

THE ST NICHOLAS OR 'BOY BISHOP' TOKENS

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COIN-LIKE PIECES, cast in lead-alloy and bearing legends or types referring to St Nicholas, are peculiar to East Anglia. Indeed, they have been regarded solely as products of Bury St Edmunds, which has yielded the overwhelming majority of known specimens and the only known mould for casting them, the publication of which, at the request of Miss Elizabeth Owles, Curator of Moyses's Hall Museum, has prompted this reconsideration of the whole subject. It will be shown that they were manufactured in at least two other places, Ely and Ipswich, and that their distribution, though mainly in Suffolk, is even more extensive. Bury, notwithstanding, may well have been the example for them all—all, that is, of the English kind; from the first study of them, by Daniel Haigh in 1844, they have been compared with other series, especially from Picardy and Flanders, with legends mentioning other patrons beside St Nicholas and explicitly connecting them with the 'Bishop of the Innocents' or 'Pope of Fools'.¹ Hence Haigh produced the hypothesis (for hypothesis it remains, however plausible and attractive—neither 'undoubted', as he put it, nor self-evident from the legends) that the English pieces played a part in the rites and customs of the 'Boy Bishop', 'Child Bishop' or 'St Nicholas Bishop', the subject of several investigations (see especially Evelyn-White, 1905). The 'reign' of each year's Boy Bishop lasted from St Nicholas day to Childermas, or Holy Innocents, when he preached a sermon and resigned. The custom is widely attested from the time of Edward I onwards and by no means only in East Anglia, though there has been a special study of it in these parts (*E.A.N.Q.*, 1885-6, 169-72). Most of the evidence comes from great churches with established choirs, but parochial instances are known, again particularly from East Anglia.²

Before suggesting for what precise purpose the Boy Bishop might have used the tokens, or how relevant to the hypothesis is their limited distribution and very late date in the regime of the medieval church, it is worth noting, as was sensed by Haigh and subsequent writers on the tokens and enlarged upon by Evelyn-White, a subtle difference in 'tone' between what was expected of an English Boy Bishop and of some of his continental counterparts. Whereas at Amiens, for instance, there is an inescapable element of burlesque, even of impiety, and an assimilation of 'innocence' to foolery, the English 'Bishop', though no doubt the occasion of a good time, especially for the children, was exhorted to be serious, decorous, uplifting. 'Innocence', tempered by good manners, was judged to be lucid and potentially wise. There is no need to invoke an incorrigible insular Pelagianism; it is scriptural enough, though nothing about childlike virtue occurs in the quotations on the tokens.

The author accepts the Boy Bishop hypothesis as useful and likely, but not necessarily as providing the whole explanation. The first commentary on a St Nicholas token was by Blomefield (1806, 523-4)³ in the context of a fishermen's chapel near Norwich and concerned with the Saint as patron of seamen rather than of children. Blomefield cites the story of a miraculous rescue from the *Golden Legend*, whence the words put into the Saint's mouth appear on some of the tokens, and suggests that they served as amulets for sailors. This is likely enough, but probably a secondary use. The prime datum about the pieces, especially the earlier ones, is that they closely resemble contemporary groats and pence; they are much more like coins than are any other lead tokens or religious medalets and must, in some fashion, represent money.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Haigh's note of 1844 was followed by the longer works of C. Golding (1868, 14-19) and of J. B. Caldecott, forthrightly called 'The money of the Boy Bishop at Bury St Edmunds' (Caldecott, 1936). The last two are closely dependent on their predecessors, and Caldecott, who had long been interested in lead tokens (cf. Caldecott and Yates, 1908), acquired Golding's collection and ultimately presented it to the British Museum. Thus, the main body of material used for these earlier studies is intact. I have sought to expand this body with material from other sources in the British Museum and from the museums at Bury St Edmunds, Ely, Ipswich, Norwich and, above all, the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

FINDS AND DISTRIBUTION

The first examples to be described, though apparently made in Bury, were not found there but recorded by the antiquaries Blomefield,⁴ from Norwich, and Gardner, from Dunwich or nearby (Gardner, 1754, 112). It may be of negative significance that Thomas Martin recorded none from Thetford (Martin, 1779) nor have extensive recent excavations there produced any. Nevertheless, the sudden appearance of large numbers from Bury itself brought them to the attention of Haigh and the numismatic world at large as 'something new'. Haigh, not a local man but writing from Yorkshire, implied that 'a few' had been found about 1838, more around Christmas 1842 and, citing a Mr Wire of Colchester, that the total recovered over five years or so was about a hundred—not, as some have misread it, that a cache of 100 was found in 1838. By Golding's time the days of abundance were over but they were still sometimes found. This account must be set against the prosperity of Bury in the last days of the Corn Laws, with intensive building works, such as the Market on Cornhill, two new churches, St Edmund's and St John's, and above all, between 1840 and 1843, Cottingham's restoration of St Mary's, where many 'groats' and 'pennies' were found in 1842-3 under the flooring of the chancel aisles (Evelyn-White, 1905, 247), which must be the find of 'Christmas 1842' (Haigh, 1844). In the earliest volumes of *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.* (I, 151; II, 95) it is recorded that twelve were exhibited and presented to the Society as early as 1840, all, it would appear, from St Mary's, and over the next few years, but none later than 1853, at least three or four more from Bury, one from the Abbey grounds. These 15 or 16, give or take a loss or addition or two, must surely be the 15 or 16 that form the *ancien fonds* of the present Moyse's Hall collection. The only six obvious and well provenanced additions have been given or exhibited there very recently—since 1975. Two more have come from excavations on the Abbey precinct by the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments. Four 'groats' in Ipswich, given by Miss Nina Layard, and a 'groat' and a 'penny' in Cambridge have a Bury provenance, as by implication does most of the Golding-Caldecott collection. Many, no doubt, stem from the finds of c. 1840, but examples turn up every year or two and the original round hundred may possibly have doubled over the following 140 years. Of these at least 80 are in public collections. Finds in Bury extend to the fringes of the town, but Bury productions have a much wider distribution—not only Dunwich and Norwich, whence a second example is now known, but Exning on the Suffolk-Cambridge border and as distant as St Neots.

