

YORK ANNULET SILVER COINS OF HENRY VI

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RECENT hoards from Reigate¹ and Ryther² have offered a good opportunity to catalogue the Annulet type of silver coins issued briefly from the York mint early in the reign of Henry VI; to differentiate dies; and to estimate the volume of coinage for each denomination. The six York coins in these two hoards were a third again as many as had been known previously.

History and chronology

To review the familiar background from Ruding:³ Bartholomew Goldbeter was master of the Mint and worker of the monies of gold and silver for London and Calais under Henry V, and he was continued in office by Henry VI's parliament of 9 November 1422. In the same parliament authorization was given for masters and workmen to coin money and hold the exchanges in York and Bristol (Goldbeter was not named, but was probably meant). An indenture of 16 February 1422/3 authorized Goldbeter to coin at York and Bristol, and this seems to be a formal confirmation of the November parliamentary ruling. Brooke mentioned that a controller and assayer, and also a warden were appointed for York in July 1423.⁴ The parliament that began 20 October 1423 continued him as master, and appointed him to hold the exchange at York in addition to his office as master of the Mint in the Tower of London. In that same parliament, but it is not clear at what date, a northern counties petition stated that the master and his workmen had been to York, did their work, and then retired; the situation had deteriorated, and they wanted him back. The petition, which was granted, went on to request that all deficient gold should be brought to the castle at York to be coined before the next feast of St Michael (presumed to mean 29 September 1424).

The major writers on the coinage of Henry VI, such as Hawkins, Walters, Brooke, Whitton and Potter, have all used or referred to the Ruding material.⁵ The 20th of October has often

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¹ Reigate II, Surrey, hoard of 1990, from an unpublished British Museum list of the contents by Barrie Cook. The sale of the hoard was at Glendining's 8 December 1992, and included three of the five York coins; the other two were retained by the British Museum.

² Ryther, near Cawood, North Yorkshire, hoard of April 1992, from an unpublished list of the annulet coins by Craig Barclay. This was a most unusual hoard, in that only 4 per cent

of the coins were of the annulet type, and 76 per cent of those annulet coins were pennies. There was one York annulet penny.

³ R. Ruding, *Annals of the Coinage of Great Britain*, 1840, 267–270 (from the Rolls of Parliament, or *Rotuli Parliamentorum; ut ei Petitiones et Placita In Parlamento Tempore Henrici R.V., Vol. IV* (1767–77), pp. 197–200. Apparently Ruding's translations were complete).

⁴ G.C. Brooke, 'A find of nobles at Borth (Cardiganshire)', *NC* 5th ser. 11 (1931), 59, but his source for this was not indicated.

⁵ F.A. Walters in 'The silver coinage of the reign of Henry VI', *NC* 4th ser. 2 (1902), 228, followed E. Hawkins, *The Silver Coins of England* (1887), p. 228 in using York to define the chronology of the annulet coinage. Walters did not know coinage figures until he wrote 'The Stamford find and supplementary notes on the coinage of Henry VI', *NC* 4th ser. 11 (1911), 19. Brooke, 'A find of nobles at Borth', pp. 59–60 used the lack of a broken letter P on York nobles to help define the entire Annulet issue, and he assumed the dates of August to October 1423 for the York production. C.A. Whitton in 'The heavy coinage of Henry VI', *BNJ* 23 (1941), 65, estimated that the coinage ended about 23 December 1423, based on a lack of the broken letter R, which he considered a privy mark for the next year. W.J.W. Potter, 'The heavy groats of Henry VI', *BNJ* 28 (1958), 299–304, also discussed die usage for the Calais coins.

been thought of as the termination date of the coinage. Yet the records imply a gold coinage between 12 August 1423 and 14 August 1424, and a silver one between 30 September 1423 and 7 August 1424.⁶

