

# A Die Study of Victorian Shillings Dated 1867

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## Introduction

With the exception of some proofs, the shillings of 1867 all bear die numbers on the reverse. There are two obverse and two reverse types (Davies obv. 4 and obv. 5 and rev. B and rev. C<sup>(1)</sup>). There has been some confusion over the years regarding what die numbers are to be found on the various die combinations<sup>(2,3)</sup>.

The following table summarises the known die numbers for the shillings of 1867.

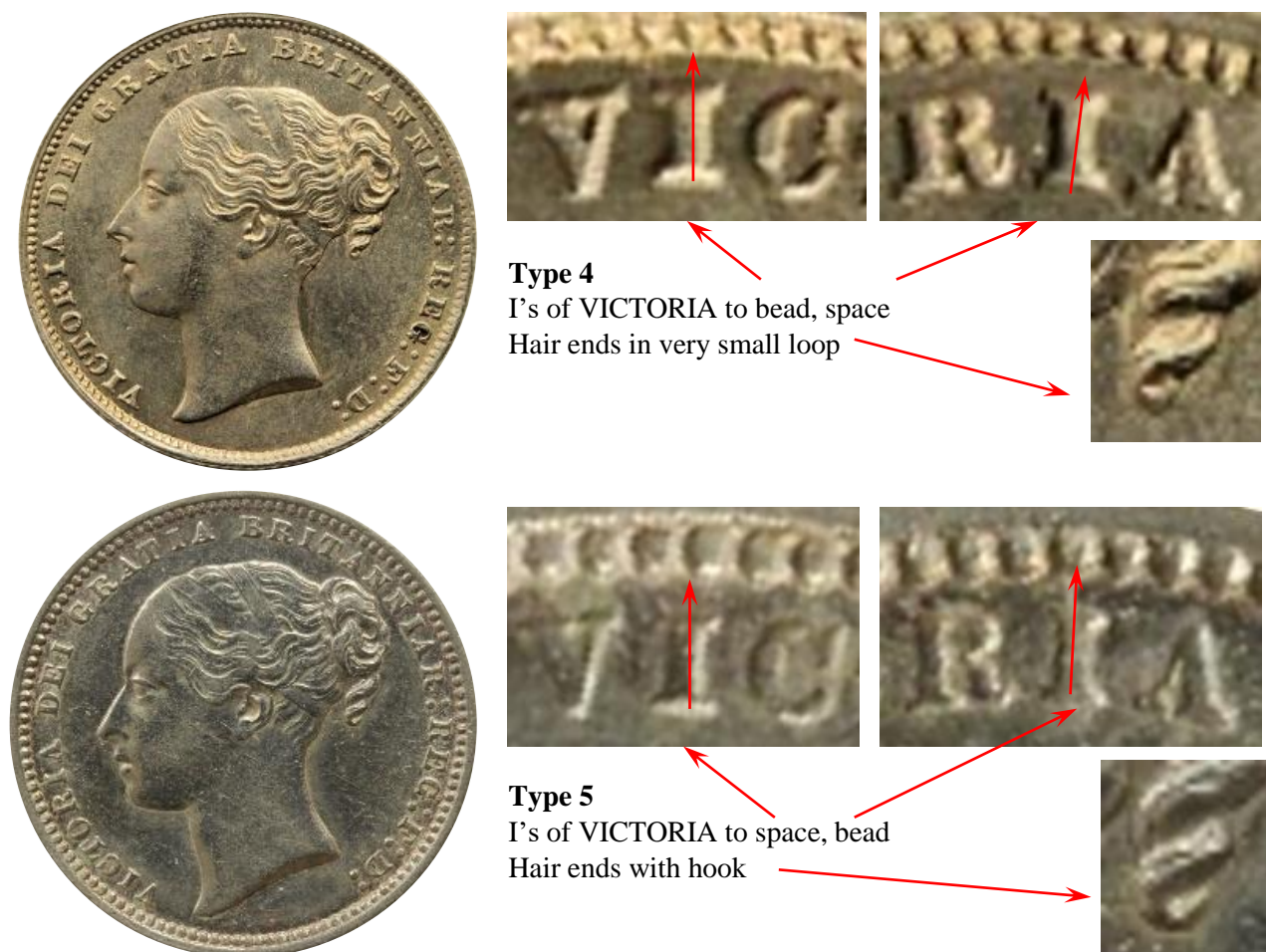
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	<b>21</b>	22	23	<b>24</b>	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	32	<b>33</b>	34	35		<b>37</b>		

**Table 1.** Die numbers on shillings dated 1867. Black – illustrated, Bold – extremely rare, Blue – reported, not confirmed.

