

# Counterfeit Round Pound Coins (v) Loose Ends

Gary Oddie

In this fifth and final instalment some peripheral topics will be covered. Ranging from the mentions of counterfeit pound coins in the media, to publications, to the response of the establishment, to prosecutions, to counterfeits of the dodecagonal pound. This will not be comprehensive, and is not in any particular order, but hopefully will provide a good starting point should anyone wish to take the topic further.

## 1. Counterfeit Round Pounds at the Royal Mint



When a member of the public suspected they had a counterfeit pound, the options were limited. If they wanted to keep the value they could; try to spend it and claim ignorance if caught, find a slot machine that would accept it, bag it with other pounds and hope the weight is within acceptable tolerances at a bank or Post Office.

If they wanted to lose the pound they could; put it in a charity collection box, hand it in at a police station, hand it in to a bank, or I suspect many were just thrown away.

Giving or selling the counterfeit to an enthusiastic collector is fine, but the number of collectors of counterfeits has always been very small.

The charity collection box and the slot machine options, especially if the slot machine was detuned to accept almost all coins to maintain traffic flow (e.g. Dartford Tunnel, Severn Bridge etc) would explain why these organisations always reported unusually high counterfeit percentages.

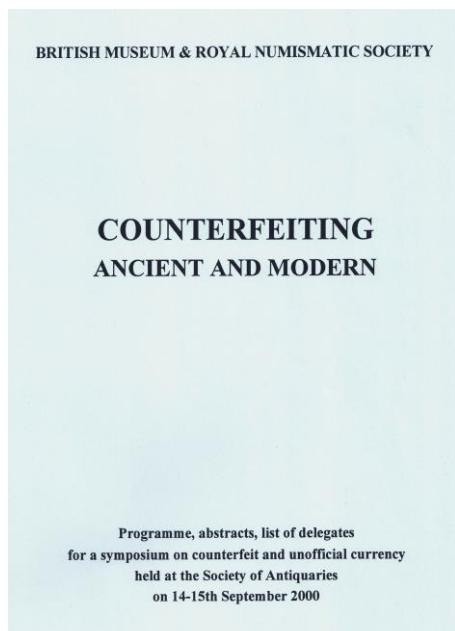
In September 2009 the operator of the Mersey Tunnels, Merseytravel, announced that £86,000 of counterfeit one-pound coins had been passed in their tollbooths in the previous six-months.

A final intermediate option was to send the suspicious coin to the Royal Mint and ask for it to be returned. The coin was inspected at the Royal Mint, a judgement was made and the decision was written in a letter, as shown above, to be returned with the coin.

Sometime around 2010 there was a TV news report about the Royal Mint at Llantrisant. I did not catch the title of the programme, but it might have been for BBC Wales. In one scene the camera panned round a yard containing a row of pallets, maybe 10, each carrying a bin full of counterfeit pound coins.

## 2. Conference (2000) - Counterfeiting: Ancient and Modern

This conference was a combined effort of the British Museum and Royal Numismatic Society. It was held at the Society of Antiquaries in London on 14-16th September 2000. The intention was to publish the papers as part of the RNS Special Publications series in Metallurgy in Numismatics part 5. Several of the papers were withdrawn or were not considered suitable for inclusion and ultimately just eight papers made it into the Numismatic Chronicle of 2012<sup>(1)</sup>.

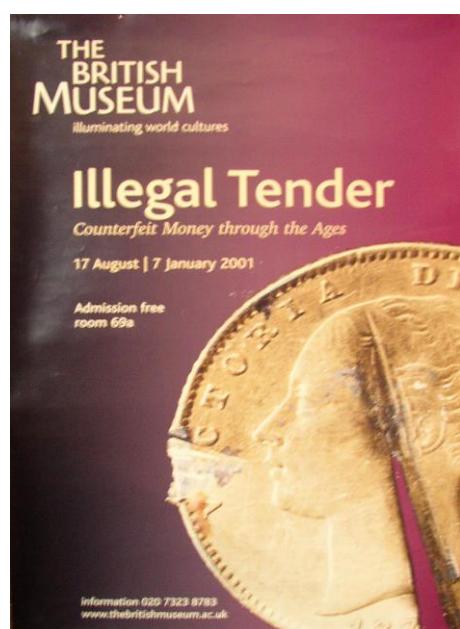


Unfortunately, the paper of interest did not make the cut but R.W. Matthews gave a presentation on the Friday morning - The development of a classification system for modern UK £1 coin forgeries. The abstract was as follows. "The paper will describe the development of a computer database for UK counterfeit coins. It required the development of a simple classification system for counterfeits. The system takes into account the production technique, material and appearance. The reasons for the final classification will be described with reference to specific examples of modern counterfeits. The paper will describe some of the techniques used by the Royal Mint to examine counterfeits from the UK and the rest of the world."