The York mint was opened as a temporary measure, mainly for the re-coinage of the region's inferior circulating gold specie. Most likely the dies were made at the Tower, and this could have been done quickly and easily by experienced workmen. It can only be said that Goldbeter may have started coining gold at York in August and silver in September, and perhaps he was gone by mid-October 1423, or mid-August 1424. The starting dates may be reasonably correct, but the end dates remain questionable. When, after the opening of the 20 October parliament, was this northern counties petition actually presented or written? Was it really around 20 October, and can that therefore represent a final date? Did the workers ever return to reopen the mint and, if so, when, and was it for gold, or silver, or both? The recorded end dates of August 1424 may have been only book-keeping formalities with no relation to actual production. On the other hand they could represent what was a sporadic coinage over a period of a year.

Quantity of coinage

The weight of sterling coined at York between 30 September 1423 and 7 August 1424 was 330 lbs Tower, 4 oz, 10 dwt (330.375 lbs Tower).⁷ This is equivalent to 1,784,025 grains, or about £496. The minimum number of coins that could have been produced was 29,734 groats, had only groats been made. Gold coinage figures are recorded in the amount of £42,310 between 12 August 1423 and 14 August 1424.⁷

The following table lists the total number of non-York Annulet silver coins from several hoards,⁸ and the percentage of the total for each denomination. This is done to see if the figures can be applied to help estimate the number of York coins made of each type.

Mint	Total Annulet coins	Percentage of total (rounded)				
		4d	2d	1d	½d	¼d
London	270	83	14	3	0	0
Calais	3136	77	21	2	0	0
Sum	3406	78	20	2	0	0

Most of the coins are from Reigate I and II (91 per cent). Annulet pennies of London and/or Calais were present only in Reigate II with 44, Wyre Piddle with one, and Ryther with 24 (plus one of York), and none of the hoards had any smaller coins. For this type of estimation,

⁶ Dr C.E. Challis re-examined PRO E364/58 rot.3V, 'The Account of Thomas Haxey, late warden of the Mint in York', and kindly supplied the recorded dates and the weights coined.

⁷ Challis. Weights were recorded in 925 sterling silver, i.e., weight coined, not 1000 bullion silver. In C.E. Challis (ed), *A New History of the Royal Mint* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 682, he converted the weight to £496. These coinage figures have been confused and variously published both as pound weight and as pound sterling by different writers. Walters in 1911 was correct (within one ounce), but Stokes did not include York, and both Brooke and Whitton were wrong.

⁸ The few hoards that have been recorded fully, or at least reasonably well are: Reigate II, unpublished list by B.J. Cook; Ryther, unpublished list by C. Barclay; Reigate I, M.M. Archibald, 'The Reigate hoard', *BNJ* 48 (1978), 80-96; Wyre Piddle, M.M. Archibald, 'The Wyre Piddle (Worcs.) 1967 hoard', *NC* 7th ser. 10 (1970), 133-62; list of hoards in N.J. Mayhew, 'The monetary background to the Yorkist recoinage of 1464-71', *BNJ* 44 (1974), 62-73; J.D.A. Thompson, *Inventory of British Coin Hoards A.D. 600-1500* (1956); Hampshire (Inventory 183), Reculver (Inventory 310), Diss (Inventory 120), Aberdeen (Inventory 5).

the hoards are not of great help for anything less than halfgroats. Hoards show what was hoarded, not what was made, and the larger coins were usually those most practical to store. So it would be wrong to claim that 78 per cent of the coins made were groats, or 2 per cent were pennies, but it is of interest to see how the use of these figures will compare with other methods later on. Applying 78, 20 and 2 per cent to the £496 of York sterling gives about 23,200 groats, 11,900 halfgroats, and 2,400 pennies.

