

HENRY VIII—THE SEQUENCE OF MARKS IN THE SECOND COINAGE

By W. J. W. POTTER

THE problems surrounding the sequence of mint-marks in the Second Coinage of Henry VIII have been very fully dealt with by the late Mr. C. A. Whitton in his "Coinage of Henry VIII and Edward VI in Henry's Name" published in the *Journal* (vol. xxvi, 1949). Nevertheless, he confesses that the solution of many problems eludes him, and that his final suggested order, viz. Rose, Lis, Sunburst, Lis, Arrow, Pheon, is not entirely satisfactory.

The chief reasons he gives for this state of affairs can be summarized in his own statements, viz.:

- p. 59: 1. The uncertainty of the precise position of the Sunburst.
2. The use of the Lis on muled coins at widely separated periods.

As to his first point, the chief difficulty is that there are no known mules with this mark in any denomination, nor any Sunburst crowns, although a continuous series of these coins was issued. As to his second point, this might be elaborated by further quotations:

- p. 60: "The earlier and later Lis dies are indistinguishable."
"We cannot identify post-Arrow true coins with i.m. Lis."
"The Pheon, for some unexplained reason, is sometimes found muled with the Lis."

The late Dr. Brooke in his *English Coins* deals with the same question as follows:

- p. 176: "It is evident from muled groats, and from the alterations on the sovereign from Sunburst to Lis, that the Lis was used twice, the order being: rose, lis, arrow, sunburst, lis, pheon, but it is not at present possible to distinguish the earlier and later issues of silver coins with the Lis mark."

on which Mr. Whitton has commented:

- p. 18: "Thus though Brooke lists the order of these sovereigns correctly, viz. Sunburst, Lis, Lis/Arrow, he is inconsistent elsewhere (*English Coins*, p. 176) in placing Arrow before Sunburst."

In spite of these differing views, however, I think it is possible to give a coherent picture of the use of the mint-marks during the Second Coinage which will not only explain the position of the Sunburst and its significance, but also identify the several appearances of the Lis. This will show that Dr. Brooke's order of marks was quite correct, but only for the silver, and I think it will appear that most of the confusion and difficulty with this coinage is due to mistaken efforts to find an order which will apply equally to the fine and crown gold, and to the silver. I find it hard to understand why this should be considered a *sine qua non* of any system. One has to go no further than the previous reign to find marks common on the silver but unknown on the contemporary gold. It will be understood, therefore, why

I propose to deal with the metals separately. My first task was to examine the very common Lis groats for the purpose of differentiating the early from the late issues, and the obvious starting-point was the lettering, which I have always found very reliable for such a purpose. Mr. Whitton, of course, recognized this point well, but, he states:

p. 55: "... so faithfully were the letter-puncheons reproduced that no clear catena can be traced."

Fortunately, this is not strictly true. Certainly, after the very early experiments with Roman lettering in the first rose-marked coins, a remarkable uniformity of style is maintained. Nevertheless, I found one letter which does change in such a way as to give most valuable aid in determining the order of the marks. This is the **F** in **FRANCE**, of which I soon found three very distinct forms. The next thing was to check the Rose, Arrow, Sunburst, and Pheon groats for these **F**'s, with the result that another type of **F** was found on the first of these marks, and two forms of **M** on the early reverses. Eventually, the following picture emerged:

<i>Mint-mark</i>		<i>Letters</i>
Rose	. . . . .	F ₁ , F ₂ (RR), M ₁
Lis 1	. . . . .	F ₂ , M ₁
Lis 2	. . . . .	F ₃ , M ₂
Arrow	. . . . .	F ₃ , F ₄ (RRR), M ₂
Sunburst	. . . . .	F ₃ (RRR), F ₄ , M ₂
Lis 3	. . . . .	F ₄ , M ₂
Pheon	. . . . .	F ₄ , M ₂

The order shown is very simply established. There has never been any question that the rose was the first of the new coinage marks. Only on these groats do we find experiments in bust, lettering, and reverse cross-ends. That the lis followed is demonstrated by the mules existing which also show Lis 1 with F₂ and M₁. To prove that Lis 1 was then immediately followed by Lis 2 with F₃, making together the



first issue of the Lis mark, it is only necessary to point out that the Arrow is the only other mark commonly showing F₃, and of this mark there are also rare specimens with F₄, the F found on the Pheon mark.

