THE COINAGE OF EDWARD V

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Editorial Note
[As has occasionally happened in the past, two members of the Society have been studying independently the same series of coins and have arrived at conclusions which they wished to lay before the Society. The two following papers are the result of these researches, and it will be seen that in certain respects the conclusions reached differ materially. By mutual consent, the papers are published together in order that members may have available the results of these two independent investigations and may be able to form their own opinions on the points at issue.]

EDWARD V, as every one knows, reigned, or perhaps one should say occupied the throne, for a shorter period than any other English king since the Norman Conquest.

His reign began on the death of his father, Edward IV, on 9 April 1483. He was then about twelve years old, but his uncle Richard, Duke of Gloucester, subsequently Richard III, on 4 May 1483 assumed, euphemistically speaking, "the protectorship of the realm", and, some fifteen days later (though some authorities say on the very same day) sent Edward V to the Tower and, some four weeks later, sent Edward’s younger brother Richard, Duke of York, to the Tower also.

On or about 26 June 1483 Richard deposed his nephew and made himself king in name as well as in fact, on the specious ground that Edward IV’s marriage was invalid.

Thus Edward V’s reign only lasted some eleven weeks.

These dates, i.e. 9 April to 26 June, are given by Sir Charles Oman, the eminent Oxford historian, in two or three places in his book The Coinage of England, and also by Kenyon in his book The Gold Coins of England, but Bishop Stubbs gives 25 June as the date when Edward V was deposed. Mr. H. Montagu, in a paper in the Numismatic Chronicle in 1895, wrote as follows: "that the coins of Edward V are of considerable rarity is hardly remarkable, seeing that his reign extended only from the 9th day of April to the 26th day of June (or, according to the Red Book of the Exchequer, 22nd June 1483).” This is not, perhaps, the time or place exhaustively to discuss the precise date, place, or mode of Edward V’s death. His actual reign and coinage
are all that we are properly concerned with, but, in passing, it may be mentioned that the subject of Edward V's death has recently been somewhat prominently brought to public attention. The urn containing his remains and those of his younger brother Richard, Duke of York, which is in Henry VII's Chapel in Westminster Abbey was opened in July 1933 and afforded proof, in the opinion of experts, that he was only about twelve years old at the time of his death, thus disproving, if the experts are right, one theory which has been advanced, namely, that Henry VII ordered the murder of the former boy-king in 1485 upon his, Henry VII's, accession to the throne, or soon afterwards, Edward having been, according to this theory, kept a prisoner throughout Richard's reign.

Edward V and his brother are, by most authorities, considered to have been murdered by smothering in the Tower in August 1483, and in December 1933 a descendant of Sir Robert Brackenbury, the Keeper of the Tower in August 1483, wrote a very interesting and detailed letter to The Times in which he claimed to establish his own ancestor's and Richard III's joint and combined guilt in respect of the deed, though tradition associates the name of Sir James Tyrrell with its commission, he having been given the keys of the Tower for one night, so it is averred, and having hired two assassins called Miles Forest and John Dighton.

Naturally, after a lapse of about four and a half centuries there is some divergence of opinion regarding the coinage struck during the eleven weeks of Edward V's reign, especially as he immediately succeeded Edward IV and at that time the practice of placing numerals on coins after a king's name had not commenced, except for a brief temporary spell during Henry III's reign.

There is the original extreme view advanced by Hawkins in 1841. The late Mr. Hawkins, in the first edition of his Silver Coins of England (1841), wrote as follows:

"Short as was the reign of this young king, coins are said to have been issued in his name and by his authority; none, however, known to have been his have come down to us; and it is more probable that none were ever struck, or if they were, that they were struck from dies of his father's coins."
After quoting the foregoing paragraph Mr. Montagu wrote as follows:—

"Acting upon this impression the author attributes the mint-mark boar's head to the reign of Edward IV, but subsequently (p. 278) modified his opinion, and suggested the probability of its being attributable to the reign of Edward V."

