

An Unrecorded Minor 1787 Shilling Reverse Type

Ashley Wickens-Rumble

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1 Introduction

The year 1787 is one of only two years in which shillings were produced during the reign of King George III prior to the Great Recoinage of 1816. The most comprehensive study of these pieces is the work of H. E. Manville and P. P. Gaspar, *The 1787 Shilling – A Transition in Minting Technique*. For those interested in the history of this coinage, I highly recommend reading this work.

Despite being such a comprehensive study, it unfortunately does not examine the dies in depth. To my knowledge, a complete die study has yet to be published. In my own research, however, this piece represents the most significant undocumented variety I have encountered. For the purposes of this article, we will consider four 1787 shillings: a proof, a circulation strike with hearts, a circulation strike without hearts, and the newly identified type.

2 Proof Shilling



Figure 1: Image from © Noonans

The 1787 proof shilling shown possesses several key features by which it can be readily identified. Most obvious is the raised border around the circumference of the coin. The piece has stops flanking the date, seven hearts within the semée, and two small flaws near the lowest hearts. The central pellet on the reverse is slightly displaced upwards and to the right, and is also noticeably small.

Turning now to the harp, a small raised flaw can be seen on the outside of the shield on the left-hand side. This flaw is present on all proof pieces, but on no circulation strikes. The harp has seven strings in total, which will be numbered from right to left as 1–7. It can be observed that string 1 terminates between the body of the harp and its curved pillar. The strings are also parallel to one another, being inclined at approximately thirteen degrees.

3 Circulation with Hearts



Figure 2: Image from © Noonans

The 1787 circulation shilling with hearts also possesses several important identifying features. Most obviously, it retains the hearts within the semée. It lacks both the flaws amongst the hearts and the flaw beside the harp seen on the proof issue, and it does not have a raised border. The central pellet is of medium size and is slightly displaced downwards and to the right of the centre of the cross.

Once again, the harp has seven strings. Strings 2, 3, and 5 are all over-extended into the neck of the harp. String 1 meets the harp at the same point as on the proof issue, with the strings inclined at approximately eleven degrees.

4 Circulation without Hearts



Figure 3: Image from © Noonans

The 1787 circulation shilling without hearts—this example being the 1787/6 variety without stops at the date—also possesses several readily identifiable features. Most notably, it lacks the hearts within the semée and has a large, well-centred pellet in the middle of the cross.

Turning once again to the harp, there are seven strings, this time with no over-extension into the neck of the harp. String 1 terminates at exactly the same point as on the previous two pieces, with the strings inclined at approximately twelve degrees.

5 Unrecorded New Type



Figure 4: Image from © Noonans

This is the presumed unrecorded type: a shilling with hearts and stops at the date, a large central pellet within the cross, and a harp with seven strings. However, this harp differs from every other example I have examined. String 1 joins the pillar of the harp rather than the body. Harp string 2 occupies the standard position of string 1, while strings 2, 3, 4, and 5 are all over-extended into the

neck of the harp.

It is here that the principal distinguishing feature becomes apparent: the harp strings are inclined at only approximately three degrees. They are almost completely vertical.

6 Harp Comparison



7 Estimated Mintages

In a sample of fifty 1787 shillings, only one exhibited this feature. Extrapolating from this sample suggests that approximately 2% of the original mintage may represent this previously undocumented variety. Based on an estimated mintage of 746,480 pieces, this would correspond to approximately 14,930 examples of the “straight harp” type.

8 Licensing

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