COINS AND TOKENS OF THE BRITISH POSSESSIONS OVERSEAS

SOME UNPUBLISHED VARIETIES

By H. ALEXANDER PARSONS

The Coins and Tokens of the Possessions and Colonies of the British Empire, by James Atkins, published in 1889, is still the standard work on the subject, but the information it gives as been amplified in numerous sectional treatises issued since, both in this country and abroad.

Of the English monographs on the subject the most illuminating, to my mind, is the Catalogue of the Coins and Tokens in the Museum of the Royal Mint, by W. J. Hocking, issued in 1906. In this useful work will be found not only the numerous dates of coins issued since Atkins’ work was published, up to the beginning of the present century, but also many additions to the lists of dates given by Atkins for coinages struck prior to 1889. The coins and tokens of Ceylon and the British copper tokens of the Straits Settlements and Malayan Archipelago have been exhaustively dealt with in the Numismatic Chronicle of 1895, and articles on the countermarked coins of the British West Indies and on the early Bombay pice of the British East India Company have appeared in the British Numismatic Journal, vols. i and xx respectively. The coins of Griqualand have been dealt with in a brochure from the pen of the present writer, published by Spink & Son in 1927, whilst Chalmers’s History of Currency in the British Colonies, 1893, deals with the whole subject in its historical aspect.

In monographs issued abroad, Canadian and Australian coins and tokens have been frequently dealt with, since Atkins’s book was written, by the numismatists of those great territories, whilst a more complete account of the coins of the West Indies based on the Spanish dollar has been published by the American Numismatic Society, 1915. The coins of Pulu Penang and Java (the latter being included in his work on The Coins of the Dutch East Indies, 1931) have been exhaustively dealt with by Sir John Bucknill, whilst the history of the coinages of the East India
Company has been written by Edgar Thurstan as an introduction to the catalogue of the coins in the Madras Museum, and this catalogue includes a number of varieties not appearing in Atkins' work.

After examination of all available sources of information on the subject I have, however, been unable to trace that adequate treatment or, in most cases, any notice at all has been given to the major varieties of coins and tokens which I now bring under notice, all of which were struck before the date of Atkins's work, although it should be mentioned that some are fairly well known through the sale catalogues in which they have, from time to time, appeared. I emphasize the fact that the pieces now being brought to the Society's notice are major issues or variants, as any complete account of all the unpublished varieties, major and minor, of colonial coins and tokens would involve a long list of variants in lettering, of edgings and of minor differences in the designs. A description of these small variants must be left for a thorough revision and reprint of Atkins's work. Furthermore, I can only speak of such major unpublished varieties as I have myself seen and handled, or which have come under my own notice. It may be that other students and collectors could, from their experience, add to the list. It should also be mentioned that certain pieces, not in the standard works, which are in reality trade tickets or checks pure and simple, have been omitted in deference to a strict adherence to my title.

Commencing with Europe, the regal coinage of Gibraltar is confined, by Atkins, to a description of the two-quart, one-quart, and half-quart pieces of the date 1842, although he mentions the pattern set of similar design dated 1861. Atkins and other writers on the colonial currency seem, however, to have been unaware of the pattern one-quart piece dated 1841 which, although very rare, has appeared in sales from time to time, notably in that of the collection of a nobleman—Count Ferrari—dispersed in London in March 1922, when no less than three specimens appeared. An example of this coin, from my own collection, is here shown, Pl. I, 1. These one-quart pieces of 1841 are undoubtedly the first assays for the regular coinage of 1842, which was sent out to the colony at the instance of the Governor who, in the previous year, had asked that a copper coinage of
£2,500 in quarts might be coined at the mint. The actual amount coined was, in fact, only £420 worth.¹

Close examination of the one-quart pieces dated 1841 shows that the final figure was struck over the date 1840, and as the obverse is exactly similar to the ordinary copper farthing of England of 1840 there seems little doubt that, when a trial was made for the coinage of 1842, the obverse die of the English farthing of 1840 was utilized and a figure 1 cut over the cipher.

