HENRY VIII's experiments in debasement during the early 1540's quickly brought English coin into disrepute, for while coins of the old standards appreciated in value those of the new issue depreciated at the exchanges, sometimes even to the point of being unacceptable. In such circumstances it would have been wise to allow a considerable time for confidence in royal finances to recover, and to weigh carefully the dangers of accelerating inflation before embarking on further debasement. However, by the spring of 1545 the deterioration of the international situation and the increasing financial dilemma of the Crown could brook no such delay. Money was needed urgently and it was essential that debasement, which had already yielded a substantial profit and given promise of even better returns in the future, should be exploited to the full. To achieve these ends it was necessary either to continue the existing standards and expand production, or to maintain production and lower the standards, or to combine both possibilities by increasing production and also lowering the standards. It is some measure of the king's great need that the third course was decided upon. The standards were lowered and four new mints were opened: Canterbury, York, Southwark and another at the Tower. Of all these mints Southwark was to become the most important and yet through want of documentary evidence it has remained the least well known. Some of the documents relating to Southwark, such as the original Establishment and the early indentures, may always remain untraced, but fortunately the accounts have now come to light and from them it is possible to suggest at least the main outlines of the mint's brief history.

Established in June 1545, Southwark mint was 'almost directly over against Saint Georges church' in 'a large and most sumptuous house, builded by Charles Brandon late Duke of Suffolk, in the reign of Henry the eight, which was called Suffolke House, but comming afterwardes into the Kings hands, the same was called Southwarke place.' The site was little more than a mile from the main royal mint at the Tower, and the new mint drew upon the pool of trained staff within the Tower for some of its principal officers. John York, the new under-treasurer, had previously been appointed assay-master at the Tower, and the salary of 100 marks for this office was now annexed to his salary of 100 marks as under-treasurer to give him a total income of 200 marks per annum. Robert Broke, the comptroller, had been appointed comptroller in the Tower in June 1544, and he continued to exercise this office while fulfilling, unpaid, the duties of comptroller at Southwark. In December 1547

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1 See the increasing number of complaints printed in Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, (L. P. Hen. VII) e.g., xix, i, nos. 654, 763, 836, 869.
3 Between 1 June 1544 and 31 March 1545 the king's gross profit was £36,101 18s. 1d. Public Record Office, Exchequer, King's Remembrancer, Accounts Various, (K. R., Acc. Var.) 302/27.
4 In all Sir John York made three reckonings for his office at Southwark and, although the draft of the last one has been preserved amongst the Treasury papers, the fair copies of this and the other two accounts do not seem to have survived. Therefore it is indeed fortunate that Sir John York took the unusual step, presumably as a precaution against any further claim being made upon him, of having his accounts enrolled by the Exchequer.
7 L. P. Hen. VIII, xix, i, no. 812/16: K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trim. 41 m. 20d.
Broke was replaced at Southwark by Thomas Fletewood, who had worked in the Tower as teller under Sir Martin Bowes.¹ The assay-master, William Knight, the surveyor, Richard Wigmore, the surveyor of the meltings, Dennis Coventry, and the two melters, Bede Bacon and John Monger, were also transferred from the Tower;² and it was to the Tower that York, Knight and Bacon returned, along with five other officers, when Southwark was closed in 1551.³ In addition to these officers, Southwark was planned originally to have a teller, a finer, a clerk, a porter, two blanchers and two labourers, but as the business of the mint grew this staff of fifteen officials was augmented by the office of potter which was held by the finer, another surveyor of the meltings, and four more labourers⁴. At one time it may also have been the intention that the new mint should have its own engraver, because ‘John Prale gravor of Irons’ was ‘appoyntydy by the sayde late kyng (Henry VIII) to make dyverse experiences of his scyence there.’⁵ The account does not give the date either of Prale’s appointment or of his dismissal and therefore the period of his experiments could fall anywhere between the opening of the mint and Michaelmas 1547, the concluding date of the account in which he is mentioned. However, Prale cannot have proved satisfactory because he was dismissed with a reward of £16, and throughout the remainder of its brief existence Southwark was without its own individual engraver, dependent, like Canterbury and York, upon the engravers and sinkers of the Tower for its coining irons⁶.

