

# Introduction to medieval coins & identification guide for archaeologists

## Guide 37



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## **Introduction**

Today coins are mostly found by metal detectorists but occasionally they are found on archaeological sites. This guide will offer a basic and easy to use identification guide for the main types of English medieval coins dating from 1066-1544. The guide will be divided into two parts; the first part will be an introduction to medieval coins detailing the basic layout and how to read the legends and also the different denominations. The second part will be a simple classification guide covering the English medieval coinage from the Norman Conquest in 1066 to Henry VIII's debasement of the coinage in 1544.

## **Numismatic terminology**

When dealing with coins it's important to be aware of some of the more specialist terminology used and this small section will give a glossary of some of the terminology.

**Obverse:** This is the side with the rulers bust or name.

**Reverse:** The other side of the coin usually with the mint signature.

**Legend:** The inscription, coins without legends are known as a mute or anepigraphic.

**Blank:** The blank metal before it's struck into a coin

**Flan:** The piece of metal after striking

**Die:** Block of metal with the design cut into it. Two dies, an obverse and reverse were needed to produce the coin.

**Mule:** A coin with the current type on one side and an earlier type on the other or a coin struck from a pair of dies not normally used together.

**Hammered:** Coins struck by hand between two dies

**Milled:** Coins struck by dies in a coining press

**Moneyer:** Person in charge of producing coins at the mint prior to 1279. Some mints had more than one moneyer working there.

**Initial mark:** The symbol placed at the start of the obverse or reverse legend

**Mintmark:** the term applied to the symbol when it does not appear at the start of the obverse and reverse legend.

## **Basic medieval coin layout**

The basic layout of a medieval coin is shown in the diagram below, though it must be mentioned that the layout differs on some coins; for example the initial mark is sometimes on the reverse rather the obverse.

Obverse

Initial mark



Obverse legend with king's name and titles

Bust or portrait

Reverse



Mint signature

## **Reading the legends**

This section will look at some of the different legends and mint signatures on medieval coins and how to read and translate them. The lettering on some types of coins can be very difficult to read to the untrained eye, especially when the coin is worn or clipped.

On most coins the obverse legend starts at 12 O' Clock after the initial mark and starts with the rulers name followed by their titles. The following diagrams will show clearly how to read legends on different types of coins.

The first example is a Henry III class 5a3 voided long cross penny minted by Nicholas in London dating from 1251-c.53. The obverse legend starts at 10 O' Clock after the sceptre



The obverse legend reads **HENRICVSREX III** while the reverse legend reads **NICOLE ONL VND**



It will be noticed that some of the letters are joined together (ligate) such as the N and R in HENRICVS and the O and N in ON and the N and D in LVND. Ligate letters are common on coins of Henry III and earlier.

The second example is an Edward I class 3g long cross penny of the London mint dating from 1280-81. The legend starts at 12 O' Clock after the initial mark



The obverse legend reads as **+EDWRANGLDNShYB** which translates as Edward king of England lord of Ireland. The reverse legend reads as **CIVITAS LON DON**. It will be noticed on this example the name of the person who minted the coin is not there. Following Edward I's major coin and mint reforms in 1279 the names of the people who produced coins were no longer allowed to appear on coins (with the exception of Bury St Edmunds until the early 1280s). Instead the city or town the coin was minted in was on the reverse. The reverse legend after 1279 now starts with either CIVI or VILL depending on where the coin was minted.



The diagram above shows the division of the obverse legend so with the divisions the legend reads as **+EDW R ANGL DNS hYB**

There are a large number of different legends on medieval coins and far too many to list here. For a full list of legends and their meanings on medieval coins see <http://www.psdetecting.com/Inscriptions.html>

## **Denominations**

This section will look at the various denominations used in the English coinage. Not all denominations were added at once, some were added then retracted and some changed name.

The standard unit was the penny and it was the only denomination produced between 1066 and 1279. Henry I and III did attempt to introduce a round halfpenny but this was not a success and surviving specimens are extremely rare. To create a halfpenny or farthing prior to 1279 the penny was cut in half or quartered to produce either a halfpenny or farthing. There is some debate as to whether this process was carried out at the mint or as and when it was needed. The diagram below shows a cut halfpenny and a cut farthing.



