

Kings and Coins in Medieval England

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The Long Cross Coinage (1247-1279)

Introduction

In 1247, nearly halfway through the reign of Henry III, a reform of the currency was undertaken that replaced wholesale the previous short cross coinage, which had been the current type for approaching 70 years. There was clearly public dissatisfaction with the ailing short cross. Contemporary sources reveal that clipping had become rife and was causing problems for the integrity of the circulating medium (Fig.1.). There would also be the financial windfall for the crown which came with any major recoinage. The long cross coins were of a new design (Fig.2.). The obverse bust on the new coins was a rather stylised affair with the king's crowned head shown bearded (usually in two lines of pellets) with the hair at each side of the head composed of two crescents usually containing pellets. The eyes can be round or almond shaped. The replacement of the reverse short cross with a long cross has been viewed as a device to discourage clipping, which had been problematic in the short cross coinage while maintaining the useful guidelines for cutting the pennies into halves and quarters.

Henry's Reign From 1247

The second half of Henry's reign was a troubled time for England. A damaging rebellion, culminating in what is known as the Second Barons' War left the rule of the king in England in an uncertain position. The English barons and the church had grown increasingly angry over the way the king was raising funds. In 1258 a group of powerful noblemen led by Simon de Montfort forced the king to accept the Provisions of Oxford, which saw the creation of a council of barons who would limit the powers of the king. War between the reformists under de Montfort and the king was inevitable and broke out in 1264 when Henry was captured after the Battle of Lewes. Henry's son Edward (the future Edward I) was victorious over Simon at the Battle of Evesham in Worcestershire on 4 August 1265 after which the rebel leaders corpse was mutilated. Henry lived for a further seven years and died at Westminster on

16 November 1272. He was buried where Edward the Confessor had been laid to rest prior to his translation by Henry to a grand new tomb (Fig.3.).

The Coins and Their Classes

The classification we use today was established in the 1910s by the eminent numismatist L.A. Lawrence. This saw the coins divided into seven classes, with class VII attributed to the reign of Edward I. The most common classes we find today are III and V. Exceptionally contemporary chronicles by Matthew Paris and John of Oxenedes actually illustrate the reverse of the coin. The recoinage of 1247 was placed in the hands of the king's brother Richard of Cornwall, who was one of the richest men in Europe (Fig.4.). He was assigned half the profits of the coinage for five years in exchange for a loan of 10,000 marks (£6,666 13s. 4d.). To put this in perspective, Henry's annual revenue in 1230 was £24,000 and his extensive rebuilding of Westminster Palace and Abbey cost almost £55,000.

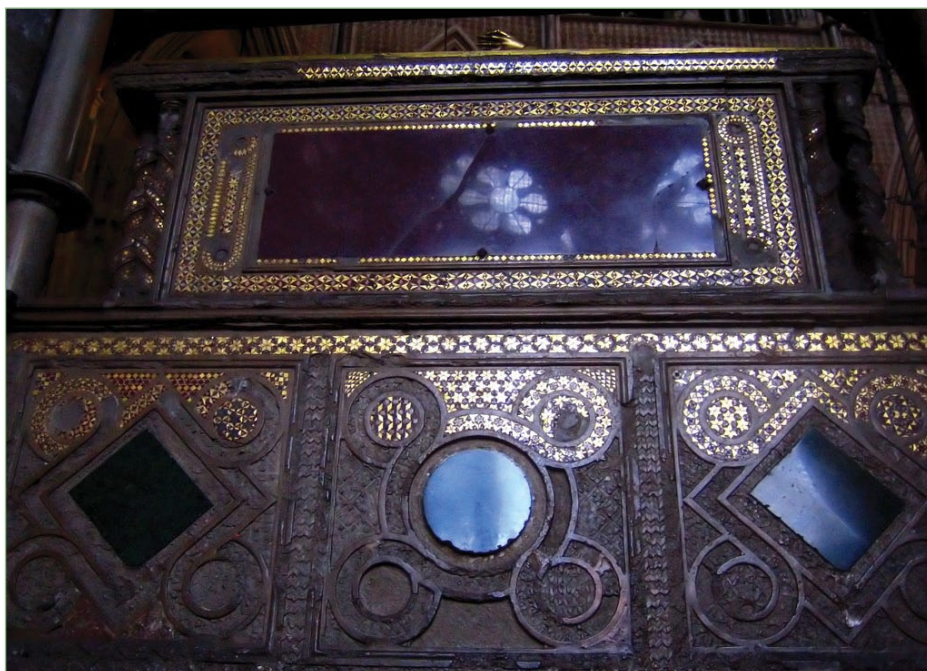
Fig.3. Tomb of Henry III at Westminster Abbey (© 2005 Anthony Majanlahti).



