

The Posthumous Coinage of Henry III, and the Enigmatic Class 6x

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In 2018 Bob Thomas first reported the existence of a potentially new type of Henry III penny in an article which first appeared in the Winter 2018 edition of *Caesaromagus*, the Journal of the Essex Numismatic Society, before being published in the BNS Research Blog in Oct 2018¹; the coin had been found in Essex. In 2020 he went on to write about a second example which I had located for him in the PAS database; this article appeared in *Caesaromagus*, Winter 2020 edition, and then later in the BNS Research Blog², this latter coin had been found in Shropshire.

Both are coins issued by Renaud at London, and with realistic hair, rather than two side curls, these two coins appear to belong with the posthumous coinage issued after the death of Henry III. Bob and I both thought at the time that these coins might belong between classes 6 and 7; he retains his view that the coin is an early version of Class 7, but I have come around to thinking that the coins were issued at the beginning of class 6, and I have designated them as being of class 6x rather than 7a.

Recently, a further example was purchased by the author from a Facebook forum auction; it is a clipped cut half penny weighing 0.54 gm, and was found within the last year near King's Lynn in Norfolk by a detectorist. It is clearly of the same obverse die as the first two specimens, and looks as if it probably has the same reverse die too.

The illustration below shows the cut half, and also shows a comparison with that of the obverse of the first found full penny. Comparison of the eye region is compelling for the conclusion that this new



discovery is of the same obverse dies as the previous two coins. Comparison of the reverse dies is a little harder, though the notch seen at the base of the letter “V” appears present on all three coins and is highly suggestive that the reverse dies are identical too.

The historical background is worthy of consideration: Henry III had died in November 1272 whilst his son Edward was away crusading in the Holy Land. Edward had left for the Eighth Crusade in 1270 and did not return to England until August 1274, at which point he was crowned King. During Edward's

¹ Bob Thomas, “The Recent Finds of Two Late Coins of London from the Long Cross Series in the Name of Henry III”, BNS Research Blog, 01-Oct-2018 ([Link](#))

² Bob Thomas, “A Second Specimen of the Early Class 7 Coin of Renaud of London...”, BNS Research Blog, 02-Oct-2020 ([Link](#))

absence the country had been under the regency of Roger Mortimer, 1st Baron Mortimer, a nobleman who had joined the baronial opposition to King Henry III's rule during the Second Barons' War (1263-1267). He had played a significant role in the conflict and even briefly held the king captive.

At the time of Henry's death, pennies of class 5h were being struck and these continued after Henry's death, gradually becoming cruder in style with the crudest being designated as class 5i. It may be that different die-sinkers created cruder style coins whilst other die sinkers were still producing coins of a better style, thus resulting in some 5h and 5i coins being synchronous. There is much uncertainty around the evolution of 5h and 5i, and this remains a potentially fruitful area for further research.

At some stage, although the exact timing is unknown, class 6 was introduced and then the design further changed at some point to that of class 7. Class 6 and 7 both have a more realistic hair style, as does 6x, the type of coin being the subject of this article. Production of class 7 ceased in November 1278, and the new style long cross pennies in the name of Edward started to be produced in May 1279.

Class 6 coins, other than those of Bury St Edmunds, are rare. There are only small numbers known for London and Durham³, and none for Canterbury whose mint may have been inactive at the time. The coins of Bury are relatively common only because of the 1,916 Bury class 6 pennies found in the 1969 [Colchester Hoard](#) which are all of the same obverse die. Looking at the extant Class 6 coins one has the impression that this was a relatively short-lived issue. Class 7 coins, whilst scarce or rare (depending upon mint/moneyer) are relatively more common, and class 7 was almost without doubt issued over a longer period of time than class 6.

During the time that Edward was still away from England, and Mortimer held the regency, there was probably no great incentive to do anything about the state of the coinage; Mortimer would have known that new coins would be required at some stage under Edward's name. The news of Edward's impending return to England may have acted as a catalyst for Mortimer to instigate some improvements to the coinage, or such improvements may have awaited the actual return of Edward.

Looking at the style of 6x (or 7a if one prefers) in comparison to classes 6 and 7 one can see that from a design refinement point of view class 6x fits best between classes 5i and 6...



The 6x design probably represents the first experimental design change, and its crude appearance probably proved unsatisfactory leading to the introduction of class 6, itself also short-lived, and the situation stabilised with the far superior design of class 7, of which many different dies are known for the coins from the London mint. We know that production of class 7 survived until late 1278 and it is

³ Rob Page, "Henry III – Posthumous Long Cross Class 6 Pennies of the Durham Mint", BNS Research Blog, July 2022 ([Link](#))

perhaps a little surprising that the opportunity was not taken to issue class 7, and class 6, under Edward's own name.

One possibility is that the 6x coins are continental imitations, however I believe this not to be the case given the style of the lettering, and that there are no spelling mistakes in the legend. Also, the fact that imitations sought to have copied English designs rather than invented their own design. Another possibility is that these are English forgeries, but the coins seem to be of good silver, and have been found in widespread parts of the country. The conclusion is that these are most likely to be genuine English official issues.

I would suggest that the chronology of these issues might be as follows:

Class 5h	From mid-late 1260's to c.1273/early 1274
Class 5i	c. 1H 1274
Class 6x	2H 1274 – prior to or after the coronation of Edward in August 1274
Class 6	Possibly 2H 1274, or perhaps early 1275
Class 7	c. Late 1275 or early 1276 to Nov.1278

The start date of class 7 is particularly uncertain – several years ago I made a calculation which suggested that production of class 7 at London may not have commenced until late 1277 or even early 1278⁴; I am now thinking the commencement of class 7 was probably earlier than this - though it is apparent that there is considerable uncertainty as to the exact timing for the introduction of both classes 6 and 7, and I am continuing research on this, and hence would welcome any comments or observations which may help in this regard. I am also particularly keen to learn of any further examples of class 6x coins such that we can determine if further dies exist, or whether this was indeed a one-off “experimental” issue.

The updated corpus for class 6x:

	Penny #1	Penny #2	Cut Halfpenny
Findspot:	<i>Essex</i>	<i>Shropshire</i>	<i>Norfolk</i>
Found:	<i>Oct. 2017</i>	<i>Sept. 2018</i>	<i>2023</i>
Weight:	<i>1.25 gm</i>	<i>1.44 gm</i>	<i>0.54 gm</i>
Current ownership:	<i>Bob Thomas</i>	<i>Unknown finder?</i>	<i>Rob Page</i>

We now await with interest the emergence of further specimens.

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⁴ Robert Page, “Henry III (Posthumous), Class 7 Pennies from the London Mint”, BNS Research Blog Sept.2020. ([Link](#))