

# THE EARLY IRISH PENCE OF EDWARD I RECLASSIFIED

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IN a recent note the writer attempted to identify the coins struck in Dublin before mid 1280.<sup>1</sup> Three varieties were examined as possible candidates, but the first two were dismissed as almost certainly being imitations. The third appeared to be from official dies although one could not be absolutely certain of this. However, shortly after publication of the note, another coin came to light having the crown, face and hair from the same punches while the reverse was of the so-called third issue (pl. 3, 3). Whilst this coin serves to confirm that both are from official dies<sup>2</sup> it throws some doubt on the existing arrangement of the Irish coins attributed to the period 1279 to 1284.

Further doubts were raised by the coin (pl. 3, 15), which has a portrait with a pinched face and a spread crown. The earlier note illustrated and discussed a similar obverse (pl. 3, 16) which was used with a normal reverse of Waterford. It was suggested that the crown was from the same English class 3g punch as the majority of the Irish coins, and in an early state, making the die very early. However the new coin has a very late reverse with the closed E and other lettering associated with English coins post class 5 and Irish pence of the rose-marked issue of c. 1292 or later. This appears to place this style of portrait very late, calling for a complete re-assessment of this variety and its position.

The present classification of the Irish issues with a trefoil of pellets beneath the bust is based mainly on the stopping and lettering.<sup>3</sup> It may be summarised as follows:

1. No mark at the head of the obverse legend or over DNS. Narrow waisted S. Dublin only.
2. Pellet initial mark. Bar over DNS. Wedge tailed or, later, scroll-tailed R. Dublin and Waterford.
3. Small cross initial mark. Roman E. Scroll-tailed R. Reverse: Gothic N and egg-waisted S. Mules both ways with class 2. Dublin only.

This arrangement was primarily based on the premise that the letter S with an egg-shaped centre is later than that with a thin centre, as first noted by Burns in his footnote about the Irish content of the Montrave hoard.<sup>4</sup> He based this postulate on his classification of the English pence where A 16 and 17 (= Fox 3g), which he describes as 'of a transitional character, marking the change from the slender-bodied to the full-bodied S', are preceded by coins with the thin S and followed by A 18 (= Fox 3f) with the thick S. Thus there was a clearcut transition from the 'early' to the 'late' S with considerable 'muling' in A 16–17 and some in A 18. However, as their designation indicates, the Fox brothers placed A 18 before A 16 and 17,<sup>5</sup> and, although some students have favoured the Burns chronology, the Fox arrangement appears to be confirmed by the emissions of the York mints for which coins of 3f but not 3g are known. In any case one can no longer

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irreproachable dies (figs 5 and 6) provided the final confirmation.

<sup>3</sup> *SCBI 10. Ulster Museum, Belfast Part I, Anglo-Irish Coins: John – Edward III* (1968), p. xlv. Subsequently referred to as *SCBI*.

<sup>4</sup> E. Burns, *The Coinage of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1887), p. 218 fn.

<sup>5</sup> H.B.E. and J.S. Fox, 'Numismatic History of the reigns of Edward I, II and III', *BNJ* 7 (1910), 123–5.

<sup>1</sup> *NCirc* 99 (1991), pp. 79–80.

<sup>2</sup> The identification of the face and hair punches on other

accept that all use of the composite S ceased on the introduction of the thick letter as there appears to have been a certain amount of overlapping.<sup>6</sup>

While the existing arrangement of the Irish series has the considerable advantage of simplicity, it does not seem to reflect the actual sequence of the series, as a close examination of the punches used to make the portraits on these coins reveals that the position is far more complex than it suggests. The following classification, into Groups A to D, has been based primarily on such punches as were also used in the preparation of English dies. However, the resulting chronology should be treated with caution as, although it gives some indication of the order in which the obverse dies were probably made, this is not necessarily the order in which they were all used. The pattern which emerges suggests random use of some dies, which may well have been stockpiled as they were received in batches from the die-sinkers.<sup>7</sup>

### Crowns

The crown punches of Group A do not appear to have been used in the manufacture of any English dies. They are tall with straight sides and bear some resemblance to some of the crowns in early class 3, although the side fleurs are more spread than on the English punches. Two varieties have been distinguished, the first of which is somewhat cruder than the second, which has neater petals to the fleurs. The general outline of the two crowns is very similar and it is possible that there is only one punch which has been recut.

