

TUDOR COINAGE

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Introduction

The study of Tudor coinage since the foundation of the British Numismatic Society has been overwhelmingly dominated by two figures, Henry Symonds (Pl. 3c) in the first half of the 20th century, and Christopher Challis (Pl. 7b) from the 1970s to the present day. It is pleasingly apposite that Symonds’s contribution is considered in detail elsewhere in this volume by Christopher Challis. The work of both Symonds and Challis has not for the most part been numismatic in the very technical sense: neither of them has produced catalogues, or works of detailed classification. Their achievement has been rather to provide an unparalleled insight into the production, organisation and use of coinage, that scholars of other periods can only hope to emulate, rather than excel.

Specialist work on the coinage of the Tudors before the foundation of the Society was in fact sparse in the extreme. In Brooke’s English Coins of 1933 the only such early contribution deemed worthy of inclusion in the bibliography was Sir John Evans’ 1886 paper on the debased coinage of Henry VIII, published in the Numismatic Chronicle.¹ Occasionally picked up by modern scholars is A.E. Peake’s 1891 article ‘Some notes on the coins of Henry VII’, which was an enterprising attempt to link details of the coinage with historical events, not all of which may have been wholly misguided.² Given this scope for further investigation, it cannot be said that the foundation of the BNS did a great deal initially to remedy this apparent neglect, since work on Tudor numismatics in the first half of the 20th century continued to be somewhat restricted, apart, of course, from Henry Symonds (the most spectacular exception to this generalisation), who split his many publications between the Journal and the Numismatic Chronicle. Otherwise, there was relatively little, with Raymond Carlyon-Britton, L.A. Lawrence and Helen Farquhar the only really substantial contributors, mostly concentrating on the early Tudor period.

The lack of activity may have become apparent to students, however, and from the late 1940s there was a definite change, inaugurated by C.A. Whitton’s major study of the coinage of Henry VIII. It may be the case that the likely and then actual accession to the throne of a second Elizabeth encouraged this shift, especially for the long-ignored late Tudor series: a rare example of ‘New Elizabethan’ sloganeering having a positive consequence. Whatever the impetus, in the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s a range of now very familiar names began to appear in the literature in Whitton’s train: Potter, Winstanley, Spufford, Grierson, Metcalf, Schneider, Brown, Kent, and, of course, Challis. By this time the Journal had undoubtedly become established as the natural outlet for this research. Towards the end of the century, in the 1980s and 90s, there seems to have been something of a falling-off from this peak of activity. Challis continued to be productive, but otherwise only Ian Brown (continuing his work with his new collaborators David Border and Christopher Comber) and Joe Bishpham have moved forward to take up the slack, assisted by the late-straying medievalists, Martin Allen and Tim Webb Ware.

¹ Sir John Evans, ‘The debased coinage bearing the name of Henry VIII’, NC 3rd ser., 6, 114–60. This decision by Brooke was, of course, eminently justified, since Evans had made the crucial discovery (implicit in his careful title) that the debasement coinage in Henry VIII’s name was also struck under Edward VI.

General works

Challis's *The Tudor Coinage* still stands alone as a study of the administrative and institutional history of the coinage for a lengthy period of modern English history (or indeed of European history). As the work of an historian, it draws on masses of unpublished documentary sources, as well as of the limited published literature, to illuminate the subject as no-one else has. It is complemented by the new Mint history, edited by Challis and to which he contributed the central section, 'Lord Hastings to the Great Silver Recoinage, 1464–1699'. Separately, each would be a uniquely significant contribution to Tudor numismatics, and together they stand as models for the integration of numismatic and historical research. Challis has made many other contributions (for which see below), but an important general piece is his 1989 essay in which he discussed the relationship between the money supply and the economy during the Tudor and early Stuart period.

Among the various books devoted to the English coinage in general, special mention must be made of George Brooke's *English Coins*, which both summarised and stimulated research in many areas of the national coinage. Brooke's organisation of the coinage of the Tudor period was based soundly on the current research to which he was a distinguished contributor, and it was explicitly taken as a starting point in several of the major studies of the mid-century.

