

MORE ST NICHOLAS TOKENS FROM BURY ST EDMUNDS AND VICINITY

by the late *S. E. Rigold, M.A., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S.*

The classification that I suggested for the St Nicholas or 'Boy Bishop' tokens in Volume xxxiv Part 2 (1978) of these *Proceedings* was under eleven 'series', of which six (I, II, VI, VII, IX, X) were assigned by distribution or legend to Bury, three (IV, VIII, XI) to Ely, one (V) to Ipswich and one (III) uncertain, possibly to Sudbury. Of the 'Bury' series, II is known only from one specimen, now lost, and IX is not a regular series but a class of imitations, more or less bad, of Bury productions.

Since publishing the classification I have had opportunity to test its utility and to supply any defects and modifications needed. Miss Elizabeth Owles, curator of Moyses's Hall Museum, has kindly submitted to my scrutiny two unsorted collections made in or near Bury, besides a remarkable single specimen from Whepstead, some eight miles to the south, while I have seen and examined, more cursorily, the residue (twenty-six specimens), in the hands of a London dealer, of what is reported to be a similar lifetime's gathering from Bury.

The first-named collection (hereinafter referred to as Y) has now been bequeathed to the Museum and was made over the years by Mr Harvey Frost, a local builder; it contained eight St Nicholas tokens and three other lead pieces, which can safely be assumed to be local finds by his workmen and friends. The second collection (fifteen in all, referred to as Z) has been made in recent years by Mr M. Taylor and comes mainly from the area east of the abbey and town, within a kilometre or so of TL/870645. The specimen from a garden at Whepstead (TL/834582 approx.), Series VII, 3, is illustrated (Fig. 36), and is far enough from Bury to make an additional provenance for Appendix II to my previous paper. The rest, referred to as SG, are included by courtesy of the dealer, the firm of Stanley Gibbons. Not all, particularly of Z, are very legible or complete; but the collections, individually and together, may be taken as a valid sample of the Bury token production.

All the Bury series except II are represented and the more normal pieces are easily assigned to their serial numbers and letters. The system 'works', but the relationship between the series is made clearer by the less normal pieces.

Firstly, the connection between Series I and some at least of Series VI and VII is made more rational if Series I, B 3 (Vol. xxxiv Pl. IX, d), an anomalous piece, with 'button' eyes, and also a Bury find in Moyses's Hall, is removed from that position and placed in a transitional group

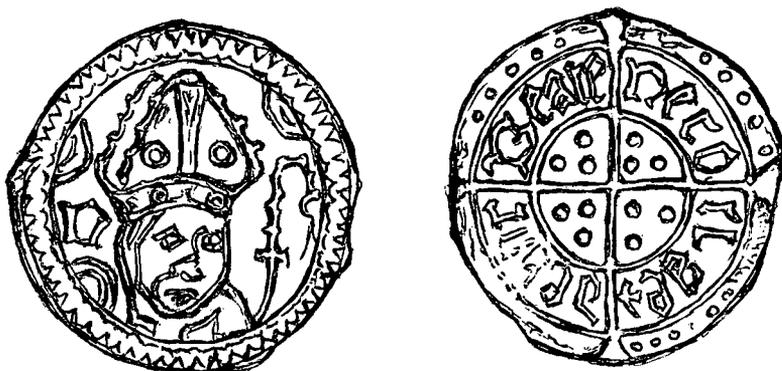


FIG. 36 — St Nicholas token 'groat' from Whepstead (actual size).

('groats' and 'half-groats' only at present), prefixed I, K, this becoming I, K 1, with the related pieces numbered in sequence.

Secondly, a surprising number, a fifth of the total sample, of rough, anepigraphic pieces of normal, small 'penny' size (quite distinct from the small size of Series X), are now shown to be Bury productions. Previous classifications have ignored them. Surely they are the 'pennies' that go with the rough imitation 'groats' of Series IX, though not as conspicuously clumsy as some of these. They will be classed as such, to be numbered IX, 11, et seq., though not described in great detail since they are obviously irregular and not further serializable.

Thirdly, the numbers found are fairly consistent with the supposition that the mould in Moyses's Hall (Vol. xxxiv, Pl. VIII) was typical, and that at least in Series I four 'pennies' were cast to every one 'groat' or 'half-groat'.

Summary of the Sample

The specimens are tabulated under their series. The first figure is the diameter in mm, then the source (X, Y or SG). New types or differences are briefly described where necessary.

Series I: normal 'groats'

A: 25, Z; 26, SG; B2 (?): 27, Z; D1: 25, Y; D3: 25, Y.

Series I: normal 'pence'

F: 15, Z (i.m. colon, no rev. terminal colon).

16, Z (i. m. annulet, rev. terminal pellet).

17, Z; 6 from SG, of which 4 have reversed E.

G: 15, Y (colon after GEN); 16, Z (2); 3 from SG.

J: 16, Y; Z, 16, SG; also 3 unclear, SG.

Series I: transitional

'Groat', 28, Z, K 2 (following K 1 = B3); unclear, but inner circle, though otherwise unlike Series VII, apparently reads -- /*Nico/lae*/ -- in black letter.