The two varieties of crown found on the remainder of the early coins are from punches used in the manufacture of dies of English class 3g. They are very similar, that of 3g<sub>2</sub> being thicker and heavier than 3g<sub>3</sub> which appears more spread. There is considerable variation in the appearance of the latter, mainly due to the manner of its insertion into the dies and one cannot dismiss the possibility that it was refurbished at some stage. A few dies have an extra petal to one side fleur.<sup>8</sup> This appears to be due to recutting the die, possibly because the crown had been inserted unevenly.

### Faces

Although faces are perhaps liable more than any other punch to be distorted when inserted into the die or by the hair punches, it is possible to distinguish three (possibly four) varieties in this series.

- 1a. Narrow face with pointed chin resembling that found on some English coins of early class 3. Unfortunately this has only been seen on the coin illustrated (pl. 3, 2), which

<sup>6</sup> An obverse die of English class 3d exists with a thick-waisted S while the thin composite S is recorded on an obverse of class 4a<sub>4</sub> (SCBI 39, pl. 9 no. 211).

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately we do not appear to have a record of where the dies for the Irish coins of this period were manufactured. It is evident that a few years earlier they were being made in England as Stephen of Fulbourne on his appointment as Treasurer of Ireland brought to that country in March 1275 two dies 'to make therewith the King's money' (SCBI 10, xlili). However, for the recoinage of 1300, Alexander Norman of Lucca, Master of the Mint at Dublin was ordered to find the engraver of the dies at his own cost (Red Book fo. 259 dd. 29 March 1300 in *The De Moneta of Nicholas Oresme and English Mint Documents*, edited by C. Johnson (Nelson's Medieval Texts 1956)). Later the entry states that 'the voyage between Ireland and England is perilous' which may account for the dies not being made in

London. However, it seems safe to assume that the Irish dies of c. 1280-2 were made in England in view of the shared punches on most of these, although it is difficult to explain the use of special irons in Group A. If the dies were supplied from London, batches would be sent to Dublin from time to time and eventually mules would arise. An unusual pattern of muling occurs in the Scottish coinage about this time and this also appears to be due to stockpiling (see *BNJ* 60 (1990) p. 44).

<sup>8</sup> The following Dublin coins have been noted with altered side fleurs:

Dexter fleur (Aberdeen hoard No. 347 - *BNJ* 58 (1988), pl. 21).

Sinister fleur (SCBI 475).

One coin (SCBI 476) described as 'irreg. l. hand fleur' may have a fault there.

is not completely clear. It has some affinities with Face 1b and may be from the same punch distorted in the die.

- 1b. Slightly wider with more rounded chin (**pl. 3, 1**).
2. Similar style with slightly more prominent features. The sinister eye pellet is slightly higher than the dexter one and has a prominent lower lid consisting of a solid half circle. This punch was used on English dies in class 3g and early 4a. Although the face appears smaller on some coins all seem to be from the same punch (**pl. 3, 7**).
3. Narrow, oblong face of gaunt appearance. The slight indication of the eyelids gives prominence to the pellet eyes. This punch does not appear to have been used on any English dies although it has a superficial resemblance to some of the faces of late class 4 (**pl. 3, 15**).

### Hair

Basically the hair punches consist of three main strands with a row of curls (usually coalesced) below and are difficult to distinguish, especially on worn or poorly struck coins. Minor differences separate the three main varieties which may be described as follows:

1. Dexter punch: outer strand bifurcated at the top. Thick middle strand. Inner strand is an elongated S, bifurcated at the top and having an annulet at the bottom forming the first curl; the row is completed with three crescents. Sinister punch: very similar but inner strand is hollowed rather than bifurcate. Both punches are bushy and stand out well from the face (**pl. 3, 1**).
2. Less full than Hair 1 with a solid crescent for the inner strand which does not touch the row of curls made up of four crescents. At least two similar punches are covered by this description, the main difference being in the inner strand which is longer and flatter in one variety. One set of punches was also used in the manufacture of some English class 3g dies (**pl. 3, 7**).
3. Resembling the punches of Hair 1 but of rather cruder style with the rows of curls sloping upwards and a sharper curve to the strands. These punches do not appear to have been used on English dies (**pl. 3, 15**).

### Lettering

Although the reverse lettering may have been inserted with punches used on English dies these have not been identified<sup>9</sup> and there does not appear to be any chronological significance in the use of incurved or straight-sided uprights. This may well indicate that current English punches were not being used since incurved ones do not appear on coins of classes 3f to early 4a. The obverse lettering is, of course, from specially prepared punches since it is smaller than on any English pence or the Irish reverses.