King John cut halfpenny, minted by Willelm and a Henry III cut farthing of the London mint.

In 1279 Edward I introduced a round farthing followed by a round halfpenny in 1280. These coins proved to be a success and they were minted throughout the period. There are many different varieties of halfpennies and farthings after 1279 and too many to list here. A good reference guide is the small change series by P and B Withers published by Galata.



Edward II Withers type  
30h halfpenny of the  
London mint

A new larger, silver coin known as the groat and its half was introduced by Edward III in 1351. Edward I had tried to introduce them in his coin reforms of 1279 but they were not a success and production of them ceased in the early 1280s. The groats of Edward I are extremely rare and will probably not be found on an archaeological site. The diagram below shows a typical medieval groat



Henry VI annulet issue groat of the London mint dating to 1422-27

The groat differs in design from the penny for example the portrait is now surrounded by arches known as a tressure. On certain coins the cusps of the tressure's are blank, some varieties have fleurs (like the example above), some have a lis, some have trefoils etc. It will also be noticed that the groat has two legends on the reverse; the inner legend is the mint signature i.e. where the coin was minted and the outer legend reads as **POSVI DVEM ADIVTORE MEUM** which translates as 'I have made god my helper'. This legend continues to be used on coins in various spellings up to the end of the Tudor period.

### **Gold denominations**

Gold denominations were introduced in 1344 by Edward III, Henry III attempted to introduce a gold penny in the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century but this was a failure. The first gold coinage known as the double florin introduced by Edward was not a success and was replaced in the same year by the gold noble which was the standard gold coin for most of the period after 1334. The noble was produced along with its fractions the half and quarter nobles.



Edward III gold noble of the London mint



Edward III quarter noble of the treaty period (1363-69), London mint

After Edward IV's coin reforms in 1464/5 the noble was renamed the rose noble or ryal, the design of the rose noble was similar to the noble shown above but a rose was added to the ships hull. A new gold coin was added at the same time called the Angel, which depicts St Michael slaying the dragon. After c.1470 this replaced the noble as the standard gold coin and was produced along with the half angel.



Henry VIII gold angel of the first coinage (1509-26), London mint

## Values and dimensions

Having looked at the different denominations it's important to know how you can tell which denomination it is your dealing with. Apart from the obvious changes in design and metal, the size of the coin is the perfect indicator. However coins during the medieval period were subject to clipping which reduces the size of the coin, if in doubt contact a specialist. The table below will show the diameter of each denomination and its monetary value in the English medieval currency.

Denomination	Diameter (in mm)	Monetary value in shillings and pence
Noble	32-34	6s 8d
Half Noble	26-27	3s 4d
Quarter noble	20-21	1s 8d
Ryal or rose noble	32-34	10s
Angel	28-30	6s 8d
Groat	27	4d
Half groat	22-23	2d
Penny	17-19	1d
Halfpenny	15-16	1/2d
Farthing	11	1/4d

## Part II coin classifications

This part will look at the coin classifications. There are lots of different varieties and types a lot of which can be sub divided into smaller classes. It is impossible to list every type here and only the main types will be listed.

The following books offer an easy to use and detailed classification guide:

North, J. J 1991 *'English hammered coinage'* Vols 1 and 2. Spink and son, London

*'Coins of England and the united kingdom'* published annually by Spink

*'The small change halfpennies and farthings'* series by P and B withers published by Galata

## Norman coins 1066-1158

The coinage of the Norman kings covers the reigns of William I and II, Henry I, Stephen and the baronial coinages, terminating in 1158 following a re-coinage. Norman coins are not as common as some of the later medieval coins due to the periodic re-coinages carried out every 2-4 years (this system was abandoned by Henry I in c.1124). The most commonly

found Norman coins are Henry I type 15 and Stephen types 1 and 7. The coinages of the Norman period are divided into types known as B.M.C (British Museum catalogue) based on the work carried out by G. Brooke in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**William I (1066-87)**

There are currently 8 B.M.C types for William I



B.M.C type 1: Profile left type



B.M.C type 2: Bonnet type



B.M.C type 3: Canopy type



B.M.C type 4: two sceptres type



B.M.C type 5: Two stars type



B.M.C type 6: Sword type:



B.M.C type 7: Profile right type



B.M.C type 8: Paxs type

## William II (1087-99)

There are only 5 types for William II, though there is some debate as to whether the Paxs type of William I was continued into William II's reign.



