

## POSSIBLY A NEW MERCHANT COUNTERMARK? An Amazing Find.

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A countermark recently discovered<sup>1</sup> (TW) on a William III halfpenny dated 1831 may be a test strike from a discarded die that had previously been used to countermark Spanish American 8 reales. (Fig. 1)



Fig.1. William III halfpenny dated 1831 with obverse countermark.

The reading of the visible countermark is believed to be (Fig. 2): -  
• J<sup>s</sup> RICHMOND & C<sup>o</sup> LOCH<sup>h</sup> around 5/3 . (Fig. 3)



Fig. 2. Countermark reading.



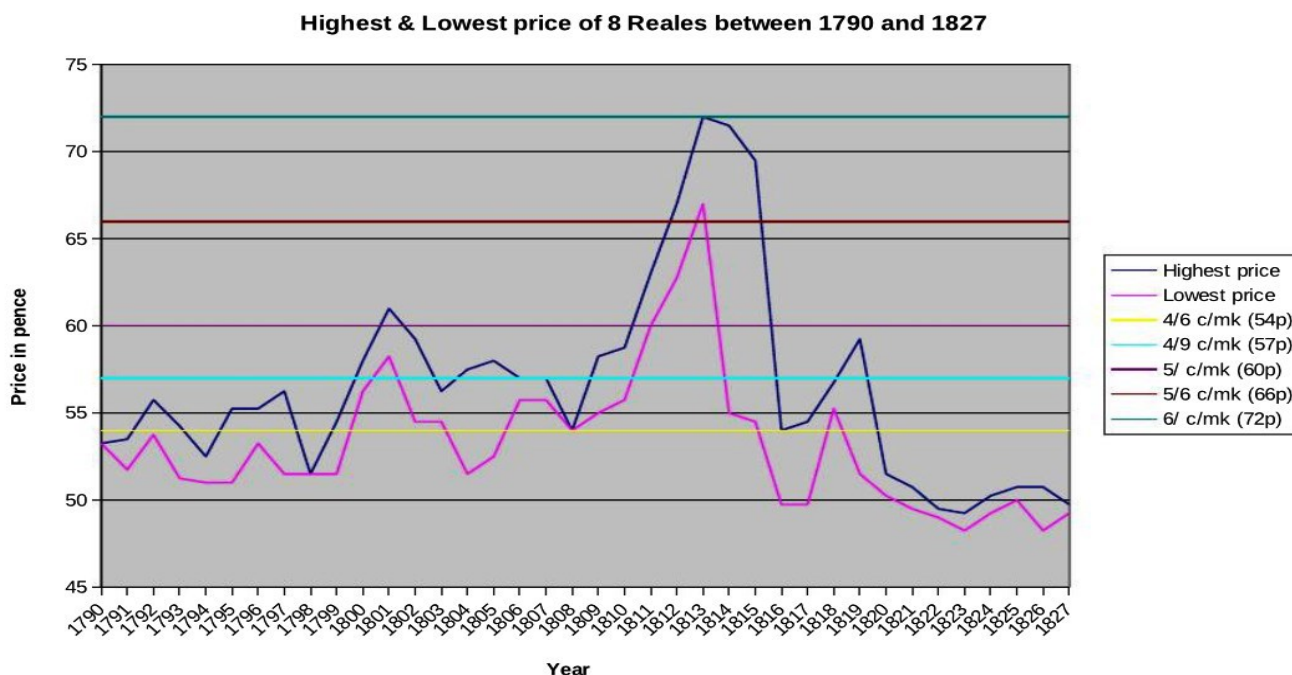
Fig. 3. The raised capital H (in orange) with stop below, seen at an angle.

<sup>1</sup> September 2022.

The name on the countermark is difficult to read either because the host coin is damaged or the die has been damaged. When a countermark value was withdrawn then the normal method was to cancel the value rather than the issuer's name, so no more value countermarked coins can be issued. The probability is, therefore, that the damage is to the host coin.

The value in the countermark of 5/3 (5 shillings and 3 pence or 63 pence) is of interest as it allows us to place the countermark use within a fairly restricted time frame<sup>2</sup>. To issue a token of value 63 pence and to ensure its return to the issuer then it must have been possible to purchase the original host (8 reales) at a price below 63 pence, but not too low to attract counterfeiters. Looking at Table 1 below then any price from say 59 pence could fit the bill. This occurred firstly around 1801, then again between 1810-1813 and finally after 1814-1815 when the price of silver was in free fall. Of these the periods 1810-13 and 1814-15 are the most likely when compared to other issues at this value<sup>3</sup>.