In the Dolley classification the scroll-tailed R was regarded as a late feature as it occurred on the coins with a Roman E on the obverse, which were thought to be the last variety of the early Irish coinage. Its position is reversed in the proposed new classification since it is found mainly on coins which have been placed at the head of the series on other grounds and only on dies used at Dublin. The wedge-tailed R is used on most of the coins and there is some variation in the size and shape of the wedge which is unduly large and wide on Group A 2 and B 1 transitional coins.

The letter S on the obverse is usually composed of two crescents and two wedges – a

<sup>9</sup> With one exception (the obverse of a coin in Group A 1) the letter A is always unbarred on both sides, a form which does not appear permanently on English coins until class 4d although it occurs on some 4a<sub>2</sub> and 4c.

form which had been largely superseded on English coins of the period by a thin waisted centre and two wedges or the thick waisted form – but a few have a thick-waisted non-composite letter. The reverses mainly have the intermediate form found on contemporary English coins, except those with the Gothic N which always have the thick letter. The latter also appears on a very few reverses with the Roman N.

The use of a Roman E on obverses of Group C has no parallel in the English series and remains unexplained.

The Gothic N which with the thick-waisted S is used on the reverses associated with Group C and frequently ‘muled’ with Group B obverses, is found on a few English coins of the period – classes 1a (obverse only), 3f (York mint-obverses only) and irregular 3g obverses of Bury St Edmunds mint. The only ones of these which may have influenced the Irish coinage are those of the York mint, being very close in date. Some confirmation of this possible influence is perhaps provided by the very rare appearance of the pellet-barred N on Irish pence (pl. 3, 7 and 13). Although this form of letter is found on a very few English coins of class 3g, it is mainly associated with class 3e of the Northern mints. If, as suggested elsewhere,<sup>10</sup> this is the privy mark of a die-sinker, he may well have been influenced by the York coins and introduced the Gothic N to the Irish reverses when preparing the dies for them.

### Key to classification

#### *Lettering*

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| R 1. Wedge tail.  | S 1. Two crescents and two wedges.                       |
| R 2. Scroll tail. | S 2. Thin waisted body from single iron with two wedges. |
|                   | S 3. Single punch with egg-shaped centre.                |

#### *Reverses*

- |                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Dublin mint           | Waterford mint. |
| 1. Roman N with S 2.  | 1. S 2.         |
| 2. Roman N with S 3.  | 2. S 3.         |
| 3. Gothic N with S 3. |                 |

#### *Obverses*

EDW·R'·/ANGL·D/NŠ·hYB· Gothic E except Group C which has a Roman one with a small cross at the head of the legend instead of a pellet. There is some variation in the stopping and the initial pellet is sometimes omitted.

### Classification

#### *Group A (before late 1280 ?)*

Tall straight-sided crown(s) resembling one used on some English coins of class 3 c–d. Dublin mint only.

- (1) Crown of coarse style. Face 1a or 1b. Hair 1. Small open E which appears to be closed. R 2.

<sup>10</sup> *NCirc* 89 (1981), 399. The presence of this letter on gros tournois of Philip III or IV of France in the Dover hoard is discussed in *BNJ* 28 (1956), p. 154.

- Barred A. S 3. No pellet at head of legend. Reverse 1. (**pl. 3, 1**).  
 Unbarred A. S 1. Reverse 1 (**pl. 3, 2**), 2 (JJN) 3 (**pl. 3, 3**).  
 (2) Neater crown of similar shape with well defined petals.<sup>11</sup> Face 2. Hair 1 or 2.  
 Larger, distinctly open E. S 1. R 1.  
 Hair 1, Reverse 3 (JJN).  
 Hair 2, Reverse 1 (**pl. 3, 4**).

#### *Group B (late 1280 to mid 1282 ?)*

Crowns of English class 3g.