Similarly, the Sunburst must have followed the Arrow, as though the majority of these scarce groats have F₄, very rare specimens are known with F₃. We are left with another issue of the Lis, and the Pheon, both with F₄, and there is no question as to the order of these two as the Pheon was the last mark of the coinage, found with the Irish title assumed in 1542, and also found muled with the first mark of the Third Coinage, i.e. Lis 4.

This order, which has been established for the silver, completely

disposes of the difficulties regarding the various issues of the Lis, and it also explains very simply the Lis/Pheon and Pheon/Lis mules which worried Mr. Whitton; these, of course, all have F₄ on the obverse. Mules with the Arrow mark are rather more difficult. Both Lis/Arrow and Arrow/Lis mules are known, but unfortunately they are very rare. There is no Lis/Arrow in the B.M. collection, and my own specimen (Taffs) does not show a clear letter F.¹ The point, of course, is that there should be Lis 2/Arrow mules, and also, if the Sunburst, as I hope to show, was a mark outside the normal series, Lis 3/Arrow mules, from Arrow reverse dies put aside to be used up when the Sunburst was discontinued. Mr. Whitton states, on what evidence I do not know, that the Arrow groats with **AGLIE** instead of the usual **AGL** are the late ones, in which case any Arrow/Lis mules with **AGLIE** should also link up with the later Lis 3, though unfortunately there is nothing to identify the different Lis reverses. On the other hand the solitary Arrow groat with F₄ in my collection has **AGL**.

Before I conclude this first section of my survey I would like to quote in full what Mr. Whitton has said regarding the late use of the Lis mark:

We cannot identify post-Arrow true coins with i.m. Lis. This view is borne out by at least two coins in the British Museum: a Lis/Pheon muled groat struck from the same obverse die as a true coin with Lis both sides. This would presumably have been claimed by Brooke as a true coin of his later Lis, but it does not differ materially from scores of similar groats in the Museum's trays, some of which must be true coins of the earlier Lis. All the mules I have seen of this type show Lis dies of a style previously employed.

I have examined the two coins to which Mr. Whitton refers, and they both have F₄, and therefore do "differ materially from scores of similar groats", as many of these latter would have F₂ or F₃; and if anyone has any lingering doubts as to the ability to distinguish between the three F's found on the Lis groats and crowns, I would like to emphasize their fundamental differences as follows:

F₂—Semi-open F with concave top and gap between heavy seriffed arms.

F₃—Open F with short straight arms of equal size.

F₄—Closed F with wavy top and short closing bar sloping inwards. (F₁ has a longer and thinner bar sloping outwards).

Occasionally on poor specimens F₂ and F₄ may be confused, but in addition to the reverse **M**'s which should distinguish them but might also be indecipherable, the earlier **A**'s on the obverses have a nearly flat crossbar, whereas the late **A**'s have a markedly wavy top with pointed centre.

All the groats so far considered have borne the title **REX. ANGL. Z. FRA.** In January 1542 Henry assumed the title of King of Ireland, and the title **HIB. REX** is found on a few rare Pheon groats of rather poor work, having also the numeral 8 instead of **VIII** after Henry's

¹ I have since seen the Parsons specimen and this also curiously has the F obliterated.

name. In addition to these, as already mentioned, there are in existence some very rare Pheon/Lis groat mules having the HIB. REX title on the obverse, and a reverse mint-mark of a new shape, while Mr. Winstanley has in his possession a unique Lis/Pheon mule with this form of Lis on the obverse. It is illustrated by Mr. Whitton on p. 57 of his article.

It is an extraordinary fact that the three Lis mint-marks, as well as the six Lis in the arms on the reverse of the groats, from the later Rose to the ordinary Pheon marks, could all have been struck from the same punch, as they are of the same irregular shape as shown in the illustration (A). This last of the ubiquitous Lis mark, Lis 4, however, is definitely from a new punch as shown (B), and is in fact identical with the mark used on the first issues of base silver.



