

# Making a Nation:

## Money, image and power in Tudor and Stuart England

The signing of the Treaty of Union, the agreement that brought the kingdoms of England and Scotland together in 1707, marked the creation of the nation of Great Britain. The journey from medieval England to a United Kingdom, can be viewed in a new exhibition which traces the story through 250 years of coins and medals. **Making a Nation: Money, image and power in Tudor and Stuart England** explores how kings and queens used coins and medals to manage their identity, display power, influence people, and demonstrate their right to rule.



Coins and medals were important media for communication in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The minting of coinage was a royal prerogative, affirming the king or queen's divine status, and its ubiquity meant that the royal message could be transmitted across the social scale. Medals, on the other hand, acted as high status gifts to display authority, reinforce alliances, as propaganda, or to demonstrate loyalty to the crown or cause.

Renaissance and Reformation, Civil War and Union are chronicled in this exhibition. **Making a Nation** draws on The Fitzwilliam Museum's world-class collection and highlights how, against a backdrop of artistic change, technological innovation, and religious and political conflict, the ruling class fused Classical and modern ideas, symbols, and metaphors on their coins and medals to represent themselves and signal their aspirations to their subjects. The objects on display illustrate how coin and medal portraiture developed alongside other art forms, such as miniatures, paintings and drawings; and how medals emerged as important tools for propaganda and to celebrate national achievements.



Pembroke College Hoard. This hoard of 41 gold coins was discovered in 1874 and 1875 by workmen demolishing buildings in the Old Court of Pembroke College, Cambridge. It was probably hidden by a member of the College between 1642 and 1644, perhaps to avoid contributing it to the king or Parliament, or to keep it safe while the owner was away from Cambridge.

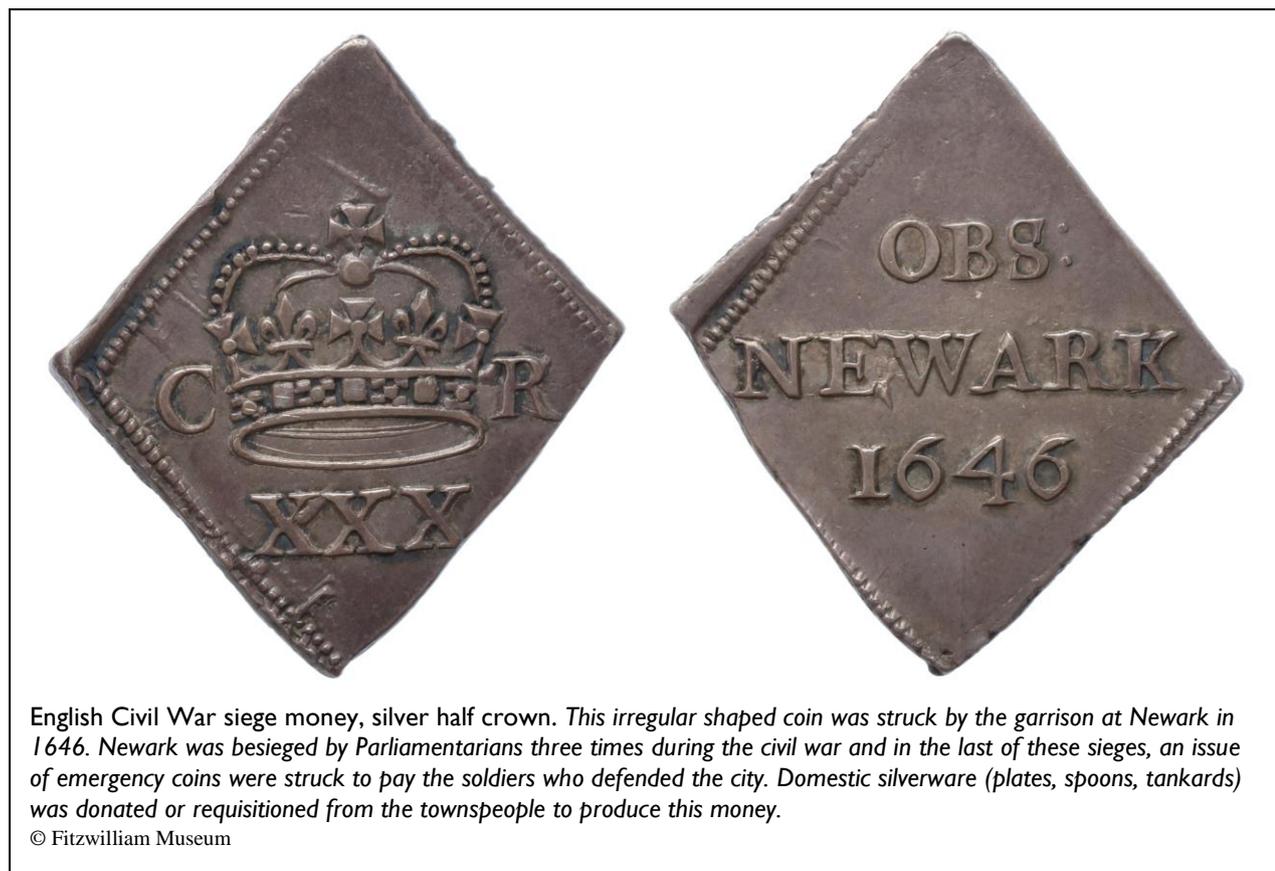
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The exhibition is supported by loans from the British Museum and York Museums Trust. It charts how, during times of trouble, money was hoarded and buried in secret locations. Some, unfortunate, sixteenth and seventeenth century hoarders were unable to recover their stash. But these hoards, found by subsequent generations, are an invaluable indication of how people in Tudor and Stuart England valued and used money. The Sherborne hoard is a case in point. Found in 1970 and on loan from the British Museum, this sixteenth century hoard of ten Portuguese and Spanish gold coins and 184 English silver halfpennies is evidence that foreign coins were circulating in Tudor England.