Helen Farquhar bestowed the same lavish prolixity on the numismatic portraiture of the Tudors as she would on the Stuarts, and there is still much of interest in her work, however much of the period it remains in style and approach. She unquestionably holds an important position as one of the few numismatists to have seriously addressed the role of coinage in ceremony in early modern Europe, by virtue of her massive surveys of the ceremonies of Touching for the King's Evil, royal largesse and the Maundy. It is valuable to supplement her approach to the King's Evil with the major historical study by Marc Bloch. The Maundy ceremony has since been the particular study of Brian Robinson. Beyond the Maundy and King's Evil, the ceremonial use of coins in early modern England remains an area with scope for further investigation.

Only a few works have been produced which have catalogued coins from across the Tudor period, and the most important is Peter Woodhead's sylloge of the first part of the Herbert Schneider collection of English gold coins, a superbly illustrated work accompanied by summaries of current knowledge of the field (issues, classification systems, mint output figures, hoards and finds etc), and a valuable bibliography. Wilson and Rasmussen's *English Pattern Trial and Proof Coins* included the relevant Tudor items, but did little to illuminate the significance and purpose of this interesting material. An unusual and stimulating approach has been taken by Craig Muldrew, in an investigation of the social meaning and function of money in the Tudor period.

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4 C.E. Challis (ed.), *A New History of the Royal Mint* (Cambridge, 1892), at pp. 179–397. See also Appendix 1 Mint Output (pp.673–9) and Appendix 2 Mint Contracts (pp. 699–758). As a source Appendix 1 replaces E. Stokes' pioneering 'Tables of bullion coined from 1377 to 1550', NC 5th ser., 9 (1929), 27–69.
7 Helen Farquhar, 'Portraits of our Tudor monarchs on their coins and medals', *BNJ* 4 (1907), 79–143.
8 Her enormous study 'Royal charities', is spread across many issues of the *Journal*. For the Tudor period, the principal sections are: 'Royal charities. Part 1. Angels as healing pieces for the king's evil', *BNJ* 12 (1916), 39–135; 'Royal charities (second series): The Maundy', *BNJ* 16 (1921–2), 195–228; 'Alms at the Gate, the daily alms, and the privy alms', *BNJ* 17 (1922–3), 133–64; 'Largesse and the King's Dole', *BNJ* 18 (1925–6), 63–97; 'The Maundy coins', *BNJ* 19 (1927–8), 109–29.
The Early Tudors

The reign of Henry VII has probably attracted the most sustained attention of any of the Tudors, despite (or perhaps because of) the 'baffling and seemingly insoluble problems' it presented. Its appeal arises no doubt in part from its transitional nature, as in the course of a couple of decades English coinage shifted from medieval to early modern in its appearance, the pound and shilling made their debuts as actual coins, and realistic portraiture entered the English ambit. Yet despite the novelties of the reign (and assuming scholars were not simply deciding to start at the beginning), the persistence of medieval traditions may have had as much to do with the early attention Henry VII's issues received from numismatists, since well-established medieval specialists took the lead in giving it this level of attention. G.F. Crowther had already begun to investigate the series in the 1880s, but L.A. Lawrence would provide the first systematic look at any early Tudor coinage in the 20th century in 1918, in his paper in the Numismatic Chronicle, 'The coinage of Henry VII'. This, along with a run of papers by Carlyon-Britton in the Journal and Numismatic Circular, and George Brooke’s English Coins (with some supporting papers) went a considerable way towards establishing the structure of the coinage, and this body of work, rather amazingly, thus provided almost the only in-depth coverage of any Tudor coinage before the Second World War.

