THE COINAGE OF THE STUARTS
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Introduction

The Stuart coinage does not possess an integrated history of the nature of Christopher Challis's *The Tudor Coinage*. Nevertheless, numismatic studies relating to the seventeenth century (like the Tudors, the Stuarts reigned a little over a hundred years, coinciding in effect with that century) are numerous and from the Society's very beginning played an important part in the *British Numismatic Journal* and other publications. While the coinage of Charles I has always attracted considerable attention, that from 1649 onwards has sometimes received short shrift in general works. Brooke for instance dismissed nearly three centuries to the time he was writing (1932) in fifteen pages— which included six pages of lists of dates and types. Nevertheless the period has received good coverage in the two Royal Mint histories (Craig, 1953 and Challis (editor), 1992). In the more recent of the two, Challis himself (Pl. 7b) has written the section that includes the Stuarts. He has dissected the often sketchy evidence for the functioning of the Mint, the personalities involved and the historical and economic context within which all this happened. *A New History of the Royal Mint* provides the essential background to the study of the coins themselves and will do so for many years to come. Challis, too, has created an invaluable *dramatis personae* of mint officials and moneyers of the period and has studied in detail the careers of several individuals.

The new Mint history has been complemented magnificently, just in time for the present survey, by the second part of the *Sylloge* of the Herbert Schneider Collection of English gold coins. This covers the period 1603 to the twentieth century, but eighty per cent of the coins are of the Stuarts. As pointed out in its introduction, the superbly illustrated volume (together with its companion covering the years 1257–1603) forms the first work devoted to English gold coins since Kenyon's in 1884. The introductory essays in both serve as up-to-the-moment summaries of knowledge in this field and its development during the Society's first century.

James VI and I

The English coinage of James I followed directly in the footsteps of that of Queen Elizabeth, in the same visual and technical tradition. Innovation was subtle, for instance in the use of new mottos on everyday coins, replacing messages immobilised since the fourteenth century. The coins were for the most part fairly well made and correspondingly straightforward to classify. There was a flurry of papers in early *Journals*, by writers whose names recur elsewhere: H.W. Morrieson (Pl. 3a), who classified the busts and issues of the silver; and Henry Symonds (Pl. 3c),

1 In practice, although the Stuarts reigned until 1714, it is convenient to conclude this survey with the Great Recoinage of 1696–8, leaving the whole of Isaac Newton's Mastership of the Mint and the post-recoinage context to be covered under the modern period.
who detailed from documents the pyx trials of the reign – an early contextual study.\textsuperscript{9} Since then, virtual silence, though there was much going on in James’s reign that has been examined within broader studies (for instance of mechanism of minting, small change, portraiture) and these are explored below. Relative to the silver, gold output was often high and its shifting market price led to revisions of its tariffs, even its designs. For James I (as for Charles I) there is also a wider picture: the issues for Ireland and those of his other kingdom, Scotland, their relationships to the English and their use in the currency of England and Wales, are discussed elsewhere in this volume.

Charles I and the Civil War

The study of the coinage of the Stuarts has long been dominated by that of one reign: Charles I (1625–49). The King’s artistic interests and encouragement of continuing technological experiments came together in the person of the Frenchman Nicholas Briot to create elegant products of aesthetic merit. There was a flourishing gold coinage early in the reign, and a continuation of the ‘Welsh silver’ issues begun around 1621: a period of some interest for the numismatist, even without the Civil War. However, a decade of high silver output in the 1630s and early 1640s, which stretched the capacity of the Tower Mint, was followed by another of disruption and massive hoarding. Unusually high numbers survive of worn Elizabethan and Jacobean silver coins and fresh, if crudely made, silver of Charles, with a small topping of the often equally crude royalist emergency issues, and occasional exotic issues, mainly from the Spanish Netherlands.\textsuperscript{10}