B.M.C type 1: Profile type



B.M.C type 2: Cross in quatrefoil type



B.M.C type 3: Voided cross type



B.M.C type 4: Cross pattee and fleury type



B.M.C type 5: Cross fleury and piles type

## Henry I (1100-35)

There are 15 types for Henry I and it was during this reign that the system of periodic re-coinages every 2-4 years was abandoned after the purge of moneyers in c.1124. The most common type found is type 15, which was in circulation for c.11 years. Following the work of M. Blackburn the chronology of types has been revised from that of Brooke, the generally accepted order is 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 7, 8, 11, 10, 12, 13, 14 and 15. As there are a lot of types for this reign not all of them will be shown below.

B.M.C type 1: Annulets type

B.M.C type 2: Profile/cross fleury type

B.M.C type 3: Paxs type



B.M.C type 4: Annulets and piles type

B.M.C type 5: Voided cross and fleurs type

B.M.C type 6: Pointed bust and stars type

B.M.C type 7: Facing bust quatrefoil with piles type

B.M.C type 8: Large profile/cross and annulets type

B.M.C type 9: Facing bust/cross in quatrefoil type

B.M.C type 10: Facing bust/cross fleury type

B.M.C type 11: Double inscription type



B.M.C type 12: Small profile/cross and annulets type

B.M.C type 13: Star in lozenge fleury type

B.M.C type 14: Pellets in quatrefoil type

B.M.C type 15: Quadrilateral on cross fleury type



### **Stephen (1135-54)**

There are four main types for Stephen but there are a lot more types dating from this reign minted by barons, bishops and the Scots during the anarchy that is the civil wars between Stephen and Henry I's daughter Matilda. Types 1 and 7 were the only nationwide issues, types 2 and 6 were confined to the east of England under Stephens control and types 3, 4 and 5 were minted by southern lords in the name of Stephen. There are too many variants and irregular issues to list here. Only the main types of Stephen will be listed below. The

most common types of Stephen found are types 1 and 7. Type 7 was largely issued in the reign of Henry II until 1158.

B.M.C type 1: Cross Moline type (also known as the Watford type)



B.M.C type 2: Voided cross and stars type

B.M.C type 6: Cross and piles type

B.M.C type 7: Cross pommee type (also known as the Awbridge type)



### **Further reading**

For more detail on the history and background and coin types of the Norman period, the selected works below will be useful.

Blackburn, M. 1991 'Coinage and Currency under Henry I; A review' *Anglo-Norman studies* 13, pp 49-81.

Blackburn, M. 1994 'Coinage and currency' in *The anarchy of King Stephen's reign*, ed King, E, Oxford, pp 145-205.

Brooke, G.C, 1916 '*Catalogue of the English coins in the British Museum. The Norman kings*', 2 volumes, London.

Mack, R.P, 1966 'Stephen and the Anarchy 1135-54' *British Numismatic Journal* 35, pp 145-205

### **Cross crosslets coinage 1158-80**

Henry II succeeded Stephen in 1154 and Stephen type 7 coins continued to be produced until 1158 when they were replaced by the cross crosslet coins. The cross crosslet or Tealby (named after a large hoard found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century near the village of Tealby) coins are distinguishable by the reverse design with a short, solid cross dividing the centre of the reverse into quarters and a smaller cross in each quarter (see diagram below). The cross crosslet coins continued in production until 1180 when they were replaced.



Henry II cross crosslet class C penny, possibly Newcastle mint

There are six main classes (A to F) in the cross crosslet series some of which can be subdivided. Each class is based on minor details in the king's bust and because cross crosslet coins are often of poor quality it can sometimes be difficult to assign coins to a specific class. As this guide is intended to be an introduction to medieval coins the detailed description of each class is not necessary but a basic breakdown is as follows:

Classes A and B don't have a jewelled collar whereas classes C, D, E and F do. The jewelled collar is clear on the diagram above.

