

A Die Study of Charles I Shillings – mm Heart

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Introduction

A previous note identified a curious counterfeit Charles I shilling, mm Heart, apparently cast in a silvered base metal, and a die duplicate of a genuine coin⁽¹⁾. Whilst trying to find other pieces with the Heart mm, and ultimately the die duplicate, a quick search revealed 25 specimens of this scarce shilling. The following extends this search to a more detailed die study of 33 of these pieces.

The shillings of Charles I have received much attention since the first classification by Edward Hawkins in 1841⁽²⁾. Each generation of collectors and writers has refined this classification with Grant Francis adding a next level of detail and filling some gaps⁽³⁾. This classification has survived and forms the basis of the modern Seaby/Spink Standard Catalogue's listing of Charles I shillings issued by the Tower mint⁽⁴⁾. Colonel Morrieson tabulated the state of understanding as it was in the 1920s⁽⁵⁾ and Michael Sharp added another level of detail of the different busts within each type⁽⁶⁾.

From Hawkins' first work, differences in individual punches such as those for the Irish Harp, the Scottish shield and the Welsh plumes on the reverse had been noticed. This differentiation was taken to an extreme with the work of Roy Osborne⁽⁷⁾. However, this gave the punches, illustrated with line drawings, rather than enumerating the dies made using the punches. The aim of this note is to identify and illustrate as many dies as possible with the mm Heart, and use the statistics to estimate how many more dies might remain to be discovered.

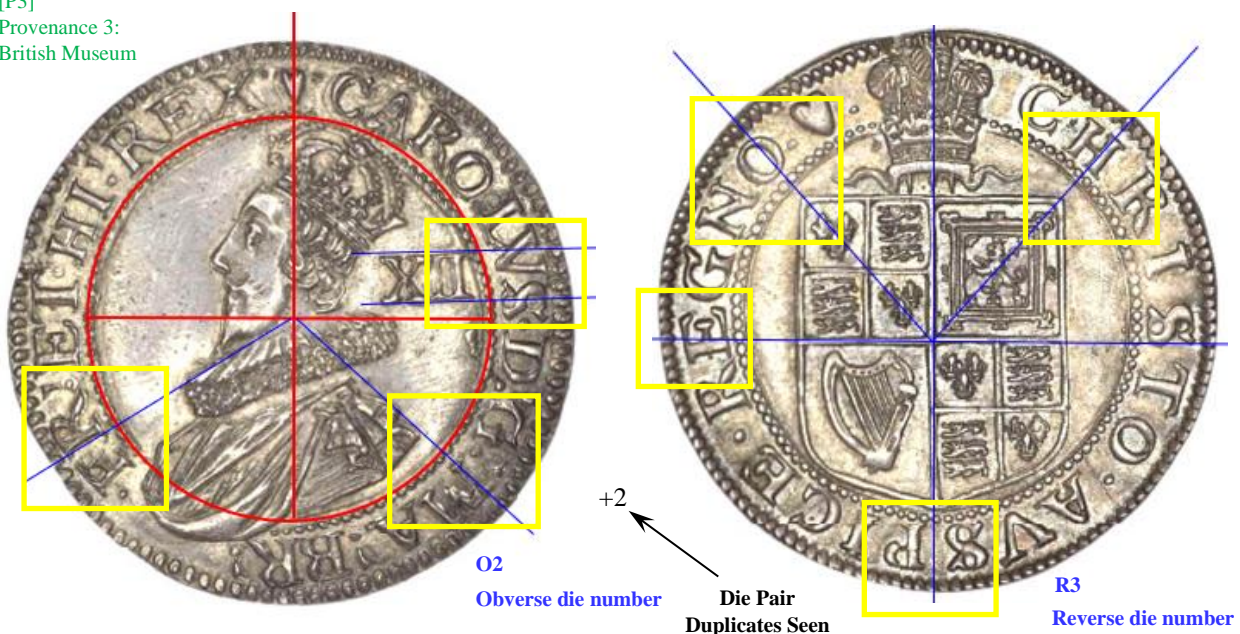
Mention should also be made of the John G. Brooker collection of coins of Charles I, which included six pieces relevant to this study⁽⁸⁾. It is interesting to note that in the searches for this study, only three of the Brooker coins were tracked down.

