IN 1799 the National Collection acquired, with many other coins from the Cracherode
Bequest, a gold piece of Henry VIII purporting to be a ryal (Pl. XI, 1). It first appeared
about 1780, and remains unique. Accepted without question for well over a century, it
was condemned as false by Dr. G. C. Brooke, and relegated to the forgery series. This
condemnation was sustained by Whitton. I consider that the grounds on which this
piece was condemned are inadequate, and it has accordingly been restored to its
appropriate place.

That ryal's were authorized, and indeed struck, under Henry VIII is not in dispute.
It is also apparent that they must have been exceedingly rare. The Flemish coin-valua-
tion books illustrate such rarities as Henry VII’s ryal, and Henry VIII’s crown of the
rose, but can offer no picture of a Henry VIII ryal.

The piece under discussion is of good gold (S.G. 19-4, i.e. approximately pure) and
weighs nearly correctly, 118-6 grains. Whitton writes as follows: ‘The piece . . . may
have been copied from a genuine coin. Though plausible in its ensemble and weight, its
detail is unconvincing. It shows, for instance, the King wearing the now obsolete open
crown, and both the lettering and the form of the i.m. Portcullis differ materially from
those seen on any other piece of Henry VIII.’ Such criticism is confused. The piece is
manifestly not a cast, though even if it were, it would still be evidence for the original.
A struck forgery of such quality, and with the peculiar archaic crown mentioned by
Whitton, produced c. 1780 is inconceivable, and we must therefore suppose it contem-
porary. Whitton’s other detailed criticisms are now seen to be without foundation.
Our coin has in fact the same fount of letters and stops found on the Portcullis angels
and groats (Pl. XI, 2, 3). Identity even extends to a characteristic flaw in the mark of
contraction after HENRIC and VIII.

There is, no doubt, a superficial similarity between our ryal and the rose noble of
Edward IV (Pl. XI, 4). It is, however, quite out of the question that one could have
been tooled from the other. In the first place, tooing is manifestly absent. Secondly, it
would require a complete reworking of the margin to construct the legend and stops as
we have them. Thirdly, Henry’s hair hangs straight down after the manner of the early
Tudors; Edward IV’s was always curled in the Plantagenet style. Fourthly, the obverse
rose, with its hollow petals and bold looped outline, is quite different from Edward’s
flat-petalled flower. Fifthly, Henry’s coat of arms is furnished with bulbous-headed
lis, in sharp contrast to the thin pointed fleurs used for Edward.

Objections to the form of the privy mark have no greater validity. The crowned port-
cullis has two basic shapes, with and without barbs to the vertical bars. The chains are
always added to the die separately, and have various shapes, looped and otherwise. The curious cabled effect of our ryal’s portcullis chains is almost certain due to the
double striking evident on the adjacent inner circle.
My evidence yields the following conclusion. The piece is not an eighteenth-century concoction. To make it, the forger would have needed to collate the genuine groat and angel founts, stops and all, and reproduce them complete with flaws. It is not a cast. It is not tooled from an Edward IV ryal—the only series of correct weight and general type. It uses genuine Tower letters of the Portcullis period. I conclude that the Henry VIII ryal is certainly authentic.

We are left with the archaic crown, for the hair style beneath is Tudor enough. Perhaps it was hoped at first to give the coin some of the continental popularity enjoyed by its predecessor. It may be that the changes in financial policy evidenced by the Second Coinage of 1526 accounts for its discontinuance, for there is reason to suppose that our ryal belongs late in the Portcullis period. The bulbous-headed lis of the ryal are found, not on the Portcullis angels and groats, but on those bearing the subsequent Sunburst and Lis marks. The only trial of the pyx under Henry VIII to mention ryals shows them being ‘tried’ with George nobles. We may perhaps see here evidence both of the date of the only surviving example and of the circumstances which render it so rare.

A COPY OF THE CROWN OF THE ROSE IN LEEDS MUSEUM

Through the kindness of Dr. Owen, formerly Director of the City Museum, Leeds, I am able to publish a remarkable imitation of the exceedingly rare crown of the rose of 1526 (Pl. XI, 5). This was found on the site of a fair—as fakes often are—on Woodhouse Moor (Nat. Grid. ref. SE 292354) and has been acquired by the Leeds Museum.

The piece is of pewter gilt, and appears to be cast from a genuine coin (struck from the same dies as the specimen in the National Collection (Pl. XI, 6)) and the details of both obverse and reverse designs are exactly reproduced. The lettering, however, was recut in the mould, and the result has been to barbarize the legends, though traces of the original impression can still be seen at some points.