### **Short cross coinage 1180-1247**

Henry II replaced the cross crosslets coinage in 1180 and replaced it with the short cross coinage. It is known as the short cross because of its reverse design, which is a short, voided cross dividing the centre with four pellets in each quarter as shown in the diagram below.



Short cross penny of Henry II class 1b, minted by Oslac in Worcester

The short cross coinage was replaced in 1247 but a partial re-coinage took place under King John in 1205/6. The short cross coinage covers the final 9 years of Henry II and the reigns of Richard I, John and the first part of Henry III. All the coins have the obverse legend **HENRICVS REX** and to the non-specialist it can be extremely difficult to tell which king a short cross coin belongs to. In total there are eight main classes of short cross coins many of which can be sub-divided the classes of each king are shown below:

**Henry II (1158-89)**

Class 1- can be sub-divided into 3 sub-classes A, B and C based on the number of curls in the kings hair, the king's bust and the style of the lettering. An example of a Henry II short cross class 1 coin is shown in the diagram above.

**Richard I (1189-99)**

There are three classes attributed to Richard I and are as follows:

Class 2- Almost always 5 pearls to crown and beard on chin made up of small curls, frequently no collar



Class 3- Seven pearls to crown, beard made up of small curls



Class 4- seven pearls to crown, beard made up of small pellets. Class 4 can be sub-divided into 3 classes A, B and C. Class 4c is the first coin of King John's reign and has 5 pearls to crown instead of seven



### John (1199-1216)

There are two classes attributed to King John including class 4c and are as follows:

Class 5- hair curls contain pellets (except class 5a1), can be sub-divided into 3 sub-classes A, B and C all three sub-classes can be further sub-divided. The sub-divisions are based on portrait and lettering style



Class 6- Various style of portrait, some have small bust, while others have a long face. Can be sub-divided into four sub-classes A to D. Sub-classes C and D are attributed to Henry III's reign



### Henry III (1216-72)

There are two classes attributed to Henry III including class 6C and D which are as follows:

Class 7- Can be sub-divided into 3 sub-classes, small face, letter A on reverse is pointed on class 7a, square top on 7b and c



Class 8- is sub divided into 3 sub-classes A, B and C. Early class A has a cross pattée as an initial mark on the rev while late A and B and C have a cross pommee on the rev. Letter X is different on all sub-divisions of class 8; Class 8a its curule shaped, class 8b its wedge shaped and class 8c its cross pommee shaped.



### **Further reading**

Brand, J. 1963 'Some short cross questions' *British Numismatic Journal* 33 pp 57-69

Mass, J. 1993 'Of dies, design changes and square lettering in the opening phase of the short cross coinage' *British Numismatic Journal* 63 pp 21-52

Mass, J.P. 2001, *The J.P. Mass Collection of English Short Cross Coins 1180-1247*, SCBI 56, Royal Academy: London.

Stewart, I. 1979 'English coinage in the later years of John and the minority years of Henry III part 1' *British Numismatic Journal* 49 pp 27-41

Stewart, I. 1981 'English coinage in the later years of John and the minority years of Henry III part 2' *British Numismatic Journal* 51 91-106

Wren, C.R. 2006 'The Short-Cross Coinage 1180-1247'. *Henry II to Henry III*, Spink, London.

### **Voided long cross coinage 1247-1279**

Henry III replaced the short cross coinage in 1247 with a new type, the voided long cross type. The difference in these coins compared to the short cross is the reverse design which now has a voided cross extending to the edge of the coin rather than the centre. The diagram below shows the new design.



Henry III class 5a3 voided long cross penny minted by Nicholas in London

The Henry III voided long cross coins can be divided into two main groups, those without a sceptre and those with a sceptre. Classes I to III do not have a sceptre whilst classes IV to V do.

Class 1 has does not have the moneyer's name on the reverse, can be sub-divided into two types

Class II has the obverse legend **HENRICVS REX TERCI**, with the moneyer's name on the reverse

Class III has the obverse legend **HENRICVS REX: III** with the moneyer and mint on rev, can be sub-divided into three types



Henry III class IIIb minted by Huge in Winchester

Class IV has a sceptre and the obverse legend starts at 12 O' Clock, can be sub-divided into two types

Class V has the sceptre and obverse legend starts at 10 O' Clock, can be sub-divided into nine types some of which can be further sub-divided.