Fig.1. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 1b, minted at Canterbury. Found at Stapleford, Cambs. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Clipping was a problem at most periods in the Middle Ages. This coin has been clipped and then the edges hammered to disguise the fact. It weighs 1.19g, quite a bit less than the 1.38g norm.



Fig.2. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 3a, minted at Gloucester by the moneyer Ricard. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Kings and Coins in Medieval England



Fig.4. Seal of Richard of Cornwall as King of the Romans (1257-72). He was born in Winchester Castle and buried at Hailes Abbey, Gloucestershire which he had founded.

The extension of the long cross to the edge of the coin meant that there was less space for the inscription, which tells us the name of the mint town and moneyer responsible for its production. This sometimes makes reading the inscription difficult. Pairs, or sometimes trios, of letters can share uprights, we call these joined up letters "ligatured" or "ligated".

The long cross coinage is divided into seven classes and among the medieval coinage is one of the more straightforward series to identify. The coins can be broken down into an earlier and a later group by the absence (classes I-III), or inclusion, of a sceptre (classes IV-VII) on the obverse. The first three classes also helpfully carry different inscriptions, so class 1a coins read *HENRICVS REX* on the obverse and *ANG/LIE/TER/CI* on the reverse (Fig.5.), with no mention of mint (only London struck these coins). In class 1b two new mints, Canterbury and Bury St Edmunds joined London and so the inscription changed to *HENRICVS REX ANG* and *LIE/TER/CI/AED, CAN* or *LON* for the different mints (Fig.6.). In

class II the obverse became *HENRICVS REX TERCI*: with the reverse naming the moneyer and the mint (Fig.7.), while in class III the "TERCI" is changed to the numeral "III" (Fig.8.).

The short-lived (as thus rare) class IV was a transitional type sitting between the large-scale production of classes III and V. The type introduced the sceptre on the obverse with the hand and sceptre head dividing the three parts of the legend *HENRICVS, REX* and *III* (Fig.9.). The sceptre was retained into class V but the orientation of the legend shifted from 12 o'clock to about 10 o'clock, commencing just after the sceptre (Fig.10.). Class V was issued over a lengthy period (1251-66) making it the most common long cross class. It also has a number a sub classes labelled a-i of which some are more common than others. The finer points of classification are too numerous to list fully here; however, each type is illustrated with some basic guidance (Figs.11-19.). Class VI was issued in the last part of Henry III's reign into the early part of Edward I's (Fig.20.). At the



Fig.5. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 1a, minted at London. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.6. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 1b, minted at Bury St Edmunds. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.7. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 2b1, minted at Lincoln by the moneyer Walter. In class II mints were added in eight new towns (Exeter, Gloucester, Lincoln, Northampton, Norwich, Oxford, Winchester and York). © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.8. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 3c, minted at London by the moneyer Henri and found in the moat of the Tower of London. A further seven mints were added in Class III to help in the recoinage of the old short cross currency – Carlisle, Hereford, Ilchester, Newcastle, Shrewsbury, Wallingford and Wilton. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.9. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 4a, minted at London by the moneyer Ricard. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

time of Henry's death Edward was on crusade in the Holy Land and did not return to England until 1274. Class VII was issued in Edward's reign; the type is very rare and shows the king with realistic wavy hair (Fig.21.).

