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## **Some 17th-century Token-issuers**

by I. E. Gray  
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# Some 17th-century Token-issuers

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By IRVINE E. GRAY

THOSE of us who have lived through two world wars are only too familiar with the term inflation and with its practical effects; and anyone who lived between, say, 1580 and 1640 would be equally familiar with the effects, if not with the word. Doubtless it was only the heavy and progressive fall in the purchasing power of money that enabled people to manage practically without anything below the silver penny right up to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642. At any rate Lord Harington, who was granted a royal licence to issue brass or copper farthings in 1613, apparently met with little success. Why the Civil War did not produce a catastrophic landslide in money values is a question for the economists. However, the gradual slide continued, but the establishment of the Commonwealth saw the beginning of a period of relatively stable prices, actually followed by a downward trend after the Restoration of 1660.

By the end of the War, the shortage of small change had become acute, as various petitions in the Calendar of State Papers show. In 1651 Thomas Violet, in propositions to the Mint Committee for making farthings of tin, brass, or copper, pointed out that chandlers in London were minting farthings themselves. In fact, the royal prerogative having been removed with King Charles's head, private traders not only in London but all over the country were taking matters into their own hands by the local circulation of farthing and halfpenny tokens. The Commonwealth Government evidently made no serious effort to check this outburst of private enterprise, which of course saved them the trouble of doing anything about it themselves.

Although many tokens are undated, the dated specimens are numerous enough to show that they covered the period between 1648 and 1672, when the first general copper coinage by the State put an end to them. No doubt the tradesmen's tokens were regarded as advertising media in addition to their practical usefulness. The

standard work on the subject, G. C. Williamson's edition of Boyne's *Trade Tokens issued in the 17th Century*, gives about 200 Gloucestershire pieces, including those for Gloucester city but excluding varieties of the same token. For the whole country there were well over 10,000. Most of the Gloucestershire tokens can be seen in the Gloucester City Museum, where a complete list is being established with a view to publishing a catalogue similar to the Oxfordshire one.<sup>1</sup> I am not dealing here with the Gloucester City tokens, which are described in *Trans. BGAS*, XIII, pp. 130-45.<sup>2</sup>

A few items have been added to the Gloucestershire list by the discovery of new specimens or the transfer of tokens previously attributed to other counties. Thus Edward Wallington, mercer, of *Wootton*, located by Williamson at Wootton in Oxfordshire and included rather tentatively in the Oxfordshire catalogue, is certainly a member of the Wallington family of Wotton-under-Edge, Glos., prominent tradesmen there. Again, Stow in Buckinghamshire, on the strength of a local family of gentry named Gibbs, claimed Thomas Gibbs of Stow, who issued a trade token in 1658. However, I have now no doubt that he was Thomas Gibbs, senior, of Stow-on-the-Wold, Glos., Bailiff of that Borough in 1653 jointly with William Mince, who himself issued a token in 1656. Confusion between Stroud, Glos. and Strood, Kent has been pretty well cleared up. But where is '*Starton*'? This was a common form of Staverton, near Cheltenham. Edward Cagworth of Starton issued a token with the Blacksmiths' arms in 1669. Williamson's appendix of tokens unallocated to places includes one of Edward *Gagworthy*, which must surely be a variant reading of the same name. But I can find neither Cagworth nor Gagworthy as a surname in Gloucestershire (or for that matter anywhere else), and Starton may well prove to be in another county, e.g. Staverton, Northants.) So may Edgeworth, whose single token is made more difficult by being in numismatic language a 'mule', one side belonging apparently to a token from some other place, not identified. We are left with the place-name Edgeworth and the initials R. & E. D. As Edgeworth, Glos. is and always was a tiny and remote rural parish, unlikely to produce a token-issuer, and as the available records show no family of the token period with a surname beginning in D, I am inclined to favour Edgworth, Lancs.

For any attempt to compile a biographical note on a token-issuer, the starting-point is naturally the token itself. This normally yields one

<sup>1</sup> *Catalogue of Oxfordshire 17th-Century Tokens*, ed. J. G. Milne (Ashmolean Museum, 1935).

<sup>2</sup> J. P. Wilton, *Gloucester Tokens of the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries*.

or more of several data: the year of issue, the trade, the issuer's name and/or three initials, the middle one of which stands for his wife's Christian name (cf. the initials on old houses); but you will seldom get all of these. The wife's initial is a valuable clue, her mention in a will or on a memorial often enabling the issuer to be distinguished from his father or son of the same name. Usually the token also bears some personal or trade device. This may be more or less puzzling or misleading; for instance, a falcon or a unicorn may represent a shop-sign, not necessarily an inn-sign. Two Gloucestershire issuers whose tokens display respectively a human leg and a shoulder of mutton are explained by their wills as a hosier and a butcher respectively. Clothiers, clothworkers or wool merchants might use the Clothworkers' Arms, a cloth mark, or a woolpack, but Obadiah Webb of Dursley, whose token bears a fleece, was a mercer. John Pierce of Tewkesbury, whose device is described by Williamson as a roll of bread, is found by his will to be not a baker but a weaver, and on inspection of the token the device is clearly not a roll of bread but a weaver's shuttle.