Table 1. Silver prices on the London bullion market between 1790 and 1827.



The visible lettering, especially the LOCH appears to be that used in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and can be compared to another Lochwinnoch issuer that of A. Gibson & Co<sup>4</sup>. (Figs. 4 & 5) It is certainly possible that both countermarking dies could have been made by the same local smith.

<sup>2</sup> Manville, H.E., 2001. Tokens of the Industrial Revolution – foreign silver coins countermarked for use in Great Britain, c.1787–1828, BNS Special Publication 3 (London). (Manville.)

<sup>3</sup> Manville, pp 25-8, J. Faulds, Beith (1804); pp 153-4, John Lang (1813); pp 154-5, W. Langmuir (1814); pp 159-60, J. McLean (1812); pp 160-1, John Morris (1812). The dates in brackets are the latest dated hosts for each issuer.

<sup>4</sup> Manville, pp 132-3.



Fig. 4. William III halfpenny.



Fig. 5. A. Gibson. © Trustees of the British Museum ref. 1998-4-35-05.

Further research by TW discovered a really interesting resource in the form of 46 handwritten volumes of a history of Lochwinnoch by Dr Andrew Crawford (1786-1854) which is in the Renfrewshire Archives and has been digitised for on-line free public access by the Mormons as part of their genealogy project<sup>5</sup>.

<https://libcat.renfrewshire.gov.uk/iguana/www.main.cls?v=6a47980d-58c7-479c-b588-4b4b13101335>

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/359031?availability=Family%20History%20Library>

It is a bit chaotic and rambling but was indexed by Crawford. One of the first discoveries of interest to this countermark was the use of Lochh (small h with stop below) used as a contraction for Lochwinnoch. (Figs. 6 & 7)

4 Mary Montgomerie married Peter Barr former  
Kilmalcolm parish afterwards  
at the Brigflats same parish. no issue.  
5 Wm Montgomerie of whom before.  
6 Bob M. Died unmarried at Lochwinnoch.  
7 John Montgomerie weaver in Lochh  
afterwards steward at Port Glasgow  
He married Mary daughter of Wm Dochra  
wright Lochh. they have see Vol. 412.  
1 Wm Montgomerie, a sailor married a  
woman in Poole in England.  
2 Hugh Dead  
3 Hugh Dead  
4 Janet Dead

5 This basket married to one  
daughter. Basket maker in Edinburgh  
about 1810.  
3 John Garbet Died unmarried  
4 Janet Died Do  
5 Janet Do Do  
6 Grizzel Garbet still unmarried.  
Lives with her mother in Lochh.  
They keep a change house.  
7 Jean Garbet married James Speir  
a weaver - a sailor, and labourer  
at Buthessburgh. They have two  
children, viz Robert, Alexander.  
William Garbet unmarried living with

Figs. 6 & 7 showing contraction for Lochwinnoch, highlighted in red.

It is now that we come to the 'An Amazing Find' in the title to this article. Whilst browsing through Manville,<sup>6</sup> after all the above research had been completed, TW came across the following description under the heading 'Unknown Issuers':- 'The very indistinct lettering shown in this first illustration might read something like ....IND & Co, ending in ....OCH. The valuation is almost certainly 5/3. Two much smaller letters are intermingled among the larger: an H after the Co, and an S below the ....OCH - apparently the name of the issuing town.'

When the details of this coin are matched to the William III find the similarities are obvious and are highlighted in Figs. 8 & 9 below.

<sup>5</sup> Accessed 6 September 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Manville, pp 228-9, type 112.





Figs. 8 & 9 for **J<sub>s</sub>** RICHMOND & C<sup>o</sup> LOCH<sup>h</sup> around **5/3**, with highlighted items in red.

I never cease to be amazed at the accuracy of Harry Manville's reading of some badly struck and cancelled countermarks.<sup>7</sup>

This new countermark can now be numbered **067A** to continue the sequence originally set up by Manville.

What is now required is definitive proof that a business called Js Richmond & Co operated in the Lochwinnoch environ in the 1810's. This research will be ongoing using the Crawford notes mentioned above and local trade directories of the time. However, it is likely to need better eyes than ours and probably more active brain power. The diary is hand written, difficult to read and not at all neatly organised. We shall do our best.



<sup>7</sup> Eric C. Hodge, Merchant Countermark Holdings in Madrid Museums, Spink Numismatic Circular, December 2007, p 319.