A Die Study of James I Shillings – Third Issue, Sixth Bust, mm Lis

Gary Oddie

Introduction

Having recently completed a first die study of one of the scarcer James I shillings; third issue, mintmark rose, and found a surprising 11 obverse and 11 reverse dies[(1)], this note tackles one of the commoner issues of James I shillings; third issue, sixth bust, mintmark lis. The three main types; no plume on reverse, plume on reverse and IACOB[9] contraction for IACOBVS are well known[(2)] along with various contractions in the legend abbreviations: MA(G) BR(I) FR(A) ET HI(B)[(3)].

Method

Unlike the mintmark Rose shillings, of the mintmark Lis shillings only one has been found that has a bust that breaks the inner circle. Thus the method for identifying individual dies is modified as shown below.

Fig. 1. Images used to identify individual dies.

For the obverse, the inner circle and centre is determined, and lines are constructed across the top and bottom of the XII through the legend. The coin is rotated until the top and bottom of the XII is horizontal. Two lines are also drawn radially from the centre to the locations where the bust is closest to the inner circle. These provide three close-ups which are generally enough to uniquely identify a die.

For the reverse, radial lines are drawn from the centre of the shield though the top left and top right corners, horizontally to the left and vertically downwards. These provide four close-ups to identify the die.

A few of the dies are very similar, and when double striking and die bounce are considered, great care must be taken when looking for the presence or absence of punctuation. Several of the dies show small die breaks leading to infilled letters and also metal loss from the die (corrosion or spalling?) can lead to irregular raised areas on the coin, typically between the inner/outer circles and the legend.

To make finding dies easier, those pieces which display one or more stops around the obverse or reverse mintmark are placed before pieces that have no stops at the mintmarks.

Summary of Results

Images of 84 specimens from various private collections and archived auction catalogues (see sources section at end). Only 12 die-pair duplicates were found and the best specimen of each is illustrated, resulting in the 72 pieces illustrated below.

The table below summarises the main obverse legend varieties and further divides the coins by the reverse design (plain or with plume above the shield). Types have been added for completeness where types are expected to exist. The illustrations on the following pages follow the same sequence.

Dies have been found muled with dies in different groups and are indicated by the coloured fractions thus allowing the correct total to be maintained. Thus in the **IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HI REX** group the entries of 17 $^{2}/_{3}$ and 4 $^{1}/_{3}$ indicate that one of the obverse dies is known from 3 specimens; two with a plain reverse and one with a plume reverse.

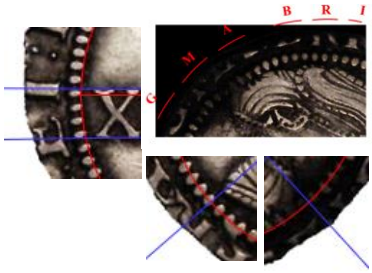
Main Type	Obv. Legend	Reverse	Obv. Dies	Rev. Dies
Third Issue Sixth Bust mm Lys	**IACOBVS D G MA BRI FRA ET HI REX**	Plain	2	2
		Plume	-	-
	IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HI REX	Plain	17 $^{2}/_{3}$	27 $^{1}/_{2}$
		Plume	4 $^{1}/_{3}$	4 $^{2}/_{5}$
	IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HIB REX	Plain	13 $^{4}/_{6}$	16 $^{1}/_{2}$ $^{3}/_{4}$
		Plume	3 $^{2}/_{6}$	1 $^{3}/_{5}$
	IACOBVS D G MAG BRIT FRA ET HI REX	Plain	1	$^{1}/_{4}$
		Plume	-	-
	IACOB^{9} D G MAG BRI FRA ET HI REX	Plain	2	3
		Plume	2	2
	IACOB^{9} D G MAG BRI FRA ET HIB REX	Plain	4	5
		Plume	-	-
		Totals	50	63

The Die Study

IACOBVS D G MA BRI FRA ET HI REX – Plain reverse

Stops either side of mm

Not enough space for G in MAG

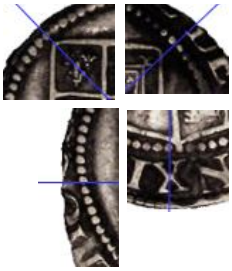


[P1]

O1

R1

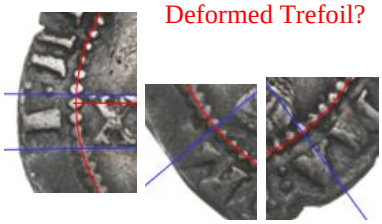
Distorted shield, camera effect?



Stop before mm

Described as mm Lis over Thistle

Deformed Trefoil?