Carlyon-Britton's major achievement (as noted by Lord Stewartby elsewhere in this volume) was to demonstrate an overlap between the medieval-style facing bust issues and the profile portrait type introduced in 1504. It was Brooke who introduced the division of the silver coinage by style of crown, an insight which Potter and Winstanley would subsequently use as the backbone of their classification in a major study produced in several successive volumes of the Journal in 1960–63 (though written a decade or so earlier). In this work Potter and Winstanley gave elaborate and authoritative form to the classification of this coinage, 'one of the late and best fruits of a tradition of numismatic research fostered by the British Numismatic Society during several decades', to quote Michael Metcalf. The relative sequence of types for the reign that they produced can be regarded as generally satisfactory (although inevitably there have been a number of amendments), though the absolute chronology is still rather more speculative. A useful summary of this is provided as part of the substantial and valuable apparatus to Metcalf's 1976 volume in the SCBI series, devoted to the coins of Henry VII in the Ashmolean Museum (which incorporated Winstanley's collection). Henry VII's issues are the only Tudor coinage illustrated in such depth, since they remain the only one to receive sylloge-style publication across all the denominations.

Subsequent work on the reign has tended to concentrate on specific denominations. The single surviving example of the sovereign groat of Henry VII has received considerable attention since its modern rediscovery by Christopher Blunt (Pl. 4d). Herbert Schneider commented on a section of the angel coinage. The sovereign, as one of the grand innovations of the reign, has

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15. L.A. Lawrence, 'The coinage of Henry VII', NC 4th ser., 18 (1918), 205–61. This paper saw the first appearance in print of Lawrence's theory of three month long privy mark periods, which affected so much numismatic work in the early to mid 20th century.


been discussed in some detail, particularly in an important article by Grierson (commented on by Metcalf and, in an important paper, Stewart), and more recently with new details and insights by Challis. The most recent contribution has been Martin Allen’s discussion of the sovereign pence, in which he questions and corrects Potter and Winstanley’s classification of these coins, which was based primarily on the number of pillars of the king’s throne.

Over the years a number of scholars have addressed themselves to the question of the mysterious dandyprats, with Grierson and perhaps Cook offering acceptable solutions to the various references. The main work of significance on foreign coins in early Tudor England has been by Peter Spufford, whose article ‘Continental coins in late medieval England’ included a section on the significant role of Venetian soldini (‘galley-halfpence’) in the early 16th century, and who also detailed the history of the Burgundian double patard as a legitimate element of English Yorkist and Tudor currency. The role of the double patard in the early Tudor period was further illuminated by Challis’s demonstration that the mint maintained a trial plate to check the standards of this coin as late as 1526. Spufford’s Handbook of Medieval Exchange quotes English exchange rate evidence down to 1500. Challis, of course, also discusses the role of foreign coins in England throughout the sixteenth century. Mayhew has published a list of finds of 16th century foreign gold coins, and Cook a small hoard of foreign gold deposited probably in the 1550s.

The decades around 1500 were a period of monetary transition at a European level. In his magisterial Money and its Use in Medieval Europe, Spufford concludes with a chapter ‘Money on the eve of the Price Revolution’ that sets the scene well. As well as his papers on relatively detailed subjects, Grierson has also placed the early Tudor coinage in this European setting, taking an approach that is relatively rare in anything other than works on a very general and popular level.

The early Tudor period saw of course the end of the ancient tradition of ecclesiastical mints in England. Brooke provided some discussion of Canterbury and York under Henry VII, and Parsons commented on the Wolsey coinage, an article by Dolley and Winstanley discussed their significance as providers of small change, and important documents were published by Symonds and Reddaway. However, the principal work here (building in particular on Symonds) has been by Challis, who, among other things, demonstrated that the mints did not cease in the mid 1530s with the various acts which appeared to limit ecclesiastical liberties, but continued possibly into the 1540s, and the eve of the Great Debasement. Martin Allen’s imminently study of the Durham mint (to be published by the Society) is likely to be another major contribution in this area.

