THE EIGHTEENTH- AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY TOKENS OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

BY WILLIAM C. WELLS.

To the pages of the *British Numismatic Journal*, vols. vi, vii, viii and x, I contributed a series of articles on "The Seventeenth-Century Tokens of Northamptonshire," and at the repeated suggestion of members of the British Numismatic Society, I beg to complete the series by a description of the few tokens issued in Northamptonshire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

After the final suppression of the seventeenth-century series of tokens, in 1674, regal coins in copper and pewter appear to have been issued in sufficient quantities to supply the needs of the nation until the early years of George III, when copper currency again became scarce. No regal coins were issued between the years 1775 and 1797, and forgeries were made in such quantities that, about 1780, at least half the copper coins in circulation were false. The public refused to accept these forgeries and large quantities were shipped to America, where they circulated as halfpence or cents.

In 1787 private tokens again made their appearance, and from that date until the great re-coinage of 1797–9, a large series of tokens was issued by mining companies, manufacturers, tradesmen, and others throughout the length and breadth of the United Kingdom.

Only one token appears to have been issued in Northamptonshire during this period, namely, the following halfpenny issued at Northampton in 1794 by "George Jobson, Banker." I have made
every endeavour to obtain some information concerning the issuer of this token, but entirely without success.

1. **Obverse.**—GEORGE JOBSON. BANKER. 1794 = Bust to left.  
**Reverse.**—MAY NORTHAMPTON FLOURISH. = A triple-towered castle; below, a lion passant guardant.  
**Edge.**—PAYABLE IN LANCASTER LONDON OR BRISTOL.

2. From the same dies as No. 1. Struck on a thick flan.  
**Edge.**—Plain, not struck in a collar.

3. From the same dies as No. 1. Struck on a very thin flan.  
**Edge.**—Plain, not struck in a collar.

Specimens of No. 1 are quite common. No. 2 is very scarce and rarely met with in mint state. No. 3 also is very scarce, and appears to have been hitherto unrecorded. The average weight of fine specimens of No. 2 is about 194 grains, and No. 3 averages about 107 grains.

When George III ascended the throne there was a great deficiency of silver coin in circulation. In 1763, when the Duke of Northumberland went to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant, a small coinage of shillings was made to enable him to distribute them amongst the populace upon his entry into Dublin. Only £100 worth of these coins—known as the "Northumberland" shilling—were issued, and they are now very scarce. But no serious attempt was made to remedy this deficiency of silver currency until 1787, when a coinage of shillings and sixpences was issued to the value of £55,459. The greater part of this coinage, however, soon found its way to the melting-pot, or the coins were withheld from circulation, and in a very short time the silver currency had returned to its former unsatisfactory condition.

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1 This has reference to the arms of Northampton, which are—"Gules, on a mount vert, a triple towered castle argent, supported by two lions rampant guardant or."
In 1798 a further attempt was made to grapple with the problem, this time by a firm of London bankers, but the venture was doomed to failure. I cannot do better than quote Hawkins’ account of it:

"In the year 1798, Messrs. Dorrien and Magens sent a quantity of bullion to the Mint to be coined according to the law, which had never been repealed, by which it was enacted that anyone sending bullion to the Mint might have it coined into money upon payment of certain dues. The whole was actually coined into shillings from dies varying very slightly from those of 1787, but with the date 1798, and no dot over the head; but the very day on which the bankers were, by appointment, to have received the coin, an order of Council was received commanding it all to be melted, upon the ground that the proceeding had been irregular, and that no coinage was lawful without the sanction of a Royal Proclamation. Very few indeed of these pieces escaped the crucible."

About the close of the eighteenth century, the Government held large quantities of Spanish dollars which had been captured in Spanish vessels. On one occasion no less than one and a quarter million dollars were captured, and a description of the passage of this large treasure through the streets of London is given in a contemporary magazine.¹ Six wagons, drawn each by eight horses, loaded with the treasure taken in two Spanish frigates, reached London from Plymouth. When the wagons arrived at Kensington they were met by a Captain’s guard of the Grenadier battalion of the Guards and a detachment of the 16th Light Dragoons, which, preceded by a military band, accompanied the treasure to the Bank. Twelve or fourteen more wagons similarly loaded subsequently came up. The whole of the specie taken on board the two ships amounted to no less than forty tons.