At first it was intended that Southwark, like York and Canterbury, should not produce gold coin, since the first indenture of 16 June 1545 provided only for the coining of silver, 6 oz. fine.⁷ Production began in July, but the financial needs of the Crown grew so desperate in the following month that it was thought necessary, if money were to be had in time, to extend York’s commission to include the production of gold coin.⁸ A new commission was

¹ Ibid., 13d: Calendar of Patent Rolls Edward VI, (C.P.R. Ed. VI) ii, 133: L. P. Hen. VIII, xx, i, no. 620/25.
² See the list of fees in K.R., Acc. Var., 302/27.
³ Compare the list of fees and officials in York’s last account for Southwark with that in his account for the Tower mint, K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trin. 41 m. 18, 18d; 22, 22d.
⁴ The Establishment of 16 June 1545, laying down the offices, the duties appertaining to them and the other regulations concerning the management of the mint has not survived. Therefore, details of office given here are based upon information given with the lists of fees in York’s three accounts for Southwark, K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trin. 41m. 6, 6d; 13, 13d, 14; 18, 18d.
⁵ Ibid., m. 6d.
⁶ Since the accounts show quite clearly that Southwark did not employ a permanent salaried engraver and that the single brief experiment in engraving was over by Michaelmas 1547, it is mystifying to find that both extant Southwark indentures contain clauses regulating the employment of engravers and the custody of coining irons. It could be argued that these clauses had originally been included to cover the period of Prale’s experiments and, if he did continue to engrave until Michaelmas 1547, this explanation could account for the wording of the 1547 indenture. However, it seems unlikely that Prale influenced the drafting of the indentures, because he was certainly not at Southwark after Michaelmas 1547 and yet the 1548 indenture still referred to the employment of engravers and the custody of irons. Alternatively, it is possible that the clerks who copied out the Southwark indentures were in error in including such clauses, but this also seems unlikely because the same clerks were careful to ensure that the indentures of the non-graving mints, York and Canterbury, did not contain provisions concerning engravers and the custody of irons. Then, too, it seems plausible to argue that, if it were possible for Broke to be comptroller at Southwark, party to the indentures there but fulfilling his duties unpaid and therefore not figuring amongst the officers salaried at Southwark, could it not also be possible that the Tower engraver spent some time at Southwark, his work there regulated by the indentures but his salary payable at the Tower and therefore not mentioned in the Southwark accounts? Such an explanation is tempting, particularly as the proximity of the Tower and Southwark would certainly have facilitated such an arrangement, but again there are serious objections. Available evidence for earlier and later periods suggests that it was the practice for the engraver to remain in the Tower and to send coining irons prepared there even as far afield as York and Durham. Moreover, if the Tower engraver had worked outside the Tower his activities would have constituted a breach of the Tower indenture, which, as in 1547, stipulated that the engraver was to work only in such a place within the Tower as the under-treasurer should appoint.
⁸ L. P. Hen. VIII, xx, ii, no. 302.
drawn up extending to Southwark the provision in the Tower indenture of 27 March 1545 for the production of gold coin 22 carat fine. On 5 September 1545 Wriothesley sent the commission to the king; it was approved the next day and actual production began on the fifteenth.

The denominations of the coins produced under these first two orders are known with reasonable certainty, even though the original indentures have not survived and the accounts reveal nothing other than that testons and groats of the first stamp of the mint were shown to Henry VIII. It is quite clear from numismatic evidence that Southwark produced a full range of gold and the larger silver coins to correspond with those which, according to Lowndes, were ordered at the Tower that year: that is to say, the sovereign and its half and the crown and its half in gold, and the teston, groat, half-groat and penny in silver. The half-penny and farthing were also mentioned in this Tower indenture but whether or not Southwark participated in the striking of these coins is questionable. The halfpenny, if struck, is not distinguishable from the Tower coin, while examples of the farthing remain unknown even to the Tower.

On 1 April 1546 a new indenture reduced the fineness of gold coin to 20 carat and that of silver to 4 oz., and in the following year, 5 April 1547, the indenture confirmed these standards and provided for the production of the sovereign and its half and the crown and its half in gold, and the teston, groat, half-groat, penny, half-penny and farthing in silver. In tale each pound weight of gold was to contain £30 and each pound weight of silver 48s. All these coins, except the teston and the farthing, were re-ordered at the same fineness and weight by the indenture of 16 February 1548, and on the same day a commission empowered the officials at Southwark to receive testons and convert them to coin 4 oz. fine, 48s. being cut from each pound weight.