[P2]

O2

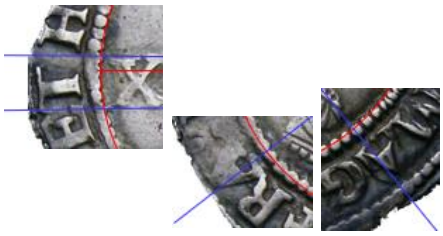
R2

IACOBVS D G MA BRI FRA ET HI REX – Plume reverse

Not found

IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HI REX – Plain reverse

Stop before mm

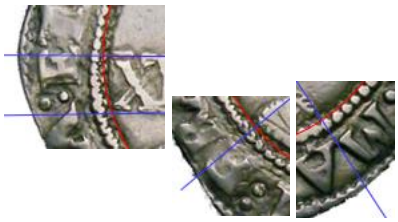


[P3]

O3

R3

Stop before mm



[P4]

O4

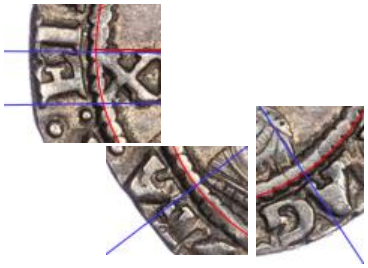
R4

[P5]

O5

R5

Stop before mm



[P6]

O5

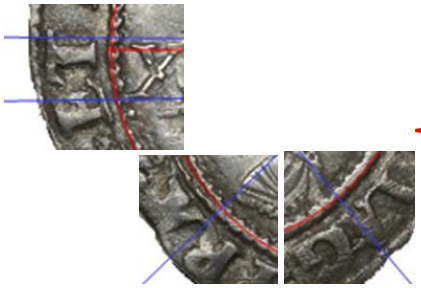
R6

[P7]

