



## THE FIFTY PENCE COIN – The First Fifty Years (1969 – 2019)



Thank you for purchasing this copy of the "History of The Fifty Pence Coin", which contains a considerable amount of new previously unpublished information collated from a wide variety of sources to help you with understanding your collection of 50p coins.

This is the First Edition of the book which covers the First 50 Years of the 50p + 1 Year. It not only includes all of the 50p coins issued during the first 50 years, but also the UK fifty pence coins that have been issued by the Royal Mint during 2020.

The price of the 2020 Edition of this e-book is £10.00 which includes free future updates of the book whenever they are issued. Updates of the book will be issued every two years.

We would like to acknowledge the wide range of sources of valuable information that we have used to create this book and are especially grateful to the Royal Mint for providing some very interesting data that has allowed us to incorporate quite a lot of previously unpublished information.

*This copy of the History of the Fifty Pence Coin belongs to:*

**Mr Brushwood Coins**

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## THE FIFTY PENCE COIN – The First Fifty Years (1969 – 2019)

The popularity of the fifty pence coin has grown very rapidly in recent years as more and more new commemorative designs of 50p have been issued by the Royal Mint. Searching for the wide variety of different coin designs that have been issued into general circulation has created a new generation of avid coin collectors within the space of only a few years. Collecting the related sets of coins, such as the London Olympic Sports and the Beatrix Potter series of 50p, has become particularly addictive for many, especially when nobody knows for several years which coins are actually going to be the rarer ones.

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the issue of the first 50p coin therefore seems an appropriate time for this Brushwood Coins Fact Note to take an in depth look at the history of all the fifty pence designs that have ever been issued during the first fifty years.

An unprecedented number of 50p coins were released during 2019, with some issued into general circulation, whilst many others were solely issued as 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary special limited editions, and all of these are discussed in this note. Our coin note is intended to provide interested collectors with a good knowledge of all aspects of the 50p coin to assist them with their collecting, whatever their age or experience, as well as taking a look at some of the myths and legends surrounding the so-called 'rare' 50p coins. A discussion section on 'Fakes, Forgeries and False news' is included to help collectors avoid some of the common pitfalls when buying some of the rarer 50p coins.

There is a detailed reference table (Table 1) describing every UK 50p issued since 1969, and also a complete rarity index reference table (Table 2) covering every single 50p variation issued, including Special Editions and those that were only ever available in Royal Mint sets. These two tables form the largest part of this coin note, providing over 60 pages of very detailed 50p information, and contain some previously unpublished facts that may surprise readers whether they are new to collecting or more experienced. Also included within Table 1 is a detailed section on the scarce London Olympic 50p Sports Series, with lots more detailed 50p-related information following on from the main table in 8 pages of subsidiary reference tables and lists.










For completeness, we also take a brief look at some of the very interesting non-UK fifty pence coins and sets of coins that have been issued by the UK Territories and Dependencies, but which are actually not legal tender in the UK, despite being exactly the same shape and often being found in mainland change.

Further detailed information on 50p coins is also included in a series of supporting Annexes, covering such topics as the Royal Mint Experience 'Strike Your Own' (SYO) 50p coins, and this edition now also includes all the 50p coins issued during 2020. A detailed overview of the 50p Error Coins that have been discovered since 1969 is also included in the Annexes.



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*Further detailed supporting information relating to 50p coins is contained in the following Annexes*

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### 1. The introduction of the new Fifty Pence coin

In October 1969 the new 50 pence coin was issued into circulation in the UK, replacing the old paper ten shilling note and joining the two other decimal coins (5p and 10p) that were already in circulation ahead of the formal changeover to decimal coinage. The ten shilling note was then demonetised in November 1970. This then left just the three bronze decimal coins (2p, 1p, and  $\frac{1}{2}$ p) to be introduced on 15 February 1971 when full decimalisation of the UK coinage finally took place.



The new 50p coin almost went into production with a different design on the reverse; 'The Royal Arms'. However, at the last moment The Royal Mint decided instead to use a seated figure of Britannia. The reverse design for the first 50 pence coin therefore featured a symbol of Britannia that has appeared on our coinage since 1672. The 1969 design was created by Christopher Ironside, depicting a seated Britannia alongside a lion, holding an olive branch in her left hand and trident in her right. (Ironside's original 50p Royal Arms design was however later issued on a special commemorative 50p in 2013 to celebrate the anniversary of the engraver's birth).

The Ironside Britannia design was used for all the definitive 50p coins from 1969 through to 2008, with the only significant change to the definitive version of the coin during that period being the removal of the associated inscription 'NEW PENCE' and its replacement by the wording 'FIFTY PENCE' in 1983. The obverse used for the first fifty pence was the Queen's portrait engraved by Arnold Machin.



Whilst the Britannia design on the new fifty pence coin may have been traditional, the shape of the new seven sided 50p coin was certainly not. The revolutionary coin

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was subsequently copied in many other countries too.) Early designs of the coin had included ten and twelve-sided versions, and there was even a square one with rounded corners proposed. However, The Royal Mint decided that a seven-sided coin made it easiest to tell the 50p apart from the rest of the UK coinage, so the 50p became the world's first seven-sided coin. The idea to issue an equilateral-curve heptagon as part of Britain's new decimal currency came originally from Mr H. G. Conway, the technical member of the Decimal Currency Board who was at that time President of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers. The heptagonal item illustrated above, inscribed with his name and date, is a trial piece from early in the process of the new 50p coin development.

The original sized 50p coin continued in use from 1969 through until 1997, when it was then reduced in both diameter and thickness, resulting in a much lighter coin costing less to make. The 50p coin is legal tender for payments of up to £10; in theory a shopkeeper could actually refuse to accept a payment which includes more than twenty 50p coins. (London Underground ticket machines initially would not accept the new 50p coin because 10p coins of 28.5mm diameter could be substituted for the 50p coin.)

However, the new coin in 1969 initially did not prove very popular with the British public at all, mostly due to its unorthodox shape, and so its current popularity amongst collectors is a far more recent thing. Many different designs of reverse have been used on the fifty pence coin throughout the 50 years since its introduction and these are all detailed later in this note. There have also been four different obverse designs used for the Queen's portrait to date, and these are also discussed and illustrated. The many reverse designs of 50p are all presented in chronological order of issue, and then also listed again in terms of their relative rarity ranking in a separate table.



## 2. Size, Weight, and Metal Composition of the UK fifty pence coin

The original 50p was a larger coin than it is currently, but in 1997 it was reduced both in diameter and in thickness to lower the cost of manufacture, and the older larger coins were removed from circulation so these can no longer be found in your everyday change.

The new lighter coin that we see in use today was introduced on 1 September 1997 and the larger coins were withdrawn and demonetised on 28 February 1998. The obverse and reverse design of the standard definitive fifty pence coin did not change at this point in time, just the relative size of the coin itself.

The base metal of the UK fifty pence coin is the same for both sizes of coin, comprising 75% copper (Cu) and 25% nickel (Ni); a mixture or alloy called cupronickel. All general circulation standard 50p coins are made of the same cupronickel base metal.

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coins per minute;  
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in Section 6.

|            | <u>Larger 50p</u>                     | <u>Smaller 50p</u>                    |
|------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Dates:     | <b>1969 – 1996</b>                    | <b>1997 – Present</b>                 |
| Weight:    | <b>13.5g</b>                          | <b>8.0g</b>                           |
| Diameter:  | <b>30.0mm</b>                         | <b>27.3mm</b>                         |
| Thickness: | <b>2.45mm</b>                         | <b>1.78mm</b>                         |
| Edge:      | <b>Plain</b>                          | <b>Plain</b>                          |
| Shape:     | <b>Equilateral Curve<br/>Heptagon</b> | <b>Equilateral Curve<br/>Heptagon</b> |
| Metal:     | <b>Cupronickel</b>                    | <b>Cupronickel</b>                    |





### 3. 50p Obverse Designs - The Queen's Portraits

#### 1969-1984 (Second Portrait)



As with all UK decimal currency, a new portrait of Queen Elizabeth II by Arnold Machin appeared on the obverse side of the new 50p coin from 1969 until 1984. The Queen is wearing the 'Girls of Great Britain and Ireland' Tiara.

This was the second portrait of the Queen used on UK coins since 1953. (The first portrait, sculpted by Mary Gillick, had been used previously on all the earlier UK coinage following the Queen's Coronation.)

The obverse letters 'D. G. REG. F. D.' stand for Dei Gratia Regina Fidei Defensor (By the Grace of God, Queen, Defender of the Faith)

#### 1985-1997 (Third portrait)



In 1985 a new portrait of the Queen by Raphael Maklouf was introduced on the obverse of all UK coinage in which the Queen wears the George IV State Diadem. This is often referred to as the third portrait, and it continued in use until 1997.

