NOTES ON EARLY TUDOR COINAGE

PHILIP GRIERSON

I. KING HENRY VII'S DANDYPRATS

Many readers of Ruding must have been intrigued by a footnote to his table of silver denominations which runs as follows: "Camden, in his Remains, article Money, says "King Henry stamped a small Coin called Dandyprats"." The citation will be found on p. 207 of the 1614 edition of Remaines Concerning Britaine, but so far as I am aware no modern authority on the coinage of Henry VII has commented on it or tried to identify the coin. G. C. Brooke, however, cited a reference to dandyprats in a document of 1530/5 which suggested that they might be some type of half-groat, an idea which was later taken up by Frey, though he offered neither justification for the idea nor explanation of the name.

The most helpful collection of references is that in the Oxford English Dictionary, though there are two important ones to be added to its list. The word was used in the sixteenth century in two senses, either for a small coin worth three-halfpence or as a term of contempt, one applied to a dwarf or to a small child. The sense of 'dwarf' is clear in the second half of the century: John Florio's Italian dictionary of 1598 translates pigméo as pigmy, dwarf, or dandiprat. The word survives with this meaning in dialect usage, especially in the north of England. In the sense of a small coin it existed in the first half of the sixteenth century, and it may be merely an accident that we find this use earlier than the other. The editors of the OED make no attempt to decide which was the original meaning of the word, or what its etymology may be.

The five earliest references are one of 1516, which shows it as a coin of inferior weight or fineness but having the nominal value of a half-groat, which was available in quantity at Tournai in that year; one of 1525, which alleges that it was a coin struck by Henry VII in 1492; one of 1530, which implies that it was sometimes found in circulation at that date; one of 1530/5, which shows it to have been then current in Ireland; and one of 1543, which gives it a contemporary value of 1½d. They are as follows:

1. An undated set of instructions delivered to Sir Richard Jerningham [Treasurer at Tournai, who was presumably travelling to England], to be shown to the King and his

---

1 I should like to express my thanks to my friends Ian Stewart, Christopher Challis, and Michael Metcalf for valuable help and comment on various sections of this paper. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Challis, who called my attention to a pair of 'dandyprat' references I had missed, resolutely declined to accept my initial explanation of the term and thus caused me to think the problem through again, and helped me in many ways with transcripts of sixteenth-century material. On bibliographical problems concerning the Ground of Artes I have been advised by Miss K. Pantzer and Mr. P. Wallis, and Mr. A. E. Werner and Mr. M. J. Hughes provided me with essential data on the fineness of Henry VIII's Tournai coins.


3 'Dandyprats', NC 1924, p. 326.


5 OED iii (1933), p. 24, s.v. DANDIPRAT.

6 A Worlde of Wordes (London, 1598), p. 277: 'Pigméo, a pigmey, a kinde of little man like a dwarf, a dandiprat, a twattle, or an elfe.'

Notices on Early Tudor Coinage 81

Council. It is bound up in Cotton MS. Caligula E.I. fo. 106 (formerly E.II. fo. 33) in the British Museum, and may be summarized as follows:

Whereas his Grace by his letters willed that the dandepratts in Mr Treasurer's hands, to the sum of xiiij li., should be delivered to his coiners to be coined in the fineness of English groats and employed in the payment of the garrison here, the said coiners say that in the melting of them the loss would be so excessive that they will in no wise meddle therewith, and the Treasurer can consequently have no succour or help by the said dandepratts towards the charge of the garrison.

If the said dandyprats had been in ready and current money, the King's treasure remaining in his said Treasurer's hands would suffice this garrison for the month beginning the 18th day of June and for another month which shall begin the 16th day of July, and in like wise it would pay the one garrison for two months which shall end the last day of July.

And inasmuch as the said dandypratts stand the said Treasurer in no stead, may it please the King's Grace to send letters to his servant Robert Fowler at Calais, willing him to receive the said xiiij li. in dandepratts at the rate of 2d the piece according as the said Treasurer received them, and for him to deliver unto the said Treasurer other xiiij li. in ready and current money.

The date of the letter must be 1516, as it fits in with the preoccupations of Jerningham in the early summer of that year, and its allusion to the June/July payments show that it was written in May or early June. The dandypratts were evidently coins having a nominal value of 2d. but with a lower silver content than that of ordinary sterling half-groats.

2. A letter of 1 April 1525 from Thomas Howard, third duke of Norfolk, to Cardinal Wolsey giving an account of his negotiations at Norwich on the previous Wednesday, the 29th 'of this monethe', for the raising of the so-called 'Amicable Grant'. Those approached had declared themselves unable to pay cash—if they did so, the consequent shortage of coin would bring about a crisis in the local cloth industry—but willing to do so in silver plate. The duke advises the acceptance of the offer, since it would reconcile the persons concerned to the grant, 'and than suche a Coyne might be devised as were the dandipratts of the king [that] ded is [at his] going ouer to Bullen: wherewith the Kings Highnes mought recompens his losse [i.e. in taking plate instead of coin] and yet the same good enough to bee spent in Francye'. The king that dead is' was a normal sixteenth-century way of saying 'the late king', and since Bullen is Boulogne the reference would be to Henry VII's continental expedition of 1492.

3. A passage in John Palsgrave's English-French grammatical dictionary, Lesclarissemment de la langue Francoyse (London, 1530). This gives under coyle (i.e. 'cull'), in respect of coin, the separating of the good from the bad, the following entry: 'I coyle with money, I trye the currante from the badde. Coyle out the dandyprattes and Yrisshe pence: Eslisez les dandyprattes et les deniers dirlande hors de la reste.'
4. A passage in a letter of R(obert) R(othe) to his son David, dated 10 October in a year which various allusions to third parties show to have been between 1530 and 1535, which refers to £10 in gold and current coin sent by the bearer, with a promise of 20s. more in ‘Irish groats and dandiprats’ to be sent before Easter. Robert Rothe was the head of a prominent Kilkenny family, and the letter was written to his son in England.