Those both found and produced in places other than Bury are extremely few beside these and were unsuspected until I deciphered the legends. From Ipswich there are two, one explicitly made there; from Ely five, of which one, perhaps two, give the 'mint' name. But the style of all these is distinct from that of the Bury pieces, which are numerous enough for us to form a general idea of it in all its phases. The profile 'groat' from Lavenham is unmatched by anything from Bury and might conceivably emanate from Sudbury. No other place seems

to have produced anything like the St Nicholas pieces, but a possible, though much earlier parallel from Hampshire was shown at Winchester Museum in 1967 and is here put on record (Pl. X,k). It is in high relief and well executed, showing a mitred head between a star and crescent and a shield with emblems of St Peter and St Paul and two six-pointed stars in chief. The high relief is reminiscent of some earlier leaden pieces from Northern religious houses,⁵ but it is not necessarily English.

THE MOULD

This has been in Moyses's Hall Museum for a long time; there is no record of its acquisition but it may be safely assumed to have come from Bury or its close vicinity. It is made from a slab of grey calcareous mudstone, about 20mm thick, cut from a pebble showing natural weathering at the end. It is 44mm wide and the surviving fragment preserves 48mm out of an original length of at least 60mm (Pl. VIII,a, enlarged). The break shows a conchoidal fract radiating from the point of intersection of the runnels.

It is the reverse mould of a pair and was finished as far as the engraving goes (see the positive impression, Pl. VIII,b) but may have been broken before it was ready for use, since the slight round 'mortise' in one corner and the marking for another in the other corner were hardly enough to hold it to the corresponding obverse mould. Pegging of dies is sufficient for striking under pressure, but moulds for casting are usually drilled obliquely and laced together to resist the thrust of the molten metal; on the other hand, the pair could have been pegged and then bound round the outside. No pieces are known cast from this mould, though they are known from a very similar one. In any case, the runnels which were to lead the metal into the individual matrices and radiate from one point have been roughly deepened so as to deface the matrices of the individual pieces at one point and the blow that broke the mould seems to have occurred after this defacement.

The matrices are for one 'half-groat' (diam. 22mm), two complete 'pennies' (diam. 14-15mm) and segments of two more 'pennies'. The legends, which differ slightly from 'penny' to 'penny', are given with those of actual pieces in Appendix I, under Series I,B. The larger matrix and a closely related piece are the only known 'half-groats' among the neat, inscribed series and may possibly represent the earliest phase of them all. The cross-ends are broad and triangular, as on coins before the middle of the 15th century and the lettering includes Roman Ns, which disappear from normal coinage under Henry V. On the other hand, the obverse of the related 'half-groat' hardly suggests that it is in fact as early as this and circumstantial evidence about other pieces with plain cross-ends points to a deliberate archaism towards the end of the 15th century.

FABRIC AND TYPOLOGY

Ignoring the non-Bury pieces, which seem, however, to follow Bury prototypes, and the other unusual categories (II and III in Appendix I), the body of tokens divides itself into a reasonably neat and legible inscribed series (I), the apparently transitional series (VI and VII), the uninscribed series (X) and the crude, heavy productions (IX). Of these I and X are numerous enough for generalization: they are relatively thin for cast pieces, and generally rigid enough to indicate a hardening alloy in the lead. The high Specific Gravity of lead allows one, as in the case of gold, to estimate the proportion of alloy without identifying it, and measurements taken in the Ancient Monuments Laboratory with a 'groat' and a 'penny' of Series I and a smaller-sized piece of Series X show a significant proportion of alloy, but not enough, if the second metal is tin, for it to qualify as 'pewter'. An alloy of about this density seems to be around the average for 'lead' tokens of later date, according to analyses made by

Mr B. R. Osborne with tokens from Bury, viz: between 75% and just over 90% lead, or slightly less if the alloy is with antimony rather than tin. Of two Series I pieces belonging to Mr Mernick the 'groat' (4.48g.) would indicate approximately 90% lead, the 'penny' (1.98g.) approximately 77% lead; of two small-module Series X pieces, that from the Norman Tower excavation at Bury (2.43g.) shows approximately 80% lead, one from Moyse's Hall (2.71g.), tested by Mr Osborne, slightly over 90% lead. Thus it seems that both the principal series have a similar variation in alloy and that this factor, rather than volume or condition, may affect the range of weights for otherwise comparable pieces in the British Museum: for Series I 'groats' from 3.74g. to 5.08g., with no obvious 'peak'; for 'pennies' from 1.56g. to 2.00g., with 'peaks' around 1.65g. and 1.95g.; for smaller Series X pieces from 2.18g. to 2.93g.⁶

The diameters of the Series I pieces are close to those of the denominations of coins they obviously represent, as in the late 15th century; the reverse design is identical with that of coins in the traditional 'Sterling' pattern of three pellets in each quarter, as used with two circles of legend on groats and half-groats down to 1504 and on pence, with a single circle, down to 1493-4. As on the coins, the head, or the unaccompanied mitre on the 'pence', is frontal, or nearly so. All but the earliest 'groats' show some version of the forked cross-ends that first appeared on the reverse in 1488 and continued, with more elaboration on the 'shield' reverse after 1504, but only the unique Series III piece copies this reverse and the accompanying profile. There is no need to expect these changes to be immediately reflected on the St Nicholas pieces: the old types predominated in circulation down to the 'Wolsey' coinage of 1526 and disappeared slowly. By the time of Series X, however, we may assume the single circle on groats and half-groats to be the most familiar. This series, though generally consistent within itself, is less coin-like in design and approximates less to the diameters of actual coins, yet it keeps the obsolete pattern of three pellets.

