It is now fifty years and more since Henry Symonds began to transform our knowledge of
the mints and their activities during the great Tudor debasement by his meticulous research
among the public records which, at that time, were a source of information largely untapped
by numismatists. The great wealth of material unearthed in the course of his labours, which
were all the more difficult since many of the printed Calendars of documents which are avail-
able today had not then been produced, was written up with such care that the broad out-
lines of the picture which emerged have scarcely been improved upon from that day to this.
His was a pioneering achievement of the first importance and as such it has rightly won
acclaim. In common with most scholars who work in the early modern period, however,
Symonds was sometimes confronted with gaps in his sources and with evidence which beyond
some simple statement of fact, say, the name and title of an official, proved so intractable
that he was forced to abandon his accustomed precision in favour of surmise or, less commonly,
a frank admission that he could add nothing to existing knowledge. Consequently there were
some aspects of his analysis which were less well founded than others and which resulted
either in Symonds himself obscuring the true course of events or in those who subsequently
made use of his analysis misinterpreting his guarded comments. One instance of these processes
at work concerns Stephen Vaughan's under-treasurership at the Tower mint, and it is with
this subject that this paper is concerned.

I

Stephen Vaughan first became associated with the mint in 1544 when he was appointed
under-treasurer at the Tower with a salary of £133 6s. 8d.1 His patent of office dated only
from 11th July but he was named with Sir Martin Bowes in the indenture of 28 May 1544
and in fact received his salary from the preceding Lady Day.2 The occasion of Vaughan's
appointment was what Symonds described as the 'domestic revolution' in the organization
of the Tower mint, which in 1544 resulted in the division of the 'establishment into two,
and shortly afterwards into three separate mints which worked independently, each being
placed under the control of an officer who was styled "under-treasurer".3 In being associated
in this way with Sir Martin Bowes who was the most experienced and probably the most
influential mint official of his day, and also with the Tower mint which was the very centre
of coinage operations, Vaughan was clearly intended to be a key figure in the king's mint.
But just how important was his role has never been decided. The accounts of the work done
in his mint have not survived and hitherto it has been customary to surmise with Symonds
that as Vaughan 'was a party to the indenture of 1544 . . . he was not unemployed, and that
the products of his "establishment" were much the same as those made by his colleague
Sir Martin Bowes.'

3 H. Symonds, 'The Documentary Evidence for
the English Royal Coinages of Henry VII and
In the following year, 1545, Vaughan was again named in the coinage indenture with Sir Martin Bowes and the appearance in the same document of the name of Thomas Knight, also in the capacity as under-treasurer, suggested to Symonds the tripartite division in the mint already alluded to. Symonds was able to discover the accounts of Thomas Knight and use them to show what was happening in the mint of this latest recruit to the Tower, but again he could find nothing for Stephen Vaughan. In 1546 and 1547 the case was similar: Vaughan was named along with Bowes and Knight in the indentures of those years but, although accounts could be found for his colleagues, his remained elusive. This was a dilemma indeed, for Symonds knew from other evidence that Vaughan was in fact receiving his fee as under-treasurer and that Vaughan and his executor were subsequently to pay over to the Crown the profits which arose from his operations at the mint. Here was what seemed to be a clear case of failure of evidence and Symonds could only ‘express the hope that attention having now been directed to the triple organizations at the Tower, it will become possible to assign one of the unappropriated mint-marks to Stephen Vaughan’s workshops’. The threefold division of the Tower mint which Symonds saw coming into being in April 1545 lasted, again according to his calculations, hardly more than two and a half years. The indenture of 16 February 1548 named only Sir Martin Bowes and Stephen Vaughan as under-treasurers in the Tower and Symonds drew the conclusion that ‘the Tower was thenceforth to be worked as two mints only.’ In January 1550 Nicholas Throckmorton succeeded Stephen Vaughan at one of these mints and in October of the same year Christopher Levens may have succeeded Sir Martin Bowes at the other. Throckmorton continued in office down to March 1552, as did Sir John York who had become head of the other Tower mint at least by the preceding Michaelmas. From March 1552, when both York and Throckmorton were dismissed, the Tower mint was once again a unitary body and, the period of the Elizabethan recoinage apart, was so to remain throughout the rest of the Tudor period.

