

# How to identify Henry III Long Cross Pennies Part I

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**One of the most common types of hammered coin found by detectorists is the voided long cross penny of Henry III, and in this two part article we will look at how to identify such finds.**

**Many millions of these coins were produced over the issue's 35 year life span from 1247. A fascination with this coin series is the extreme amount of variation that exists; if one wanted to collect an example of each class and moneyer from each mint then we are looking at over 560 coins! And if we throw in the different varieties of spelling and punctuation on the reverse then we're looking at well over 3,000 different varieties.**

**With so many different types there are clearly going to be some that are much rarer than others, and so, as well as identification guidance, this article also includes some comments on rarity.**

**ABOVE:** Carlisle castle was the location of one of the mints producing Henry III pennies from 1248 to 1250. Unlike most medieval castles, Carlisle castle has been continuously occupied since its foundation by William II in 1092. Henry III Carlisle pennies are amongst the scarcest coins from the provincial mints.

The guide below will easily allow you to identify most voided long cross pennies if they are in reasonably good condition. If you use the scheme to identify a coin then you can usually build confidence in your identification by comparing with similar coins illustrated on the [www.henry3.com](http://www.henry3.com) website.

Detectorists sometimes turn up coins that at first appear to probably be English Henry III pennies but which turn out to be continental imitations or even contemporary forgeries. If, after working through the identification guide below, you cannot be sure of the identification then you are welcome to send me images and request my help – you can reach me via the contact page on the website above.

## IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

Keep in mind that the letter 'N' can be represented on these pennies by either an "N" or an 'H'; where I refer to an 'N' it can mean either an 'N' or an 'H' unless specified otherwise.

To identify a Henry III penny work through the following questions in the order indicated:

- 1) Firstly, looking at the obverse of the coin (the side with the king's bust) see if there is a sceptre on the left hand side or not. Sceptres, which had been present on the earlier short cross pennies were re-introduced from class 4 onwards. See fig.1 for examples of coins with and without sceptres. If there is no sceptre proceed to question (2) and if there is a sceptre proceed to question 20 (which is in the second part of this article).
- 2) OK, so you have a coin with no sceptre: staying on the obverse for now, look at the legend around the coin and select which of the following is most similar:  
hENRICUS REX – go to #3  
hENRICVS REX ANG (or AN) – go to #6  
hENRICUS REX TERCI (or TERC) – go to #7  
hENRICVS REX III – go to #10
- 3) A coin with hENRICVS REX – a lucky find! This coin will also have an initial mark comprising a star over a crescent, see type 1 in fig 2. This is either a rare class 1a or an equally rare 1a/1b mule. To determine which we now need to look at the reverse of the coin and check the lettering:  
ANG/LIE/TER/CI – go to #4  
LIE/TER/CI'/LOH (or ... LON) – go to #5
- 4) This is a rare class 1a penny, which was only minted at the London mint in 1247, and although a moneyer is not named on the coin these pennies were issued under the oversight of Nicholas of St Albans. Only 30-40 of these class 1a coins are thought to still exist, so finding one of these is quite a rare event. Two types of crown exist on 1a coins - most have a

caul (headdress) above the crown-band, less commonly it is absent.

5) You have a rare class 1a/1b mule – as with the class 1a coins they are found only from the London mint; in contrast to 1a, these 1a/1b mules actually state the London mint name (LON or LOH) on the reverse of the coin. Equally as rare as class 1a.

6) Your coin says 'HENRICVS REX ANG' on the obverse, rarely the letter G is missing. This is either a class 1b coin, a class 1b/1a mule, or a class 1b/2 mule. All have type 1 initial marks. The 1b/1a mules have a reverse with 'ANG/LIE/TER/CI' and rate in rarity alongside the class 1a and 1a/1b mules. It's more likely that your find is one of the other possibilities. If it is a class 1b coin it will bear an inscription on the back similar to:

- LIE/TER/CI/LON or /LOH or /LVH – these are all class 1b coins from the London mint
- LIE/TER/CI/CAN – these are class 1b pennies from Canterbury
- LIE/TER/CI/AED – class 1b from Bury St Edmunds

The London coins are scarce rather than rare. Canterbury 1b coins are less common, and consequently more valuable, and Bury 1b coins are even more scarce and valuable. It was with class 1b that we see the beginning of the ramp-up of production of the new coinage, with minting being expanded from London to Canterbury and Bury also.