Most of the remainder can be described as slight deviations from these models in fabric and design. The reverses of the '*Congregacio Dusse*' piece (II in Appendix I), now untraced, and the 'ship' piece from Ely (VIII, 2) are original, although the second is suggestive of an Angel or of a common type of Nuremberg jetton. Series IX, however, though equally coin-like in type may be much broader and thicker in fabric, with a 'do it yourself' quality; some may be local productions to save the trouble of sending to Bury for them. Dr G. C. Brooke (1922, 139-40) claimed that impressions or moulds of a St Nicholas token had been used on the inscribed circle of a bell in the church of Shelley, Suffolk, much as impressions of genuine groats were sometimes used.⁷ I am grateful to Mr David Sherlock for kindly examining the bell. The four impressions are all of the reverse, and therefore with no indication of St Nicholas. They are groat-like, with unforked cross-ends, illiterate as any Series IX piece, not very circular but of large size (30-33mm) (Pl. XI, b). There is no reason to think of them as other than parts of bell-founders' moulds, copying *real* groats, but they may give an indication of the origin of some of the larger and cruder Series IX pieces, in a bell-foundry.

SYMBOLISM AND LEGENDS

The fidelity to coin-types leaves little room for special attributes of St Nicholas beyond the mitred head or bust, or single mitre, variously ornamented, and one or two croziers. In a sense the three 'Sterling' pellets could be seen as an attribute of the Saint—three balls or bezants—and the ship of his tutelage of sailors. More significant is the insistence on the episcopal insignia and the title of *Episcopus*, as though St Nicholas were the only bishop-saint. This, perhaps, is the strongest evidence for associating the pieces with the Boy Bishop; he was St Nicholas's bishop, and he was a 'bishop' (not an abbot, dean, or any other kind of

president), whose duty was to move about his 'diocese' and not to preside in one place. Once elected he was a 'bishop', not by consecration, but by virtue of his pontificals alone. *Mitra fecit episcopum*.

The obverse legend generally invokes the prayers of St Nicholas, as sometimes also does the reverse. This would be unusual on coins, where the image of a saint is normally simply labelled as such, and it strengthens the amuletic aspect of the pieces. The reverse legends, as often on larger late-medieval coins, include quotations from Scripture, from at least two liturgical hymns in the metre of a 'prose' or sequence, and from the *Golden Legend*. The exact relevance of all these citations to St Nicholas, the Childermas or the Christmas liturgy is not yet clear. The first is from the Apocalypse: (*et dixit qui sedebat in throno*) '*Ecce nova facio omnia*'—'Behold, I make all things new'.⁸ The second, and most prevalent, combined with the others and used on all Series I 'pennies' comes from an antiphon sung at a visit to Bury Abbey by Henry VI,⁹ honouring St Edmund but applicable also to the living king: '*Ave rex gentis Anglorum, miles Regis angelorum*'—'Hail, king of the English (or Anglian) people, soldier (or knight) of the King of angels'. This text is the only internal indication that the Series I pieces originate in Bury, but it does not concern St Nicholas. The third is from an untraced sequence: '*Sospitati dedit egros*'—'He gave the sick unto security' (One might have expected '*Sospitatem dedit egris*'). It is relevant to almsgiving, including that of St Nicholas, but does not appear in any 'prose' in his honour in the Sarum use or ascribed to Adam of St Victor. The last, as even Blomefield knew, is from the *Golden Legend*, in the context of an apparition of St Nicholas himself to sailors in distress: '*Vos vocastis me: ecce adsum*'—'You have called me: behold, here am I'.¹⁰

Ely, which had never had a mint, and Ipswich, which had long ceased to have one, are named in their proper place, in the inner circle, as a *civitas* and a *villa* respectively. So is *Villa Buri*, on a specimen of Series VI, whether or not, as has been suggested, the Abbot was making a gesture to assert the mint-rights that he had enjoyed until the 14th century. On Series VII it is St Nicholas 'de Bury', or 'Buriu', and the reference is to a cult, chapel or image, rather than to the mint.

CHRONOLOGY AND PURPOSE

It is useful to apply the tests of 'pure' archaeology or 'pure' numismatics to the entire 'coinage' before venturing into its historical setting. The exact order of the Series I pieces, as given in Appendix I, is open to revision (some of I,B may precede I,A), but it is hard to escape the general sequence of the several series taken together, viz: that Series X is the last, and derives, *via* VI and VII from Series I, and that it is virtually impossible to reverse the order. In Series I, apart from the pennies, only the 'groats' of I,A and the 'half-groats' of I,B have the cross-ends plain, not forked in the fashion introduced on Henry VII's second issue. Only these, therefore, could possibly be earlier than 1488. The lettering may in some cases be old-fashioned, but the compactness of the later part of the series gives no ground for extending it too far backwards. Fortunately a I,A 'groat' from St Neots is one of the two excavated examples with plentiful stratigraphic associations. These include a latten jetton from early in the 15th century, but this is worn and chipped while the vulnerable lead piece is in good condition and the overwhelming bulk of the pottery, in Mr J. G. Hurst's view, is late 15th-century or even later. The associations of the I,C 'groat' from the 'Maypole' at Norwich were of comparable date. On balance, therefore, none of Series I, and *a fortiori* none of the other series, is likely to be before the last quarter of the 15th century.

'Groats' of Series I,C and 'pennies' of Group I,F have pure Lombardic lettering, still compatible with a date around 1500, but I,D, with its 'mixed' letter (experimented with at

the beginning of the 'Wolsey' coinage in 1526), or even near-Roman letter, would be happier in the 1520s or 1530s. A terminus for them all at the Dissolution in 1539 is likely from the legends referring to the cult of St Edmund, but those that merely say 'Nicolaus' could well be later, still more so the anepigraphic Series X. They may be intentionally 'safe'; any 'style' they have is vestigial.