Robert Matthews was the Queen's Assay Master at the Royal Mint until his retirement in 2004. He then became a numismatic consultant. He was regularly quoted in the media, from about 2008, on matters relating to the counterfeit pound coins in circulation (see section 8 below). Following his

presentation there was a very brief discussion regarding the legality of the collection and study of counterfeit legal tender coins.

## 3. British Museum Exhibition (2000-2001) – Illegal Tender



In conjunction with the above conference, the British Museum staged an exhibition in room 69a from 17 August 2000 to 7 January 2001. The material on display ranged from base metal or plated copies of ancient Greek, Roman and British coins, foreign currency, paper money including Operation Bernhard notes and George Cruikshank's anti-hanging note and finishing with a small pile of counterfeit pound coins. This had the caption "One of the most widely forged British coins of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been the pound coin, first issued in 1983. A recent study estimated that in 1999 1.3% of pound coins in Greater London were forgeries although the Royal Mint suggests that the proportion is lower."

This latter group raised some eyebrows amongst the authorities and public.

The coin used for the poster was the other sort of pound, a counterfeit sovereign made from gold plated platinum, as discussed by Graham Dyer in his paper at the conference. A note on this topic was published by the IBSCC<sup>(2)</sup> and afterwards in the Numismatic Chronicle<sup>(3)</sup>.

(Thanks to Tom Hockenhull at the BM for the poster.)

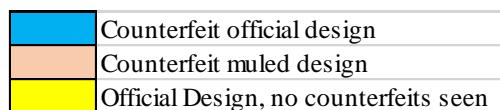
#### 4. Late Issue Round Pound Counterfeits

The previous notes have focussed on the largest issues of counterfeit round pounds – typically dated 2007 and earlier. From 2010 onwards the Royal Mint was typically producing more than one design per year, with small mintage figures and sometimes only in BU sets. Whilst counterfeits are known for some of these designs and dates, they are all quite rare as the counterfeiters focussed on the earlier issues rather than being obliged to put the correct year of issue on their products.

An excellent website that has been keeping a chronological record of the finding of particular round pounds is at “the fake pound coin database”, the FPCD<sup>(4)</sup>. This database is very extensive and includes a table of mules more comprehensive than presented in parts (i) and (iii) of these notes. This resource also confirms a significant decline in counterfeits dated after 2007, both muled and good copies. There is a projects page which includes a table of dates and known reverse designs. “The Quid Grid” has many more cells filled in than the table in part (iii) of these notes. This includes a fake pound dated 1971!

The table below combines the data from the analysis presented in the previous notes for lead alloy counterfeits (part (i) table 2) and brass counterfeits (part (iii) table 2) with the table on the FPCD to reveal the total known counterfeits and muled designs.

Date	Official Rev	Royal Arms	Thistle	Leek	Flax Plant	Oak Tree	Shield Rampant	Lion	Dragon	Celtic Cross	Three Lions	Forth Bridge	Menai Bridge	Egyptian Arch	Millennium Bridge	Dent	London Arms	Belfast Arms	Cardiff Arms	Edinburgh Arms	Rose Oak	Leek Daffodil	Flax Shamrock	Thistle Bluebell	Four Beasts
1971	n/a																								
1983	Royal Arms																								
1984	Thistle																								
1985	Leek																								
1986	Flax Plant																								
1987	Oak Tree																								
1988	Shield																								
1989	Thistle																								
1990	Leek																								
1991	Flax Plant																								
1992	Oak Tree																								
1993	Royal Arms																								
1994	Lion Rampant																								
1995	Dragon																								
1996	Celtic Cross																								
1997	Three Lions																								
1998	Royal Arms																								
1999	Lion Rampant																								
2000	Dragon																								
2001	Celtic Cross																								
2002	Three Lions																								
2003	Royal Arms																								
2004	Forth Bridge																								
2005	Menai Bridge																								
2006	Egyptian Arch																								
2007	Millennium Bridge																								
2008	Royal Arms																								
2008	Dent Shield																								
2009	Dent Shield																								
2010	Dent Shield																								
2010	London Arms																								
2010	Belfast Arms																								
2011	Dent Shield																								
2011	Cardiff Arms																								
2011	Edinburgh Arms																								
2012	Dent Shield																								
2013	Dent Shield																								
2013	Rose Oak																								
2013	Leek/Daffodil																								
2014	Dent Shield																								
2014	Flax/Shamrock																								
2014	Thistle/Bluebell																								
2015	Dent Shield/4th																								
2015	Dent Shield/5th																								
2015	Royal Arms																								
2016	Dent Shield																								
2016	Four Beasts																								