The reverses of these Pheon/Lis mules have the normal second coinage form with saltires in the cross-ends, but there are two reasons other than the new form of Lis on the reverse for allocating them to the third coinage:

1. They are obviously of base silver.
2. There are rare groats with the same reverses but with full-face obverses.

These latter are sometimes called 3rd coinage/2nd coinage mules, but the weight of evidence is, I think, in favour of their being the first true base silver groats.

Finally, there are the famous groats of York, struck by Thomas Wolsey, the Cardinal Archbishop, bearing his initials TW and his cardinal's hat on the reverse. They were issued only from early in the Second Coinage up to his fall in November 1530, a period of four years, and the dies were, of course, prepared at the Tower and therefore with the consent of the king, tacit or otherwise, though the archbishop's coinage rights had previously been strictly limited to silver not exceeding the half-groat in value.

The issue probably commenced a little later than the Tower coins, as no York groats are known with the experimental busts or Roman lettering as on the first Rose groats. The first mark was the voided cross, as only these groats have F1. It continued in currency probably a little later than the Rose, however, as of the 20 groats in the B.M. collection, 17 have F1 and 3 F2. The few known mules between the voided cross and the only other mark, the acorn, as well as all the scarce groats of the latter mark which I have seen, have F2, so that there is no question as to which mark came first. As the issue probably continued until Wolsey's fall late in 1530, a very few acorn groats might exist with F3.

There is, of course, no question that the scarce voided-cross groats without TW on the reverse were anything but die-sinkers' errors, or that they had anything to do with any Sede Vacante period. In any

case no such period occurred with regard to the groats after Wolsey's death, as the issue had already been declared illegal in his indictment, and would certainly never have been granted to his successor.

I would now like to consider the crowns and the valuable evidence they afford for dating the earlier mint-marks. These coins are identical in size to the groats and carry the same lettering, the F's being found on what is called the reverse, that is the shield side. A fifth form of F is found on the earliest crowns, but it is not relevant to my argument. When the mint-marks found on the crowns are listed we immediately come up against a very curious circumstance. Though the bullion records show that crown gold was regularly being struck up to March 1544, there are no specimens known with the Sunburst, Lis 3, or normal Pheon marks (two solitary specimens have the HIB. REX title).

I have an explanation to offer as to the absence of the Sunburst crowns, but the non-appearance of crowns with the other two marks, if not due to mischance, can only be explained in one way, and that is that the Arrow mark was continued on the crown gold until the early months of 1542. No proof of this can be offered, but an indication is obtainable from the initials which appear on both sides of these coins. The mint-marks and initials on the known crowns are as follows ignoring mules:

Rose	(F1, F2)	.	.	.	.	HK)	
Lis	(F2, F3)	.	.	.	.	HK)	—for Katherine (1526-33)
Arrow	(F3)	.	.	.	.	HK)	
	(F3)	.	.	.	.	HA	—for Anne Boleyn (1533-6)
	(F3)	.	.	.	.	HI	—for Jane Seymour (1536-7)
	(F3, F4)	.	.	.	.	HR	—for Henry alone (1537-42)

There are only three Arrow crowns with HR in the B.M. collection, two of which have F3 and one F4, but this is the indication I mentioned that the Arrow did continue on until the HIB. REX issue, an indication which might become a certainty if any number of these crowns are extant with F4.

Unfortunately, crown mules are almost non-existent, the only specimen known to Mr. Whitton being the Rose/Lis mule in the B.M. This coin, incidentally, has F3 on the Lis side and is one more proof that Lis 2 followed directly on Lis 1. This does not, of course, indicate that there were no Lis 1 crowns, as, in fact, of the 13 crowns with Lis both sides in the B.M., 3 have F2 and 10 have F3. It does show, however, that Lis 1 only lasted a comparatively short period on the crowns, whereas on the groats I think it lasted at least a year, to judge by the comparative rarity of the two Lis marks. It is all a question of the change in letter punches not taking place simultaneously on the two metals.