### **Edward I (1279-1307)**

Class VI is the first class of Edward I and has more realistic hair

Class VII is similar to class VI but of better quality and a lombardic U



Edward I class VI voided long cross penny minted by IOH (John) in Bury St Edmunds

**Further reading**

Lawrence, L.A. 1912 'The long-cross coinage of Henry III and Edward I' *British Numismatic Journal* 9 pp 145-179

**Long cross coinage 1279-1327 Edward I and II**

Edward I replaced the voided long cross coinage with a new type of long cross coins, instead of a voided cross on the reverse, a solid cross now replaced it. The moneyer's names were replaced with the city or town the coin was minted in as shown in the diagram below. This basic design was to continue until the Tudor period.



Edward I class 3g of the London mint

There are 15 classes (many of which can be sub-divided) of Edward I and II coins and several features on the coins will help in assigning a coin to either Edward I or II. Classes 1-mid class 10 (class 10cf3) are Edward I and mid class 10 (class 10cf3) to 15c are Edward II. Class 15d is attributed to Edward III and has a lombardic **n** rather than the Roman **N**

The first feature is the obverse legends which are as follows:

**EDW REX ANGL DNS hYB** is present on class 1a and c

**ED REX ANGLIE DNS hYBN** is present on class 1b coins

**EDW R ANGL DNS hYB** is present on coins of class 2 to 9c

**EDWAR R ANGL DNS hYB** is present on class 10ab1 and 10ab5 but also on Edward II classes 12-15 (and sometimes on class 11)

**EDWARD R ANGL DNS hYB** is present on class 10ab2 and 10ab3

**EDWR R ANGL DNS hYB** is present on class 10ab4

**EDWA R ANGL DNS hYB** is present on class 10cf and most of class 11

The second main feature is the crown type, if the crown is trifoliate then it is and Edward I, if the crown is bifoliate then its Edward I class 10 or Edward II



Trifoliate crown



Bifoliate crown

The diagram below shows the five crown types for Edward I and II class 10cf (Source: Wood, 1989, 44).



There are five classes of 10cf each based on the crown type; for example 10cf1 has crown type 1, cf2 has crown type 2 and so forth.

The crowns are important in identifying an Edward I and II coin here are a few examples of crowns of different classes:



Edward I class 3g, crown is trifoliate



Edward I class 9b, crown is trifoliate



Edward II class 11, crown is bifoliate



Edward II class 15, crown is bifoliate

### **Further reading**

Fox, H. B. E and Fox, S. 1909 "The numismatic history of the reigns of Edward I, II and III"  
British Numismatic Journal 6, pp 198-212

Fox, H. B. E and Fox, S. 1910 "The numismatic history of the reigns of Edward I, II and III"  
British Numismatic Journal 7, pp 91-142

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British Numismatic Journal 8, pp 137-148

Fox, H. B. E and Fox, S. 1912 "The numismatic history of the reigns of Edward I, II and III"  
British Numismatic Journal 9, pp 181-206

Fox, H. B. E and Fox, S. 1913 "The numismatic history of the reigns of Edward I, II and III"  
British Numismatic Journal 10, pp 95-123

North, J. J. 1989 SCBI 39 "The J.J North collection, Edwardian English silver coins 1279-1351"  
Oxford University Press

Withers, P and Withers, B. 2001 'Farthings and half pennies of Edward I and II' Galata,  
Llanfyllin

### **Long cross coinage 1327-99 Edward III and Richard II**

The first coinage of Edward III was as already mentioned class 15d with a lombardic **n** instead of a Roman **N**. The coinage of Edward III can be divided up into four coinages, the first three coinages are relatively small, but it is the fourth coinage which is large and can be

divided into three main groups based on the legend, initial mark and lettering style. The three main groups are based on the treaty of Bretigni, which was signed between England and France in 1361. The first group is known as the pre-treaty period, the second group is known as the treaty period and the third group is known as the post-treaty group. The Characteristics of each will be described later.

