

The Categorization of Counterfeit British & Irish 1/2d & 1/4d of George II & III

A Preliminary Progress Report on Family Groups & Subgroups

by

**Clement V. Schettino & Byron K. Weston;
J. C. Spilman and Gary Trudgen, co-editors**

Copyright © 2002 by The Colonial Newsletter Foundation, Inc.

This report is a summary of the progress that those of us in the CNLF eGroup have made to date regarding the Categorization of Counterfeit Halfpence and Farthings believed to have circulated in early America. We are working to categorize the varieties into a systematized format and our first goal was to identify Families of counterfeits based on a “Link Fingerprint” scheme developed by Byron K. Weston (see appendix A).

To date we have identified ten individual Families. Some of these Families are very small, others quite large, and some contain branches or Sub-Families. Based on our experience to date, and our conversations and posts on the eGroup, we suspect that a substantive number of additional Families will eventually be identified.

The Family organizational baseline presented in this report is tentative and will be modified as future findings and discoveries develop. Some Families have already been merged into others and some may eventually vanish. The naming convention used for the Families will probably change in the future to reflect a more scholarly notation. In the beginning, however, we required a technique with which we could all quickly identify and the family nickname approach was a natural consequence.

The Families which we have currently identified are listed below, more or less in the order of recognition:

Simian, Young Head, Longneck, Tilting IIIs, Coin Y, Atkins 232, Pinhead, Coin X, 1771-94, and Lanky Letters.

The members of the CNLF research eGroup who have contributed either images or their expertise are as follow, and are listed alphabetically:

Bob Bowser, Morris E. Hankins, Marcus M. Mayhugh, Frank McGrath, Phil Mossman, Gord Nichols, David Palmer, Mike Ringo, Ed Sarrafian, Clem Schettino, Kayla Schlemmer, James C. Spilman, Stan Stephens, Gary Trudgen, Ray Turcotte, Byron K. Weston-Principal Researcher, Ray Williams and Vicken Yegparian.

Special thanks are due to Jim Spilman who created and continues to monitor the eGroup Counterfeit Halfpence forum for the researchers and in so doing has made this progress possible. The use of an iterative research technique utilizing the Internet is a first for numismatic research and appears to reduce what was previously an extremely time consuming technique into an almost real-time peer review experience. In addition we wish to thank Gary Trudgen for translating these documents and images into electronically publishable formats.

Family Names, their Attributes and Design Similarities: the “Link Fingerprint”

The following text is meant to serve as a summary of the major counterfeit halfpence Families and their similarities. I hope to expand on this for a larger article to be published in *CNL* at a later date.

Simian; British and Irish (Illustrations on pages 8-11)

The myth persisted for many years that any Crude style counterfeit halfpenny was likely of American origin. This myth was debunked in *CNL*-111, published in August 1999, and titled *Evasion Hybrids: The Missing Link*. Part of that discussion was concerned with what has become known as the Simian style counterfeits. The hand engraved letter style of these counterfeits was described to that author as “spidery” by Mike Ringo. The overall craftsmanship of the devices are quite crude, with the reverse Britannia device often displaying an ape-like spear arm. These were sometimes called “monkey arms,” but the name “Simian style” replaced that description, having been taken from a lot description of an example in the October 21, 1995, C4 Griffee sale.

Many other device design similarities exist among the different groupings of this style, but even with the differences between these groups there is still an overall ‘look’ to these pieces. Device element design style differences aside, the spidery lettering would seem to be the primary element in the Link Fingerprint that is shared by known examples from this Family.

This hand-engraved letter style is not only prominent among counterfeit British halfpence, but among British farthings and Irish halfpence as well. (Currently there are no known Simian style Irish farthings.) Although the counterfeit Irish halfpence issues from this Family do not lend themselves to being called “Simian,” it was decided to use this all inclusive descriptive term for both counterfeit British and Irish coppers based on the “spidery” letters as the primary link. Despite not displaying the simian-like characteristics, the Irish pieces do often look as if they were made by a monkey.