There was in Bury a confraternity of twelve that claimed great antiquity, called *Congregacio Duodena*, hence 'Douze', or 'Dusse'. It worshipped in St Mary's, but, like everything in Bury, was ultimately dependent on the Abbey, and was devoted to St Nicholas. It may have had an 'outer' (clerks') Guild of St Nicholas attached to it, the actual 'twelve' probably being an elite of rich burgesses.¹¹ Its precise relationship to the quire school, which had a monopoly of teaching in the town, and to the Hospital of St Nicholas outside the East Gate is hard now to define, but was close. The names of both the 'Dusse' and the St Nicholas Guild appear on the lost Series II piece, which may perhaps have been the archetype of them all. These bodies in connection with the quire school would certainly have had a part in organizing the local Boy Bishop, who existed at least as far back as 1418,¹² and we can be sure that the Abbey would see that there was only one of him. The situation is thus entirely consistent with the idea that the Boy Bishop used the pieces. He received alms, as well as giving them and playing a part not unlike that of the guizer 'St Nicholas' in the Netherlands today—in fact, Santa Claus without a white beard. But it is hard to believe that if, in fact, he distributed the pieces as largesse they were mere toy money, without value. Children and bedesfolk are harder-headed than that! They fit rather among the *méreaux*, 'tickets' or immediately redeemable tokens, usually of lead, that were fairly familiar in religious institutions for alms or payments that had to be made in church. It is likely enough, especially in view of their close resemblance to coins, that they were redeemable for sweetmeats and the like by the Guild, the Abbey almonry, or perhaps by any tradesman charitable enough to enter into the scheme. At what value one might only guess—hardly at a 'groat' for a groat's worth; more likely in terms of farthings, like the copper *moneta pauperum* of Scotland and Ireland (the Irish farthings bear a mitred head). A 'hand-out' so managed is understandable in other urban situations: Dunwich, Ely, Ipswich, even the *nouveau-riche* and ambitious Lavenham, and possibly St Neots. With or without a major religious house, but with the backing of a charitable lay guild, such practices would suit the late medieval atmosphere of religious emulation, and they would be missed when the charity was suppressed.

The amuletic aspect of the tokens has already been mentioned in the context of Norwich and Dunwich, where the negative evidence is probably enough to say they were *not* issued. But there is the wider possibility that, if accepted for exchange, they might have remained in use outside the Christmas season. The numbers found in Bury, which also produced other lead pieces with Es, crossed arrows and devices more germane to the Abbey (Golding, 1868; specimens in Moyses's Hall) might support this, and it is around the turn of the 16th century that we first hear of English leaden pieces in circulation, which were to trouble the authorities for a hundred years to come,¹³ though few that are known today can be placed so squarely in this period. Certainly in Bury the move from well known *méreaux* to general tokens would have been easy.

The Douze guild was so dependent on the Abbey that it seems to have collapsed before the general suppression of chantries. In 1548 there was no school within the town.¹⁴ If Series I, with its acknowledgement of St Edmund can be spread, as is likely, over the period from the 1470s or '80s to the Dissolution, the transitional series would go well in the following decade, with the disoriented townsmen doing their best for the children. This might force Series X into the time of Queen Mary; she is known to have had a weak spot for the Boy Bishop, who is even referred to as 'Queen Mary's Child', and she doubtless had a harmless cause for

popularity thereby. In fact much of the documentation of the practice dates from her reign, including a sermon preached by the 'Bishop' at Gloucester, a section in a Sarum use printed at Rouen (not entirely for the English market) and accounts from Witchingham, Norfolk (Evelyn-White, 1905, 44, 232, 243, 249). I know of no archaeological evidence that contradicts this late date for Series X. Some reformers had attacked the practice in the 1540s, but without complete success; it still prevailed at Winchester College in 1552, and such a light cause would bend rather than break before enactments. However, by 1589 it was remembered almost as a joke and almost with affection (Evelyn-White, 1905, 39).¹⁵ I approach the subject archaeologically, but perhaps Mr Tebbutt (1960, 104-5; 1966, 33, 53) was right in publishing his piece from St Neots in *Folklore*. In approaching it archaeologically I must reiterate that this last section is based upon a hypothesis.

APPENDICES

Appendix I is an enlarged classification under eleven 'Series', with a concordance referring the pieces, where mentioned by them, to the lists of Haigh, 1844 (*H*), Golding, 1868 (*G*) and Caldecott, 1936 (*C*). Representative examples are cited from the British Museum (B.M., whether ex-Caldecott (*C*), or not), Ely Museum, Ipswich Museum (I.M.), Moyses's Hall Museum, Bury St Edmunds (M.H.), Norwich Castle Museum (N.C.M.) and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (Fitz.). 'Seaby' = B. A. Seaby's, *Coin & Medal Bulletin*; 'i.m.' = initial mark.

Appendix II gives as detailed as possible a list of known find-spots.

APPENDIX I: CLASSIFICATION

I. NEAT, INSCRIBED BURY SERIES

Groats and half-groats, all with mitred bust, except type C (mitred head), inclined right, and with two circles of legend on reverse. Classification by outer *reverse* legend.

A. '*Ecce nova facio omnia*'; good, well-spaced Lombardic.

24-25mm. S on crozier l., N on crozier r.; i.m. Knopped I (?), or Cross, double annulet stops, obv. only. Cross-ends plain.

SANCTE : NICHOLAE : ORA : PRO NO — ECCE / NOVA / FACIO / OMNIA // AVE / REX / GEN / TIS

Variants: obv. ends NOBIS, with no stops.

H, 1; *G*, 4; *C*, 2. Examples: B.M., 2, ex-*C* (Pl. IX,a, larger); Fitz. from St Neots (Pl. IX,b).

B. '*Sancte Nicholae ora pro nobis*'; rougher, well-spaced Lombardic, Roman N.

1. 22mm. (half-groat). S l., N r.; colon i.m. and stops, Lombardic N. on obv. Cross-ends plain.

ORA PRO NO (BIS?): NICHOL(AE). E — :SANC:/TENI:/:CHOL/AE OR//APR/ONO/BIS/:III.