The mould may have served to produce fakes, but it may be doubted whether the piece in question is a forgery. It weighs 116·2 grains, as compared with the 51 grains of its prototype. It is more significant that its weight is almost exactly double that of the common crown of the double rose (57·3 gr.) and I would suggest that it is in fact a weight. Indeed the choice of a discontinued, but appropriate, design might in view of its metrology be held to remove the piece definitely from the class of forgery to that of unofficial coin weight.

There is a distinct pinch in the side immediately above the crown on the obverse, suggesting the possibility of the object having served as a pendant ornament at some stage of its career.

A LOST VARIETY OF THE GEORGE NOBLE

That well-known rarity the George noble (Fig. 1) is one of many fine coins that impart a welcome variety to the designs of the Tudor period. This note draws attention to the occurrence in Flemish coin-valuation books of a variety which is not known to have survived, and which appears to be unrecorded (the lower coin on Fig. 2). It differs substantially from all known George nobles. On the George side, the saint brandishes
a sword instead of thrusting with his lance, while the dragon’s tail curls up over the horse’s back. On the ship side, the vessel is furnished with three cruciform masts, with rigging, as opposed to the usual one, and the letters HR are omitted. Since the valuation books regularly misquote marginal legends and make no attempt to reproduce letter forms, the evidence of the illustration on these points has little value. There can be no doubt, however, that in 1551 the compiler of our book believed that two varieties of the George noble existed and, since his purpose was purely practical, there seems no good reason to doubt this. It may yet appear, to justify Joos Lambrecht’s entry.

A BASE GROAT IN THE NAME OF HENRY VIII, 
WITH A FRENCH COUNTERMARK

In June 1640 the government of Louis XIII of France decreed that billon *douzaines* should no longer remain in circulation, unless they received the countermark of a fleur-de-lis within an oval frame. This allowed them to remain current, passing for one

1 Joos Lambrecht, *D’Onghevaluwer de gauden Hertooghdommen, Graafschappen, Heerlichheden Land ende zelveren Munte van diverschen Coningrijcken*, Ghent, 1551.
denier. Many pieces survive bearing this surcharge (Pl. XI, 7), but unexpected is the discovery of the mark on a base Canterbury groat in the name of Henry VIII (Pl. XI, 8). The coin, in the British Museum, was struck under Edward VI and is type (d), second variety, of Whitton’s classification. Base groats disappeared rapidly from currency in England after 1561, and it is remarkable that one could still be found circulating in France nearly a century after issue. The standard of the base groat (40 gr., 4 oz. fine) compares closely with that of the billon douzaines, most of which were about 36 gr., 3 oz. fine. In its present condition the groat weighs 31.3 gr. A group of four countermarked douzaines was found to average 33.0 gr.

A SUPPOSED PATTERN SOVEREIGN OF ELIZABETH I

In 1742 Horace Walpole acquired in the sale of the Earl of Oxford’s collection a lot including an object described as ‘a piece of a Sovereign of Elizabeth I’ (Pl. XI, 9). This passed through the Strawberry Hill sale in 1842 and is now in the National Collection. Walpole wrote of it: ‘It is a fragment of one of her last broad pieces, representing her horridly old and deformed: An entire coin with this image is not known: It is universally supposed that the die was broken by her command, and that some workman of the mint cut out this morsel, which contains barely the face . . . it has never been engraved.’ Since the piece was unknown before this time, the ‘universal supposition’ is probably no more than Walpole’s own uncontroverted conjecture.

Kenyon and Brooke, amongst others, ignore the piece but, though it was implicitly condemned by Lawrence, a general impression remains that it is an authentic pattern. I consider it to be a demonstrable fake.

That it was once a genuine piece is beyond doubt. The reverse die has a characteristic flaw found on an anchor-marked sovereign of 1597–1600 (Pl. XI, 10). The obverse, however, is the product of ruthless tooling, which has removed the inner circle on either side of the head. Examination under a low-power microscope clearly shows it running below the crown. The hag-like countenance and crude ruff are the results of a most thorough recutting.

An act of vandalism, perpetrated in the early eighteenth century, we must suppose, has turned a genuine Elizabeth sovereign, perhaps already mutilated, into a worthless fraud. It is not surprising that subsequent forgers were found to realize Walpole’s desire for an entire coin with this spurious image (Pl. XI, 11).

1 Lot 109.
2 Sale no. 10, lot 9.
3 Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England (1758), i, p. 125.
4 BNJ iv (1907), p. 316.