5. Robert Recorde, in his *Ground of Artes*, a treatise on arithmetic which proved one of the most successful textbooks of its kind and went through a long series of editions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, includes a list of English coins, from the sovereign down to the farthing, with their values. In the first edition, that of 1543, the list is given on fo. 65v. and expanded as follows on fo. 67r.:

In sylver, the greatest is a Grote, which containeth 4 pennies. Then is an other Grote called an Harpe, which goeth for 3d. Then next, is a penny of 2d, and then a dandypratte worth thre half penies. Nexte it a penny, then a halfpenny, and last and least of all a farthyng, whose coyne is on one syde a crosse, and on the other a purculles.

It is not necessary to carry the story any later, beyond noting that the term dandyprat continued to be used for coins of 1½d. in later editions of Recorde—Elizabeth I struck coins of this denomination between 1561 and 1582—and is elsewhere used in literature. The word had by that time come to mean a particular denomination, not a particular coin, and I would suggest that our difficulties over identifying the dandyprats of the first decades of the century result from our failure to realize that this was true even then. A coin that was extremely abundant at Tournai in 1516 cannot have been the same as one common in Ireland in the early 1530s and worth noting by Recorde in 1543. What we have to do with is a series of coins worth 1½d. in English money to which the name dandyprat was successively applied, and which evidently go back to some defective coins

---

1 *New Palaeographical Society*, Series II, Vol. ii, Pl. 153. The reading Roche there given should be Rothe; see British Museum, Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts 1916-20 (1933), pp. 327-8, Egerton 3009A, and G. D. Burtchaell, 'The family of Rothe of Kilkenny', *Journ. Roy. Hist. and Arch. Assoc. Ireland*, vii (1887), pp. 507 ff. The relevant passage, with modernized punctuation and capitalization, is as follows: 'Ye schall receive of this berrer x li. yn gold and mony of this mony, and by Ester ye schall hawe more, God wyllyng, and ye schall receive xx s. Irys grottis and dandypratis which y thynke schall stond (?) for Englys mony styd (?) and so we do sett them out in the partys of Brystowe.' Mr. Gilson, in the Palaeographical Society transcript, read 'xxs. in ryt grottis', suppling the n of 'in', but Dr. Challis and I, after examining the facsimile, are satisfied that the letter before 'grottis' is s, not t, and that 'irys' is the correct reading. The word 'stond' is not clear: it might be 'serve' which would make better sense. One would expect a figure to follow 'Englys mony', and the meaning of 'styd'—the reading seems certain—is not clear. Irish money, owing to the cross-channel traffic, would presumably have been acceptable in the Bristol region.

2 It was formerly supposed that there were earlier editions in 1540 and 1542, but this is not the case. See J. B. Easton, 'The early editions of Robert Recorde's *Ground of Artes*', *Isis*, lviii (1967), pp. 515-17. The date 1540 arose because in John Dee's edition of 1570 the list of coins taken from earlier ones is headed anno 1540. It is now clear that this was only intended as an approximation. Mrs. Easton has misinterpreted (p. 517) one passage, where Recorde says that 'nowe there are 46 pennies in an ounce'. It is not, as she supposes, a value relationship, but one of weight. Nor is it quite correct, for the penny was reduced in 1526 from 40 to 45 and in 1542 from 45 to 48 to the ounce. As for the supposed edition of 1542, this date was merely conjectural, and the unique copy that exists is now attributed to c. 1545 (ibid., p. 516, n. 4).

3 E.g. Edward Hellowes's translation of *The Familiar Epistles of Sir Anthonie de Gueuara* (London, 1577), p. 253, in a letter against miserliness, includes the dandyprat amongst small coins likely to be given for common objects: 'if they [i.e. the sellers] aske an half-pence for spice, a penie for candels, a dandiprat for an earthen pot, a farthing for oyle, two pence for salt, he [i.e. the miser] riues the house with yelles, and gives unto the diuell both wife and children, exclaiming that they are all bent to rob him.'
issued by Henry VII in 1492. Recorde’s valuation of 1½d. shows that ones containing 16 or 17 grains of fine silver must have been involved, and in each case except the first the identification can be fairly easily made. It will be convenient to discuss them in reverse order.

The dandyprats of Recorde’s manual must have been Irish half-harps, i.e. half-groats, since he both values the Irish harp at 3d. and makes no mention of half-harps, though these existed. There was no need for him to use this term, since while there were no coins of 3d. current in England there had sometimes been others in circulation which were valued at 1½d., and the word dandyprat was consequently at his disposal.

The dandyprats of Rothe’s letter must also be Irish half-harps, since there is the same linking with Irish groats, and an Irish connection is anyhow implied by the circumstances of the letter. The exact date of the introduction of the harp and half-harp is uncertain. The commission of 6 March 1536 authorizing Ralph Rowlett and Martin Bowes to strike silver coin for Ireland cannot have been the first of its kind, since harps with H in the field (for Henricus and Anna) are too common, and struck by too many dies, to be limited to the two months between that date and Anne Boleyn’s downfall in May. Even if they only go back to 1534, however, the letter could well date from October of that year and the new coins be the ones referred to.

