

THE COINAGE OF CROMWELL AND ITS IMITATIONS

By D. F. ALLEN

MUCH has been written about the coinage of Cromwell and its imitations,¹ and the facts should be well known, but mistakes continue to be common. The traditional descriptions given to coins of the series in sale catalogues are often wrong and misleading. As the coins are very widely collected, it may be of interest to readers of the *Journal* to have a summary of the facts. No claim is made to originality, but the material has not before been put together in this form.

On 27 November 1656 Thomas Simon received a warrant ordering him to prepare dies for a coinage of the Protector, to consist of 20s., 10s., and 5s. pieces in gold, and 5s., 2s. 6d., 1s., and 6d. pieces in silver. He was to put on the edge of the gold coins "Protector Literis Literae Nummis Corona et Salus", and on the edge of the silver "Has nisi periturus mihi adimat nemo". The coins were to be struck by Peter Blondeau. The original warrant has coloured drawings of the 20s. and 5s. pieces in Simon's hand.²

On 11 December 1656, a fortnight later, Simon received a further warrant amending the design of the silver coinage, and the document bears a different version of the design for the crown, also in Simon's hand.

In accordance with these instructions Simon made dies for the 20s. piece in gold and for the 2s. 6d. in silver, that is, one sample of the type for each metal. Specimens were struck by Blondeau during 1657 but dated 1656. The 20s. piece was struck in gold and in silver, in each case with grained edge. In gold it was also struck on a thick flan with lettered edge as ordered. This very rare variety is now known as the "50s. piece", but there is no contemporary evidence for that name. The coin had to be of this thickness because it was a physical impossibility to strike a 20s. piece of the diameter of the coin shown in the warrant with an adequate lettered edge. The 2s. 6d. piece has the legend on the edge ordered in the earlier warrant and the portrait of the later warrant.

Various records survive from 1657 relating to preparations for a coinage in the Protector's name. There is a bill dated January 1657/8 in which Simon charges for seven "species" of punches and dies for coins of the Protector. The natural explanation is that the seven "species" are the seven denominations ordered in the original warrant, but the surviving coins do not bear this out, as there is no trace of 10s. or 5s. pieces in gold. No pieces are known at all dated 1657 (although it is possible that the figure 8 on the crown die of the next

¹ G. Vertue, *Thomas Simon &c.*, 2nd edn., 1780, pp. 70*-1*. H. Henfrey, *Numismata Cromwelliana*, 1877, pp. 91-154; W. J. Hocking, "Simon's Dies", *Num. Chron.*, 1909, pp. 56-118; T. H. B. Graham, "Cromwell's Silver Coinage", *Num. Chron.*, 1908, pp. 62-79.

² D. F. Allen, "Warrants and Sketches of Thomas Simon", *Brit. Num. Journ.*, xxiii, pp. 39-48, Pl. II.

year, 1658, is altered from 7), but there are silver coins of 5s., 2s. 6d., 1s., and 6d., dated 1658, the dies for which may have been prepared in the previous year. A few specimens of silver coins of this year were struck in gold, but there are no gold coins proper dated 1658. A puncheon for the 10s. in gold, presumably of this year, has survived amongst other puncheons which Simon apparently never used.

To summarize, the genuine patterns of Simon are as follows:

1656	"50s."	In gold and with lettered edge only.
	20s.	In silver or gold; with grained edge only. From the same dies as the "50s." piece.
	2s. 6d.	In silver and with lettered edge only.
1658	5s.	In silver and gold ¹ ; with lettered edge only. Normally distinguished by a flaw running across the bust from the O of OLIVAR to the O of PRO.
	2s. 6d.	In silver and with lettered edge only. Obverse die distinguished from that of the 2s. 6d. of 1656 by reading HIB in place of HI.
	1s.	In silver and gold ¹ with edge grained, and in pewter with edge plain. Distinguished by a flaw from the forehead to the P of RP.
	6d.	In silver with edge grained, and in pewter with edge plain. The wreath touches the A of ANG.

Each of the above is known only from one pair of dies. Simon made puncheons for some additional dies, but there is no evidence, apart from the bill mentioned above, that the dies were completed or coins struck.

All the pieces are normally treated as patterns. Up to the time of Cromwell's death there was every intention of making an experimental issue, but there is no documentary evidence that they were ever put into circulation. It is worth noting, however, that while some of the 1656 types, notably the half-crowns, are practically never found without some signs of wear, those of 1658 are generally in mint condition.² It may be right to conclude from this that the 1656 series, which is by far the rarer, was actually put into circulation.