Henry's Gold Penny

In 1257 a gold coin was minted for an English king for the first time in 200 years (Fig.22.). The previous example had come in the reign of Edward the Confessor with a penny struck in gold using normal penny dies of the expanding cross type (c.1050-53). Anglo-Saxon gold coins were not produced for general circulation and have been interpreted as high-status offering pieces – the kind of thing that would have been used in religious ceremonies or as diplomatic gifts. Henry's gold coin was different and marked the first serious attempt to produce a coin of greater value than the silver penny; but what prompted this move? Gold coins were known in England from documentary sources and especially from the two great gold

treasures accumulated by Henry III in the 1240s and 1250s. Over a couple of decades Henry was a fervent accumulator of gold buying up bullion and insisting certain payments be made to him in gold. The first of these treasures was destined to be used in his proposed crusade to the Holy Land; however, difficulties in his Continental possessions in Gascony (south-west France) led to it being spent on his expedition there in 1253-4. Almost immediately a second treasure was started as a war chest to pay for the expulsion of the Hohenstaufen rulers of Sicily. Pope Innocent IV (Fig.23.) himself had offered the kingdom to Henry's son Edmund if only Henry would remove the current regime. Ultimately the invasion never came and the gold was used in the production of Henry's gold coinage of 1257.

The majority of the two treasures were in the form of gold foil. However, records also indicate that parts of it comprised foreign gold coins, from the three areas in which they were most commonly used: the Islamic world, the

Byzantine Empire and in Italy. Of these the most prolific were the "bezants" – a colloquial term used for gold hyperpyra from Byzantium (Fig.24.) – which are recorded as being used in England in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Another group were the "oboli de Musc", which have been identified as Almohad dinars from Islamic Spain and



Fig.15. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 5e, minted at Canterbury by the moneyer Willem. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. This coin has been transformed into a piece of jewellery. Rare type, distinctive band to crown – double line with four pellets.



Fig.10. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 5g, minted at Canterbury by the moneyer Willem. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.11. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 5a3, minted at London by the moneyer Davi. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Round eyes, pellet footed R.



Fig.14. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 5d3, minted at Bury St Edmunds by the moneyer Rand. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. A scarce type. Half fleurs at ends of crown, new R.



Fig.12. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 5b2, the mint and moneyer are absent as this coin, known as brockage, was struck between dies where one die still had a coin stuck to one surface. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Wedge shaped R.



Fig.13. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 5c, minted at Canterbury by the moneyer Gilbert. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Almond shaped eyes.

Kings and Coins in Medieval England

North Africa (Fig.25.). The final group were the augustales of Sicily (Fig.26.). These very handsome and well-engraved coins were struck with an idealised bust clearly inspired by classical Roman prototypes. Given the circulation of such foreign coins as these (albeit in small numbers) it comes as little surprise to see an English king attempt to introduce a native coin.

When it was issued the new coin was valued at 20 pence. The obverse depicts a seated figure of the king, very much in the style of the "sovereign/eagles" pennies minted by Edward the Confessor c.1056-59 (Fig.27.). Henry III had a special reverence for the sainted king for whom he built a grand golden tomb at Westminster Abbey. The reverse shows a voided long cross with a rose and three pellets in each angle and the inscription around the edge tells us that the moneyer is Willem at London. This was the London moneyer and king's goldsmith William of Gloucester whose name appears on the dozen surviving specimens. The issue was short lived, however, and quickly withdrawn. It has

been suggested that they were undervalued against the silver and quickly drained overseas, or that they were unpopular with the public. Whatever the reasoning, we see the king actually buying them back at 24 pence each between 1265 and 1270.

Mints, Moneyers and Denominations

Contemporary documents are particularly informative in the long cross series. For example the Trial of the Pyx held in 1248 (that was a formal ceremony in which the coinage was tested for quality) listed all the mint officials and moneyers then currently active at all mints excluding London, Canterbury and Bury St Edmunds. So we know quite a bit more about the identities of those running the mint operations than at early periods – although the moneyers were not inscribed on coins of class I. For example the London moneyer Tomas was Thomas de Weseham the king's surgeon and appointed to the die formerly held by David of Enfield. The number of mints active in the long cross was slightly

lower than that of the short cross (21). In the period 19 mints produced coins, although the network was only at its full extent during the recoinage (class III and to a lesser degree II) (Fig.28.).

In the long-lived class V fewer mints were operational and of these London and Canterbury account for 95% of the single finds recorded on PAS across the long cross type. The coins record shows that classes III and V were most prolific (Fig.29.) so these are the proportions in which they are recovered today. However, this disguises the fact that when the length of the issues of the classes are accounted for, in fact class V losses per year are lower than those of class III and II.

An interesting fact of the long cross finds lies in its denominational profile. We find a large proportion of the finds are cut halfpennies and farthings (Fig.30.). Pennies account for 38% of single finds, cut-halfpennies make up 45% and cut-farthings 17%. This is very intriguing and tells us that coins were becoming a usual method of payment for small goods.