Such a solution does not seem to be possible for the dandyprats of Palsgrave’s dictionary. It is true that the harps with H and κ in the field were formerly taken as dating from the period in which the king’s marriage to Catharine of Aragon was still regarded as valid, but more recent work has shown that the H must refer to Catharine Howard. The series consequently did not start before the reign of Anne Boleyn, i.e. not before January 1533. Further, the reference to ‘culling’ seems to imply that the coins in question were ones which could easily be mistaken for English ones, and this would not have been the case with harps and half-harps. Presumably the coins involved were the much earlier Irish half-groats of Henry VII’s reign, which were lighter in weight than their English counterparts and would by 1530 be worn and in poor condition. Their issue had ceased some twenty-five years earlier, but no coin had been struck in Ireland during the intervening period, so that, mixed with English imported coin, they must still have formed a substantial part of the circulating medium.

The dandyprats of 1516 cannot have been either coins of 1492 or Irish half-groats, for the first would not have been available in 1516 in the quantity envisaged in the Jerningham memorandum and the latter would scarcely have circulated at Tournai. The most obvious hypothesis is that they were the first of the two types of Tournai “groat” struck by Henry VIII, the one bearing the date 1513 and having on them a crowned shield and an elaborate cross. Since these coins are continental in design one might assume them to have been struck in poor quality billon, which would explain the complaint of the moneyers regarding the loss involved in their melting. A semi-quantitative analysis of the three specimens in the British Museum, however, gives them a fineness of 90 per cent ±10 per cent, and the same figure is found for the portrait groats, which are known to

---


2 M. Hoc, Histoire monétaire de Tournai (Brussels, 1970), p. 132, nos. 204-7. They were slightly heavier than English groats, and presumably intended as a different denomination. Hoc’s collection of material (pp. 126-34) needs to be complemented by the account of the mint in C. G. Cruickshank, The English Occupation of Tournai 1513-1519 (Oxford, 1971), pp. 137-42.
be of sterling silver. The non-portrait groats cannot therefore be the dandyprats of the memorandum.

The likelihood, in fact, seems to be that these coins were not English at all. The document does not say that they were, and it would have been quite natural for the garrison to be paid in some foreign coin acceptable in the town where the troops were quartered and in the surrounding region. This was the practice at Calais at the time of the Cely Papers, when the garrison was normally paid in Flemish double patards. The memorandum shows that the dandyprats were officially valued at 2d. but actually worth less. The alternatives seem to be that they were either French blancs à la couronne (douzains), appropriate to a French town but not particularly useful in the countryside around, or Low Country patards. The French coins weighed 2-85 g. = 44 grains but were only 358/1000 fine, so their silver content was 1-02 g. or 15-7 grains. This is very close to the 16/17 grains one would expect for a value of 1¼d., and the weights of English half-groats were in any case so irregular, and often so low, that the valuation of the douzain at 1¼d. would be a quite likely one. On the other hand, the weight and fineness of this denomination had been stable for many years, and even at its best, three-quarters of a century earlier under Charles VII, its silver content had only been 1-22 g. = 18-8 grains, so it is difficult to believe that it could ever have been accepted at 2d. The first type of double patard of Charles the Bold, however, that issued from 1467 to 1474, had had a weight and fineness which justified its being allowed to circulate in England as the equivalent of a groat, and the corresponding patard would thus have been valued at 2d. The patard of the early years of Charles V, however, was lighter and baser, weighing 3-10 g. and being only 319/1000 fine, so that its silver content was 0-99 g. or 15-3 grains. The difference between it and the douzain was thus very small, but the patard was the successor of a coin once worth 2d. and one can understand the government attempting to assert this as its official value, though in ordinary commerce it would pass for less. On present evidence, therefore, it looks as if the dandyprats of 1516 were patards of the Low Countries.

There is, finally, the identity of the dandyprats of 1492, and for this I have no satisfactory solution to propose. The reference to the Boulogne expedition (6 Oct.–17 Nov.) might suggest that they were some kind of obsidional coin, but although this possibility cannot be ruled out, none are known for the siege of the town (8 Oct.–8 Nov.) and it is not in any case likely that such coins, if they had been struck, would have provided a name for subsequent 1¼d. pieces. It is equally unlikely that Howard’s memory would

---

4. Ibid., no. 514.
5. H. Enno van Gelder and M. Hoc, Les Monnaies des Pays-Bas bourguignons et espagnols 1434–1713 (Amsterdam, 1960), no. 23, but the fineness is given incorrectly as 798/1000 (= 10rf.). It was really 878/1000, and as the coin weighed 3:16 g. its silver content was 2-77 g. This was virtually identical with that of the English groat, which contained 44-4 grains = 2-88 g. silver. On the circulation of the double patard in England see Spufford’s article cited below, p. 88, note 3.
6. Van Gelder and Hoc, op. cit., no. 172. Henry VIII’s first type of Tournai ‘groat’ was modelled on this coin.
have been at fault in the matter, for although he himself had been only a young man in 1492 he was something of a specialist on French affairs, and his father had been Lord High Treasurer from 1501 to 1522. The implication seems to me that Henry VII had a large consignment struck of half-groats of inferior fineness or low weight—their name, with its suggestion of smallness, suggests the latter—with the intention of unloading them on unsuspecting Frenchmen, who would have no standard for comparison and might consequently be ready to accept them at their face value. In England they would obviously have a less easy passage, and ultimately have attributed to them a conventional value of \(1\frac{1}{2}d\). But I have found no contemporary evidence for the circulation of half-groats at \(1\frac{1}{2}d\), and the condition of Henry's surviving coins of this denomination is so deplorable—they are as a rule badly clipped—that one can hardly see how specimens deliberately struck under weight could have been distinguished from the others. It is possible, of course, that half-groats were intended to be covered by the coinage Proclamations of 5 September 1497, 12 December 1498, and 16 January 1499, although these refer only to 'pence'. The Proclamations order the king's subjects to accept at their face value coins which are 'small and light in weight', as well as those which are old, worn, or clipped, and Ruding, in discussing this phrase, points out that since they are expressly stated to be of the king's own coinage their thinness must be taken as evidence of deliberate malversation, since Henry had reigned for too short a time for it to be due to wear.