In 1797 it was decided to countermark these Spanish silver coins and issue them for circulation in England. This was done by

¹ Gentleman’s Magazine, January, 1800.
stamping the head of George III within a small oval, upon the centre of the obverse. Coins of lower value—half-dollars, quarter-dollars and reals—were similarly countermarked.

Immense numbers of these countermarked coins were issued from 1797 till 1803, but in 1804, owing to both dollars and countermark having been extensively counterfeited, a new countermark was substituted for the old. The new countermark was considerably larger than the old and consisted of the bust of George III within an octagon. A little later in the same year the countermarked dollars were withdrawn from circulation, and, having been overstruck with an entirely new design, reappeared as the well-known Bank of England dollar.

From 1804 to 1811 no silver coins were issued, and the lack of small silver change was keenly felt by manufacturers, tradesmen, and the general public; and although an attempt to remedy this deficiency was made in the latter year by a Bank of England issue of tokens of the value of 3s. and 1s. 6d., the deficiency continued, and by the end of 1811 silver tokens for 6d. and upwards were being issued by private firms and token dealers throughout the country, and in the succeeding year the numbers of token-issuers had increased enormously.

In 1811 there was considerable agitation in and out of Parliament; public meetings were held for the purpose of condemning the tokens, while others were held for the purpose of promoting the issue of them. In Sheffield, at a public meeting held on October 24th, 1811, it was resolved that "the denomination of 2s. 6d. and 1s. be stamped and sent into circulation to an amount not exceeding £10,000, and not less than £5,000." Archibald Reed, the Mayor of Newcastle-on-Tyne, in 1807, convened a meeting of the principal tradesmen and others of that city to petition Parliament for a new silver coinage, but when, in 1811, John Robertson of Newcastle announced his intention to issue tokens for 2s. 6d., 1s., and 6d., the project was opposed by the

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local tradesmen, 120 of whom signed and issued the following notice:—

"Caution

"To the Public against taking Local Silver Tokens.

"Newcastle, Nov. 26, 1811.

"Mr. John Robertson, silversmith, Dean Street, having by Public Advertizement announced his intention of issuing Silver Tokens for general circulation as shillings and sixpences in this Town and the adjoining Counties, We, the undersigned, think it necessary to inform the Public that we will not receive in payment any Tokens which may be issued either by the said Mr. John Robertson or by any other individual whatever.

"N.B.—We have Authority to say that all local Tokens will be refused in Payment by the regular Bankers in Newcastle."

Robertson's tokens, however, in quality of silver and for excellence of design and workmanship, were perhaps equal to any issued at that period.

The Earl of Lauderdale, who defended the issue of private tokens, sent out a circular letter in August, 1811, from which Mr. Davis quotes the following:—

"In the last Session of Parliament, I opposed the Bill entitled An act to prevent the issuing and circulating of pieces of gold and silver or other metal, usually called tokens, except such as are issued by the Banks of England and Ireland respectively.

"Much as I could wish for the credit and welfare of the country that a general revision should take place of the principles upon which our circulation is now conducted, I was then, and am now, perfectly convinced that the measure of annihilating all local tokens in the month of March next, unless it should be attended with some further arrangements, must prove highly injurious."
"I am indeed of opinion that there is just reason to believe that, if this Act is not repealed immediately on the meeting of Parliament, the commerce of the country will sustain a most severe shock. For, in my view of the subject, it will deprive the master-manufacturer of the power of paying the wages of his workmen, and leave the poorer consumer without the means of dealing with the retail trader; whilst it would prove a source of infinite inconvenience to the community at large."

Throughout all this controversy bankers, overseers of the poor, and tradesmen were issuing their tokens which, although never legal tender, were recognized by a Parliament which strongly desired to suppress them, and the late Maberly Phillips\(^1\) quotes from a writer of the time, who says:—

"... Since Ministers have transferred to the Bank of England one of the prerogatives of the Crown, that of coining, every other Bank, Banker, Agent, Merchant and Shopkeeper has taken it for granted that an equal right of assuming a royal prerogative is the privilege of all ..."