Coins with a reverse text not including LIE/TER/CI/... represent the third possibility, i.e. 1b/2 mules. These were issued by Nicole at London, and by Gilbert, Ion, Nicole and Willem at the Canterbury mint, e.g. HIC/OLE/OHL/VHD or WIL/LEM/OHC/AHT.

7) The obverse of your coin reads 'HENRICUS REX TERCI' (or TERC) – a class 2 coin which can be class 2a, 2b1 or 2b2. Determination of which is a function of the initial mark and shape of the letter 'X' (fig.3). Class 2a coins usually have initial mark ("IM") type 2 and a type 1 'X'; class 2b coins usually, but not always have initial mark type 3, and are subdivided into class 2b1 having X type 1 and 2b2 having X

type 2. These two types of initial mark are illustrated in fig.2 and the types of letter X in fig.4.

- Your coin has IM type 2 – go to #8
  - Your coin has IM type 3 – go to #9
- 8) Your coin has IM type 2 so you are thinking you may have a class 2a coin – but this is where things can get tricky as this initial mark can also occasionally turn up on later coins; the initial mark is only an indicator of probable class but is not a definitive characteristic. One also needs to look at the style of the bust and check that it is similar to those types of bust seen on class 1 coins; and one also needs to check the reverse of the coin to see if it was issued by one of the few mints issuing class 2a coins; these being London, Canterbury and Bury only.

If you think you have a class 2a coin, then you may wish to confirm the identification by comparing it to some of the examples illustrated on the [henry3.com](http://henry3.com) website.

If your suspected 2a coin has a reverse bearing a class 1b legend, e.g. LIE/TER/CI/LON or similar, then you may have found an extremely rare class 2a/1b mule of which only one specimen is known, and that one was found by a detectorist.

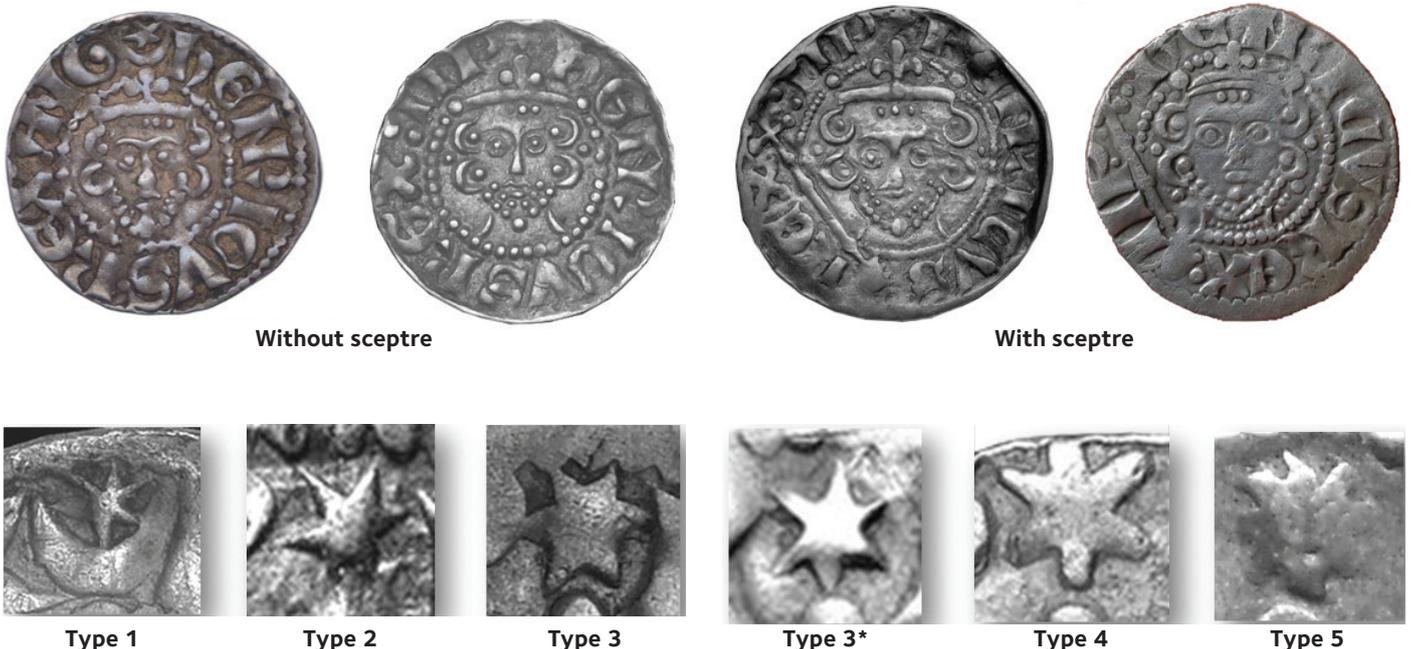
9) Your 'TERCI' coin has a type 3 initial mark. If the X is of type 1 then the penny is the earlier class 2b1, or if X type 2 then the later class 2b2. (Fig.3).