Maklouf's signature initials, 'RDM' can be seen, fairly indistinctly, on the lower left-hand side of the Queen's portrait.

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From 1998 to 2015 the portrait by Ian Rank-Broadley FRBS was used, again featuring the tiara, and with a clear signature-mark "IRB" below the (4<sup>th</sup>) portrait.

In 2008 the obverse design was rotated slightly (about 26 degrees) to match the new reverse shield design which is displayed with the heptagon point down, rather than point up. Several variations of date positioning exist for this portrait.

#### 2015-Present (Fifth Portrait)



Since June 2015, all fifty pence coins now bear the (5<sup>th</sup>) portrait of the Queen, sculpted by Jody Clark. A sketch of the latest portrait by Jody is shown on the right.

His signature initials "JC" can be clearly seen below the portrait.



The four obverse portraits used on 50p coins to date are illustrated above using Proof quality coins as they show the portrait detail most sharply. All 50p proof coins prior to 1981 were completely mirror-finish, as in the first illustration above, and similar to the later 'Brilliant Uncirculated' coins. From 1981 onwards the obverse of all proof 50p coins had a 'frosted' matt finish to the Queen's portrait. The different minting standards used for Royal Mint coins are explained fully in Section 6. Note



## 4. The 50p Reverse Designs – Commemorative and Definitive Issues

This part of our Coin Note is by far the most extensive and contains detailed information about every 50p coin issued. Section 4 however is just an introduction to the content of the very detailed 50p reverse design database tables which can be found at the back of the note for easiest reference.

The 50p Reverse design information is presented in two very large tables, so that you can find all the information you might need easily by selecting whichever table best suits your needs. Use 'Table 1' to find out all the detailed information for any particular 50p coin that you might be interested in, and then search 'Table 2' for its ranking position if you wish to find out how scarce it is relative to all other UK 50p coins issued.

- **Table 1: Chronological Order** (Pages 30 - 86)

The first and largest table (Table 1) covers every UK 50p design that has been issued to date, starting with the first 50p issued in 1969 and running in chronological order through all the 50p reverse designs, including all the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary special coins issued, through to the end of 2019.

In Table 1, for each fifty pence design there is an illustration of the reverse, its year of issue, a description of the design, name of the designer, and the mintage released into general circulation by the Royal Mint. The table, occupying well over 50 pages, also highlights which obverse portrait is associated with the reverse design whenever there are changes made to the design of the obverse.

The quantity of coins minted at the higher Proof and the BUNC minting standards are also included in this first table for each of the 50p designs. Also identified in Table 1 are all the additional 50p designs that were only ever issued as limited editions within RM Proof and Brilliant Uncirculated Sets (BUNC), but never issued into general circulation. This applies particularly to a number of scarce definitive 50p issues which were often only ever issued within Royal Mint annual year sets.

- **Table 2: Rarity Ranking Order** (Pages 87 - 94)

The second table again lists all the 50p reverse designs ever issued, but now in a completely different order. This time they are ranked using the relative 'rarity' of the coins, starting with the rarest, rather than in order of their date of issue. Unlike some other attempts to produce a '50p rarity ranking index', our second table covers every fifty pence coin issued in the UK since 1969 (including all the early larger-sized and all the current smaller-sized 50p coins, with issue dates up to and including 2019). The rarity table extends over 8 pages.

The sequence of the coins in the 'Rarity Order' Table 2 is based purely on their actual minting quantities (as published retrospectively by the Royal Mint), and it is not skewed in any way by such subjective effects as 'perceived demand', 'popularity', or by having certain selected groups of 50p designs omitted altogether (as is often done by certain quite well known commercial sellers in their 'rarity' listings!) The release of the 2018 50p mintage figures in October 2019 by the Royal Mint has affected the table significantly, for example by all the 2018 Beatrix Potter coins which are now known to be scarce. The 2019 Peter Rabbit 50p has also had a very surprising impact!

There is a great deal of entirely false information regularly published in the media and in advertising regarding 50p coin rarity, so this second table is intended to give an entirely impartial view of how scarce or not some of the 50p coins actually are. Section 5, that follows, is a useful introduction to the 'Top Ten' rarest 50p coins that will be found in Table 2.



## 5. The 'Rare' Fifty Pence Coins

OK, so which really are the rarest 50p coins? The following few pages will take just a brief look at the current 'Top 10' of the most scarce 50p coins. Note that our top ten includes both general circulation standard 50p coins and the special edition 50p coins which were only issued at BUNC minting standard and for which mintage figures are known. You will need to consult the full 'Table 2' at the back for the complete rarity list for all other 50p coins beyond the Top 10.

An important point to note here is that often the prices paid for the scarcest 50p coins do not appear to relate directly to their true rarity! For example the Beatrix Potter *Jemima Puddle-Duck* was until recently perceived by some to be very much rarer than it actually is, and the *Kew Gardens* is still incorrectly believed by many to be the rarest 50p ever issued, and so they both continue to sometimes attract higher prices due to popular demand than coins which are actually much rarer.

At the time of writing, the release of the 2018 (and early indications of some 2019) Royal Mint circulation coin mintage figures, particularly the Beatrix Potter coins, has significantly affected the overall ranking list in a number of areas. This includes pushing the scarce Olympic Triathlon coin out of the Top Ten into 11<sup>th</sup> place. Coins marked with an asterisk\* are BUNC only.

| RARE 50p - TOP TEN               |        |                                |      |
|----------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------|------|
| 2019 Peter Rabbit*               | 400    | (Non-Royal Mint release)       | 1st  |
| 2011 Aquatics (Lines over Face)* | < 600  | (Many fakes in existence)      | 2nd  |
| 2009 Blue Peter Olympics*        | 10 TC1 | (Competition Winner 2009)      | 3rd  |
| 2018 Isaac Newton (SYO)*         | 70 976 | (Royal Mint confirmed Apr2020) | 4th  |
| 1992/93                          |        |                                | 5th  |
| 2009 Kew Gardens                 |        |                                | 6th  |
| 1985 Br                          |        |                                | 7th  |
| 2011 Football                    | 1      | (Fake copies in existence)     | 8th  |
| 2011 Wrestling                   | 1      | (Fakes uncommon so far)        | 9th  |
| 2011 Judo                        | 1      | (Fakes uncommon so far)        | 10th |
| 2011 Triathlon                   | 1      | (Fakes uncommon so far)        | 11th |

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*The Royal Mint typically publishes its coin mintage figures up to two years in arrears, so it can be some while before the true rarity of new issues is actually known, resulting in significant speculation and often quite false claims of rarity for new releases.*





**1<sup>st</sup> 2019 Peter Rabbit (Beatrix Potter series).** This coin has suddenly shot into first place on the list of rare 50p coins to be found 'in circulation' as a result of 400 of the BUNC versions of the coin being released into circulation all around the UK by a group of people associated with the 'Great British Coin Hunt'. It is therefore possible to discover one of these 400 higher grade coins in your everyday change and the low number now in general circulation therefore beats the previous rarest 50p coin into second place. However this is a highly

be released into general circulation and, as a significant number of these coins have been also sold as BUNC special issues by the Royal Mint, the value of the second rarest coin is therefore likely to easily retain its top spot as the most valuable 50p.



**2<sup>nd</sup> 2011 Olympic Aquatics with water lines.** Taken as a collective group, the Olympic Sports series of 50p coins issued in 2011 for the 2012 London Olympics are all scarce. The rarest of these, (and the design with by far the most forgeries), is the early Olympic Aquatics first design, with water lines running across the swimmer's face, almost obscuring it. Only around 600 of these escaped from the Royal Mint before the design was quickly improved to show the swimmer's face more clearly by removing the water lines on the face. This was previously by far the rarest of all the UK 50p coins ever issued and it still easily takes first place in terms of its value relative to all other 50p coins. (It is occasionally described by sellers as a Royal Mint 'error' coin but strictly speaking this is not correct; it is merely a change to the reverse design of a coin already issued from the mint. There is an annex section

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with over 3.8 Million issued. (scarce 50p.)



**3<sup>rd</sup> 2009 Blue Peter Olympic Competition Winner.** Not within the official 2011-dated Olympic Sports series of coins, this is the very first Olympic 50p coin design that was the winning entry in a Blue Peter competition for an Olympic coin design, held a few years prior to the London Olympics. The winning design, by 9 year old Florence Jackson from Bristol, was adopted for the eventual reverse of the Athletics 50p coin, but a special version of this coin was issued at the end of the competition in 2009, in a limited edition 'competition winners' BUNC sealed card by the Royal Mint. Less than 20,000 of these coins were issued, and so the 2009-dated version of the Olympic Athletics 50p becomes the third rarest of all the 50p coins ever issued. (The more frequently found 2011-dated version of the same coin design is much less rare with a mintage exceeding 2.2 Million.)



