

This is a free sample section from the Rotographic publication:

“The Standard Guide to Grading British Coins (1797-1970”

The book shows all of the design types used on British coinage from 1797 - 1970 in 3 or 4 different grades, as large high resolution images. The first half of the book deals with the obverses, and the second half (from which this sample was taken) deals with the reverses.

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In essence this was a re-hash of the short-lived shield type which appeared on the George IV halfcrowns issued in 1823 and 1824; the most noticeable alterations being the removal of the arms of Hanover and the different shape of the crown. It was not the most inspired of designs, so it is difficult to understand why it was perpetuated in this way. Wear tends to be quite general with, as usual, the motto of the Order of the Garter (Honi Soit etc.) beginning to get a little faint by the time the coin hits fine.



UNC

EF

Those old standbys the lions' faces and the small George and Dragon (where the lance should be complete) can be used here. There is plenty of other detail to investigate.

**VF**

Obvious wear on the small garters and the large buckle. The faces of the lions may well be flat.



F
Some of the shield detail becoming blurred; the odd letter in the 'honi soit...' motto missing or only partially present.



Fair
Further blurring on the design itself. Wear on the rim is now likely to be encroaching on the legend.



Perhaps I have a penchant for Victoriana, but this strikes me as one of the most attractive of all the shield designs which have graced our coinage in the period 1816-1970, although if pressed I would struggle to say why. Certainly, there was nothing really new, even the ribbons and roses within individual garters that flank the shield were used as far back as 1816. Ultimately, I suppose it just comes down to the overall balance of the design and the competence of the engraving.



UNC



EF. Shows wear to George and Dragon and lower part of shield especially the lions passant

EF

As usual check out the lions in the shield and the jewels near the base of the crown. The small St. George and the Dragon at the base of the coin may have picked up a little more wear than would have been the case on the previous design.



VF

St. George & Dragon will be pretty worn. Inspect the pellets between the legend and the main design for slight flattening. The edges of the garters will be less clear than in the previous grade but a good test is to check that the buckles are still visible.



F
Coin very flat and as they stand slightly proud, the designs inside the shield are becoming somewhat misty.



Fair
Garters and crown are little more than an outline and although lions, harp etc. are just visible, there is no detail and indeed some parts may have been obliterated altogether.



Shield/Halfcrown 1902-26

Again one of the better shields, but like other denominations, it all goes horribly wrong in 1915 when the quality of many coins falls dramatically. There are actually two distinct reverses here, as the coins of George V lack the ring of pellets around the garter which denote the coins of Edward VII.



AU

EF

The edge of the shield and the line dividing its separate parts are among the first places to wear. The crown can also show early erosion at the bottom edge, but at this point, the lions show less wear than is evident in other designs.

**VF**

Wear is much more evident on the edge of the shield and the lions too are beginning to suffer. The letters of the motto have begun to look well rubbed, especially near the folds at 9 and 3 o'clock.



F
Getting much flatter, but the motifs are still largely separate from the shield edge.



Fair
This design has quite lightweight beading and wear will begin to infiltrate from the edge, resulting in the upper parts of the legend beginning to disappear.



Once again, there are slight differences between the coins produced for each of the two monarchs represented here but the designs are so closely related that there is little point in discussing them separately. The bold engraving means that they can be hard to judge, and frequently show a higher grade than the necessarily more organic designs on the obverse.



AU

EF

This is not a coin to check out the 'lion's face' grading technique, as they are very boldly struck and seldom wear like earlier coins. Check with a magnifying glass for minute damage to the body of the Scottish lion rampant. In the earlier coins, the thistle will provide some easy clues. All lines and the legend should be similarly checked for the beginnings of wear. In this particular coin, the uppermost lion does not appear to have been fully struck up.

**VF**

General wear, but check that the strip by which the shield hangs from the ring is still intact (George VI only).



F

A surprisingly large amount of detail will still exist. Look for the overlap of the interlocking Gs becoming merged, especially for some reason on the left. Few cupro-nickel coins (1947-on) will have descended beyond this.

**Fair**

As with most coins from this era and later, the design tends to wear flat, protected by its bold engraving and heavy beading. Everything will still be there but in heavily eroded form.



This would have been the reverse of Edward VIII's coronation crown had Wallis Simpson not intervened. Nice enough but essentially a conventional shield, the only break with tradition being the inclusion of the lion and the unicorn.



EF. Slight wear on chain where it crosses body

EF

The orb just underneath the cross gets some early wear, as does the chain where it crosses the unicorn's body. The lion outside the shield takes some rubbing, especially on the nose and the tongue.

**VF**

Most high points now flat. Chain, as above, will lack any detail.