An unpublished two-quart piece of 1841 was included in the Caldecott sale of June 1912. The half-quart pieces, undated, described in the above-mentioned Ferrari sale catalogue of 1922 as unpublished, which were no doubt assays of the same time as the one-quart pieces and two-quart pieces under discussion, were, in fact, fully described in 1906 by Mr. W. J. Hocking in his Royal Mint Catalogue, vol. i, and they cannot therefore have a place here as unpublished coins.

Before leaving the regal coinage of Gibraltar mention might usefully be made of the existence of two-quart and one-quart pieces of the date 1860, both of which were catalogued in the Numismatic Circular of 1933, p. 231. From these it is evident that there were serious intentions of issuing a further regal coinage for Gibraltar even earlier than 1861, the date of the patterns mentioned by Atkins. It is understood that these two-quart and one-quart pieces of 1860 are now in the Gibraltar Museum, a most suitable place for them.

The regal coinage of 1842 superseded the interesting local token currency which had been used in the colony from the early years of the nineteenth century. Of this token issue Atkins gives a comparatively complete list, but one variety of major importance, unknown to him, should have a place here. It is an example of the earliest two-quarts of the date 1802, on the obverse of which the sea in the foreground of the view of Gibraltar is considerably curtailed. The “Rock” itself is much varied in its details and the date is shown on the obverse, instead of on the reverse, in the large exergual space left by the curtailment of part of the seaboard. On the reverse, the design of the castle towers is engraved at the top part of the die, with the legend, VALUE 2 QUARTS,
in three lines beneath. The usual key is accommodated between the A and L of the word VALUE. The normal type depicts the castle and key in the centre, surrounded by the legend, VALUE TWO QUARTS.

The above rare piece has not appeared in the more important sale catalogues, but one is in my collection and is here shown, Pl. I, 2. Possibly it was struck as a pattern, but rejected in favour of the published type.

A special currency for the Ionian Islands was first dated 1819 and it extended to 1862, the Islands being ceded to Greece in 1863. The types and dates of the coins issued were limited and Atkins is still fairly complete in his descriptions of them. He omits, however, to notice a number of patterns, of which the more important are a pattern five-oboli piece of 1819 with berries on the spray held by Britannia, and the initials, W. W., in the exergue; and a pattern piece of four-oboli, struck in 1821, and evidently of local workmanship. Specimens of both these pieces, although very rare, have appeared in various sales during the present century and one of each, from my own collection, is illustrated here, Pl. I, 3 & 4. The regular coinage consisted of denominations of the value of ten-oboli, five-oboli and two-and-a-half-oboli, and were produced in England from dies made by W. Wyon. They are dated 1819 and 1820, but they are not signed like the pattern five-oboli piece above mentioned. From the latter year to 1834 no further consignments of coins were dispatched to the islands. In the interval some local attempt appears to have been made to supplement the original issue of coins from England and, at the same time, to meet a change in the currency needs of the inhabitants, by the introduction of a different denomination, viz., a piece of four-oboli. The designs of the latter closely follow those of the English-made pieces, but on the reverse a large figure 4 appears in the exergue which, on the official coins, is blank.

Atkins mentions that there are varieties of the ten- and five-oboli pieces made by muling the reverses with the obverses of the Irish penny of George IV, and the Ceylon stiver of George III, respectively. This practice of mixing the dies of coins of different dependencies was a comparatively common one in the earlier days of our colonial currencies, although individual specimens of the coins so
produced are very rare, but I can bring under notice, Pl. I, 5, a further example of a similar character, the obverse being from the die of the Sierra Leone Company’s penny of 1791, with the design of a lion couchant, surrounded by the legend, SIERRA LEONE COMPANY AFRICA, and the reverse being struck from the die of the one-forty-eighth rupee of Madras, struck in 1794 and 1797, with the design of the arms of the East India Company surrounded by its motto and the value. This coin could not have been struck earlier than 1794, although the date on the regular penny is 1791.