It is the relatively scarce, but ‘interesting’ royalist issues that have long held centre stage, but the early decades of the twentieth century, which coincided with the first years of the BNS, witnessed a vigorous series of numismatic studies of all of the ‘hammered’ coinages of the Stuarts. Pre-eminent among these were the writings of the ‘retired gunner colonel’ H.W. Morriseon (1857–1933). A man of ‘wisdom, willingness to help and kindly courtesy’,\textsuperscript{11} Morriseon was a founder-member of the BNS and served as Librarian and as President (twice, 1915–19 and 1928–32). He published papers on James I, the ‘provincial’ mints of Charles I\textsuperscript{12} and on the coinage of Charles II\textsuperscript{13} and in 1920 was awarded the Sanford Saltus Medal. Building on previous writers, Morriseon brought increased order to the classification of the coinage, but his studies of Aberystwyth and of royalist mints such as Oxford and Bristol, while they identify varieties, often stop short of providing full die-studies, even of the material available to him. Nevertheless, they remain standard references. Classification of Charles’s Tower Mint coins, meanwhile, was undertaken by Grant R. Francis, another of the Society’s early Presidents (1922–5).\textsuperscript{14} The work of Morriseon and Francis remains the basis of modern catalogues such as that of J.J. North (Pl. 9d).\textsuperscript{15} Symonds too published on Charles I, on the pyx trials\textsuperscript{16} and in a number of shorter contributions to both BNJ and Numismatic Chronicle.

Of course, die-study of the massive Tower Mint silver coinages of Charles I would be a thankless task. They are mostly very poorly made, from huge numbers of dies (irons for 582 piles

\textsuperscript{9} H. Symonds, ‘The mint-marks and denominations of the coinage of James I, as disclosed by the trials of the Pyx . . .’, \textit{BNJ} 9 (1912), 207–27. The paper also includes a striking early use of scientific analysis (an ‘assay’ as Symonds put it), to resolve the question of the standard of James’s Irish issues.

\textsuperscript{10} For a concise, ‘popular’ illustrated account of English coinage and currency in the period 1603–60, see E. Besly, \textit{Coins and Medals of the English Civil War} (1990).

\textsuperscript{11} NC 1933, Proceedings, 23.


\textsuperscript{16} H. Symonds, ‘Charles I: the trials of the pyx, the mint-marks and the mint accounts’. NC 4th Series 10 (1930), 388–97.
and 1,224 trussels were made for shillings alone, from August 1639 to July 1640, for instance.\textsuperscript{17} Only occasionally, in a hoard such as Ryhall (Rutland) does a relatively uncirculated batch permit an effective study.\textsuperscript{18} The small mint at Aberystwyth (1639–42) provides a complicated enough picture.\textsuperscript{19} Although numbers of papers dropped off from the early 1930s, significant die-studies started to appear for the royalist coinages, such as Truro and Exeter (Lockett),\textsuperscript{20} ‘Weymouth and Salisbury’ (as they were then known) by Allen\textsuperscript{21} and, following a mid-century lull, the gold of Oxford (Beresford-Jones).\textsuperscript{22} Tower gold was classified by Schneider,\textsuperscript{23} and a new system for identifying Tower shillings, by Sharp, appeared in 1978.\textsuperscript{24}

As recently as 1980, our understanding of the Civil War coinage remained patchy, with some series well studied, and others yet to be tackled. The large and growing hoard record, too, was unexploited, while many factoids (e.g., ‘Weymouth mint’)\textsuperscript{25} had become entrenched and were repeated uncritically by successive writers. It was left to George C. Boon (1927–94) (\textbf{Pl. 12a}) to provide two integrated accounts, which for the first time fully explored these coinages in their historical, even their archaeological, context. His study of lead-silver mining in Cardiganshire and the Aberystwyth mint,\textsuperscript{26} ostensibly a treatise on a topic of purely Welsh interest, goes far beyond that, with an in-depth evocation of Stuart mining and minting and an extended postscript dealing with the subsequent history of the Aberystwyth operation, for it provided the basis of the King’s principal wartime mints. Above all, Boon reproduced the texts of many of his sources, some in facsimile. The book was recognised by John Kent as a ‘remarkable and fundamental work’.\textsuperscript{27} Boon’s second survey took in the Civil War coinages as a whole, forming a substantial portion of the introductory text to the Brooker Sylloge,\textsuperscript{28} complementing Kent’s text on the Tower Mint. This volume provided the best overall illustrated survey of Charles I’s coinages since the Lockett Sales of the 1950s.\textsuperscript{29}