Both class 2b1 and 2b2 pennies were minted at London, Canterbury and Bury, starting in the Spring of 1248, however we now see an expansion of mints to the 'provincial mints' and class 2b1/2b2 pennies were also issued as follows:

- 2b1: issued at Lincoln, Northampton, and by Winchester,
- 2b2: issued by the mints at Gloucester, Oxford, York, and at Norwich (rare).

So, if your coin is from one of the provincial mints one can normally deduce the sub-class 2b1 or 2b2 even if the letter 'X' on the obverse is not visible through wear or a poor strike. If your coin is from London, Canterbury or Bury though it is more important to be able to see the shape of the 'X'. However, the shape of the bust can also be indicative, and again one can look at the different examples

**BELOW:** Figure 1: Coins with or without sceptres  
**BOTTOM:** Figure 2: Initial marks



on the henry3.com website in order to firm up the identification.

10) Your coin reads 'hENRICVS REX III' or similar on the obverse – a class 3 coin dating to 1248-50, and generally much more frequently encountered than all the previously described coins. It is in class 3 that we see further provincial mints start up; with all the provincial mints then closing down during the production of class 3c in (Autumn 1250), with the last coins in class 3 being produced only by the major mints at London, Canterbury and Bury. There are ten different sub-classes that can be identified and a few of them can at first be tricky to identify given the degree of transition between some of the sub-classes. Key factors in determining the sub-class include the shape of the bust, the initial mark and various details of the legend.

Does your coin have an initial mark with a star comprised of 6 rays?

- Yes – go to question #11.
- No – it has 8 rays (initial mark type 5, see fig.2) – go to section #19.
- Can't tell? – go to question 11 for now, but keep in mind the coin could have an 8 rayed mint mark and hence not be covered by section 11.

11) A class 3 coin with a 6-rayed initial mark: This is where one needs to become familiar with the different bust styles. Examine the busts in fig. 5 and decide which is most like your coin, and then read more in the relevant section below to firm up the ID.

- 3a1: Go to #12
- 3a2: Section #13
- 3ab: Section #14
- 3b: Section #15
- 3bc: Section #16

- 3c: Section #17
- 3d: Section #18

- 12) Class 3a1 – these coins have narrow busts, similar to the class 2 TERCI coins, usually of sub-class 2b style. Class 1 or 2a style busts are scarcer. There are two types of 3a penny – if the lower rays of the initial mark straddle the top of the central fleur (IM3) we have subclass 3a1, and if one of the initial mark rays points vertically down (IM 3\*) then the coin is of sub-class 3a2, see #13 below.
- 13) Most 3a2 coins have a colon between REX and III, and their busts are somewhat different to those of 3a1; the faces are small and there is usually a clear neck present. Note that for both 3a1 and 3a2, as well as class 3b, the initial mark normally has sharp points to the star rays; otherwise, if rounded or angular points, we are looking at a coin of class 3bc or later. Class 3a2 mints are Bury, Canterbury, and London, and the provincial mints of Exeter, Gloucester, Ilchester (rare), Lincoln, Norwich (rare), Oxford, Winchester and York.
- 14) Class 3ab – As with class 3a the initial mark has sharp points. The king's bust is of a width intermediate between those of 3a and 3b. Owing to the degree of transition between the two, it can sometimes be difficult to decide between 3ab and 3b coins. A variety of class 3ab has an ornate X on the obverse – this is known as class 3ab2, and is far less common than the class 3ab1 coin having a plain X type 2. In fact, class 3ab2 is the rarest of the class 3 coins, and I have seen them only from the mints at Bury, Canterbury, Gloucester, Northampton and Winchester.
- 15) Class 3b – the widest of the bust types, and the last sub-class to feature the initial marks with sharp points, though a few late 3b coins sometimes show the more rounded or angular points that characterise sub-class 3bc onwards. The bust