The possibility of dies of coins of widely separated dependencies being muled together is readily understood when it is realized that there was one common centre at various periods for the minting of the early colonial coinages, viz. London, Birmingham, or Calcutta, but it is not so easy to explain the reason for the issue of these anomalous pieces. It is improbable that they had official sanction, and the more likely explanation is that they are the results of a looser supervision over the output of the mints than obtains nowadays, which enabled some officials, without sanction, to have these muled types struck off as souvenirs or, possibly, to dispose of to collectors as rare varieties. Many eighteenth-century tokens were struck from mixed dies for the same reasons. A further variation of the same general character as this muling of dies, and no doubt explainable in the same way, is an example of an unpublished coin in my collection, and here shown, Pl. I, 6, made up of two obverses of the double pice of Bombay dated 1804, or four kapangs of Sumatra of the same date. An example of this coin appeared in the Caldecott sale of 1912, lot 74, where it was described as a pattern.

A more interesting example of apparent muling of dies is represented in a coin in the collection of Dr. A. N. Brushfield and here shown, Pl. I, 7. It also appears to have escaped reference in the standard works. Its description is as follows:

Obv. Crest of the East India Company with the motto of the Company, AUSPICIO REGIS ET SENATUS ANGLIÆ, and date, 1824, around.

Rev. An inscription, RECU AU. BUR: DU TRES: surrounding the value, *pour 50 Sous*, the whole within an outside border of zigzag pattern.
The obverse of this rare piece has been shown by Sir John Bucknill to be that of a pattern one-third cent for Pulu Penang. This pattern is referred to by Atkins under miscellaneous Indian coins, No. 213, p. 191.

The 50 sous of Mauritius, the reverse of which forms the reverse side of the unpublished piece under notice was (with the 25 sous) struck in Calcutta in 1822, and only in that year, and it may be that two years later, in 1824, there was some intention of renewing the coins with an obverse design of more typically English character. If this view can be accepted the piece would belong to the category of official assays for a projected coinage. The designs are not only suitable, whereas in the other mules referred to they are largely inappropriate, but the coin is exceedingly thick, and is struck in copper, instead of base silver, the proper metal. The intrinsic value of the ordinary base silver 50 sous of 1822 was 6½d. The implication is that our coin is, in this instance, an officially issued trial piece struck on a thick copper blank.

One of the more complete of our separate mongraphs on the colonial currencies is that on the "British Copper Tokens of the Straits Settlements and Malayan Archipelago", by H. Leslie Ellis. In it the author mentions, as No. 8 of the series, a coin which he suggests is a pattern four- or five-kapang piece of Susu, a town in Sumatra. It is a very large piece, compared with the rest of the series, and it bears, on the obverse, a boldly executed figure of the Malay cock in high relief, and on the reverse, the place of issue in Malay characters, together with the date of issue, 1804, in European figures. Specimens of this coin are generally represented in the larger colonial collections, and I have seen examples which show obvious traces of having been in circulation. One such is in the collection of Dr. A. N. Brushfield. So far as I can ascertain, the only reason for calling these pieces patterns is their rarity, and certainly they are very seldom met with, but it is not apparent why a small place in Sumatra should have had patterns struck in anticipation of a coinage when more important places in the same general area had no such preliminary emissions. Further,

1 Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, vol. xx, 1924, No. 4.
3 Num. Chron., 1895, p. 135.
this place of Susu had no separate coinage if one excludes the pieces under notice. My explanation is that they form part of a small emission of coins or tokens for Susu which, on account of their large size and heavy weight, were only for a short time in use, and they were then recalled or driven out of circulation. The specimen mentioned by Ellis is stated by him to weigh 180 grains. The two in my collection and here shown, Pl. I, 8, 9, weigh 98½ and 179 grains respectively. Dr. Brushfield’s example and the one in the British Museum also weigh only about 98 grains. Apparently Ellis was unaware of pieces so light as to weigh only 98 grains. The average weight of the numerous kapangs described by Ellis is 32 grains each, and he mentions also two-kapang pieces weighing over 60 grains. I suggest, therefore, on the weight test, that the pieces under notice form part of a coinage of three-kapangs and six-kapangs, and that they should have a place in any work on colonial coins as such.