**Table 1.** Combined data for muled and good counterfeits from three datasets.

Thus there are 122 muled designs and 30 good counterfeits known. This includes the lead, brass and resin coated types and there are likely quite a few more varieties to be discovered.

## 5. Coin News

Coin news, a popular monthly magazine (<https://www.tokenpublishing.com/>). From January 1983 I have gone through manually looking at the Contents page, News & Views, Letterbox, The Forum, and Letters to the Editor. The online archive only includes main articles. From October 2007 complete pdf's are available online and are searchable. I searched for the word counterfeit and then checked manually if it referred to pound coins. Bold entries are most relevant and very brief notes summarize the content.

1983	Feb.	p10	1 <sup>st</sup> pound coin auctioned by Spink 9 Feb. Truck by the Prince of Wales.
1983	May	p9	National Coin Week, new £1 on cover. p13 £1 launch on 21 April.
1983	Aug.	p15	Four new designs announced – national symbols.
1986	March	p39-46	Index Dec 81 - Dec 85, News not indexed, no entries.
1986	Dec.	p12	Genuine 1987 £1 found in circulation several months early!
<b>1989</b>	Jun/July	p12	When a pound is not Mint, G. Dyer, X-ray spectrometry 60% Cu, 40% Zn, "numbers increasing in past months."
1990	May	p9	Editorial, about counterfeiting, £1 not mentioned.
1995	June	p16	False money display at Fitzwilliam Museum.
1996	April	p56	Formation of Counterfeit Collectors Society. Philip Kiernan, Canada, later taken over by Ken Page, UK.
<b>1996</b>	May	p52	DECUS LACESSIT TUTAMEN edge and looks ok.
<b>1996</b>	June	p52	"massive number of quite presentable forgeries in circulation".
<b>1996</b>	July	p15	Fake £1 flood UK. Quotes "Big Issue, Lead alloy, gold paint – quoted by Andrews Nov 2003 p30.
<b>1996</b>	July	p52	£1 coin survey. DECUS LACESSIT TUTAMEN – at least three manufacturers.
<b>1996</b>	Aug.	p52	2 letters. Mules identified mentions raves and nightclubs and taxis, supermarkets – mentions Coin Monthly in 1992.
			[Coin Monthly, 1992 Feb p53 DECUS LACESSIT TUTAMEN, 1989 – a number of readers have written to us about errors. . . ]
<b>1998</b>	Feb.	p52	Mule edge
1999	June	p14	CCNB newsletter articles on forgeries to deceive the public.
<b>2000</b>	Feb.	p29-30	"Caution--forgers at large" by D.J. Cane, Table of DECUS edge varieties.
<b>2000</b>	April	p67	Taboo subject.
2000	May	p62	Edges milling count, proofs vs circulating.
<b>2000</b>	Aug.	p2	Editorial forging ahead, Pounds, BM display.
2003	April	p41	Robert Matthews cft Euros.
<b>2003</b>	Aug.	p8	Editorial, new bridge designs. Error edge Laurence Chard.
<b>2003</b>	Oct.	p62	Welsh dragon cft 2000, mentions Lawrence Chard finding one 2 months previously. Two notes.
<b>2003</b>	Nov.	p30-31	Article by John Andrews "Britain awash with fake pound coins." Earliest reference Sunday May 20 1992. Article in Feb. 2000 is a pseudonym. Lead alloy cfts sell for 20p. Method of manufacture and distribution described. Then p64 welsh dragon edge error and Robert Matthews reply.
<b>2003</b>	Dec.	p64	Estimates numbers.
2004	Jan.	p2	Editorial.
<b>2005</b>	Dec.	p10	Ken Peters booklet published: The Cheat in Your Change. Also p87.
2008	May	p27	Dent designs launched.
<b>2008</b>	April	p14	Royal Mint estimate.
<b>2009</b>	Jan.	p16	Ken Peters p16 Fake Hunters Wanted, p82 interview with BoE estimate 30M.
<b>2009</b>	March	p34	Article picture of 1971 Fake £1 coins—How bad is it?
2009	April	p55	Ken Peters profile.
<b>2009</b>	May	p2	Editorial - Forging ahead. Mint statement p14.
<b>2009</b>	June	p12	Estimate from Ken Peters 3%, p81 letter, bimetallic suggested.