Hawkins's grandson, Mr. R. L. Kenyon, in his well-known book *Gold Coins of England*, written in 1884, supports this last-mentioned view that the boar's head on a coin with the name of Edward marks the coin out as belonging to the reign of Edward V and not of Edward IV, but he is not prepared to attribute any Edward coin with only the combined rose and sun mint-mark on it to Edward V.

As every coin collector knows, Edward IV's distinctive coin marks and cognizances were the white York rose and the sun. He adopted the latter sign because, so it was said, three suns appeared in the heavens simultaneously on the morning of his first victory in battle, namely, that of Mortimer's Cross, in 1461.

Consequently, there would appear to be nothing unnatural, in fact, quite the reverse, in his adopting or his mint-master adopting for him, a conjoined, united, combined, halved, or dimidiated rose and sun (all these five separate terms are used but signify the same thing) as a late armorial or mint-mark variety towards the close of his reign, if, in fact, he did, though, as I will attempt to show, I think that the better opinion is that he did not do so.

Edward IV's mint-master was William, Baron Hastings, and he was also mint-master for Edward V until 13 June 1483, when Richard III ordered him to be beheaded, though possibly he was not formally appointed Edward V's mint-master at the very beginning of Edward V's reign. Reference will be made to him again later. Kenyon refers to him as Sir William Hastings, but he had been created a baron early in Edward IV's reign.

Kenyon, in support of the view that only coins with the boar's head mint-mark and bearing Edward's name can be regarded as genuinely Edward V coins, observes as follows. (This passage calls for somewhat close attention in order that its significance may be realized.)
"All those coins which have the rose and sun mint-mark [he obviously means the rose and sun united] are sometimes attributed to Edward V, but the rose and sun was the well-known cognizance of Edward IV and is therefore as likely as the boar’s head is unlikely to have been placed on his own coins; and . . . it is very improbable that more than one new mint-mark can have been authorised for the coinage during the very short reign of Edward V."

It is true that the boar, but not, however, the boar’s head, was a badge of Edward III, and that Edward IV and Richard III were his great-great-grandsons—both being great-grandsons of Edmund of Langley, Duke of York, a younger brother of John of Gaunt, and sons of Richard Duke of York, a grandson of the said Edmund of Langley, Duke of York, son of Edward III. But there would appear to be strong reason to believe that this badge of cognizance descended in modified form to Richard, the younger son.

Sir Henry Ellis, in 1813, discovered in the Bodleian Library a memorandum recording the fact that Richard, Duke of York, father of Edward IV and Richard III, had inherited the badge of a blue boar from his ancestor Edward III.

Sir Henry Ellis, after most exhaustive research, never discovered a single instance of the use of a boar as a badge by Edward IV, nor did Sir Charles Young, Garter King at Arms, ever come across an instance (see Montagu’s before-mentioned article at p. 120). Montagu in the course of this article also writes as follows:

"It seems, however, that Richard III’s boar was a white boar, and not a blue boar. In the illuminated roll of the Earls of Warwick, according to Sainthill (Olla Podrida, vol. ii, p. 214), quoting from Turner’s History of England, there is a representation of Richard (in consequence of his intermarriage with the family), who is depicted standing on a white boar. . . .

"Acknowledging, then, that all coins with mint-mark boar’s head must have belonged to the reigns of Edward V and Richard III only, how is it that, with a solitary doubtful exception, the only mint-mark which appears in conjunction with it is that of the rose and sun combined?"

To this very significant point I think one might also very
cogently add the importance and significance of the occasional conjunction of another undoubted Richard mark, though not an actual mint-mark or initial-mark, namely, the pellet under the bust. (See list of Edward V coins at the end of this paper.)

Montagu proceeds:

"The contention of Mr. Kenyon is that this last-mentioned mint-mark, the rose and sun united, distinguished the last coinage of Edward IV; but this is only a surmise on his part and just one of those surmises which are open to the greatest suspicion, inasmuch as it has been invented for the express purpose of defeating the attribution of the rose and sun coins to the subsequent reign. I quite admit that there was a possibility, though not a probability, of the rose and sun being a mint-mark of Edward IV; but, on the other hand, it is an absolute certainty that it was in use in the reigns of Edward V and Richard III, seeing that it is found in conjunction with coins bearing the mint-mark boar's head during both these reigns.

