, 1208, bringing with them all mint workers and others 'qui sciunt dare consilium ad faciendum monetam'.⁶

It is to be noted that the participants at the conference were to be not those whose names appear in the Rolls as farmers of the exchanges, but those who served as moneyers (and were named on the coins). Occasionally, however, the offices of moneyer and exchanger or farmer appear to have been vested in the same individuals. For example, in 1206/7 the Ipswich exchange was farmed to Alexander and John Prikehurt, while the names of the moneyers found on coins of the Ipswich mint are Alisandre and Iohan. At Carlisle the moneyer between 1180 and 1205 was Alain and in the 1205 coinage Tomas, the two names that occur in the rolls in connection with the farm of the exchange. The Christian name of each of the farmers of the Chichester mint, Simon FitzRobert (the bishop) and William Toht, is found on coins of Chichester in class V, although whether a bishop when in office at this period would have acted as moneyer in his own mint is open to question.

Longstaffe interpreted the writ of October 1207 convening the conference of moneyers as indicating that the recoinage began in that year, but Evans soon afterwards demonstrated that this should be dated to 1205. Although Grueber revived the view that the conference indicated a new coinage, Brooke restated the evidence for John's recoinage having been initiated in 1205 and suggested that the conference was by way of an inquisition relating to forgery. Lawrence went seriously astray over the dating of his class V, and allocated much too long a period to it. More recently, recognising the need to compress classes V and VI into the time allotted by Lawrence to class V alone, Brand suggested that the 'subtle new characteristics of Vc could have resulted' from the conference of moneyers of January, 1208, that the imposition of the interdict in March, 1208 'may have a bearing on why the provincial mints ceased operations', and that 'the introduction of class VI was probably round about the year 1210'.⁷

Since we are without explicit evidence for the dates when the recoinage mints were closed, it may be instructive to consider the pattern and duration of earlier and later

⁶ The text of the Patent Roll is printed in *NC* 4th ser. 10 (1910), 315.

⁷ Longstaffe, *NC* 2nd ser. 3 (1863), 177. Evans, *NC* 2nd ser. 5 (1865), 285-6; Grueber, *NC* 4th ser. 3 (1903), e.g. 156 and 169-70; Brooke, *NC* 4th ser. 10 (1910), 315-8; Law-

rence *BNJ* 11 (1915), 71 and 75; Brand *BNJ* 33 (1964), 68. In *Pipe Roll 7 John*, p. xxxi, Smith follows Sir Charles Oman, *The Coinage of England*, p. 138, in assuming that the conference of January 1208 meant that the provincial mints were then still working.

recoinages. In 1180, 1248 and 1280 regional mints were opened for the purpose of withdrawing and reminting all the existing currency. In 1300 there was a partial recoinage, directed mainly at eliminating foreign counterfeits from circulation but which probably encompassed also deficient money of English origin; as in 1205, a substantial part of the monetary stock remained in circulation.

In all five cases, the new coin was first produced at London and such few other mints as were operative before the recoinage. Regional mints were then opened in two or more stages, the greater ones before the lesser. In 1180 new mints began to be opened in the summer and the withdrawal of the early coinage of Henry II and its conversion into the Short Cross type was substantially complete by Easter, 1182.⁸ The Long Cross recoinage began at the existing mints of London, Canterbury and Bury in November 1247, the more important regional mints were authorized in February 1248 and the others in the following October. One of the latter, Shrewsbury, was in operation for a year from February, 1249. All the recoinage mints were closed before the end of 1250.⁹ London began the Edwardian recoinage in the second half of 1279, followed by the larger regional mints early in 1280 and by others in the course of the same year. The last of them, Chester, did not open until December 1280, yet all were apparently closed by Michaelmas 1281. For the partial recoinage of 1300, six mints were opened, five of them for periods of six to eight months each and one, Newcastle, from June 1300 until September 1302.¹⁰ In none of these cases, where we know the duration of the recoinage, were any of the provincial mints open for as long as two and a half years. On average, therefore, larger mints seem to have had periods of activity lasting for eighteen months or so during a recoinage, the smaller for a year or less.