Shield/Halfcrown 1953-70

The last half crown minted, and in terms of workmanship, sadly amongst the worst, with the area within the shield often appearing rough-hewn even when fresh from the mint. Moreover, this lack of detail continued throughout much of the production run. The design was traditional if a little bland, and all things considered was a poor swansong for a much loved coin.



AU

EF *There will be minute amounts of wear on high spots such as the orb on the crown immediately below the cross and the stones towards the bottom of the crown. This is not a coin which should be assessed purely on its reverse and, in better condition, more weight should be given to any wear on the obverse. Due to the frequently poor quality of the strike, it is inadvisable to use the three lions in the shield as a touchstone to grading this design.*



VF

Wear continuing in the above places, but also check out the scrolls flanking the lower part of the shield which will by now be beginning to show some wear on their higher points.

**F**

Much of the detail will have merged, and the design overall may have a rather flat appearance. You are unlikely to find many examples in much worse condition than that in this picture.



Shield/English Shilling 1953-70

The concept of splitting shilling production into English and Scottish types was continued under Elizabeth II. The English coins used the familiar three lions within a simple crowned shield, surprisingly the first time this had been used in isolation on a circulating coin.

The design is in bold relief, and seldom turns up in less than VF condition. Grading however, is in most cases academic as anything below EF (with the possible exception of 1958) is to all intents and purposes, valueless.



AU

EF

Any wear is likely to show itself on the stones at the bottom of the crown, the nearby pellets and on the lions' faces. Expect evenings wasted with a magnifying glass to distinguish EF from AU.



VF

Almost anything else. Note that the pellet on the orb (under the upper cross) has been eroded away to nothing.



Shield/Scottish Shilling 1953-70

Very similar to its English counterpart, the one difference being the rampant Scottish lion within the shield. Grading notes can be taken as similar too, as the single lion is not particularly diagnostic where wear is concerned.



UNC

EF



VF



Gothic Crown 1847-53

Godless Florin 1848-87

The 'cruciform shields' design dated back to the days of Charles II, in subsequent years being enhanced by the addition of roses and/or plumes in the angles to denote the origin of the metal. Therefore, the design which first appeared on the 'Gothic' crown in 1847, and the florin (proof only) the following year was hardly new. What was novel however, was the intricate treatment of the subject, and other than the 'Godless' florins of 1848-9, the use of Gothic lettering in the legend.

The legendary crown performed little more than a toe in the water function, never being adopted for full scale circulation – but what stunning coins they were – even average examples now selling for well into four figures.

These are all attractive and popular coins but, partly due to three of the four shields having no discernable border, they do suffer from rapid wear.



GEF. Wear becoming obvious on lions passant. This is an area that can wear rapidly. However, apparent wear in this area can also be the result of die weakness

EF

The lions and the harp will already be showing slight wear as will the thistle and roses in the angles.



VF

Wear continues much as before with the outer lions wearing quite rapidly.



F
The lions' eyes will be disappearing, as will any detail on the crowns, but it is the contents of the shields which receive most rubbing.



Fair
To all intents and purposes the designs in the shields have now disappeared, but in most cases the wording will still be sharp and clear.



Although the Gothic crowns and florins had carried the torch for the concept of the cruciform shield, this was a return to a simpler interpretation, in essence one which had done sterling service for every monarch from Charles II to George III. In the past however, the sceptres had been restricted to the gold denominations. After the Gothic series, they appeared gaunt and unimaginative, and the double florin (or 'Barmaid's Ruin') was unpopular for other reasons. Detail on the Victorian florin is frequently lacking and the collector can search in vain for anything resembling a face on the English lions.

After the decline of the much maligned Jubilee head, the reverse of the florin went first to the almost baroque series which marked Queen Victoria's final years and then to the stunning 'Standing Britannia' of 1902-10. Although many mourned the decline of this brilliant image, the revival of the cruciform shield that followed aptly reflected the personality of the dour new king, George V.

The revived image was rather more robust than that issued from 1887 with shorter and thicker sceptres between the fields. Many of these later coins survived in circulation until the early 1970s.



AU



EF showing wear to crown and lions

EF

Check the usual places for early wear such as the sceptres (especially at their inner ends), the lions' faces (but see previous page) and the crowns.



VF

There should still be a good amount of detail on the crowns, especially on the later series and the St. George's cross in the centre should still be recessed below the level of the surrounding garter.



F
Wear tends to be quite even, and although much detail has been lost, the basic design still stands out in bold relief.



Fair
The design is less clear and wear is beginning to encroach on the heraldic symbols within the shields. Thanks to the heavy rim, the legend and date should remain intact.