Before leaving the Malay States, mention should be made of a piece in my collection and here shown, Pl. I, 10, which was unnoticed by Ellis and appears to be a trial for the ordinary one-kapang piece, with cock to right, and the inscription “The Land of the Malays”. It is uniface, like the first copper cent of Pulu Penang, and it was overstruck on a halfpenny of George III.

A small but interesting series of coins was struck by the African Company for use on the Gold Coast in 1796. On the reverse of the coins appears the shield of arms, with supporters and crest, of the Company, surrounded by an inscription, FREE TRADE TO AFRICA BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT [sic] 1750. The coins, comprising ackey, half-ackey, quarter-ackey, and one-takoe piece, are fully described by Atkins, who adds that silver, pewter, and bronze proofs exist of all the pieces named. In addition, I can now bring under notice and illustrate here, Pl. II, 1, a pattern trial piece for the reverse of the half-ackey of 1796 struck on a large pewter blank, no doubt an unique piece which has fortunately escaped destruction after serving its purpose of showing how the coins would appear. The reverse ultimately adopted for the approved coins was, however, engraved rather closer than the pattern under notice, the inscription being brought nearer to the shield of arms forming the central design.
The early currency history of Canada is similar to that of many other of our colonies, i.e. the people had to make shift with a variety of foreign pieces, cut coins, and more or less badly executed local tokens or imitations of them, and in a memoir of the date 1837 "On the Miserable State of the Currency of the British North American Provinces" it is stated: "The miserable coppers which are now in circulation, consist of base coin and tokens of all descriptions, and frequently pieces of sheet copper which have never been impressed, and do not weigh more than a fourth or a half of the weight of an English halfpenny." It was just previous to this date, in about 1836, that the Bank of Montreal came to the rescue of the people and imported from Birmingham a quantity of "Bank tokens" the first issue of which comprised the well-known series of "Bouquet" tokens, to be followed, in 1837, by an even better series of that truly Canadian token on one side of which was engraved the arms of Montreal and on the other a typical French Canadian farmer. This in turn was followed, in 1838, by the handsome series of tokens on which the "farmer" design was replaced by a "corner" view of the bank's premises, to be subsequently displaced, in 1842, by a "front" view of the bank. The above several series of fine tokens issued by the Bank of Montreal came to an end for all practical purposes in 1844, and there Atkins leaves them, but in 1845 the Bank of Montreal obtained an authorization to import a further supply of copper coin to the extent of £1,200. For some unrecorded reason the coins were not issued, although dies were prepared, at least for the halfpenny, and two specimens were struck off them. One of these extremely rare and interesting tokens is, or was, in the collection of Mr. Thomas Wilson, Clarence, Ontario, whilst the other is in the cabinet of the present writer, and is here illustrated, Pl. II, 2.

With the above exceptions dated 1845, the whole of the "front" view Bank of Montreal tokens were issued in the two years 1842 and 1844, the specimens dated 1837 being rare "mules" with an obverse of the previous Canadian farmer type and the Bank Building type, but it is evident

1 Canadian Archives, vol. xxiv, p. 96.
that there was some idea of an issue in 1843, to be coupled with a change of type, since unique patterns of the penny and halfpenny are in existence, although unknown to Atkins, of the date 1843, with an obverse composed of a coroneted bust of Victoria surrounded by the inscription VICTORIA DEI GRATIA REGINA with date, 1843, beneath, as on the New Brunswick coinage, and on the reverse the usual "front" view of the Bank of Montreal.