From the documentary evidence it is apparent that the London mint, at least, was involved with the new coinage from early in 1205, and that the exchanges to which the regional mints were attached were being farmed at high rents from June onwards. None of these separate farms runs beyond September, 1207, after which the exchange of all England was farmed by Wrotham, as it had been by Cornhill before the recoinage began. From this it may be supposed that all the regional exchanges were closed by September, 1207. A duration of a little over two years, for only a partial recoinage, is, by comparison with other occasions, quite as long as might have been expected.

As in the case of the other recoinages from 1180 to 1300, the larger mints were already active at the time the new coinage of 1204/5 was initiated, or had lately been so. Seven mints, London, Canterbury, Winchester, York, Durham, Lincoln and Norwich are known for all three sub-classes of the recoinage, Va, b and c, and two other mints, Chichester and Exeter, were open early enough to strike Va as well as Vb. In Vb seven further mints appeared, Bury, Ipswich, Northampton, Carlisle, Lynn, Oxford and Rochester; only the first three of these continued into Vc. This is the normal pattern of operation of regional mints in a recoinage, with a lapse of time between the appearance of the earliest and latest, with different dates of closure, but with a concentration of activity for perhaps a year at virtually all the mints at the peak of the operation. This year would have been from the summer of 1205, with the closure of the Vb-only mints probably taking place by the end of 1206, if not earlier, followed during 1207 by the closure of those which continued briefly into Vc. By October, 1207 the regional mints would have been closed and the moneyers

⁸ D. F. Allen in *BMC Henry II*, pp. lxxxviii-xciv; J. D. Brand and F. Elmore Jones, 'The emergency mint of Wilton in 1180', *BNJ* 35 (1966), 116-9; see also J. H. Round's introductions to *Pipe Rolls 26, 27 and 28 Henry II*, 1908-10, pp. xxviii, xxi-ii, and xxiii respectively.

⁹ *BNJ* 9 (1912), 157; various references are given by J. D. Brand, 'The Shrewsbury Mint, 1249-50', *Mints, Dies and Currency*, edited by R. A. G. Carson (London, 1971), pp. 129-50.

¹⁰ *BNJ* 7 (1910), 124-5 and 9 (1912), 183.

would therefore have been able to seal up their dies to be taken to Westminster in January, 1208 without interrupting the recoinage.

The likelihood that the provincial mints had been closed, and the recoinage thus effectively completed, by the time that Wrotham resumed the farm of the exchange of all England (the pre-recoinage formula) from Michaelmas 1207, appears to receive confirmation from the Lincoln mint. At some point in the twelve months from 13 January, 1205 Wrotham apparently sent £100 from London to Lincoln¹¹ as an opening float for the exchange there, and this sum is recorded in the twelfth Pipe Roll (1209/10) as having been repaid together with the net profit, amounting to £110, of its operation during the seventh and eighth years of the reign.¹² More precise dates are not available for the activity of this mint. But since John's regnal years ran from one Ascension Day to the next, the period during which the Lincoln exchange was open would have fallen between May 1205 and May 1207. On this basis Vc would probably have followed Vb early in 1207 or even perhaps towards the end of 1206.

In his paper on the dies of class V, Mr. Allen has provided detailed information about the varieties of the class that were struck at each of the mints participating in the recoinage, and this enables us to check the numismatic detail against the documentary evidence.¹³ He defines two divisions of the early sub-class Va, the first of which (Vai), with various exceptional features, was produced only at London and Canterbury, the two most active mints of class IV and possibly the only two which were operating immediately before the recoinage.¹⁴ Coins of class Vai are very rare and it was quickly followed by the much less rare Vail, on which the cross pommée became standard and dies of which were sent to seven other mints. All the mints received dies of class Vb, the main recoinage issue, and several of them received dies of Vc, during which the recoinage came to an end. A general idea of the periods of activity of the several mints can be gained from considering the main sub-classes struck by each of them, and further sub-division of Vb enables a more detailed picture to be drawn. The main varieties are Vbi, with flat-topped R, and Vbii, with round-topped R, which are sequential. A third variety, Vbiii, with defective eyes, falls within the period of Vbii, perhaps towards its later stages but not running to the end of Vb, so its chronological value is doubtful. The table below shows the number of obverse dies recorded by Allen of each mint and variety.