Thanks to the British Museum, an exciting object on show for the first time, is an early medal given to soldiers during the English Civil War. The medal is still attached to the presentation document and bears the signature of the Parliamentarian commander-in-chief, General Sir Thomas Fairfax.

Exhibition curator Richard Kelleher, Assistant Keeper, Medieval and Modern Coins and Medals, adds: “This exhibition showcases some of the most iconic and important coins and medals in The Fitzwilliam’s collection and examines how the royal image was reinvented and reimagined over two centuries of fundamental artistic, religious, and political change. More than 500 objects will be on show, some for the first time, including Renaissance medals and Tudor coins, Elizabeth I’s stunning gold Armada medal and Oliver Cromwell’s death mask alongside some fabulous siege coins – emergency money minted by besieged royalist garrisons that still held out for the king.”

**Making a Nation** is open to the public from Tuesday 26 March until Sunday 30 June 2019.



## Notes to editors:

Richard Kelleher, Assistant Keeper of Medieval and Modern Coins and Medals specialises in the money of medieval and early modern Britain. He has published widely on money in medieval England, winning the Royal Numismatic Society's Lhotka Prize for his book *An Introduction to Coinage in Medieval England* in 2016. He was awarded the British Numismatic Society's Blunt Prize in 2014, and was a recipient of an Art Fund New Collecting Award in 2018 for a project on 'Currencies of Conflict and Dissent'. His current research projects include co-authoring a volume on coins of the Latin East in the Medieval European Coinage series and looking at monetisation and coin use from medieval and early modern metal-detector finds at Rendlesham, Suffolk.

## About the Fitzwilliam Museum

Founded in 1816 the Fitzwilliam Museum is the principal museum of the University of Cambridge and lead partner for the University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) Major Partner Museum programme, funded by The Arts Council. The Fitzwilliam's collections explore world history and art from antiquity to the present day. It houses over half a million objects from ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman artefacts, to medieval illuminated manuscripts, masterpiece paintings from the Renaissance to the 21st century, world class prints and drawings, and outstanding collections of coins, Asian arts, ceramics and other applied arts. The Fitzwilliam presents a wide ranging public programme of major exhibitions, events and education activities, and is an internationally recognised institute of learning, research and conservation.

[www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk](http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk)

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The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB | Free admission  
OPEN: Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00;  
CLOSED: 24-26 & 31 December, 1 January, Good Friday

**Business Partners** The Museum is supported by our Business Partners during 2017; TTP Group plc, ACE Cultural Tours, Hewitsons LLP, and Sotheby's.