

Introduction to the Short Cross coins Issued at Bury St. Edmunds¹

Early in 1180 the poorly produced and heavily clipped Tealby coinage then current in England was replaced. The Tealby dies were quite well made; however, the coins were almost always badly struck up and on irregular shaped flans, giving them (*to some*) an unappealing appearance and at times making it rather challenging to interpret the mint and/or the moneyer's name.

This major recoinage saw the introduction of the short cross series. This new coinage was of a completely different design and was both very attractive and well produced. It came with a more realistic facing portrait, that in the early issues had a slight bias to the left. The king is always portrayed holding a sceptre in his right hand, around which is an inner circle, then the king's name "HENRICVS REX". On the flan's edge is a further circle of pellets, or similar shaped marks. The obverse legend remained unchanged for the duration of a series that spanned some 67 years, encompassing the last 9 years of Henry II's reign, the complete reigns of both King Richard I and King John, and the first 31 years into Henry III's reign.

During its 67 year history this coinage went through recoinages and design changes that affected both the portrait and the lettering. However, throughout all this the basic design of the coinage remained unchanged.

The reverse has a small voided centre cross around which is the name of the moneyer who was responsible for its production, together with the name of the mint that issued it; e.g. FVLKE ON SANT (*moneyer's name FVLKE and the Bury St. Edmunds mint abbreviated to SANT*) with "ON" ("IN") separating the two. On the flan's edge is a further, normally beaded circle.

Although Bury was very prolific in the production of the Tealby coinage it took no part in the 1180 recoinage, and remained closed until 1205, therefore missing out on all the early short cross series.

By early 1205 the current Short Cross coinage (*class 4c*) had developed into a somewhat crude and unappealing appearance, with the coins themselves often heavily clipped and underweight. The poor state of the coinage gave both the initiative and opportunity for change. The restyling of the coinage that very quickly followed had much in common with the design and manufacturing criteria seen back in 1180.

To ensure a rapid replacement of the coinage many mints that had been closed since the Tealby issue reopened, together with the occasional new mint. Once this recoinage was completed in 1207 many of these mints closed down, with some never to reopen.

Bury missed out on the very first issues of class 5 (5a), however this was a very short-lived issue and was quickly replaced by class 5b1 when the Bury mint once again commenced issuing coins, and it continued to see out the remaining class 5 issues; 5b1, 5b2, 5b3, and 5c. Then in 1207, along with several other mints, Bury once again closed down, remaining inactive for a further eight years, reopening in 1215 in class 6c1. It then continued producing all of the short cross issues (*except for 6x that was produced at Canterbury only*) until this series ended in 1247.

¹Highly recommend very detailed reading of the history of this period, the reader is guided to Dr. Eaglen's publication "The Abbey and Mint of Bury St. Edmunds to 1279 pages chapter 8 pages 128-161"

Arranging the Short Cross classes

As stated earlier the obverse reading of all short cross coins bears the king's name as "hENRICVS REX", this inscription covering the whole, or part of the coinage of four different kings.

Once it was realised that this coinage spanned four different monarchs, early numismatists had to find a way of assigning different styles of the short cross series to the correct kings and to dating the series.

Initial grouping of the series was achieved by noting differences in portrait and lettering styles. However, this did not allow the series to be placed in a true chronological order that would allow attribution to a particular king.

Coins hoards that contained a mix of either earlier, or later series of coins that had short cross among them gives some indication as to the sequence of the series.

Historical research involving transcription of surviving exchequer records and pipe rolls from the period has proved to be a breakthrough in understanding this series. (*Rolls are a written record from the Exchequer and Treasury of important financial matters, appointments and other transactions*). Written in medieval Latin on sheets of vellum (*dried sheep skins that were stitched together and rolled up, often written on both sides*), this form of documentation is remarkably robust if it has been well stored.

The records contained in these rolls occasionally included the names and, most importantly, dates when moneyers were appointed at the various mints, allowing correlation with the names found on the reverses of the coins.

Unfortunately not all of the rolls have survived, and many remain to be transcribed. Much like today, errors were made in records that are sometime contradictory to one another. Nevertheless this approach was a front runner in helping to understand the chronology of the series. Following on from this, a detailed and careful study of the coins themselves disclosed subtle changes in style and lettering. We have punches breaking up and being replaced, evidence of work by new die cutters etc. Slowly and surely the true chronological order of the coinage has been refined. Work remains to be done on this series but every new short cross find adds to our understanding.