Method

Most but not all of the busts break the inner circle and so the distinguishing features outlined below are used to identify and then compare dies. The obverse is aligned using a line through the middle of the mm. and the inner circle. For the reverse a cross through the centre of the shield (not the centre of the inner circle) and two lines through the shield corners provide the identifying features. Where the inner circles are not "circular" on the die or double struck on the coin, a "best guess" is made to locate the inner circle. Similarly if the reverse shield is not "straight" on the die or in the striking, use the centre of the shield and a best fit for the rest.

[P3]

Provenance 3:
British Museum



Summary of Results

The die study is based on images of 34 specimens from various private collections, archived auction catalogues and museums (see sources section at end). Only 9 die-pair duplicates were found and the best specimen of each is illustrated. This results in the 25 pieces illustrated on the pages to follow.

The table below summarises the main obverse legend varieties. All of the coins have the Welsh plumes above the shield on the reverse. 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. This simple method allows the correct totals to be maintained. Thus in the **CAROLVS D G MA BR / FR ET HI REX** reverses group, the $7 \frac{2}{4} \frac{2}{3} \frac{1}{3} \frac{1}{2}$ indicates that along with the 7 dies that only appear paired with an obverse of this reading, one of the reverse dies is known from 4 specimens (2 in this group), another is known from 3 specimens (2 in this group), another is known from 3 specimens (1 in this group) and yet another is known from 2 specimens (1 in this group).

Type		Obv. Legend	Reverse	Obv. Dies	Rev. Dies
Spink	Sharp				
1b2	B4/2	CAROLVS D G MAG BR FR ET HI REX	Plume	1	$\frac{1}{3}$
	B5/2	CAROLVS D G MA BR / FR ET HI REX	Plume	9	$7 \frac{2}{4} \frac{2}{3} \frac{1}{3} \frac{1}{2}$
		CAROLVS D G MA BR / FR ET HIB REX	Plume	2	$1 \frac{1}{3} \frac{1}{3} \frac{1}{2}$
		CAROLVS D G MAG BR / FR ET HIB REX	Plume	1	$2 \frac{2}{4}$
-	C1/4	CAROLVS D G MAG BRIT FR ET HIB REX	Plume	1	1
Totals				14	16

Thus there are five obverse legend variations and 14 obverse and 16 reverse dies have been identified.

The Die Study

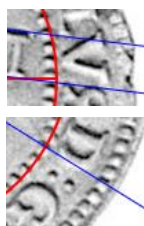
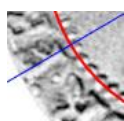
This follows the same sequence as the above table.

[Note that the numbering and sequence has been rearranged since drafts of this article were circulated. This has allowed new dies and die links within groups to be accommodated.]

CAROLVS D G MAG BR FR ET HI REX – Plume reverse – Sharp B4/2

Heart over Anchor

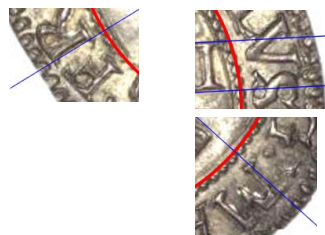
[P1]



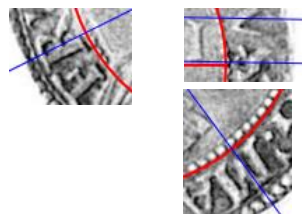
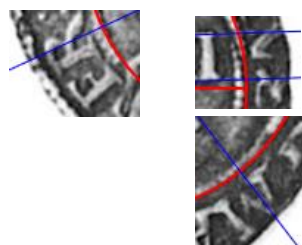
CAROLVS D G MA BR / FR ET HI REX – Plume reverse – Sharp B5/2

Finework die used for circulation

[P2]



Finework die, die bounce distorts mm



[P3]



O2



+2
O2

[P4]



+3
O3

[P5]



O4

[P6]



O5

[P7]



