

## THE CLASSIFICATION OF HENRY VII SOVEREIGN PENCE

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THE detailed analysis of Henry VII's coinage published by W.J.W. Potter and E.J. Winstanley has been the basis of all subsequent work on the subject.<sup>1</sup> Winstanley's classification of the 'sovereign' pence was founded upon the assumption that coins with no pillars in the throne (type I) were followed by coins with one pillar (type II), two pillars (type III), and two double pillars (type IV), in succession.<sup>2</sup> This simple scheme was first formulated by L.A. Lawrence.<sup>3</sup> There is no reason to doubt that type I is the earliest, and that type IV is the latest. Lord Stewartby has suggested that type I was produced in 1489, before the first supply of dies to Durham, which is assumed to have followed an indenture of 20 September 1489.<sup>4</sup> Type IV was produced at the London mint only, and D.M. Metcalf has associated this with the prohibition of pence in the provincial mints from 1499 to the end of the reign in 1509.<sup>5</sup> Types II and III must be placed between types I and IV, but the assumption that the number of pillars infallibly indicates two successive issues should be

critically examined.

Winstanley believed that the two-pillar type III could be distinguished from the one-pillar type II by its use of new lettering of type E.<sup>6</sup> The Potter and Winstanley lettering types were principally based upon the great lettering, and in practice it is difficult to apply them to the smaller lettering of the pence, which is from different punches. The only unmistakable difference between lettering E and earlier lettering is the change from a Roman M to a 'Lombardic' M, but all of the Durham pence of types II and III have a Lombardic M in the mint's name. Lettering does not provide definitive evidence for the division of type II from type III.

Table 1 summarizes the type IIc and type IIIB obverse dies used to produce the forty-three Durham pence of Bishop Richard Fox in the Ashmolean, British, and Fitzwilliam Museums. There seem to have been four successive supplies of obverse dies, each supply having a different ornament on the pillar or

TABLE 1: Durham obverse dies of types IIc and IIIB

Ornament	No. of pillars	No. of dies	Total
Lis	1	5	6
	2	1	
Saltire cross	1	2	5
	2	3	
Cross	1	4	5
	2	1	
Rosette	1	4	6
	2	2	

*Acknowledgements* I have greatly benefited from the opinions and advice of Mr Jeffrey North, the Rt. Hon. Lord Stewartby, and Mr Christopher Wren. Dr J. D. Bateson of the Hunterian Museum, Dr Mark Blackburn of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Dr Barrie Cook of the British Museum, Mr Nicholas Mayhew of the Ashmolean Museum, and Mr Michael Sharp of A. H. Baldwin and Sons Ltd. have provided photographs of coins for study and illustration.

<sup>1</sup> W. J. W. Potter and E. J. Winstanley, 'The coinage of Henry VII', *BNJ* 30 (1960-1), 262-301; *BNJ* 31 (1962), 109-24; *BNJ* 32 (1963), 140-60. D. M. Metcalf, *Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Part III. Coins of Henry VII (SCBI 23*, London, 1976) illustrates 971 coins catalogued in accordance

with the work of Potter and Winstanley.

<sup>2</sup> E. J. Winstanley, in Potter and Winstanley, *BNJ* 31, pp. 120-1. E. J. Harris, 'Varieties in the York "Sovereign" pence of Henry VII', *SCMB* April 1961, 137-8, described 100 coins, without attempting a classification.

<sup>3</sup> L. A. Lawrence, 'On the coinage of Henry VII', *NC* 4th ser. 18 (1918), 205-61, at pp. 238-46.

<sup>4</sup> I. Stewart, 'Problems of the early coinage of Henry VII', *NC* 7th ser. 14 (1974), 125-47, at p. 140.

<sup>5</sup> Metcalf, pp. xix-xx, xxxviii-xxxix.

<sup>6</sup> Potter and Winstanley, *BNJ* 30, pp. 267-8, 279-82 describe and illustrate lettering types A to E.

TABLE 2: Durham reverse dies used with obverse dies of types IIc and IIIb

<i>Initials</i>	<i>Associated obverse dies</i>	<i>No. of dies</i>	<i>Total</i>
Large DR	Lis	5	10
	Saltire cross	3	
	Saltire cross and cross	1	
	Cross	1	
Large RD	Saltire cross	1	5
	Cross	3	
	Rosette	1	
Small RD	Rosette	5	6
	Rosette and Henry VIII first coinage	1	

pillars: trefoils, saltire crosses, crosses, and rosettes. Six dies of each type may have been provided.<sup>7</sup> Each supply included one- and two-pillar dies, invalidating the division between the single-pillar type II and the two-pillar type III.