"In mediaeval times it frequently occurred that an obverse or reverse die of the last coinage of one monarch was, at first, used, either inadvertently or under pressure of circumstances, on the earliest coinage of his successor; but this does not at all account for the very important fact that on the coinage of both Edward V and Richard III the moneyers were constantly ringing the changes, so to speak, with the two mint-marks mentioned, and with those two only. It is in favour of the exclusion of the mint-mark rose and sun from the list of mint-marks of Edward IV that it occurs more commonly on the coins of Richard III than even the more characteristic mint-mark boar's head.

"It has been considered certain, by those numismatists who have studied the subject of the series of angels and groats of Edward IV, that the cinquefoil mint-mark was the last one used in connexion with their coinage. The similarity of the pieces bearing that mint-mark and those bearing the mint-mark sun and rose, particularly in the case of the angels, proves that the latter immediately succeeded the former. It is almost as improbable that Richard III, throughout both his protectorate and his
regard, should have adopted a well-known, because latestknown, badge of his brother, as that his brother should have previously adopted Richard's well-known badge of the boar's head. Surely, the fact that both gold and silver coins of Richard occur throughout his reign with the mint-mark rose and sun on both obverse and reverse (and more commonly, as before stated, than the mint-mark boar's head) should tend to show that the adoption of that mint-mark was due to neither inadvertence nor pressure of circumstances, but clearly to premeditated design.

"It may have been considered that, inasmuch as Edward IV had adopted the sun and rose separately, his son might fairly use those two mint-marks combined, or, to use heraldic language, dimidiated; and, of course, the same argument may apply to its adoption by Edward IV's brother Richard. . . ."

"What the well-known collectors of English coins in the past times thought on the subject may not constitute the strongest argument in favour of my contention, but their opinion is entitled to respect, and it is a fact that my attribution of the mint-mark rose and sun to Edward V has been previously acceded to by Sainthill, Cuff, Bergne, Murchison, Brice, and many others, including the late Mr. J. F. Neck."

Grueber, in his well-known book on coins of Great Britain, writes as follows:

"The coins of Edward V which are limited to 3 denominations [this is, of course, wrong, as will be seen later], 2 in gold and 1 in silver, are precisely similar to those of his father, and can only be identified by their mint-marks, a rose and a sun united or a boar's head. The former was the well-known cognisance of Edward IV (see the rose noble) and the boar's head the badge of the Protector, Richard III. The weight and fineness were the same as Edward IV's coinage. A variety has the mint-mark, rose and sun united, on both sides. These coins are very rare. No half-angels of Edward V are known with the boar's head mint-mark. All the gold coins were struck at the Tower.

"Groats were struck in London only.

"Varieties have for mint-marks the rose and sun united,
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or the boar's head only on both sides; and a further variety of each of these issues has a pellet under the king's bust.

Thus we observe, at the outset, that whereas there may exist groats with the boar's head on obverse and reverse,¹ there are no angels with the boar's head on both sides, and no half-angels with a boar's head on at all.

The late Dr. Brooke, in his book English Coins, simply writes as follows (though he later on refers in his classifications to the existence of at any rate one specimen of a fourth denomination of Edward V coins, thus differing from Grueber and Oman, namely, to a halfpenny with the halved or dimidiated or combined rose and sun mint-mark referred to before):

"The attribution of coins to the short reign of Edward V is based upon the use of the boar's head as initial mark and its close connexion, on coins of Edward and of Richard, with the halved sun and rose. Not only was the boar's head the personal badge of Richard III but it is commonly used on the coins bearing his name; its use, more rare, on coins with the name of Edward is coupled with the halved sun and rose on the other side of the coin, a combination also frequent on the coinage of Richard. There is little doubt that the use of the boar's head on the coin was originally ordered by Richard as regent, and probably the coins with halved sun and rose that bear the name of Edward must also be assigned to the reign of the unfortunate boy-king."