The origin of the word dandyprat remains unexplained. Presumably the coins were so called because they were inferior to others ostensibly of the same value, but how a dwarf came to be called a dandyprat is unknown. There seems to be no connection with dandy, a word not found before the late eighteenth century. Mr. Richard Falkiner informs me that donnyprat is used in the north of England for a child's hand, i.e. something small, e.g. in such a phrase as 'Go and wash your donnyprats', but the standard dialect dictionaries only know donny or danny in this sense, without the suffix -prat, and the origin of danny is in any case unknown. In view of the earliest purpose of the coins one might expect a French origin, but I am unable to suggest anything which, even allowing for the English capacity to deform foreign words, would result in anything that resembles it. I am inclined to wonder if it may have been the personal name of a dwarf in some romance of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, but such experts in the literature of that period as I have consulted have not been able to make any suggestions.

2. ERASMUS'S LEAD TOKENS

'A very important development at the beginning of the sixteenth century was the appearance of the token. The earliest of these were in lead or pewter and we first hear of them through Erasmus, in his Adagia, printed in Paris in 1500. In this he speaks of Plumbeos Angliae as being in general circulation in England at this time, and there can be no doubt that it was to these leaden tokens that he was alluding.'

1 P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, Tudor Royal Proclamations, i (New Haven, 1964), nos. 38, 42, 43 (pp. 41 ff.). The coins envisaged in a fourth Proclamation of 23 Mar. 1499 (no. 44) can only be pence.
2 Annals of the Coinage, i. 295-6.
3 OED, s.v. DANDY. It may be abbreviated from Jack-a-dandy, attested from the seventeenth century.
4 Wright, English Dialect Dictionary, s.v. DANDY (sb.2), danny.
So the late Mr. Peck in his great catalogue,¹ the reference being presumably taken from Snelling via Ruding² and Erasmus’s reliability being buttressed by the information that he visited England in 1497 and 1499. This, it should be said at once, is wholly irrelevant, since plumbei Angliae are not referred to in the 1500 edition of the Adagia at all. Erasmus’s note occurs only in much later editions, and was made towards the end of his life. The precise reference is not very easy to trace, since versions of the Adagia are numerous and their indexing is erratic. It is worth trying to get the record straight.³

The first edition of Erasmus’s collection of proverbs, with supporting citations and commentary, was published at Paris in 1500 under the title Adagiorum Collectanea. It is a short work of only 150 pages, containing rather over 800 adagia, and is unindexed. I have not seen the original edition, but have been through the Paris reprint of 1506/7, and neither this nor any of the later ones I have consulted make any reference to plumbei Angliae.

In 1508 the Collectanea were not so much replaced as supplemented—it went on being published as a separate work—by a new and enormously expanded volume entitled Adagiorum Chiliades, ‘Thousands of Sayings’ (Venice, Aldus Manutius). This contained 500 folio pages and over 3,000 sayings, with long commentaries on them. No. 3640 (Chil. III, Prov. DCXL), on fo. 223r, entitled Ne nummus quidem plumbeus, is an entry of three lines. *Nummus plumbeus* is described as an exaggerated expression for a coin of little value, with a reference to the use of the term by Plautus in his *Casina* (line 258). There is no reference to English lead coins.

In 1515 a revised and expanded edition of this, with the title altered to Proverbiorum Chiliades, was published by Frobenius at Basel. It contained (p. 541) the same heading and reference, but the numbering has been changed to 3752 (Chil. III, Cent. VII, Prov. LII), which it was to retain in subsequent editions and reprints. In the 1526 (Basel) edition, the title of which has now become the familiar Adagiorum Opus, the entry (p. 731) was slightly expanded by the insertion of a second reference, that to a mention of *plumbeus nummus* in Plautus’ *Trinummus* (line 962). This revised wording was retained in later editions. There is still no reference to English lead coins.

The reference to *plumbei Angliae* in fact occurs not under this heading, where one would expect it, but under a subsequent one added as an afterthought in the fifth ‘thousand’ in the Basel edition of 1533. This includes as Chil. V, Cent. I, Prov. IX (p. 1051) the rubric Nummus Plumbeus, which cites for the second time the two passages from Plautus and then adds *Aereos nummos et hodie novit Flandria, plumbeos Anglia,* ‘Nowadays Flanders is familiar with copper coins,⁴ England with lead ones.’ Though the repetition of the headings is clumsy—Erasmus, though his powers of work were still

³ For what follows I have been greatly helped by the invaluable *Bibliotheca Erasmiana. Bibliographie des œuvres d’Érasme. Adagia* (Ghent, 1897), by F. van der Haeghen and others, and by Mrs. M. M. Phillips’s *The ‘Adagia’ of Erasmus: a Study, with Translations* (Cambridge, 1964). I am indebted to the kindness of the librarians of the Bodleian and of Christ Church and Corpus Christi College, Oxford, for verifying references to editions of Erasmus not available in Cambridge.
⁴ This is technically incorrect, since coins of pure copper were only introduced in Flanders in 1543, but Flemish ‘black money’ was so deficient in silver content that the coins looked like copper and were commonly regarded as such.
prodigious, was feeling the effects of age—the reference to the English tokens is easily explained. In 1529 he had left Basel for Freiburg-im-Breisgau, and it was over the next four years that the new edition was being prepared. We know from his correspondence, and from allusions in the edition itself, that English affairs, and in particular the fortunes of his English friends, were much in his mind. The ‘King’s great matter’, that of the divorce, had been openly broached, and the preface to the 1533 edition includes a moving tribute to one of his dearest friends, Archbishop Warham of Canterbury, who died on 22 August 1532. ‘Working on the *Adages* had brought vivid memories, of the archbishop’s library and his enthusiastic encouragement, and that kindly deeply-lined face which Holbein drew.’ The reference to *plumbei Angliae* represents one more recollection of his life in England during his stay of 1508–13. Since even official price regulations provided for fractions of less than a farthing, the smallest coin struck by the Mint, these tokens served an obviously useful purpose.