George Boon (who joined the Society in 1980) saw himself primarily as an historian; he had trained and practised as an archaeologist (he was proud to be FRHistS as well as FSA). His work demonstrated the increasing importance to numismatics of contextual study and the application of a range of disciplines, though he feared that because of its diverse subject-matter, Cardiganshire Silver . . . would be read neither by the historian nor by the numismatist. In undertaking the first study of the York mint and in preparing a new integrated account of Sir Richard Vyvyan’s mints the present writer owes much to his example.\textsuperscript{30} Truro and Exeter were previously the subject of two important studies, by R.C. Lockett (\textbf{Pl. 4b}) (numismatist) and Mary Coate (historian, a by-product of her study of Civil War Cornwall).\textsuperscript{31} However, only by combining a new die-study with a fresh reading of such documents as survived the 1942 Exeter Blitz (which included, fortunately, the all-important 1643 mint books) could a vivid (and it is hoped accurate) picture of these mints, their operations and products be assembled.
The siege coinages of the Civil War are perhaps the most immediately appealing to a non-numismatic readership and likewise received early attention in *BNJ*. Philip Nelson's survey, modified by Andrew's re-attribution of 'Beeston Castle' pieces (to Scarborough), continues to serve as a valuable exposition of both the specimens and the related documentary records. That coinage was struck at Colchester in 1648 is extremely doubtful. Differing opinions have been expressed over the years as to whether a service of royal plate was used for coinage at Newark in 1646. This writer sides with the 'ayes'.

The Commonwealth (1649–60) is marked by coinage of a somewhat plain, utilitarian nature that has attracted correspondingly little attention. Nevertheless, this was an interesting period for developments in two areas, minting technology and military awards, which are considered below.

Meanwhile, the hoards have kept coming. From an average of eight likely Civil-War hoards found per decade during the nineteenth century, their rate of discovery rose to ten in the period 1901–50 and to fifteen per decade since then, boosted first by post-war reconstruction and latterly by the widespread use of metal-detectors. Including Commonwealth hoards (1649–60), the total recorded is now over 200, though details of many early finds are sketchy. Civil War hoards provide a very rare instance of a body of material deposited across England and Wales in a restricted period of time which might be large enough to give a realistic picture of the currency of the day, its extent, its physical state, the speed and areas of circulation, and so on. Such an attempt was made in 1987, but it gives one pause for thought that even with this broad base of information, the many new finds since then, though repetitive in their basic contents, are nevertheless pointing to new patterns, new interpretations. In a time that is abundantly documented, the fact a small hoard such as Broughton (Oxon, found in 1996) could equally plausibly be datable to 1641, October 1642 or July 1643 onwards, depending on the criteria adopted, alerts one to the far greater problems of interpreting finds from periods for which documentary records are sparse, output figures unknown and few hoards recorded.

Towards modern coinage: the march of the machine

Perhaps the biggest change to the coinage during the Stuart period was purely physical. In 1603, coins were still made at the Tower Mint by traditional, manual methods. By 1714 production had long since turned mechanical, and the older hammered coinages had been swept away by the Great Recoinage of 1696–8, though 'broad' gold remained legal tender until 1733. Mechanisation was applied to a number of processes — rolling out of the raw metal, cutting out of the blanks and coining itself, but leaves its mark most obviously in the finished product. Two main coining methods were developed in sixteenth-century Europe (Britain, as ever, lagged): the screw press and rotary methods. Both were used in England in experiments under the Tudors and early Stuarts, but neither found favour for large-scale use making official coinage.

