

Creating Coins and Seals

Coins and lead seals were made using essentially the same methods throughout the Medieval period and into the modern era. Designs were simultaneously punched into both sides of a thin metal sheet or circular 'blank'.

The process starts with a series of punches, usually made of a very hard metal such as steel. Each punch had one small element standing proud at one end, such as a letter, number or shape. These punches would be used to impress their shapes onto a 'die' – a cylinder of slightly softer metal - by pressing the letter against the face of the die and hammering the back of the punch. The resulting design would be a mirror image of that which was desired for the surface of the coin or seal.



Once each letter, number and shape had been impressed into the correct place on the dies for the front and back of the coin or seal, they could be used to make the coin or seal. The dies were placed on either side of a metal sheet (usually silver or bronze) for coins or circular lead blanks for seals, and hammered from the top so that the design was punched into both sides at the same time. The design was left standing in relief as the pressure of the hammer blow forced the softer metal into the recesses on the die faces.

Once coin sheets had been covered in designs they were cut out using a snipping tool or circular punch cutter. Lead seals were usually punched with a cord running through the metal so that it would grip the cord and could be attached to goods.

This process allows one design to be reused to create many items. It relies upon metals of different hardness to make impressions onto other metal objects.



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See also:

Box 3 object sheets: Lead Seals, Medieval Coin Die and Coins

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