As was pointed out in the case of Messrs. Dorrien and Magens, in 1798,\(^2\) no coin is lawful tender unless issued by Royal Proclamation, but by Acts of Parliament this official recognition of the privately issued tokens of 1811 and 1812 confers upon such a circulation its highest mandate, short of a Royal Warrant. Thus for a period of nearly two years private tokens were clearly a lawful tender. During this period of official recognition no official coinage was issued, except Bank tokens.

On July 20th, 1812, it was enacted that after March 25th, 1813, no privately issued silver tokens should be current. The penalty for the issue of each private token was to be not less than £5, or more than £20, at the discretion of the Justices of the Peace, who should hear and determine the offence. This Act gave rise to considerable

\(^2\) *See* p. 201, *ante.*
dissatisfaction, and meetings of citizens were held, when the token issuers were thanked for having issued their tokens and the Act forbidding the circulation of silver tokens condemned.

In the early part of 1813, the Government, in spite of its Act of prohibition, having failed to substitute coins for tokens, was ultimately compelled to grant a new lease to the traders who provided them. On March 13th of that year an Act was passed extending the period of circulation of private tokens to July 5th following; and again on July 10th of the same year it was enacted that "the time for the circulation of private tokens be extended to the space of six weeks after the commencement of the next Session of Parliament." In the following November, Parliament again considered the question, when it was again enacted that private tokens should remain in circulation until "six weeks from the commencement of the next Session of Parliament." This Act is the last on record which in any way gave Parliamentary sanction to the circulation of tradesmen's silver tokens.

A considerable series of copper tokens also appeared in the early years of the nineteenth century but, as none appear to have been issued in Northamptonshire at that period, I will not go further into the subject.

Northamptonshire was not prolific in its issue of silver tokens, and in the following list I have described those specimens which are in my own collection, or have passed under my notice. The references are to Davis' *Nineteenth-Century Token Coinage* (1904), and Dalton's *Silver Token-Coinage* (1922).

1. **Obverse.**—PETERBOROUGH TOKEN PAYABLE BY GEORGE GRIFFIN = The Arms of the See of Peterborough\(^1\) enclosed within a garter inscribed DOLLAR SILVER

   Reverse.—SILVER TOKEN 2 SHILL 1812 in four lines, enclosed within a wreath of oak; below, H·M.

   Edge.—Diagonally milled. Davis, 1, Plate 1, fig. 14. Dalton, 1. [Plate, fig. 2.

\(^1\) The arms of the See of Peterborough are—"Gules, two keys endorsed in saltire, wards upwards, between four cross-crosslets fitchée or."
2. As No. 1. A proof struck upon a flan composed of a thin sheet of silver upon a thicker sheet of copper; the obverse being struck upon the silver and the reverse upon the copper.

_Edge._—Plain, not struck in a collar. Davis, 2. Dalton, 2.

George Griffin was landlord of The Black Moor's Head Inn, on Long Causeway.

Many tokens of this period are inscribed _DOLLAR SILVER_, and were made from silver provided by Spanish dollars, the demand for which, for the manufacture of private tokens, became so great that considerable numbers were imported from our Colonies, especially from the West Indies. H·M. on the reverse indicates that the token was made by Henry Morgan, of 12, Rathbone Place, Oxford Street, London. Morgan's name, however, is not to be found in any London Directory of the period, and it is probable that he merely acted as agent for a Birmingham medallist, possibly Halliday, who wished to remain anonymous. For more information concerning Morgan, see later.

3. _Obverse._—SILVER TOKEN 1811 = View of the West front of Peterborough Cathedral.

_Reverse._—PETEBOROUGH BANK TOKEN COLE & CO. = FOR EIGHTEEN PENCE in three lines, within a wreath.


[Plate, fig. 3.

4. As No. 3. A proof struck upon a flan composed of a thin sheet of silver upon a thicker sheet of copper, the obverse being struck upon the copper and the reverse upon the silver.