We now have some useful dates to apply to the full list of marks on the silver, for which I suggest the following:

Rose	.	.	.	.	1526-9	Sunburst	.	.	.	.	1537-8
Lis 1, 2	.	.	.	.	1529-32	Lis 3	.	.	.	.	1538-41
Arrow	.	.	.	.	1532-7	Pheon	.	.	.	.	1541-2

The bullion records published by Miss E. Stokes in the *Num. Chron.* 5th ser., vol. ix, 1929, give these details for the silver:

Period	lb.	Suggested marks
Michaelmas 1526-Michaelmas 1532 . .	115,688	Rose, Lis 1, Lis 2
" 1532- " 1537 . .	18,897	Arrow
1 May 1537-31 May 1540. . .	58,723	Sunburst, Lis 3
Michaelmas 1540-Michaelmas 1541 . .	8,261	Pheon

These figures agree very well with the suggested dates, and also the comparative rarity of specimens, Lis 3 being the commonest type found, and Pheon the rarest, though the latter is really a good deal scarcer than the total coined would suggest. This may well be due to the large proportion of coins melted down for the base money.

It is now time to deal fully with Mr. Whitton's problem No. 1, viz. uncertainty as to the precise position of the Sunburst. To summarize the unusual circumstances connected with it, these are:

- (a) The total lack of mules.
- (b) The absence of crowns of the mark.
- (c) The rarity of the groats compared with other marks.

All these factors led me to suspect a special issue, the occasion for which might be suggested by its date. I have mentioned a unique Sunburst groat with F3; all the other specimens I have seen have F4. Assuming the changes in form of the letter F to have taken place on crowns and groats within a few months of each other, it is reasonable to think that the Sunburst might first have appeared towards the end of 1537. Did anything occur about this time which might justify a special issue, and one with such a curious but significant mark?

Surely the obvious answer is the birth of Henry's long-looked-for son and heir, Edward, in October 1537. This was the one thing lacking to set the seal on his life, and for it he had broken with Rome and committed most of the crimes in the calendar. No doubt he considered that this showed that the Sun of Heaven, so long obscured, was once more shining on him. The special character of the issue is sufficient to explain the lack of mules. It would also explain why no crowns are known with the Sunburst, whereas there are rare fine gold sovereigns and angels with the mark, the first known in the second coinage. Obviously, only fine gold and fine silver were fitting to celebrate an event of such importance to the Tudor dynasty.

We are at last in a position to deal with the fine sovereigns on which Mr. Whitton has based most of his case for the order and dates of the marks in this coinage, particularly his theory that the Sunburst was current in 1532-3 preceding the Arrow. He has presented a most painstakingly detailed history of all known specimens, and has traced one obverse die through some remarkable changes, noting all the coins struck from it with their attendant reverses. In essentials the evidence provided is as follows:

1. A sovereign is known with Sunburst on both sides, each mark being struck over a Portcullis, i.e. first-coinage dies altered.

2. Another sovereign is known struck from the same two dies with a Lis struck over the Sunburst in each case.
3. A third sovereign is known from the same obverse die as 1 and 2, but with considerable alterations in lettering and design detail, i.e. a third version of the die though still with the mint-mark Lis. This is known with two different reverses having the mint-mark Arrow.

Here the order of marks is certainly shown to have been: Sunburst, Lis, Arrow, and having in mind the position of the Arrow mark on crowns and groats, Mr. Whitton has naturally had to make his full list: Rose, Lis, Sunburst, Lis, Arrow, but I think I have already shown that the Sunburst followed the Arrow, and therefore in the case of the fine sovereigns we have to accept the fact that after the Sunburst and Lis 3, the Arrow, which had not previously appeared on these coins and was then current on the crowns, was adopted.

Strangely, and obviously without realizing it, Mr. Whitton has provided a very strong indication, if not proof, that the Arrow was, in fact, current on the sovereigns immediately before the 23 ct. coinage of 1544. On p. 18 he says:

The letter punches in question (used on the sovereigns) show different forms of A, E, and V, forming links as follows:

1. Between the old Lis dies in their altered form (A₁, E₁, and V₁) and the new Lis dies (A₁, E₁, V₁, and V₂).
2. Between the new Lis dies (A₁, E₁, V₂) and the Arrow dies (A₁ and A₂, E₁ and E₂, V₂ and V₃).
3. Most conclusively, between the latest Arrow die and the earliest die (i.m. Lis) of the next coinage of 1544 (A₂, E₂, V₃ on both).