The catalogue below lists three obverse dies for the groat, and two each for the halfgroat, penny, and halfpenny. If the general figure of 10,000 coins for each obverse die is used, then there could have been about 30,000 groats, and 20,000 each of the other denominations, but these numbers are far too high. With our small sample size, it is unlikely that coins have been found from all of the obverse dies, and more dies would even increase those numbers. The figure of 10,000 coins for each obverse die is one of several that has evolved over the years, and may be useful under some circumstances, such as for an extensive coinage. Here it is questionable, especially for the denominations below the groat. And surely on a small coinage such as this, the use or output of any one die could not be expected to be very similar to that of another. We cannot have seen all of the reverse dies either, if one presumes two or three reverse dies for each obverse die, although reverse dies do not play a part in these calculations.

Even after qualifying all of this, it does not seem too unreasonable to suggest a production figure of some 20,000 groats, and maybe half that for each of the other denominations. Still, 10,000 pennies and halfpennies seems high. This implies die useage in the region of 5,000 coins/obverse die. Perhaps the coinage anticipated was larger than that which was actually struck, and more dies were prepared (and underused) than were really necessary.

Catalogue

Searches for the extant coins included the museums noted in the acknowledgement, illustrated auction sale catalogues, and the major fixed price lists. Fortunately these coins were normally pictured when they appeared for sale. There probably have been private treaty sales from new finds in recent years that went unrecorded, and old coin 6 only appeared at the last moment, but it is supposed that very few unlisted coins exist above ground today, and the catalogue may be considered to be fairly complete (80 per cent?). There are 24 coins recorded from 25 different dies.

Where possible, die flaws have been examined in order to sequence the coins, even though it is very difficult to trace a tiny flaw from Polaroid photographs or catalogue plates. At the same time flaws are often necessary to help identify a die. There is no certain evidence of excessive die wear, but groat obverse 1 does degrade. All in all the dies do not appear to have been overused, although further finds could change that view. The groat weighed 60 gr (3.89 g) in 1423, and was reduced to 48 gr (3.11g) in 1464. Clipping because of this should be kept in mind when looking at the weights of coins with hoard dates, and often there is wear from use, a condition most visible on the groats.

The initial mark on all of the obverse dies and the groat reverse is the pierced cross type II. None of the other denominations has a reverse i.m. All coins have a lis on either side of the king's neck. If there was a significance in this mark being different from the analogous annulets on the London and Calais coins, it is not known. There is an annulet in the first and third quarters (heraldically the second and third quarters) of all reverse dies. Legends are identical for each die within a denomination.

Die axis is defined as the reverse long cross relative to the obverse pierced cross. Die numbering is arbitrary. The numbers 1-23, by which the coins are referred, correspond to the plate designations.

Groats

There are 13 coins from three obverse and seven reverse dies. The bust is Potter's type A2, or 'old bust',⁹ and there is a fleur on the breast cusp.

Obverse: (im) HENRIC x̄ DI x̄ GRA x̄ REX x ANGLIE x Z x FRANC

The Z is reversed. The contraction mark above the first stop has not been visible, and is only assumed here, because it is present on the London and Calais coins.

Reverse: (im) POSVI o/DEVM x̄ A/DIVTOR/E x̄ MEVM/

CIVI/TAS x̄/EBO/RACI o/

There is an annulet after POSVI and after RACI.

Obverse die 1 coins can be sequenced by flaws about the lis, but more importantly by a die crack that develops at the bottom right of the crown and spreads toward the legend. There are several other flaws, which seem to be in the same state on all five coins. Coins 1 and 2 are in a state similar to each other, and they preceded coin 3, which preceded coin 4.

The coins from obverse die 2 are clipped or worn, and their listing is intended to be in the order that they were struck.

Obverse die 3 exhibits far less change, and the only obvious flaws are a group of pits by the right jaw. The pits look like rust, something hard to imagine for the short time period that these dies were in use (or were they in sporadic use for a year?). Surface rust could form rapidly, but these appear to be deep. The sequence of obverse 3 is based on this flaw, with uncertainties from using catalogue illustrations. Coins 8–10 have the flaw, and coins 11 and 12 have the most extensive state of that flaw.