Because the dies for these counterfeits were hand engraved and exhibit a distinct device and letter style, this is one of the few Families where it has been possible to establish a link between the counterfeit British halfpence and farthing issues. The Simian style counterfeits are known in both George III and George II issues.

The maker of the Simian dies was quite prolific, with his work often muled with that of Generic style die makers. There is even evidence of his work being improved upon or reworked by more skilled craftsmen. His reverse dies are also found muled with at least three Evasion issues produced by two different makers.

There is a wide range of dates found on the Simian style counterfeits. They are as follows:

- British George II 1/2d - 1733 over 1773, 1739, 1751, 1752, 1757, 1762, & 1794.
- British George II 1/4d - 1732, & 1735.
- British George III 1/2d - 1772, & 1775.
- British George III 1/4d - 1773, & 1775.
- Irish George III 1/2d - 1769, 1772, 1773, 1775, 1776, & 1781.

Although the myth that Crude style counterfeits are of American origin still persists, it is no longer reasonable to assume this to be true as the Simian style counterfeit Family demonstrates that some of the crudest designs were, in fact, made in England.

Young Head
(Illustrations on pages 13-15)

This name was chosen by the eGroup for the youthful look of the George III obverse bust device. This Family employs similar central device punches among the obverses and reverse dies. This is one of the two largest Families as well as being one of the more commonly encountered. Shear numbers, as well as being able to divide this Family into subgroups, not only suggest a common origin but a sophisticated counterfeit operation.

Dates noted are 1772, 1774 & 1775, divided among three major subgroups: Young Head w/Open G's, Young Head w/Closed G's, and Young Head w/Lopsided Shields. Even the casual collector of counterfeit halfpence is likely to run across an example from this extensive Family which has made it difficult for us to determine relative rarity between the many varieties.

Longneck
(Illustrations on page 16)

The name was chosen because of Britannia's long neck. Although a relatively small Family with only seven members currently known, all dated 1775, one of its major Link Fingerprint attributes is die sharing, the strongest attribute of all. It shares one of its reverse dies among 3 Family members. Nonetheless, Family members also exhibit many stunning design, lettering and date similarities. Despite their obvious counterfeit characteristics, members of this Family display some degree of design detail and skill within the overall Link Fingerprint of the Family.

Tilting III's
(Illustrations on pages 17-18)

This name was chosen by consensus of the eGroup because of the unusual tilting among the ordinal III's. The tilting between the individual I's varies from one variety to another, being quite noticeable on some. Another major attribute for inclusion in this Family is the distinct facial profile of the obverse bust device. Family members also appear to utilize similar central device punches for the reverse as well as letter punch similarities.

At present, this is an average size Family with seventeen varieties known, two dated 1774, and 15 dated 1773. Among a couple of the 1773-dated varieties the last numeral appears to have been botched, sometimes giving the impression of an overdate where the die sinker attempted to correct his error.

Coin ‘Y’
(Illustrations on page 19)

This Family derives its name from the Peck plates. This variety, coin y, is also listed in *Forgotten Coins...*, #85, and also happens to be the variety upon which Anton based his pricing structure. However, Anton apparently did not recognize that his example and the Bowers and Merena Galleries auction lot, 1741, Sept. 10-12, 1990, were the same variety.

This seems to be a relatively small yet very distinctive Family, with all varieties thus far encountered dated 1774. Some typical characteristics encountered among several of the varieties in this Family are thick eye-brows on the bust of George III and “squared” Ns in the reverse legend. The style of the date on these varieties is also very distinctive and the head of Britannia often has a doll-like look to it.

Despite the crude Link Fingerprint characteristics for this Family, the overall look of most members of this Family give the impression of a well-made counterfeit while being made up of some relatively crude design elements.