BELOW: Figure 3: Differing styles of the letter X **BOTTOM:** Figure 4: Differing styles of the letter R



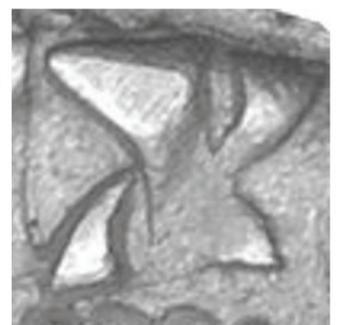
**X Type 1**  
Two curly limbs



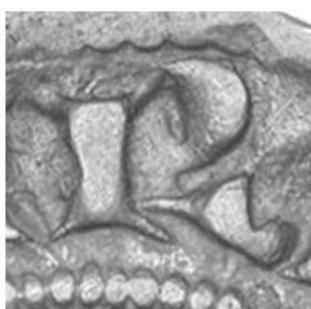
**X Type 2**  
Two straight limbs



---- **X Type 4** ----  
One relatively straight and one curly limb



---- **R Type 1** ----



**R Type 2**



**R Type**

style is the key determining factor. Issued by all mints except Durham, it is the commonest type of class 3 coin from the provincial mints.

- 16) Class 3bc – This and subsequent sub-classes are characterised by initial marks having rounded or angular points, not sharp points. The individual star ‘rays’ have a tendency to be more finger-like rather than triangular. Sub-class 3bc coins often, but not always, have the ENR of hENRICVS ligated – i.e. the letters are joined together. Other Henry III pennies normally have only the NR ligated. Class 3bc was issued by many of the mints, but no examples were seen in the vast Brussels Hoard from the mints of Exeter, Gloucester, Hereford, Newcastle or Wallingford.
- 17) Class 3c – A bust similar to 3bc, with necklines, but the bust is typically smaller and has a rounded chin (if a pointed chin then see class 3d below). The provincial mints were closed down during the period when class 3c was produced, and so class 3c coins from provincial mints are usually scarcer and command higher prices than the other classes from these mints. 3c coins can sometimes be difficult to distinguish from those of class 3a2; one needs to look carefully at the form of the initial mark. Also, the 3c bust is normally of a rougher style than that of 3a2.
- 18) Class 3d – Similar to class 3c, but with a more pointed chin. These coins were only minted in London, Canterbury and Bury. Carefully examine the obverse and reverse of your coin to see which of the sub-classes it is:

3d1 – A less coarse design compared to class 3c, with the letter R being of type 1 (see fig.4). Class 3c and 3d1 coins of the major mints can at first be difficult to distinguish – so be sure to refer to the illustrations on the [henry3.com](http://henry3.com) website for further assistance.

3d2 – Finer die-cutting, and the letter R is of type 2 having a tail with a curved up end. The reverse of these coins shows a greater number of pellets making up the inner circle than is usual – many class 3 coins typically have about eight pellets comprising the inner circle in each quadrant, but in class 3d2 we often see ten or more pellets per quadrant.

- 19) Your class 3 coin has an eight-rayed star initial mark – these coins are relatively scarce and are seen on some coins of Lincoln as well as on some of the very latest coins of sub-class 3d2 from London. The Lincoln and London 8 rayed IMs are of a slightly different style to each other. Lincoln mint: Work through section 11 to determine the class, but keep in mind that you have a scarcer variety due to this particular initial mark. If from the London mint your coin is a scarce sub-class 3d3 which is currently treated as a variety of 3d2 in the published literature.

This concludes the first part of this article; the second part, which covers the long cross pennies with sceptres, will be published in a future edition of *The Searcher*. For detectorists wanting to read more about these voided long cross pennies the most comprehensive reference is the 2012 book by Churchill and Thomas describing their study of the *1908 Brussels Hoard*. For a briefer synopsis the guide by Chris Wren, *The Voided Long Cross Coinage 1247-79*, 2nd edition 2006, has some useful additional information but is not as up-to-date as the *Brussels Hoard* volume.

The best source of illustrations to compare your coin to is the [www.henry3.com](http://www.henry3.com) website which currently has hundreds of different coins illustrated, including some continental imitations and forgeries, and which also provides you with up-to-date market valuation data. Take a look and feel free to use the contact page if you need some help identifying your Henry III pennies. ●

BELOW: Figure 5: Differing styles of Class 3 busts