Kings of England during the production of the Short Cross coinage at Bury St. Edmunds

John (1199-1216); Classes 5b1– 5c, issued (1205-1207);
6c1, early 6c2, issued (1215-1216)

Henry III (1216-1272); Classes mid 6c2 - 8c, issued (1216-1247)

Moneymen at Bury during the Short Cross issues

Moneymen:-

FVLKE, (1205-1207)	classes 5b1, 5b2, 5b3, 5c
RAVF, (1215- c1217)	classes 6c1, 6c2, 6c3, 6d, 7a1
WILLEM, (c1217-1218)	classes 7a1, 7a2,
NORMAN, (c1218-1229)	classes 7a2, 7a3, 7b1, 7b2
SIMVND, (c1229-1236)	classes 7b2, 7b3, 7b4, 7c1,
IOAN/IOhAN (c1236-1247)	classes 7c1, 7c2, 7c3, 8a1/8a2, 8a2/8b, 8c

Abbots at Bury during the Short Cross issues

Samson of Tottington (1182-1211)

In office during the last 7 years of Henry II's reign (1154-1189); all of King Richard I's reign (1189-1199); and the first 12 years of King John's reign (1199-1216) .

Overseeing all of the class 5 coinage (1205-1207)

No Abbot in office (1211– 1215)

Unlikely that any coins were issued at Bury at this time

Hue of Northwold (1215-1229)

In office during the last 2 years of King John's reign (1199-1216) and the first 13 years of Henry III's reign. (1216-1272)

Overseeing the following classes: 6c1, 6c2, 6c3, 6d, 7a1, 7a2, 7a3, 7b1

Richard of Rushbrook (1229-1234)

In office during 5 years of Henry III's reign

Overseeing the following classes: 7b2, 7b3, 7b4

Henry of Rushbrook (1235-1248)

In office during 13 years of Henry III's reign (overseeing the short cross coinage)

Overseeing the following classes: 7b4, 7c1, 7c2, 7c3, 8a, 8b, 8c

Further Study and Information

Over the last 150 years or so many different numismatists have spent thousands of hours studying and cataloguing the short cross series, resulting in an array of high quality publications⁴ on the subject. To this day the study of the series is still very much ongoing. Almost every new short cross coin that is found adds to our understanding of the series.

Since Dr. Eaglen's 2006 publication of *The Abbey and Mint of Bury St. Edmunds to 1279*⁴ many new coins have appeared, resulting in unrecorded dies, and coins from recorded dies in a much better state of preservation being discovered. As these coins were not available to Dr. Eaglen when he compiled his catalogue in 2006 it is not surprising that there are additions and amendments to the dies in his catalogue.

Quite obviously having many more coins available for study has given students of the series the opportunity to reappraise the long standing classification of the short cross coinage and has allowed the series to be placed in a more accurate chronological order.

Almost any coin set (*normally one obverse and two reverse dies*) can be linked back to Dr. Eaglen's publication on the Bury mint. The die numbering used on this site is still faithful to his publication, meaning that using his die reference, e.g. *Eaglen 124*, will link that particular set of dies back to his catalogue.

However, the new coins now available for study and the resulting alterations to the series and sequence of dies has led to the adoption of a revised die linking lettering system on this site, which does not link directly back to that in Dr Eaglen's publication.

A die listed in red (e.g. **221a**) indicates that this coin or die link was not known when Dr Eaglen published his work.

On the left side of the die charts the circle containing a capital letter is the obverse die and the circle on the right containing a lower case letter is the reverse die. The lines between the obverse and the reverse indicate a die link.

Information printed on the lines are:-

The Eaglen reference number, "*Eaglen 80*".

The new die reference number "*A-a1*".

The approximate number of coins recorded from these dies "(5)"; giving *Eaglen 80, dies A-a1, (5)*

Underlined lettering indicates ligated letters (*two or more letters interlinked*)

Pictures of the short cross coinage are listed by the Eaglen number (RE). Much appreciation is given to the following individuals, organizations, museums for the inclusion of these pictures.

All pictures are the author's with the exception of the following:

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⁴ A list of these publication will be found in the introduction section of this site