Atkins 232
(Illustrations on pages 21-25)

This Family name is the Evasion designation for the Georgivs Triumpho token. First explored by Mike Ringo in CNL-100, July 1995, these counterfeits, British along with a few Irish, share letter punch design style similarities with each other and also the Georgivs Triumpho token.

This is one of the larger Families thus far uncovered in our research, with many branches on its Family Tree. These branches or subgroups share similar device design style characteristics within each branch and each branch in turn shares some of these characteristics with the other branches. Although it is the letter punches that tie this Family together, similarities between its branches may suggest a progression in device design style development. This might also suggest that many individuals may have been involved in their manufacture.

Although the most direct link, die sharing, has not yet been found within this family, there are clues that it may exist, such as the specimen with a British obverse married to an Irish reverse. Many varieties have been identified belonging to this family and many others are likely to be added as our research continues. Dates found in this family are: British George III 1/2d - 1772, 1774, 1775, & 1776; Irish George III 1/2d - 1775, & 1776.

Pinhead
(Illustrations on pages 26-27)

This Family was named in CNL-111, the author of that article got the name while watching a television program about circus sideshows on the Discovery Channel. Pinheads suffered from a disease called microcephaly, a congenital birth defect believed to be caused by German measles, resulting in an abnormally small head. Circus sideshows often employed persons suffering from this affliction. Thus far the strongest evidence of all has linked all members of this family, die sharing. The obverse die is shared with all Family members. Currently there are two British and one Irish reverse dies known. Dates include 1769 & 1776 for the British and 1769 for the Irish.

Coin 'X'
(Illustrations on page 28)

The name was chosen because of its attribution on Peck plate 50. One of the major attributes for inclusion as a Family is again the strongest of all, die sharing. A common reverse die is shared with another Family member. Device design style similarities, as well as letter and number punch similarities, are all part of the Link Fingerprint for this very small Family. Presently there are three known members in this family, all dated 1770.

1771-94
(Illustrations on page 29)

This temporary name was chosen for the dates represented by the three currently known varieties of this very small Family, 1771 and 1794. The two 1794-dated imitation varieties share the same reverse die while the 1771-dated counterfeit variety shares its obverse die with one of the imitation date pieces. (Counterfeits are dated within the regal years while imitations are dated outside the years in which genuine issues were made.) The unique quality about this Family is that thus far the extant varieties currently known to us are tied together only by die sharing, the strongest link possible in a Link Fingerprint profile.

Lanky Letters
(Illustrations on page 30)

This name was chosen by consensus among the members of the Counterfeits eGroup, sponsored by The Colonial Newsletter Foundation, because of the tall, thin, lanky-looking letters characteristic to members of this Family. Besides this major attribute, there are also stunning device design style similarities, as well as style similarities of the numerals in the two currently known dates, 1771 and 1773.