The reported 53 and 55<sup>(3)</sup> have not been seen or confirmed and are likely misreadings of 33 and 35. This note will begin with descriptions of the two obverse and two reverse types that are found on the shillings of 1867. This is followed by the catalogue of the known die numbers, with each illustrated.

## Obverse Die Variations

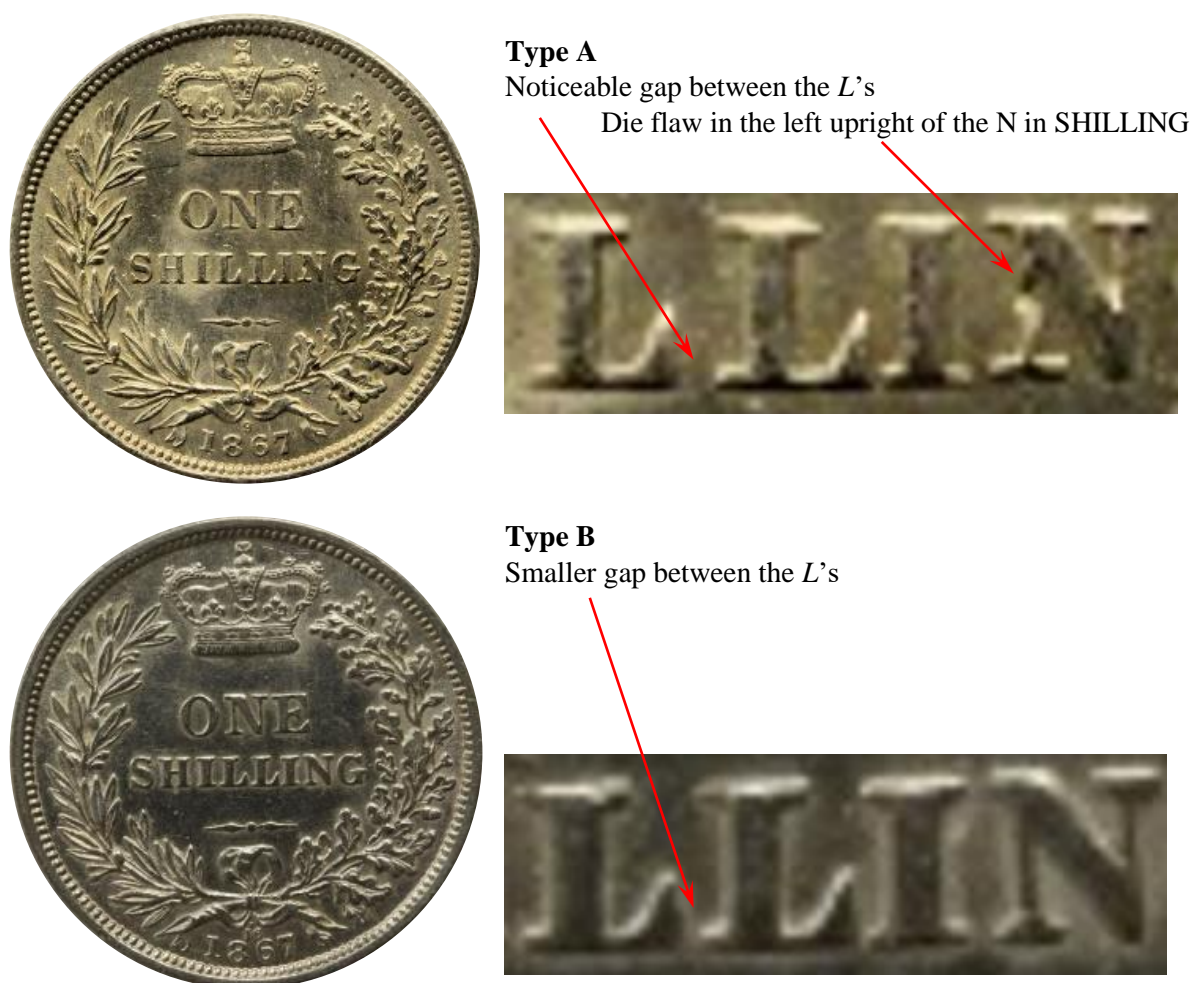
Two main obverse varieties are known on the shillings of 1867. For this catalogue, Victoria's portrait will be classified according to Peter Davies' excellent book *British Silver Coins Since 1816*<sup>(1)</sup>.