### Second coinage 1335-43

This coinage consisted purely of halfpennies and farthings, which were issued at 83.3% fineness (the amount of silver each coin contained, the sterling standard of pervious coins was 92.5%). These coins are identifiable by star mostly located at the end of the obverse and reverse legends. The halfpennies can be divided into 5 types and the farthings 3 types



Edward III type 5(ii) halfpenny of the London mint. Six pointed star after **ANG** and **DON**

### Third (florin) coinage 1344-51

The third or florin (named after the introduction of the short lived gold florin in 1344) coinage saw the coins brought back up to the sterling standard but with a reduced weight compared with earlier issues. The bust is of a new stlye with a large, spread bifoliate crown with bushy hair. There are four main types based on the style of the letter N and legend for example:

Class 1 the king's name is **EDW** with a lombardic n

Class 2 the king's name is **EDWA** with a lombardic n

Class 3 the king's name is **EDW** with a Roman N

Class 4 the king's name is **EDW** with a reversed N

There are also other types from other mints some of which the king's name is spelt differently.



Edward III third coinage class 1 of the London mint

**Fourth coinage 1351-77**

As already mentioned this coinage is the largest of Edward III and divided into three main groups; pre-treaty (1351-61), treaty (1361-9) and post-treaty (1369-77). They are divided by the style of the letter X in **REX** and also the reading of the obverse legend and the style of the initial mark. The diagrams below show a coin from each period.



Edward III pre-treaty series D groat with the French title **FRANC** normal letter **X**. The pre-treaty period coins can be divided into seven types based on lettering style and initial mark.



Treaty groat without French title instead the title of Aquitaine (Aquitaine title is not present on pence) is inserted, the letter X is a different style and very distinct even on worn coins.



Post-treaty groat, French title resumed, reversed letter F for ET, which is shown as Z on earlier coins. Letter X in the form of a St Andrews cross and saltire stops in the legends, on the earlier fourth coinage coins they were annulets (some coins of the pre-treaty period also have saltire stops).

### **Richard II (1377-99)**

The coins of Richard II are little different from those of Edward III except with minor details in the portrait, lettering styles and the change of name on the obverse legend. There are several marks on some of Richard's coins for example on York coins there is usually a cross or lis on the kings breast and on the locally produced dies of York two pellets by the shoulders The diagrams below show some examples of Richard II coins



Richard II penny of the York mint no marks on breast or by shoulders



Richard II local dies York mint, pellets by shoulders and cross on breast



Richard II type II groat of the London mint

### **Further reading**

Potter, W.J.W. 1960 *'The silver coinage of Edward III from 1351: part 1 pre-treaty period'* The Numismatic Chronicle. Vol 20, pp 137-181

Potter, W.J.W. 1962 *'The silver coinage of Edward III from 1351: part II the treaty period (1361-69) Part III the post-treaty period (1369-77)'* The Numismatic Chronicle. Seventh series. Vol 2, pp 203-224

Purvey, F. 1962 *'The pence, half pence and farthings of Richard II, of the mints of London, York and Durham'* BNJ 31, pp 88-108

### **The long cross coinage 1399-1461 Henry IV, V and VI**

The coinage of Henry IV the first king of the house of Lancaster can be divided into two main groups. The first group consists of the heavy coinage and dates from 1399-1412 and the second group consists of the light coinage dating from 1412-13. Some coins of the heavy coinage are identifiable by a star on the king's breast, while the coins of the light coinage often have an annulet and a pellet by the crown and some have a trefoil or an annulet on the king's breast. The coins of Henry IV are rare as not as many were produced compared to earlier and later periods.



Henry IV penny of the light coinage York mint, annulet on kings breast

### **Henry V (1413-22)**

The coins of Henry V can be divided into several types based on the style of lettering, bust and marks by the crown for examples classes B and G have no marks (class B groats have a mullet somewhere on the kings breast). The marks by the crown include:

Class A: usually a pellet and annulet by crown

Class C: mullet and a broken annulet by crown

Class D: similar but whole annulet

Class E: similar but pellet above mullet (York mint only)

Class F: mullet and trefoil by crown



Henry V halfpenny class F (trefoil and annulet next to crown)



Henry V class G groat

### **Henry VI (1422-61, 1470-71)**

The coinage of Henry VI can be divided into several issues based on the marks either by the bust or on the breast and in the legends. There can be several sub-divisions in some of the issues but these will not be mentioned here the main issues are as follows:

