

The Elusive Gros au Lion of Bergerac, Elias 138 b

Paul Torongo & Raymond van Oosterhout © 2016



The coin shown here is a *gros au lion* (or *leeuwengroot*) struck for Henry of Grosmont, Earl of Lancaster, as Lord of Bergerac (a French town captured by the English in August of 1345). Henry died on 23 March, 1361. The exact date that the *gros au lions* of Bregerac were minted is not known, but a date of 1360-1361, after the Treay of Brétigny was put into effect, seems likely^[7]. The coins struck in France by Henry of Grosmont were imitations of those struck in Aquitaine by Edward III of England^[6,7].

The specific variant shown here, with MONETA BRAI (instead of BRAG, BRAGI, BRAII or BRACII) and a short outer legend ending in NR II (instead of NRI and also missing the word DEI), was listed by E.R. Duncan-Elias under number **138 b** in his book *The Anglo-Gallic Coins*^[4].

In the recently published *Anglo-Gallic Coins*^[6] by Paul & Bente Withers and S.D. Ford (an excellent work), the following notation is made on p. 145, under catalog number **325** (*gros au lion* of Bergerac):

“Elias 138b not seen. Elias reports it from a line drawing in R. Serrure, *L’imitation des types monétaires flamands*.”

(For Elias and Withers/Ford, the lion side, with its MONETA BRAI legend, is the reverse and the cross side the obverse.)

ELIAS^[4]

On pp. 160-161 of his book, Elias describes the coin thusly^[4]:

Elias 138 b

+ • MONET * BRAI *sic*
EQO VRI COS DQS
+ BQDICTV : SIT : QOMΘ : DQI : QR II

The MONET must be a typo; according to Elias' earlier article, *The Gros au Lion of Bergerac* ^[3], the legend reads MONETA (there numbered 13.4.1). In neither work did Elias indicate the form of the O's; on the coin; they are long (as opposed to round).

On p. 71 of *Bergerac*, Elias states ^[3]:

“This coin is described and illustrated by Raymond Serrure. No specimen is known to me”

SERRURE ^[5]

The trail then leads to the previously-named work, where Serrure numbers the coin 91, and describes it reasonably accurately on pp. 181-182, providing this drawing:



Fig. 91.

He ascribes the coin to Henry of Lancaster and states that the type is an imitation of the coins of Edward III of England, terming it an “imitation of the second degree” with regard to the original Flemish *leeuwengroot* of Louis II of Mâle (1346-1384). He describes a similar variety with the legend MONETA BRAG, and states that his coin 91 had previously been incorrectly ascribed to Arnold of Oreye, Lord of Rummen and was said to have been struck at Bree. According to Serrure, the correction to Bergerac was made by Monsieur Caron. Serrure does not specifically give references for this coin, but his sources must certainly have included V.D. CHIJS and possibly CHALON (see below).

VAN DER CHIJS ^[2]

P. O. Van der Chijs describes the coin on p. 248 of his *De munten der leenen van de voormalige hertogdommen Brabant en Limburg etc.*, where he [incorrectly] attributes the coin to Arnold of Oreye, just as Serrure had (indirectly) reported. V.d. Chijs refers directly to CHALON, stating that it was he who made the determination of Bree for this coin.

The coin is illustrated on Plate XXIII, no. 1. If the drawing was made from the same specimen that we have ourselves seen, it has been somewhat idealized, and the border leaves interpreted as having 3 lobes (see CHALON below).



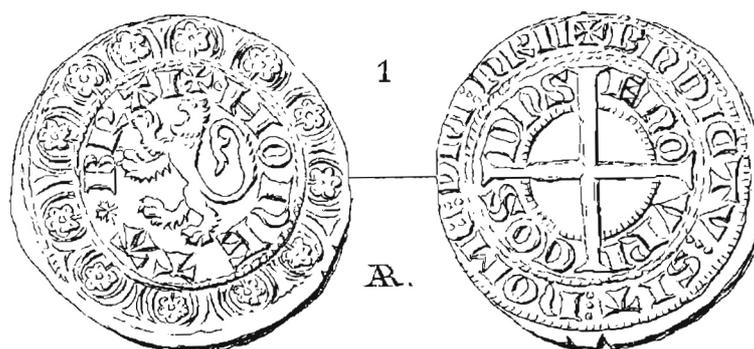
VdChijs XXIII, 1

According to v.d. Chijs, the coin was in Serrure's own collection and weighed 2.7 grams. Clearly, this is the same specimen described by Serrure. V.d. Chijs' illustration is very similar to Serrure's; neither have the blank area of flan on the bottom right side of both faces shown in Chalon's drawing (see below).

CHALON ^[1]

Finally we come to R. Chalon, who reported the coin in *Le dernier pr dendant de Looz - Monnaie de Bree* ^[1]. He [incorrectly] attributes the coin to Arnold of Oreye, and proposes *moneta braiensis* as the legend, indicating Bree. According to Chalon, the coin weighs 2.70 grams and is the property of R. Serrure. **It is clear that all of the authors cited are referring to the same specimen.**

But of all the illustrations, Chalon's is the most faithful to the actual coin:



Chalon XIV, 1

Drawing made from the actual coin in question.