Examples: the mould in M.H. (rev. only) (Pl. VIII); B.M., ex-Parkes-Weber (Pl. IX,1).

2. 27mm, thick fabric. S on crozier l., N r.; 4-pellet i.m., colon stops; Lombardic E in EPI and on rev. reversed. Cross-ends tulip-shaped. On this and the following, Os sometimes lozenge-shaped.

∴:ORA : PRO : NOBIS B : ATE NICHOLAE : EPI — : SANC / T : NIC / HOLA / E : ORA // : PRO / : NO / : BIS / : AGL (or :AGG)

H, 7; *G*, 7; *C*, —. Examples: Fitz., from Bury (Pl. IX,c); Seaby, 1958, no. 3899.

3. 27mm. Nimbed bust, nothing in field; 4-pellet i.m. and stops on obv. and before NOBIS (?), otherwise colons. Cross-ends tulip-shaped.
 ∴ SOSPI ∴ TATI ∴ DEDIT ∴ EGROS — : SANC / TE NI / CHO ∴ :
 LAE ∴ : ORA / PRO / ∴ : NO ∴ : BIS
 Example: M.H. (Pl. IX,d).
- C. '*Vos vocastis me, Ecce ad(sum)*'; heavier, closely-spaced Lombardic.
 25mm. S l., N r.; 4-pellet i.m., colon or single stops, both sides. Cross-ends forked (U-shaped).
 ∴ PIE : NICHOLAE : ORA.PRO.NOB' — ∴ VOS.VO / CASTI / S : ME'E /
 CCE : AD. // AVE. / REX. / GEN / TIS:
 Variants: .PRO : NOB', : PRO : NOB', ME : ECCE :, no stops in AVE and REX.
 G, 4; C, 1. Examples: N.C.M., Norwich, 'Maypole' excavation; I.M., ex-Layard (Bury); B.M., 2, ex-C. and Baldwin, 1898 (Pl. IX,e).
- D. '*Ave Rex gentis Anglorum, miles Regis angelorum*'; 'mixed' lettering, with Roman H and N, usually Roman E and lozenge-shaped O. All have 4-pellet i.m., colon stops and cross-ends forked.
1. 24mm. Heavy lettering, close to that of type C. S, reversed, on crozier l., knopped N on crozier r.
 ∴ SANCTE : NICHOLAE : ORA : PRO : NO — : AVERE : / XCNTIS / :
 ANGLO : / R + MILE : // REGES / ANGE / LOR'I / O ECCE
 G, 5; C, 4. Example: B.M., ex-Franks (Pl. IX,f).
2. 25mm. Finer lettering; S, reversed, on crozier l., knopped N, without crozier, r.
 ∴ SANCTVS : NICHOLAUS : ORA PRO NOBIS — : AVEREX / GENTIS /
 ANGLORVM.(?) // MILES / REGE / SANG / LORVM
 G, 6; C, 3. Example: B.M., ex-C (Pl. IX,g).
3. 28mm. Lettering of uniform thickness; bust with high mitre, almost full face; N l., S, reversed, on crozier r.
 ∴ SANCTVS NICHOLAVS ORA : PRO : NOBIS — : AVERX : / : GENTIS
 A / NGLORV : / MINGES // REGES : / : O NICH : / : OLAE : / : EPISCO
 G, -; C, 5. Examples: B.M., ex-C. (Pl. IX,h); I.M., ex-Layard (Bury).

Pennies, all with mitre, usually inclined right but often frontal and rarely inclined left. Classification by the single reverse legend and the lettering. All are between 14mm and 16mm in diameter.

- E. '*Sancte Nicholae*'; rough, well-spaced Lombardic with Roman H and N. Shares the mould in M.H. with the half-groat B, l. Rare.
 : ORA PRO NOB' BEATE NI (?) — SAN/CTE:/NIC:/HOL
 Variants: rev. only, on mould: :SAN/CTEN/ICHO/LAE, :SAN/CTE/NICH/
 OLAE
 Examples: apart from the mould, one in B.M. (Pl. IX,i).
- F. '*Ave rex gentis*'; generally good lettering, allied to type C groats: E, which may be reversed, and H Lombardic; N often Roman. Normally 4-pellet i.m. and colon stops. Common.
 ∴ SANCTVS : NICHOLAVS — AVE/REX/GEN/TIS : (Pl. IX,j).
 Variants: annulet i.m., no colon on rev.; no colon on either side; cross i.m. and annulet stop on obv. and before AVE. Obv. legend may begin at '8 or 10 o'clock'.
 H, 3, 4, 5; G, (14); C, 12. Examples: numerous, including those from Bury Vineyard and Recreation Ground (M.H.) and Exning (Fitz.).

- G. 'Ave rex gentis'; 'mixed' lettering, allied to type D groats: H, N and sometimes E Roman, but E may be reversed Lombardic and O lozenge-shaped. Normally 4-pellet i.m. and colon stops. Common.

∴:SANCTVS:NICHOLAVS OA (for *ora*) — :AVE/:REX/:GEN/:TIS: (Pl. IX,k).

Variants: NICOLA (without OA); no obv. colon (E in AVE reversed); no colon before, or after AVE; colon after GEN; no initial colon in quarters (E in REX reversed). (Pl. IX,m).

H, 6; G, 14; C, 14. Examples: numerous, including that from Bury Abbey (Bradfield Hall). Of types F and G together there are 10 in M.H. and 20 in B.M., half of them ex-C.

- H. 'Ave rex gentis'; all Es reversed Lombardic; H and N Lombardic; mitre inclined left.

∴:ORA:PRO NOBIS SNT NCH — :AVE/:REX/GEN/:TIS:

C, 13. Example: B.M., ex-C (Pl. IX,n).

- J. 'Ave rex gentis'; lettering closest to type B or A groats; E, H, N, X Lombardic.

.INTERCEDAT.PRO.NO — AVE/REX/GEN/TIS.