**4<sup>th</sup> 2018 Isaac Newton (SYO).** The fourth rarest 50p is possibly an unexpected one for newcomers to collecting 50p coins. It is the 'Strike Your Own' (SYO) version of the Isaac Newton 50p coin carrying a 2018 date. All the normal Isaac Newton coins issued into general circulation by the RM carried a 2017 date, and there were 1.8 Million of those, making the circulation version much less rare but still quite scarce. This special edition 2018 coin was only available to visitors to the Royal Mint Experience tour between January and March of 2018

and who also paid extra to 'strike their own coin' at the end of the guided tour around the mint. It was originally believed that fewer than 20,000 of this 2018 dated design were issued, but a final mintage figure of 20,826 has recently been confirmed by the Royal Mint Experience team. A few of the early visitors striking this coin were also able to have their coin packaging signed by the designer, Aaron West.



circulation and so can no longer be found in your change. (The value of this coin may slowly increase as more and more people realise it is actually quite a lot rarer than the Kew.)



**[5<sup>th</sup>] 1992-93 UK Presidency of the EU.** The fifth rarest 50p is one that is no longer in everyday circulation because it is one of the older larger-sized 50ps. This coin was issued during the UK's Presidency of the European Union and it is unusual in that it carried a dual date of 1992 & 1993. The mintage of this design was only about half that of the later Kew Gardens anniversary coin and it comes in with a circulation issue quantity of just 109,000. This coin is therefore significantly rarer than the Kew Gardens but is often completely omitted in many of the 50p 'rarity index' lists because it has been withdrawn from general circulation and so can no longer be found in your change. (The value of this coin may slowly increase as more and more people realise it is actually quite a lot rarer than the Kew.)



**[6<sup>th</sup>] 2009 Kew Gardens.** The sixth rarest 50p is the Kew Gardens 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 50p coin. There are several Royal Mint versions of this coin issued (and there are very many fakes) so it is worth carefully studying Table 1 to be sure which one you have. 210,000 'Kew Gardens' 50p coins were issued into general circulation and this is probably the most well-known of the rarer 50p coins. It is still incorrectly claimed by many to be the rarest 50p ever issued.

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**[7<sup>th</sup>] 1985 Britannia Definitive.** In seventh place on the rarity list is a coin that you might not expect to find there: the 1985 Definitive Britannia 50p of only 1985 and this was the first full-length portrait by the Royal Mint since the 1960s. It is a very common coin in circulation but is still considered rare because of its low mintage of only 1985 and this was the first full-length portrait by the Royal Mint since the 1960s. It is a very common coin in circulation but is still considered rare because of its low mintage of only 1985 and this was the first full-length portrait by the Royal Mint since the 1960s.

*(However, rather perversely, a little known fact is that the Football (Offside) 50p at the BUNC minting standard is actually the most common of all the BUNC Olympic 50ps issued in sealed Olympic 50p cards, and Goalball is actually the rarest of all the sealed Olympic BUNC card coins.)*



**[8<sup>th</sup>] 2011 Olympic Football (Offside Explained).** In eighth place can be found the Olympic Football coin which illustrates the offside rule in its reverse design. This is the scarcest of the circulation standard Olympic Sports range of coins, with a mintage of just 1,125,000 coins having entered into general circulation. A further 188,262 Olympic Football coins were issued in sealed BUNC Olympic 50p cards.

*(Here is another little-known fact: if you consider the overall totals of Olympic 50p coins issued into circulation together with those issued at BUNC standard in sealed cards, then overall it is the Olympic Wrestling 50p coin that is the rarest of all the Olympic 50p coins and not Football!!)*



**10th** 2011 Olympic Judo. Tenth place is taken by the Olympic Judo coin with a general circulation mintage of 1,161,500 coins. A further 128,442 Olympic Judo coins were issued in sealed BUNC Olympic 50p cards.



**11th** 2011 Olympic Triathlon. Just outside the top ten in eleventh place is the Olympic Triathlon coin with a mintage of 1,163,000 coins issued into circulation and now recently pushed out of the 50p Top Ten by the knowledge that 400 Peter Rabbit 2019 coins have now been released into circulation.

Just by way of example, when removed so many coins have been released into circulation, ranking it, but many people still incorrectly describe this coin as rare when it is in fact more common than many of the standard definitive 50ps.

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being rare by many cause people have not their rarity. For coins were actually overall 50p scarcity

The 2016 Jemima Puddle-Duck design was at one time considered to be the rarest of the Potter coins, with an issue into circulation of just over 2 Million, putting it in amongst the Olympic Sports 50p coins in terms of number of coins issued, but this is still not scarce enough to make it even inside the top thirty of the rarest 50ps. There are still people who think that the 2016 Peter Rabbit with the half-whisker is a rare Royal Mint error when in fact it is the standard design.

The most recent circulation figures released by the Royal Mint show that the 2018 Peter Rabbit, the 2018 Flopsy Bunny, and the 2018 Mrs Tittlemouse are all inside the top twenty rarest 50ps and so all these are actually much rarer than the Jemima Puddle-Duck coin. However Jemima Puddle-Duck, at the time of writing, still attracts a higher price on secondary coin markets (such as eBay). This will gradually change with time as more people discover that it is actually the 2018 50p circulation standard Beatrix Potter coins which are the rarest; although now controversially overtaken by the 2019 Peter Rabbit!



## 6. Minting Standards used by the Royal Mint for 50p coins

For fifty pence coin collectors who may not be familiar with how to spot the difference between the three minting standards used by the Royal Mint, the following definitions are quite important and will help you to understand the key differences. These minting standards are regularly misused in descriptions by people selling coins on the internet; sometimes because they do not properly understand the differences, but often in an attempt to mislead the less knowledgeable coin collector into thinking they are buying a higher quality coin than they may actually end up receiving.

Before explaining the differences, it is important to appreciate that these minting standards are not the same as 'grades' used to define a coin's condition, or state of wear. (If you need to understand the accepted UK definitions for a coin's condition, or grade, then there is another Brushwood Coin Note that you can refer to entitled 'Coin Grading' under the 'Collectors Coins' section of the Brushwood Coins website.) The 'minting standard' defines the quality of surface finish and detail on the coin at the point of manufacture.

There are three minting (or “striking”) standards regularly used by the Royal Mint for base metal 50p coins:

**"General Circulation Standard",  
"Brilliant Uncirculated (BUNC or BU)",  
"Proof Standard"**

Sometimes the Royal Mint has issued subtly different variants of 50p coin design at more than one minting standard which can make it easier to tell which coin you have in your hand, but only if you know the exact detailed differences. However, another word of warning: do not rely entirely on the Royal Mint's own website as there are unfortunately some errors and omissions. A prime example (at the time of writing) is the very scarce 2009 Kew Gardens 50p, where the RM mintage section the 'proof/BUNC standard' reverses the 'circulation' side. This is a low resolution version of the book for the website with some information obscured. If you would like to purchase a full version please contact us via the Brushwood Coins website. The RM has also made a similar mistake with illustrating the 2011 Olympic Aquatics coin, which has a truly rare variant, but the website shows the wrong image.

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The key message here is to be fully aware of what you are buying, particularly if it is a scarce 50p coin; do your own research, and check the photographs of the actual coin being sold in detail before parting with hard-earned cash. (Table 1 will highlight any obvious coin design differences if they are not exactly the same at each minting standard.)

- **General Circulation Standard**

Coins that are minted for issuing into general circulation, (e.g. for everyday use via the banks and the Post Office), are minted using the Royal Mint's standard minting process. A single coin production press at The Royal Mint can typically strike up to 500 circulation standard coins per minute, which is equivalent to 720,000 coins a day. Often multiple presses are running



simultaneously when large quantities are required for issue and all these coins pour from the machines into bulk containers before being later counted out by machine into sealed bags for issue.

Circulation standard coins produced in this way for general circulation will often inevitably have a lot of minor surface marks or scratches on them caused by the coins knocking into each other as they are collected together for packaging. This is the basic (lowest) standard of coin minted for general use in everyday circulation.

For modern day coins (post 1982) it is not correct for sellers to ever describe any coins that have come from this large scale manufacturing process as "BUNC" or "BU" (see below) because they will definitely not be up to that quality standard of minting. The highest quality that a standard coin can be is just 'Uncirculated' or 'UNC' even if it comes straight from the Royal Mint or sealed bank bag.