O6

R7

Stop before mm

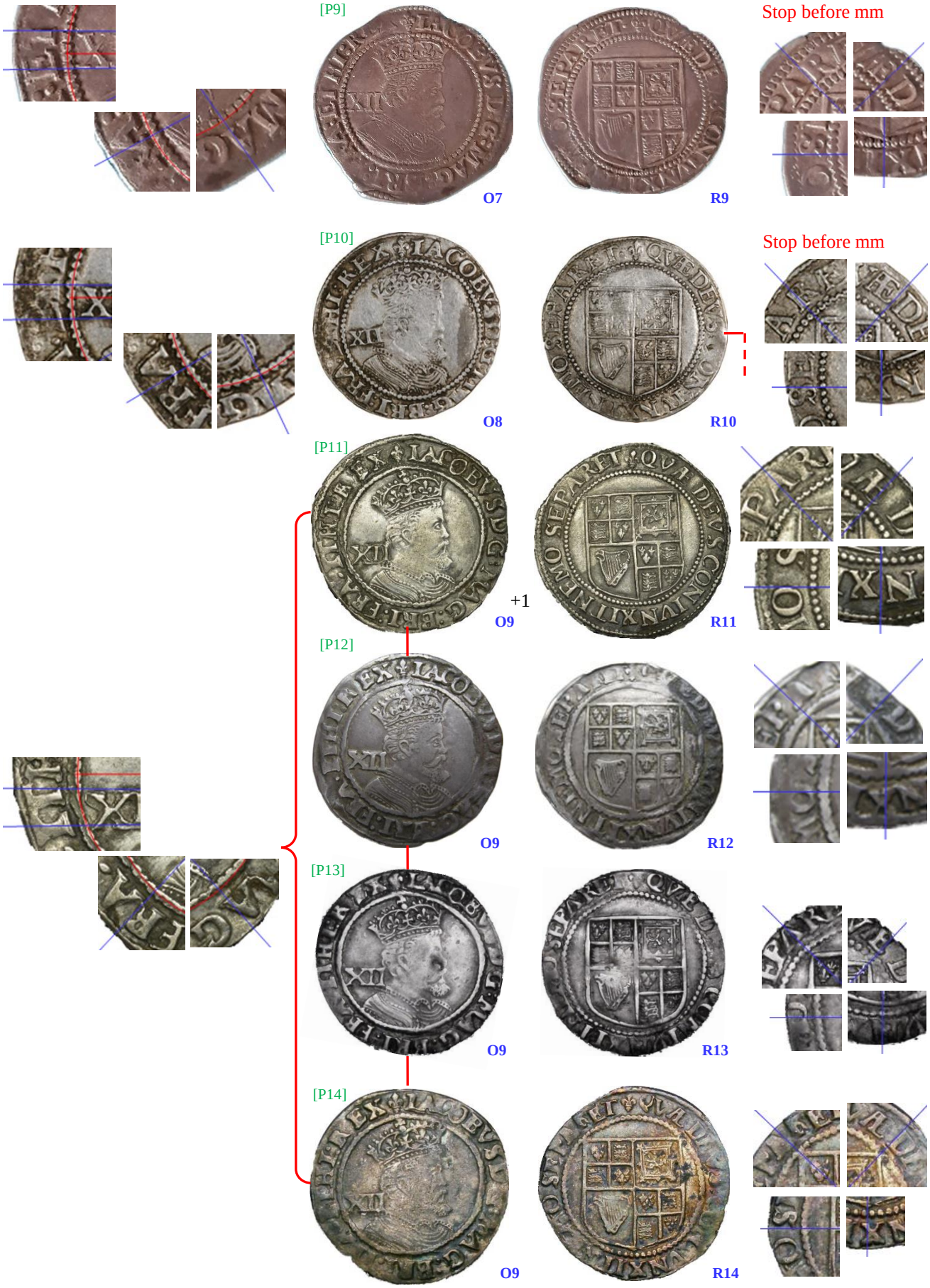


[P8]

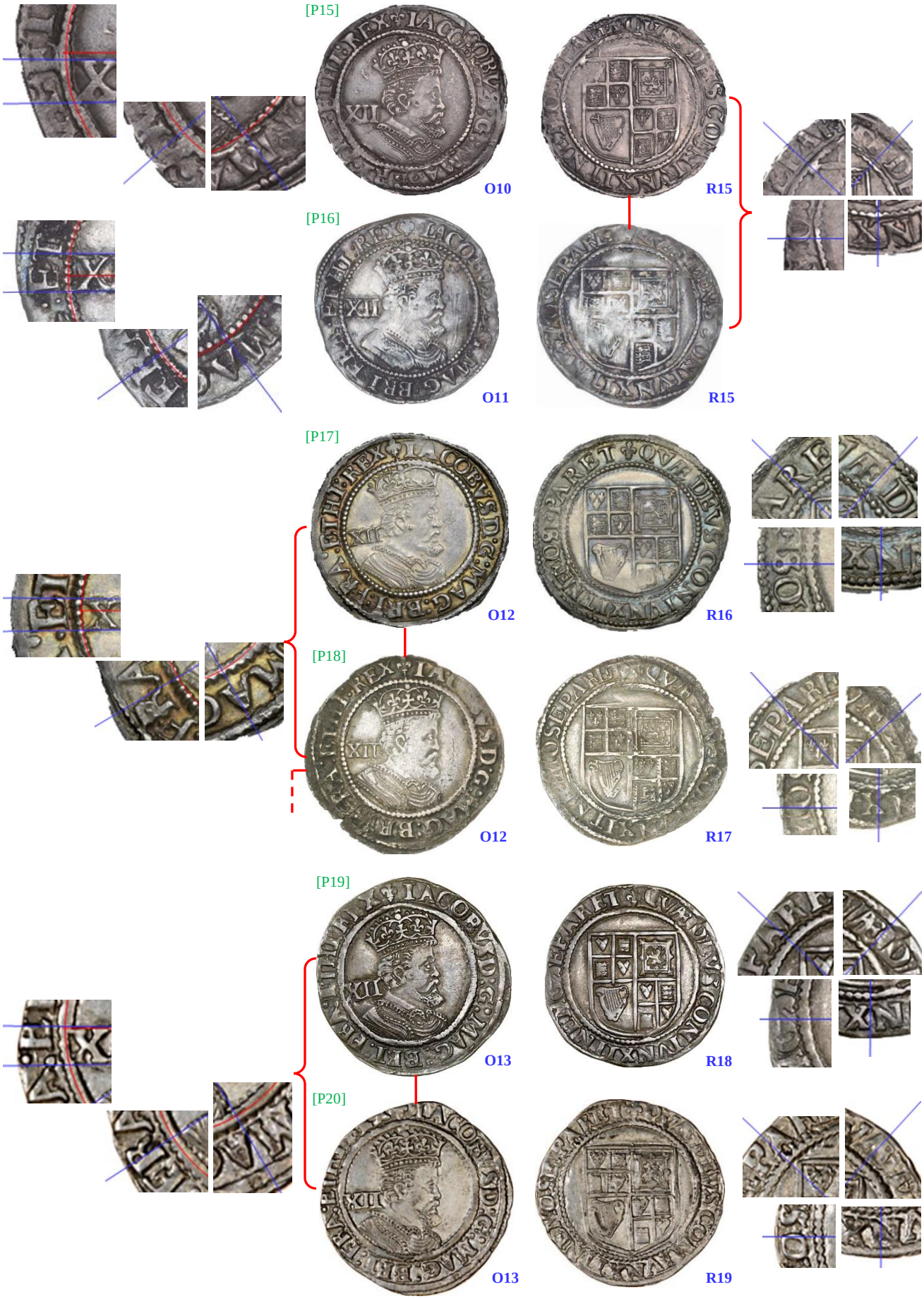
O6

R8

IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HI REX – Plain reverse - continued



IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HI REX - Plain reverse - Continued



IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HI REX - Plain reverse - Continued

[P21]

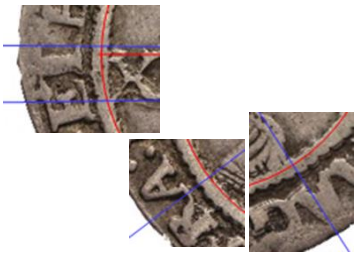
O14

R20

[P22]

O14

R21



[P23]

O14

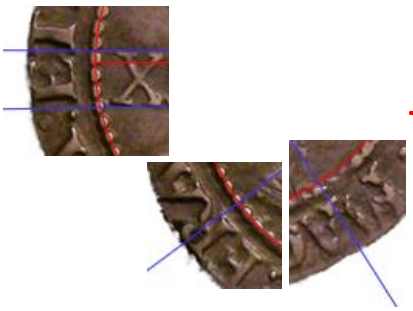
R22

[P24]

O15

+1

R23



[P25]

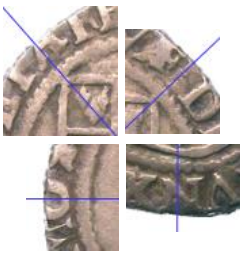
O15

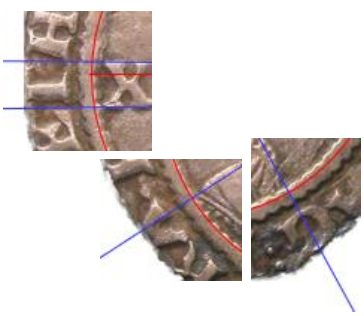
R24

[P26]

O16

R25





IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HI REX - Plain reverse - Continued

[P27]

O17 R26

[P28]

O17 R27

[P29]

O18 R28

[P30]

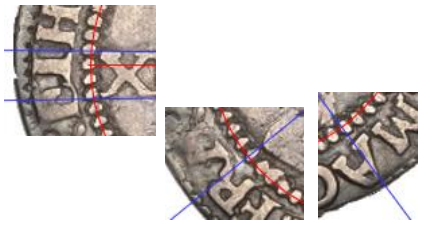
O19 R29

[P31]

O20 R30

IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HI REX – Plume reverse

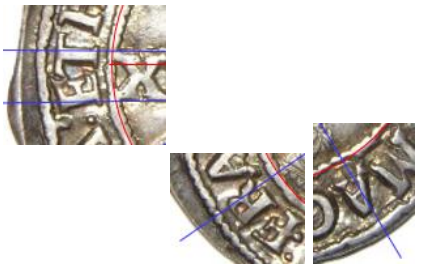
Stops either side of mm,
no colon after HI



[P32]

O21

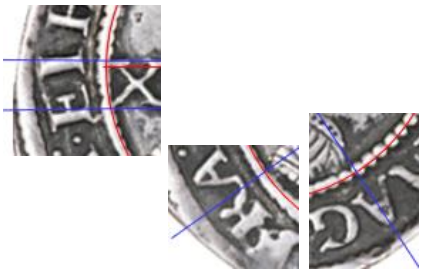
R31



[P33]

O22

R32

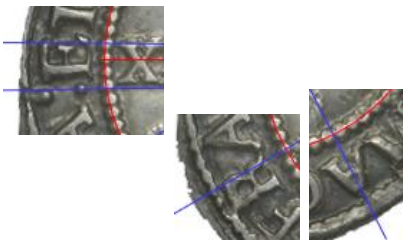


[P34]

O23

+1

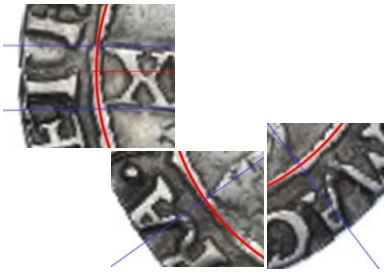
R32



[P35]

O12

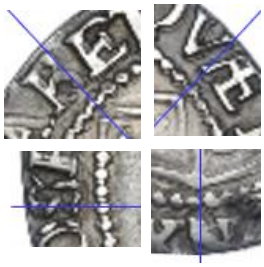
R33



[P36]

O24

R34



[P37]