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30 Challis, The Tudor Coinage, see index.
Henry VIII's coinage has in general received much less attention than that of his father, and it took much longer for it to attract any serious attention at all in the 20th century, maybe due to the precocious nature of Evans's paper of 1886. In 1907 Lawrence published a study of a previously unrecognised coin, the crown of the rose, and in 1919 there was a brief flurry of activity over the small change of the reign, as Carlyon-Britton corrected a misunderstanding by Lawrence about the halfpenny and farthing coinages. (Much more recently T.G. Webb Ware has taken advantage of new examples of farthings of the reign to provide a modern study.) Apart from these, Lawrence made a study of the Second Coinage issues with the queen's initial, tackling the question of which Queens Katherine and Anne were here being saluted. Serious sustained work on the reign had to wait, as it would only be in 1949-51 that C.A. Whitton published in the Journal the first major survey of the whole reign, including the coinage of Edward VI in Henry's name, an epic book-length study that, with some supporting work by Schneider and Potter, remains the only significant technical modern study of this coinage. Since this high point, interest in Henry VIII's coins has largely subsided again, although Marcel Hoc devoted an article to Henry's coinage for Tournai and John Kent discussed a number of specific coins, in particular the George noble.

The real achievements in studies of the coinage of Henry VIII since Whitton have been in the fields of economic and institutional history, and have focussed on that great anomaly in English currency, the Great Debasement. Challis has discussed this at length in The Tudor Coinage, and various articles, sometimes in debate with J.D. Gould's arguments in his 1970 book, The Great Debasement. In his article 'Tower II', Challis corrected Symonds by establishing that two mints, not three, were in operation at the Tower during the debasement, and by clarifying the career of the under-treasurer Stephen Vaughan. In 'The circulating medium ... ' he considered the relationship between the debasement and prices, suggesting that there was not necessarily a direct link between the two.

The later Tudors

The different degrees of research attention bestowed on the short reigns of the two mid-Tudor monarchs Edward VI and Mary I are, on the face of it, surprising. Both are, of course, covered in detail by Challis and (in her way) Farquhar, while Symonds inevitably produced major papers on each of them, but otherwise Mary has received almost total neglect, whilst Edward has frequently received lively attention. Morrieson's 1916 paper 'The silver coins of Edward VI', published the year after Symonds's documentary study, is the only study of the later Tudors which can match the work of Lawrence, Carlyon-Britton and Brooke for Henry VII to appear before the 1940s.
Despite the fairly considerable attention the Edwardian coinage has received, the literature on the reign is somewhat disjointed, no doubt a consequence of the particular nature of the coinage. Symonds divided the issues into six coinages (subsequently expanded to seven), using the mint indentures as his guides, but this approach has not been systematically followed and is not generally applied today. Broadly the coinage had three phases. First were the issues struck in the name of Henry VIII, between Edward’s accession in January 1547 until near the end of January 1549 for most denominations, plus the groats and lesser coins issued up until 1551, and alongside these some rather rare issues in Edward’s own name, struck in 1547–9. These coins were covered in detail by Whitton (see note 42 above).

The base silver coinages of the reign, struck between 1549 and 1551, have received repeated attention: Morriseon’s approach was more descriptive than schematic, not attempting to align the actual coins with Symonds’ sequence of coinages. Coincidentally with Whitton’s work, Carlyon-Britton’s systematic survey was appearing in a run of issues of the Numismatic Circular, an approach which was the consequence of health concerns. Before Whitton came to cover the coinage of Edward in Henry VIII’s name, he had spent some time dealing with some specific coins and questions of Edward’s later coinage. Potter re-examined the base silver in 1962, and most recently Joe Bispham has provided a satisfying modern point of view, clear, succinct and authoritative, giving particular attention to the Durham House issues. The latest phase of Edward’s issues, the fine coinage, has received the least detailed attention, as pointed out by Challis in his discussion of the fine silver. Thus, although clearly much valuable work has been done, there is still plenty of scope remaining: indeed, an integrated modern reassessment of the reign, to set beside the institutional history provided by Symonds and Challis, would be a valuable addition.

Whatever the potential for research that remains for Edward’s coinages, this is as nothing compared to that of his elder sister’s. Apart from Symonds’ documentary-based study of Mary’s reign, the only specialist commentary, outside Challis and Farquhar, is a minor note by John Kent. There is surely scope here for much more.

