COUNTERMARKED TOKENS OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

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Introduction


Additions, corrections and other suggestions for the countermark series will continue to be welcome and, if pertinent, will be published. Changes of ownership occur infrequently and these and other revisions to catalogue entries have been and will be listed in a more timely manner in Spink’s six-times-a-year Numismatic Circular, rather than in this annual Journal, with its year-long lead-time for submission of articles and notes. Several correspondents have questioned entries of Not traced. This in some cases covers locations not in print, such as on dealers’ trays, private sales or collector cabinets where permission has not been given to name the owner. The number of collectors who have come forward to identify the location of Not traced specimens is gratifying; these changes have been or will be published elsewhere.

New specimens – genuine

CARK COTTON WORKS 1787 / FOUR SHILLINGS AND SIX PENCE

101. Four shillings and Sixpence
On obverse/reverse of New Guatemala 1778 P-

CROMFORD-DERBYSHIRE-

104. Four Shillings and Ninepence
On obverse of Lima 1778 M- (possibly over Bank of England octagonal countermark)
Not traced. NCirc, CX, no. 6 (Dec 2002), MS4337, 2 illus.

PAYABLE AT CASTLE COMER COLLIERY

108. Five Shillings Five Pence (Irish)
On obverse of Mexico City 1797 F-M-
b. English collection MS. eBay, 22 Mar 2002 (additional T-M scratched in field before bust; traces of an earlier rectangular punch-mark beneath 55).
Note: C and S of CASTLE weak; A and TLE and possibly COM show signs of strike- (or mechanical-) doubling (Plate 6, 1)

Specimens – now located

On p. 230, a Louis XV écu with a punched valuation of 5/ above a Bank of England oval countermark is listed as ‘Not traced’ – illustrated by an obverse photograph on plate 54. The coin has now turned up and been placed in the British Museum.

117. Five Shillings

At least a dozen Spanish-American dollars and French écus are recorded as punched with the valuations 5/6, 5/ or 4/9 (pp. 230–1). Two are paired with initials (J-D and L B), the others have
numerals only and therefore cannot be placed to any issuer or location – unless documentation is uncovered in the unpublished records of a merchant. Without further identification it is not possible to verify that such added valuations actually are legitimate countermarked tokens, although a faker probably would prefer to give his production the legitimacy of a company’s name and location (see next section). A new specimen with a hitherto unrecorded valuation, thus, should be taken for what it is: probably from the countermarking era, but not located (Plate 6, 2).

122. Four Shillings Sixpence
On obverse of Potosi 1818 P-

New specimens – false

In July 2001, a remarkable group of seven countermarked coins was catalogued for auction in London. Two of the dollars (No. 59, J & A MUIR GREENOCK 4/6 and No. 92, ROTHSAV COTTON WORKS 4/6) are known genuine merchants’ marks. The other five had not been noted previously and, although each exhibited exceptional features, they all may be condemned as concoctions. Three are adaptations of known or speculated countermark issuers; one is a pure fantasy; and one is rather a maker’s mark than a purported circulating token (Plate 6, 3–4 and Plate 7 – all copyright British Museum).

DETH. INGLES • KINCAID • within a circular band around 2/6, on a Spanish 4-real coin presents a provocative challenge. Uncut half-dollars were seldom countermarked in Scotland (Ballindalloch, Deanston/Adelphi, New Lanark, and possibly the untraced Oates & Co.), but only on French half-écus coins and only in association with countermarked dollars. The Bank of England did countermark, although did not issue, Spanish half-dollars in 1799 but they are otherwise unknown as legitimate tradesmen’s tokens during the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century countermarking period. Under Campsie on p. 33 it is noted that ‘a similar village (to Lennoxtown) was built near the Kincaid Mill for that facility’s workers’, and on p. 36 reference is made to ‘Kincaid Printfield (Messrs Inglis), established in 1785’. This could suggest a genuine countermark, although considering the ‘spidery’ lettering, improbable denomination and association with other false countermarks, there can be little doubt that it is an in impudent concoction.

PAYABLE AT CULCREUCH MILL* within a circular band, mimics the genuine countermark (No. 30a) in larger letters and lacks any inner denomination. If it had appeared by itself it might have been taken as a possible unissued second punch of the Culcreuch Mill at Fintry (see pages 65–68), however in company with more-obvious concoctions it can be rejected as a genuine mark.