Fig.16. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 5f, minted at London by the moneyer Iohs. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Double band to crown, sometimes á before start of legend.



Fig.17. Silver long cross cut halfpenny of Henry III, class 5g, minted at Canterbury by the moneyer Willem. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Commonest of all classes. Thick band to crown.



Fig.19. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 5i, minted at London by the moneyer Renaud. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.18. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 5h, minted at London by the moneyer Renaud. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Scarce class, crudely depicted, pellet ornament on crown.



Fig.20. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 6, minted at Bury St Edmunds by the moneyer Ion. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. From the Colchester Hoard of 1902 which included 1916 die-duplicates of this coin.



Fig.21. Silver long cross penny of Henry III, class 7, minted at London by the moneyer Phelip. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.22. Gold penny of Henry III, struck at London by the moneyer Willem. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.23. Papal bulla of Pope Innocent IV (1243-54) found at Dodcott Cum Wilkesley, Cheshire (© Portable Antiquities Scheme LVPL-60C0E3).



Fig.24. Gold hyperpyron of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I (1143-80) © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. There are yet no modern finds of these coins in England but records indicate their fairly widespread use as a coin of accounting and international trade.



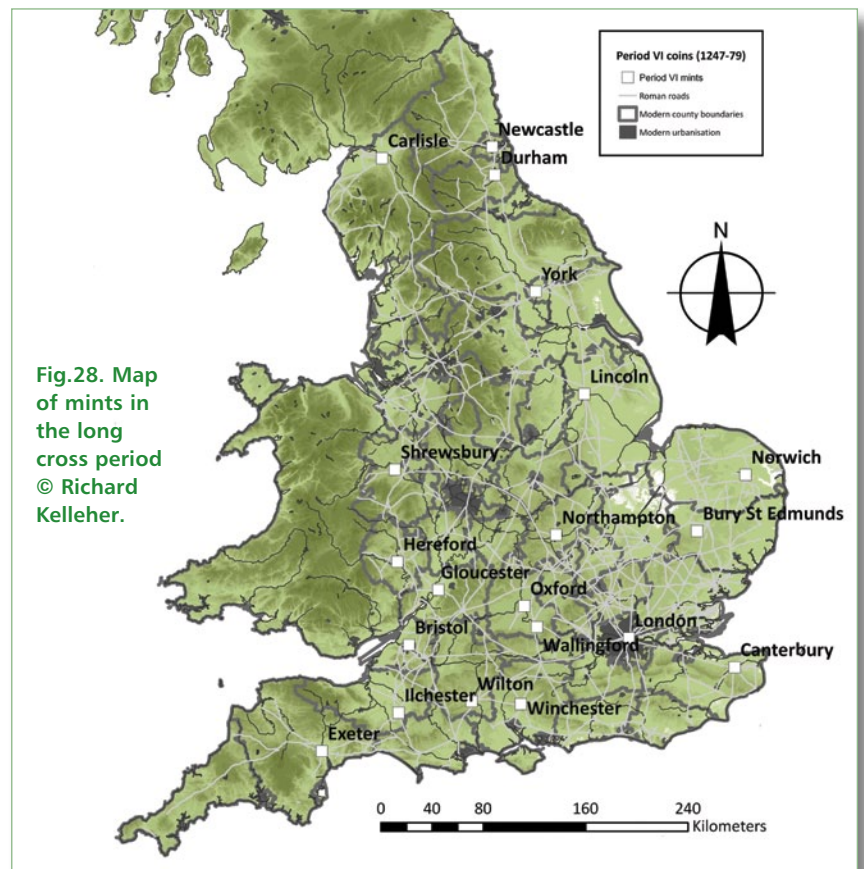
Fig.25. Almohad gold half dinar of Abu Ya'qub Yusuf I (1163-84). Found at Wattisham, Suffolk. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.26. Gold augustale of the Emperor Frederick II of Sicily, struck at Brindisi. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.27. Silver penny of Edward the Confessor (1042-66) minted at Hastings by the moneyer Brid. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Kings and Coins in Medieval England

