

The Lombardic n in York pennies of Edward I Class 3f

Denis Martin

The use of the Lombardic n in the early coinage of Edward I is a spasmodic feature which occurs in AnGL and DnS on a few obverse penny dies, on some of the groats and on an early reverse die of the Dublin mint. These issues cover a short period at the onset of Edward's new coinage but, apart from appearing later on locally made dies of the Berwick mint, the use of the Lombardic n would disappear from English pennies until the class 15d coinage of Edward III in the late 1320's.

Fig.1 illustrates the form of this Lombardic n which is neatly made up of a plain upright followed by an elegant curved tail. The illustrated coin is from the London mint, class 1a.



Fig.1 Edward I class 1a (Author's collection)

The purpose of this article is to examine more closely the rare coins produced at the York mints, both Royal and Archiepiscopal, during class 3f. Although coins of the York Royal mint were discussed in the Fox brothers' ground-breaking articles of the early 1900's¹, it was only in 1986 that David Greenhalgh² reported the discovery of a York class 3f from the Archbishop's mint.

Figs. 2 and 3 show obverses of York Royal and Archiepiscopal class 3f coins and the Lombardic n's are clearly visible in both images. The coins are only distinguishable on the reverse where the Archbishop's mint coin carries a quatrefoil in the centre of the cross. There is no letter n on the reverse which has a mint signature, CIVITAS EBORACI.

¹ Fox and Fox, BNJ Vol. VII, 1910, p123.

² D. Greenhalgh, Spink Numismatic Circular, Vol. XCIV, July/August 1986, p183



Fig.2 Obverse York Royal class 3f



Fig.3 Obverse York Archiepiscopal class 3f

(Both coins author's collection)

Greenhalgh noted only seven specimens from one Royal obverse die, two of which were supposedly from the Montrave hoard but untraced. Further research by the present author has revealed the existence of a second Royal die, very similar to Fig. 2 (Obverse A) but having the lower punch in the initial E lined up correctly (Obverse B). Six coins, have been identified by the author as having obverse A linked with three different reverses whilst only a single coin, one of the two in the British Museum, is from Obverse B. The two Montrave coins remain unexamined.

The Archiepiscopal coin reported by Greenhalgh was, at the time, the only specimen known. The coin was sold in the Stewartby sale at Spink in 2016³. The author was lucky enough to obtain the coin and it is interesting to note that Stewartby's envelope had the word "unique" crossed out indicating that, subsequent to his obtaining the coin from Greenhalgh, he had become aware of another. The author is also aware of this second coin, now in private hands, and has found it to be from the same dies as Fig. 3. A further coin was sold at Lockdales Auctioneers⁴ recently. All these three coins, the only ones known to the author, are from the same obverse and reverse dies.

It should also be pointed out that the Archbishop's coins have damage at the base of the hair to the right of the bust characteristic of many Northern mint coins of class 3e. The Royal coin has the hair undamaged. What this tells us about the chronology of the two coins is arguable.

³ Spink, The Academic Collection of Lord Stewartby, Part 2, 28/6/2016, Lot 739 (part)

⁴ Lockdales, 16/11/2019, Lot 1562, ex. Conte.

The 3e coins of Newcastle, Durham and York were struck from dies made in York and it is reasonable to suppose that the 3f dies of York were also produced by local die sinkers but making use of a new form of S on the obverse, a diagnostic feature of the obverse of class 3f of all mints. A strong piece of evidence that the York dies were still being made locally is provided by a close examination of the form of the Lombardic n.

Figs. 4 and 5 are enlargements of the coins in Figs 2 and 3, in the region of the n in DnS.



Fig.4 York Royal class 3f



Fig.5 York Archiepiscopal class 3f

The individual touch of the same die sinker is clearly seen on both coins at the tail of the letter n. Instead of finishing off with an elegant curved punch which would have been artistically quite acceptable, the letter has been added to with a punch (or punches) producing a small, rather crude, L-shape. As far as is known, this feature seems never to have been pointed out before and its enigmatic nature will probably never be explained.

The author would like to thank the two private collectors who, over the years, have sent relevant images to me. One added to the corpus of the Royal coins and the other was the second known Archiepiscopal coin. I hope they may read this and recognise themselves. I would also think that there are other collectors or curators who have examples of these coins which I do not know about. I would appreciate hearing from them through this blog.

