

Coins of the Tudors and Stuarts **Edward VI**

Part 2



Fig.30. Edward VI, gold sovereign, third period, Tower mint (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.31. Edward VI, gold half sovereign, third period, Tower mint (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.32. Edward VI, gold crown, third period, Tower mint (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.33. Edward VI, gold halfcrown, third period, Tower mint (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.34. Edward VI, silver crown, third period, 1552, Tower mint (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.35. Edward VI, silver halfcrown, third period, 1551, Tower mint (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

Continued from the August 2015 issue of Treasure Hunting.

Third Period and Return to Fine Silver (1550-3)

In 1550 the fineness of the gold coinage was improved further, at least for the sovereign of 30s and the 10s angel and its half. These are very rare coins but the 22ct standard was continued for the rest of the gold coinage; namely the 20s sovereign, half sovereign, crown and

halfcrown (Figs.30-33). Each of these depict an attractive half-length figure of the king, crowned and in armour, bearing a sword and sceptre. In 1551 the silver standard was returned to the quality it had enjoyed before the Great Debasement of 1544 and there was a clear and concerted attempt to convert the majority of the previous base issues into new good quality money. Production was the responsibility of the Tower mint and that at York and with the new

standard came new denominations in silver. The silver crowns and halfcrowns bore a handsome equestrian figure of the king on the obverse with the date in Arabic numerals included on an English coin for the first time (Figs.34 & 35). The new denominations of sixpence and threepence joined the shilling, penny and farthing. The three larger of these were of a new style with a facing bust and for the first time the penny value of the coin was shown in Roman numerals



Fig.36. Edward VI, silver shilling, third period, Tower mint (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.37. Edward VI, silver sixpence, third period, Tower mint (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.38. Edward VI, silver threepence, third period, Tower mint (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.39. Edward VI, silver penny, third period, Tower mint (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

Fig.40. Ireland. Edward VI, sixth harp issue (1547) sixpenny groat in the name of Henry VIII.

The omission of the regnal year identifies this type as belonging to the early years of Edward's reign. (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.44. Ireland. Edward VI in the name of Henry VIII, three farthings (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.41. Ireland. Edward VI in the name of Henry VIII, sixpence (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.42. Ireland. Edward VI in the name of Henry VIII, threepence (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.43. Ireland. Edward VI in the name of Henry VIII, three halfpence (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

next to the king's left ear with a large rose opposite (Figs.36-38) The pennies reverted to the sovereign style seen in earlier reigns (Figs.39).

Ireland

The first Irish coins minted in Edward's reign were a continuation of the harp groats of his father and were minted posthumously for a short time (Fig.40). Between 1547 and c.1550 posthumous old head coins were minted in four denominations, the sixpence, threepence, three halfpence and three farthings (Figs.41-44). Each of these conformed to a similar design with the dead king's bust on the obverse and the quartered arms over a cross on the reverse, except on the tiny three farthings which used a cross and pellets. There is some variation in the quality of engraving of the bust, the earliest style appears to be from dies made in England while later ones

degenerate and are from locally produced dies. The reverses give the mint name as Dublin although production was moved from Dublin to London during the reign. Indeed the cost of producing coin in London and transporting it to Ireland was cheaper than producing indigenous coin in silver. Base English shillings were also imported into Ireland in 1552, and it is possible that these coins were produced expressly for that purpose (Fig.45).

Scotland

Mary Queen of Scots (1542-67) is a familiar if tragic figure in the history of Scotland. She was the daughter of James V and Mary of Guise and grew up in the French court alongside the children of the French king. Her father died in 1542 and Mary, then just six days old, became queen. In the early years a regency, headed by James Earl of Arran was established, and the first coins in

Mary's name were minted under his authority. A number of denominations were struck in the first period (1542-58) in gold, silver and base metal. The gold consisted of a 44 shilling and 22 shilling piece (Figs.46 & 47). The obverse of both these coins are comprised of the crowned arms of Scotland with the inscription **+MARIA DEI GRA R SCOTORVM** and the initials **I** and **G** either side of the shield for **IACOBVS GUBERNATOR** (the Regent James). The reverse continues the legend **DILIGITE IVSTICIAM** 'Observe Justice' around a monogram of Maria Regina. All bear the date 1553. In silver were the testoons, valued at four shilling Scots and its half. The three types are of different design, the first carries a portrait of the young queen on one side and the lion rampant within a shield on the reverse, the second, on a finer silver standard and valued at 5 shilling bore a crowned **M** and the lion shield over cross



Fig.45. Ireland. Edward VI, base imitation of a shilling (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.46. Scotland. Mary, gold 44s piece, Edinburgh (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.47. Scotland. Mary, gold 22s piece, Edinburgh (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.48. Scotland. Mary, silver testoon, type IIIa, 1556, Edinburgh. The M and R either side of the shield stand for Maria Regina while the reverse inscription IN VIRTUTE TVA LIBERA ME means 'In Thy strength deliver me' (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.49. Scotland. Mary, silver half testoon, type IIIa, 1556, Edinburgh. (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.50. Scotland. Mary, billon bawbee of three-quarter alloy, this type has a fluted saltire of later coins in the series, Edinburgh (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.51. Scotland. Mary, billon plack, 1557, Edinburgh (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).



Fig.52. Scotland. Mary, billon lion of one-twelfth alloy, dated 1556 (© Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

potent, while the third, and most common type, depicts the lion rampant on one side and cross and crosslets design on the reverse (Figs.48 & 49).

Base metal coins continued to make up the lower denomination pieces in Scotland. The bawbee, valued at sixpence, was struck for Mary in 1543 in continuation of her father's coins (Fig.50). The obverse shows a crowned thistle with **M** and **R** to either side while on the reverse is a saltire cross through crown with cinquefoils to either side. The cinquefoil was a symbol of the Hamilton Earls of Arran. The reverse inscription gives the name Edinburgh, where most were struck, but a small issue is known from Stirling and dated to 1544. In 1557 the billon plack was struck again for the first time since 1526 (Fig.51). The crowned shield of the larger denominations was used on the obverse while on the reverse the ornate cross with plain cross in the centre is surrounded by the inscription

SERVIO ET VSV TEROR ('I serve and am worn by use'). The billon lion, or 'hardhead', was valued at one and a half pence and borrowed the crowned **M** design from the type II silver testoons for its obverse design (Fig.52). The reverse bears a rampant lion surrounded by the inscription **VICIT VERITAS** ('Truth has conquered'). Mary's story would later become entangled with that of the English monarchs and will be continued in the next instalments covering the reign of Mary Tudor and Elizabeth.

Death

Edward died on 6 July 1553, the most likely cause thought to be tuberculosis and was buried at Westminster Abbey. Although brief, Edward's reign saw the virtual restoration of the English coinage to something approaching the quality it had enjoyed before the debasement. The introduction of new denominations and the addition of dates and value on many

coins brought the English coinage up to date within the context of the broader European picture. Before he died he made alterations to the succession from his sisters Mary and Elizabeth to Jane Grey, the unfortunate 'nine days queen'. Next time we'll move on to the coinage of Edward's sister Mary.

Further Reading

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Sutherland, C.H.V. *English Coinage 600-1900* (London, 1973).

Note: Coins and medals in this article are shown at actual size (100% scale). **TH**