

A Machine-Made Contemporary Counterfeit of a Scottish Charles I Turner, Made in London

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Recently seen on the Trade Tokens Facebook Group, the item shown below was found on the Thames foreshore next to Kew Bridge. Rose farthings and other coins of the period have also been found in the same area.

Obv. **CAR D G SCOT AN FR E HIB R**
mm Lis. Around a beaded circle and
Crowned C II R



Rev. **NEMO ME IMPVNE LACESSIT**
Around a beaded circle and a large
Thistle head with two leaves

Details Copper or copper alloy. 25x16mm as
shown. Image approximately 300%,
scaled from photos.

Note the edges are a bit smoother than shown due
to my digital extraction of the images!



Though corroded, the mm Lis is clear and that makes it a contemporary counterfeit of a Charles I twopence (Turner) of the Earl of Stirling coinage issued 1632-39. The counterfeit is confirmed by a note to entry 5601 in the 2015 Spink catalogue of Scottish coins.⁽¹⁾

The piece is important in several respects. Firstly, the piece was made in a roller press, and has not been cut out, though its two neighbours have been cut out using a circular punch. Secondly, though one corner has been bent over, the remaining sharp points of metal mean that it is very unlikely that the piece circulated at all, leading to a final conclusion that the piece was manufactured in London.

Scottish copper coins of this period are relatively common metal detector finds across England confirming they circulated alongside the patent farthings (issued 1613-1644). It is possible that the small Scottish copper coins would also circulate alongside the farthing and halfpenny tokens (issued 1648-1672). When you need small change, anything round, metallic and about the right size and weight will be acceptable – official, counterfeit, token or foreign.

A quick search of the Portable Antiquities Scheme database reveals records of 443 Scottish Turners found in England and Wales, and they are just the ones that have been reported.⁽²⁾ Most are in too poor a condition to determine if they are genuine or counterfeit.

Whilst counterfeiting was a serious problem for the public and the issuers of the patent farthings, the earliest proclamation I can find against the counterfeiting is from May 1625.⁽³⁾ In 1636, another proclamation went on to include the counterfeiting of Scottish copper coins.⁽⁴⁾

We do therefore again publish and declare, That it is our pleasure, that no Farthing Tokens shall be paid, or received, or be in use amongst Our Subjects of Our Realmes of England & Ireland, but such as heretofore have been made, , or hereafter shall be made for Our said Realmes, by the authority of Our late Royall Father or Ourself: And that if any of them shall either bee counterfeited, or any counterfeit Tokens, or any Copper pieces made for the use of Our Realme of Scotland, or any forraigne parts, shall be vented or used, that in all such cases, all persons willingly, or knowingly offending therein, shall be proceeded against according to Our Lawes, and as transgressors of Our authority and Royall Prerogative.

Whilst this piece is the first clearly machine-made counterfeit of a Scottish twopence or Turner, a small contemporary hoard of scissel and uncut Royal farthings was found during excavations of a well at Scarborough castle at the beginning of the 20th century. The hoard was first reported in *The Times* in April 1907.⁽⁵⁾

The Discovery of Old Coins at Scarborough. – The discovery of old coins in the well which is being excavated in the ruins of Scarborough Castle has aroused much interest. Some of the coins were sent to Mr. H.A. Grueber, the Keeper of Coins at the British Museum, who has forwarded an interesting reply to Alderman Hastings Fowler, the Deputy-Mayor of Scarborough. Mr. Fowler writes as follows : - “The find consists of a large mass of copper or bronze strips, out of which coins have been punched, together with a number of imperfectly struck coins. The find took place at a distance of 130ft. from the surface. I have submitted specimens to Mr. H.A. Grueber, the Keeper of Coins at the British Museum, and he pronounces the coins to be incompleated farthings of Charles I., issued between 1626 and 1630. It appears that the right to issue these coins was granted by Charles I. to the Dowager Duchess of Richmond and Sir Francis Crane, who, no doubt made a considerable profit on their monopoly. The result of this monopoly seems to have been that extensive forgeries on these coins took place, and Mr. Grueber is of the opinion that the coins found in the castle well are forgeries struck at the time, and that in all probability they were thrown down the well to avoid detection.”

The first numismatic notice of this was a few months later in June 1907 and adds nothing to the above report.⁽⁶⁾ For a comprehensive catalogue identifying the different issues and varieties of genuine and contemporary counterfeit royal farthing tokens, see Everson, where there are details of genuine uncut single tokens (111, 130r) and an uncut pair (130q).⁽⁷⁾

