

THE GUERNSEY EIGHT DOUBLES OF 1864

By D. L. F. SEALY

THE Guernsey 8 doubles of 1864, with its companion piece the 4 doubles, formed the first coinage in bronze for the island. The design, which must be familiar to all numismatists, shows on the obverse an ornately outlined shield bearing the arms of Guernsey (the ancient arms of England), gules, three lions passant guardant, or. The tincture of the field is indicated by the conventional vertical hachuring, but the tincture of the lions is not indicated. The shield is surmounted by a sprig of three leaves, the name (in French spelling) GUERNESEY above, the whole surrounded by a wreath of two laurel branches, tied at the base with a bow. Border of pellets. Reverse, in a similar but longer wreath, the value and date, 8/DOUBLES/1864. Border as last.

The exact composition is apparently not on record, but probably approximates to that of the contemporary British penny, i.e. a bronze of about 95% copper. The weight averages 150 grains¹, slightly heavier than the legal weight of a penny, 145.83 grains (= $\frac{1}{3}$ ounce avoirdupois). The diameter is less rigidly held and is generally slightly greater than a penny; Pridmore (*loc. cit.*) gives 31.4 mm (penny 30.8 mm). At the time of issue they were current at 252 pieces to the pound sterling², i.e.,

$$8 \text{ doubles} = \frac{20}{21} \text{ of a British penny!}$$

This may be compared with the contemporary Jersey penny, worth

$$\frac{12}{13} \text{ of a British penny.}$$

The Guernsey currency was assimilated to British in 1921, making 8 doubles = 1 penny.

284,736 of the 8 doubles and 212,976 of the 4 doubles dated 1864 were struck by the firm of Henry Jay & Co., of Birmingham, who were also responsible for the last copper issue of 1858. This information, with a detailed listing of the coins, was published by Marshall-Fraser (*loc. cit.*, p. 315) from a study of the official records. He is followed with only minor amendments by Pridmore (*loc. cit.*, pp. 34-5). These authors give the most complete listings, I believe, of the varieties of this coin that have yet appeared in print, but they are unfortunately incomplete and, as I hope to show, miss a conclusion of some interest.

No trace whatever of the firm of Henry Jay & Co. can be found in the records of Birmingham firms of the time or later. For this interesting, though negative, piece of information I am indebted to Mr. R. N. P. Hawkins, who confirms a statement to the same effect by Marshall-Fraser. It is therefore all the more important that any facts we can glean from the coins themselves should be put on record.

There are five different dies to be distinguished for both obverse and reverse of this coin, and certain of these exist in two states. They form a series of ten varieties which are die-linked together in a definite order, with the exception of one pairing. It has proved possible, by the marked deterioration of one reverse die, to deduce the direction in which this series is to be read, and thus to number the varieties and dies in chronological order. Marshall-Fraser and Pridmore separate the obverse dies fairly successfully, but practically ignore variations in the reverse.

¹ Pridmore, F., 1960. *Coins of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Part 1.* (London (Spink & Son). 98 pp.), page 34.

² Marshall-Fraser, W., 1948. The Coinages of the Channel Islands. *Trans. Soc. Guernesaise* 1948, pp. 298-332. Page 328.

The obverses may be distinguished as follows:

1. No berries at bow. Wreath therefore arranged as follows (reading from top to bottom): leaves 3-4-4, berries 2-2 both sides. Bow deep; three leaves at top of shield spring from a single stalk. (Pridmore no. 4a).

2. Wreath and berries as 1. Bow shallower; three leaves at top of shield have separate stalks. (Pridmore no. 4b).

3. Two berries at right and one at left of bow. Extra leaf in wreath at left. Wreath therefore arranged as follows: left, leaves 3-5-4, berries 2-2-1; right, leaves 3-4-4 and berries 2-2-2. (Pridmore no. 8).

3a. A variety of the above lacks the berry at left of bow; wreath therefore arranged as follows: left, leaves 3-5-4, berries 2-2; right, leaves 3-4-4, berries 2-2-2. (Not in Pridmore or Marshall-Fraser). It would seem that this variety, which is only found paired with one reverse, is due to a detail being temporarily filled in on the die. There are very slight traces of the stalk of the missing berry.

4. One berry each side of bow, twelve leaves in left half of wreath. Wreath is therefore arranged as follows: left, leaves 3-5-4, berries 2-2-1; right, leaves 3-4-4 and berries 2-2-1. (Pridmore no. 7).

5. As no. 4, but only eleven leaves in left half of wreath. Wreath is therefore arranged as follows: leaves 3-4-4, berries 2-2-1 both sides. (Pridmore no. 5).

The different reverses are most conveniently classified on the form of the triad of leaves at right, nearest the s of DOUBLES. They may be distinguished as follows:

A. Centre leaf of triad on top. Bar of 8 in date weak.

A*. A second state of die A, which shows marked deterioration in the outlines of the letters, which are blurred and irregular. This is particularly noticeable on the BLE of DOUBLES. On some examples there is an excrescence on the margin of the top leaf at left. The bar of the 8 in date is generally missing. A* only occurs paired with obverse die 2, while undamaged A occurs with both 1 and 2. It is this fact which gives a direction in time to the die-linked series.

B. Similar to A, but left leaf of triad on top. Bar of 8 in date weak.

C. Right-hand leaf of triad on top. The triad is irregular, with the tip of the right-hand leaf out of line and lower than the others. Coins from this die are usually not fully struck up.