<b>2009</b>	Oct.	p52-3	Ken Peters article, chart.
2010	March	p10	Ireland confusion – no beads on outer rim.
<b>2010</b>	Sept.	p12	News.
<b>2012</b>	June	p38	Mention.
<b>2012</b>	July	p83	Letter mention.
<b>2013</b>	Aug.	p13	Painted pounds and £2.
2013	Dec.	p95	Counterfeit coin club goes online.
2014	May	p28	12 sided announced.
<b>2014</b>	June	p16	Estimate 45M fakes. Ken Peters.
<b>2015</b>	March	p18	Dutch 30M.
<b>2015</b>	May	p16	2M removed from circulation, new design announced.
2015	June	p51-2	New design(er).
2016	Feb.	p28	New pound announcement.
<b>2016</b>	March	p69	Article Robert Matthews website <a href="http://www.coinauthentication.co.uk">www.coinauthentication.co.uk</a> . “However, if you decide to include any phonies in your collection just ensure it is legal to do so.”
2016	Nov.	p22	BANS congress on Not from the Mint – counterfeiting, at Harrogate.
<b>2016</b>	Nov.	p70	Values for round pounds mentions cft varieties.
2017	March	p28	Editorial – twelve sides to the story, early design, advert for new design.
2017	May	p59-60	Pattern £1 designs for 1983, cft quiz p88 ans p94.
2017	July	p39-40	IoM keeps round pound.
<b>2017</b>	Oct.	p38	A Bridge Too Far article about 2018 cft £1 with new dies by John Grantham.
<b>2018</b>	April	p58-61	New design article. Also mentions cfts.
<b>2018</b>	July	p55-6	Fake pound coins list. Wolverhampton and other coiners. Mentions shed jobs.
<b>2019</b>	Sept.	p48-9	Richard Coulthard article on cft 12 sided.

## 6. Notices and Articles in Printed Newspapers

Mining the British Newspaper Archive (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>) reveals a rich seam of notices about counterfeit pound coins. The first is the earliest that I have found so far.

“The Stage”, Thursday 12 April **1984**, p3 “Clubs fake Warning”. Fake £1 coins are being fed into change machines in four different clubs in Oldham, Lancs.

“Liverpool Echo”, Monday 22 April **1985**, p3 “£1 stick-up”. Shopkeepers are being warned about fake pounds made from two five pence pieces glued together and “treated” with gold foil.

“Newcastle Journal”, Friday 1 December **1989**, p5 “counterfeiting”. Describes the operation of two men using a mould, solder and plaster of Paris to create fake pound coins that were used in the Tyneside Metro ticket machines.

“Aberdeen Press and Journal”, Friday 29 October **1993**, p2 “Shopper short-changed by forged pound coin”. Gold paint on a lead alloy counterfeit received in change in Inverness, several others found in Aberdeen and Orkney. The NCIS commented that the problem was small compared with forged banknotes.

“Liverpool Echo”, Wednesday 26 June **1996**, p9 “Jail for man who forged £1 coins”. Police raided a Southport garage and caught a man with 20 fake pounds and the equipment for making them. He had learned the technique while serving a previous sentence in an open prison.

These are all what might be called small-scale “shed jobs”.

## 7. Royal Mint Survey – 2009

In 2009 the Royal Mint carried out a survey of the pound coins in circulation. The resulting short document was released after a freedom of information request<sup>(5)</sup>. For this survey 14,994 coins were inspected from Post Offices and cash centres, revealing 378 (2.54%) to be counterfeits. Past data shows the transition from lead alloy to various brasses, increasing percentages and the geographical distribution.