On 24 January 1549, an attempt was made to improve the coinage by raising the standard of gold to 22 carat and ordering silver coins, possibly shillings and sixpences, 8oz. fine. These good intentions were maintained with regard to gold, because the commission of 12 April 1549 confirmed this new standard, while that of 18 December 1550 ordered the sovereign, rial, angel and its half at the old standard of 23 carat 3½ grains fine. Hitherto it has been generally accepted that this commission of 1550 was not acted upon and that existing specimens of fine Edwardian sovereigns, angels and angelets should be assigned to the Tower issue of 1551. The Southwark accounts, however, show quite clearly that whereas there was a small production of gold at Southwark according to the 1550 commission, that part of the commission of 5 October 1551 ordering the sovereign, angel and angelet 23 carat 3½ grains fine was not acted upon during Sir John York’s brief term as under-treasurer at the

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1 K.R., M.R. 331 Rec. Trin. 41 m. 2d.
2 L. P. Hen. VIII, xx, ii 302, but the original makes the point more clearly.
3 K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trin. 41 m. 2d; ibid. m. 2d; W. Lowndes, A report containing an essay for the amendment of the silver coins, London, 1695, 43-4.
4 Ibid., m. 3.
6 I am indebted to Mr. Herbert Schneider not only for this numismatic information but also for his most generous and helpful criticism of the paper in general.
7 K.R., Acc. Var., 300/3 no. 8.
8 Ibid., no. 7.
9 K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trin. 41 m. 7d. 10.
10 K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trin. 41 m. 7d. 8. Again the original indenture has not survived and the accounts do not give the denominations. However, Southwark probably coined shillings and sixpences as did Canterbury at this time, K.R. Acc. Var. 302/25. Certainly each pound weight was to contain 96s. by tale, K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trin. 41 m. 10.
11 Ibid., m. 8.
12 C.P.R. Ed. VI, iii, 345.
14 See the table of production p. 140.
Whether or not this small production of standard gold at Southwark according to the 1550 commission was, in view of its unrealistic rating of £28 16s/lb., ever issued, and to what extent Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, the other under-treasurer party to the commission of 5 October 1551, succeeded in fulfilling all its provisions and produced standard gold at the Tower are questions which in the absence of further documentary evidence, particularly the accounts of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, the numismatist alone must answer. Clearly, however, some doubt must now exist as to whether all extant specimens of Edwardian standard gold should be assigned to the Tower. In contrast to this improvement, however, it was thought necessary, in face of the deteriorating financial position of the Crown, to embark upon fresh exploitation of the silver standard. The limited production of 8 oz. silver made entirely from converted testons was superseded in April 1549 by an order for shillings 6 oz. fine. In the following February a commission empowered the officers of Southwark to receive up to £4,000 base testons and to recoin them into groats, half-groats, pence and half-pence at 4 oz. fine and 48s. to the pound weight. Finally, on 14 April 1551, silver shillings 3 oz. fine were ordered, thus far the lowest standard during the debasement. Production of this 3 oz. fine coin was divided fairly evenly between Southwark and the Tower, and, although he was not officially under-treasurer at the Tower until 1 October 1551 and was unable to claim a fee for the exercise of this office until then, Sir John York supervised production at the Tower through a deputy and was accountable for production there as well as at Southwark.

This last desperate bout of debasement by which the boy king had imagined 'the debt of the Realm might be payed, the Country defended from any sudden Attempt, and the Coin amended,' could not solve the financial problems of the Crown. On the contrary, it proved quite conclusively that reform of the currency was essential if the finances of the government were to regain the stability of former years. Deliberations on how this reform could be carried through went on throughout September 1551 and finally, on 5 October 1551, a new indenture provided for the coinage of gold at 23 carat 3\frac{1}{2} grains fine and 22 carat fine, and silver at 11 oz. 1 dwt. fine. Southwark produced no part of this new coinage, however, because reform, embodying a return to fine standards for the larger coins and the controlled production of the smaller debased silver coins, implicitly denied the principle of mass-production for royal profit, the very reason why Southwark and the other mints had been established. Actual production at Southwark ceased in July 1551, in August Sir Edmund Pekham and Sir John York were ordered 'to cleanse the house of Southwark Place and to repayre it, leaveng it in as good a state as they founde it', and by 1 October 1551 Sir John York and the other officials were at their posts at the Tower mint.

