

A New Die Pair for Edward III Berwick Pennies

By

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G. O'Keefe

I recently purchased the above coin from a metal detectorist. It was in a large group of around 200 coins. The penny which weighs 0.87g, was found in Lincolnshire, somewhere around the Boston area. I recognised the portrait as being similar to an Edward III Berwick penny. But I was puzzled by the fact there was no bear's head on the reverse. I struggled to match it to anything in any of my books. So I posted an image of the coin on a Facebook group, asking for people's opinions. This is where it got the attention of a few group members, in particular Dr. Denis Martin, who identified the coin as Edward III with the same obverse reading as his own Berwick Edward III coin but being a new reverse without the bear's head. Mr. L. Stone correctly noticed from the crown that the coin was a different die to Dr. Martin's, which had been illustrated in the 2006 Galata guide to the pennies of Edward I and II and the coins of the mint of Berwick-upon-Tweed.



Fig 1
0.87g



Fig 2
Author's (DM) collection

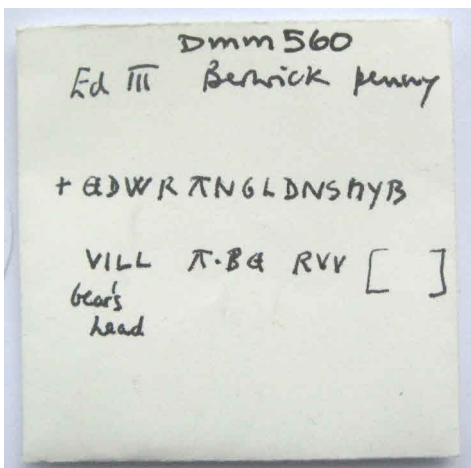
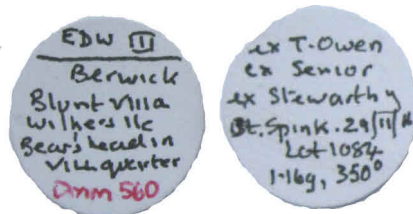
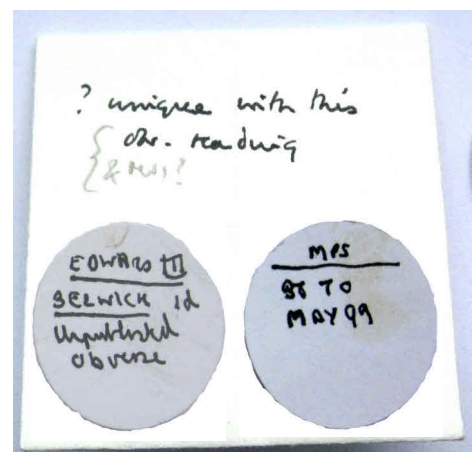


Fig 3



D. Martin

Following its appearance on social media with a request from one of us for an identification of the coin in Fig 1 it was quickly recognized by two of the authors (DM and DIG) as being an important discovery.

A similar coin to this, shown in Fig 2, had already emerged as an unknown type in 1999. It eventually found its way into the collection of Lord Stewartby and was sold on to one of the authors in a Stewartby sale in 2016.¹

Stewartby had recognised the importance of the coin and saw it as unique at the time as can be seen from the notes on his coin envelope in his own hand shown in Fig 3. Images and details of the actual coin in Fig 2 were published in Withers "The Galata Guide to the Pennies of Edward 1 and II..... 2006, page 53" and designated as type 11c.

The coin shown in Fig 1, the new discovery, has an obverse of the same type as Withers 11c but a close comparison between the obverse images in Fig 1 and Fig 2 reveals that they are not from the same die. It is the reverse that is substantially different in one rather surprising respect. Up to now all known Berwick pennies of Edward III, as well as halfpennies and farthings, have displayed either one or two bear's heads in quarters of the reverse. A bear chained to a tree, possibly a wych-elm, appears on the borough coat of arms as a rebus on the town name of Berwick. Despite the authors having viewed the reverse at high magnification and resolution no bear's head is apparent in any quarter. Although the legend is not clear in all parts of the reverse it would appear to have the same reading as the coin in Fig 2 as noted in Withers (11c). The reverse is, therefore, a completely new die and the original Stewartby coin has lost its status as "unique" as far as type but not, perhaps, as a particular variant, is concerned.

The authors also gave some thought to possibility of the coin being a mule between an Edward III obverse and a Edward I or II reverse. Pennies of the earlier monarchs do not display the bear's head, simply three pellets in each quarter. This idea was quickly discarded for various reasons. For example the time span between earlier issues and the Edward III coin is rather long for a reverse die to have lain unused and, in addition, the reverse die reading matches an already known coin apart from the missing bear's head.

D.I. Greenhalgh

The coins of the Berwick mint were published in the Numismatic Chronicle in 1931, C. E. Blunt, *The Mint of Berwick-on-Tweed Under Edward I, II, and III* NC 1931 pp. 28-52

In this paper he describes the Edward III pennies, which have a bear's head in one quarter, as coming from 2 pairs of dies both obverses having the same reading :

+EDWRADVSANGLHIB (sic)

One die has a normal N and the second a reverse barred N. The coins actually read ANGL HB.

The reverse dies both read : VIL / LAB / ERW / ICI

One die has the bear's head in the VIL quarter and the second in the ICI quarter.

The Withers 'Galata Guide to the Pennies of Edward I and II' lists 3 obverse dies for Edward III Berwick pennies which they designate 11a-c :

11a reading : +EDWRADVSANGLHIB (2 dies)

11b reading : +EDWRADVSA~~N~~GLHIB

11c reading : +EDW R ANGL DNS HYB

For the reverses they list 3 :

11a reading : VIL / LAB / ERW / ICI with the bear's head in the VIL quarter (2 dies).

11b reading : VIL / LAB / ERW / ICI with the bear's head in the ICI quarter.

11c reading : VILL / ABE / RVV / [ICI] with the bear's head in the VIL quarter.

We can now add a second obverse die to 11c (11ci) and a completely new reverse die (11d) without the bear's head and reading:

VIL / [??] / [?]VV / ICI

¹ "The Academic Collection of Lord Stewartby Part 4, Spink Coin Auctions, 29/11/2016, lot 1084"



11a



11ai



11b



11c



11ci



11a



11ai



11b



11c



11d



11a/a
BM
J.J. North 1151
1.33 g



11a/ai
DNW 2019 Jul 593
0.98 g



11a/ai
CNG 3360473
0.96 g



11ai/a
DNW 2005 Sep 551
wnr



11b/b
Fitzwilliam Museum
J.J. North 1150
Ex C.E. Blunt
Ex Walters
0.97 g



11c/c
D. Martin
SCA 16022-1084
Ex Stewartby
1.17 g



11ci/d
G O'Keefe
0.87g

Addendum to Original Article



Since writing the original article a second specimen from the same die pair has come to light courtesy of Mr. Lee Stone.

The reverse reveals the full legend reading of the coin :

VIL / LAB / ERV / ICI

With ERV and not ?VV as was first thought.

Mr Stone informed me that according to his records, the coin was originally found illustrated on a metal detecting web-site in 2014.

Mr Stones records also brought to light a third specimen belonging to Mr. S. Ives that had been shown on facebook in December 2012.