Annulet issue: annulets by bust and in two quarters on rev  
(annulets sometimes absent on some coins)



Rosette-mascle issue: rosettes and mascles in legends (some York pence have saltires or mullets next to the crown)



Pinecone-mascle issue: pinecones and mascles in legends (some York pence have a rosette or a mullet on breast)



Leaf-mascle issue: leaf under or on the bust and under **SIE** on Calais mint coins, mascles in legends



Leaf-trefoil issue: leafs and trefoils in the legends and leaf on king's breast

Trefoil issue: trefoil either side of neck and in the legend, leaf on breast

Trefoil-pellet issue: trefoils by neck and pellets by crown, some types have extra pellets in the quarters on the reverse, leaf on breast



Leaf-pellet issue: leaf on breast or neck and mostly with pellets by crown; some coins have two extra pellets on the rev



Unmarked issue: no marks on the obverse extra pellets on the rev. Only groats and halfgroats were produced for this issue

Cross-pellet issue: saltire on neck or sometimes either side and pellets by crown



Lis-pellet issue: lis on neck and pellets by crown, only groats of this type were produced. This issue was produced alongside the cross-pellet issue

Henry VI was briefly restored to the throne in 1470 only to be deposed again in 1471. The coinage of this period is known as the restoration coinage, many of the coins have the king's name as **HENRICV** and the letter R which looks like a B



Henry VI restoration groat of the York mint (E on breast)

### Further reading

Potter, W. J. W. 1958 *'The silver coinages of Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V'* British Numismatic Journal 29, pp 332-352

Potter, W. J. W. 1960 *'The silver coinages of Richard II, Henry IV and Henry V'* British Numismatic Journal 30, pp 124-150

Whitton, C. A. 1938 *'The heavy coinage of Henry VI parts 1 and 2'* British Numismatic Journal 23

### The long cross coinage 1461-85 Edward IV, V and Richard III

The coinage of Edward IV can be divided into three main types, the first type is the heavy coinage dating until the re-coinage in 1464/5 the second type is the light coinage of the first reign, dating from 1464/5 to 1470 and the third type is the coinage of Edward's second reign, dating from 1471-83. There are far too many varieties of Edward IV coins to mention here but a brief description of the things to look out for will be listed below:

**Marks by bust:** these take the form of quatrefoils, annulets, trefoils, saltires and sometimes nothing

**Marks by bust (pence of the York mint):** these take the form of quatrefoils, trefoils, a letter G and key, a letter G and rose, a letter E and rose, a letter B and key, a letter T and key and sometimes nothing

**Marks by bust (pence of the Durham mint):** these take the form of quatrefoils, trefoils, lis, letters B and D, quatrefoil and letter B, letter D and quatrefoil. In the second reign the marks are a letter B and trefoil, lis, letter V to the right of the bust, letters D and V and sometimes nothing



Edward IV groat of the light coinage, quatrefoils by neck

### **Edward V (1483)**

The coinage of Edward V is very similar to Edward IV and are extremely rare due to the short time Edward was on the throne

### **Richard III (1483-85)**

The coinage of Richard III can be identified by the initial mark, which is a sun and rose (three varieties), a boars head (two varieties) and a lis (Durham only), some groats also have a pellet below the bust. Some of the York pence have a letter T and a key by the bust and the Durham pence have a letter D in the centre of the reverse and a letter S on the breast



Richard III penny of the Durham mint, letter S on breast and D in centre of rev



Richard III penny of the York mint, letter T and key by bust

### **Further reading**

Blunt, C. E and Whitton, C.A. 1945 '*The coinage of Edward IV and Henry VI restored*' British Numismatic Journal 25, 3 parts

Mayhew, N. 1974 '*The monetary background to the Yorkist re-coinage of 1464-71*' British Numismatic Journal 44, pp 62-73

## Early Tudor coinage 1485-1544 Henry VII and VIII

The early coinage of Henry VII followed the standard design of the forward facing bust with the long cross on the reverse. The standard facing bust and design was changed at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to a new realistic profile bust while a shield containing the royal arms divided by a long cross replaced the standard reverse design. A new design to the penny was introduced in the 1490's which featured the design of the new gold sovereign recently introduced and was known as the sovereign penny. There were changes to the crown design as well for example the earliest Henry VII groats had the standard open crown, while later ones had a crossed crown either with a single arch or a double arch and sometimes one or more of these arches are jewelled. The diagrams below show the different style of crowns