A few issuers use heraldic bearings of their own. This is not altogether surprising, seeing that younger sons of the gentry often went into trade, while on the other hand many of the token-issuers were prosperous tradesmen on the social up-grade. Thus Thomas Jeynes, who issued a token at Tewkesbury in 1669, was described as 'gentleman' when he served as mayor of Tewkesbury and also in his will, which shows him to have been in fact a flourishing maltster owning a number of houses in the town. William Hopton of Stroud, whose token bears on one side the three cloves frequently used by a spicer or grocer and on the other side a coat-of-arms in a circle, married a daughter of John Trotman of Cam, a member of an old cloth family whose pedigree was recorded by the Heralds in their Visitation of Gloucestershire, 1682-3. Some social climbers failed to make the grade, like Thomas Garway of Mitcheldean and Ralph Willett of Cirencester, both token-issuers, who were disclaimed at the Visitation; as the Heralds were accustomed to note tersely: 'no gent.'

The chief record sources which have proved informative for Gloucestershire tradesmen are much the same as those used in the Oxfordshire study: wills, parish and borough records, and the Hearth Tax lists. In addition, Gloucestershire is fortunate in having in print the 17th-century marriage licences, the Heralds' Visitation of 1682-3, and Bigland's history of the county with its thousands of church memorials and tombstone inscriptions, many of which have perished by decay or in the ruthless church restorations of Victorian days and churchyard clearances of our own.

Taking the manuscript sources in ascending order of usefulness: many of our token-issuers can be traced in the Hearth Tax lists of 1671, the only year for which fairly complete returns for Gloucestershire have been preserved among the Public Records. The Gloucestershire Records Office has a photostatic copy. The only information they yield, apart from the confirmation of name, is the number of hearths or chimneys for which the owner was charged, giving some idea of his relative wealth. Occupations are not stated, but smiths and bakers can be identified by the mention of a forge or oven. The lists are arranged by parishes, and the parishes under Hundreds.

The searching of parish records for local tradesmen may be a more or less lengthy task according to the size of the parish, the quantity of 17th-century records surviving—if any—and their location. They may be higgledy-piggledy, or even tidily arranged, in the parish chest, or classified and catalogued in the local record office. As the token-issuers were generally prominent parishioners, they were likely to serve as churchwardens, or overseers of the poor, and will be found in lists of parish officers or in their account books. In Tewkesbury, where a large number of tokens was issued, and where a fine continuous series of churchwardens' accounts has survived, no less than ten token-issuers were churchwardens.

Rate assessments may also be useful, and if there are parish apprenticeship indentures the trades of the masters to whom children were apprenticed will be stated. As the Oxfordshire investigators noted, the actual parish registers of baptisms, marriages and burials will normally yield nothing beyond these bare facts of life, and are scarcely worth the labour of searching unless other sources have failed. Just occasionally a zealous parson or parish clerk has recorded the occupations of parishioners.

A number of tradesmen of the period are likely to have been dissenters—Independents (later called Congregationalists), Baptists, or Quakers, so that references may be found in the records of the Free Church bodies, which are not always easy to trace. The Quakers, however, were outstanding as record-keepers, and the surviving minutes and accounts of their Gloucestershire meeting-houses have been placed in the care of the County Records Office.

But by far the most valuable source of information has been the wills. Wills were proved and deposited either in the local probate registry or, if the testator had property in more than one diocese,—probate having been until 1857 an ecclesiastical preserve—in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, i.e. at Somerset House. On the

assumption that few local tradesmen would have widespread property, I searched first the Gloucester wills, expecting to find a few only in London, but to my surprise there were more than thirty. It seems that many people who were not obliged to prove a will in the P.C.C. chose to do so for greater security, or perhaps for greater secrecy.