## 8. Online Newsletters

From 2003 to 2009 there was a series of online newsletters at [coinauthentication.co.uk](http://coinauthentication.co.uk)<sup>(6)</sup>. The original pages are missing, but the content of some has been preserved<sup>(7)</sup>. The pages typically included data from the Royal Mint on numbers of counterfeits found by the Mint and estimated percentages of counterfeits in circulation. Later issues included details of convictions for coining. The March issue of Coin News 2016 on page 69 confirms that this website and content were created by Robert Matthews.

## 9. Online Media Including Newspapers, TV and News Channels

There are many links generated by a Google search, but much duplication. There was a media frenzy after the 2008 BBC documentary by Ben Ando, but again with little new information.

**2005** <https://www.sheffieldforum.co.uk/topic/26892-fake-pound-coins-in-sheffield/>

“While we were in skeggy this year, one of the girls who worked on the campsite told us its a huge problem at seaside resorts - she said some nights they found over 50% were fakes. . .”

**2007** <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/counterfeiter-jailed-for-making-14-million-fake-1-coins-6623279.html>

December 2007, Marcus Glindon, from Enfield, north London, was gaoled for 5 years for making over 14 million counterfeit one-pound blanks and coins. These were made over seven years. The police raid found a blanking press, dies and blanks. He had been making between 10-12,000 coins per day and was paid £2,000 per week for them.

**2008** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7628137.stm>

BBC news, 22 Sept. 2008, “Number of fake £1 coins ‘doubles’” By Ben Ando (BBC crime correspondent). “Mr Matthews said he was worried that in Britain, dealing with the fakes was falling between Royal Mint, HM Treasury, the banks and the police, with no one taking direct responsibility.” Also quoted Andy Brown of Willings Services Ltd, “that the number of counterfeit one-pound coins in circulation was much larger than found by the Royal Mint.” Willings make machines to check coins for other organisations such as local council car parks. They had found that up to 5% of pound coins were counterfeit. Willings also had a website listing what they had found:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20160508040901/http://www.coin-mech.co.uk/counterfeit-pound-coins.html>

**2009** <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/even-experts-cant-tell-whether-the-pound-in-your-pocket-is-a-fake-9k02cg06mpb>

Even experts can't tell whether the pound in your pocket is a fake. The coin counting machines were only detecting about 30% of the counterfeits.

**2009** <https://www.kentononline.co.uk/deal/news/two-italians-jailed-following-pound-11602/>

A plot to bring in 500,000 fake coins from Italy.

**2010** <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/multimillion-counterfeit-currency-gang-jailed-1912133.html>

Yasin Patel, of Blackburn, pleaded guilty at Sheffield Crown Court to three charges of conspiracy to supply counterfeit currency. He was also accused of manufacturing one and two-pound counterfeit coins. He supposedly melted metal on a stove and cast it into moulds to produce the counterfeit coins. He then used electroplating equipment to coat the counterfeits. 6,000 counterfeit one-pound coins were seized.

**2010** <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/pound1-coins-counterfeiter-jailed-1932407.html>

Stephen Silk received 3½ years for counterfeiting from an industrial unit at Tonge, near Sittingbourne, Kent. Others were charged but found not guilty. During the raid 8000 prepared coins and 14000 yellow metal discs were found, with a hydraulic press, coin and die moulds, wax and a high temperature plaster.

**2012** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnNSvdyGmhE>

Bloomberg 23/3/2012.

**2013** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london22612487#:~:text=Three%20fraudsters%20have%20been%20jailed,items%20to%20make%20counterfeit%20currency.>

Kevin Fisher and Daniel Sullivan, were found guilty of possessing counterfeit currency and items to make counterfeit currency. They were jailed for five and seven years. Mark Abbott, Edmonton, pleaded guilty to the charges and was given a two-year prison term.

During the raid police found a storage container with 1.6 million metal discs inside including fake coins equivalent to £20,000, and a further £30,000 were found in a nearby car.

**2015** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBQlxhes6ws>

ITV news 16/12/2015.

**2015** <https://www.securingindustry.com/security-documents-and-it/uk-man-is-jailed-for-counterfeit-pound-coin-scam/s110/a11120/#.X5MTw4hKiUK>  
<https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/lorry-driver-tried-smuggle-500000-6129581>  
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/11375570/Arrests-linked-to-forgery-ring-which-prompted-scrappling-of-1-coin.html>  
<http://www.worldofcoins.eu/forum/index.php?topic=38575.0>

Edward Magill conspired with a haulier William Turnbull to smuggle counterfeit pound coins into the UK in December 2012. The fakes were manufactured illegally at the European Central Mint (ECM) in Westpoort, Amsterdam. For the £450,000 they received 50 months and 20 months respectively and several employees at the ECM were convicted in the Netherlands.