3. THE PROCLAMATION OF 5 JULY 1504 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The Proclamation on clipped coin of 5 July 1504 is one of the very few English monetary records of the period that are illustrated, three coins being shown in the right-hand margin of the only known printed copy, that in the library of the Society of Antiquaries. It has been several times reproduced in facsimile; by the Society of Antiquaries itself; by Raymond Carlyon-Britton in his study of the coinage of Henry VII; and by Hughes and Larkin in their recent corpus of Tudor Proclamations. The coins are a Henry VII groat with arched crown and greyhound’s head mark, a Flemish double patard of Duke Charles the Bold, and a second Henry VII groat with cross-crosslet mark. Carlyon-Britton argued that the illustrations were later in date than the main text of the Proclamation, since the coin with the cross-crosslet mark has an incomplete outer circle and thus violated the terms of the Act of 19 Henry VII, cap. 5, which ordered that coins should be struck with an outer circle to make clipping impossible. Mr. Potter quite rightly rejects this view. A proclamation was a very ephemeral thing, and the only point of illustrating it would be to show coins in actual circulation. Mr. J. C. T. Oates, an expert in early typography whom I have consulted, assures me that on technical grounds it would have been impossible for the wood-cuts to have been added later.

Mr. Potter’s further view, however, that the imperfect form of the cross-crosslet groat is a consequence of defective printing, seems to me to miss the point of the illustrations. The matter is of some importance, since it suggests that his dating of Henry VII’s coinage is on some points open to question.

The Proclamation was intended as complementary to the Act against clipping (19 Hen. VII, cap. 5) of the Parliament of 25 January 1504. The Act itself cannot be

---

1 Phillips, op. cit., p. 153. This edition, as Mrs. Phillips points out (pp. 154–7), is full of early memories.
5 Tudor Royal Proclamations (above, p. 85, note 1), No. 54, pp. 60–1, and Pl. I.
7 *Statutes of the Realm*, ii (1816), pp. 630–1.
precisely dated. The Parliament was still in session on 12 March, since one of its Acts gave approval to an indenture of this date between the king and the abbess of Sion,\(^1\) and it can be deduced from payments to members which are known from local records that it was formally dissolved on 30 March.\(^2\) But its proceedings, as recorded in the Rolls of Parliament, are not dated beyond 29 January—there is nothing unusual in this—and neither the Parliament Roll nor the Statute Roll necessarily preserves the precise order of business. The Act regarding clipping, *Pro reformatione Pecuniarum* as the Parliament Roll terms it, must belong to either February or March, but we cannot go further than that.

The terms of the Act are simple. It laid down, as many acts before it had done, that coins which were only reasonably worn or were cracked should be allowed to pass current, but that clipped coin should not. In one respect it went further than its predecessors. In order to prevent clipping in the future, new grosves and half-grosves were being introduced which had a circle outside the inscription, and this must be perfect if specimens were to be considered unclipped. The wording is as follows:

> And in eschewyng and avoydyng of such clippyng in tyme to come, The Kyng our Soverayn Lord by thadvyce of his Counseill hath causid to be made newe Coynes of grotes and pens of too pens, And that every pese of the same Coynes shall have a sercle about the utter part therof . . . to thentent that his subjettis hereafter may have perfite Knowledge by that sercle . . . when the same Coynes be clippyed or appayred.

This left two matters uncertain, what the new coins with circles looked like and how the public could decide, amongst the older coins, which were clipped and which were not. The Proclamation provided the necessary information, the criteria which it laid down being described and illustrated. It was necessary to take account of two classes of English groat and of Burgundian double patards, which were legal tender in England as grosves.\(^3\) The three types of coin were as follows:

1. Groats 'coyned before the makynge of the sayd act', which are to be regarded as unclipped provided they have 'thre poyntes of the crosse hole on the [one] syde And the most parte of the scrypture hole on the other syde'. This definition was a reasonable one, for while clipping could leave three ends of the cross intact, it could not go far without affecting the obverse inscription. The point is made by the illustration of a cross-crosslet groat with three ends of the cross on the reverse intact and the obverse inscription legible, only the tops of a few letters being missing.

2. 'grotes newe coyned sythen the makyng of the sayd acte, whiche newe grotes shall not be curraunt onles they haue theyr full prynte on both sydes accordyng to the sayde acte' [my italics]. Here the illustration is of a greyhound's head groat, with the inscriptions and outer circles on both sides intact.

3. Any 'double placke' shall be current which 'hath his scrypture apparaunt on the one syde or on the other syde'. Here there was no possibility of using cross-ends as a criterion, since there was no long cross in the design, and the coin illustrated as being current is so because the outer circle and inscription are complete on one side, even though those on the other are slightly damaged.