- (1) Crown of class 3g<sub>2</sub>. Face 1b. Hair 1. Small letter E of Group A1. S 1. R 2. Dublin mint only.  
 Reverse 1 (**pl. 3, 5**), 2 (Dover 14),<sup>12</sup> 3 (**pl. 3, 6**).  
 Late transitional – Face 2. Hair 2. S 1. R 1. Reverse 1.  
 Reverse 1 (**pl. 3, 7–8**), 3 (JJN).  
 One coin has marks only after R and ANGL (**pl. 3, 7**).<sup>13</sup> Another with normal marks omits the triangle of pellets beneath the bust and has a colon before CIVI (**pl. 3, 8**).<sup>14</sup>  
 (2) Crown of class 3g<sub>3</sub>. Face 2. Hair 2. S 1 (very rarely S 3). R 1 (rarely R 2).<sup>15</sup>  
 Dublin mint – Reverse 1 (**pl. 3, 9**), 2 (**pl. 3, 10**), 3 (**pl. 3, 11**).  
 Some coins, probably early, have marks only after R and ANGL (*SCBI* xi, 467).  
 Waterford mint – Reverse 1 (**pl. 3, 12**), 2 (Dover 20).  
 A variety, probably late, has Hair 3 and both obverse Ns are pellet-barred.  
 Reverse 1 (**pl. 3, 13**).<sup>16</sup>

#### *Group C (between late 1280 and late 1281 ?)*

Crown of class 3g<sub>3</sub>. Hair 2. Small cross instead of a pellet at head of obverse legend which has a Roman E. R 2. Dublin mint only.

- (1) Face 1b. S 1. Reverse 2 (*SCBI* xvi, 29), 3 (**pl. 3, 14**).  
 (2) Face 2. S 3. Reverse 3 (*SCBI* xi, 491).

#### *Group D (c. 1282 or later)*

Crown of class 3g<sub>3</sub>. Face 3. Hair 3. S 1. R 1.

Dublin mint – Reverse of issue of c. 1292 (**pl. 3, 15**).

Waterford mint – Reverse 1 (**pl. 3, 6**).

### **Chronology**

As suggested in the earlier note, the coins of Group A are possibly the first of the trefoil-marked pence in view of the resemblance in their portraits to that on some English

<sup>11</sup> There are traces of an extra petal each side of the crown which may be due to the crown punch being double-struck into the die.

<sup>12</sup> R.H.M. Dolley, 'The Dover Hoard', *BNJ* 28 (1956), pl. 8.

<sup>13</sup> The letter N on the reverse is pellet-barred.

<sup>14</sup> The occurrence of an abnormality on each side of a coin of this period would normally make it suspect. However the dies appear to be made from official irons and there seems no reason to think that this coin might be an imitation.

<sup>15</sup> *SCBI* 482–6 (Group B 2 with reverse 1) are recorded as having the 'late' (viz scroll-tailed) R and nos 489–90 (Group

B 2 with reverse 3) are also described as 'R scroll-tailed'. Unfortunately the illustrations do not make this feature clearly visible, but there can be no doubt as to the accuracy of the descriptions. The letter shows up well on two coins with reverse 3 in the Aberdeen hoard nos 351–2 which are illustrated in *BNJ* 58 (1988) pl. 22. Dies with this letter are probably early in Group B 2.

<sup>16</sup> A coin of Waterford in the Kirial hoard is described as having the second N pellet barred (*JRSAI* 103 (1973) 89 & pl. 11, 11). The coin is rather worn and, although it does not appear to be from the same obverse die as the one illustrated here, it is possible that both Ns were pellet barred.

coins of classes 3 c–d. The fact that the irons used in making the portraits on these have not been identified on any English coins make such an association by style somewhat tenuous, but the use of Face 1b and Hair 1 punches in Group B 1 confirms that they are early. One is on firmer ground with A 2 where the face and hair have been inserted with punches apparently used on English dies of class 3g.

The proposed division into groups based primarily on the crown has been adopted to simplify the arrangement and does not reflect the true chronology which appears to be somewhat more complex. A study of the various components reveals a slightly different grouping which may be summarised as follows:

A 1, B 1 and C 1 all have Face 1b with Hair 1 (except C 1). The first two are also linked by the distinctive small letter E and all three (together with C 2) have a scroll-tailed R.

A 2, B 1 Transitional, B2 and C 2 all have Face 2 with Hair 2 and a wedge-tailed R (except C 2 and a few B 2).

This grouping is strikingly evident when the information is presented in chart form as under.

	A1	A2	B1	B1 Trans.	B2	C1	C2
Face 1a or 1b	x		x			x	
Hair 1.	x	x	x				
Small letter E	x		x				
Scroll tail R	x		x		1	x	x
Face 2		x		x	x		x
Hair 2		x		x	x	2	2
Wedge tail R		x		x	x		

1. Rarely used, probably on dies which are early.
2. Most coins appear to have the hair inserted with different punches from those used in group B2.