This third link of Whitton's would be acceptable if it represented a lapse of one or two years, but to my mind it would be quite incredible, if, as Whitton thought, a gap of 11 or 12 years was involved.

To show that this was, in fact, what Mr. Whitton had in mind it is only necessary to quote the following from later on the same page as the above:

... a surviving Pyx trial record shows that between March 1533 and October 1534 no fine gold was coined at all. Nor does fine gold appear in any later trial. This may perhaps imply that the coinage of fine gold and therefore of Second Coinage sovereigns had ceased before March 1533, when, moreover, the Arrow period was not very old.

The Pyx trial records referred to are those quoted by Mr. H. Symonds in the *B.N.J.* vol. x, and reference to them will show that the fine sovereigns are not, in fact, mentioned at all. Here is a summary:

Date	Period	Metals tested
4.6.1527 . .	22.10.1526 to 4.6.1527	{ Fine gold (Angels and halves, George nobles and halves) Crown gold (Crowns and halves) Silver only
21.11.1527 . .	4.6.1527 to 21.11.1527	Silver only
20.5.1530 . .	4.6.1527 to 20.5.1530	"
1.3.1533 . .	20.5.1530 to 1.3.1533	"
30.10.1534 . .	1.3.1533 to 30.10.1534	Crown gold (Crowns, halves)
8.5.1537 . .	(No details)	
10.6.1540 . .	(Period not given)	Crown gold (Crowns, halves)

If these records are to be taken at their face value then no crowns or halves were coined between 4 June 1527 and 1 March 1533, which is manifestly absurd. I think we can ignore the Pyx records.

Mr. Whitton has only made passing mention of the bullion records of fine gold coinage, but they certainly do not support his theory that sovereigns were being struck in 1532-3. The first entry specifically mentioning 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ ct. gold appears during the mint year Michaelmas 1536 to Michaelmas 1537, that is, incidentally, the year finishing fourteen days *before* the birth of Edward VI. While confirming pretty closely my date for the beginning of the Sunburst mark, this does appear to spoil the dramatic possibilities of my theory as to its significance. It is true that it is only a small quantity of 31 lb. or say 750 sovereigns, while what was probably the main issue is concealed in the gold total for the following three years where the fineness is not given. It is just possible that this was an isolated issue with another mark, Lis or Arrow, made for another purpose, and of which no specimen has survived, but I think it could very well have been an issue prepared a month or two before the expected event, so that if the child were of the desired sex, distribution of the new pieces could be made without any delay.

The last point which Mr. Whitton brings forward in support of his early date for the Sunburst is the E with weak centre bar which appears on all groats of that mark (in HENRIC and on the reverse). This he has found also on some Lis dies, and on half-groats of York of Archbishop Lee (1531-4). He does add, however: "and oddly, perhaps a belated survival, on a Pheon reverse muled with the Lis". It is true that some Lis 2 groats have this letter, but I have found it also on several Lis 3 dies, on Pheon/Lis and Lis/Pheon mules, and also on groats with Pheon both sides, so that its use was not confined to one period, and it is quite valueless as an indication of date. Incidentally, it is one of the few cases I know where punches of an unusual type were used at widely separated times.

Having presented my own case and answered to the best of my ability the arguments Mr. Whitton gives for his, I will conclude with a table of the marks and dates for the Second Coinage which I hope I have now successfully established:

<i>Mark</i>	<i>Groats</i>	<i>Crowns</i>	<i>Sovereigns</i>
Rose	1526-29	1526-29	..
Lis 1 }	1529-32	1529-32	..
Lis 2 }			
Arrow	1532-37	1532-37	..
Sunburst	1537-38	..	1537-38
Lis 3	1538-41	..	1538-41
(Arrow)	..	1537-42	1541-42
Pheon	1541-42	1542	..