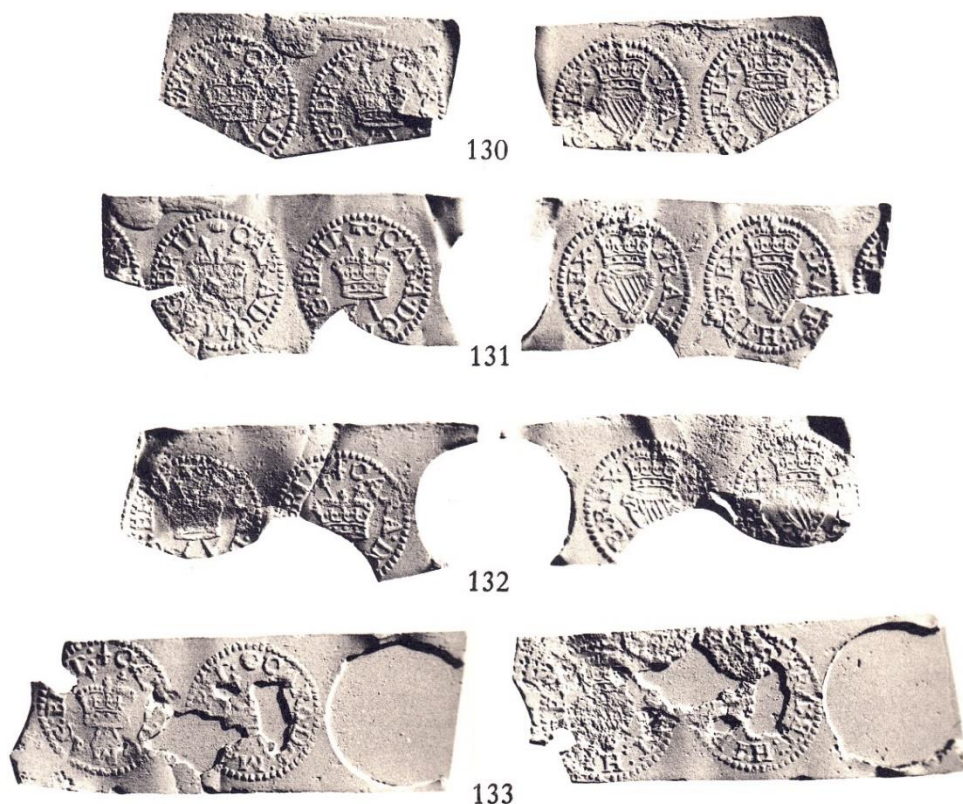
A few examples of the Scarborough hoard of scissel and uncut farthings are now in the British Museum.⁽⁸⁾ This hoard is now catalogued amongst the “normal” coin hoards of the seventeenth century.^(9,10)



Pieces of scissel from counterfeit Richmond farthing tokens of Charles I, c. 1625-34.
Images thanks to and © British Museum.

The small group of pieces in the British Museum also made an appearance at an exhibition on counterfeiting.⁽¹¹⁾

The Scarborough Castle hoard must have been dispersed, and C. Wilson Peck includes a long discussion about the CARA type, and whether, due to the quality of the die engraving, these pieces might be genuine.⁽¹²⁾ He concludes there are too many factors pointing to them being false, but does illustrate four pieces from the Scarborough Castle hoard. Interestingly these pieces were not in the British Museum collection.



Four pieces from the Scarborough excavations illustrated by Peck.⁽¹²⁾
 Scarborough Museum: 130, 132 and 133, Grantham Museum: 131. (125%).
 Images and © C.W. Peck and The British Museum.

Appendix 6 in Peck (pp583-7) also gives details of the various publications around 1907 that describe the find in the well in Scarborough Castle. None of these are earlier than the announcement in *The Times* on 8th April 1907.⁽⁵⁾

More recently another small group of three pieces with the same provenance has appeared at auction.⁽¹³⁾ The catalogue entry gives some details of the history of the group and is reproduced in full below.

Farthings, Three small STRIPS of 'Richmond' type farthings each containing a number of uncut coins, with key and dagger mintmarks, maybe others as well. Inverted axes. All with the very rare error reading 'CARA', thus hitherto considered contemporary forgeries, but the location, stated to be in the well of Scarborough Castle may date them to the 1645 Siege. This provenance certainly appears on the accompanying card, in old hand-written script, the card glued in half, internally with ornate script print and part of the date '191-', suggesting that the card was written about 100 years ago, when the strips were found. The strips were bought in an auction some 30 years ago. They were then in a frame, along with the card. They were recently offered to the Rotunda Museum in Scarborough, but they declined to purchase them as almost identical strips of farthings were already in their possession. These, they said, 'were found in the Castle well during excavations in the 1920s'; hence the same provenance being attached to these They are heavily patinated but with much clear, sharp, detail. Several side edges show circular cut-outs. Dimensions (maximum) - Strip 1: 42mm x 15mm. Strip 2: 42mm x 14.5mm.; Strip 3: 33mm x 17.5mm. UNIQUE, and, for several reasons, highly important numismatically.



Three more pieces from the Scarborough Castle excavations.

Images thanks to and © London Coins.⁽¹³⁾

The stated dates don't tie up with the 1907 reports of the hoard, but the CARA legend almost certainly confirms a common source. These three pieces were also used to illustrate a general article about counterfeiting in the seventeenth century.⁽¹⁴⁾

Conclusions

This note has presented a contemporary counterfeit of a Scottish twopence or Turner, the official pieces of which were manufactured 1632-39. The piece was found on the Thames foreshore and is clearly machine made. It is highly likely that the piece was made in London in the middle of the seventeenth century. Its existence is probably not surprising as there was already evidence of extensive counterfeiting of the patent farthings from this period using roller presses.

Specimens from a hoard of scissel and uncut counterfeit patent farthings found at Scarborough Castle in 1907 have been traced and illustrated. Again these have been made in a roller press.

It would appear that the contemporary counterfeiters were keeping up with the latest technology being used to make the official coins and tokens.

References and Acknowledgements

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- (4) *ibid.* Proclamation 213, 1st March 1636. A Proclamation Concerning Farthing Tokens. pp500-503.
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