In a time of great activity in the English mints it is best not to be too dogmatic about the possible chronological significance of the above and to bear in mind the caveat of two eminent numismatists before attaching too much importance to the use of individual punches.<sup>17</sup>

The reverses give little assistance with the chronology as is evident from the following chart of the combinations recorded.

	<i>Group A</i>		<i>Group B</i>			<i>Group C</i>	
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1 trans</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
Reverse 1	x	x	x	x	x		
Reverse 2	x		x		x	x	
Reverse 3	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

The most significant point to arise from this is the almost exclusive combination of obverses of Group C with reverse 3. The one exception, where a reverse die 2 is used with

<sup>17</sup> See M.M. Archibald in *Mints, Dies and Currency*, edited by R.A.G. Carson (1971) pp. 152–3 and N.J. Mayhew in *BNJ* 58 (1988), 46.

an obverse of C 1, is so rare that it can probably be ignored as accidental. On the other hand it will be noticed that reverse 3 is known in combination with obverses of every group. In the case of Group B, 'mules' with reverse 3 seem to be as common as 'true' coins with Group C obverses.

The interpretation of this evidence is difficult, but it suggests that Group C may have preceded Group B 2 and the fact that it was only struck at Dublin implies that it may have been minted before the opening of the mint at Waterford. Other indications that Group C may be fairly early are given above where the sharing of punches by various groups is discussed. Perhaps one should consider a parallel issue of Group C with early Group B 2, but if this were the case the controls over the dies which prevented any reverses other than class 3 being used with a Group C obverse were so efficient as to imply that the issues were struck in two different workshops.

Although the portrait of Group D has some resemblance to that on some English coins of class 4b and later, none of the punches appears to have been used on English dies with the exception of the old crown punch. It is difficult to explain why special punches should have again been made for the Irish dies, which were probably still being manufactured in London, since the English crown punch was still in use. The position of this issue, for which no 'true' coins of Dublin have been noted, seems undoubted in view of the Dublin mule with a reverse of the issues of c. 1292.

From the information available it is difficult to assess the comparative rarity of the various groups. The only considerable volume of illustrations is in the Belfast *SCBI* and it is uncertain how representative these are. However, there can be no doubt that the bulk of the coins are of Group B 2 which may account for as much as 80 per cent of the total issue. The remainder is probably fairly evenly divided between Groups A, B 1 and C.