Professor Sir Charles Oman takes a very interesting view. He attributes all the angels, half-angels, and groats with the united rose and sun mint-mark on both sides to the brief period of approximately one month which elapsed between 9 April—the date of Edward V’s accession to the throne—and the early part of May, when Richard made himself protector, or to a date shortly thereafter. He says:

"It is quite surprising that there are any coins of Edward V struck in his first month, while the Queen Dowager and the Lords of the Council were in control at London, before Gloucester carried out his coup d'état. Probably the faction which dreaded Richard's ambition

¹ But see page 211, where the existence of this coin is questioned.
was desirous of having money at its disposal, and hurried on the engraving of new dies, in order to show the name and title of the boy-king to the nation, by way of propaganda.

"At any rate, there exist very rare angels, half angels, and groats with the rose and sun mint-mark on both sides which can only be ascribed to this month.

"But, when Richard of Gloucester had once assumed control, he immediately inserted his own boar's head on the coin of the realm: we may be sure that he would never have allowed pieces without that badge to appear. . . . After he had seized on the protectorship, Richard of Gloucester concluded an Indenture with Lord Hastings for a complete new coinage of all denominations on May 20.

"He beheaded that unfortunate peer without trial, after a scandalous scene in the Tower on June 13. This Indenture is referred to by Kenyon also, but he declares that the Indenture was never actually executed. Kenyon, however, quotes Ross of Warwick to show that a separate coinage of Edward V did exist.

"It is possible that in the intervening twenty-four days, i.e. from May 20–June 13, dies may have been cut and the coins actually issued, as all the change to be made consisted in the substitution of the boar's head for the rose and sun as the obverse mint-mark. After June 28 [why Oman should at this point say June 28 instead of his own previously mentioned date of June 26, which is also Kenyon's date for the end of Edward V's reign, I cannot surmise, unless it is a slip or misprint] when Richard seized the crown, he must no doubt have given orders for the cessation of all coinage in his nephew's name. It is quite conceivable, however, that the insertion of the boar's head on the coinage may have come before the Indenture with Hastings, and have started quite early in May, for it seems reasonable to ask for every possible day of issue in order to account for the not inconsiderable amount of groats bearing the name of Edward V, but the mint-mark of his unscrupulous uncle, which are known to exist.

"The groats with boar's head mint-mark on the obverse, scarce as they are, are not all from the same set of dies. Two varieties of them are known; that which has the protector's badge as mint-mark on obverse, and the young
king's rose and sun on the reverse, is the more common. Presumably, the scarcer variety with boar's head on both sides\(^1\) belongs to the very last days of the protectorate of Gloucester. There are no half-groats, pence, or halfpence known.”

In regard to Sir Charles Oman's last-quoted statement, he is mistaken in saying that there are no Edward V half-pence "known", although Grueber, as quoted above, makes or implies the same statement in his book on British Museum coins published in 1899.

At least six such coins are known to be in existence.

The first, which I have traced, was purchased by the British Museum at Mr. Walters's sale of 1913. Another was exchanged by him for another coin with Mr. Raymond Carlyon-Britton, who sold it as lot 137 in his sale of October 1921, and nine years later—namely, in March 1930—it was sold at the Wheeler sale. I bought it myself from Spink & Son, Ltd., in November 1934.

A third—which has a hole in it through corrosion and only weighs 3.3 grains—was sold at the second Walters sale in October 1932 and was purchased by a London public museum or collection of whose name and whereabouts I am unaware. It has a clearly-defined rose and sun mint-mark.

A fourth is in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford.

The fifth, which I have traced, formerly belonged to Mr. Shirley Fox, from whom I acquired it recently.

A sixth specimen was left to the British Museum by the late F. W. Hasluck.