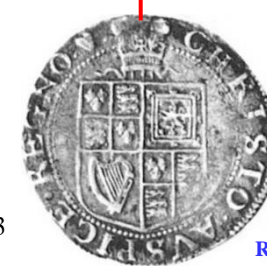
O5



R2



R3



R3



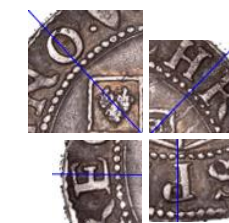
R4



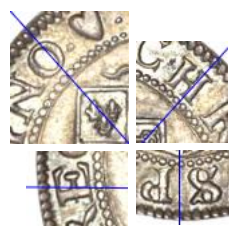
R5



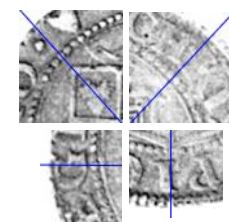
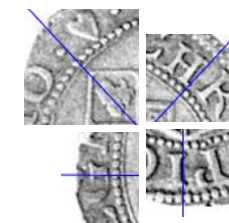
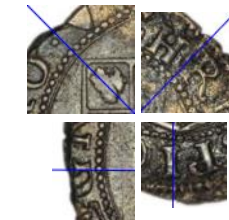
R5



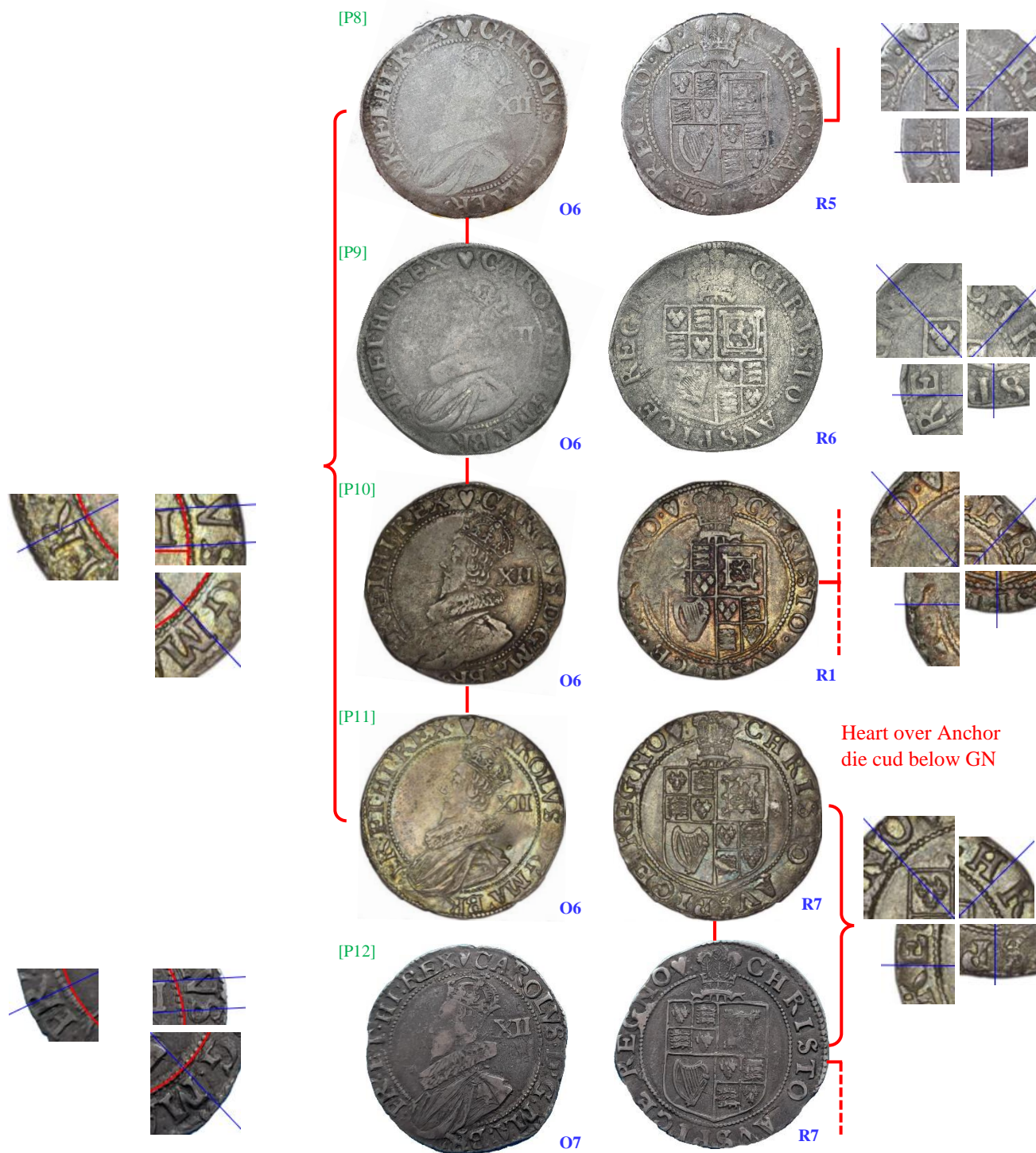
Finework die



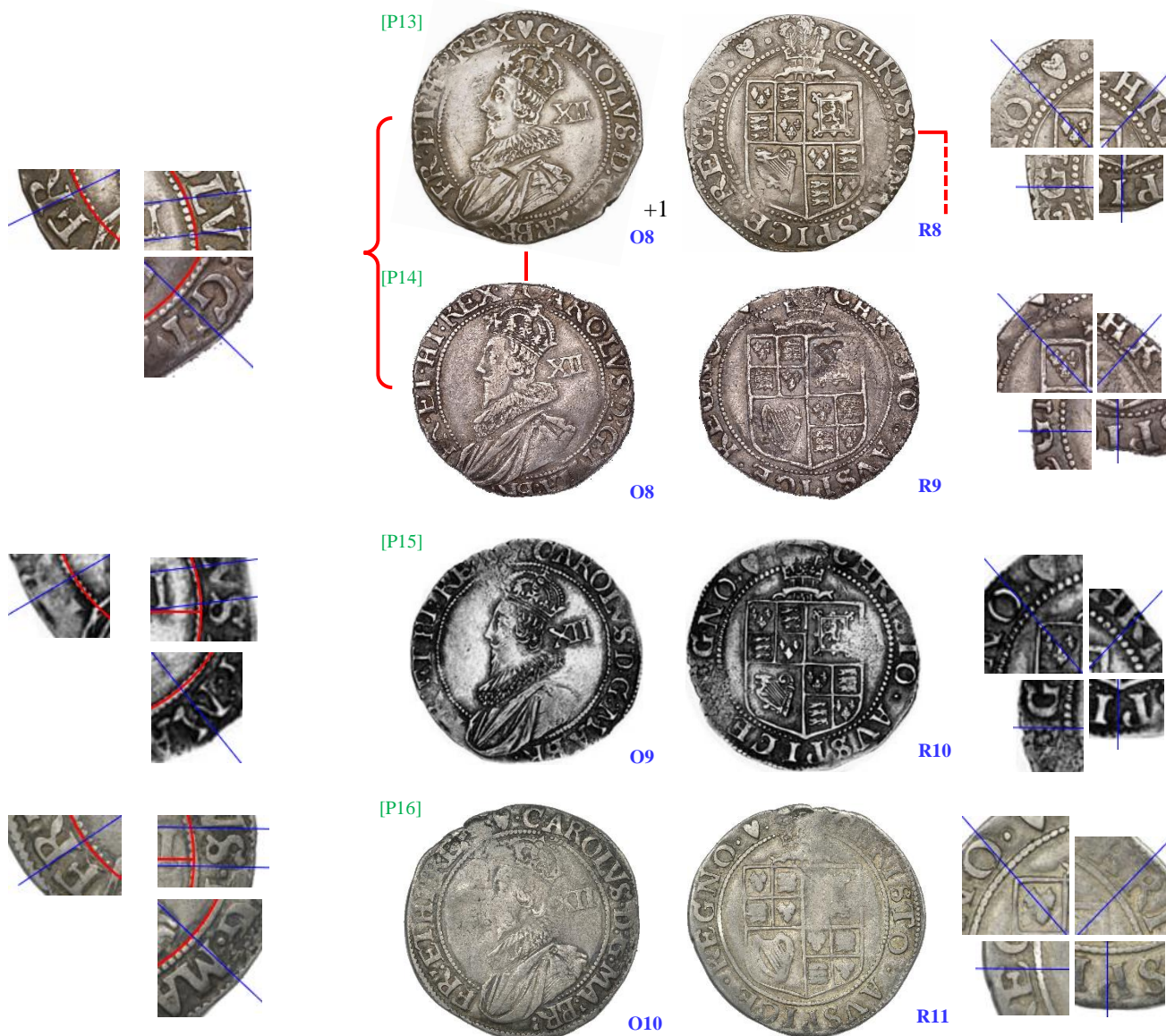
Finework die used for circulation



CAROLVS D G MA BR / FR ET HI REX – Plume reverse - Sharp B5/2 - Continued



CAROLVS D G MA BR / FR ET HI REX – Plume reverse - Sharp B5/2 - Continued



CAROLVS D G MA BR / FR ET HIB REX – Plume reverse - Sharp B5/2

Finework dies



[P17]



O11



R3



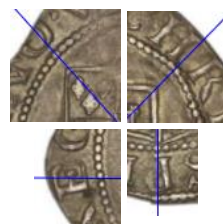
[P18]



O12



R1



[P19]



O12



R8



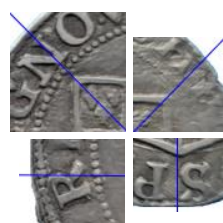
[P20]



O12

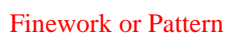


R12



No beaded ic at base

2+1 stops at mm



Sources of Images and Acknowledgements