**The Categorization of
Counterfeit British & Irish 1/2d & 1/4d
of George II & III**

**Family Groups & Subgroups
Illustrations**

**By
Clement V. Schettino
And
Byron K. Weston
July 2002**

Regal Examples For Comparison



Simian Family

British Types



7552
1775 Ctft 1/2d
ET Variety



7559CVS

Simian Family

Farthings



Simian Family

Irish Types



I7201b
1772 Ctft 1/2d



I7504CVS
Reverse Rotated 90°

Simian Family

Irish Types w/Wide Harps



17603
1776 Ctft 1/2d



18101VY
1781 Ctft 1/2d

Atkins 95-97 Connection



D.0020/B.0500
Atkins - 95



D.0020/H.0110
Atkins - 97

Young Head Family w/Closed G's



7511CVS
Heavily Clashed



7564CVS

Young Head Family

w/Open G's



Young Head Family

w/Open G's & Lopsided Shields



Longneck Family



Tilting III's Family



7311
1773 Ctft 1/2d



7306VY
1773 Ctft 1/2d
Reverse Center Dot

Tilting III's Family w/Short Fat III's



7357CVS



7355CVS
Repunched V

Coin 'Y' Family



7402 Peck Pl. 50,
1774 coin y



7416
1774 Ctft 1/2d

Georgivs Triumpho Token



Atkins 232 Family

British Types



75131CVS
Date: 5 From 6



7521CVS
Date: 5 From 6

Atkins 232 Family

British Types



7529CVS
Date: 5 From 6



7603CVS

Atkins 232 Family

Notchless Branch British Types



Atkins 232 Family

Notchless Branch British Types



7505CVS
5 Punched Over 6



7601CVS

Atkins 232 Family

Irish Types



17503CVS



17604CVS

Pinhead Family



6902CVS



7603 British
1776 (OP) Cftt 1/2d

Pinhead Family

Irish Type



6901 Irish
1769 Ctft 1/2d

Coin 'X' Family



7002 Peck Pl. 50
1770 coin x



7006CVS

1771-94 Family



7104CVS



9403 G.0638/B.0570
1794 Imitation

Lanky Letters Family



7317
1773 Ctft 1/2d

Appendix A

Establishing a Link Fingerprint

by
Byron K. Weston

A link fingerprint establishes relationships, not identities. These relationships are called Families. The link fingerprint consists of three basic elements: die sharing, punch linkage and design style. Since the most conspicuous link, die sharing, isn't always present, we must often look to punch linkage and design style.

Two or more counterfeit halfpence, not struck from the same pair of dies, may have a number of points in common. With three specimens, it may be found that an element shared by two specimens is not shared by the third or that an element shared by the first and third is not shared with the second. Although some elements may not be common to each specimen, all of the points that are collectively shared within a group by at least two different specimens become part of the overall link fingerprint.

The same letter or number punches will exhibit a characteristic style that is specific to their matrix. Keep in mind, however, that letter or number punches emanating from a common matrix may have subtle differences. Different sets of punches produced by the same artisan may often exhibit a similar characteristic style. Punches that are lightly impressed into a die will produce a slightly smaller character than that produced by the same punch that is strongly impressed. The angle and depth at which a punch is impressed into a die can also be a factor, along with the striking pressure of the die and the hardness of the planchet.

Much the same can be said of central device punches. The same obverse bust device found on two different specimens and in combination with like punch linkage would almost certainly clinch the link. If two different device punches are used, they still may exhibit a similar characteristic design style. It was not uncommon for the engraver to hand strengthen the central device after it was impressed into the die. Thus, two dies that were prepared with the same central device punch could show differences in the central device. For example, a design element that is punched into one die could be engraved into another die imitating the design of the punched design element. Conversely, dissimilar design elements or device punches would not necessarily void a link fingerprint that can be established with punch linkage alone.

The link fingerprint also suggests a common origin and, in many cases, provenance as well. As these studies progress, future comparisons with British Evasions, Conder tokens and Confederation era coppers must be done, but for now elimination must be relied upon rather than inclusion. If an American Confederation copper's relationship is not apparent, then it may be reasonable to assume a British provenance. This assumption can be corrected or affirmed at a later date when more data is accumulated and a more thorough analysis becomes feasible.

Regardless of the number of points that may be shared within a group of counterfeit halfpence, establishing the link may be more a matter of human perception. Common points, or the link fingerprint, help in establishing the link, but it is the eyeball comparison and human judgment that must logically conclude the link.

The accumulation of link fingerprints may eventually lead to the conclusion that previously accepted facts were only assumptions while, as more data is collected, assumptions that are made within these link studies may become the facts. Figuratively speaking, we are also “fingerprinting” the manufacturer, or the individual or individuals who made these spurious counterfeits. Perhaps somewhat less figuratively, we are also investigating a 200+ year-old crime and wherever this investigation may lead us we must follow.

© 2002 Byron K. Weston
reprinted with permission of the author