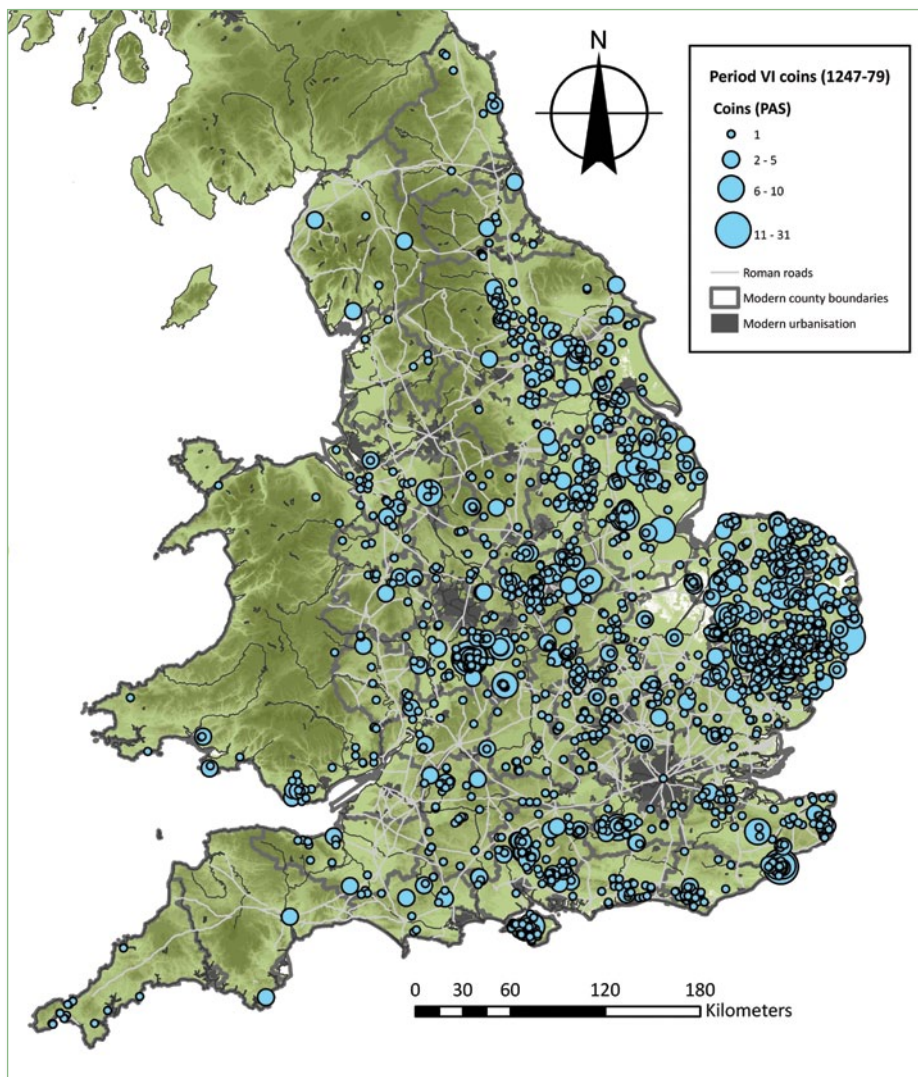


Fig.31. Map of long cross single finds recorded by PAS © Richard Kelleher.

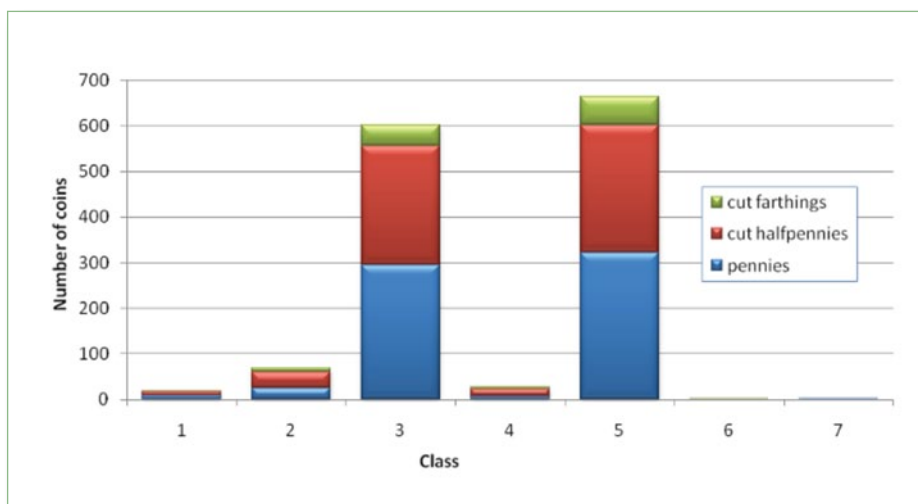


Fig.29. Graph showing proportions of long cross coins recorded on PAS by class © Richard Kelleher.