The counterfeits were found in barrels under a layer of washers during customs checks at North Shields ferry terminal.

Raids on the ECM in 2013 resulted in the arrest of its “mint master” Patrick Onel and several other employees.

## 10. Counterfeit Dodecagonal Pound Coins

As might have been expected, it didn't take long for the counterfeiters to tackle the twelve-sided pound coins issued in 2017. Though a few early suspect pieces turned out to be official coins that had been mis struck, the first confirmed counterfeit was published on the "Check Your Change" website<sup>(8)</sup>.

The forgery is bimetallic; however it lacks details such as the latent image on the shield below the Queen's head, the micro dates around the outer edge and the number of milling lines on alternate flats is incorrect.



**Fig. 1.** Bimetallic counterfeit of a 2017 dodecagonal pound coin<sup>(8)</sup> ×3.

## References

- (1) Metallurgy in Numismatics 5. Num. Chron. v172, 2012, pp213-292.
- (2) G.P. Dyer. Counterfeit Sovereigns in Platinum. The IBSCC Bulletin on Counterfeits, Vol. 4, N0. 2/3, pp30-35, Summer/Autumn 1979. Thanks to Team Withers for a copy.
- (3) G.P. Dyer. The Counterfeiting of Sovereigns in the Nineteenth Century. NC v172 pp287-292, plates 30-31, 2012.
- (4) <http://www.thefakepoundcoindatabase.co.uk/NewPound.html>  
This was previously at <http://ukfakeanderrorcoins.50webs.com/ARMS.HTML> Thanks to Steve at FPCD for allowing me to use his data and for useful comments.
- (5) [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/220830/foi\\_poundcoins\\_survey\\_may09.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220830/foi_poundcoins_survey_may09.pdf)
- (6) <http://www.coinauthentication.co.uk/newsletter13.html>. Accessed early 2020, website no longer visible. The content of several of the newsletters has been reproduced in the following.
- (7) [http://tonybof.synology.me/boffeyinfo/tonybof/coins/uk\\_coins/uk\\_fakes.htm](http://tonybof.synology.me/boffeyinfo/tonybof/coins/uk_coins/uk_fakes.htm)
- (8) <https://www.checkyourchange.co.uk/the-first-confirmed-fake-new-1-coins/> Thanks to Chris Perkins for the images.

All of the web links were checked on 18 February 2021.



## Corrections and Additions – 7 March 2021

Following publication of these five notes, several suggestions and questions have been asked by readers. Simple typos have been corrected in the text.

Thanks to Jim and Steve at the FPCD for the following:

The web link in note (v) part 9 is incorrect. The original **2009** reference can be found here: <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2012/apr/06/counterfeit-pound-coin-guide> where it mentions “In 2009 a plot to bring in 500,000 fake coins from Italy was foiled.” No further details have been found.

The reference given (<https://www.kentononline.co.uk/deal/news/two-italians-jailed-following-pound-11602/>) is to another activity from 20 January 2014, where two Italians; Giuseppe Savoia, and Norma Pirolo, were arrested on arriving in Dover the previous year whilst on a coach trip with 7500 counterfeit pound coins. This could be traced to the ECM counterfeiting activity in Amsterdam, but the URLs have since been lost.

For the 2010 Sittingbourne bust. Stephen Silk was caught and convicted in 2009 and there is BBC and Daily Mail coverage. “Jail for man who ran secret £1 coin counterfeiting factory from farm unit.”

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1262591/Jail-man-ran-secret-1-coin-counterfeiting-factory-farm-unit.html>.

I have also had a request for images of the 2010 Belfast counterfeit. It is a late date for a counterfeit.



2010	9.248 g
Cu	$65.91 \pm 0.30$ %
Zn	$22.74 \pm 0.16$ %
Ni	$6.20 \pm 0.07$ %
Si	$4.73 \pm 0.10$ %
Mn	$0.291 \pm 0.022$ %
Fe	$0.067 \pm 0.012$ %
Traces S, Ag < 0.06%	

The whole surface is very porous, as if a poor cast. A similar effect might be achieved on a genuine coin by electrolysis, pickling in acid or sand blasting. On the edge legend, if the broken/infilled *N* in *TANTO* is found on a genuine coin, then this piece might be considered genuine.