H, 2; G, 16 (and 15, misread); C, 15. Examples: B.M., ex-C (Pl. IX,o).

II. SPECIAL BURY SERIES FOR DOUZE GUILD

Groat size. Mitred bust; rev. has T (for *translatio*?) between S and N in place of normal groat type. Untraced: lettering unrecorded.

SIGNVM.GILDE.SCI.NICHO. — CONGREGACIO.DVSSE.

G, 11.

III. PROFILE SERIES: ORIGIN UNCERTAIN

Groat, inspired by the 'profile' groats of Henry VII; with single circle of legend round shield on reverse.

24mm, neat fabric. Mitred bust in profile to l., nothing in field; shield, quarterly: 1, letter S; 2 and 3, mitre; 4, letter N. Cross-ends forked with cusps. Good Lombardic letter with slight admixture (Roman H); 6-pellet i.m.; rev. legend reads outwards.

∴: ORA PRO NOBIS PIE NICHOLAE — SAN/CTE/NICH/OLAE

Example: B.M. from Lavenham churchyard (Archibald, 1967) (Pl. X,a).

IV. NEAT, INSCRIBED ELY SERIES

Groat, apparently related to series I,B; two circles of legend on reverse.

28mm, thickish fabric. Mitred bust, full-face or slightly l., N l., V r.; cross i.m., colon stops, rather heavy Lombardic letter.

+ORA:PRO:NOBIS:BEAT:NICOLAE — ORAPR/ONOBIS/SANCTE/NICOLA //CIVT/ASEL/IENC/ISII (for *Civitas Eliensis*)

Example: Fitz. (Pl. X,b).

V. FAIRLY NEAT, INSCRIBED IPSWICH SERIES

Groats, bearing head with tall mitre; two circles of legend on reverse.

1. 27mm, thick fabric. Head inclined l., W (?) l., h, or N, r.; cross-ends forked (U-shaped). Large, more or less Lombardic lettering.

.S-A NICOLAIVS — O(RA)/PRO/NOB/ISBA?//VILL/AIPP/ESVI/CH (or ..IPP/SWI/CH (?), for *Villa Ippeswich*). Inner begins at 'six o'clock'.

Example: I.M., from Ropewalk, Ipswich (Pl. X,c).

2. 24mm. Mitred bust full-face, crozier r., N (?) l. Almost illegible: there seem to be pellets for the obv. and outer rev. legends; the inner seems to end ..ICH.
Example: I.M., from Kingsgate Drive, Ipswich (Pl. X,d).

VI. BURY SERIES WITH SIMPLIFIED LEGENDS

Comprising *groats* and *pennies*: apart from Nos. 1 and 6, the obv. type is a mitre, but the groats (Nos. 1, 2 and 3) preserve the layout of the double reverse legend and the lettering is clear and recognizably Lombardic.

1. 24mm. Mitred bust with pellets on amice, inclined r.
Pellets or strokes for obv. and outer rev. legends; inner, apparently, ∴ C ∴ /NIC (?)/III ID/IR∴.
Example: M.H., from Rougham Hill, Bury (Pl. X,e).
2. 24mm. Mitre inclined r.; cross i.m.
+ N.I.C.O.L.A.V.S, outer rev. unclear (possibly ECCE/NOVA/. . .); inner, VI/LLA/BV/RI (*Villa Buri*, not AVE/REX . . ., as C. has it).
G, 1; C, 8. Example: B.M., ex-C (Pl. X,f).
3. 24mm. Mitre with pellets, inclined r.
Pellets for obv. and outer rev. legends; inner, NI/CO/LA/VS
Recorded by Gardner (1754, 112) from Dunwich.
4. 17mm. Mitre and crozier in bend. Obv. legend, SN:SN:SN:SN, but only the beginning is clear; scrolls for rev. legends (cf. X,A,2).
C, 19. Example: B.M., ex-C.
5. 15mm. Mitre with or without crozier in bend. A:V:E:A:V:E, rev. :A:/:V:/:E:/:M:
G, 18; C, 17. Examples: B.M., ex-C (Pl. X,l).
6. 14–15mm. Obv. reversed Roman N, pellet above and below, 3 pellets l. and r.
Strokes for legends on both sides (Pl. X,m).
G, 17; C, 18. Examples: B.M.; Fitz.; M.H., probably from Bury.

VII. BURY SERIES WITH BLACK-LETTER LEGENDS

1. 25mm. Mitred head inclined r., crozier l. Despite 'groat' size, the rev. has a single circle and 'cable' strokes for legend. Obv. legend in rough Gothic minuscule, *ave sace* (branch as stop) *nicholae s de bury*.
G, 2; C, 6. Example: one in B.M., clearly that cited by G and C (Pl. X,g).
2. 19mm. Mitre facing. Strokes for obv. legend. Rev. legend in slightly better minuscule, *san*, or *sanct/nico/lae/burii*.
Examples: B.M., 2, one ex-C. but not recorded by him (Pl. X,i). Variant: rougher work, 18mm, rev. legend mostly strokes but may include *bv̄-ri* (?), M.H., from Rougham Hill, Bury.

VIII. SPECIMENS FROM ELY WITH GARBLED LEGENDS

These have a rough, linear execution, technically like Series X. No. 2 may not be a local product; it is suggested that with ship and key, it might be more proper to Ipswich (cf. p. 99).

1. 24mm, thickish fabric. No obv. legend-circle; mitred bust inclined l.; crozier l., Lombardic E r., or plain staff, rather than crozier, r. Single circle on rev., with or without pellets in quarters; rev. legend in semblance of Gothic minuscule (cf. Series VIII): *Ely/mu/Sce/nic* (?) or *:aut/Nic/:aue/:ieih* (?).
Examples: Ely Mus. (Pl. X,h); Fitz., ex-J. Isaacs, from Ely, near close (*A.R.S.F.*, 1973, Pl. VIII).