Distribution

The massive growth in the short cross output – which was explored in the two previous articles – ushered in an expanded monetised economy and to a certain extent this was continued in the long cross; or at least in terms of the geographical spread of coins across the country (Fig.31.). The map shows all long cross coins recorded on PAS to 2008. The distribution shows East Anglia to be the most prolific area but the eastern half of the country is well represented with finds generally at this time. As with the short cross finds in the west are less prolific, but happily the finds bear some resemblance to maps of population densities and income from taxation.

Ireland

Henry III struck long cross pennies in Ireland as had been the case with the short cross coinage. As with the English coins half the profits of the recoinage went to his brother Richard. The process began at Dublin in autumn 1251 under Roger de Haverhull with all coins inscribed with a Dublin mint signature and the name of either of two moneyers Davi or Ricard (Figs.32-33.). It is almost certain that the Davi and Ricard inscribed on the coins were the London moneyers David of Enfield and Richard Bonaventure.

The standard of production was high suggesting that London mint workers were sent over to Dublin to assist in the recoinage. The recoinage was completed by 1254 when the mint ceased to be active.

To distinguish Irish from English the obverse carried a quite different obverse design with the bust enclosed within a triangular frame although the reverse matched the English design.



Fig.30. Silver long cross cut farthing of class Ib or Ib/a. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Imitation, Influence and Forgery

As had been the case from its outset, the Scottish coinage was closely tied to that of England in terms of style and fabric. Pennies of Alexander III, Henry's contemporary north of the border, were minted between 1249 and c.1280 and adopted the long cross shortly after its issue in England but with several divergent characteristics. Most visible was the different bust which, as was the fashion on Scottish coins, was in profile rather than facing the viewer (Fig.34.). The other difference was on the reverse where a six-pointed star or "mullet" was used in place of the pellets (Fig.35.).

Long cross coins are known to have circulated beyond the shores of the British Isles and this led to their imitation.

The main region for the production of these copies was Westphalia (in western Germany).

We saw in the previous article that short cross coins were imitated in the Rhineland. The most numerous that we encounter today are those of Bernhard III of Lippe (Fig.36.). The coins are fairly authentic copies of the English coins but substitute BeRNhaRDV on the obverse and carry a reverse legend that does not correspond with any known official coin. As well as Continental copies we also see domestic forgeries which are often detectable as they either have base cores covered with a thin silver wash, carry nonsense legends, or strange elements in their design (Figs.37-38.).

The three coinage periods we have covered in the past four articles were of a similar sort, each replaced its predecessor

wholesale with the majority of coins re-minted at the start of the period. They were composed of a single denomination (notwithstanding the experiments with round fractions in the short cross and gold in the long cross). Under Edward I a series of major changes would take place which would alter the nature of the English coinage for the next 250 years. We will explore this next time.

Further Reading

Carpenter, D. "Gold and gold coins in England in the mid-thirteenth century", *Numismatic Chronicle* 147 (1987).

Lawrence, L. A. "The Long Cross coinage of Henry III and Edward I", *British Numismatic Journal* 9 (1912), 10 (1913-14), 11 (1915).

Wren, C. **The Voided Long-Cross Coinage 1247-1279** (1993, Herne Bay). TH



Fig.32. Irish silver penny of Henry III, class Ib with the Dublin mint signature, struck by Ricard. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.34. Silver "long cross and stars" penny of Alexander III of Scotland (1249-86), class Ic, struck at Berwick by the moneyer Robert. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.35. Silver "long cross and stars" penny of Alexander III of Scotland, class VIII, struck at Berwick by the moneyer Iohan. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.33. Irish silver penny of Henry III, class IIa with the Dublin mint signature, struck by Davi. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



Fig.36. Silver penny of Bernhard III, count of Lippe (1259-65).



Fig.37. Copper imitation of a class III long cross penny.

Fig.38. Copper imitation pairing an obverse of Irish type with a reverse of English type.