All fifty pence coins issued for general circulation should have an all-over shiny finish, as opposed to any matt or frosted finishes. If you have what appears to be an uncirculated fifty pence coin with any type of non-shiny finish then it is not a normal circulation standard coin or a BUNC coin. (It may be either a genuine proof coin or, far more likely, it is a fake.)

- **Brilliant Uncirculated Standard (BUNC or BU)**

'Brilliant Uncirculated' coins are separately manufactured by the Royal Mint on different presses and to a higher standard than circulating coins. The dies used to strike Brilliant Uncirculated coins are polished to a considerably higher standard than those used for circulation standard coins. The Brilliant Uncirculated blanks are machine-fed into the press at a much lower rate than for circulation coins and then are struck twice and removed individually so that they do not knock into each other. As a result, they are produced at a significantly slower production rate than circulation coins, at around just 100 coins per hour. (Compare this to the much faster rate of production for circulation coins, which can be up to 1000 coins per hour.)

BUNC standard coins are produced to a much higher standard than circulation coins, with a much higher level of detail than circulation standard, albeit with slightly lower definition than Proof coins. All BUNC coins have a very highly polished shiny finish to both sides of the coin and they always leave the Royal Mint fully sealed in packaging which protects each BUNC coin - never in bulk bags. The quality of finish of a BUNC coin is always a 'mirror like' shiny surface, often making it quite difficult to photograph compared to a normal coin. It is quite easy to spot a true BUNC coin from its photograph due to the very high levels of reflection apparent from all parts of the design. Occasionally the background flat parts of a BUNC coin may appear black because all the light has been reflected away from the camera. A true BUNC coin will have no marks on it whatsoever and will have very sharply defined sharp edges to the coin with no dents or surface scratches. Ideally a BUNC coin will still be sealed in its original plastic RM package or have been carefully transferred to a coin capsule. The first Royal Mint BUNC coin sets were issued in 1982.

If there are any small marks or dents anywhere on a coin, then it is almost certainly not a BUNC coin. (But occasionally a BUNC coin will enter circulation, often as a result of a child deciding to spend the money they have been given inside a sealed Royal Mint coin set without realising that it was worth a lot more than its face value.)

It is also worth a quick mention here of the Royal Mint "First Strike" coin quality as this is another term frequently misused by sellers. The RM has introduced this as a marketing

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description for the best of the new Alphabet ten pence coins they have issued in 2018 and 2019, but it is NOT the same as Brilliant Uncirculated. 'First Strike' coins are merely the first coins to be struck using circulation standard dies, before they begin to show signs of wear with large scale minting; but they are not BUNC. "First Strike" coins are not issued in bulk bags, but come individually packaged and bar coded from the Royal Mint.

- **Proof Standard**

Royal Mint Proof coins are the highest quality of coin produced by The Royal Mint. With no equal in sharpness, detail and finish, they are renowned for being the pinnacle of the minter's art all over the world, offering the very highest levels of craftsmanship and design detail possible.

The dies used to strike RM Proof coins are all individually hand-finished. This is to ensure that every imperfection is removed before they are used to strike a coin. Each Proof blank or 'planchet' is placed into a coin press by hand. Proof coin blanks are also of higher quality than Brilliant Uncirculated and bulk circulation blanks. Proof coins will be struck up to six times, at a lower speed and with lower pressure than other finishes. This ensures a smoother, sharper finish and preserves all the finer details of the design.

After striking, each Proof coin is removed from the press by hand and checked for any imperfections. The dies are cleaned with air between each coin to ensure that no marks or imperfections are caused by impurities during striking. As a result of the extra care and attention, no more than 50 Proof coins can be struck per hour. The Proof dies are regularly re-worked and re-polished to maintain a bluish-rose finish when striking. Each Proof die may only strike

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Interestingly, the background of the design - the 'table' - has a polished mirror finish and a frosted effect is applied to the foreground - the 'relief'. This gives a higher contrast and more definition to the coin design. The frosted effect is achieved by sand and glass bead blasting the surface of the die, with the table protected. On rare occasions the coin will be finished with 'reverse frosting', where the table is frosted and the relief polished. There are also variations of frosting, such as Matt and Satin.

(For reference, images 2 to 4 in Section 3 (50p Obverse – 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, & 5<sup>th</sup> Portraits) are all illustrated using Proof coin images. The first two images also illustrate the photographic effect described earlier; creating what appears to be a black background. )

Also worth noting is that all the commercially issued RM Proofs prior to 1980 were issued without any matt finish at all. They were all issued with a highly polished shiny mirror-like finish over the entire coin on both sides; so from 1969 through to 1979 all proofs are 100% mirror finish shiny. In addition, there is no difference whatsoever between the coins contained in "Standard Proof Sets" and those described as "Deluxe Proof Sets", "Executive Proof Sets", "Premium Proof Sets" or any other name the Royal Mint may give them ... the only difference is in the packaging. Don't be misled by sellers claiming that they have higher quality "Premium Proof" coins for sale because all current RM proofs are of exactly the same quality.





## 7. False News, Fakes and Forgeries!

Unfortunately the fifty pence coin's new-found popularity, together with the wider realisation that there really are some quite valuable 50p variants, has given rise to a new generation of fake copy coins, outright forgeries, and a great deal of quite false news regarding what is actually rare.

**False News:** There is a lot of poorly researched, entirely false, or at best, highly biased information published in the press regarding the rarity of fifty pence coins. This is also prevalent on auction sites such as eBay where there are so many false descriptions, and even commercial coin company websites which promote the sale of their own 50p products often exaggerate the scarcity of coins in their marketing to promote greater sales.

Most articles claiming to be about rare fifty pence coins published in daily national newspapers are just not credible, frequently taking extreme examples of crazy prices on eBay as being representative of a coin's value. Newspaper journalists writing about scarce coins are seldom experts, and they often just reproduce what others have already written in error on the subject, therefore only further compounding the false illusion of what is actually rare for those who do not yet know.

Various 'rarity' or 'scarcity' index lists have been produced for the fifty pence coin, but we advise taking great care when using them, because many of them are highly selective in what they include, or exclude, and usually fail to inform the reader if they have missed out quite significant blocks of 50p issue, (such as, for example, often the entire Olympic Sport series of 29 coins!) Frequently all the early larger-sized issue of 50p coins minted prior to 1997 have been omitted from fifty pence rarity lists, so for example the rare 1992-93 EU Presidency 50p coin almost never appears in its rightful place ahead of the Kew Gardens 50p.

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A few of the web-based commercial sellers of coins are so popular that entirely false demand is sometimes created when 'not entirely factually complete' information has been presented with professional looking graphics. Instead of being rare, many 50p coins turn out to have been issued in extremely large numbers, and the Beatrix Potter 50p series is a prime example of much misinformation, as discussed earlier in the section on the top ten rare 50ps.

People seem to randomly quote whichever 'rarity index' suits their purpose when claiming a coin they are selling is 'rare'. In many cases sellers on sites such as eBay just invent information about a coin's rarity with almost no basis of fact whatsoever. The most important message, repeated again here, is to do your own research and try to ignore most of what is published in the daily news press about rare 50p coins. Only make a significant purchase of what you think might be a rare 50p coin after making up your own mind that the information provided is genuine. Never believe what the seller tells you without first checking it. Concentrate on the *detail* of what you can see in the photograph provided, not what the seller is claiming. If the picture quality is poor, or not of the actual coin being sold (eg a 'stock photo'), then our advice would be not to buy it.

Here are some typical examples of so-called 'fake news' from the newspapers ...



This wildly exaggerated Daily Express article from 2017 claims that 50p coins such as the Beatrix Potter 'Miss Tiggywinkle' are worth up to £450, and that the 2016 Battle of Hastings coin is selling for £3,000! Another Express headline from around the same time highlights a Battle of Hastings 50p coin 'selling' on eBay for £2.5 Million ...

A few more example newsprint headlines from well-known news publishers on the subject of rare 50p coins are below, for you to research in your own time if you are interested. Every one of them contains very misleading or completely incorrect information!

