

Local Coinage

Chapter X of Sydney Gardner Jarman. *History of Bridgwater, 1889*

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LOCAL COINAGE — DUE TO PRIVATE ENTERPRISE — THE NUMBER OF TOKENS ISSUED IN SOMERSET — LIST OF BRIDGWATER TOKENS, AND THOSE IN THE IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

LOCAL trade tokens, so universally circulated in the various cities and towns in this country some two hundred years ago, present a somewhat singular episode in the history of our national currency. Private enterprise was responsible for their introduction, and they were issued from time to time, without the consent of the Government, to meet the pressing want of "small change," which had long existed. They were made chiefly of copper, but sometimes of brass, and the designs on some of them were crude and the orthography faulty, even in regard to the name of the town. They began to appear in London towards the close of the reign of our ill-fated monarch, Charles I., and the idea being taken up by other cities, the traders in towns, both large and small — and even some villages — followed the example set them. Over eleven thousand varieties are known to have been issued, and the earliest date found on any of them is 1648, and the latest 1672. In Somerset the number issued was 316, from 61 cities, towns and villages. They were nearly all farthings, and the dates range from 1651 to 1671, inclusive. The number of town pieces (i.e., those issued by the authorities) was larger than in any other county in England. The following is a list of those issued in Bridgwater, which was kindly supplied to the author by Mr. H. S. Gill, J.P., of Tiverton, who is regarded as an authority in the matter of trade tokens, and who has written a small work on the subject :—

BRIDGWATER SEVENTEENTH CENTURY TOKENS.

[" O " —Obverse ; " R " —Reverse.]

- . 1 O A BRIDGWATER FARTHING.
1666 (large ¼d.)
R. THE ARMES OF BRIDGWATER.
A castle on a bridge of five arches.
2. A variety has no flags on the two outer towers, is from a different die, and smaller in diameter.
3. O. BRIDG WATER
(in two lines across the field).
R. A castle on a bridge of six arches
(filling the field).
This is a very rare token,
perhaps only a few were issued.
4. O. ALEXANDER ATKINS — A.A.A.
R. IN BRIDGWATER — 1654.
A variety slightly differing read thus :
- 5 O. ALEXANDER ATKINS—A.A. A.
R. OF BRIDGWATER.—1656.

- 6 O IOHN BONE, OF
A hand holding a woolcomb.
R. BRIDGWATER, 1666.—I.B.
7. O JOHN CRAPP.—1659.
R. OF BRIDGWATER. I.C.I.
8. O WILLIAM CRAPP.—1670.
R. IN BRIDGWATER.—W.M.C.
9. O. IOSEPH FRANKLIN, IUNR.
A woolcomb.
R. IN BRIDGWATER. 1666.—I.F.
10. O. WILLIAM GOODRIDGE.—W.I.Gr.
R. OF BRIDGWATER, 1669.—A ship,
11. O ROBERT HAVILAND.
A Merchant's Mark.
R. IN BRIDGWATER.—R.L.H.
12. R. A variety is dated 1652.
13. O. IOHN HVNT, IN—I.S.H.
R. BRIDG WATER.—1651.
14. O IOHN LINTON,
of The SaltersArms.
R. BRIDGWATER, 1656.—I.E.L.
An undated variety reads thus :
15. O. IOHN LINTON. The Salters' Arms.
R. IN BRIDGWATER.—I.E.L.
16. O WILL PAGE, OF BRIDGWATER—1669.
R. IN SOMMERSET SHEIRE—W.P.E.
17. O. IOHN PALMER, 1664.
The Drapers' Arms.
R. IN BRIDGWATER.—I.A.P.
18. O. EDWARD PETTITT.—E.I.P.
R. OF BRIDGWATER.—1654.
19. O. CHRISTOPHER ROBERTS.
A covered cup.
R. IN BRIDGWATER, 1664—C.E.R.
20. O. IOHN ROGERS
Arms in a shield ; a sword erect
between a pair of wings conjoined.
R. HIGH CROSS IN BRIDGWATER. I.T.R.
21. O. IAMES SAFFORDE. I.S.E.
R. IN BRIDGWATER, 1656. I.E.S.
22. O. WILLIAM SEALEY. W. S.
R. OF BRIDG WATER.—1652.
23. Another variety is dated 1654.
24. O. WILLIAM SERLLAND.—W.S.
R. OF BRIDGWATER.—1654

Several tokens were issued by traders in the parishes around Bridgwater as follows :

ASHCOTT, one

(Richard Milles, 1666, a double-headed eagle displayed) ;

CANNINGTON, one

(Edward Coales, same device as last) ;

KILVE, one

(Charles Michell, 1670) ;

NETHERSTOWEY, two

(John Hoopper, a mortar and two pestles,
and Wm. Patey, a fleur-de-lys) ;

NORTH PETHERTON, four

(Thos. Hooper, 1668, the Tallow Chandlers' Arms ;

Edmund Jeferis, a man making candles ;

Tho. Loveder, 1657 ;

and Will Chappel, a woolcomb) ;

ROAD, three

(Richard Tvcker, 1670, a wreath and hat with feather ;

Wm. Whitchvrch, 1668, a woolpack ;

David Jefres, 1664, a barrel) ;

SPAXTON, one

(John Chick, 1665, the clothworkers' arms) ;

STOGURSEY, three

(Thomas Eelestone, 1665, a tailors' pressing iron ;

Wm. Exon, 1664, a pair of scissors ;

Riclard Wickham, an axe).

The spelling of the latter town was different in each case — Stogursey, Stogussey, Stogursay.

Three varieties may also be attributed to WESTONZOYLAND, including one issued by Will. Page, who issued one for Bridgwater. The others were Thomas Hancock and Thomas Coulson.

As late as 1794 a copper token was issued in the town. The obverse shows the front view of a house, "*J. Holloway and Son, Drapers, &c., Post Office,*" 1794. On the reverse is part of a castle, and a bridge, "*B. Water half-penny, for change, not fraud,*" "*On demand we promise to pay.*" A specimen is now in the Taunton Museum.