

# The First Issue Shilling of Nicholas Briot's Hammered Coinage of 1638-39

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This rare issue comprises a halfcrown and four varieties of shillings but I am going to concentrate on the rarest, the first hammered issue shilling numbered S2862 in Spink. It is described therein as being not unlike his second milled issue coin (S2859) with a square topped shield over a cross fleury which ends within the inner circle. There are contraction and pellet stops on the obverse and pellet stops on the reverse which also bears a very unusual Irish harp in the shield.

For many years it has been thought that there were only two specimens of this coin, one of which is in the British Museum. The other, pictured below, has a lengthy provenance:



The earliest owner of whom I am aware was Grant R Francis who was President of the British Numismatic Society from 1922 to 1925 and the winner of the Sanford Saltus Medal in 1926. He wrote extensively in the BNJ in and around the 1920's covering, amongst others, the silver coins of Charles I with his account of the shillings appearing in the 1918 edition. This coin is of type 4c with mm anchor, right and featuring the very rare harp shown as No. 17 in the plate facing page 67 with the coin and the harp referred to in pp 65/66 of the text. The coin is illustrated as item 2 on Plate V, item 3 on the same plate being of Briot's 2<sup>nd</sup> milled Issue shilling, S2859, from which the similarities are apparent. It is further mentioned in his descriptive listing on p 84 which confirms that this coin and that in the BM are the only ones known to him.

His coin was sold at the Glendinings Auction which took place from 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> March 1920, Lot 173. The coin appeared again at Glendinings on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1955 as Lot 58 from the Helen Farquhar Collection. It was then to form part of the Michael Sharp collection until he sold it to JG Brooker where it appears in his sylloge as Brooker 736. It also featured as part of the RA

Shuttlewood collection with this coin being sold from the Spink Numismatic Circular in April 2001 when it was acquired by Dr John Hulett whose collection has been sold in tranches by Dix Noonan Webb over recent months with this coin appearing at the DNW sale of 5<sup>th</sup> June as Lot 390 when, against an estimate of £1000-1200, it sold for £3800 hammer/£4712 gross. At this stage I am unaware of the identity of the new owner. The illustration in Brooker confirms it is the same coin but adds no further information. The coin is listed as weighing 5.82 grams in DNW but as 5.84 grams in Brooker.

The British Museum have kindly provided me with images of their coin which appear below:



As can be seen this is probably better than the Hulett coin and it was acquired by the BM in 1825 but the source of the purchase is not noted and there is no provenance. The coin weighs 6.02 grams.

Meanwhile and, as so often occurs, concealed in a collection in the USA was a third specimen which appeared unrecognised in a lot in a Heritage Auction sale in April 2010 which comprised some nineteen hammered coins. In total there were three pennies of Henry III, two of the early Edwards plus seven small denomination coins from Henry VI to Elizabeth, a James I shilling, two shillings, two sixpences and groat of Charles I plus the Briot coin. It is not clear who bought the lot but I gather it went for US\$1610, presumably including buyer's premium etc, and what happened to the Briot coin in the interim is unknown but it next appeared, still unrecognised, in the trays of an American dealer at Coinex in 2016. It was then acquired by Paul Woodard who retained it until mid-2018 when he sold it to me since when it has formed part of my collection and it is illustrated below:



It is clear that my coin is not of the same quality as the ex Hulett or the BM coins, but it is a full, generally round coin with all of the legend legible and the punctuation marks and mint marks clear. The unusual Irish harp is also clear and obviously matches that shown in the Francis article from 1918. Whilst the bust is somewhat worn and the coin dark, it is a pleasing specimen I am very glad to have acquired. This coin weighs 5.70 grams and has a diameter of some 31 cm.

A comparison of the three coins suggests that all three are die duplicates.

I am very grateful to Paul Woodard for drawing my attention to his coin and for letting me buy it from him and for his help and guidance during the production of this note. I am also very grateful to Barrie Cook of the British Museum for making special efforts to provide me with images of the BM coin which are reproduced with their kind permission. Images of the ex Hulett coin are by kind permission of Dix Noonan Webb.

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