McLachlan published the halfpenny and stated that the only specimen known is in the cabinet of the Library of Parliament, Ottawa. The solitary example of the penny, hitherto unknown, is in the collection of the present writer, and is here illustrated, Pl. II, 3.

On the other hand, the penny of ordinary type, dated 1844, No. 160 in Atkins, was not struck, the coinage that year being confined to halfpennies.

The issue of bank tokens, relinquished by the Bank of Montreal in 1844–5, was continued by the Quebec Bank in 1852 and the Bank of Upper Canada in 1850, 1852, 1854, and 1857. In the latter year an Act was passed by the Legislature of Canada (vide Chalmers, p. 188) under which Act Government transactions were to be calculated in dollars and cents and the Government undertook the duty, long shirked by it, of providing a supply of official coins. These were first struck in 1858 and comprised copper cents and silver twenty-, ten-, and five-cent pieces. An extremely rare pattern uniface cent in yellow bronze, unknown to Atkins and McLachlan, marks this official issue of coins. It is from a reverse die only, but its fellow obverse, also uniface, is number 5 in McLachlan. The design of the unpublished reverse consists of the legend ONE CENT 1858, in three lines, surrounded by a scroll-like border made up of maple leaves and seed-pods. It was struck also on a smaller flan. The border adopted for the current cents consisted of a simpler one of maple leaves strung one after the other round the edge of the coin.

A specimen of this unpublished uniface cent appeared in the Montagu, Murdoch, and Caldecott collections, and another was in the Count Ferrari sale. One is also in my collection and is here illustrated, Pl. II, 4.

1 The Copper Currency of the Canadian Banks, 1837–57.
2 Patterns struck at the Royal Mint for Canada, 1908.
The change to the decimal system was not welcomed in Canada at the time and very little of the coinage instituted in 1858 was put into circulation. Indeed, there appears to have been some idea of a return to the pence issues, for in my collection, and here illustrated, Pl. II, 5, is a pattern half-penny in yellow bronze with an obverse of the usual type, but a reverse consisting of Britannia seated to right on a shield, with a trident in the left hand, and surrounded by an inscription, HALF PENNY MDCCCLIX, separated by rosettes. This pattern piece was also unknown to Atkins and McLachlan.

An unusual Canadian token, apparently unique, which appeared in the Caldecott sale of June 1912, lot No. 395, should have a place here. It was struck on a flan which was Sheffield plated and bears on the obverse a Canadian canoe, beached on the edge of a lake of rippling water. On the reverse appears the letters RDI, with Co underneath, evidently the initials of the issuer. The illustration in the catalogue above mentioned shows it to have been of the cent size and in my collection, and here illustrated, Pl. II, 6, is a similar unpublished piece but only half the size. Nothing appears, so far, to be known of these pieces, but they have rather an archaic appearance which suggests an issue at the beginning of the nineteenth century, or even earlier.1

Before leaving the early tokens of Canada reference might usefully be made to an important, though hitherto unnoticed, variety of the “Ships, Colonies, and Commerce” halfpenny, numbered 232 in Atkins. This is a very common token which had a large circulation in Canada in the period prior to the introduction of the Bank of Montreal Bouquet tokens in 1836. The reverse depicts a ship in full sail over a stretch of sea, and there are numerous die varieties made

1 Since the above was written Professor A. S. Morton, of Saskatoon, has suggested that the letters on the reverse may signify the Robert Dickson Indian Company. Colonel Robert Dickson was a fur trader with headquarters at Niagara and Michilimackinac, and Brigadier-Gen. E. A. Cruikshank, of Ottawa, informs me that Dickson traded with the Indians in the vicinity of the Wisconsin and Missouri rivers from about 1790 until 1812, that from 1812 until 1815 he was engaged in the British military service as superintendent of the Western Indians, and that he died about 1823.

