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## VARIATION ON A THEME

**A unique 1887 Queen Victoria Jubilee proof sovereign with 14 bead obverse and "uniface" reverse**



**A** PROOF sovereign recently acquired by the author was found to be different from the examples usually encountered. Some investigation by way of books, the internet and friendly dealers followed but only after speaking to a fellow collector was he alerted to a second variety. This gave half the answer (the obverse) but the reverse was different to both of these. It was clear that professional help was needed and, happily, found. Here then is a brief summary of the two previously known variations and this newly-found variation which brings the total to three. You may be as surprised as he was to find there was more than one variation of this coin, so read on!

There are now three known variations of the 1887 Jubilee proof sovereign: (1) The type with an obverse with 13 beads in the necklace on the Queen's effigy. This is the variation usually found. (2) The variation with an obverse with 14 beads in the effigy and the reverse the same as in 1. These variations are as reported by Stephen Hill for Spink in 2001. (3) The variation with an obverse with 14 beads in the effigy and a reverse differing from both 1 and 2. This reverse was previously unknown on a full coin and was known only on a uniface reverse sovereign held by the Royal Mint. This variation was confirmed by Robert Matthews for the author and subsequently for Spink in 2008.

### VARIATION 1

This is the regular proof sovereign issued in the 1887 proof sets of which there were nominally 797. Almost all appear to be of this type. It is very well struck with mirror fields and matt relief. The rim edges are near-flat and the whole coin well-finished. The obverse bust has a necklace of 13 beads and the monarch's crown and all devices fit neatly inside the border. The designer's initials J.E.B. are shown clearly on the lower extremity

of the truncation, protruding a little into the field below.

The reverse carries the familiar effigy of St George and the Dragon. For the Jubilee year a streamer was re-introduced to the helmet which consists of several distinct raised lines in this variety. The date 1887 has its numerals aligned exactly and is followed by the designers initials B.P. in smaller lettering, shown clearly, and with full stops.

### VARIATION 2

The coin, of which only one example is known, is reported as being very well struck and shown in the pictures to have mirror fields and matt relief. The colour is described as, "more yellow in this piece than in the more red coloured gold of the regular proof". The reverse is reported as, "The reverse die used is the same as that for the regular proof issue and has a very distinct B.P.".

Stephen Hill says the obverse is different from the regular proof and his report shows a good photograph at approximately four times magnification. He says the rim is slightly thicker (it is clear from the photograph and examining the variation 3 coin that the border is also broader) and the garter star has a couple of extra rays

which protrude into the field below. The initials J.E.B. are placed fully on the truncation and there are differences in the ribbon on Victoria's shoulder. Stephen says, "The final colon of the legend after D of F:D: is closer to Victoria's bust". (It is also clear that the colon after the G of D:G: is further away from the crown in this variation when compared with the regular proof and the top of the monarch's crown is lost into the border. Also, the front edge of her dress is a different shape as is the necklace pendant.) The most obvious difference of all though is that this bust carries a necklace of 14 beads instead of the 13 on the regular proof and the currency Jubilee head sovereigns.



Variation 1 in which the necklace can be clearly seen to have 13 beads and the crown fits neatly inside the border.



Variation 2 and 3 both have 14 beads in the necklace and the crown abuts the border.