

## Privy Mark Crown on the Sixpences of Elizabeth I

by Walter Wilkinson

Preparation of the drawings of die punches for BCW \* included the privy marks. These were not used in the book, but are an interesting study in their own right. As would be expected, there are more different punches on the numerous sixpences than on other denominations. Some, such as the lions, are easily distinguished; others, eglantine for example, can be uncertain, especially as privy marks are often worn or partly off-flan.

Five distinct shapes of the crown ("coronet") privy mark can be distinguished on the sixpences, As illustrated in figure 1.

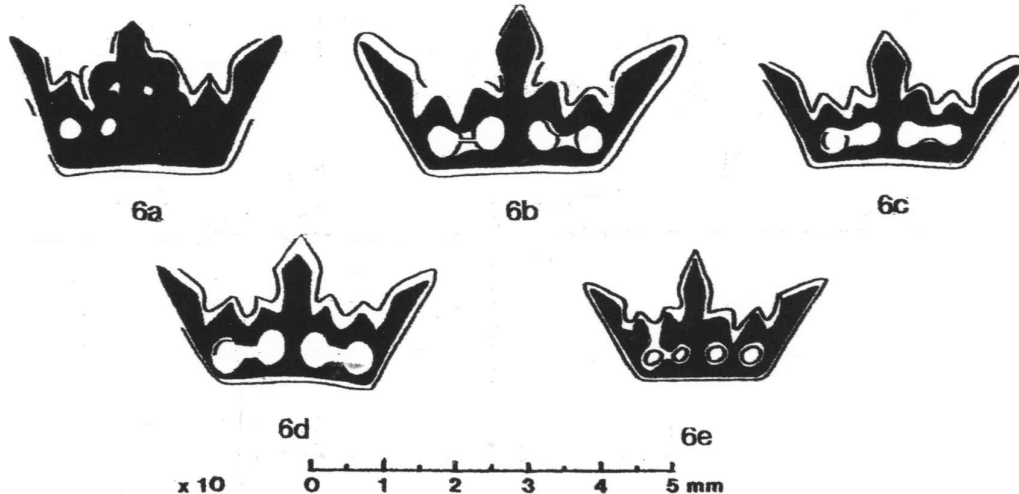


Fig. 1. The five crown privy marks on sixpences.

6a is more upright, the left side being at an angle of  $70^\circ$  and the right at  $115^\circ$ . Its extreme width is 3.7mm. It occurs on the Reverses of early 1567 productions, which have lis 29 and lion 37 on the shield. Most of the crown over lion Reverse overmarks use 6a.

6b is the largest punch, often very clear on the coin. It has more splayed sides, the left being at an angle of  $62^\circ$  and the right at  $123^\circ$ . Its width is 4.4mm. This occurs on the same early issues as 6a, usually on the Obverse, but is known from a few later 1567 Reverses which have lis 30 and lion 43 (early state) on the shield.

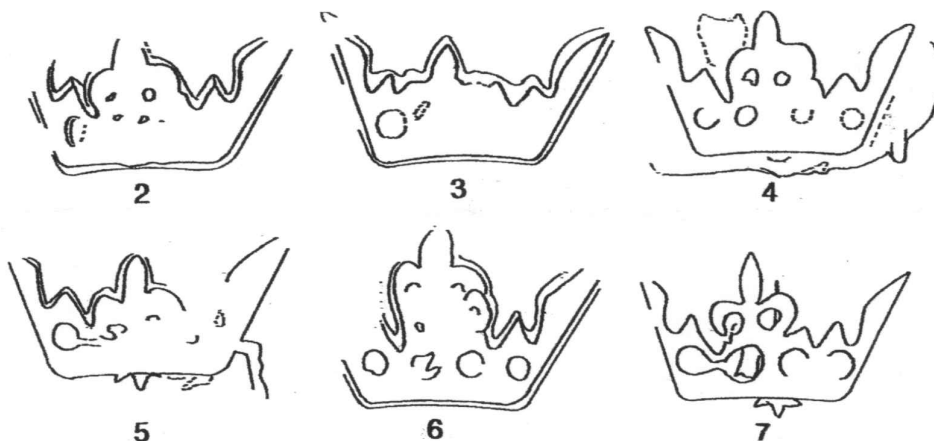
6c is of similar shape to 6b but smaller. The side angles are the same, but overall width is 3.8mm. It clearly follows on from 6b, being found on later 1567 coins bearing lis 30 and lions 43 (late state) or 44. All the 1568/7 and 1568 coins have this punch and the occasional 1569. I have a single 1570 specimen Obverse with 6c broken off at the right side; its Reverse has 6d.

6d is about the same size as 6c, with the right side slightly more upright ( $118^\circ$ ). Its base is, however, deeper, with more pronounced "dumbbells". It is found only on coins dated 1569 and 1570.

6e similar in appearance to 6c but with a slightly more splayed left side ( $58^\circ$ ). It is only 3.3mm wide, with a narrow central spike and a constant distinct break above the left "dumbbell" (a similar break occurs on some 6c). It is found occasionally on the 1567 Obverses. This does not truly belong among the sixpences, being the punch used mainly for the threepence, also for the halfgroat and threepence dies.

These recorded designations are based on the study of over 100 specimens, not all of which could be allocated, due to wear, distortion or missing parts.

Punches 6b to 6e are straightforward, but 6a is an enigma. The main part of the crown is standard, but the central spike varies in height, angle and position. Examples can be seen in figures 2 to 7. At first it was thought that these were different crowns, but it soon became apparent that they were the same, but that the main body and the centre piece were struck from separate punches.



Figures 2 to 7. Variants of crown 6a.



Figure 8. Main body of 6a.

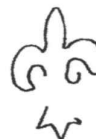


Figure 9. Putative lis of 6a.

The main body of 6a is illustrated in figure 8. The central element appears to be a fleur-de-lis, and the (partial) putative punch is shown in figure 9.

Figs 2 and 3 are of typical appearance.

Figs 4 and 5 have been struck over a lion privy mark; the rear hind leg can be clearly seen. In 4 the lion has been partly obliterated by an oval punch before the 'crown' was struck.

Figs 5 and 7 show the base of the lis.

Figs 6 and 7 here the lis has been double struck, but not the body of the crown.

Two possible explanations of 6a are as follows.

1. The crown punch was broken, and was repaired on the die using a lis punch to replace the missing central spike. Although repairs to the die, where a broken punch has been used, are known (eg the shield) I know of no privy mark which has been repaired. This explanation seems unlikely, especially as punch 6b may have been available at the time.
2. The lis was entered first and then corrected to a crown by overstriking with a crown punch, possibly with the central spike removed, as no trace of such a spike has been detected. In Mestrelle's milled series the privy mark lis was introduced in 1567, so is it possible that the die sinker mistakenly thought that the lis applied also to the hammered coins? Although contentious I feel that this explanation carries more weight.

I have delayed publishing these observations for 30 years in the hope of finding clearer examples (eg figure 7). Can anyone please produce documentary evidence, clearer coins, or even the ultimate prize of a hammered sixpence of 1567 bearing privy mark lis!?

\* Brown, I.D., Comber, C.H. and Wilkinson, W. 2006 (updated 2016). *'The Hammered Silver Coins Produced at the Tower Mint during the Reign of Elizabeth I'*. Galata (Withers), Llanfyllin, 84 pp, 18 plates.

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