After Simon's death a number of his puncheons for the coinage of Cromwell appear to have reached the Low Countries. His widow is known to have sold some puncheons, but not necessarily these, in 1676. In the Low Countries the puncheons were used to make a set of false dies, including probably the dies for the well-known "Dutch Crown".³ In 1700 a number of these puncheons and some false dies made from them, but not including the dies for the "Dutch Crown", were bought by the Mint. The false dies were for a 10s. piece in gold and a 1s. and 6d. in silver. All were dated 1658. The reverse of the 10s. dies had been made from a punch intended by Simon for a 6d.

¹ Specimens of the 5s. in gold are recorded in the Montagu, and in the Murdoch (*ex Bieber*) sale catalogues, and of the 1s. in gold in the Murdoch and Wertheimer catalogues. I have never seen specimens in gold, but assume they are genuine, though the 1s. was stated in the Murdoch catalogue to be cast.

² I have to thank Mr. A. H. Baldwin for drawing my attention to this fact.

³ In the illustrations to Hocking's article (*Num. Chron.*, 1909, Pl. VIII) and in G. C. Brooke's *English Coins* (Pl. LIX) the "Dutch" and "Tanner" crowns have been transposed by mistake. Brooke repeated Hocking's error. In other respects also his list on pp. 236-7 follows traditional lines and is not reliable.

The head, however, was from the puncheon intended for the 10s. piece, but never used by Simon.

No specimens were struck by the Mint from the false dies at the time of acquisition, though some may well have been struck previously in the Low Countries. In 1738 the dies were taken from store and a number of specimens struck. If any pre-1700 specimens survive, they cannot be distinguished from those struck at this time. The officials of the Mint did not realize that the dies were false. The collection did not contain any dies for the 5s. piece in silver, though it did contain puncheons made by Simon himself for the bust and the shield. It was decided, therefore, that John Tanner, the engraver at the Mint, should supply the missing pair of 5s. dies by making new ones from the surviving puncheons. It was also decided to make a new pair of dies from the puncheons for the 10s. in gold, to be dated 1656, although no such coin had been made by Simon, presumably because the existing 10s. die was cracked.

The copies of Simon's patterns of the Protector, all of which are made from Simon's puncheons, should therefore be classified as follows:

A. Tanner's dies, made in 1738

- 1656 10s. In gold only, with edge grained or plain. The reverse die is also used with the Low Countries 10s. obverse die described below.
- 5s. In silver only, with edge lettered or plain. Marked by a flaw in the letter P at the bottom to the right, wherever it occurs.

B. Low Countries' dies, made before 1700

(i) *Struck only in the Low Countries*

- 1658 5s. In silver and pewter; with lettered edge. Distinguished by an inverted N on the obverse with a serif projecting from the bottom of the right-hand limb. (The "Dutch" Crown.)

(ii) *Some possibly struck in the Low Countries before 1700, most struck in London in 1738*

- 1658 10s. In gold and bronze; edge plain. Obverse distinguished from that of Tanner's 10s. piece of 1656 by the omission of "&c." This obverse was also used in gold with the reverse die of Tanner's 10s. piece, dated 1656; edge plain.
- 1s. In silver on ordinary and thick flans (the so-called 2s. piece), and in bronze, in all cases with edge plain. Distinguished from Simon's 1s. die by the wreath which divides the P of RP from the A of ANG. The N is inverted.
- 6d. In silver on ordinary and thick flans (the so-called 9d. piece); in both cases with edge plain. Distinguished from Simon's 6d. die by the wreath which points just in front of the P of PRO.

Owing to the war it has not been possible to check the above in the detail which could have been wished. There may be other combinations of dies and varieties of edges and metals which I have not been able to collect. The above, however, includes all the main varieties. I have not attempted in this paper to deal with the Cromwell farthings, none of which were engraved by Simon.

Neither the Low Countries nor the Tanner dies are particularly creditable specimens of the art of forgery, although the pieces from them fetch higher prices than many of Simon's fine originals. For this reason, if for no better one, Tanner's name should be reserved for the only two pieces in the series, of which he was the author. As Simon himself had occasion to say on the edge of a coin no less famous than these: RENDER TO CAESAR THE THINGS WHICH ARE CAESAR'S.