Combining this information with the documentary evidence we can make some attempt to work out a more detailed chronology of the sub-classes. We do not know when coins that we describe as of class Va were first struck. The assize of 26 January, 1205 provided that any pennies minted after Christmas 1204 and found clipped were to be bored through and the possessor attached as thief, which suggests that they may have been distinctive, perhaps by virtue of bearing the cross pommée mark of Vail. If this was so, the ten London and four Canterbury obverse dies of Class Vai might be attributable to the period between the announcement of the reform on 9 November and Christmas 1204.¹⁵ The first batch of additional mints opened in the summer of 1205. Durham, Exeter, Lincoln, Norwich, Winchester and York all received obverse dies of Vail. No Va dies went to the abbot of

¹¹ There is an entry, without dates, referring to a float of £100 for the exchange of Lincoln (*Close Roll*), or London (*Pipe Roll*, p. 11); probably the former (see Smith's comment in *Pipe Roll 7 John*, p. xxxi, n.6).

¹² *Pipe Roll 12 John*, p. 10.

¹³ M. R. Allen 'The provision and use of Short Cross class V dies' below, pp. 46-76. I wish to thank Mr. Allen for making this information available to me before publication, and for many helpful comments on the present paper.

¹⁴ Northampton and York struck IVc, the last sub-class

before class V, and might have been minting as late as 1204, but if so probably only on a small scale.

¹⁵ It is conceivable that the improved workmanship of Vai replaced the comparatively uncouth IVc before the reform, but it is more natural to see a connection between the two developments, especially since Vai includes the sort of experimental dies that are often associated with a new coinage (cf. Stewart, 'Style in medieval coinage', *NC* 7th ser. 9 (1969), 269-89, at p. 287).

No. of obverse dies recorded of class V.

| | <i>Total</i> | <i>Vai</i> | <i>Vaii</i> | <i>Vbi</i> | <i>Vbii</i> | <i>Vbiii</i> | <i>Vc</i> |
|-------------|--------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-----------|
| London | 366 | 10 | 22 | 46 | 91 | 23 | 174 |
| Canterbury | 205 | 4 | 20 | 42 | 69 | 30 | 40 |
| Durham | 17 | | 2 | 2 | 6 | | 7 |
| Exeter | 18 | | 3 | 3 | 9 | 3 | |
| Lincoln | 25 | | 4 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Norwich | 20 | | 2 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 3 |
| Winchester | 78 | | 4 | 16 | 45 | 4 | 9 |
| York | 24 | | 4 | 7 | 12 | | 1 |
| Chichester | 20 | | (bi/aii) | 6 | 11 | 3 | |
| Bury | 6 | | | 1 | 4 | | 1 |
| Carlisle | 4 | | | 1 | 3 | | |
| Ipswich | 23 | | | 7 | 10 | 2 | 4 |
| Lynn | 15 | | | 3 | 7 | 5 | |
| Northampton | 17 | | | 6 | 9 | 1 | 1 |
| Oxford | 9 | | | 3 | 4 | 2 | |
| Rochester | 12 | | | 1 | 11 | | |
| Total | 859 | 14 | 61 | 150 | 306 | 82 | 246 |

Source: M. R. Allen (see n. 13 above).