Despite being the most accurate illustration, Chalon's drawing is also a bit idealized; on the actual coin, the M of NOME is unclear. Chalon opted for a 5-lobed border leaf, of a type something like: . (On the actual coin, the leaves are unclear and open to interpretation. See p. 4.)

The obverse (lion side) legend misled Chalon (and v.d. Chijs in turn) into thinking the coin had been struck at Bree in Looz. Chalon presumed the reverse, inner legend was just another of the notorious Arnold's deceptive corruptions of other people's coin legends. But in fact, the coin had been struck at Bergerac for Henry of Lancaster, as determined by Caron and then reported by Serrure.

WHERE IS THE COIN NOW?

The coin that we have been discussing can be found in the Cabinet de Médailles of the Koninklijk Bibliotheek in Brussels, Belgium. It weighs 2.750 grams, and is marked as being "ex- collection B. de Jonghe".



Cabinet de Médailles Brussels / 2.750 g.

✠ • MONETA [✚] BRAI

ENNO VRI COS DNS

✠ BNDICTV [: SI]T : NO[ME :] DNI : RRII

Obverse border of 12 leaves of 5 lobes: ✠ (?)

In the reverse, outer legend, the form of **M** in NOME is unclear. The final **I** may indicate the otherwise missing IHS. All of the **O**'s are long.

The obverse (lion side) legend reads: ✠ • MONETA BRAI. The pellet after (under) the **A** of BRAI has gone previously unreported, but it is present on the coin itself. It is probable that the pellet was repeatedly missed because it is under the right 'foot' of the **A**, well below the line of letters, and not very obvious: ✠. The leaf after MONETA is unclear.

This is the coin represented by reference numbers **Elias 138 b** and by **Withers/Ford 325-2 (variant)** (similar to **W/F 325-2 a**). It is almost certain that this is the very coin once owned by Raymond Serrure and described by him, as well as by v.d. Chijs and Chalon. It is undoubtedly the coin used by Chalon for his drawing.

The reason that Elias and Withers/Ford did not find this coin is because it was mis-filed in the CdM under Rummen, and mis-attributed to Arnold of Oreye, *à la* v.d. Chijs and Chalon. We ourselves were pleasantly surprised to come across it while searching for *leeuwengroten* at the CdM, and are glad to be able to bring this coin to light once more for the general public.



Chalon's drawing adjusted to match the actual coin.



Pellet under the A of MONETA.



Final NR II in reverse, outer legend.



Final NR II in reverse, outer legend indicated.



*Large, blank area between **E** and **T** of **MONETA**.*



The area around the initial cross.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the Cabinet de Médailles in Brussels for their assistance and cooperation. We would also like to thank Steve Ford, David H. Mee, Bente Withers and Paul Withers. Of course we thank the authors of all of the works listed below, most of whom are now deceased.

Photographs by Paul A. Torongo, © 2016.

We apologize for the rather poor quality of the photographs. They were originally produced as a reference for our own studies and not specifically for publication.

LITERATURE

[1]

Le dernier préendant de Looz - Monnaie de Bree

R. Chalon

in *Revue de la Numismatique Belge*, 1851

pp. 258-261 , plate XIV

Brussels

[2]

De munten der leenen van de voormalige hertogdommen Brabant en Limburg, enz. van de vroegste tijden tot aan de pacificatie van Gend

P.O. van der Chijs

F. Bohn, 1862

[3]

The Gros au Lion of Bergerac 1346-1351

E. R. Duncan Elias

in *The British Numismatic Journal*, 1979

pp. 56-73

[4]

The Anglo-Gallic Coins

E. R. Duncan Elias

Spink & Son

London, 1984

[5]

L'imitation des types monétaires flamands : depuis Marguerite de Constantinople jusqu'à l'avènement de la Maison de Bourgogne

Raymond Serrure

1899

Liège: G. Genard; Maastricht: A.G. Van der Dussen, 1972

[6]

Anglo-Gallic Coins

Paul & Bente Withers and S. D. Ford

Galata Books

Powys, 2015

[7]
private correspondence
Steve Ford – Paul Torongo
2016

[8]
private correspondence
Theodoor Goddeeris – Paul Torongo
2016

The following article was not specifically used to write the current paper, but may interest the reader as well:

The Gros au Lion of Aquitaine
E. R. Duncan Elias
in ***The Numismatic Chronicle***, 1981
pp. 65-70 & Plate 21

After publishing the current article, we were informed by T. Goddeeris that R. Serrure's mention of CARON (see p. 2) refers to the following:

Les collections de Bordeaux. Monnaies rares ou inédites. Nouvel atelier du prince noir. Gros de Bergerac d'Henri de Lancaster
in ***Bulletin mensuel de numismatique et d'archéologie*** VI, 1886
p. 132-136.