- "Highly rare 50p coins worth up to £450" (Daily Express, 21 September 2017)
- "Rare 50p coins worth up to £450" (Daily Express, 21 September 2017)
- "Revealed: the most valuable 50p coins in circulation" (Daily Express, 21 September 2017)
- "Most valuable and rare 50p coins in circulation – and you could have one" (Mirror, 6 June 2019)
- "Rare 50p coins can fetch £500: do you have any in your piggy bank?" (Telegraph, 5 July 2017)
- "Most valuable and rarest 50p coins – do you have one worth £840?" (The Sun 25 March 2019)
- "Rare 50p coins in 2019: The change selling for THOUSANDS revealed" (Daily Star, 22 Jan 2019)
- "Rare 50p coins ... Samuel Johnson Dictionary ... £3,500 on eBay" (Daily Mail 5 November 2018)
- "Rare 50p coin goes on sale ... £2.5 Million ... it could be in your pocket" (Daily Express, Sept 25 2017)

All newspaper coverage on the subject of rare 50p coins should therefore be read with extreme scepticism. Many articles are just sensationalised to attract your attention and are often far from correct. It seems that even such established organisations as "Which" and "The Daily Telegraph" don't adequately check everything they publish and so just end up compounding already false information by mindlessly copying it from previous publications which are already incorrect in the first place!

(Surely the top prize should be awarded to this final example, from a local Cumbrian newspaper, dated 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019, for managing to get just about every single piece of information in its article on "the rarest 50p coins in the UK" totally wrong. [www.nwemail.co.uk/news/17965902-rarest-50p-coins-uk](http://www.nwemail.co.uk/news/17965902-rarest-50p-coins-uk). Their 'ranking list' of the top 28 UK rare 50p coins only has 4 of them in the correct sequence before you even start to consider whether some of the coins should ever be on their list in the first place!)



**Fakes & Forgeries:** The remainder of this section will now focus solely on the fakes and forgeries of rare 50p coins and show how you can easily spot many of them before parting with your hard-earned cash for what might turn out to be a worthless counterfeit.

Most of the fake copies of UK 50p coins have their origin in China. Currently by far the most widely copied coins are the following three rare fifty pence coins:

- 2009 Kew Gardens 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- 1992-93 UK Presidency of the EU
- 2011 Olympic Aquatics – ‘water lines over the swimmer’s face’

Other UK 50p fakes that are now appearing include the Olympic Football (Offside Rule), Beatrix Potter Flopsy Bunny, The Gruffalo, Stephen Hawking, and I am sure there will be many others.

### 2009 Kew Gardens 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 50p - Fakes

The following (8) variants of the Kew Gardens coin shown below are all complete fakes. Some sellers may be honest enough to point out that the coin they are selling is a ‘copy’, ‘replica’, ‘space filler’, ‘restrike’, or other similar name for counterfeit. Others will dishonestly claim them to be entirely genuine, or pretend they don’t know if it is real or not, but then immediately proceed to include all sorts of detail coin measurements and weights in an attempt to try and persuade you that it is genuine! The most significant piece of general guidance we can offer is to study very carefully what the Queen’s effigy should look like, because almost every common fake is quite easy to spot from obverse effigy errors. (Refer back to section 3 of this note if you are unsure; the shape of the Queen’s effigy is a key feature of the coin.) The detail of the effigy, hair, crown, and neckline are all important.

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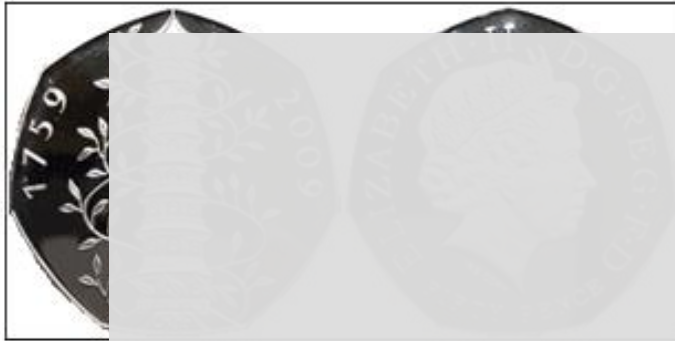


FAKE 1.



FAKE 2.

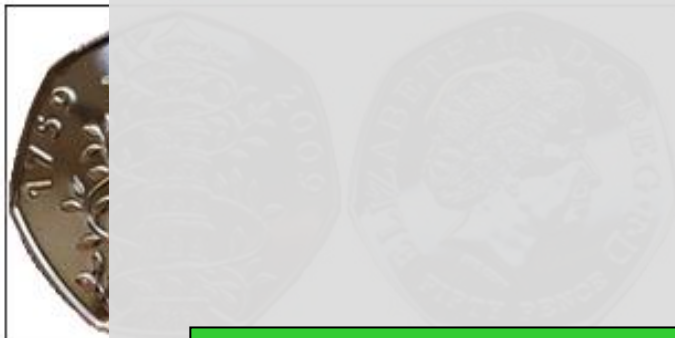
FAKE 3.



*This fake Kew exhibits many of the faults described on the earlier pages, but the word 'COPY' next to the IRB designer's initials is the give-away and you need to look no further to know that it is not genuine.*

*Sometimes you will see sellers describe these as a 'Silver Proof Copy' or sometimes 'IRB COPY' (as if the designer would sanction a fake copy)*

FAKE 4.



*This fake Kew is shiny on both sides as it should be, but is a very poor representation with 'chunky' text and numbers. Again the word 'COPY' next to the IRB designer's initials is a give-away and you need to look no further to know that it is not genuine.*

*Dishonest sellers will sometimes take an unfocussed picture of the obverse, or the reverse, or both, making it hard as hell to tell it's a 'COPY'!*

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FAKE 5.



*Shiny on both sides as it should be, but is a really poor representation of the real coin, with 'chunky' text and numbers far too near to the rim of the coin.*

*The Queen's effigy on the obverse is so far adrift from what it should look like that you should have no problem recognising this as a fake.*

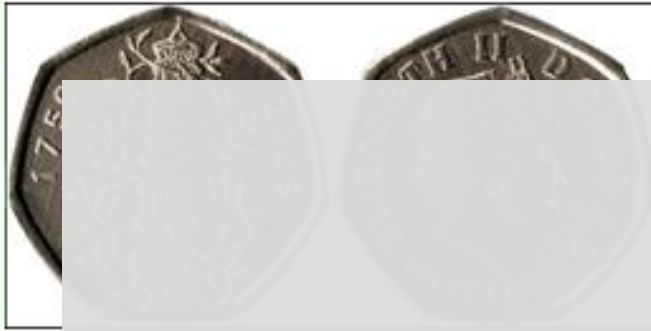
FAKE 6.



*This fake Kew is shiny on both sides as it should be, but is a very poor representation again with 'chunky' text and numbers. Pointed pages at top and slanted lines by 'Kew' are wrong.*

*The Queen's effigy is again such a long way away from what it should look like that you should have no problem recognising this as a fake.*

FAKE 7.



*This fake Kew is of such poor quality that I am sure you don't need any detailed analysis!*

*Chunky rim, pointed pagoda, pointed lines around 'Kew' but such a truly appalling Queen's effigy, also pointing at the 'E', that no-one could surely be fooled by this!*

FAKE 8.



*This fake Kew is again of such poor quality that I am sure you don't need any detailed analysis, but they have been frequently seen described as 'genuine' by sellers.*

*Pointy pagoda, matt frosted finish, but such a truly awful Queen's effigy with terrible hair and eye representation that no-one could surely ever be fooled by this!*

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## 1992-93 UK Presidency

The following five variants of the EU Presidency rare 50p coin are all total fakes. As in the case of the 'Kew Gardens', some sellers may be honest enough to point out that the coin they are selling is a 'copy', 'replica', 'space filler', 'restrike' or other similar name for counterfeit, but others will dishonestly claim them to be entirely genuine, or pretend they don't know if it is real or not. As a general rule, in almost all cases of seller's claiming they don't know whether it is real or not, it will be a definite fake! As with the 'Kew', the most significant guidance we can offer is to study in detail exactly what the Queen's effigy should look like. This is a pre-1997 coin, so it is the larger-sized 50p and will carry the Queen's third portrait. (Refer back to section 3 on obverse designs.)

FAKE 1.



*This fake EU coin is shiny on both sides, as it should be, but is a poor design representation with very 'chunky' text and numbers and so you need look no further to know that it is not genuine!*

*Dishonest sellers will sometimes take an unfocused picture of the obverse, or rotate the obverse image to make it as hard as possible to properly compare the Queen's effigy!*

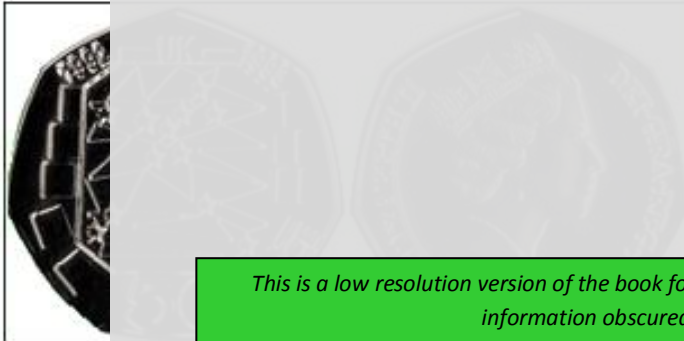
FAKE 2.