Rotary coining took two forms, the 'cylinder press' and the 'rocker' press. Cylinder presses employed paired rollers, each impressed with a series of 'dies', producing strips of coined metal with multiple impressions, which were cut out afterwards. This method, with its uncertain control of final weights and no way of marking edges, was best suited to high volume production and found its greatest use where output was large and water power plentiful, at such Continental sites as Segovia in Spain and Hall-im-Inntal (Austria). The method was used experimentally in

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53 H.E. Manville, 'British notebook no. 2 'Caroli Fortuna resurgam' siege pieces', *NCirc* (September, 1982), 229-32.
54 C. Oman, 'A note on the coining of the royal plate at Newark in the year 1646', *NC* 1934, 436-8; J.P.C. Kent, 'Newark siege money and civil war coin hoards', in *Newark-on-Trent: the civil war siege works* (1964); H.R. Jessop, 'Flans for Newark siege coins', *NCirc* (March, 1976), 90-1.
England around the turn of the seventeenth century and from 1613 in the manufacture of licensed tokens, until 1635-6. It re-surfedaced at the Civil War mint of York, run by the attorney William Martin, c.1643–4. York’s products, in silver only, are at best handsome coins from well-made dies (by Briot, or are some by another hand?), but many demonstrate the shortcomings of the method and weights were far from consistent.48 Perhaps in wartime conditions this was thought to be less critical.

The ‘rocker’ press was a modification of the cylinder method, using single pairs of dies with curved surfaces, actuated by a rocking motion in a simple machine. It is a method associated especially with the work of the French engraver Nicholas Briot, who fled to London in 1625 and was taken up by Charles I.39 Briot’s products, from a small establishment located in, but not part of the Tower Mint, were of high quality, but could not compete with conventional coining for speed and consistency. Speed of production, in particular, became of the essence from 1632 when large quantities of Spanish silver began to arrive at the Mint. On the other hand, several of the smaller royalist mints of the 1640s appear to have employed rocker presses, which would have been very convenient for the purpose.

It was, however, the screw press that was to prove the way forward in mechanising the striking of coinage. Though Briot certainly employed this method, both experimentally in London and in his tenure of the Scottish mint from 1635, it was another Frenchman, Pierre Blondeau, who was brought to London to make it practicable for the Tower Mint, during the Commonwealth. Dies for the proposed Cromwell coinage were made by Thomas Simon; these and Simon’s early coins and medals for Charles II are the subjects of important papers by Lessen.40 The advantages of the screw press over the rotary were principally practical ones, in die-making, blank-making and control of weights, and most importantly in the ability of the method to accommodate the marking of the edges of coins to deter clipping.41 Simon, as artist, was perhaps the greatest engraver of the period and his work has consistently attracted attention.42 However, it was the Roettier brothers from the Netherlands who were preferred to the native Thomas Simon, largely on technical grounds, when the Mint changed wholesale to ‘milled’ coinage in 1662–3.43

The study of Stuart minting technology has for the most part belonged to the second half of the Society’s first century, as indeed has scientific study of aspects such as the alloys of coins.44 The application of science had to await appropriate knowledge and analytical techniques. Nevertheless, there is much that the coins can tell from careful examination.

The limited usage of the rocker press in England would appear to be at odds with a persistent twentieth-century factoid: that the pinched edges and poor production of many Tower Mint half crowns signify its use there under Charles I, a view re-iterated as recently as 1984.45 As Challis’s account of the early Stuart mint at work clearly demonstrates, traditional methods were still in use as late as 1639–46 and there is no discernible change in technique for the rest of the reign or in the mainstream issues of the Commonwealth. The atrocious appearance of much Tower silver of the period can be explained as the result of the pressure of coining up to £1 million of Spanish silver a year by manual methods, from the making of blanks to the final striking. The Aberystwyth

45 SCB1 33 (as in n. 28), p. xvii.
mint obtained its dies from the Tower and here too there is no need to invoke the use of rocker presses. A perception of widespread clipping of Charles’s silver in Civil War hoards is also often false and relates to the same phenomenon. Clipping was certainly a problem in some regions (notably the north of England), but although many coins are misshapen, their weights and edges generally demonstrate that this is the condition in which they left the Mint.

The use of rotary coining methods in Britain was reviewed in a symposium devoted to techniques of coin production in 1988, but the full story of the ‘experimental’ years between 1600 and 1650 remains to be told. It will require a careful examination of medals, patterns, tokens and jettons, as well as the currency of these years.