**Fig. 1.** Identifying obverse die varieties of the 1867 shillings.

## Reverse Die Variations

Two main reverse varieties are known on the shillings of 1867 – Davies types A and B – as illustrated below.

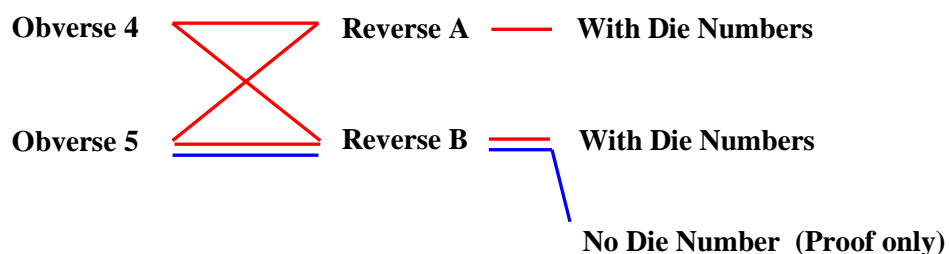


**Fig. 2.** Identifying reverse die varieties of the 1867 shillings.

The flaw in the left upright of the N in SHILLING of reverse A is due to a damaged master die. The damage first appeared on the shillings of 1865 die number 79 and then on all shillings with type A reverses through 1866 up to 1867 die 13<sup>(4)</sup> where this reverse die makes its final appearance.

## Die Combinations

The following diagram shows the known die links, which also confirms the 5A suspected by Davies<sup>(1)</sup>.



**Fig. 3.** Known die combinations on 1867 shillings.

With the exception of a few proofs, all of the coins are orientated  $180^\circ$  ( $\uparrow\downarrow$ ), contrary to some historical catalogues.

In the following catalogue, shillings with obv. 4 appear on the left and obv. 5 on the



## The Catalogue

Images with a small **F** are photographs of foil rubbings of pieces in the Ron Stafford collection. Sources of images will be found at the end of the catalogue.

### 1867 With Die Number

1867-1



4A



1867-2



4A



1867-3



4A



Difficult to distinguish from 5.  
Here the 7 aligns to the left of a bead.  
Larger gap in the lower loop of the 3.

1867-4



4A



1867-5



4A



Difficult to distinguish from 3.  
Here the 7 aligns to the right of a bead.  
Smaller gap in the lower loop of the 5.

1867-6



4A



1867-7



4A



1867-8



4A

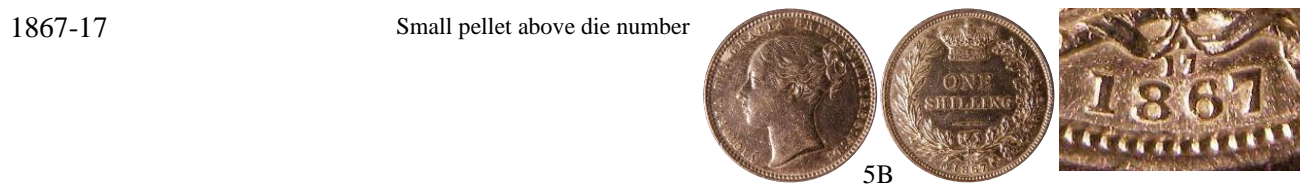
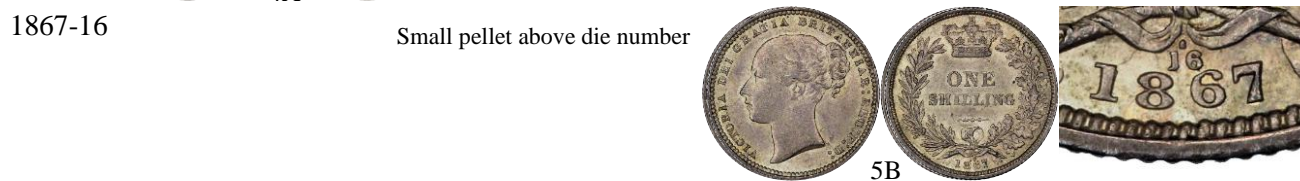


1867-9



4A







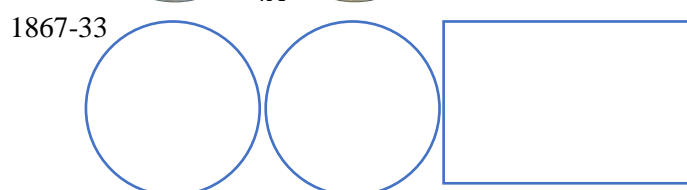


Confirming Davies 894



Easily mistaken for a 23. The lower loop of the 5 is below the horizontal of the 2.