2. 34mm. Rude mitred bust facing, crozier l., key r. Quasi-legend in well-spaced Lombardics, P (reversed) O D E I C O . . . T I I . . Rev: no legend-circle; ship much as on Angels, but without shield; man in fore-castle and ladder to mast-top. cf. Series IX.

Example shown at Fitz., from Ely Cathedral close (Pl. XI,a).

IX. CRUDE, GARBLED IMITATIONS OF GROATS OF SERIES I OR VI

Very heavy and thick, apparently of lead with little or no alloy. All but Nos. 8 and 9 have a semblance of the double reverse legend and cross-ends usually forked. Were it not for the mitred obverse, or, in the case of the uniface No. 3, traces of the appropriate legend (the others being unintelligible), they would be classed with the imitation groats cast on bells and be considered bell-founders' sports (cf. p. 90). *Pace* Caldecott, they are not numerous.

1. 35mm. Head in conical mitre, with big 'button' eyes, inclined l.; S on crozier l., N above, both reversed.
Obv. and outer legend mainly strokes, inner IICN/-IO/.
(M.H.) (Pl. XI,c: obv. only)
2. 35mm. Similar, chevrons on mitre, no S or N.
Obv. SA..CNIOL? — rev. unclear. (B.M. ex-C.)
3. 30mm. Uniface (no obv.). S (reversed) TO-/ANSA/NIC-/NAVIV//AVE/REX/
GEN/TIS (C,7, reading SACNTVS NICOLAVS) (B.M. ex-C.)
4. 30mm. Facing head in conical mitre, N over X l., pellet over, 3 pellets r. Quasi-
lettering, inner rev. as NA/AIN/VICO/VINO.
Illustrated by C. before C,7. (B.M. ex-C.) (Pl. XI,d).
5. 25mm. Similar, no X; quasi-lettering. (B.M. ex-C.)
6. 27mm. Tub-like mitre in profile, infulae to l. and r., crozier l. 'Legends': obv.
zig-zags; rev. outer, strokes; inner, quasi-letters. (Seaby, 1958, no. 3901).
7. 26-27mm. Thickly drawn mitre in profile to r., infulae reaching edge. Double
rev. circle, but both rings blank or illegible, inner perhaps has pellets.
(M.H.; shown at N.C.M.)
8. 27mm. Obv. as No. 7. No rev. inner circle but pellets for legends on both sides;
cf. Series VI. (B.M. ex-C.)
9. 30mm. Obv. cross and 4 crude ovals containing pellets, in place of mitre. No rev.
inner circle. Rough scrolls for 'legends'. (B.M.; shown at N.C.M.)

X. UNINSCRIBED BURY SERIES

These come in 'large' and 'small' sizes, but the large, though of 'groat' size, do not have the double-circle reverse, and the small, though of 'half-groat' size (except A,2), may be intended as 'pennies'. Consistent, fairly thin and neat fabric.

A. *Exceptional.*

1. 29mm. Finely drawn crocketed mitre in profile to r.; infulae do not reach inner
ring. Rev. cross within inner ring and crowns, with pellets over, in each quarter
(not the arms of Bury). Continuous 'scroll' in border on both sides.
C, 11. Example: B.M. ex-C. Illustrated by G. and C.
2. 15-16mm. The 'penny' of A,1 (?). Mitre in profile to l. bold scrolls on rev.
Example: B.M. (Pl. X,j)

B and C. *Normal.*

B is the large size (25-28mm), C the small (18-20mm). They all have an outlined bulbous mitre, usually with a pellet in the centre, in near-profile to the r. or l. on B

and always to the l. on C., and, unless otherwise indicated, a crozier to the same side with its head or crook turned in the same direction; the infulae extend in the other direction. The classification is by the treatment of the border-ornaments, in place of legends, in which B and C more or less correspond. These may be: (a) oblique ('cable' or 'wreath') strokes; (b) 'scrolls'—wavy lines, singly, in pairs or joined together; (c) zig-zags; (d) rows of arcs. On the rev. they are always divided by the arms of the cross and always some form of scroll, one in each quarter on C, usually two on B (only exceptions are noted); on the obv. they may be continuous or interrupted by pairs of strokes at the compass-points, forming the ends of a cross, or by 4 pellets. Other variants may be found, but the tale of examples is larger than any other series but I.

- B, 1. 26mm. Mitre and crozier r., crook sometimes to l.; oblique strokes, 2 scrolls in rev. quarters. C, 10. Example: B.M. ex-C. (Pl. XI,e).
 2. 26–28mm. Mitre and crozier as before; 6 or 7 scrolls, 2 scrolls or joined scrolls in rev. quarters. G, 10; C, 9. Examples: B.M. (Pl. XI,f).
 3. 28mm. Mitre and crozier l.; continuous zig-zag, single scrolls in rev. quarters. Example: I.M. ex-Layard (Bury) (Pl. XI,g).
 4. 25mm. Mitre and crozier l.; continuous arcs, single scrolls in rev. quarters. Example: Salisbury Museum from Suffolk. (Pl. XI,l).
 5. 25–27mm. Mitre and crozier l.; interrupted arcs, 2 scrolls in quarters. Examples: B.M. ex-C.; M.H.
 6. 25mm. Mitre l., crozier r.; chevrons and scrolls on obv. Example: B.M. (Pl. XI,k)
- C, 1. 20mm. Mitre and crozier l., continuous oblique strokes. Example: M.H. (Pl. XI,i)
 2. 18–20mm. As previous but interrupted scrolls, sometimes with pellets. C, 20. Examples: Fitz.; M.H. (recent find, N. outskirts of Bury); D.o.E. (recent find, Norman Tower, Bury) (Pl. XI,m); B.M. (Pl. XI,n).
 3. 18–19mm. As previous but interrupted zig-zags. Example: B.M. (Pl. XI,j)
 H, 10; G, 20; Seaby, 1958, no. 3902.