Small change

The Stuart century saw another major innovation – the arrival of copper as an important part of the currency, a result of the need for coinage for everyday use in an expanding and increasingly urbanised economy. The practical advantages of the third ‘coining metal’ were twofold: first in the manufacture and secondly in the use. Copper small change started to be used on the Continent from the middle of the fifteenth century, with the cavalli of Ferdinand I of Naples (1458–94), and other countries followed suit over the next century. Whilst the English coinage had been historically much more stable than many Continental (or, for that matter, the Scottish), it was not immune to the price of silver and its fine halfpence and farthings had become inconveniently small, to make or to use. Following an experiment with unusual silver denominations such as three-farthings under Elizabeth, the City of Bristol had used copper tokens from 1577 and trial base metal small coins were made late in the reign.

Under James I, a patent was issued in 1613 to John, Lord Harington of Exton to issue copper farthing tokens for use in England, Wales and Ireland ‘made exactly and artificially . . . by engines and instruments’. Harington died the following year and the patent passed through various hands until the issue of tokens was suppressed in 1643. Early studies of the tokens by Weightman and Rogers have since been enlarged and consolidated by Peck, as part of his magnificent British Museum catalogue. Official small change, in the form of copper halfpence and farthings, was finally introduced in 1672. The Mint’s new machinery proving inadequate to prepare them, the coins were struck from blanks imported ready-made from Sweden. During the 1680s, small change was made from tin, a more profitable exercise, but a less durable material and no less prone to counterfeiting. Coining in copper was resumed in 1694, using British metal. The principal publications are that of Peck, Horsefield and Challis, who elucidate the output and finances of the copper and tin coinages.

The gap in the circulating medium left by the banning of token farthings in 1643 was filled after the war by the unofficial issues of local tradesmen, until they in turn were suppressed in 1672. These issues, rich in opportunity for social and historical studies, are discussed below by Thompson. Suffice it here to record that, following a heyday of study in Victorian times and a few early twentieth-century updates, the study of these tokens has in recent years taken on a distinctly ‘Welsh’ flavour. George Boon (Cardiff-based) in 1973 set new standards in his catalogue of the National Museum’s Welsh tokens; and Robert Thompson (Cardiff-born) has published

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47 G.C. Boon, ‘The Aberystwyth mint at work’, in Cardiganshire Silver . . . (as in n. 26), at pp. 66–70 is in my opinion mistaken in this regard.
48 Besly, Coin Hoards (as in n. 35), pp. 64–6; B.J. Cork, ‘New hoards from seventeenth-century England’, BNJ 69 (1999), 146–72 summarises at pp. 171–2 the metrological information from 33 hoards dating from 1606 to 1696.
52 At least one consignment failed to arrive: in December 1673, the Golden Sun was wrecked off Hornholm, carrying farthing blanks on route from Stockholm to London (Money, edited by J. Cribb (1986), p. 114).
54 C.E. Challis, ‘Copper and Tin’, in A New History . . . (as in n. 3), pp. 365–79.
extensively on the series in recent years, notably in compiling the massive series of Sylloge volumes of the Emery May Norweb collection.\textsuperscript{55} Thompson’s achievements were recognised by the award of the Sanford Saltus Medal for 2000.

**Coinage of the later Stuarts**

With the conversion to mechanised production in 1662, the English coinage took on many of the characteristics familiar to the present day. The products were well-rounded and more uniform in appearance, with decorated edges, regular die-axes and explicit dates. The ‘milled’ coins are therefore more easily susceptible to straightforward classification. Aspects such as the technology, the portraiture and social and economic context take over from the purely numismatic. The literature is relatively thin. One aspect that has always fascinated is the use of marks denoting the sources of the bullion used for the coinage, notably on the coins of Anne. Here again, it was left to George Boon to demonstrate the scope of contextual study in giving an account of one of these marks, in a tour-de-force on the ‘feathers’ coinage in the period 1671–1730 (therefore overlapping with the next section of this volume).\textsuperscript{56} As presented to a packed BNS meeting in 1993, the breadth and erudition of Boon’s paper evinced a stunned silence.