Open crown



Double arched crown



Double arched crown with outer arch jewelled

The diagrams on page 34 show the different designs on various types of Henry VII coins



Henry VII groat with the new profile facing bust and new reverse design, the legend now incorporates the king's regal number



Henry VII groat showing the old reverse design with the bust with a double arched crown with the outer arched jewelled



Henry VII sovereign penny of the Durham mint

## **Henry VIII (1509-47)**

The coinage of Henry VIII can be divided into three main groups, the first group consists of the first coinage (1509-26), the second group consists of the second coinage (1526-44) and the third group is the debased third coinage (1544-47). The debasement in 1544 is usually considered the traditional end of the medieval coinage in England as all existing medieval coins still in circulation were sent to the melting pot. The sovereign penny still continued to be produced, but that design stopped at the debasement.

The coins of the first coinage have the portrait of Henry VII but have VIII in the legend



The coins of the second coinage have the portrait of Henry VIII



The third coinage will be included in a later guide as this forms the start of the post-medieval coinage.

## **Scottish and Irish coins**

As well as English coins Scottish and Irish coins may also be found on archaeological sites or in hoards. This section is designed to show the differences between Scottish, Irish and English issues.

An easy to use guide for Scottish and Irish coins is: *'Coins of Scotland, Ireland and the islands'* 2003 published by Spink

The first Scottish coinage was initiated in c.1136 during the reign of David I after he took Carlisle and Cumberland on the death of Henry I of England. Carlisle already had an established mint and control of the nearby Alston silver mines gave David the opportunity to strike the first Scottish coins.

The Scottish coins generally followed the same reverse design as the English coinage, for example when there was a change in reverse design in England then a year or so later the Scots would follow suit.



David I penny modelled on Henry I type 15 minted by Erebald of Carlisle

Following the English re-coinage in 1180 The Scottish king William the lion followed suite and in c.1195 began issuing coins with a similar reverse design as the English short cross coins. This new Scottish design had a voided short cross as the English design but instead of four pellets in each quarter the Scottish design had mullets in each quarter. This coinage is known as the short cross and stars coinage and would continue through the rest of William's reign until the death of Alexander II in 1249



William The lion phase A short cross and stars penny minted by Walter of Perth

The design of the Scottish coinage changed again following Henry III's re-coinage in 1247, in 1250 Alexander III replaced the short cross and stars coinage with a voided long cross with mullets in each quarter, this was Alexander's first coinage and it lasted until c.1280



Alexander III type III first coinage penny minted by Walter of Dun (Dumbarton?)

The one of the most common Scottish coins found is pennies from Alexander III's second coinage (REX SCOTORVM). This design follows the design on Edward I coins after 1279 and is the standard Scottish design for the rest of the medieval period. Unlike the English issues the mint signature is not present on the reverse; instead the mint is attributed to the number of points on the mullets. The mint signature is present on the Scottish groats, which follow the same basic design as the English groats except with the bust holding a sceptre.



Alexander III REX SCOTORVM issue type Ma possibly minted in Berwick

### **Irish coins issued by the kings of England**

The Irish coins issued by the kings of England up until Henry VI are characterised by the king's bust in a triangle rather than in a circle. The Irish issues were relatively small, the largest being the issues of Edward IV. The only kings to issue Irish coins during the medieval period were John, Henry III, Edward I and III, Henry VI, Edward IV, Richard III and the Tudor monarchs. The reverse design is the same as the corresponding English issues (except for

John and some Edward IV types) for example the Henry III coins have the voided long cross and coins of Edward I onwards have the solid long cross.



King John Irish penny



Edward I Irish penny of the Waterford mint

### **Further reading**

Dykes, D.W. 1963 'The Irish coinage of Henry III' *British Numismatic Journal* 32

Stewart, I.H. 1967 'The Scottish coinage 2<sup>nd</sup> edition with supplement. Spink

Symonds, H. 1921 'The Irish coinage of Edward IV' *Numismatic Chronicle*

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