

English Mediaeval Hammered Silver Coins

Between 1066 and 1662/3, the coins of England are known as ‘Hammered Coins’. **Hammered Coins** got their name from the way they were made - a disc of silver was put between 2 ‘dies’ and hit with a **hammer** to get the pattern onto the coin. Gold coins were also issued from Edward III’s reign. Early coins have a standardised ‘portrait’, normally full-face. More realistic portraits began under Henry VII.

Up to 1540, the total amount of silver available for coins in Europe remained constant - the amount mined approximately equalled the amount made into jewelry or lost. Inflation was almost unknown and prices & wages were steady, related to the value of silver. The basic coin was a **silver penny** (1d), made from a ‘blank’ weighing 1/240th of a pound weight of silver. Collectors sometimes specialise in the pennies of one reign as many different ‘types’ were issued (e.g. about 30 for Edward I) and from different mints – others specialise in the coins from a single mint over several reigns. Pennies were usually marked with a cross so that they could be cut into halfpennies (½d) and ‘fourth things’ (farthings - ¼d). From Edward I’s reign round farthings and halfpennies were normally issued. Coins representing 4d (groats) and 2d (half groats) became more common from this reign also.

After 1540, following the discovery of rich silver mines in the Americas, rapid inflation reduced the value of silver and coins got smaller as a result. Farthings were no longer issued regularly but coins of a larger value were introduced including 3d and 6d coins and 1/- (shillings – though those of Henry VII and VIII were known as testoons). Crowns (5/-) and Halfcrowns (2/6d) appeared from Edward VI’s reign, though these are not shown on the list opposite. Queen Elizabeth I restored the purity of the coins after Henry VIII had debased them by adding copper to the silver. She issued a large range of coins including three-farthings (¾d) and three-halfpenny (1½d).

Hammered Coins are all rare as each king or queen called in the coins of the previous monarch to melt and re-use the silver.

After 1662/3, early in the reign of Charles II, **milled coins** replaced hammered coins. These were made much more accurately by machine and often had a pattern along the edge to prevent people ‘clipping’ away small pieces of valuable silver. Although clipping was a capital offence, it had become very common at the time of the English Civil Wars (1642-48) as it was easier to escape punishment with the breakdown of law enforcement.

✓ = coins issued (R = rare)		¼d	½d	1d	2d	3d	4d	6d	1/-
William I	1066-1087	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
William II	1087-1100	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Henry I	1100-1135	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Stephen	1135-1154	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Matilda	1139-1148	-	-	R	-	-	-	-	-
Henry of Anjou	1140 and 1153/4	-	-	R	-	-	-	-	-
Henry II	1154-1189	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Richard I +	1189-1199	-	-	R	-	-	-	-	-
John +	1199-1216	-	-	R	-	-	-	-	-
Henry III	1216-1272	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Edward I	1272-1307	✓	✓	✓	-	-	R	-	-
Edward II	1307-1327	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Edward III	1327-1377	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-
Richard II	1377-1399	R	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-
Henry IV	1399-1413	R	✓	✓	R	-	-	-	-
Henry V	1413-1422	R	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-
Henry VI (1)	1422-1461	R	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-
Edward IV (1)	1461-1470	R	R	✓	R	-	✓	-	-
Henry VI (2)	1470-1471	-	-	R	R	-	-	-	-
Edward IV (2)	1471-1473	-	R	R	R	-	R	-	-
Edward V	Apl-Jun 1473	- all coins extremely rare -							
Richard III	1473-1485	-	R	R	✓	-	✓	-	-
Henry VII	1485-1509	R	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓*
Henry VIII	1509-1547	R	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓*
Edward VI**	1547-1553	R	R	R	-	R	✓	-	✓
(Philip &) Mary I	1553-1558	-	-	R	R	✓	✓	✓	✓
Elizabeth I	1558-1603	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
James I	1603-1625	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Charles I	1625-1649	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
The Commonwealth	1649-1654	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓
Oliver Cromwell #	1654-1658	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓
Rich. Cromwell #	1658-1659	- no coins issued -							
(# = Lord Protector)									
Charles II	1660-1685	-	R	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

* known as ‘testoons’ ** from Edward’s reign halfcrowns and crowns were also issued
+ Richard I’s and John’s English coins are all named for Henry II

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