---

\(^1\) *Rotuli Parliamentorum* (n.d., c. 1783), vi. 527.
If this interpretation of the illustrations is correct, and it is difficult to gainsay it, its chronological implications are disturbing. The groats with greyhound’s head were introduced as a consequence of the Act of the Parliament of 25 January 1504, and the cross-crosslet ones, which are illustrated as examples of the earlier groats and by inference represent the last issue of the previous dispensation, ended at the same time. Mr. Potter supposed that the greyhound’s head groats were those current in January 1504 and indeed were then nearing the end of their period of issue, which he places conjecturally at the end of March 1504. The implications of the Act and Proclamation combined are quite contrary to this. The cross-crosslet groats should have been struck up to the passing of the Act and the greyhound’s head groats only after it. The portrait groats, further, would not seem to have been in normal circulation at the date of the Proclamation.

Such an interpretation seems to contradict two views very generally held by scholars who have worked in the field. One is that the greyhound’s head groats preceded the cross-crosslet ones—Mr. Potter dates the two groups 1502–4 and 1504–5 respectively¹—and the other is that the profile head groats started, at least as an experimental issue, in the opening months of 1504.

The accepted order of issue has been determined partly on the evidence of the privy marks, partly on the details of the crown and of the cross on the reverses, and partly on the evolution of certain letter forms.² That any proposed arrangement involves difficulties and contradictions has been admitted in turn by Carlyon-Britton and by Potter and Winstanley. While mint indentures continued to attach great importance to privy marks and prescribe their use, surviving coins make it clear that reverse dies with obsolete marks, and perhaps obverse dies as well, were commonly retained in use after their legal term had expired, so that muling between marks is sometimes frequent. Punch sequences might seem a firmer basis for reasoning, but my personal opinion is that too much weight is attached to them. An engraver must often have had an accumulation of punches on which to draw, and since they wore out unevenly and he had no good reason for preferring one to another the lettering on the coins is mixed and die-sequence and punch-sequence do not necessarily correspond. Nor will all the alleged cases of muling stand up to examination. The ‘anchor’ die in the anchor/greyhound’s head mule which on paper should make them consecutive classes is in fact a die with no privy mark at all,³ and while it may indeed go back to the ‘anchor’ period it could well, because of its non-committal character, have been brought back into use at a substantially later date. This is not the place, however, for a full examination of the problem. My object is only to point out that the most natural interpretation of the Proclamation of 1504 goes against the accepted sequence of privy marks, and is evidence of which students of the coinage must take account.

4. THE ORIGIN OF THE PORTRAIT GROATS

The Proclamation of 5 July 1504, by its silence, throws some light on the origin of the portrait groats. The three authorities normally cited for their introduction are Fabyan, Holinshed, and Stow,⁴ but Holinshed and Stow wrote much later and do no more than copy Fabyan, so their testimony must be disallowed. To Fabyan’s evidence, however,

² The evidence is set out by Carlyon-Britton, art. cit., p. 24 and pp. 30 ff., and by Potter and Winstanley
there can be added that of Polydore Vergil, an Italian who took up residence in England in 1502 and wrote a history of the country which virtually created the standard pattern of interpretation for Tudor history for many centuries to come. His account is brief. ‘At that time’—Vergil, in the best classical tradition, avoids precise dates—‘Henry held in London a Parliament of his nobles in which, after legislating on many matters concerning the good government of the realm, he obtained a general tax. In the same parliament it was ordained that the silver coins, called ‘groats’, which had been clipped round the edges, should no longer be used, but that new ones should be minted on which the image of Henry should be impressed.’ 1 Although Polydore Vergil was in England at the time, however, his account is not strictly contemporary, for he has displaced the date of the Parliament by a year—it is associated with events of January–March 1503, 2 not January–March 1504—and his linking of events could have been borrowed from Fabyan, the first draft of whose work he seems to have used. On the other hand, he had a professional interest in coinage—he was a collector of papal taxes, and indeed was prosecuted before the Barons of the Exchequer in June 1504 on a charge of operating an illegal exchange in London 3—and his memory on this point may not have been at fault.

Robert Fabyan, a London alderman of antiquarian tastes who died in 1513 and compiled a chronicle which exists in several forms, is a more important source. Fabyan’s interests were in part national, in part local: the succession of aldermen, fires in the City, public executions, and suchlike topics. His precision is not always matched by his accuracy, and he can often be faulted over small details in names and figures. The contemporary sections in his work are based partly on Guildhall and other records, printed or manuscript, which he could consult, partly on notes made at the time the events happened, and partly on memory. Three versions exist of the part of the work that concerns us. One is the text printed in 1533 by William Rastell. This added a section covering the reign of Henry VII to the first edition of the work, which had been published in 1516, after Fabyan’s death, and ended in 1485. It is the version normally cited. A second version, very brief and for our purposes unimportant, is in British Museum MS. Cotton Vitellius A.xvii. The third and longest version, which now goes under the name of The Great Chronicle of London, was only published in 1938. 4 It is a fair copy, probably made and was buried on the 23rd, and the archbishop died on the 15th.

1 ‘Per idem tempus Henricus habuit Londiniis suo rum procerum concilium, in quo post multa super statum regni bene ordinando, statuta, obtinuit a populo tributum. In eodem concilio sanctum est ut nummi argentei, quos vocant grossos, tonsura diminuti in usu amplius non essent, ac novi cuderentur, in quibus regis ipsius Henrici facies sculpta est’ (The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil A.D. 1485-1537, ed. and transl. D. Hay [1950], p. 132). I owe this reference to Dr. Challis. Although the first edition of the work was not published till 1534, the manuscript used by Hay was written in 1512-13 and covers events up to 1513. Polydore apparently began to collect material and put this in order c. 1506.