With each will there should be an inventory of the testator's goods, but many of the Gloucester inventories are missing, while the Somerset House inventories, recently transferred to the Public Record Office, are in a state of chaos and totally unindexed. Where they exist, inventories are of the greatest interest, but in their absence the will itself may specify stock-in-trade or equipment in considerable detail. Valentine Smith, of Chipping Campden, a baker, bequeathes his trough and moulding boards in the bakehouse, with scales, weights, meal barrel, and peels. Samuel Arrowsmith, of Cheltenham, whose trade is not given on his token, leaves to his son Obadiah 'all utensils and instruments belonging to my trade of a haberdasher and maltster', — a curious combination.<sup>1</sup> Giles Smith, a Painswick tallow-chandler (though called a mercer on his tomb),<sup>2</sup> who founded a school there, mentions his tallow-furnace, candle mould and strainer, a copper ladle and candle rods. Thomas Atkinson, a Tewkesbury hosier, leaves two hose-presses. John Ouleff of the same town, spelt Olive in his will, whose token bears a dove with olive-branch, was a brewer; he had a brewhouse with 'furnace, fatts, coolers and caske'. William Jones of Winchcombe, issuer of a token with the arms of the Armourers' Company, leaves to his sons 'my wheele, forge, bellows, and all my workeing tooles with all my implements and utensills belonging to my trade of a brasier and pewterer'. He also had shops at Cheltenham and Stow-on-the-Wold. One wonders whether this wealthy craftsman, whose stock and equipment was valued at the large figure of £482,<sup>3</sup> might himself have struck some of the Gloucestershire tokens.

As their wills reveal, many of our token-issuers were men of substance, owning houses and land as well as shops or workshops. It is therefore worth while to seek them in title-deeds or other estate records which may have found a home in a record repository. I had no information on a token-issuer of Newent named Thomas Master, but a deed of 1661, now in the Gloucestershire Records Office, mentions him as a mercer.

Some general statistics may be of interest. An analysis of the

<sup>1</sup> The son, Obadiah Arrowsmith, as a mercer, issued a token in Cirencester.

<sup>2</sup> One of the handsomest of the well-known sculptured tombs in Painswick churchyard.

<sup>3</sup> The equivalent of perhaps fifteen thousand pounds in modern money.

dated tokens of Gloucestershire shows that in the years 1650 to 1654 nineteen were issued, then after two slack years came renewed activity with eight tokens dated 1657. In 1658 there were two, in 1659 one, and in 1660 and 1661 none at all. This decline is doubtless to be associated with the death about 1660 of David Ramage, the London moneyer who has been shown by Dr Milne to have been the designer of many tokens up to that date.<sup>1</sup> But 1660 was also the year of the Restoration, and there must have been some uncertainty as to the attitude of the monarchy towards the circulation of private tokens. In 1662 two Gloucestershire tokens appear, in 1663, four, and in 1664 the industry is in full swing again with nine. 1665 has only one—puzzling until one remembers that it was the Plague Year—but the next five years, 1666–70, saw the maximum production, no less than sixty-eight in all. Only two pieces are dated after 1670. The pattern for Oxfordshire is almost exactly similar.

Distribution over the county is much what might be expected, though Tewkesbury has thirty-one tokens against Cirencester's twenty-one and Gloucester's seventeen; but Cirencester also issued a municipal piece, and Gloucester several. The smaller towns have from one to nine private tokens each, Thornbury being an exception with none, though it issued a town farthing very late, in 1670. There is a sprinkle of tokens in the larger villages. The other town piece comes from Tetbury.

Of the trades, that of mercer is predominant. The name originally meant a dealer in textiles, but by this time evidently covered a multitude of dealings and must have been used commonly by a grocer or the keeper of a general store. There are at least forty-three Gloucestershire mercers and only six grocers. Next come the chandlers or tallow-chandlers, thirteen in number. There are eight clothiers, as we should expect in such a centre of the cloth industry. The other trades represented are apothecaries, four, bakers, four, cordwainers (shoemakers), three, hosiers, three (all in Tewkesbury, where the stocking frame-knitting industry became important), blacksmiths or ironmongers, two, glovers, two, with one token each for butcher, brewer, maltster, haberdasher and maltster, worsted-comber, stationer (with an open book as his device), pin-maker, pewterer, brazier and pewterer, and woolmerchant. The last must have been in a big way of business, since he issued a token in Tetbury but lived and died apparently in Taunton, Somerset. With a name like Antipas Swinnerton, one can scarcely be mistaken as to identity. There also

<sup>1</sup> *Catalogue of Oxfordshire 17th-Century Tokens*, v. *supra*.

appear to be a cutler and a draper, judging by their use of the respective Companies' arms. Only one innkeeper has been definitely recorded, but there are probably others if devices like a horse, a mermaid, and St. George and the dragon are anything to go by. Taverns are obviously places where small change would have been handy, and tokens were in fact issued by taverns in Gloucester city, but as already explained, the city is not within the scope of this survey.

