

A NOTE ON THE POST-TREATY NOBLES OF EDWARD III

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SOME time ago while re-reading Mr. Lawrence's account of the first nobles issued after the rupture of the Treaty of Bretigny in 1369 I was struck by the similarity between two obverse dies illustrated in Plates III. 1 and IV. 1 of the *Numismatic Chronicle* for 1933, or as consecutively numbered for Mr. Lawrence's series of articles, Plates XIX. 1 and XX. 1. Closer examination showed the coins to be struck from the same obverse die; in particular each reveals the same peculiarity, an intrusive and unnecessary saltire between the E and X of REX . The coins are respectively a London noble of the first Post-Treaty issue with E in the centre of the reverse, and a Calais one with A in that position: in this particular case the A happens to be inverted so that it looks like a D .¹

There is, it will be recalled, no flag at the stern of these early Post-Treaty Calais nobles: further they show the fo'c'sle dividing the king's name into two parts, of two letters and four, ED and $\text{W}\text{T}\text{RD}$; the French title is denoted by the three letters FRT , and the dies use the old lettering of the Treaty period. The later Post-Treaty nobles of both London and Calais have the king's name divided three letters and three, EDW and TRD , by the fo'c'sle; they read $\text{FR}\text{T}\text{RD}$ and have a new and distinctive lettering: on the Calais coins there is always a flag. With regard to the London specimen of the two nobles which show this die identity, it may be mentioned that Mr. Lawrence has accidentally omitted to describe it in the text. It is somewhat similar to other coins described, but the details are quite clear for all to see. It is, moreover, one of the rare coins with a crescent on the fo'c'sle. The Calais coin is described clearly and confirms the fact that Mr. Lawrence both overlooked the saltire in REX and omitted to describe the obverse in his London list.

The use of this die at both London and Calais raises a point, perhaps several points, for our consideration. Mr. Lawrence divides the Post-Treaty Calais nobles into nominally three but really two groups; first group I, without a flag, which comprises only the early nobles reading FRT , some of which have a crescent on the fo'c'sle, and secondly, group II, coins with a flag, which read $\text{FR}\text{T}\text{RD}$ and show the new tall lettering. There is also group III, but for our purpose it can be regarded as part of group II. It seems to me that these groups, while remaining substantially the same, might more appositely be described, not as without or with a flag, but as group I, with London obverse dies and old Treaty reverses, group II, true Calais dies and new lettering on obverse and reverse. An advantage of the proposed new description would be that it could be extended to the Post-Treaty London nobles

¹ A better specimen from the same pair of dies is illustrated in *Num. Chron.* 1911, Pl. XXI, 28 [East Raynham Find].

also, which Mr. Lawrence has not thought worth while to divide into groups as he has the corresponding Calais coins. I think they might with advantage be so divided; that is, for instance, group I, old Treaty style with French title added, group II, new style with new lettering. For indeed the difference in general appearance between the two kinds of nobles is most marked.

If this suggestion is acceptable we may perhaps feel ourselves obliged to reconsider the description not only of these Post-Treaty nobles but also of the Calais Treaty nobles which have no flag. Were they struck from genuine Calais dies or merely from London ones made to serve an emergency? And arising out of that, should we look for die-identity between London and Calais nobles during the Treaty period? Is there, moreover, a possibility of similar die-identity in the silver coins? The answers to these questions are that in the silver special Calais obverse dies were not struck, but in the gold they were. Die-identity therefore may be expected, and is found, in the silver but not in the gold.

In the silver there are at London and Calais precisely similar obverses in every denomination, groats, half-groats, and pence, of which Calais coins were struck. It would not be too much to say therefore that no special obverse dies were made for Calais silver but that London ones were used; the special reverse dies, by showing the mint name, were sufficient. The die-identity which is known to exist was brought to my knowledge by Major Blunt, who has two half-groats struck from the same obverse die; one of them shows a London and the other a Calais reverse. There is no reason why other similar coins should not be found.

As regards the gold, however, the case is different. In no case, as Mr. Lawrence has shown, is there a possibility, even when the flag is absent, of confusing obverses during the Treaty period of either nobles or half-nobles of London and Calais; for of the five known issues of such Calais coins, three are peculiar to that mint and not found at London, and the other two, even when they show no flag, differ from the parallel London coins by having trefoil instead of saltire stops about the symbol for ET . The quarter-nobles do not afford reliable evidence; they have no certain distinguishing mark of Calais, such as the flag, and in fact the distinction between London and Calais coins is even now a matter of conjecture. Die-identity then in the gold during the Treaty period was unlikely to take place except perhaps through carelessness or a sudden emergency.

But a sudden emergency was just what occurred in the rupture of the Treaty of Bretigny in 1369. Now only was die-identity between London and Calais coins possible or likely. We may, I think, dismiss the possibility of confusion or error. The Mint-Master at London simply had no Calais obverse dies available claiming the French title, which it was very important to do; so he did the best he could and sent his colleague or deputy at Calais some London ones, with instructions to use them with old Treaty reverses where the α

in the centre would be enough to furnish the coins with a mint-mark.

This was not the only occasion when an emergency arose and Calais had to make shift with what dies London could send her. When Edward III died the London mint being apparently unable to prepare in time any Calais obverse dies for the noble showing the new king Richard's name, sent his colleague one of Edward's: he managed, however, perhaps by alteration, to send him a reverse die with **R** in the centre, and a striking of this coin came into the market only the other day. Two or three specimens in fact are known. Later in Richard II's reign the supply of obverse dies for Calais again ran short, for I remember reading in the *Proceedings*¹ of the Royal Numismatic Society that Mr. Lawrence once exhibited before that Society two Richard II nobles, a London and a Calais one, struck from the same obverse die. Again for some reason the London Mint-Master was in a quandary with no true Calais dies at hand. So he had a flag added to a London one and sent it off.

¹ *Num. Chron.* 1931, *Proceedings*, p. 4.