2 The passage continues by saying that ‘meanwhile’ (interea) Queen Elizabeth gave birth to a daughter and died and was buried shortly afterwards, while at about the same time (per eosdem dies) Henry Dean, archbishop of Canterbury, died. The birth of Catherine took place on 2 Feb. 1503, the queen died on 11 Feb.


4 Ed. A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley (London, 1938). The introduction to this includes a detailed and authoritative examination of the interrelationship between the various texts and—for an earlier period—others that are now lost. I have assumed the correctness of the editors’ conclusions—effectively, Fabyan’s authorship of the Great Chronicle—in the discussion that follows. A useful summary will be found in C. H. Williams, English Historical Documents 1485-1558 (London, 1967), pp. 94-5.
in 1512 before Fabyan's death, and it is easy to see that behind it there must have been a rough draft with marginal additions and insertions which were subsequently incorporated in the text.

The printed text of 1533 records, for Henry VII's nineteenth year (22 Aug. 1503–21 Aug. 1504), a feast at Lambeth Palace on 13 November and fires in the City on 21 November and 7 January. It then continues:

Upon the xxv daye of January began a parliament at westmynster. And the xxvii day of March, was an house brent agayn saynt Martyns le graunt. And the same day was hurt done with fyre in the paryshe of saynt Peters the pore. And in the forenamed parlyament was ordeyned a new coyne of syluer, as grotes, half grotes, and shyllynges with half faces. And in the forsayde parlyamente was graunted to the kynge an ayde of xxxvi (recte xxx) thousand li. And a correccyon was dyuysed for clipped grotes.¹

Such an account invites an excursion into textual criticism, since the arrangement is distinctly odd. The entries regarding Parliament are separated by a record of fires in the City and those regarding groats by one of an aid granted to the king. The text of the Great Chronicle provides an explanation. Since it is not easily accessible, having been published in a limited edition not sold to the public, the passages regarding the coinage may be quoted in full. After relating a series of precisely dated events—the opening of Parliament on 25 January, the deaths of various aldermen on 9 and 19 February and on 15 March, the two fires on 27 March—it continues as follows:

Abowth this tyme were ffyrst opynly shewid newe coynys which the kyng by his parlyament had stablyshid to goo as currant money among his subgectis, That is to say Grote and half Grote which bare but half a fface and the same tyme alsoo was coynyd a Grote which was In valu of xij d. But of these were but fFewe coynyd.

There follows a note on the high price of alum in 'this yere', a change of aldermen on 19 September, an account of the Parliamentary grant, and then a return to the coinage:

And In this fforenamyd parlyament was among other thingis providid ffor the common wele, That all grotys not havyng ij of the crosse endys hool, and the half sckrypture upon that othyr syde shuld be dampnyd and cut In sundyr, and penaltees sett upon all such personys that offird any such Grotys in payment, The whych at the begynnyng was a grete Grudge and losse to the comons, But afftyr It turnd to theyr grete comfort and ease, and avoydyd moch of the suspectid money of this land.²

These passages make two things clear. The first is that neither are strictly contemporaneous; they were inserted after the events they describe. The second is that they are not equally authoritative. The account of the remedies for clipping, despite the mistake of ij for iij, was probably made after consulting the Rolls of Parliament, to which Fabyan would have had ready access, since this document also inserts the coinage provisions immediately after those regarding the grant to the king. The introduction of the portrait groats, on the other hand, must have been described from memory. The phrase 'about this time' makes this plain, and its separation from the entries regarding the grant to the king and the clipped groats shows that it did not come from the Rolls of Parliament or any other source of comparable authority.

The fact that it is inserted from memory, however, does not mean that it is necessarily

incorrect, more especially since Polydore Vergil’s recollections ran on similar lines. There is also good numismatic evidence, set out by Carlyon-Britton and by Potter and Winstanley, for a period of overlap between the facing bust groats and the portrait ones. To balance this there is the absence of any reference to portrait groats in the Proclamation of July 1504, an absence which implies that they were not then in general circulation. The explanation may well be that their issue was initially projected as the main remedy for the clipped coinage—so complete a change of type would facilitate the demonetization of the older groats—but that technical or professional difficulties prevented their definitive introduction, and a change of privy mark, coupled with precise legislation regarding the outer circle of beading, was substituted in their place. By July they had not yet come into general use.

This conclusion, which is by no means novel, raises the question of who designed the portrait coins and cut the dies. In 1913 Henry Symonds rescued from oblivion the name of Alexander of Bruchsal as that of the mint engraver who held office when portraiture was introduced. It has, ever since, been taken for granted that Alexander was the artist responsible for the early coins, as well as for the first ones struck under Henry VIII, since he continued to be paid as mint engraver down to Michaelmas 1509. He is entitled, in Symonds’s view, to be regarded as ‘the father of English medallic portraiture’.

This assumption was in 1913 a reasonable one, despite the absence of any ‘medallic’ features in the coinage of 1494–1504 which unquestionably belongs to him. It became rather less so with G. F. Hill’s publication of a number of documents, supplied by Victor Tourneur, regarding Alexander of Bruchsal’s later career. On 4 September 1504 he bought a house in the Zierickstraat at Antwerp, where he set up in business as a goldsmith and was admitted a citizen in 1505/6. He was dean of the guild of goldsmiths in 1527 and died in 1545, leaving a widow and three children.