II

This bold interpretation of events which Symonds expounded was subsequently challenged in part by C. A. Whitton. In a long and scholarly review of Henry VIII’s coinage Whitton suggested that Vaughan may well have been put into the mint as a sort of watchdog on his colleagues and, furthermore, that the ‘absence of the accounts may now suggest more strongly that it (i.e. Vaughan’s post) was a sinecure, that from 1544 to his death in 1549 his connexion with the mint was purely nominal, and that he took no active part in the production of coins.’ Such a view is not wholly acceptable, for it ignores two important pieces of evidence: first, that Stephen Vaughan is known to have paid to the high treasurer of the mints no less than £37,176 13s. 10d. in profits from his mint and, second, that Vaughan’s executor ultimately drew up an account for Vaughan’s office as under-treasurer and helped to clear up the liabilities which remained on that account by disbursing further sums on the Crown’s behalf. Both pieces of information show clearly that Vaughan’s post was not always a sinecure and since Symonds made clear reference in his analysis to both of them it is difficult to see why Whitton should have reached the conclusion that he did.

2 Symonds, op. cit., BNJ, X, 170.
3 Symonds, op. cit., BNJ, XI, 131.
4 Ibid. 146.
5 Ibid. 156.

6 C. A. Whitton, ‘The Coinages of Henry VIII and Edward VI in Henry’s Name’, BNJ, XXVI, 64.
But if Whitton’s criticisms are to some extent—but not wholly, as we shall see—wide of the mark there can be no doubt that Symonds’s interpretation remains suspect to some degree, for there is reason to believe that there were only two mints in the Tower during the debasement period and that the second of these did not begin operations until 1545. One reason for arguing that Vaughan did not take up his mint appointment in 1544 as had been intended is that at the time of the reorganization he is known to have been occupied in Antwerp about the king’s financial affairs and that apart from a brief visit to London in the autumn of 1544 he continued to serve the Crown in this capacity. His absence abroad would not of course have prevented him from operating a mint in England by deputy but such a course of action seems highly improbable. In the first place, we know that Vaughan’s enforced absence from England worried him: he feared that unless he were allowed to return home Pekham would replace him at the mint, and on 26 August 1544 he suggested to Paget, the king’s secretary, that ‘If Mr chamb(er)leyne come hether (i.e. to Antwerp) I maye be sparyd here and s(er)ve in the mynt’. Such a situation suggests that Vaughan had not at the time of writing taken up his duties at the mint in any way, and this impression is strengthened by the fact of Vaughan receiving his salary for these and the subsequent months of 1544 and early 1545 from Sir Martin Bowes, the other under-treasurer at the Tower. For had Vaughan really opened his mint in 1544 and exercised his office either in person or by deputy he would have been his own paymaster, as was every other under-treasurer of the day, receiving his salary at his own hands from some of the gross profits for which he himself was accountable.

It seems clear, then, that in respect of the year 1544–5 Whitton was right to conclude that Vaughan’s office was in fact a sinecure, and consequently it is not surprising to find that when the auditor of mint accounts, William Dunche, listed early in Edward VI’s reign all the under-treasurers who had made account before him he included Sir Martin Bowes, Thomas Knight, John York, William Tyllsworth, George Gale, and Sir William Sharington but made no reference to Stephen Vaughan. Acceptable though sinecurism may well have been to Vaughan himself it can hardly have been regarded as satisfactory by Sir Edmund Pekham and Sir Martin Bowes who had looked for some help in the production of coin once the mint had been reorganized. As debasement got under way and the old coin flooded into the mint to be recoined the pressure upon the production line became so great that delays of several months between the receipt of bullion and the issuing of new coin were experienced. The need for another mint could not long be ignored and in April 1545, when a fresh coinage indenture was sealed for the Tower, provision was duly made for a second unit of production; not by removing Vaughan from office but by creating a new and effective under-treasurer in the person of Thomas Knight. In this way the Crown did not penalise its trusted servant by depriving him of the office which his enforced stay in the Netherlands prevented him from exercising, but at the same time production of coin which was of enormous fiscal importance was not retarded. The details of Knight’s brief tenure of office have been clearly set out by Symonds and need not detain us here, except to note that both his and the accounts of Sir Martin Bowes add further support to the view that Vaughan’s post was a sinecure, at least in the early years. Sir Martin recorded that from Lady Day 1545 the salary of Vaughan was to be paid by the new under-treasurer, Thomas Knight, who in turn accounted for £366 13s. 4d. paid to Vaughan for 2 3/4 years’ salary ending Christmas 1547. Why Vaughan should continue