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1 Sir John York was only officially under-treasurer at the Tower for six months, from Michaelmas 1551 to 31 March 1552 and the account for this term of office was enrolled by the Exchequer along with his accounts for Southwark, K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trin. 41 m. 21–3. Although no angel gold was produced at this time the rest of the 1551 commission was acted upon, 109 lbs. of crown gold and 18,880 lbs. of silver 11 oz. 1 dwt. fine being produced.
2 K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trin. 41 m. 10, 10d.
3 Ibid., m. 8.
4 C.P.R. Ed. VI, iii, 348.
5 K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trin. 41 m. 15.
6 Ibid., m. 21.
7 Treasury, Miscellanea Various, 190 no. 5, on this, a draft of York's third account, his claim to six months' fee for being under-treasurer of the Tower was disallowed by the auditor.
8 K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trin. 41 m. 20d.
10 Ibid., 44–6.
11 British Museum, Additional Manuscripts, 18,759 f. 69. The details were given by H. Symonds, The English Coinages of Edward VI, 'BN', xi, 152–153.
12 K.R., M.R., 331 Rec. Trin. 41 m. 16, 16d.
14 This was the date on which York's last account, as under-treasurer for the Tower only, began.
In the beginning Southwark had been planned, like York and Canterbury, purely as a silver-producing mint and, even after the privilege of minting gold had been granted to it, enjoyed powers no greater than those given previously to the mint at the Tower under Thomas Knight or subsequently to the mints at Bristol or Durham House. Nevertheless, the available evidence suggests that throughout these crucial years of debasement Southwark had enjoyed a prosperity and rising importance unknown by any other mint except the main mint in the Tower under Sir Martin Bowes. Certainly Southwark stayed open longer than any other provincial mint except York, and on the last comparable occasion, that is to say during the production of shillings 3 oz. fine, output at Southwark even exceeded the 22,430 lbs. 4½ ozs. of coin produced at the main mint at the Tower.

* My thanks are due to Dr. P. H. Ramsey for reading this paper.

**TABLES OF PRODUCTION AT SOUTHWARK MINT 1545–1551.**

(1) **Silver Coin.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of Production*</th>
<th>Fineness</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Began</td>
<td>Ended</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 vii 1545</td>
<td>31 iii 1546</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 iv 1546</td>
<td>31 i 1549</td>
<td>Ap., Ju., Jly., 1547,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 x 1549</td>
<td>31 iii 1551</td>
<td>Ap., Aug. 1548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 iv 1551</td>
<td>31 vii 1551</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) **Conversion of Testons.**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Period of Production*</th>
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<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Began</td>
<td>Ended</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 iv 1548</td>
<td>31 vii 1549</td>
<td>May–Dec. 1548,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ii 1549</td>
<td>28 ii 1549</td>
<td>Feb., Ap., Ju. 1549.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 iv 1549</td>
<td>30 ix 1549</td>
<td>May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 v 1550</td>
<td>31 iii 1551</td>
<td>Ju., 1550–Feb. 1551.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All dates are inclusive.

1 A detailed comparison of the production of the mints is not yet possible because some of the accounts are still missing. However, it seems probable that Canterbury (production of silver coin, 98,129 lbs. 3½ ozs., and conversion of testons, 26,858 lbs. 9 ozs., K.R., Acc. Var., 362/25.) was the largest provincial producer next to Southwark.

2 K.R., M.R., Rec. Trin. 41 m. 16, 16d.
(3) Gold coin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of Production*</th>
<th>Fineness</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Began</td>
<td>Ended</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 ix 1545</td>
<td>31 iii 1546</td>
<td>22 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 iv 1546</td>
<td>31 xii 1548</td>
<td>20 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 i 1549</td>
<td>31 xii 1550</td>
<td>Dec. 1546, Jan., Mar., Ap. 1547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 i 1551</td>
<td>30 vi 1551</td>
<td>Jan., Apr., Jly., Oct., Nov. 1550. Feb., Apr., May 1551</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total | | | 12,995 $10\frac{3}{8}$ |

*All dates are inclusive.*