XI. UNINSCRIBED ELY SERIES

Similar to, but distinct from, Series X. The only provenance is Ely.

1. 27mm. Mitre in profile, thickly drawn, pellet in centre; border of alternate strokes and pellets. Rev. as Series X (cross with three pellets in each quarter), border of radial strokes.
 Example: Ely Mus., found 1977 (Pl. XI,h).

APPENDIX II: FINDS

BURY St EDMUNDS. The more precisely located find-spots are:

1. St Mary's church (TL/856640); 1840, nave (?), a dozen or more, mostly Series I 'pence', the majority in M.H.; 1842–3, quire-aisles, Series I 'pence' and 'groats'.
2. Abbey precinct (TL/857642); late 1840s, one; 1962, site of Bradfield Hall (Infirmarer's lodging), Series I 'penny' (Biddle; 1964); 1977, Abbey vineyard, in rubbish-pit, Series I 'penny', in M.H. Both the last near R. Lark.
3. Abbey gatehouse (Norman Tower) (TL/856641); 1973, Series X small-size. (Drewett, *et al.*, 1976, 252, Fig. 74b.)
4. Recreation Ground (TL/844656); 1975, Series I 'penny', in M.H.

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5. No. 7, Gloucester Road, near road to Fornham (TL/848662), 1975, Series X small-size.
6. Rougham Hill (TL/869633); 1977, Series VI, 1; VII, 2.

DUNWICH, Suffolk, or 'hereabouts' (TM/4870 approx.).

Mid 18th-century, Series I 'groat' (broken), Series I 'penny', Series VI 'groat'. The first is group, I.C. (Gardner, 1754, 112 and fig.).

ELY, Cambs.

Where precise location is recorded it is in or near the Cathedral Close (TL/541802 approx.). 19th century, Series IV 'groat', in Fitz.; early 1970s, three Series VIII pieces, one in Fitz., two including the 'ship' piece (VIII, 2), in Ely Mus.; 1977, Series XI, in Ely Mus.

EXNING, Suffolk, on Cambs. border (TL/620655 approx.).

1969, Series I 'penny', in Fitz.

IPSWICH, Suffolk

1948, corner of Ropewalk and Bond St. (TM/168444), Series V 'groat', in I.M.; 1965-9, garden in Kingsgate Drive (TM/178462), Series V 'groat', in I.M.

LAVENHAM, Suffolk

c. 1965, churchyard (TL/913490), Series III 'groat', in B.M. (Archibald, 1967).

NORWICH

18th century, Bracondale, near St Nicholas chapel (?) (TG/236075), Series I 'groat'¹⁶; 1966, 'Maypole', No. 5, Haymarket, in infilled undercroft (TG/230084), Series I 'groat', in N.C.M. (Wilson and Hurst, 1967). Both are group I,C.

St NEOTS, Hunts. (administratively Cambs.)

1958, ditch or pit east of dorter-range of Priory (? filled at the dissolution) (TL/182263). Series I 'groat' (group I,A), in Fitz. (Tebbutt, 1960, 104-5; 1966, 33, 53).

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NOTES

¹ Haigh cited Rigollot, 1837, from which a selection was published in Wright, 1845, 165, and much more was gathered in Demailly, 1908. Generally the interest in jettons and allied pieces was at its highest in the mid-19th century, including a comparable series from Paris published by Forgeais and, later in the century, some from Théroutanne. I know of no recent collection.

² Evelyn-White, 1905, cites, directly or indirectly, instances from Norfolk, at Elsing, North Elmham, Norwich, Witchingham, etc. and from Hadleigh, Suffolk.

- ³ Blomefield died in 1752 and his work was completed by others. The find may be after his death and the engraving only appears in the second edition (1805-10) of his *Essay towards a topographical history of the county of Norfolk*.
- ⁴ See note 3.
- ⁵ For example, the series from Rievaulx Abbey, Yorks., of 13th- or early 14th-century style, one with WELB (Welbeck?) in bold Lombardic letter.
- ⁶ I am grateful to Mr Barry Knight of the Ancient Monuments Laboratory for calculating the density of these four pieces, and to Mr B. R. Osborne of the Pharmacy, Clare, for kindly putting his calculation of the density of the 44 lead pieces in Moyses's Hall, including five of St Nicholas, at my disposal.
- ⁷ Dr Brooke notes, at least, that the bell in question, if properly ascribed to Roger Reve (active in the 1530s) was still representing the obsolete type of groat with two circles of legend.
- ⁸ *Revelations*, ch. xxi, v. 5.
- ⁹ Craven Ord, 1806, 65-71, gives an account of the king's visit in 1433, extending over the Christmas festivities, but with no mention of St Nicholas or anything pertaining to him. Golding was aware of this document. See also King, 1977, 387-91, giving the text and (?) origin of the antiphon, with fragments of it preserved in glass-painting.
- ¹⁰ Graesse, 1846, 24: '*Mox quidem in eius similitudinem apparuit dicens, Ecce adsum: vocastis enim me*', which is not exactly as on the tokens.
- ¹¹ *V.C.H., Suffolk*, II, 310-12; Golding, 1868, 16, citing the will of John Baret, 1463, brother of the guild of the Translation (whither?; whence?) of St Nicholas, otherwise 'Dusgilde'. His tomb is prominent in the south quire-aisle and he was no doubt typical of the select twelve.
- ¹² Records of the 12d customarily given *episcopo Sancti Nicolai: H.M.C.*, 1895, 124 (1418), 125 (1429-30), 157 (1520-1); under *distribucio pauperum*, 125 (1537-8); cited at *V.C.H., Suffolk*, II, 312 (also in 1426).
- ¹³ Sources cited by Caldecott and Yates, 1908, 318-9.
- ¹⁴ *V.C.H., Suffolk*, II, 312, with efforts of Sir N. Bacon and others to refound a school in 1550.
- ¹⁵ We are getting near the nostalgic (and premature) tolerance of Bishop Corbet.
- ¹⁶ See note 3.

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