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2 P.R.O., SP 1/191 f. 181.
3 P.R.O., E101/302/27 m. 11.
4 P.R.O., E101/302/29 m. 12.
5 Ibid. m. 5, 10.
so long in his sinecure is a little puzzling when it is remembered that he removed the original cause of his failure to exercise his office by returning to England in November 1546. True, he continued to serve his country in the following year—as M.P. for Lancaster—but his duties at Westminster were hardly so onerous or so far removed from the Tower as to have been the prime cause of his continued absence from the mint. More likely was the existence, following the establishment in 1545 of a second unit of production within the Tower and the proliferation of mints in the provinces, of sufficient productive capacity in 1547 to cope with existing demand. Vaughan may well have had to wait for a vacancy to fall due in the existing order of things before being given the chance to exercise his office.

If this were so, he did not have to wait long. On 1 February 1548 Thomas Knight, ‘a verie honest man of good conscience’ according to one contemporary, sickened and died. At first it may well have seemed to Sir Martin Bowes that he would once more be left to shoulder the whole burden of coinage at the Tower for, although the indenture of 16 February 1548 named both him and Vaughan as under-treasurers in the Tower, if past experience were any guide he could hope for no help from Vaughan. In the years which had subvened between the first abortive attempt in 1544 to bring Vaughan into the mint and the death of Thomas Knight, however, a new mint had in fact been firmly established and it now stood only in need of a new head. In these circumstances it must have been natural to look to Vaughan to fill in practice the office he had held nominally for so long. The precise date when Vaughan did take up his duties in the Tower is still obscure, for his accounts remain elusive, but, assuming that the payment of his salary by Knight is indicative of his office being a sinecure down to Christmas 1547, it is reasonable to assume that he took over Knight’s establishment on the latter’s death on 1 February 1548 and was associated with the coinage from that date until his own death in December 1549 when he was succeeded, as Symonds has shown, by Sir Nicholas Throckmorton. It must have been in this period, February 1548 to December 1549, that the profits which he paid to Sir Edmund Pekham were made and that he struck up friendships in the mint sufficiently strong to prompt him to bequeath ‘to my loving frendes William Billingesley and Thomas Stanley’, assaymasters in the Tower, each a ring worth 40s. 0d. and to Sir Martin Bowes a third ring to the value of 53s. 4d.

III

This interpretation, which reduces both the number of mints operating in the Tower during the period of debasement and the number of years during which Stephen Vaughan enjoyed his sinecure, produces a sequence of under-treasurers for the second mint in the Tower as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under-treasurer</th>
<th>Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Knight</td>
<td>1 July 1545 to 1 February 1548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Vaughan</td>
<td>1 February 1548 to 25 December 1549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Nicholas Throckmorton</td>
<td>25 December 1549 to 25 March 1552</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is a sequence fully endorsed by Sir Edmund Pekham, high treasurer of the mints, who stated clearly in his accounts that Knight was succeeded by Vaughan and that Vaughan

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1 Richardson, op. cit. 76, 78.
2 Ibid. 79.
4 Richardson, op. cit., 79.
5 Symonds, op. cit., BNJ, XI, 142.
6 Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Wills (1549) 5 Coode.
was succeeded by Throckmorton.¹ What privy mark Vaughan used to distinguish his coins from those manufactured by the other under-treasurers is difficult to determine, for the evidence is not entirely conclusive. But one suggestion, which I owe entirely to the generosity of Mons. Herbert Schneider, is that Vaughan's privy mark was Grapple. Coins bearing this privy mark were struck only in 1548 and 1549, our new dates for Vaughan's active association with the mint, and although on these grounds alone Martlet would also qualify as Vaughan's privy mark the existence of coins bearing K/Grapple overstrikes would argue that Knight's successor, who on the evidence submitted here was Stephen Vaughan, must have used Grapple. Grapple may thus be the missing link between K and Tun and, in future, it may be found convenient to distinguish the Tower mint at which coins bearing these privy marks were produced from the neighbouring establishment by designating it Tower II.

¹ P.R.O., E351/2077. A similar statement occurs in the account of John Brown, surveyor of the Tower mint. P.R.O., AO1/1670/495. In passing it should be noted that although Tower II does not seem to have been wound up until March 1552 actual coinage production may have ceased before then.