As with the Kew, always avoid coins that are matt finish against a polished-like mirror smooth background. A genuine circulation standard EU should be shiny on both sides, not silver or matt. The Queen's portrait in this example is full of errors, hair and eye details are quite wrong.

Some of these fakes also have 'COPY' written adjacent to the initials 'RDM' of the sculptor Rafael Maklouf.

FAKE 3.

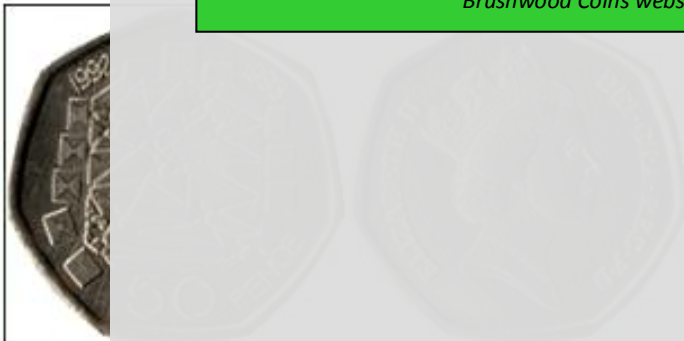


This fake EU coin is shiny on both sides, as it should be, but is again a poor representation with very 'chunky' text and numbers and so you need look no further to know that it is not genuine.

The Queen's effigy is also a very long and awkward shape, not correct in this fake, is easily seen.

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FAKE 4.



This fake EU is of such poor quality that no detailed analysis is needed!

Chunky rim on both sides and such a truly appalling Queen's effigy that no-one could surely be fooled by this terrible fake.

FAKE 5.



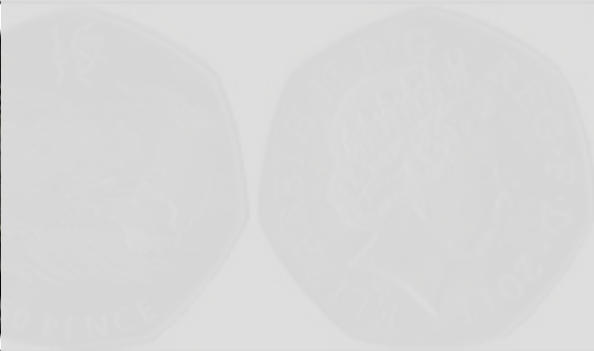
This EU fake coin has obviously been created as a 2019 Brexit related joke!



## 2011 Olympic Aquatics 'with Water Lines over Face' - Fakes

A couple of things in particular to note about this very rare Olympic coin is that, because a genuine example is so valuable, it is quite common to even see forged letters from the Royal Mint falsely associated with the selling of fakes. This particular coin is also frequently found inside 'sealed' Brilliant Uncirculated Royal Mint cards which look entirely genuine - always look very closely at the coin inside and do not be misled by any realistic looking packaging.

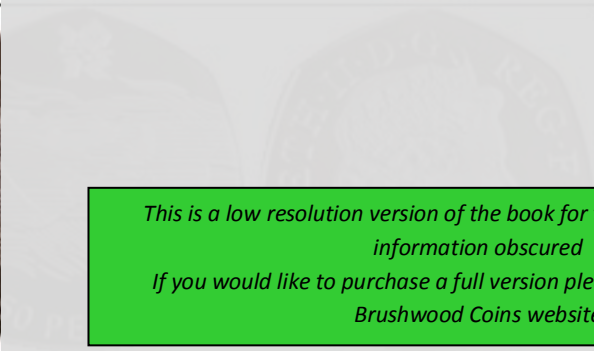
FAKE 1.



The Olympic Aquatics 50p with water lines over the swimmer's face is by far the most valuable of the rare 50p coins and as a consequence it is the most widely counterfeited.

As with the Kew and EU coins it is the shape of the Queen's effigy that is most always the most obvious sign of a fake, with the Queen's eye often being the biggest flaw to look out for.

FAKE 2.

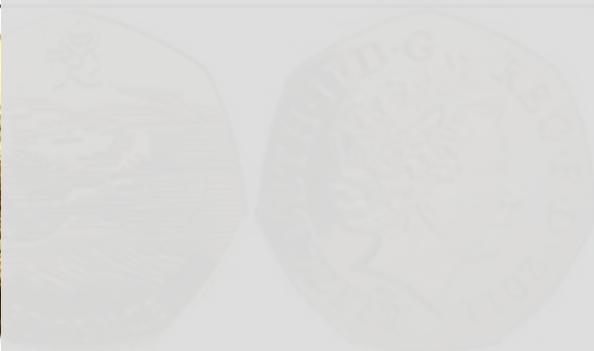


As with the Kew and EU coins, avoid coins that have frosted or matt proof-like finish when they are claimed to be from circulation.

Again here in this example it is the shape of the Queen's effigy that is the most obvious sign of a fake, with the Queen's hair and eye detail being the significant and most common flaw.

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FAKE 3.



Again in this example it is the shape of the Queen's effigy that is the most obvious sign of a fake, with the Queen's hair and eye detail being the significant and most common flaw.

It should be possible to see the detail of the swimmer's goggles underneath the water lines running across the face.

FAKE 4.



Avoid coins that have frosted or 'silver' matt proof-like finish especially when they are claimed to be from circulation.

Again here the shape of the Queen's effigy is the most obvious sign of a fake, with the Queen's hair and eye detail being the significant and most common flaw. But in this example, next to the IRB initials is 'COPY' just further confirming it is not genuine.

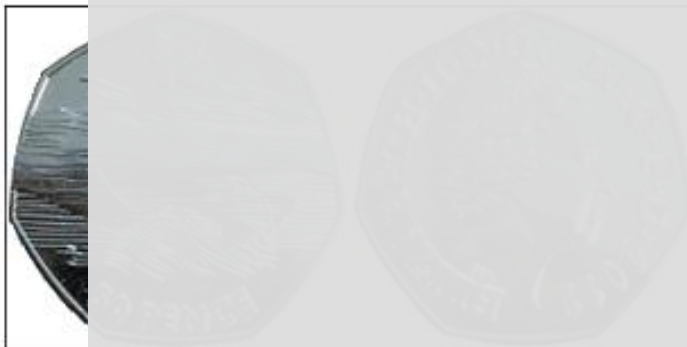
FAKE 5.



*This fake coin is shiny on both sides, as it should be, but is a very poor design representation with 'chunky' text and numbers and so you need look no further to know that it is not genuine.*

*The Queen's effigy is in this example terrible and a very long way from being correct! The swimmer's face and goggles are also not visible.*

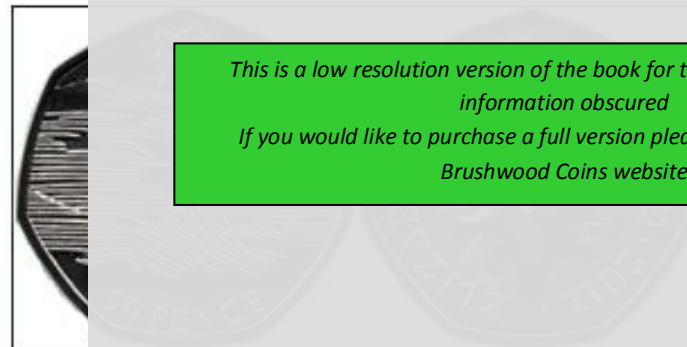
FAKE 6.



*Again this fake is shiny on both sides, as it should be, but is an extremely poor design representation with 'chunky' text and numbers and so you need look no further to know that it is not genuine.*

*The Queen's effigy is once again truly terrible and a very long way from being correct.*

FAKE 7.



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*This fake coin is shiny on both sides, as it should be, but is a very poor design representation with 'chunky' text and numbers and so you need look no further to know that it is not genuine.*

*The Queen's effigy is again terrible and a very long way from being correct! The swimmer's face and goggles are also not visible.*

FAKE 8



*This fake is actually based on a genuine (revised design) aquatics coin and so everything about the coin is correct apart from one aspect...*

*... the lines across the face on this coin have been hand engraved/scratched onto the coin.*

*The later revised issue aquatics coin on which this fake is based has far fewer lines than the original rare coin, and so marking a few extra lines across the face can never produce a coin that can ever look like a genuine original.*

In the previous few pages we have explained how to spot the most common fake Olympic Aquatics coins, of which there are many. In fact the percentage of fake copies of this rare 50p is so high that it is always best to start from the assumption that one of these coins is a fake until you can definitely establish otherwise. There was a huge upsurge in counterfeit copies regularly being sold as 'genuine' on eBay during 2018 and 2019, with almost every single one of them sold being a fake. For that reason we have included below some detailed reverse pictures of a genuine 2011 Olympic Aquatics 50p coin with water lines running over the swimmers face for you to use.