_Edge._—Plain, not struck in a collar.

5. A proof similar to No. 4, but has the edge diagonally milled.

6. _Obverse._—SILVER TOKEN 1811 = View of the west front of Peterborough Cathedral.

_Reverse._—PETEBOROUGH BANK TOKEN COLE & CO = FOR XII PENCE in three lines, within a wreath.

_Edge._—Diagonally milled. Davis, 5. Plate B, fig. 5. Dalton, 5.

[Plate, fig. 4.
7. As No. 6. A proof struck upon a heavy silver-gilt flan.  
   Edge.—Diagonally milled.  Dalton, 6.

8. Davis, 6, and Dalton, 7, describe a proof similar to No. 7,  
   but struck in copper.  I have not seen a specimen, but  
   presumably it has a thin sheet of silver upon one side  
   of the flan, similar to No. 4.  In the Bliss collection was  
   an impression of this token, struck apparently upon a  
   copper coin; possibly this is the specimen described by  
   Davis and Dalton.

Specimens of No. 3 are quite common; No. 6 is less common;  
Nos. 4 and 7 are rare.  Only one specimen of No. 5 has come under  
my notice.  It was a much worn specimen, and was shown to me  
several years ago by Mr. A. H. Baldwin.

In the Statesman, September 18th, 1811, it is announced that “All  
the Country Bankers have received permission to issue silver tokens  
for small change.”  Cole and Co. were the principal bankers in Peter-  
borough; their London agents were Glyn and Co., 12, Birchin Lane.

9. Obverse.—SILVER XII TOKEN = View of the West front of  
   Peterborough Cathedral.
   Reverse.—DERBY LEICESTER NORTHAMPTON AND RUT-  
   LAND LICENSED SHILLING SILVER TOKEN  
   in eight lines, surrounded by  
   H. MORGAN  
   LICENSED MANUFACTURER 12 RATHBONE  
   PLACE LONDON.  
   The initial N and the final N of NORTHAMPTON line with D  
   in LICENSED and B in RATHBONE.  Davis, “Derby,” 3.  

10. Obverse.—The Arms of Leicester1 within crossed branches  
   of laurel; above, ONE SHILLING; below,  
   SILVER TOKEN.  
   Reverse.—From the same die as No. 9.  
   On the Obverse, the stems of the branches come over E in  

[Plate, fig. 8.  

[Plate, fig. 7.  

1 The Arms of Leicester are—“Gules, a cinquefoil pierced ermine.”
11. **Obverse.**—Similar to No. 10, but the stems of the branches come over E in SILVER and O in TOKEN.

**Reverse.**—Similar to No. 10, but the initial N of NORTHAMPTON lines with the space between LICENSED and MANUFACTURER and the final N cuts through the inner circle.


[Plate, fig. 6.]

12. **Obverse.**—From the same die as No. 11.

**Reverse.**—NOTTS DERBY LEICESTER NORTHAMPTON AND RUTLAND SHILLING SILVER TOKEN surrounded by MORGAN LICENSED MANUFACTURER 12 RATHBONE PLACE LONDON.


[Plate, fig. 5.]

13. **Obverse.**—From the same die as the reverse of No. 12.

**Reverse.**—ONE SHILLING TOKEN in three lines; below, H·M., the whole enclosed within a wreath of oak.


[Plate, fig. 9.]

14. A "mule," composed of the reverse of Nos. 9 or 11, and the reverse of No. 12.


Specimens of No. 14 are very rare, and no specimen has come under my notice. Nos. 9 and 13 also are of considerable rarity No. 12 is scarce. Nos. 10 and 11 are common.