The British Museum possesses a half-groat which is sometimes attributed to Edward V, but the alleged rose and sun mint-mark is so indistinct that the late Dr. Brooke told me shortly before his lamented death that he doubted the validity of the assignment of this coin to Edward V's reign. I think that he considered that it was more probably an Edward IV coin.

In regard to Sir Charles Oman's assertion, above quoted, that "when Richard of Gloucester had once assumed control, he immediately inserted his own boar's head on the coin of the realm: we may be sure that he would never have allowed pieces without that badge to appear”... the last statement

\(^{1}\) See page 211.
is quite definitely contrary to the actual facts as evidenced by coins now in existence.

Thus, in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge there are three specimens of Richard III angels and each one of them has the combined rose and sun mint-mark both on the obverse and the reverse.

Then again, as quoted previously, Montagu, in his paper written in 1895, states that throughout the reign of Richard III the combined rose and sun mint-mark occurs on both obverse and reverse, and, in fact, is found in Richard’s reign “more commonly ... than the m.m. boar’s head”. This last-quoted statement Montagu also makes in an earlier portion of his paper.

Unfortunately, no help in regard to this matter is forthcoming from an examination of the nobles or ryals of Edward IV, since none were minted subsequently to his restoration to the throne in April 1471 after his victories at the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury—and, of course, there were none minted during the reigns of Edward V or Richard III.

There are, however, a few exceedingly interesting angels and groats in existence, with the combined rose and sun mint-mark upon them, on which the name Edward has had over-struck upon it the name Richard. It is submitted that these coins afford strong suggestive evidence of a separate coinage of Edward V the mint-mark on which was the combined rose and sun.

An exceedingly important and relevant discovery was made some years ago by the late Mr. H. B. Earle-Fox, who found a mint account at the Record Office covering the fifteenth century which showed that in Edward V’s reign 50 pounds in gold coins and 434 pounds in silver coins were minted.

In conclusion, it may be of some interest to tabulate the various types of Edward V coins at present in existence, according to the attributions set out in this paper, as held and supported by experts much greater than I can claim to be, whose names I have already mentioned:

1. Angel, m.m. obverse boar’s head, reverse rose and sun.
2. Angel, m.m. rose and sun on both sides.
3. Half-angel, m.m. rose and sun on both sides.
4. Groat, m.m. obverse boar’s head, reverse rose and sun.
(5) Groat, m.m. obverse boar’s head, reverse rose and sun with pellet under the bust.
(6) Groat, m.m. rose and sun on both sides.
(7) Groat, m.m. rose and sun on both sides, with pellet under the bust.
(8) Halfpenny, m.m. rose and sun on obverse only.

In his paper, above quoted, written in 1895, Montagu mentions two additional types of groats, namely, one with the boar’s head mint-mark on both sides and no pellet under the bust, and another type with the boar’s head mint-mark on both sides and with a pellet under the bust.

In regard to these two last-mentioned types, I can only say that I, personally, have never seen an Edward groat with the boar’s head on both sides, and I know of no one else who ever has done so. I do not say that no such coin was ever seen by Montagu, but I do say that there is none in the British Museum or any other collection that I know of, and that neither Grueber nor Dr. Brooke refers to or describes any actual specimen of such a coin, though Grueber and Oman include them in their classifications. Mr. Shirley-Fox has told me that he has never seen a coin with the name of Edward which has the boar’s head on the reverse.

The last type enumerated above, namely, the Edward V halfpenny, was not included or mentioned by Montagu in the list which he set out at the end of his paper written in 1895. As previously stated, it was not mentioned by Grueber in his book published in 1899. Presumably, neither of these numismatists had seen or heard of it, and even Sir Charles Oman does not refer to it in his recently published book. But at the Walters sale in 1913 one specimen became known to the world and was, as I have said, acquired by the British Museum.

My own specimens, previously mentioned, are virtually identical with a Richard III halfpenny now in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, except that they have Edward’s name instead of Richard’s.
COINS OF EDWARD IV, EDWARD V AND RICHARD III