THE SHIP BANK • GLASGOW • within a circular band around Bank of England oval mark, the think ‘spidery’ lettering is typical of several concocted countermarks and the concept, while ingenious, is an obvious fraud. In the countermark book (p. 98), it is noted that:

‘The Thistle Bank (1761–1836) and the Glasgow Bank (1809–36) issued countermarked dollars in addition to their banknotes, but tokens from the first and longest-lived of the early Glasgow banks, the Ship Bank (1750–1836), are unknown.’

Notes of the Ship Bank were issued in the name of the proprietors, the bank name deriving from vignette showing a ship in full sail on all notes. The Bank of England oval mark may be a 1797 stamping and, if so, would place the purported Ship Bank mark to ca. 1800.

J. & J. KIBBLE & Co in a line over DALMONACH, all within a long unadorned rectangle which, although unlocated, resembles a trial-piece of a maker’s mark rather than a true tradesmen’s countermarked token. A firm named J. & J. Kibble has not been traced, nor has the location

1 Glendining’s, 13 July 2001, lots 454–60.
Dalmonach. Dalmarnock is a district of Glasgow on the north bank of the Clyde about two miles/three kilometers southeast of the city centre, and it is possible that the faker was being cute by deliberately spelling the name phonetically, as occasionally occurred in the other series (see, especially, many seventeenth-century tokens), although not known on countermarked dollars.\(^3\) The host coin has been abused, with file marks and uneven wear obscuring the last two digits of the date and the assay masters' initials (possible FF?). The mintmark of Mexico City is legible and Charles III coins of this type were issued 1772–89, with assay master initials FF in 1777–84. The mark exhibits the thin 'spidery' lettering on three other coins of this small group, all likely from the same hand and all undoubted concoctions.

**DOIGS MILL ROTHESAY** within a small circular band around 4/6, suggests a certain amount of research, although insufficient, by the fabricator. As published in a history of the County of Bute in 1864, there was a possible Doig's mill at Rothesay, but not until well after the countermarking period of c.1787–1828.

\(^4\)There are in Rothesay three other extensive cotton works – namely, those of Messrs Archibald & John M'Kirdy ... their work contains 305 looms, with preparation therefor, and employs 210 workers; those of Messrs Sharp, Thomson & Co., which are new and very complete, and contain 390 looms, 27,000 spindles, and employ about 400 hands; and those of Messrs Doig and Co., built in 1840 (emphasis added), containing 280 looms, with preparation for the same, and employing 190 workers.

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**CATALOGUE**

\(X12A.\) Two Shillings and Sixpence – D&H Ingles, Kincaid  
On obverse of Seville 4-real 1773 CF  

\(X30A.\) No valuation – Culcreuch Mill  
On obverse of Lima 1774 M-\(\)  

\(X50A.\) No valuation – The Ship Bank, Glasgow  
On obverse of Mexico City 1795 F-M-  

\(X52a.\) No valuation – J.&J. Kibble, Dalmonach  
On obverse of Mexico City 17xx FF(?)  

\(X92A.\) Four Shillings and Sixpence – Doigs Mill, Rothesay  
On obverse of Mexico City 1813 J-J- (countermark inverted on coin)  

For those willing to take a chance on the internet, electronic bidding on eBay offers new opportunities to pit one's knowledge and verve against anonymous 'other bidders' to obtain specimens. Unfortunately, some of the offerings are questionable at best; bidding is a clear case of caveat emptor and the Devil take the ignorant. A case in point is a new A. KING * GREENOCK around 4/6 punched on two Spanish-American dollars of the same mint and date. Every knowledgeable countermark specialist who has examined one of the specimens or seen photographs has condemned the punch as false.

\(X55A.\) Four Shillings and Sixpence (modern forgery)  
On obverse of Mexico City 1804 T-H-  
\(a.\) Not traced. Offered eBay, August 2002 (sold?)  
**Note:** Tip of chin shows, space between I and N below mouth and chin, bust line divides G of KING and K of GREENOCK.

**Note:** whole chin shows, N below mouth and chin, top of G in GREENOCK weak.

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\(^3\) Rothsay for Rothesay and Dalzell for Dalziel are local spelling variations, the latter pronounced dee-el.