Coins from obverse dies 1 and 2 show considerably more wear than those from die 3. This is surprising, since all coins are considered to have been struck within the same short period.

The reverse dies lack distinguishing features, except for die 3, which had or developed a flaw on the inner arm of the long cross opposite TAS. The use of common reverse dies with obverses 1 and 3 implies that reverse dies were in a pool and were used randomly throughout the coinage.

Obverse die 1./Reverse die 1. (**pl. 7, 1**) British Museum, from the Holwell hoard of 1864.¹⁰ 50.62 gr (3.28g). The hoard deposit was c. 1450.

Obverse die 1./Reverse die 2. (**pl. 7, 2**) British Museum, from the Holwell hoard of 1864.¹⁰ 56.95 gr (3.69g). This coin was struck after coin 10, based on a reverse die flaw. The hoard deposit was c. 1450.

Obverse die 1./Reverse die 2. (**pl. 7, 3**) Lessen, from Spink 1981, likely a then recent find. 51.15 gr (3.31g), 80°.

Obverse die 1./Reverse die 3. (**pl. 7, 4**) Lessen, Reigate II, Glendining (248). 52.90 gr (3.43g), 145°. The hoard deposit was c. 1455.

Obverse die 1./Reverse die 3. (**pl. 8, 4A**) Patrick Finn List, Spring 1994 (293), *ex Dupree collection*. 50.2 gr (3.25g).

Obverse die 2./Reverse die 5. (**pl. 7, 5**) Reigate II, Glendining (247). The hoard deposit was c. 1455.

Obverse die 2./Reverse die 5. (**pl. 7, 6**) Richard Hodgkinson collection, Spink Auction 98, 16 June 1993 (7). 46.96 gr (3.043g).

⁹ Potter, 'The heavy groats of Henry VI', p. 299.

¹⁰ M.M. Archibald, 'Re-dating the Holwell, Leics. hoard in

the light of a parcel of coins in the British Museum', *Coin Hoards V* (1979), 110–112.

- Obverse die 2./Reverse die 4. (pl. 7, 7) Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, from E.J. Winstanley, *ex Walters* 1913 (315), from the Stamford hoard, bought from the Stamford Institute in 1910 and, according to Walters, probably the only York coin from the 1868 hoard of 3,000 groats. 48.30 gr (3.13g). The hoard deposit was *c.* 1465.
- Obverse die 3./Reverse die 6. (pl. 7, 8) Sotheby 20 February 1974 (367). It is not entirely clear if this has the flaw (pitting).
- Obverse die 3./Reverse die 2. (pl. 7, 9) Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, *ex Lockett* 1956 (1514). 56.48 gr (3.66g).
- Obverse die 3./Reverse die 2. (pl. 7, 10) British Museum, from Reigate II. 58.18 gr (3.77g). The hoard deposit was *c.* 1455.
- Obverse die 3./Reverse die 3. (pl. 7, 11) British Museum. 57.87 gr (3.75g).
- Obverse die 3./Reverse die 7. (pl. 7, 12) I. Schneider collection, *ex Norweb* 1985 (177), R. Carlyon-Britton, *Walters* 1932 (273). 56.67 gr (3.672g).

Halfgroats

There are five coins from two obverse and four reverse dies.

Obverse: (im) HENRIC X DI X GRA X REX X ANGL X Z X F
The Z is reversed.

Reverse: POSVI o/DEVM X/ADIVT/ORE X M X/

CIVI/TAS X/EBO/RACI o/

There is an annulet after POSVI and after RACI.

