

The George III 1818 8 over 7 Half Sovereign.

An often mis-identified rarity.

By Graham Warboys.

Lockdown 2020 was a great time for research. During this time one of the coins I researched was the extremely rare 1818 8 over 7 Half Sovereign (Marsh 401A, Spink 3786). This coin is rated as R5 by Marsh indicating 5-9 examples believed to exist. I found 3 professional coin websites with the coin mis-identified. These websites showed a variety that appears as if it could be the variety due to a defect on the right side of the second 8, making that side of the coin appear fatter. There is however no trace of the upper side of the 7 which would be clear if this was indeed the rarity. This variety is in fact not the 8 over 7 but just a worn die, and this variety although in itself scarce is far more common than the actual 8 over 7. (See Pictures 1 & 2).

Genuine 8 over 7's are extremely hard to find. I have searched all available records back to the start of the internet and managed to find just one example, this example was sold at auction by Spink in 2014, then graded and encapsulated by the London Coin Grading Service. The genuine variety clearly shows the top corner of the 7 to the upper right side of the last 8.

Back in 2017 having liaised with Spink, from 2018 onwards their Coins Of England reference book has carried the footnote, "7 under 8 clearly visible at the top right of 8". Despite this the rarity continues to be mis-represented. The genuine variety clearly shows the top of the 7 with no fattening of the 8. (See Pictures 3 & 4).

Conclusion.

Due to the type being so rare and having been seen by so few people the identification mistake is understandable. Considering when Marsh first published The Gold Half Sovereign way back in 1982 there was no internet, email or digital photography. These defect 8 varieties may have been represented to him as the 8 over 7's back then

and may possibly have counted in his 9 known. The genuine variety may in fact be much rarer than suggested as no others seem to have appeared in the last 27 years.

Bibliography.

Michael Marsh, The Gold Half Sovereign.

Steve Hill (Token Publishing), The Gold Sovereign.

Spink, Coins of England.

London Coin Grading Service.

Graham Warboys Half Sovereign Collection.



The defect last 8 variety, note the fatter right side of 8 but no top of the 7.

Compare to the real 8 over 7 below with 7 top clearly visible.





An enlargement of the real 8 over 7 variety.