The neglect of Elizabethan coinage in the first half of the 20th century remains rather mysterious. There really was no contribution of significance in print before 1947, and even lesser pieces were in short supply. The only serious work was that by Ives and Thompson on Elizabeth’s gold royals and their imitations, and even this was quite late, dating to the early 1940s. (Peter Woodhead has recently returned to this subject with profit.) Once Elizabethan numismatics did get going, however, one or two particular topics have regularly attracted attention. The events surrounding the 1560 recoinage had already drawn in an economic historian, Conyers Read, but it was the physical reality of the countermarking of the testoons of Edward VI that has sparked numismatists’ attention, with Brooke, North and Pridmore each making a contribution.

Eloy Mestrell and the first English machine-struck coinage is another popular subject, with Borden and Brown providing the main survey of the milled issues, and useful contributions also

51 See note 45 for details.
59 Woodhead (see note 11 above), pp. 85–90.
coming from Goldman,\textsuperscript{63} and more recently from Challis,\textsuperscript{64} moving swiftly to refute the arguments of Gaspar and Cooper that cast doubt on the idea that Mestrell was actually employing a screw press at all.\textsuperscript{65} The ‘portcullis’ coinage, intended for trade with the East Indies, has been investigated by Wodak and Pridmore, and commented on by Challis.\textsuperscript{66} The various plans for introducing token coinage in copper that were considered under Elizabeth have been discussed by Challis, and by Peck, who catalogued the various pattern coins and related material.\textsuperscript{67} The related matter of the civic copper tokens of Bristol has also received attention from Challis, building on the earlier work of Latimer and Pritchard, and subsequently by Du Quesne Bird.\textsuperscript{68}

The mainstream numismatic work (as it were) on Elizabeth’s coinage has been principally carried out by Ian Brown. Whitton made a beginning in 1949 with a relatively brief though accurate survey of her gold,\textsuperscript{69} but it is the succession of papers by Brown that have made significant progress in understanding the coins of the reign. In a short but very useful paper in 1982 he summarized the problems of classifying the Elizabethan coinage, and laid out the principal series.\textsuperscript{70} This built on his major study in vol. 28 of the \textit{Journal}, which had set out the silver of the reign in seven issues.\textsuperscript{71} Subsequent work with Chris Comber has made further advances into understanding how the Elizabethan coinage developed underneath its apparent and somewhat illusory uniformity. In 1988, in something of a \textit{tour-de-force} for a relatively short article, they provided a full catalogue of all the portrait punches of the queen in use on her hammered coinage, establishing the lifetime of each master punch, and demonstrating that portrait punches were liable to be used on a variety of denominations, across both gold and silver. In their next contribution, a study of the hammered gold, they have maintained Brown’s earlier identification of three main issues, breaking in 1572, with the death of Thomas Stanley and the restoration of a coinage in angel gold, and in 1593, with a new indenture authorising a revival of crown gold, concurrently with continuing production of angel gold denominations.\textsuperscript{72} Other work on the coins of the reign (which is not extensive, in any case) has concentrated on specific coins: Barr on the silver crowns, Wilkinson on a new shilling bust, and Kent on the well-known forged ‘pattern sovereign’ showing the queen as an elderly hag.\textsuperscript{73}

A number of important papers have looked at the economic background to the coinage. Challis has discussed the impact of Spanish-American silver.\textsuperscript{74} J.R. Wordie has proposed a much smaller size for the English currency (about £1.5 million) than did Challis in \textit{The Tudor Coinage} (about £3.5 million), and has argued that the impact of Spanish bullion on inflation was not major, at least during the 16th century.\textsuperscript{75} The smaller circulating medium he proposes combined with the undoubted price rises would have made for an even less pleasant divergence between the demand


\textsuperscript{64} C.E. Challis, ‘The introduction of coinage machinery by Eloy Mestrelle’, \textit{BNJ} 59 (1989), 256–62 and [the microscopic structure and the observed characteristics of Mestrelle’s coins], \textit{BNJ} 60 (1990), 178–82.


\textsuperscript{69} C.A. Whitton, ‘The coinages of Elizabeth and James I. Elizabeth’s hammered gold’, \textit{NCirc} 57 (1949), 345–7.


for cash and the coin available to answer this. It is likely that both authors would recognise that there was a serious workload being placed on the late Elizabethan currency, a factor that may have something to do with the scarcity of hoards. Challis and Ramsey, and Lloyd have published papers on attitudes to international exchange.