Bury St. Edmunds, who was granted the use of a die on 12 June, 1205, nor to Northampton, the mint and exchange of which was farmed from 24 June. The bishop of Chichester was granted the right to his die on 29 April and the farm of the king's dies and the exchange ran from 1 August. Each moneyer at Chichester received one reverse die of *Vaii* but no *Va* obverse dies went to this mint. It therefore looks as if the distribution of *Va* dies ended and that of *Vbi* dies began about June or July, 1205.

The bulk of the recoinage was produced from dies of *Vb*. Of four minor mints, Carlisle, Lynn, Oxford and Rochester, this is the only sub-class known. Carlisle and Rochester are recorded only in *Vbi* and *Vbii*, and not in *Vbiii*, which could mean that their period of activity ended well before the end of *Vb*; but that is not necessarily the case, since Bury, Durham and York used dies of *Vbii* and *Vc* but none of *Vbiii*. Allen has counted 538 obverse dies of *Vb* against 75 of *Va*, and it seems likely that *Vb* dies were in issue and use for well over a year. In addition to the four mints known only of *Vb*, two mints that had received dies of *Vaii*, Exeter and Chichester, are unknown in *Vc* and presumably closed at or before the end of *Vb*. Apart from London, which certainly, and Canterbury and Durham which probably continued in operation after the end of the recoinage, there were seven mints which survived into class *Vc*, Lincoln, Norwich, Winchester and York, which had been active since *Vaii*, and Bury, Ipswich and Northampton which had opened with dies of *Vbi*.

Taking all the evidence together, I do not think the conference of moneyers held at Westminster in January 1208 could have fallen within the period of the recoinage. Indeed, for what was not a total recoinage it would be very surprising if the provincial mints had been active for thirty months or more. The timing of the conference and the instructions sent out suggest that it is more likely to have been an occasion for a general debriefing on the recoinage, at which dies could be returned and checked off, reports made on practical and financial aspects of the recoinage and any outstanding matters resolved. The only mints which would have resumed coinage (of *Vc*) after the conference would have been London, Canterbury and Durham. I do not follow Brand in believing that the papal interdict of March 1208 was relevant to the closure of the provincial mints, but I do think it

is possible that it led to the closure of Canterbury. I have argued elsewhere that there was a substantial interruption to minting at Canterbury between the end of the recoinage and the last years of John's reign.¹⁶ No Canterbury coins are known of class VIa, and the proportion of Vc:Vb obverse dies recorded¹⁷ at Canterbury (40:141) is so much lower than at London (174:160) that Canterbury may have ceased minting Vc long before London did. The closure of the mint at Canterbury from some point after the end of the recoinage, during the course of Vc, until some time after the beginning of class VIb could be explained as the consequence of the king's action following the interdict. John eventually came to terms with Innocent III in May 1213. Reginald of Cornhill, who was keeper of the exchange in 1213/4, accounted for profits at London from soon after the beginning of the exchequer year (20 November) but for those at Canterbury only from 9 March 1214.¹⁸ If the revival of minting at Canterbury was a (slightly delayed) consequence of the restoration of the archbishop's temporalities, this would lend support to the idea that its suspension was a consequence of the interdict of 1208.¹⁹

We have no means of knowing exactly when VIa replaced Vc at London (and Durham), but the very large number of London Vc dies counted by Allen suggests it cannot have been before 1208. Perhaps c.1209/10 is the best date we can offer on present evidence for the end of Vc and the start of class VI.

¹⁶ *BNJ* 51 (1981), 93.

¹⁷ Even if the numbers of dies recorded are not accurate indicators of the numbers used, the difference between the figures for Canterbury and London is so marked that it seems likely to be of significance.

¹⁸ *Pipe Roll 16 John*, edited by P. M. Barnes (1962), pp. 37–8.

¹⁹ In the Pipe Roll for 1210/11 (*Pipe Roll 13 John*, p. 242), there is an entry which could be read as suggesting that, while the Canterbury mint was closed, an exchange was established down river at Sandwich. Immediately following an account for export duty at Sandwich ('de lastagio de Sandwiz') there is a reference to Hugo Bardulf who 'habuit de pecunia cambii'.