The ‘milled’ coinage did not replace the earlier overnight, and it was not until the mid-1690s that the hammered coinage of the later Tudors and early Stuarts was finally recoined. Again, publications relating to the Great Recoinage of 1696–8 belong principally in the realm of political and economic history, with little that is purely numismatic. The traces left by government expedients adopted during the process have been identified in the centrally-pierced coins – hammered coins of full weight granted a temporary stay of execution to ease currency shortage during the transition. Charman’s articles of 1983–4 point up the moral that the fine collector’s specimen is often the lesser historical document. The arrangements of the recoinage are covered by Challis;\textsuperscript{58} the national context and practicalities of exchanging coin were well conjured by Boon, who published a Welsh hoard of ‘old clipp’d money’ found near Builth Wells, Powys, in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* – not the average numismatist’s everyday reading.\textsuperscript{59} Nationally, massive clipping was the inevitable result of government misjudgement: a promise to redeem clipped coins at face value in new coinage. The tax necessary to recoup the cost of the Great Recoinage proved (like so many) durable rather than temporary and has left a legacy of blocked-up windows right across the country.

**Collateral studies: Helen Farquhar**

There is, of course, much more to Stuart numismatics than pure coinage and currency. This was a period that saw considerable development of medals, both as commemorative items and as rewards for service and for gallant conduct. Special coins were produced for ceremonial use, such as touching against the ‘King’s Evil’ (scrofula), which the Stuart monarchs took very seriously. No account of developments in Stuart numismatics would be complete without the name of Helen Farquhar (1859–1953), the most prolific contributor in this field to both *BNJ* and the *Numismatic Chronicle* in the first few decades of the twentieth century, and one of very few to be awarded the medals of both British (1911) and Royal Numismatic Societies (1931). A lady of independent means and delicate health (though she lived to 93), Helen Farquhar was a prolific correspondent.

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and author. Relatively few of Farquhar’s writings deal with coinage in itself. Instead, she concentrated on related aspects such as portraiture and ‘Royal charities’ – ‘touching’, the Maundy, and so on. In the Numismatic Chronicle, Farquhar chronicled two of the biggest ‘names’ – Briot and Simon – as well as more abstruse subjects, such as the techniques for making silver counters and a ‘lost coinage’ in the Channel Islands. Her two articles on royalist military awards are also valuable. Farquhar’s works are substantial and wide-ranging, but her somewhat discursive style tends sometimes to obscure the simplicity of the message. For instance, though Farquhar settled the identity of the ‘forlorn hope’ badge, the impact of an otherwise pithy article was blunted by a romantic view of the ‘forlorn hope’ that was royalism and the author’s regret that a relatively crude production had superseded the rather prettier medal that had previously been thought to be the award.

Farquhar took the view, with which one may to some extent concur, that the badges of the Civil War were the forerunners of modern military medals. The terms of the Forlorn Hope warrant have a remarkably modern feel. While the royalists rewarded specific persons or service, the idea of a general medal for an action arose under the Commonwealth after the battle of Dunbar (1650), though a full distribution was probably not in the event carried out. These and the naval awards of the Commonwealth have been studied in recent years by Lessen.

A flavour of Helen Farquhar’s researches survives in PRO Mint 28/5, correspondence with W.J. Hocking. From 1908 until 1922, there was a regular flow of discursive letters, charmingly and apologetically grateful, to Hocking, requesting information or clarification on a wide range of topics related to the Stuart portraiture and other papers. Hocking’s replies, invariably formal, detailed and prompt (which seems to have encouraged further questions), were incorporated and duly acknowledged in the published papers. Farquhar visited the Royal Mint on several occasions to examine and discuss aspects of the collection with Hocking. I am grateful to Graham Dyer for the opportunity to examine this correspondence.


6 It is not clear to me whether or not Farquhar knew the meaning of the term ‘forlorn hope’ (though its true significance may have been taken as read). For an integrated view of these awards see E. Besly, To reward their deserving: the badge for the Forlorn Hope. The Medal, no. 19 (Autumn 1991), 20–7.