If all of the small water line details on your coin are not precisely the same as in the pictures below then the coin you are looking at is almost certainly a fake. You should check every part of the reverse design detail on your coin for 100% consistency with what is detailed in these pictures before considering that your coin might be genuine.

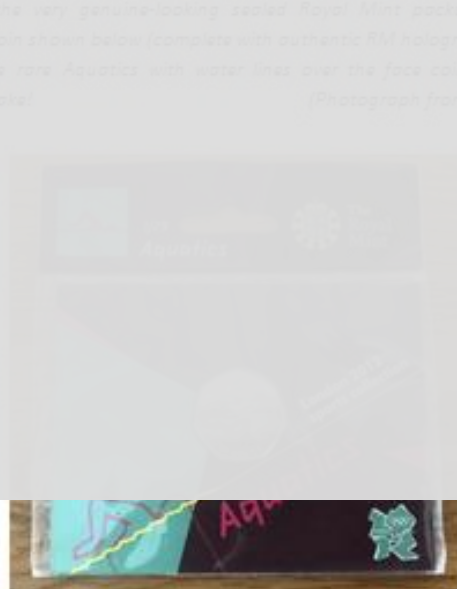


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The Royal Mint museum department operates a coin verification service if you are unsure whether a potentially valuable coin is genuine or not. The letter below is an example of an Olympic Aquatics 50p coin with 'water lines over the swimmers face' that was submitted to the Royal Mint for authentication; in this case the coin was declared to be genuine, but many submitted are fakes.

(There is a charge for this service.)

*A final word of caution... Most, if not all, of the genuine 50p 'water-lined face' versions of this Olympic Aquatics coin are understood to have been produced as corded BUNC versions of the coin, rather than normal general circulation issue. However, the very genuine-looking sealed Royal Mint packaged BUNC corded Aquatics coin shown below (complete with authentic RM hologram) and containing one of the rare Aquatics with water lines over the face coins ... is in fact a complete fake!*  
 (Photograph from BayJune 2019)







## 8. Non-UK Fifty Pence Coins (Crown Dependencies & Overseas Territories)

This 50p fiftieth anniversary coin note would not be complete without a brief mention of the very interesting variety of other seven-sided fifty pence coins that have been issued by countries and territories associated with the UK, but which are not directly part of it. Countries other than the UK that issue comparable similar fifty pence coins include the UK Crown Dependencies and five of the fifteen British Overseas Territories. Prior to joining the Euro currency in 2002, Ireland also issued seven-sided 50p coins of identical size to the UK. Occasionally 50p coins from these countries will appear in UK change. Many of the non-UK fifty pence coins are produced for these countries by smaller independent mints such as Pobjoy (Surrey) and the Tower Mint (London) in the UK, although the Royal Mint still produces circulating coinage for some of the Territories.

As our note is primarily focussed on the UK coins, this section will only provide a brief introduction to some of the non-UK 50p coins that are the same size and shape. The fifty pence coins from the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories are issued in relatively low numbers and these days are often designed specifically to attract collector interest rather than as circulating coinage. It is worth noting that there are already significant numbers of fake non-UK 50p coins, especially for some of the more scarce collectable examples.

- **The Crown Dependencies:** The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are Crown Dependencies of the United Kingdom. They have their own legislative and taxation systems and issue their own currency. The Channel Islands (Guernsey, Alderney, Jersey and Sark) and the Isle of Man issue their own fifty pence coins. These coins are not legal tender in the UK, but are legal tender in the Crown Dependencies themselves, and are not legal tender in the United Kingdom.

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|                        |                |                      |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Isle of Man:           | Manx Pound     | 50p coins are issued |
| Bailiwick of Guernsey: | Guernsey Pound | 50p coins are issued |
| Bailiwick of Jersey:   | Jersey Pound   | 50p coins are issued |

Below are just a few 50p examples from the Crown Dependencies, all of which have been fairly long term producers of 50p coins.

### Isle of Man



From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 the coins of the Isle of Man have been produced by the Tower Mint. Earlier IoM coins were produced by the Pobjoy Mint until 2007. Since 2004 the Tower Mint also produces the coins of Gibraltar. (The Chairman of Tower Mint is Raphael Maklouf who was responsible for creating the 3rd Portrait of the Queen that appeared on all UK 50p coins from 1985 through until 1997.)

### Bailiwick of Guernsey





**Bailiwick of Jersey:**

- **The British Overseas Territories (BOT) or United Kingdom Overseas Territories (UKOT):** These are 15 territories under the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the United Kingdom; they are remnants of the British Empire that at the time of writing have not been granted independence or have voted to remain British territories. These territories however do not form part of the United Kingdom and, with the exception of Gibraltar, are not part of the European Union. Most of the permanently inhabited territories are internally self-governing, with the UK retaining responsibility for defence and foreign relations. Three are inhabited only by a transitory population of military or scientific personnel. They all share the British monarch (Queen Elizabeth II) as head of state.

|   |                       |                                    |
|---|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Akrotiri and Dhekelia (Cyprus):         | Euro                  | No 50p coins issued                |
| British Antarctic Territory:            | Pound sterling        | 50p coins issued                   |
| Tristan da Cunha:                       | Pound sterling        | No seven sided 50p                 |
| South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands: |                       |                                    |
| Falkland Islands:                       |                       |                                    |
| Gibraltar:                              |                       |                                    |
| Saint Helena & Ascension (part):        |                       |                                    |
| British Virgin Islands:                 |                       |                                    |
| Turks & Caicos Islands:                 | US Dollar             | No 50p coins issued                |
| Anguilla:                               | East Caribbean Dollar | No 50p coins issued                |
| Montserrat:                             | East Caribbean Dollar | No 50p coins issued                |
| Bermuda:                                | Bermudian Dollar      | No 50p coins issued                |
| Cayman Islands:                         | Cayman Islands Dollar | No 50p coins issued                |
| Pitcairn Islands:                       | New Zealand Dollar    | No 50p coins issued                |
| British Indian Ocean Territory:         | US Dollar & Sterling  | 1 <sup>st</sup> 50p issued in 2019 |

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Some of the territories form part of what might be termed a 'sterling area' throughout which British coins are legal tender. In these territories British coins circulate side-by-side with local coins of independent design. As a result of this inter-relationship, the local coins are struck with similar specifications to their British counterparts in 5 of these territories. Policy responsibility for the issue of coins in any United Kingdom Overseas Territory rests with the Government of the territory concerned. It is customary for the obverse side of such coins to bear a portrait of Her Majesty the Queen. The coins of Overseas Territories are legal tender within the territory concerned and they sometimes find their way into circulation within the United Kingdom, but are not legal tender here.



- **Ireland:** The 50p coin (Irish: *caoga pingin*) was introduced in Ireland on 17 February 1970. It replaced the ten shilling coin and was issued a year before Decimalisation in 1971. It was the same shape and size as the British coin of the same denomination and both nations' currencies (pounds) were pegged until 1979. Since 2002 Ireland has been a member of the Euro currency and therefore 50p coins are no longer minted.



The above overview is only a brief introduction to the subject of the Non-UK 50p coins, with just a few example 50p coins illustrated. In recent years the Crown Dependencies and the British Overseas Territories have become quite prolific in producing special commemorative limited edition 50p coins for collectors (rather than as circulating coinage) and it would require a separate coin note to do the whole subject of non-UK 50p coins justice. The illustrations shown in the remainder of this book are intended to give you a feel for the extent of some of the coins that have been produced over the years. None of these are legal tender.

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*The coins shown above are a selection from the Isle Of Man, Jersey and Gibraltar, with many Christmas themed 50p coins.*

The coins below include a further selection from the Isle Of Man, Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Falkland Islands, British Antarctic, South Georgia and the Sandwich Islands, (and there is even a 'COVID19' 50p coin from Gibraltar at the bottom left of the first block of illustrations).



Increasing competition with the UK Royal Mint to produce sets of collectable 50p coins that will be attractive to new collectors, especially younger children, has resulted in the Isle of Man becoming one of the most prolific issuers of limited edition special 50p coins over recent years, with the Channel Islands also joining this trend recently. So, for example, we now have Peter Pan, Rupert Bear, VE Day Anniversary, and Cricket 50p sets from the Isle of Man, and a Fantomine character set of 50p coins from Guernsey, in competition to the Royal Mint's Beatrix Potter (Peter Rabbit) series, Paddington Bear, Dinosaurs, and more recently the new Winnie the Pooh 50p series. From the Falkland Islands and the British Antarctic Territory, there are also a number of themes with the 50p coins for collectors.