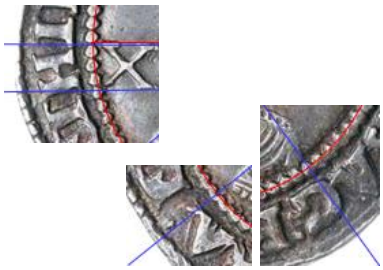
O24

+1

R35

IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HIB REX - Plain reverse

Stops either side of mm



[P38]

O25

R10

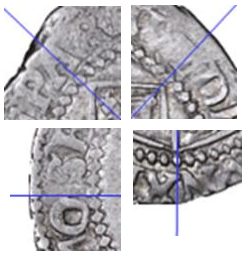
Stop before mm

[P39]

O25

R36

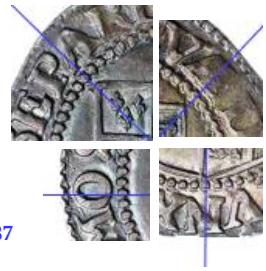
Stop before mm



[P40]

O25

R37

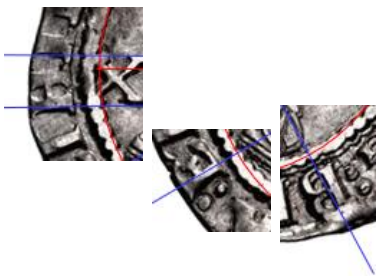


[P41]

O25

R38

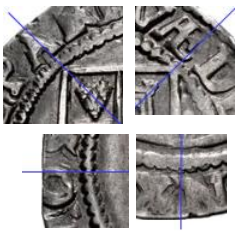
Stop before mm



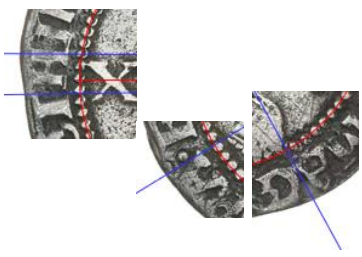
[P42]

O26

R39



Stop before mm



[P43]

O27

R40

IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HIB REX - Plain reverse - continued

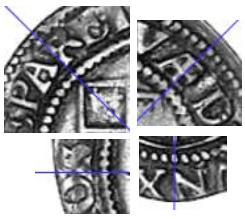
Stop before mm

[P44]

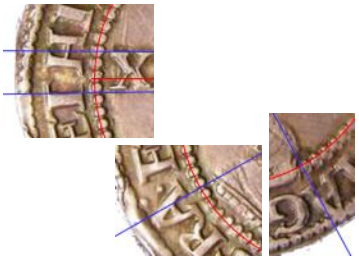
O28

R41

Stops either side of mm



[P45]



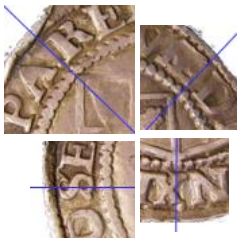
O28

R42

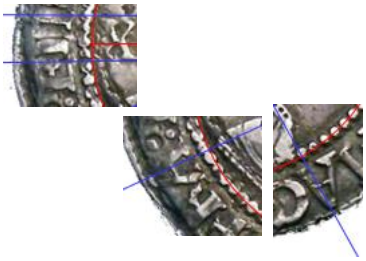
[P46]

O28

R43



Large A's and V

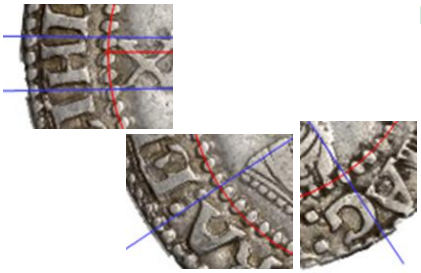


[P47]

O29

R43

[P48]

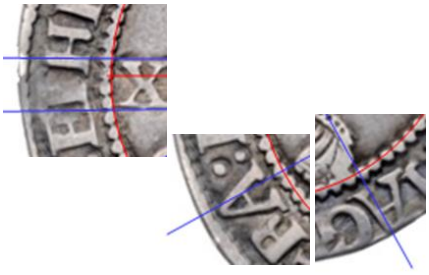


O30

R44

Stops either side of mm
Sideways O in CON

[P49]



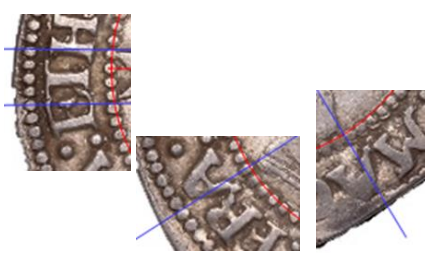
+1

O31

R44

IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HIB REX - Plain reverse - continued

[P50]