The following are thanked for the use of their images: Noonans, formerly Dix Noonan Webb, Morton & Eden (M&E), Christies and the British Museum (BM).

[P1]	Brooker 433A	[P10]	BM E.1104	[P19]	Noonans 8-4-2020 Lot 35
[P2]	Noonans 12-12-2016 Lot 2239	[P11]	BM 1920,0907.992	[P20]	Private Collection
[P3]	BM GHB.579	[P12]	Private Collection	[P21]	Noonans 6-2-2013 Lot 456
[P4]	Brooker 437	[P13]	M&E 28-11-2018 Lot 558	[P22]	Besly
[P5]	BM 1935,0401.7511	[P14]	Noonans 15-3-2017 Lot 325	[P23]	Private Collection
[P6]	Brooker 435	[P15]	Christies 1-1-70 Lot 532	[P24]	Private Collection
[P7]	Brooker 434	[P16]	Noonans 8-7-2020 Lot 7	[P25]	BM E.1105
[P8]	Private collection	[P17]	Private Collection		
[P9]	Noonans 2-2-2021 Lot 36	[P18]	BM 1935,0401.7510		

Thanks to members of “The Coins of Charles I, king of England, Scotland & Ireland (1625-1649)” Facebook group and others who kindly provided or pointed me to images and made useful comments: David Holt, Nigel Prevost, Paul Woodard, Shaun Dyer, Kerry Wilson, and Kelvin Brosz. Jay Walton gets a special mention for arranging for the Charles I tower issues in the British Museum to be digitised and put online. A final thankyou to Mark Morris for working through this study, comparing with his own, and identifying two dies that I had double counted.

Images taken from the Brooker Sylloge are reproduced by kind permission of Spink and Son Ltd, London. Thanks to Emma Howard at the Spink Book Department for this.

The Besly source [P22] refers to a coin, in the National Museum of Wales, illustrated in Edward Besly’s book on the coins and medals of the English Civil War⁽⁹⁾. The illustration in the book (fig. 18, p13) is in greyscale. The original source of the colour image has not been traced, but is suspected from a print somewhere.

Discussion and Conclusions

Whilst five different obverse legend readings have been found, three are known from just a single die, one from two dies, and the commonest variant **CAROLVS D G MA BR / FR ET HI REX** is seen on 9 dies.