The reverse dies used with the obverse dies in Table 1 have Bishop Fox's initials: DR or RD in relatively large lettering, c. 2.5 mm. high, or RD in smaller, c. 2 mm., lettering. There seem to have been two supplies of large DR dies, one supply of large RD dies, and finally one supply of small RD dies; each supply probably consisted of six dies, matching the number of obverse dies in batches of a dozen dies. Five large DR dies known only from coins with lis obverses were almost certainly supplied with the lis obverse dies. The second batch of large DR dies seems to have been supplied with the saltire cross obverse dies, and the large RD dies were probably accompanied by the cross obverse dies. Finally, the six small RD dies must have been supplied with the six rosette obverse dies. One of the small RD dies was used with a Henry VIII first coinage obverse die of Bishop Thomas Ruthall (pl. 11, 16), providing evidence of the late place of the

small RD and rosette dies.<sup>8</sup>

The evidence of the dies used at Durham supports Lawrence's assumption that the ornaments on the pillars of the throne indicate successive periods of production.<sup>9</sup> Type IIa has trefoil ornaments, and arches on the seat of the throne, beside the king's legs. Similar arches appear on the sovereigns of Grierson's classes A and B,<sup>10</sup> and on the sovereign groat (pl. 11, 6); the class A sovereign and the groat also have trefoil ornaments on their four pillars. Type IIb pence have trefoil ornaments, and an arched throne or the unarched throne normal on later pence.<sup>11</sup> Arched throne coins have Potter and Winstanley cross-ending 2 on the reverse, but some trefoil coins with unarched thrones have cross-ending 7, which appears on all later coins. The unarched throne trefoil type was superseded by the lis type, which is the earliest known for Bishop Fox, following his reopening of the Durham mint under an indenture of 20 January 1495.<sup>12</sup> One London reverse die used with a lis obverse (pl. 11, 11) has the pansy initial mark, the introduction of which has been dated to about the autumn of 1495 by Metcalf.<sup>13</sup> After the lis type the London mint seems to have left the striking of pence to

<sup>7</sup> Metcalf, p. xxix, states that the Durham coins of type IIb in the Ashmolean Museum are from eight obverse dies, and suggests that eight dies were supplied, but the illustrated coins (Metcalf, pl. xi, 724–31) are from only six dies. The two dies attributable to type Iii, applying the revised classification tabulated in Table 3, do not have a crozier to the right of the king, unlike the four dies of type 2. The two type Iii dies may have been supplied with the Ashmolean's two reverse dies having Bishop Shirwood's initials (DS) in relatively large lettering c. 2.5 mm. high. The four type 2 obverse dies may have been received with the Ashmolean's five reverse dies having smaller (c. 2 mm.) initials, in a supply of six obverse dies and six reverse dies. A sixth small initial reverse die is represented in the British Museum.

<sup>8</sup> The reverse die evidently survived the closure of the Durham mint under the restraint of 1499, and was used after the reopening of the mint in 1510 discussed by C. E. Challis, 'The ecclesiastical mints of the early Tudor period: their organization and possible date of closure', *Northern History* 10 (1975), 88–101 passim.

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence, pp. 243–4.

<sup>10</sup> P. Grierson, 'The origins of the English sovereign and the symbolism of the closed crown', *BNJ* 33 (1964), 118–34, at pp. 122–6.

<sup>11</sup> Winstanley's notation implies that the cinquefoil initial mark coins of type IIa entirely preceded the unmarked coins of type IIb, but Stewart, pp. 139–40 has noted that this is not a necessary assumption. The presence or absence of the initial mark cannot be used to allocate the arched throne coins to two successive types.

<sup>12</sup> Metcalf, pp. xii, xiv–xv, xviii has proposed that the production of pence was suspended after type IIb, probably in 1490, and has used the indenture as evidence for a revival of production in 1495. It is more probable that only the Durham mint was closed, during the production of unarched throne trefoil coins in London and York. Stewart, p. 139, suggests that the Durham mint was closed from 1492, when the three-year term of its indenture of 1489 ended, until the implementation of the indenture of 1495.

<sup>13</sup> Metcalf, p. xxxviii.