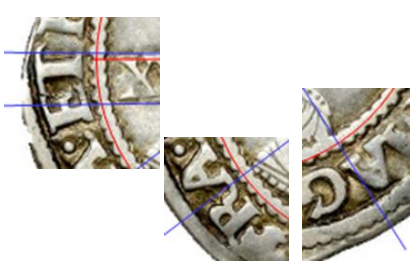


O32

R45

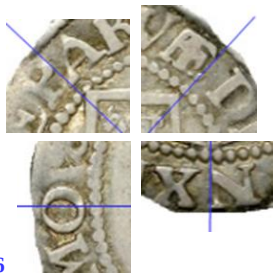
Stop before mm

[P51]



O33

R46



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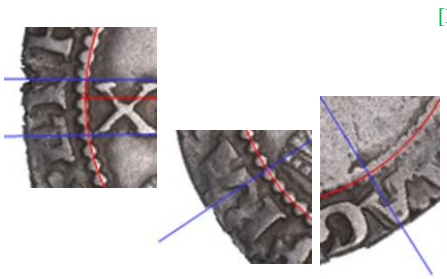
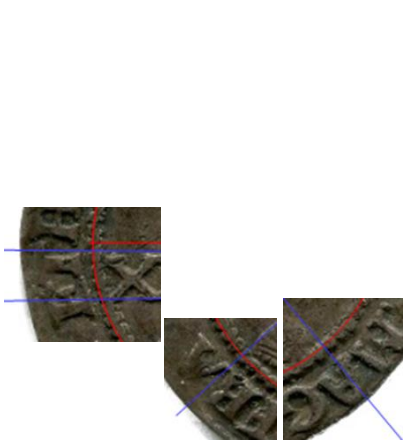


O34

R47

[P53]



O35

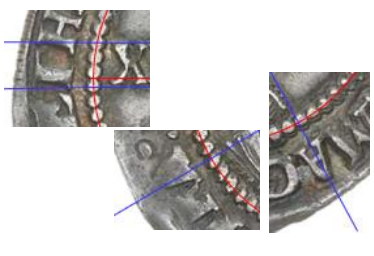
R48

[P54]

O35

R49

[P55]



O36

R50

IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HIB REX - Plain reverse - continued

Bust covers inner circle [P56]

O37 +2 R51

[P57]

O38 +1 R52

IACOBVS D G MAG BRI FRA ET HIB REX - Plume reverse

Stops either side of mm

[P58]

O25 +1 R35

[P59]

O39 R35

[P60]

O40 R53

[P61]

O41 R53

IACOBVS D G MAG BRIT FRA ET HI REX - Plain reverse

[P62]

O42 R44

Stops either side of mm
Sideways O in CON

IACOBVS D G MAG BRIT FRA ET HI REX - Plume reverse

Not found

IACOB[9] D G MAG BRI FRA ET HI REX – Plain reverse

[P63]

[P65]

IACOB[9] D G MAG BRI FRA ET HI REX - Plume reverse

[P66]

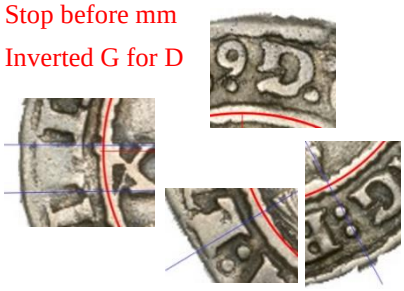
Stop after SEPARET

[P67]

IACOB[9] D G MAG BRI FRA ET HIB REX

Stop before mm

Inverted G for D

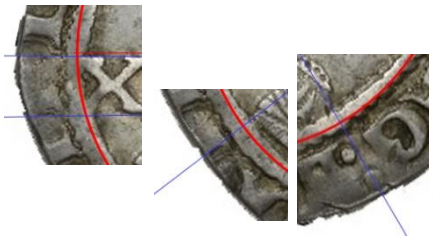


[P68]

O47

R59

Stop before mm

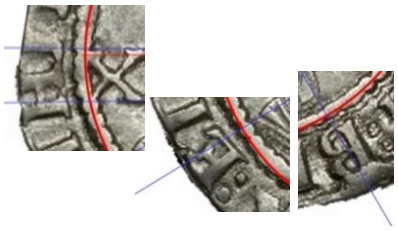


[P69]

O48

R60

Stop before mm



[P70]

O49

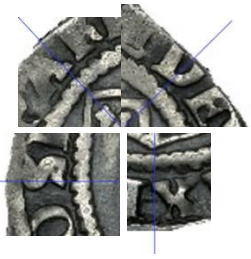
R61

[P71]

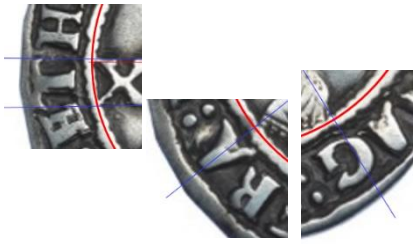
O49

+1

R62



[P72]



O50

R63

IACOB[9] D G MAG BRI FRA ET HIB REX – Plume reverse

Not found

Sources of Images and Acknowledgements

The following are thanked for the use of their images: Noonans, formerly Dix Noonan Webb (Noonans), London Coin Auctions (LCA), Noble Numismatics Australia (NNA), found on the internet without original source (www), private collections, and recent eBay sales (eBay).