The introduction of portraiture in English coinage thus coincided almost exactly with Alexander’s move to Antwerp. Symonds assumed that he must have continued to cut the dies between 1504 and 1509, since the letter of 1500 confirming his appointment did not authorize him to appoint a deputy. This was done for his successor John Sharp. The most reasonable interpretation of such a precaution, I suggest, is that it was intended to regularize de jure in the future something that had already been taking place de facto. Alexander had moved to Antwerp in 1504, while remaining on the royal payroll, and his work was done by private arrangement with some competent craftsman in England. He was apparently in the country, or at least returned to it, immediately after Henry VII’s death (21 April 1509), since he received from Henry VIII a verbal approval of the renewal of his contract for six months, but it was not long before some reforming official took steps to bring the anomalous situation to an end. There was no further renewal, and when John Sharp was appointed as the new graver on 12 February 1510, his appointment was backdated to the preceding Michaelmas.

If Alexander of Bruchsal was only formally responsible for the portrait coinage, and was not the actual cutter of the dies, who was? Most probably it was John Sharp. He would have taken over as Alexander’s deputy in 1504, and in 1505 displayed his initiative and artistic skill by making the new portrait dies. Such a hypothesis has the advantage of attributing all the dies to the single person whom we know to have cut a high

proportion of them. It is true that some of the early ones, notably those for the testoons, are of exceptionally fine quality. But one has only to look at Gilbert Stuart's paintings of George Washington to realize that uneven quality does not necessarily imply multiple authorship. Repetition becomes boring, an artist's output is affected by his health or the pressure of other work, he learns how to cut corners. There is certainly no such change in quality in 1509/10 as would imply a replacement of one die-cutter by another at that date.

This is to some extent hypothesis. But it is most unlikely that Alexander of Bruchsal would have been admitted a citizen of Antwerp unless he had taken up permanent residence there, and if he was resident there he can scarcely have been cutting dies in London. We do not, it is true, know exactly when he made the move, but it is likely to have been some months before his plans were so definite that he felt able to invest in a house. John Sharp is known to have been already at work in the Mint before his formal appointment on 12 February 1510, and all I am suggesting is that his actual employment there dates from 1504, not from Michaelmas 1509. A change of die-sinker in 1504 would thus lie behind the introduction of portraiture. It would save us from attributing to Alexander skills and interests which we do not know that he possessed and a place in the history of English art for which there is no real evidence that he is entitled.

5. THE 'GOLD PENCE' OF THE PROCLAMATION OF 1505

A Proclamation of which we possess several drafts, including a manuscript one dated 27 April 1505 and another printed but without a date, come as a climax to several similar proclamations of Henry VII directed against clipping. Ill-disposed persons are forbidden to 'clyppe, washe, 3 batter, boyle or other wyse mynnyshe or enpayre ony coyne' on pain of death, and clipped coin and coin no longer current is to be called in and paid for at 3s. 2d. per ounce. The chief novelty is the announcement that owing to delays at the Mint, a special exchange is being set up at Leaden Hall where the withdrawn coin will be paid for in 'gold' twopences and pence.

Symonds, who knew both the manuscript versions in the PRO containing this passage, explained it as a consequence of the fact that the word penny could still be used in the general sense of 'coin'. This is true, but such an interpretation is in conflict with the sense of the Proclamation. The essential passage, in the printed version, runs as follows:

[To] the entent that under colour of this exchaunge ... no clypped grotes, ne other money before declared not to be couraunt, sholde be uttred eyther by the clyppers (leg. keepers) of the sayd exchaunge or by ony of the kynges subgectes, which purcha(n)ce wolde afferme that they had receyed the same... at

---

1 Dr. Challis is inclined to regard even this as doubtful, however, since the fact that an office-holder received a salary did not mean that it was actually he who did the work. It is most unlikely, for example, that Thomas Wriothesley, a future Lord Chancellor, cut the dies between 1536 and 1544, and we do not know when the dissociation of office from function began. A professional goldsmith, however, can be given the benefit of the doubt.

2 R. Steele, A Bibliography of the Royal Proclamations of the Tudor and Stuart Sovereigns, i (Bibliotheca Lindesiana, V. Oxford, 1910), Nos. 49a, 50, 51, and text in Hughes and Larkin, op. cit., No. 57, pp. 70-4. This follows the only known copy of the printed version (in Cambridge University Library), which apart from the lack of a date is more complete than the MS. versions. The two of the latter which contain the passage referring to 'gold' pence are both in the PRO, one in Privy Seal Bundle 330 and the other enrolled (Patent Rolls, C. 66/595/33[4]d).

3 Hughes and Larkin read mash, but washe, i.e. with acid, is clear in the printed original.

4 Symonds, art. cit., p. 133.
the exchaunge aforesayd. His hyghnes theryfore . . . hath prouyded and ordyned that at the sayd exchaunge there shall none other money be gyuen or payde . . . for clypped grotes or other money thyder to be brought by waye of exchaunge, but onely golde (leg. goode) pens of two pens and pens, whereby it may euidently appere to all the kynges sayd subiectes and other, that no clypped grotes nor any other money not couraunt is payed or shall be payed at the said exchaunge, but onely good and lawfull money lyke as is before specyfyed. 1

The emendation and the meaning are both equally clear: for golde read goode, and everything falls into place. The government is concerned that those found with clipped groats—it was this denomination that was mainly exposed to maltreatment—shall not be in a position to defend themselves by asserting that they had received them from the king's exchangers at Leaden Hall. It proposes to avert this danger by providing that the clipped groats shall be paid for only in unclipped coin. To make doubly sure it lays down that the coin paid out shall consist entirely of half-groats and pence, so that no one could subsequently allege of a clipped groat that he had received it from the exchangers a few days before. We have simply to do with a misprint, probably the result of a dictated text being wrongly heard by a secretary, and we need not trouble ourselves further about the identity of 'gold' twopences and pence in 1505.

1 The spelling is that of the original, but the punctuation has been modernized.