'Half-groat', 20, Y, clipped from c. 22 mm; mitred bust with 'button eyes', garbled Lombardic rev. legend without inner circle.

Series VI: 'groats'

24, Z, VI, 1, variant, pellets for legend except inner (-/- C/-), 'button' eyes; 25, SG, VI, 2, variant, mitre and garbled legends except VRA 9RONObIS.

Series VI: 'pence'

15, Z, VI, 5, variant (mitre and rev. -/:VE/REX/- -).

15, SG, VI, 6 (large N).

Series VII: 'half-groat'

19, Z, VII, 2; same mould as in Vol. xxxiv Pl. X, 1, but legend in fair and clear black letter legible as S (on side) *a/Nico/: clae/beri*.

Series VII: 'groat'

24, D: Stevens, from Whepstead (Fig. 36): VII, 3, mitred bust inclined r., N1, crozier r., arcs in corners, serrations for obv. and outer legends, inner reads *Beate/Neco/clae + / de bu (?) r* in black letter.

Series IX: 'groats'

29, SG, coarse copy of Series I A.

25, SG, mitre.

Series IX: 'pence'

3 from Y, 1 from Z and 6 from SG, all between 17 and 15 mm and with a rough mitre and strokes for legend unless otherwise indicated; of these 17, Y is thick, with 2 lozenges under mitre, weak pellets and no legend-circles; 16, Y has the mitre reduced to a triangle, X or / for pellets and again no legend-circle on rev. as does 15, Y. The rest are as bad, and 19, Y has pellets for legends and the mitre is transformed to a crude rosette of pellets (compare Series IX, 9; in this context it is probably admissible as a limiting case).

Series X: large

23 – 24, 4 from SG, with continuous or interrupted scrolls.

Series X: small

19, Z, interrupted scrolls.

Of the total of 50 specimens, 50 per cent are Series I, normal (10 per cent 'groats', 40 per cent 'pence'); 4 per cent Series I, transitional; 8 per cent Series VI; 4 per cent Series VII; 24 per cent Series IX (4 per cent 'groats', 20 per cent 'pence'); 10 per cent Series X. The only significant associated piece is from a well-known series of small, thin lead tokens with a vast variety of obverse motifs but always a neat short cross and pellets, or pellets in circles, in the quarters and radial strokes for legends. This series was recorded from London by C. Roach Smith and recently by the London Museum Urban Unit in a 14th-century context. The specimen here (13, Y) has an eight-pointed star as the design and establishes a Bury provenance.

Addimenta

by David Sherlock

Since 1980 when Stuart Rigold wrote his second article on these tokens there has been a small but constant flow of new finds brought to Moyse's Hall Museum. They have come mainly from Bury St Edmunds and are mostly too worn or damaged to be identifiable. The following ten identified specimens are here published to bring this article up to date. More will doubtless continue to be found by metal detecting, excavation or chance but they are unlikely to alter substantially Mr Rigold's classification of the series.

The ten tokens comprise six from Horsecroft Hall Farm, Horringer (1 – 6; donors N. Marsh and Mrs W. Simpson), two from unknown sites in Bury St Edmunds (7 – 8; lender K. Millard), one from 6 – 7 Eastgate Street (9; donor Mr McCaffrey) and one outlyer from Court Knoll, Nayland-with-Wissington (10; donor J. Hayward).

1 – 3. Penny size, 18mm. Obv.: crozier and mitre; garbled legends? Rev.: long cross with three pellets in angles; wavy line in place of legend. Series X, C, 2 (cf. Vol. xxxiv, Pl. XI, m).

4 – 5. Penny size, 15mm. Obv.: mitred crown; legend .INTERCEDAT.PRO.NO. on one and on the other .SANCTVS.NICHOLAVS. Rev.: on both long cross and three pellets in angles; legend AVE REX GENTIS. Series I, J (Vol. xxxiv, Pl. IX, j).

6. Groat size, 23mm. Obv.: mitred bust to right with crozier, Lombardic N, no legend. Similar to Whepstead example (Fig. 36). Rev.: long cross with pellets, legend on inner ring only: AVE NICOLAE. Series VI, new type.
7. Penny size, 17mm. Crude simplified legends. Obv.: mitre, NICHOLAVS? Rev.: AVEAVE? Series VI, new type.
8. Penny size, 15mm. Similar to no. 4. Obv.: mitred crown, .SANCTVS NICHOLAVS? Rev.: long cross with pellets and small saltire in centre, legend AVE REX GENTIS. Series I, G, variant.
9. Groat size, 25mm. Similar to no. 6. Obv.: mitred bust to right, either side S N, legend PIE NICHOLAE ORA PRO NOB. Rev.: long cross and pellets, two rings of legends, outer VOS./.../.../EAD?, inner AVE REX GENTIS. Series I, C (cf. Vol. xxxiv, Pl. IX, e).
10. Groat size, 24mm. Obv.: Mitre (no crozier). Rev.: bifurcated cross, pellets in angles. Legends illegible. Series VI.