D. Right-hand leaf of triad on top, and the tips of all three leaves are at the same level. The leaf immediately below s is well spaced from it.

E. as D, but the leaf immediately below s is almost touching it. The date is closer spaced than on any other die.

I have seen the following ten die pairings:

<i>My no.</i>	<i>Dies</i>	<i>Pridmore</i>	<i>Marshall-Fraser</i>	<i>Notes</i>
I	1 + A	4a	1	
II	2 + A	4b	1	
III	2 + A*	4b	1	In B.M.
IV	2 + B	4b	1	
V	3 + B	8	4	
VI	3 + C	8	4	In B.M.
VII	3a + C	-	-	Variety of VI only.
VIII	3 + D	8	4	
IX	4 + D	7	2	Proof (?) in B.M. ¹
X	5 + E	5	3	Commonest. ²

¹ This proof-like piece may be the one listed by Pridmore as his 'A', p. 34.

² Although this is the commonest die pairing, I

much regret that the specimen used for illustration, the clearest available, is marred by a small hole. This is fortunately in an unimportant place.

It will be clearly seen that, as 3a can be regarded as merely a temporary condition of 3, these form a die-linked series, all connected in the order given, except for the last (5 + E). I find this is the commonest pairing. Neither of this pair of dies has yet been found linked with another, and so its place last in the series is doubtful: it may equally well come first, before 1 + A. I think, however, it is more likely to be correctly placed here than at the beginning, as the details more closely resemble 4 + D than they do 1 + A. The excessive number of specimens of this pairing suggests that a single pair of dies were made and used after an interval, after the main A-D, 1-4 series had ceased. It should be added that altogether several hundred specimens have been examined in this study and no other die pairing has been found. A die-link between 5 + E and one of the others may eventually come to light, but if it exists it must be of considerable rarity. It ought to be possible, by making a statistical study of the frequency of occurrence of the different die pairings, to estimate the output of each die. I must plead guilty to having neglected this: when I first started looking at these coins I did not know where it would lead!

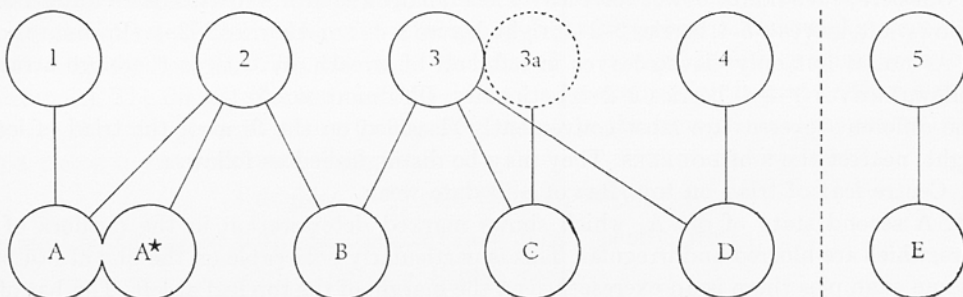


FIG. 1. The dies as a chain-linked series. Obverses above, reverses below.

Another variety that I have failed to find is Pridmore's no. 6, which he himself records solely on the authority of Marshall-Fraser (his no. 5, p. 315). Pridmore himself (*in litt.*, Feb. 1964) now doubts the existence of this coin. It seems to differ from Pridmore's no. 5 (my no. X) only in the absence of the lowest berry on the left on the *reverse*. This may well be a temporary filling-in of detail on the die comparable with my *obverse* 3a, where the same detail is lacking.

It should perhaps be mentioned that no die-link has been found between the 1864 8 doubles and that of 1868. This perhaps is to be expected: according to Marshall-Fraser they are the products of different firms.

A more important matter concerns the nature of the damage to die A to give A*. The damage once formed is progressive. The excrescence on the leaf in particular appears late and grows in size, and at the same time the blobby appearance of the outlines in the letters increases. But the defects first seem to appear suddenly: I can find no specimens showing only the faintest traces of damage. All this is consistent with it being primarily due to rusting, and this implies a suspension of coining for a short period. Because die A is involved this must have occurred comparatively early on in the issue. It is a curious fact that the companion die 2 shows no signs of similar damage, and this could be due to a careless operative forgetting to grease only one of the dies before putting them into store!

I am greatly indebted to Mr. B. H. I. H. Stewart for pointing out to me the significance of a chain-linked series as opposed to a fully cross-linked group of coins. A chain-linked series

is likely to be the product of a single press or machine over a period of time, during which as one die was worn out it was replaced by another; we do not therefore find early and late dies used together. On the other hand a fully cross-linked group would be the product of a much more intensive activity for a shorter time, i.e. several presses working at the same time, each with one pair of dies which would tend to be redistributed at random at the start of each working spell. Since this is not what we find in this case, but rather a chain-linked series, we can, I think, deduce that the firm of Henry Jay & Co. only possessed one press suitable for coining—or at any rate only one which was in fact so used.

One further fact which I think we can deduce is that, since each die is distinct, they must have been engraved directly by hand, probably as required. This would also point to the firm's lack of facilities for coinage operations; they clearly possessed no hubbing press or other means of multiplying dies. The engraving of the dies themselves shows no lack of skill, and this makes one wonder who the artist was.

My sincere thanks are due to Mr. C. Wilson Peck and to Mr. B. H. I. H. Stewart for help and encouragement, and to Mr. C. R. Hill for photographic assistance. All the coins illustrated are in my own collection.



GUERNSEY 8 DOUBLES

About x1.5 1-5 OBVERSES A-E REVERSES