- Obverse die 1./Reverse die 1. (pl. 8, 13) Lessen, *ex Reigate II*, Glendining (249). 29.45 gr (1.91g), 270°. The hoard deposit was *c.* 1455.
- Obverse die 1./Reverse die 1. (pl. 8, 14) Lessen, *NCirc* February 1990 (983) *ex David Dupree*, *SCMB* January 1962 (H627), R. Carlyon-Britton, *Lockett* 1956 (1515), possibly bought privately from Wheeler, Brunn 1925 (440), *Walters* 1913 (316), *Rostron* 1892 (79), *Montagu* duplicates 1888 (140), *Shepherd* 1885 (169), possibly *Dimsdale* 1824 (362, part). 26.80 gr (1.74g), 180°.
- Obverse die 1./Reverse die 2. (pl. 8, 15) British Museum, from Reigate II. 29.17 gr (1.89g). The hoard deposit was *c.* 1455.
- Obverse die 2./Reverse die 3. (pl. 8, 16) British Museum, *ex Montagu* 1896 (534) from *Brice*, 29.17 gr (1.89g).
- Obverse die 2./Reverse die 4. (pl. 8, 17) Hunterian Museum, Glasgow, from Dr Hunter's collection formed 1770–83. 25.77 gr (1.67g).

Pence

There are three coins from two obverse and three reverse dies.

Obverse: (im) HENRICVS X REX X ANGLIE

Reverse: CIVI/TAS X/EBO/RACI o/

There is an annulet after RACI.

- Obverse die 1./Reverse die 1. (pl. 8, 18) British Museum, piece missing, 13.12 gr (0.85g). This appears to have been struck before the next coin.

Obverse die 1./Reverse die 2. (**pl. 8, 19**) Lessen, Spink 1990 *ex* David Dupree, no provenance. 14.40 gr (0.93g), 325°. There are several tiny obverse and reverse die flaws.
 Obverse die 2./Reverse die 3. (**pl. 8, 20**) Ryther hoard. 9.57 gr (0.62g). The hoard deposit was c. 1485.

Halfpence

There are three coins from two obverse and two reverse dies.

Obverse: (im) HENRIC $\frac{x}{x}$ REX $\frac{x}{x}$ ANGL
 Reverse: CIVI/TAS/EBO/RACI/

Obverse die 1./Reverse die 1. (**pl. 8, 21**) British Museum 1926, *ex* Brunn 1925 (455), Walters 1913 (317), Montagu 1896 (535), Shepherd 1885 (170). 7.72 gr (0.50g). The reverse is double struck, making a positive identity with the next coin difficult.
 Obverse die 2./Reverse die 1. (**pl. 8, 22**) Lessen, *NCirc* September 1989 (4652) *ex* David Dupree, R. Carlyon-Britton, L.A. Lawrence 1951 (600). 7.70 gr (0.50g), 190°.
 Obverse die 2./Reverse die 2. (**pl. 8, 23**) Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, *ex* Lockett 1956 (1516). 5.71 gr (0.37g).

Farthings

There are no farthings known, but one would expect them to have been made. There are London and Calais farthings, the latter being obvious from the inclusion of annulets, the former only because its initial mark of a botany cross matches the similar mark on Calais farthings. London farthings lack annulets.

Summary and conclusions

The preceding discussions are summarized in the following table, where the estimates are based on the presumption that the figure of £496 is truth:

	4d	2d	1d	½d
No. of coins today	13	5	3	3
No. of obverse dies	3	2	2	2
No. of reverse dies	7	4	3	2
Minimum coins possible	30k	–	–	–
No. of coins using Calais & London %	23k = £383	12k = £100	2.5k = £10	–
No. of coins at 10k/obverse die	30k = £500	20k = £167	20k = £83	20k = £42
No. of coins final estimate	21k = £350	10k = £83	<10k = £42	<10k = £21

This attempt to make a rough estimate or guess of the quantities of silver coins produced will be carried further with an acceptance of the period of coinage (gold starting first) to have been from about August 1423 to August 1424. The vast majority of it would have been produced within the first two months, with only an occasional response to incoming metal, mostly in gold, over the next ten months. The dies were probably made in a batch at the start, regardless of when they were used, and there should be no concern with privy marks or other types of changes if the work went into 1424, at least for the silver.



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LESSEN: YORK HENRY VI (1)

PLATE 8



13



14



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4A