The busts all fit nicely into Sharp’s sequence, with the earliest B4/2 (**O1/R1**) having a small bust contained by the inner circle, typical of previous issues. The majority are B5/2 (**O2/R2** through to **O13/R15**) and the final C1/4 (**O14/R16**) is a pattern or finework piece with a completely different bust and shield that would be used for shillings with the following mm Plume.

Other finework pieces are **O2/R3** and **O13/R3**, which share a reverse die **R3**. Interestingly the finework dies **O2** and **R3** were also pressed into service for normal circulating coins, paired as **O2/R2** and **O3/R3** respectively, a few of which show double striking and less-than-careful production. Unusually for a study such as this, reverse die **R3** has contributed 8 pieces to the study, almost 24% of the sample.

There is significant muling within and between issues and **R1** is notable as being paired with three different obverse legends:

CAROLVS D G MAG BR FR ET HI REX (Sharp b4/2)
CAROLVS D G MA BR / FR ET HI REX (Sharp b5/2)
CAROLVS D G MA BR / FR ET HIB REX (Sharp b5/2)

Overstruck mintmarks appear regularly through the coinage of Charles I, and the mm Heart is no exception with one die, **R7**, showing traces of the previous mm Anchor, as shown below.



Statistical Analysis

The following table summarises the results and analyses the obverse and reverse die statistics separately using the usual method.

		Obverse	Reverse
Sample size	n	34	34
Number of dies	d	14	16
Singletons	d ₁	6	8
2 examples	d ₂	2	4
3 examples	d ₃	2	2
4 examples	d ₄	3	1
5 examples	d ₅		
6 examples	d ₆	1	
7 examples	d ₇		
8 examples	d ₈		1
Coverage	C _{est}	0.82	0.77
Estimated dies	d ₋	14	17
	d _{est}	21	26
	d ₊	30	40

Table 1. Die statistics of the Charles I shillings, mintmark Heart.

As a scarce mintmark, this issue has migrated to collections, auctions and museums where the searches will find them. The coverage could be higher, suggesting a larger sample is needed. However, having identified 14 obverse and 16 reverse dies, the statistics suggest there are likely to have been 21 and 26 obverse and reverse dies respectively.

It is also interesting to note that the observed ratio of reverse to obverse dies is 1.14:1.

References

- (1) G. Oddie. An Unusual Counterfeit Charles I 1b2 Shilling, mm Heart. BNS Blog 24 February 2023. <https://britnumsoc.files.wordpress.com/2023/02/332-heart-cft-blog-oddie-001.pdf>
- (2) E. Hawkins. *The Silver Coins of England*. 1841 available on Wikimedia commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page also Third edition of 1887.
- (3) G.R. Francis, 'Silver coins of the Tower Mint of Charles I' (part 3 of 4) BNJ vol. 14 (1918), pp57-85. https://www.britnumsoc.org/publications/Digital%20BNJ/pdfs/1918_BNJ_14_8.pdf
- (4) *Coins of England & the United Kingdom – pre-decimal issues*. 2023.
- (5) H.W. Morrieson, 'Table of the silver coins of the Tower Mint of Charles I' BNJ vol. 18 (1925-26), pp159-63. https://www.britnumsoc.org/publications/Digital%20BNJ/pdfs/1925_BNJ_18_9.pdf
- (6) M.B. Sharp, 'The Tower shillings of Charles I and their influence on the Aberystwyth issue' BNJ vol. 47 (1977), 102-13, 7 pls. https://www.britnumsoc.org/publications/Digital%20BNJ/pdfs/1977_BNJ_47_10.pdf
- (7) B.R. Osborne, 'The Tower coins of Charles I' BNJ vol. 54 (1984), 164-209, pls. https://www.britnumsoc.org/publications/Digital%20BNJ/pdfs/1984_BNJ_54_12.pdf
- (8) J.J. North and P.J. Preston-Morley (Editors). *The John G. Brooker Collection – Coins of Charles I (1625-1649)*. Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles, SCBI 33. Spink, 1984.
- (9) E. Besly. *Coins and Medals of the English Civil War*. Seaby, 1990.

