

A New Bust Type for James I Shillings

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The silver coinage of James I was well written up over a century ago and the various busts appearing on the shillings illustrated by Morrieson in 1906⁽¹⁾ with more details of initial marks used for each coinage in 1907.⁽²⁾ He followed this with a short article in 1912 with a short note describing recently confirmed and discovered silver varieties.⁽³⁾ In 1912 Symonds reviewed the surviving Pyx records, which allows a good estimate of the rarity of some of the issues to be determined.⁽⁴⁾

Morrieson's listing forms the basis of all subsequent catalogues of the silver coinage of James I. With the exception of the relatively rare crowns, the topic remained quiet for about a century with just the odd die sinker's error and unrecorded overstruck initial marks appearing in print and in auctions. The crowns were studied in more detail by Francis in 1921-2⁽⁵⁾ and a full die and die combination study was published by Cooper in 1970.⁽⁶⁾

Then in 2007, David Holt published an unrecorded transitional bust on a first coinage shilling with initial mark thistle (1603-4).⁽⁷⁾ Four different obverse dies are now known that use this bust punch.

To this can now be added a new bust type for the second coinage shilling with initial mark key (1609-10). The portrait is shorter and much narrower, and the shoulder and collar are sparsely decorated when compared to the normal 5th bust. The crown is also narrower with fewer jewels on the upper arches. Both the new piece and the normal 5th bust are illustrated below for comparison.

Obv. **IACOBVS:D:G:MAG:BRIT:FRA:**
ET:HI:REX. i.m. Key. 5th Bust variety.
Rev. **QVAE.DEVS.CONIVNXIT.NEMO.**
SEPARET i.m. Key, around Royal shield.
Details. Ag, 30.2×30.6 ↔↑mm, 5.639g. 150%.
GO.



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ET:HI:REX. i.m. Key. 5th Bust.
Rev. **QVAE.DEVS.CONIVNXIT.NEMO.**
SEPARET i.m. Key, around Royal shield.
Details. Ag, 30.5×30.2 ↔↑mm, 5.661g. 150%.
GO



References and Acknowledgements

- (1) H. W. Morrieson, 'The busts of James I on his silver coinage' BNJ vol. 3 (1906), 173-79.
- (2) H. W. Morrieson, 'The English silver coins of James I' BNJ vol. 4 (1907), 165-78.
- (3) H. W. Morrieson, 'Some further notes on the silver coins of James I' BNJ vol. 9 (1912), 229-33.
- (4) H. Symonds, 'The mint-marks and denominations of the coinage of James I as disclosed by the Trials of the Pyx' BNJ vol. 9 (1912), 207-27.
- (5) G. R. Francis, 'James I crowns - new discoveries' BNJ vol. 16 (1921-22), 123-28.
- (6) F. R. Cooper, 'The English silver crowns of James I: a study of the dies and die combinations' BNJ, vol. 39 (1970), 145-57.
- (7) D. Holt. A New Bust Type for James I Shillings. SNC, February 2007, p17.

Thanks to David Holt for details of the pieces bearing the transitional bust.