**Mint personnel**

Many of the works already mentioned consider in detail, or at least significantly reflect, the activity and operations of the mint, above all Challis's *Tudor Coinage*, and New History of the Mint, which together shed light on most aspects of Tudor coinage. This is bolstered also by a catalogue of recorded mint personnel. Work devoted to the debasement period and to the activity of Mestrell has also tended to illuminate the workings of the mint. However, there remain several other studies worthy of note which consider particular mint institutions, events or personalities. The status of the mint's moneyers as a formal group has been the subject of a number of articles, including Freeman on the early Tudor period and Coates on the Elizabethan Company of Moneyers. Challis has discussed the Elizabethan grant of arms to the mint, and also provided further information on other mint personnel, including a father and son who both served as provost of the Company of Moneyers in the early Tudor period.

Particular events in mint history have been the focus of a few studies. Alsop has reviewed as aspect of the dispute between the mint master Lord Mountjoy and his deputies, building on Challis's account. Greenwood has examined the circumstances of the closure of the Bristol mint in 1550 (building on Symonds's work on Bristol), and Challis has discussed Wolsey's experimental anticipations of the 1526 coinage reform.

Few individual mint personnel have received sustained study. The mint engravers would seem to be the likeliest for such attention, and some work has indeed been forthcoming. Symonds produced an important paper on the Tudor and Stuart engravers, and they feature in an intermittent way in Helen Farquhar's work. Early, pioneering pieces by Symonds and Hull were devoted to the particular figure of Alexander de Bruchsal, who has subsequently continued to receive attention, because of his possible links with the innovatory designs of Henry VII's reign. Later figures have been less well served, though there is usually something of value to be found in Symonds and in Challis's major works. A number of articles devoted to medals and seals are also of value in indicating the work of the mint engraver. Mark Jones's survey of the British medal has some useful points about Henry Basse, and Philip Attwood has demonstrated the truth of the old idea that Jacopo da Trepizzio visited the English court and thus may have had some involvement in the Philip and Mary shillings, the portrait busts of which (unlike those on the sixpences of the same issue) so closely resemble his work. A range of articles about Nicholas Hilliard contain insights

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77 C.E. Challis, 'Mint officials and moneyers of the Tudor period', *BNJ* 45 (1975), 51–76.
into the work of his sometime collaborator Charles Anthony.\textsuperscript{87} It would seem likely that a sustained investigation of Derek and Charles Anthony might be a profitable exercise. One under-graver, or die-sinker, of the Tudor mint has received considerable attention, Humphrey Cole, better known as the first named maker of scientific instruments in England.\textsuperscript{88}

**Finds and hoards**

Hoards of the Tudor period, and especially the Elizabethan period, have always been relatively rare birds. Ian Brown and Michael Dolley valuably summarised the known material discovered before 1967,\textsuperscript{89} and most significant hoards from that date onwards have been published in the pages of the *Journal*. Probably the most notable are: the Ryther hoard published very promptly by Craig Barclay, which, deposited c.1487, gives an insight into the currency at the start of the Tudor period;\textsuperscript{90} the Hartford hoard published in summary form in the *Chronicle*;\textsuperscript{91} a hoard of the debasement period rediscovered by David Symonds;\textsuperscript{92} and a group of smaller Tudor hoards published together.\textsuperscript{93} The study of single finds of the 16th century has barely begun, but a preliminary contribution has been made in Cook's survey of coins found at South Ferriby.\textsuperscript{94}


\textsuperscript{91} M.M. Archibald and J.P.C. Kent, 'The 1964 hoard from Hartford, Huntingdonshire', NC 7th ser., 14 (1974), 147-9. This hoard was acquired entire by the British Museum, and remains available for further work.

\textsuperscript{92} D. Symonds, 'An unpublished hoard of the Great Debasement', *BNJ* 60 (1990), 80-6.

\textsuperscript{93} B.J. Cook, 'Recent Tudor hoards', *BNJ* 64 (1994), 70-83.