Paisley arms

Under Paisley, a well-known countermark ascribed to William Langmuir and the Paisley Dollar Society was described (p. 154):

'A large double countermark, reading PAYABLE BY W. LANGMUIR, around the standing figure of a bishop with miter and crosier, small shields of arms either side on the obverse, and PAISLEY DOLLAR SOCIETY, around 5/3 within an ornate wreath on the reverse'.

Andrew Macmillan and Roderick Macpherson have suggested that the obverse design is based on the burgh arms of Paisley, the standing figure being a charge from those arms. In An Ordinary of Arms, the charges on the Burgh shield are described:

'Or; a fess chequy Azure and Argent, between two cinquefoils Gules in chief, and in base two covered cups of the Second, over all the figure of a mitred Abbot, vested proper, his dexter hand in the act of benediction and his sinister holding a crozier also proper'.

The Court of the Lord Lyon, H.M. New Register House, Edinburgh, elaborates on this description:

'The mitred abbot represents the great Abbey of St. James and St. Mirrin which, in pre-Reformation times, had a Charter of Regality ... The two red cinquefoils refer to the close relationship of the Hamiltons with the Abbey ... The covered cups come from the arms of Shaw and commemorate Abbot George Shaw'.

More recently, arms were granted to the Catholic Diocese of Paisley — the shield reported in the Scottish Catholic Media Office as:

'St Mirin, Patron of the Diocese, robed as a Bishop before the Cross of St Andrew. The cross is coloured in the blue and white squares of the Royal House of Stewart, which originated in Renfew and which is in the Diocese of Paisley. On each side of the cross is the shell of St James in the Great, the Apostle'.

This identifies the standing figure but does not explain the two small shields on either side. These are partially identified, however, by vignettes on several Paisley banknotes. In 1783, the Paisley Banking Company (1783–1836) issued twenty-shilling and five-pound notes, and in the 1820s, one-pound and one-guinea notes. Douglas identifies the figure as Abbot Schaw (sic). An example of the one-guinea note dated 2 May 1826, shows a half-length figure of the bishop, with a chequy shield on the left and shield with two cinquefoils, on the right, and a scallop shell, leaved tree branches above (Plate 8).

The Paisley Commercial Banking Company (1838–1844) issued one-pound, five-pound and twenty-pound notes with small vignettes of the Paisley arms. An unissued twenty-pound note of this bank is similar, although the figure is full-length, the tree has a trunk and roots, and a third small shield below is charged with three covered cups from the Shaw arms (Plate 9).

Although the interior design of the left-hand shield on the countermark is not very clear, it does not appear to have the chequy charge, rather perhaps a cinquefoil. The right-hand shield is as on the banknotes, the cinquefoils from the Hamilton arms, the shell for Saint James. The meaning of the tree is not explained, although evidently a standard feature of the Paisley arms in the early nineteenth century and somewhat reminiscent of the tree on the Glasgow arms (illustrated at pages 80, 85, 88).

Challenges

Several correspondents have questioned some of the divisions between genuine and false countermarks in the book. These were based on my best judgements and, of course, are subject to revision in light of additional evidence. Although there is an old truism that one cannot prove a negative,
these doubts are noted here in the hope that they will stimulate further discussion and perhaps even uncover additional evidence.

In a review of the book published in this Journal, P.D. Mitchell and K.V. Eckardt raise questions about most of the rarest types:

'Of the 14 pieces of which only one specimen is recorded ... only two (Glasgow, John Slater, no. 42 and Paisley, Corcor, No. 85) have a provenance pre-Cokayne 1946 (some museums excepted) and of the 10 pieces of which only two specimens are recorded, only three (Fintry, John Stewart, no. 32, Glasgow, John Inglis, no. 40 and Johnstone, Campbell, Hall & Watt, no. 65) have a pre-Cokayne provenance. This would seem to be a little unusual, if not a trifle worrying. The late William C. Wells ... (p 235) undoubtedly was responsible for Deanston Works (X2, p 58), Yelloley's Pottery (X107, p 215), the Castle Comer forgery (X108b, p 220) and, almost certainly, the Percy Main Colliery (106, p. 211).''