[P1]	LCA 170 6-9-2020 Lot 1333	[P25]	LCA 143 1-12-2013 Lot 1523	[P49]	Noonans 18-9-12 Lot 2207
[P2]	Noonans 5-12-2012 Lot 434	[P26]	LCA 126 9-6-2009 Lot 855	[P50]	Noonans 14-6-2017 Lot 207
[P3]	LCA 157 4-6-2017 Lot 1962	[P27]	NNA 65 15-11-2000 Lot 814	[P51]	Noonans 19-9-2019 Lot 1209
[P4]	LCA 159 4-12-2015 Lot 653	[P28]	NNA 25-3-2014 Lot 1710	[P52]	Noonans 2-4-2014 Lot 373
[P5]	Noonans 3-12-2018 Lot 208	[P29]	Noonans 11-10-2021 Lot 1129	[P53]	ebay
[P6]	www	[P30]	LCA 137 4-6-2012 1316	[P54]	Noonans 30-6-2004 Lot 179
[P7]	Noonans 29-1-2020 Lot 897	[P31]	ebay	[P55]	NNA 106 29-7-2014 Lot 1731
[P8]	LCA 131 6-12-2010 Lot 1040	[P32]	Noonans 8-6-2016 Lot 165	[P56]	Noonans 20-3-2013 Lot 286
[P9]	Private Collection	[P33]	Private Collection	[P57]	Private Collection
[P10]	Noonans 12-12-2005 Lot 68	[P34]	Noonans 14-12-2004 Lot 185	[P58]	Noonans 7-10-2004 Lot 309
[P11]	Noonans 23-1-2020 Lot 128	[P35]	Noonans 6-4-2021 Lot 378	[P59]	Noonans 20-3-2013 Lot 287
[P12]	Private Collection	[P36]	Noonans 5-12-2012 Lot 435	[P60]	NNA 64 12-7-2000 Lot 1309
[P13]	LCA 174 5-9-2021 Lot 1118	[P37]	Noonans 21-3-2016 Lot 644	[P61]	Noonans 14-11-2018 Lot 456
[P14]	LCA 167 2-12-19 Lot 434	[P38]	Private Collection	[P62]	Noonans 7-10-2004 Lot 308
[P15]	Noonans 6-9-2014 Lot 2502	[P39]	Noonans 30-9-2008 Lot 4697	[P63]	Noonans 12-12-2017 Lot 1010
[P16]	NNA 127 30-8-21 Lot 3761	[P40]	NNA 119 20-11-2018 Lot 2044	[P64]	www
[P17]	Noonans 21-3-2016 Lot 643	[P41]	Noonans 6-6-2005 Lot 233	[P65]	ebay
[P18]	NNA 91 21-7-2009 Lot 1715	[P42]	www	[P66]	Noonans 12-12-2017 Lot 796
[P19]	Noonans 5-12-2012 Lot 247	[P43]	NNA 111 5-4-2016 Lot 1485	[P67]	Private Collection
[P20]	Noonans 7-10-2004 Lot 307	[P44]	NNA 51 3-7-1996 Lot 1261	[P68]	Noonans 3-11-2020 Lot 55
[P21]	ebay	[P45]	NNA 130 26-7-2022 Lot 3330	[P69]	Noonans 5-6-2019 Lot 365
[P22]	LCA 154 4-9-16 Lot 1690	[P46]	LCA 122 6-9-2008 Lot 1309	[P70]	Noonans 3-12-2018 Lot 209
[P23]	www	[P47]	LCA 129 6-8-2010 Lot 1104	[P71]	Noonans 12-6-2018 Lot 313
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David Holt and Ray Jenkins are also thanked for providing images of their pieces.

Discussion and Conclusions

This note has presented a catalogue of dies used to strike James I shillings of the third issue, mintmark Lis. Without too much difficulty, images of 84 specimens were found. The method for identifying dies works well for well-struck, high-grade and unclipped coins, but is still quite a challenge, especially for the reverse dies for less good pieces even when magnified to 400% on a computer screen. Thus a few links may have been missed. However, even with this sample, there are 50 obverse dies and 63 reverse dies and there are just 12 die-pair duplicates. Several of the dies are muled within the groups and also between the groups.