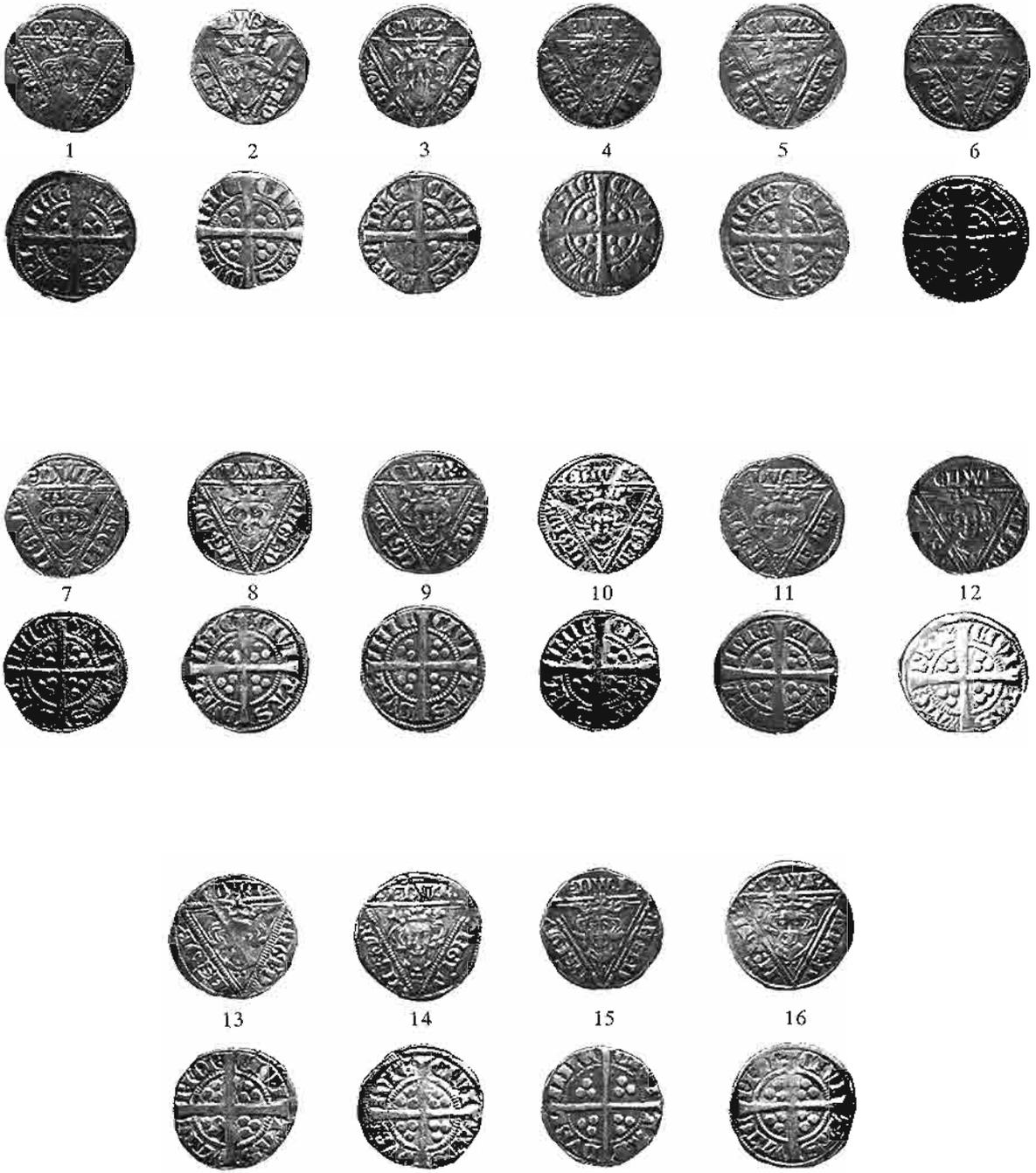
## APPENDIX

Edward I Irish pence of the coinages of c. 1279 – c. 1284? in the Belfast Sylloge reclassified.

<i>Sylloge No.</i>	<i>Dolley class</i>	<i>North class</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Plate XI Dublin mint			
466–7	First issue	B 2. Reverse 1.	No stops.
468–9	First issue	Imitations.	cf. <i>NCirc</i> (April, 1991), p. 79.
470	Second issue	B 2 ? Reverse 1.	
471–81	Second issue	B 2. Reverse 1.	
482–5	Second issue	B 2. Reverse 1.	Scroll-tailed R (see n. 15).
486	Second issue	B 1 ? Reverse 1.	ditto.
487–8	Third issue (A)	B 2. Reverse 3.	Wedge-tailed R
489–90	Third issue (A)	B 2. Reverse 3.	Scroll-tailed R (see n. 15).
491–7	Third issue (C)	C 2. Reverse 3.	
Plate XII Waterford mint			
498–9	Second issue	D. Reverse 1.	
500	Second issue	B 2. Reverse 1.	
501	Second issue	D. Reverse 1.	
502–23	Second issue	B 2. Reverse 1.	
Plate XV			
598	Imitation 'Dublin'	B 2. Reverse 1.	No stops. This appears to be from regular official dies.
Plate XVI			
29	Third/second issue	C 1. Reverse 2.	Dublin mint.
30	Early second issue	D. Reverse 1.	Waterford mint.

## KEY TO PLATE

1. Group A 1. Face 1b. Reverse 1. Dublin mint.
2. Group A 1. Face 1a. Reverse 1. Dublin mint.
3. Group A 1. Face 1b. Reverse 3. Dublin mint.
4. Group A 2. Reverse 1. Dublin mint.
5. Group B 1. Reverse 1. Dublin mint.
6. Group B 1. Reverse 3. Dublin mint.
7. Group B 1 Transitional. Reverse 1 with pellet-barred N. No stops on obverse. Dublin mint.
8. Group B 1. Transitional. Reverse 1 with colon before CIVI. No triangle of pellets below bust. Dublin mint.
9. Group B 2. Reverse 1. Dublin mint.
10. Group B 2. Reverse 2. Dublin mint.
11. Group B 2. Reverse 3. Dublin mint.
12. Group B 2. Reverse 1. Waterford mint.
13. Group B 2. Reverse 1. Waterford mint. Pellet-barred Ns on obverse.
14. Group C 1. Reverse 3. Dublin mint.
15. Group D. Reverse of c. 1292. Dublin mint.
16. Group D. Reverse 1. Waterford mint.



NORTH: EARLY IRISH PENCE OF EDWARD I