Durham and York, until its production of type IV during the prohibition of provincial minting of pence ordered in 1499. The Durham and York mints both received supplies of saltire cross and cross dies. Durham rosette obverses have lis sceptre heads from a distinctive broken punch with partly missing side fleurs, which is used in the royal arms on the reverse, and also appears as a throne ornament on York coins. The rosette and broken lis type was the last before the

restraint of the provincial mints. The London pence of type IV have lis ornaments from a new unbroken punch, and the earliest initial mark on them is the cross-crosslet, which was introduced in 1504.<sup>14</sup> Production of type IV may have begun in 1505, to supply some of the pence required at the London exchange for clipped coins established by a proclamation of 27 April.<sup>15</sup> Tables 3 and 4 summarize a revised classification, consistent with the evidence discussed.

TABLE 3: Revised classification

Type	Pillars	Ornaments	Sceptre head	Cross-ends	Remarks	Winstanley
1i	none	none	lis	1	sceptre in left or right hand.	I
1ii	none	trefoil <sup>16</sup>	lis	2	sceptre in right hand, as on all later coins.	—
2	one	trefoil	lis or trefoil	2	arched throne; trefoil stops or none; cinquefoil initial mark on some London coins.	IIa and IIb
3i	one	trefoil	lis or trefoil	2 or 7	unarched throne; stops: trefoil, rosette or none; lis initial mark on London dies with rosette stops.	IIb
3ii	one or two	lis	lis	7	pansy initial mark on one London reverse die.	IIc–IIIb
3iii	one or two <sup>17</sup>	saltire cross	lis or saltire cross	7		IIc and IIIb
3iv	one or two <sup>17</sup>	cross	lis or cross	7	throne seat on some York coins ornamented with saltire crosses.	IIc and IIIb
3v	one or two	rosette or broken lis	broken lis	7	rosette stops on some obverse dies with broken lis ornaments.	IIc and IIIb
4	two double	lis	lis	7	saltire stops; initial mark: cross-crosslet, pheon or none.	IVa–IVc

TABLE 4: Summary of mint output

Mint	1i	1ii	2	3i	3ii	3iii	3iv	3v	4
Durham		x	x		x	x	x	x	
London	x		x	x	x				x
York	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	

<sup>14</sup> Metcalf, p. xxxviii. The cross-crosslet initial mark dies of type IVb undoubtedly preceded the pheon initial mark dies of type IVc, but the assumption that the unmarked coins of type IVa were earlier than the cross-crosslet and pheon coins is questionable. Winstanley, p. 121, asserted that type IVa has lettering E or F, and that types IVb and IVc have lettering G, but I have been unable to confirm this. Only three of the lettering G letters (E, N, and R) illustrated from groats by Potter and Winstanley, *BNJ* 30, p. 289, are found on pence, and none of these differs from earlier lettering in ways that can be confidently identified on pence. Subdivision of type IV should be avoided until more secure evidence for the place of

the unmarked coins can be found.

<sup>15</sup> P. Grierson, 'Notes on early Tudor coinage', *BNJ* 41 (1972), 80–94, at pp. 93–4, discusses the proclamation of 1505, which stipulated payment in 'onely golde [*recte* goode] pens of two pens and pens'.

<sup>16</sup> One of the two known type 1ii obverse dies has trefoils in the positions later occupied by pillars; the other has one trefoil in a similar position, with a stalk that might be described as a very short pillar.

<sup>17</sup> Some saltire cross and cross obverse dies have one double pillar, with or without another, single, pillar.

## KEY TO PLATE 11

AM: Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

BM: British Museum.

HM: Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow.

MA: author's collection.

1.	Type li.	Sceptre in the left hand.	York.	BM.
2.		Sceptre in the right hand.	London.	BM.
3.	Type lii.	Small DS.	Durham.	BM.
4.	Type 2.	Large DS.	Durham.	BM.
5.		Cinquefoil initial mark.	London.	AM.
6.	Period of type 2.	Sovereign groat, obverse.	London.	HM.
7.	Type 3i.	Rosette stops.	York.	BM.
8.		Rosette stops; lis initial mark.	London.	BM.
9.		Trefoil stops.	London.	BM.
10.	Type 3ii.	Large DR.	Durham.	MA.
11.		Pansy initial mark.	London.	BM.
12.	Type 3iii.		York.	AM.
13.	Type 3iv.	Saltire crosses on the seat of the throne.	York.	AM.
14.		Large RD.	Durham.	BM.
15.	Type 3v.	Rosette ornament; small RD.	Durham.	AM.
16.	Henry VIII first coinage obverse; type 3v small RD reverse.		Durham.	MA.
17.	Type 3v.	Broken lis ornament; rosette stops.	York.	BM.
18.	Type 4.	No initial mark	London.	AM.
19.	Type 4.	Cross crosslet initial mark as the X of REX.	London.	AM.
20.	Type 4.	Pheon initial mark	London.	BM.