

Cark Cotton Works

4 Shillings 6 Pence

Manville 101 – A New Variety

By K. V. Eckardt

The Cark Cotton Works was opened near Cark-in-Cartmel, Lancashire, about 1785. Like many growing enterprises of the period insufficient silver coins to pay their employees was a problem. Due to the increasing price of silver and other factors The Royal Mint suspended the production of silver sterling denominations from about 1751 to 1816 (although there was an issue of shillings and 6 pence coins released in 1787, but seemingly not for general circulation).

One solution for some of these enterprises was to purchase foreign silver coins (primarily Spanish Colonial 8 Real coins) at bullion value then countermark them at a valuation somewhat above bullion value and thus create a medium to pay their employees. The various companies would recognise and redeem these countermarked coins and local merchants would accept them in payment for goods as they knew the issuing company would redeem them upon presentation.

The issue from The Cark Cotton Works is countermarked on both sides of Spanish Colonial 8 Real host coins. The obverse is stamped Cark/Cotton/Works/1787 (the 1787 date is thought to be when these coins were first countermarked and issued) and the reverse is stamped Four/Shillings/and Six/Pence both within a toothed circular indent. H. E. Manville¹ records 8 examples of this issue (Man 101) including the specimen dated 1792 described below. Since the publication of Manville, in 2001, four additional examples are now known.



¹ Manville, H. E., Tokens of the Industrial Revolution – Foreign Silver Coins Countermarked for use in Great Britain, c1787-1828, British Numismatic Society Special Publication No. 3, Spink, London 2001

Original Countermark Die Pair

On 17 November 2022 Aureo & Calico in Barcelona, Spain held an auction. Lot 366 was a Cark Cotton Works 4 Shillings 6 Pence. The countermark was described as false.



New Countermark Obverse Die

The host coin is a 1792IJ 8 Real from the Lima mint and this specimen is recorded in Manville. There is a small piercing at 12 o'clock. The provenance of this coin can be traced to Glendining & Co, 17 July 1946, Lot 106, The Francis Cokayne collection.

Careful examination shows that the obverse die was different, but this fact was apparently not noted by Manville, however, the reverse (value) die is the same as the other eleven specimens. The logical assumption is that the original obverse die was damaged and replaced with a new, very similar, but different die.



Original Obverse Die



Replacement Obverse Die

The most notable differences are the 'N' in Cotton; the 'W' in Works and the pattern of the 'tooth indent'.

As the Cark Cotton Works employed 400 people it is likely that a large quantity of 8 Real coins would have been stamped. As to date only one example with the different obverse die is known. A speculative theory can be advanced in that this was the second variety to be issued and closer to the time the coins were recalled by Cark Cotton Works. Further support for this theory is the fact the eleven specimens of the first variety have host coin dates prior to 1787. The single second variety specimen is dated after 1787. Perhaps, there was not sufficient time for migration outside the region as might have been the case with the eleven recorded examples of the original variety and therefore, these few first variety coins were not redeemed.

Accordingly, the specimens listed by Manville, along with the four newly discovered examples, with exception of the above mentioned 1792 Lima coin, can now be designated as Manville 101a, Type 1 and the new variety can be designated as Manville 101b, Type 2. Hopefully, in time additional examples of the Type 2 variety will be uncovered.

I would like to thank Eric Hodge and Mike Shaw for their assistance in the study and confirmation of this new variety and the constructive comments they both made.

Reference for further reading:

Eric C. Hodge, Cark Cotton Works, Spink Numismatic Circular, April 2001, Volume CIX, No. 2 (This article contains detailed background information on the formation and history of the Cark Cotton Works; the Partners/Directors of the company and corrects errors in previous publications.)

[All images are from the author's collection and not depicted in actual size]