Nos. 9 to 14 were manufactured by, or on the behalf of H. Morgan, 12, Rathbone Place, London. It is doubtful if these tokens were expressly executed on behalf of any firm or individual tradesman. They were probably kept in stock by Morgan and sold to tradesmen in the towns and counties named upon them. Morgan through the medium of the tokens, claimed to be a licensed maker of
tokens, but this claim does not appear to have any foundation in fact. A similar claim was put forward in the following advertisement which appeared in the London Star, June 24th, 1813:

"Local tokens of Gold and Silver invented and first made for Public Convenience, in March, 1811, by Messrs. Morgan and Co., Die Makers and Medallists, at their Licensed Token Manufactory, No. 12, Rathbone Place, Oxford Street, London, having been honoured with Legislative sanction and patronage, by three successive Acts of Parliament, continue to make to any design, for Companies and Individuals, at short notice, in that superior style of execution which has obtained for M. and Co. during the last two years numerous and extensive orders for Bankers, Manufacturers and Shopkeepers, in almost every city and town throughout the United Kingdom. N.B.—Unpaid letters will not be admitted. Dies of numerous patterns ready engraved."

Morgan's claim to issue tokens by Royal Licence appears to have attracted the attention of the press so early as 1811, for in the London Sun, of November 20th, and in Bell's Weekly Messenger, of November 24th of that year, we find the following notice:

"Silver Tokens.—As we have understood that large quantities of shilling and six-penny tokens have been issued by private individuals in different counties, and particularly in the City of Bristol and its neighbourhood, purporting to be issued by Royal License, we have thought it desirable to inquire into the circumstances, and we are enabled to authoritatively state that there has been no Royal License nor permission whatever granted or given for the issue of any such tokens. We are further enabled to state that an enquiry having been made at one of the places from which these tokens were issued 'what was meant by Royal License?' the answer given was—that it only meant the License which all Manufacturers of silver are obliged by law to take out. Persons therefore to
whom such tokens are offered should be upon their guard and aware that they have no security whatever for the return of the difference between their nominal and real value."

In the early part of the second decade of Queen Victoria’s reign there appears to have been a scarcity of farthings in circulation, and several Northampton tradesmen endeavoured to remedy this deficiency by the issue of farthing tokens. Only three varieties of these farthings have come under my notice, viz.:

15. **Obverse.**—GENT & CO TEA DEALERS. NORTHAMPTON = Head of Queen Victoria to left.
   **Reverse.**—THE BEST & CHEAPEST TEA COFFEE SUGAR &c = Arms, crest and supporters of the Grocers’ Company; below, GENT & CO NORTHAMPTON 1850 (in three lines).

This old-fashioned business was established in 1841, and an advertisement dated 1847, in my possession, shows that it was carried on at 4, George Row, and 14, The Drapery. The business was afterwards carried on by a son of the issuer of the token, at the former address, down to about 1890. “Gent’s farthings,” which were well-known in Northampton, were frequently met with and freely taken in circulation by local tradesmen down to about 1880. About 1887 Mr. Gent, who had for several years been withdrawing these farthings from circulation, showed me a box containing at least 2,000 which he was about to have melted. Probably that fact would account for the present scarcity of these tokens.

16. **Obverse.**—VICTORIA QUEEN OF GREAT BRITAIN. = Head of Queen Victoria to left; below, the truncation, P & C°.
   **Reverse.**—T. HAMSON GROCER & TEA DEALER MARE FAIR NORTHAMPTON (in five lines).

Thomas Hamson, born 1832, was a son of John Hamson of The Green Man Inn, St. James’s End, Northampton. In the 'fifties
Thomas commenced business as a grocer, etc., at the sign of The
Golden Tea Pot, on the south side of Mare Fair and a short distance
westward of Free School Lane. He had in his employ, as an adver-
tisement, a real Chinaman. This would be in the late 'fifties.
Thomas Hamson left Northampton early in the 'sixties, and went to
Liverpool, where he carried on Dod's Hotel. Subsequently he retired
to New Brighton, and died there about thirty years ago.

17. **Obverse.**—From the same die as No. 16.

*Reverse.*—PERKINS TEA DEALER TOP OF DRAPERY
NORTHAMPTON (in five lines).

[Plate, fig. 12.]

In addition to the foregoing, there are several brass and copper
checks issued for different values by inns in Northampton, Peter-
borough, etc., but, as they were current only at the establishment
in which they were issued, and did not obtain a general currency
as tokens, I have not included them in this list.