When looking at such a sample of coins, it is easy to estimate the relative rarity of the various types. The **IACOB**[9] contraction is not an accident, with 8 obverse dies (**O43**-**O50**) and 10 reverse dies (**R54**-**R63**), some with a plume reverse, though interestingly no reverse mules with other groups have been found. This contraction is not known anywhere else in the shillings of this reign. Pieces reading **MA** and **BRIT** are very rare with just 2 and 1 dies respectively, though more and better specimens are required to confirm the **MA** type. The reverses with plumes are certainly rare with just 8 dies as compared to the 55 dies with a plain reverse.

There are just two die sinker's errors: and inverted G for D (**O47**) and a sideways O in CONIVNXIT (**R44**). The quality of the die sinking is certainly less good than that observed in the mintmark Rose shillings and the dies continued to be used even when in a very corroded state (e.g. **O14** and **O44**). There are no finework strikings, though a few reverse dies have finely engraved shields (e.g. **R7**, **R10** and **R11**) and all of the Plume reverse dies are well engraved (**R31**-**R35**, **R53**, **R57**, **R58**). The other shields are typically of a coarser execution (e.g. **R18**). Within the sample the commonest die pair has just three specimens (**O37**-**R51**), whereas the rarer mintmark Rose finework piece is known from 6 examples confirming a disproportionate survival of a special coin.

The following table summarises the results and analyses the obverse and reverse die statistics separately using the usual method.[3,4]

		Obverse	Reverse
Sample size	n	84	84
Number of dies	d	50	63
Singletons	d_1	31	49
2 examples	d_2	9	10
3 examples	d_3	8	2
4 examples	d_4		1
5 examples	d_5	1	1
6 examples	d_6	1	
Coverage	C_{est}	0.63	0.42
Estimated dies	d_-	74	132
	d_{est}	104	210
	d_+	146	337

Table 1. Die statistics of the James I shillings, third issue, sixth bust mintmark Lis.

The low coverage, especially of the reverse dies confirms that the sample is very small and even without the statistical analysis, the high proportion of singletons suggests there are many more dies yet to be identified. It will be realistic to expect over 100 obverse dies and an even higher number of reverse dies to have been used for this issue.

It is interesting to note that the observed ratio of obverse to reverse dies is 1:1.26 (50:63) again closer to the ratio 1:1 seen for the mintmark Rose issue and far from the 1:1.9 average for the crowns of the whole reign.

As mentioned previously, museum collections typically over represent the rarer pieces and underrepresent common types. For this series, most museum specimens have been donated by collectors who were collecting by type, for example using Hawkins as a template. Thus museums will typically have one or two examples of mm Rose and three or four examples of mm Lis, with type duplicates dispersed over the years.

This is where archived sales catalogues with images really do have the advantage of numbers sufficient to allow die studies to be carried out. The numbers of a given auction house might be quite small, and again over representing rarity and quality typical of their vendors' collections, but they should eventually accumulate to give a representative sample of surviving coins. The table below shows data from the Noonans archive and compares it with the amount of silver at the trial of the Pyx for the corresponding mintmarks.[(6)] The value of the silver at the Pyx is a proportion of the total weight of silver struck during that period.

Mintmark	Noonans specimens	Obv. dies seen	Obv. dies expected	Pyx date	Pyx value
Rose	3	11	19	8 June 1621	£3 11 8
Thistle	17			3 July 1623	£26 7 7
Lis	36	50	104	17 June 1624	n/a
Trefoil	30			7 July 1625 - Stuck under James I 7 July 1625 - Stuck under Charles I	£49 8 2 £6 8 5

Table 2. Estimating the relative rarity of James I, third issue, sixth bust shillings.

It is unfortunate that the value of the silver presented at the Pyx trial for the mintmark Lis coins was not recorded. However it would seem that the Lis and Trefoil issues have roughly the same output (surviving specimens, hence similar numbers of expected dies and Pyx value). These are roughly twice as common as shillings with the Thistle mintmark and ten times commoner than the shillings with the Rose mintmark.

This is all quite rough at the moment and assumes that the proportions of denominations struck for each mintmark are constant through the reign. A few more targeted die studies may allow the Pyx value for all of the mintmarks of James I and Charles I (Tower) to be used to estimate the total number of shilling dies used for each mintmark. Die studies will have to be carried out for mintmarks where no crowns and half-crowns were

issued (1610-1620, Key to Spur Rowell). The same method can equally be applied to the other denominations, but I will leave that for someone else to work through!

References

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