In a recent article, Michael Dickinson questions the attributions of several countermark types as genuine or false:11

M.4-5 Alloa Colliery. Discerns two punches, one ring punch (the earlier?) with valuation punched separately; the other, by far more common, incorporating the valuation within the ring in a single punch.

M.X22. Deanston [Cotton] Works and beehive, 5s. On the basis of the style and lettering, Dickinson judges this to have an early nineteenth century origin, although only twentieth century restrikes are known. He may well be correct and, if so, the text on p. 57 should be amended slightly and ‘(concoction)’ deleted on plate 9.

M.X25. Adelp[h]i Cotton Work[s], 4s.6d. It is suggested that, although struck on both sides of very worn seventeenth century English halfcrowns and with the firm’s name misspelt, this ‘appears to be a genuine product for the cotton works, representing the original idea for a token coinage’. In spite of a few apparently genuine countermarks on false dollars (e.g. Alloa Colliery), the punched valuations of other issuers correspond fairly closely to the bullion value of the host coin and trying to circulate a token tariffed at about twice its bullion value may well have met resistance. If the original intention indeed was to circulate a halfcrown with a dollar valuation, the idea apparently was abandoned in favour of stamping French half-écus without a punched valuation (M.24) – as, indeed, the single surviving dollar-sized coin (M.23) also lacks a punched valuation.

M.X55. Archibald King, Greenock, 5s. Dickinson questions whether the second countermark of this issuer might be genuine, although ‘If this is a modern forgery, it is a particularly dangerous one.’ However, I stand by my original judgement that it is a modern copy.

M.99. Dugd McLachlan, Tobermory, 5s. For various reasons it is suggested that this mark may be a late Victorian or early twentieth-century fantasy. Although difficult to prove either way, this condemnation may be correct and the number amended to M.X99. It nevertheless remains an interesting token idea. I do take issue with the suggestion that punching a French coin with ‘only about 92% of the silver content of an 8 reales’ (as well as punching a false dollar) ‘suggests a surprisingly blasé attitude on the part of a contemporary issuer to a bullion value’. It seems more probable that accepting or rejecting a proffered countermarked token should be based on whether it could be redeemed as its punched valuation, which normally was several pence above the fluctuating bullion value anyway.

M.106. Percy Main Colliery, 5s. Dickinson also suggests that is is a fantasy and here his arguments are sharper and agree with W.A. Seaby’s scepticism. The numbering should be changed to M.X106. Incidentally, I have been advised that the pierced specimen on Lima 1805 J-P+ has now been plugged.

On the other hand, K.V. Eckardt suggests perhaps modernizing one X-rated mark:

'I am slightly concerned about the status of the Type 2 Rothsay Cotton Works 4/6 [M.X92]. The style of the punch, even down to placement of the letters and numerals, is so close to the Type 1 that I can only imagine that someone went to great pains to insure they were producing a good copy. This aspect plus the lack of post countermarking wear on the reverse... makes me think this could be a modern fake rather than a contemporary forgery. I would expect a contemporary piece to be somewhat inaccurate, slightly crude and to show wear indicating that it did circulate.'

NB: Dickinson has privately raised the possibility that this mark may be a genuine second (or first) issue. The jury is still out – stay tuned.


Additional Bibliography

General
M. Dickinson, ‘Observations on Recent Work by Manville on British and Irish Countermarks’, NCirc CXI, no. 3 (June 2003), 130–2.

Deanston/Adelphi, Perthshire

New Lanark, Lanarkshire

Cark-in-Cartmel, Lancashire

Addendum

A further countermarked coin has just surfaced, so heavily cancelled that it cannot yet be positively identified, although it may be the second known specimen of a Paisley issuer. The mark is oval and the denomination 5 is clear beneath a heavy grille cancellation. Less certain is PAISLEY beneath, although what can be made out of the lettering fits this reading. Nothing is clearly discernible of the lettering above the 5, but the remnants are compatible with No. 86 in Tokens of the Industrial Revolution and the uncalled blank rim with a thin outer line on the left edge of the countermark matches the illustration on page 166. The coin is pierced for suspension on the top of the bust.

86? Five Shillings
On obverse of Mexico City 1810 HO- (heavily cancelled by a grille)
American collection AD, 2003