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## 9. References & Acknowledgements

*It would not be possible to compile a reliable or complete history of the fifty pence coin without reference to a considerable number of sources of information, and I would therefore like to acknowledge the valuable contributions that I have found helpful in writing this note from the following reference sources.*

*I would also like to thank my son Chris and my good friend Anna, for their highly beneficial assistance with proof reading the final version before release.*

1. The Royal Mint [www.royalmint.com](http://www.royalmint.com) The Royal Mint website is the source of much useful information on new coin releases, historical context, and UK circulating coin mintages.
2. The Royal Mint Experience [www.royalmint.com/the-royal-mint-experience](http://www.royalmint.com/the-royal-mint-experience) The Royal Mint Experience (RME) is an interesting visitor attraction to see the workings of the Royal Mint coin production and museum. Also the 'Strike Your Own' coins that can be purchased as part of the RME tour are the only direct source of purchasing such coins, which occasionally turn out to be quite scarce.
3. The Coin Yearbook 2019 [www.tokenpublishing.com](http://www.tokenpublishing.com) A very useful reference guide to the circulation mintages and current values of all UK coin types. Updated on an annual basis.
4. Coins of England & the UK 2017 [www.spink.com](http://www.spink.com) A very useful long-established annually published reference guide to the coins of the UK, now published in two parts with the decimal issues in a separate volume.
5. The Face of the Realm by John Wall [www.spink.com](http://www.spink.com) A useful descriptive manual covering the history and design of many UK coins
6. Check Your Change 

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 General information  
ive study of error  
ce of reliable
7. The British Pobjoy Mint [www.pobjoy.com](http://www.pobjoy.com) The Pobjoy Mint is a UK privately owned coin minting service located in Surrey, producing coins (including 50p) for the UK Crown Dependencies & British Overseas Territories.
8. The Tower Mint [www.towermint.co.uk](http://www.towermint.co.uk) The Tower Mint is a UK privately owned coin minting service located in London, producing coins (including 50p) for the UK Crown Dependencies & British Overseas Territories.
9. Numista [www.en.numista.com](http://www.en.numista.com) The Numista website is a general source of information about coins from many countries worldwide, including the British Overseas Territories & Dependencies
10. Irish Coinage [www.irishcoinage.com](http://www.irishcoinage.com) The Irish Coinage website is a source of reference about the currency of Ireland from early years through to the current time.
11. The Fake Pound Database [www.thefakepoundcoindatabase.co.uk](http://www.thefakepoundcoindatabase.co.uk) The Fake Pound Database is a primary reference source for identifying fake UK coins of all types. We have referred to this excellent resource extensively for our discussion of 50p fakes.
12. eBay (British Coins) [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk) The British coins section of the eBay auction website is an excellent place to buy 50 pence coins from years that you are missing in your collection. However, it is not a source of reliable coin information, often with quite false claims being made about rarity with almost no basis of fact. You should be very careful when buying genuinely valuable or rare coins because of large numbers of fake coins on eBay. Sellers regularly put up misleading descriptions of



*their coins, and sometimes do not have any genuine knowledge of the coins they are selling; frequently just copying across incorrect descriptions from other sellers.*

13. Wikipedia <http://www.en.wikipedia.org/> *Wikipedia is a useful general source of background information on the UK fifty pence coin.*
  
14. Bank of England [www.bankofengland.co.uk](http://www.bankofengland.co.uk) *The Bank of England ultimately determines how many of each circulation coin type are minted by the Royal Mint and then released into general circulation each year based on retail needs and demands.*
  
15. Change Checker 

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*Trading division of the Royal Mint for new 50p standard.*
  
16. Westminster *an official distributor of the Royal Mint along with its associated trading division, 'Change Checker.'*
  
17. Brushwood Coins [www.brushwood.mintrasystems.com](http://www.brushwood.mintrasystems.com) *Brushwood Coins is the originator of this fifty pence coin note. Other Coin Notes on UK coins can also be found for reference on our website, including the 'Wren Farthing', the 'Ship Halfpenny', the twelve-sided 'Brass Threepence' and a note on coin grading standards in Britain.*
  
18. Change Range [www.changerange.net](http://www.changerange.net) *Change Range is a very useful resource for checking 50p issue information, and in particular it has links to the Royal Mint historical published mintage figures and pictorial content for BUNC & Proof annual sets which are often not particularly easy to find on the Royal Mint website itself. They also have information on the SYO coins from the Royal Mint Experience.*

# The Fifty Pence Reverse Designs

## Table 1: 50p Chronological Date Order

*Table 1 which follows describes every 50p coin that has been issued by the Royal Mint, from its introduction as a new coin denomination in 1969 through to its 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary in 2019. Each entry in the table includes a picture of the coin, a description of the key features of the design (including any variations), the designer, and the quantity minted. The table only includes 50p coins which are made of the same base metal as those entering circulation.*

*The mintage of each design entering general circulation, the number released in Brilliant Uncirculated quality, and also the number minted at the higher Proof standard are all included in the table.*










*The table also includes all the special limited edition 50p coins that did not enter general circulation.*

*Subsidiary tables at the end of the main Table 1 offer further detail on topics such as the London Olympic Sports 50p series, a complete list of all the 50p designers to date, and a detailed comparison of the general circulation vs BUNC mintages for the Olympic 50p series. Also covered in a separate table are the 'Strike Your Own' coins that have been available to purchase as part of the Royal Mint Experience tour, focussing particularly on the 50p 'SYO' coin options.*

*(All the 2020 50p coins are also included in this edition of the book and they can be found towards the end in Annex 3.)*

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*These are the major subject sections that you will have already seen earlier:*

|   |  |            |
|---|--|------------|
|  | <b>1. The introduction of the new Fifty Pence coin</b>                     | Page 4     |
|  | <b>2. Size, Weight, &amp; Metal Composition of the UK fifty pence coin</b> | Page 5     |
|  | <b>3. 50p Obverse Designs - The Queen's Portraits</b>                      | Page 6     |
|  | <b>4. The 50p Reverse Designs – Commemorative &amp; Definitive Issues</b>  | Page 7     |
|  | <b>5. The 'Rare' Fifty Pence Coins</b>                                     | Page 8-11  |
|  | <b>6. Minting Standards used by the Royal Mint for 50p coins</b>           | Page 12-14 |
|  | <b>7. False News, Fakes and Forgeries!</b>                                 | Page 15-23 |
|  | <b>8. Non-UK Fifty Pence Coins (Crown Dependencies &amp; Territories)</b>  | Page 24-27 |
|  | <b>9. References &amp; Acknowledgements</b>                                | Page 28-29 |

*Sections 1 – 9 (above) are followed in the actual book by a further 64 pages of Tables which contain the highly detailed individual coin information. However, all these Tables have been temporarily removed from this website version for upgrade.*

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Table 1: The Fifty Pence Designs (Chronological Order Index: 1969-2019)</b> | Page 30-77 |
| <b>Table 1.1: The London Olympic Sports BUNC 50p Coins</b>                     | Page 79-80 |
| <b>Table 1.2: The London Olympic Sports 50p - Design Competition Winners</b>   | Page 81    |
| <b>Table 1.3: The London Olympic Sports 50p - BUNC Coin Mintages</b>           | Page 82-83 |
| <b>Table 1.4: The Royal Mint UK 50p Designers</b>                              | Page 84-86 |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Table 2: The Fifty Pence Designs (Rarity Order Index according to Mintage)</b> | Page 87-94 |
|---|------------|

*After Table 2, additional detailed supporting information relating to other aspects of 50p coins are then contained in the following Annexes of the book. However, these Annexes have also been temporarily removed from this website version.*

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <b>Annex 1: The Royal Mint Experience (SYO) 50p Coins</b>   | Page 95-97   |
| <b>Annex 2: The Royal Mint Glossary of Numismatic Terms</b> | Page 98-99   |
| <b>Annex 3: The 2020 50p Coins</b>                          | Page 100-105 |
| <b>Annex 4: Fifty Pence Minting Errors (1969-2018)</b>      | Page 106-109 |

*Therefore Pages 31 to 109 in this website version of the book, that would have followed on from this point, are all missing in this website copy.*

*If you might be interested in purchasing a full copy of the book please send us your contact details via the website contact form and we will get back to you.*

**Back Page**

*The Fifty Pence coins illustrated below all did very well in the Royal Mint 2020 Coin of the Year competition. If you hover over each coin in turn you will discover their winning positions in the December 2020 competition.*