Reported, but not confirmed  
(David Morley)



1867-36 Not known



**1867 No Die Number**

Proof of new dies 5B – no die number.  
This piece ↑↓ also known ↑↑ and also  
known with plain edge.





## Sources of Images and Acknowledgements

[001]	worthpoint	[011]	DP	[021]	DP	[030]	Worthpoint
[002]	KB Coins	[012]	DP	[022]	Worthpoint	[031]	Worthpoint
[003]	Noonans	[013]	KB Coins	[023-4A]	GO	[032]	Worthpoint
[004]	LCA	[014]	Worthpoint	[023-5A]	LCA	[033]	
[005]	Worthpoint	[015]	Noonans	[024]	DM2	[034]	Noonans
[006]	AW	[016]	AW	[025]	LCA	[035]	DM2
[007]	Noonans	[017]	LCA	[026]	KB Coins		
[008]	worthpoint	[018]	AW	[027]	Noonans	[037]	RS
[009]	KB Coins	[019]	DP	[028]	DP		
[010]	Noonans	[020]	KB Coins	[029]	Worthpoint	[P1]	GO

The following are thanked for the use of their images: Keith Bayford at KB Coins and Steve Lockett and Semra Cetin at London Coin Auctions (LCA). Also Dave Morey (DM2), Andrew Wide (AW) and David Price (DP) for new and upgraded images. Also David Morley for sharing his notes and Ron Stafford (RS), Malcolm Wootton and Michael Marshman for their contributions to this topic over the decades.

## Discussion and Conclusions

This note has presented and illustrated the dies used to produce the shillings of 1867. Placing the images in sequence allows the temporary introduction of reverse die B to be easily seen. This clarifies and corrects previous catalogues<sup>(2,3)</sup>.

The application of die numbers was primarily for quality control of the coin striking process. Coins struck from damaged dies could quickly be traced back to the individual press and operator. During this period the obverse dies outnumber the reverse dies by about 50%. The high relief portrait of Victoria combined with die clashing when the blank feeder missed a blank resulted in a high die failure rate.

The new reverse die B first appears with die numbers 16, 17 and 18 and all have a small pellet above the die number. Dies 16 and 17 also see the first introduction of obv. 5. For some reason, obv. 5 makes a reappearance with a rev. A and die number 23, thus confirming the existence of Davies 894<sup>(1)</sup>. Shillings with die 23 can thus be found with both obverses 4 and 5.

Looking at where reverse die B appears in the sequence, it might be speculated that the damage to master die A had been noticed and half way through the year a new master reverse die B was cut to replace it. A new obverse master die 5 was also cut. Proofs of the new combination 5B were struck without die numbers and the 5B combination was used for die numbers 16 and 17 (with a small pellet above the die number). Die 18 is a mule of the old obverse 4 with the new reverse B, again with a small pellet above the die number. Similarly, die number 23 includes a variety that is a mule of the new obverse die 5 with the old reverse A. This is possibly an accidental use of the new obverse, as this 5A variety is about 30 times rarer than the 4A. Following the trials, the old dies (obv. 4 and rev. A) were used up for the rest of the year and 1868 would start afresh using exclusively the master dies of obverse 5 and reverse B.

The master dies for obverse 5 and reverse B would be used until 1879 (die 13) close to the end of the die numbering process, which for the shillings was 1879 die 26<sup>(4)</sup>.

Throughout this period it should be remembered that the obverse dies failed more rapidly than the reverse dies, meaning the numbers of obverse dies was about 50% higher<sup>(5)</sup>. The hand finishing of the dies and die flaws allows some of them to be distinguished but that is a whole new level of detail.

## References

- (1) P.J. Davies. *British Silver Coins Since 1816*. 1982.
- (2) P.A. Rayner. *English Silver Coinage Since 1649*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Seaby, 1992.
- (3) M. Bull. *English Silver Coinage Since 1649*. Fully revised 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Spink, 2015.

- (4) G. Oddie. A Die Study of Victorian Shillings Dated 1879. *BNS Blog* 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024. <https://britnumsoc.blog/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/1879-die-numbers-oddie-blog-001.pdf>
- (5) G. Oddie. A Die Study of Victorian Shillings Dated 1865. Part 2 – The Die Numbers. *BNS Blog* 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022. <https://britnumsoc.blog/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/377-1865-pt2-oddie-blog-004.pdf>