Not all these forgotten tradesmen of Commonwealth and Restoration Gloucestershire were successful in their businesses. Elias Osborne of Marshfield left only a shilling to each of his eight children. David Harvy, the Winchcombe butcher, had only a guinea to leave his wife, or at any rate that was all he left her. Some were charitable, like Caleb Selfe, the Cirencester clothier who left to 'two of my ancient spinners two yards of cloth apiece'. An apothecary of Wotton-under-Edge named Lazarus Kemp, who bequeathed to his son all his books 'except the books of accompts belonging to my shopp', was the son, brother, and son-in-law of clergymen, described as Ministers or Preachers of God's Word and probably of the Puritan persuasion. He managed to combine prosperity with piety, for he owned pieces of plate, a silver bowl and salt, and a 'great goblett guilt', besides land. Several of the Tewkesbury token-issuers were obviously very well off, for example Edward Laight, a maltster, Bailiff of the Borough in 1667, who had several houses, a gold ring, silver bowls and wine cups, and was able to leave a feather-bed to each of his four daughters. William Hatton of the same town, Bailiff in 1656, was removed with others from the town council in 1662, his political views being evidently not acceptable to the Restoration Government. He used the Grocers' Arms but called himself a gentleman, and his interests certainly seem to have extended beyond grocery, for the churchwardens' accounts of Tewkesbury record payments to him for 'spikes for mending the leads' in 1667-68, as well as for the 'great bell-rope' the year before. He also owned an inn called the Ram. Edward Lamlee of Bourton-on-the-Water, though called a baker, owned a water grist mill in Bourton. Thomas Osborne of Cirencester issued a token, undated, which includes his wife's initial R, and after his death another token was issued by his widow *Rebecca*, who evidently carried on the mercer's business. The tradesmen families intermarried a good deal, and relationships between token-issuers can sometimes be traced, as with Robert Porter of Tewkesbury, whose wife was a daughter of John Millington, another issuer. Two other issuers in Tewkesbury, Samuel Canner and Daniel Kemble, are shown by the former's will to have been brothers-in-law.

In an unusually interesting will, William Yeate, a Chipping Campden mercer, left his son William five shillings and his son Cornelius one shilling, to debar them, he says, from claiming any further right to his goods and chattels. His son Thomas, presumably less given to juvenile delinquency, got £200, a silver watch, three silver spoons, and furniture, his son Charles £100, a house near the market-place, spoons and furniture, his son James £250, spoons, and furniture, his daughter Anne a silver can and wine cup, his daughter Millicent £250, the furniture in the room called the Cloth Chamber over the shop, a silver wine cup and three spoons. There are bequests to servants and to the poor of Chipping Campden, 'not to relieve those that are able to work or make a trade of begging but those that are antient and weake and such as have families of small children'. One of his two tokens is dated 1666; the other, undated, must have been issued before 1662, since it bears the initial of his wife Millicent who died in that year aged 39. William Yeate himself died aged 60 in May 1680. When he made his will in February 1677, he was contemplating a second venture into matrimony, for he left 'to Mrs Susanna Cooper of Pebworth my intended wife £10 and so much cloth as will make her a mourning suit of which sort she pleaseth'. I have not yet discovered whether the marriage took place before his death.

Perhaps a fitting conclusion to these personal glimpses of long dead local figures may be quoted from the memorial in Wotton-under-Edge church to 'Edward Wallington of this town, merchant, who was beared to the church the 22nd day of April 1716 by six of his grandsons, all sons to Edward Wallington, mercer, by Susanna his wife'. This latter Edward, besides siring the six sons, issued the undated token with the Mercers' Arms, which, as I have said, was incorrectly attributed to Wootton in Oxfordshire.<sup>1</sup>

So far, no references to tokens have been found in the surviving records of the minor Gloucestershire towns where municipal pieces were issued. But Mr Brian Frith has kindly provided extracts from the Gloucester Corporation archives which show how the Mayor for 1656/7, Luke Nourse, paid Mr Edward Nourse—presumably a relative—for 'the stamp for the City farthings and for cariage and postage, etc'. This die is still in the possession of the city. In 1659 the Corporation agreed to lay out £30 for the procuring of farthings or tokens, and in 1669 £50 for farthings 'to be of the full weight of a Bristol farthing'. There are also minutes about calling in the tokens in 1672.

No will or inventory so far found has mentioned a stock of private

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the Wallington family, see E. S. Lindley, *Wotton-under-Edge*, pp. 137-8.

#### SOME 17TH-CENTURY TOKEN-ISSUERS

tokens in Gloucestershire. A number of interesting questions remain to be answered. How did Ramage and his successors make and maintain contact with local tradesmen? Were the tokens struck in London or locally? How were they distributed? I can only suggest that some of the many dealings in tokens must have given rise to law-suits in those litigious days, and that if anyone can find time for it a search in the Chancery Depositions or other court records in the Public Record Office might prove fruitful.

For information on various points I am indebted to Mr J. Neufville Taylor, Curator of the Gloucester City Museums, with whom I have for some years been in cooperation over tokens and their issuers.