Although there is no written evidence to connect the tokens under discussion with Colonel Robert Dickson, the type of the obverse, an Indian canoe on rippling water, and the initials on the reverse, form strong presumptive evidence that the tokens were issued by him for trading purposes and that the period of their use was between 1790 and 1812.
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Plate II
up of the different forms of the sails of the ship, or the ship's position in the waves of the sea, and in the size and form of the letters. In addition, however, there is a rarer major variety consisting of the substitution of the star-spangled banner of the United States for the usual Union Jack which floats out from the stern of the ship. Most of the large collections have, no doubt, a specimen or two of this scarce major variety but, in addition there is, in my own collection and here shown, **PI. II, 7**, a still more rare example which bears, in the exergual space beneath the waves on the left side, the initials of the engraver or issuer, W & B. N.Y., for W & B of New York. The bulk of these tokens are believed to have been made in England, but some, no doubt, were manufactured in Montreal, and the variety now brought under notice shows that they were made also in New York, U.S.A.

Without describing them in detail, Atkins refers, under Nova Scotia, to a series of pattern regal coins in bronze which are, however, more fully described by McLachlan in his account of the patterns struck for Canada at the Royal Mint. Amongst these patterns are a cent and a half-cent, dated 1861, the reverse of which bears a crown encircled by a heavy close wreath of roses and rose leaves, a design which McLachlan suggests was not adopted for the reason that the trailing arbutus or mayflower, previously adopted as the emblem of Nova Scotia, was not represented in the wreath. Colour is certainly given to this suggestion by the fact that on the authorized cents and half-cents, issued in the same year, the roses are mixed with mayflowers. In this series of patterns, No. 8 of McLachlan is a description of one of the cents on which the last figure of the date is wanting. This cent is also specifically referred to by Atkins; but neither Atkins nor McLachlan appear to have been aware of the existence of the corresponding half-cent, now in my collection, and here shown, **PI. II, 8**, with the same peculiarity that the last figure of the date is omitted.

The coinage of the West Indies in the earlier colonial periods was composed mainly of Spanish currency, sometimes cut into divisions for smaller change, and in a great many cases counterstamped with the initials of the various islands, or by some other suitable device, to restrict the circulation of the coins to the areas for which they were countermarked. Atkins is most incomplete in his description of these early
countermarked coins, but the gaps have been filled to a great extent, firstly, by Caldecott, in volume i of the British Numismatic Journal, and, secondly, by Howland Wood in his monograph entitled The Coinage of the West Indies, published by the American Numismatic Society in 1915. In the latter work a passing reference is made to bits and half-bits struck in brass for circulation on the island of St. Eustatius, on the reverse of which appears the name of Herman Gossling. No adequate description of these rare pieces appears, however, to have been published, and fuller attention might therefore usefully be drawn to them, more especially as their date, 1771, places them amongst the very earliest of our colonial token currencies. The island was occupied by the French in 1781, but prior to this date it was in English hands.

The token currency issued under the English régime may be described as follows:

1. **Obv.** Goose, grazing in grass, surrounded by the inscription, GOD BLESS ST EUSTATIUS & GOV

   **Rev.** The value, I BT, surrounded by his inscription, HERMAN GOSSLING. 1771.

2. **Obv.** As the previous piece, but struck on a smaller flan.

   **Rev.** The value, ½ BT, with the same inscription as before.

   The choice of a goose, or gosling, as the main device seems to be a play upon the name, Gossling, of the issuer.

   A specimen of the half-bit appeared in the Murdoch sale, lot 565, and an example of the bit was in the Caldecott sale, lot 468.1 Specimens of the two denominations are also in my collection and are here exhibited, Pl. II, 9, 10, and a pair was advertised in the Numismatic Circular some years ago.

   In bringing to an end this list of some of the more important unpublished coins and tokens struck for, or in, the British dominions overseas, may I express the hope that it will prove useful in connexion with a badly needed revision of Atkins's work on the subject.

1 There is also a specimen of the bit in the British Museum.