CENTRAL OR LOCAL PRODUCTION OF SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY TOKENS

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Introduction

THE tokens of the seventeenth century were issued in more than four thousand localities of England, Wales and Ireland.¹ They name as their issuers individuals known locally; they refer to trade signs recorded locally; and they give local spellings of place-names. It would have been natural to assume that their production was local also.

Such an assumption might have relied on, and is to some extent realised in various contemporary statements from the period 1650 to 1713, which refer to shopkeepers, chapmen and others, in many parts of England and Ireland, making and uttering their own tokens.² Above all, however, the concept of local production must have been shaped by Samuel Pegge, who stated in 1757 that halfpence and farthings were coined by the incorporations of cities and boroughs, by several of the companies there, and by the tradespeople and victuallers, at pleasure, both in them, and in country villages³.

These statements notwithstanding, the purpose of the present paper is to consider whether the tokens were in reality made locally.⁴ The evidence will be reviewed under three heads: itinerant engravers; London dies and local mints; London mint and localised dies, i.e. dies delivered to an issuer after striking.

Itinerant Engravers

When assumptions about local fabrication were confronted with collections of tokens, it became necessary to take account of similarities between tokens from different areas. The ‘similarity of design, both in style, lettering, and device, and a correspondence of mint-marks in the tokens of many adjacent places’, led to a hypothesis of local artists who ‘travelled on from town to town, something in the manner of the ancient Anglo-Saxon

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¹ In Scotland, which had its own copper coinage, tokens were issued only in Dunbar and Edinburgh, for which see G. C. Williamson, `Trade Tokens issued in the Seventeenth Century' (London, 1889-91), p. 953, and pp. 1423-4 (Uncertain 44). The total derives from the writer's card index of 'Token toponyms' which, including references, comfortably fills five drawers, each of which has a maximum capacity of about a thousand cards.


⁴ A version of this paper was first read at the British Numismatic Society's symposium on the coinage of the seventeenth century held at the University of Aston, Birmingham on 2 November 1985.
moneymen, designing tokens for the various villages and towns through which they passed.\(^5\)

This concept of moneymen had been espoused in particular by Archdeacon Pownall, who proposed that the copulative ON meant that a moneyer was only temporarily exercising his office in the particular town, and, as shown by the occurrence of the same name in different towns, accompanied the king from place to place. Before Williamson published his catalogue, Willett had opposed to the theory of itinerant moneymen the few name-identities at adjacent places, and the many names which occur in one place only. The theory was given its quietus by Keary.\(^6\)

It had been incorporated, however, in the introduction to what has remained for a century the standard catalogue of seventeenth-century tokens. In 1908 the British Numismatic Society was assured, probably by W. C. Wells, that 'it was the custom of die-sinkers and engravers of tokens to pass from place to place in pursuit of their calling, and much of the work is so characteristic that experts are able to determine the part of the country to which doubtful types must be allotted'.\(^7\) This extraordinary skill has not been vouchsafed to successors of these unnamed experts. To the extent that regional variations in seventeenth-century tokens are perceptible, they would now be explained by chronological differences in the spread of tokens to different areas.

In 1921 'Clifford\(^*\) Thompson' (the artist has not been identified) drew an accomplished reconstruction of Travelling token minters of the 17th century (pl. 16, 1). It appears to be loosely based on Pegge’s account of a press (though not on his illustration of a die), with ‘four pieces of good oak, not less than four inches thick, & very strongly dove-tailed together’, a stout iron screw of an inch or more diameter, and four nine-inch handles fixed to the top of the screw; with two persons to operate the press; even perhaps with copper being beaten out, or blanks 'commodiously rounded', by the woman near the door. In addition there is a pan on a brazier, presumably to heat the blanks for easier striking (but cold working is normal for coining). This reconstruction is as imaginative as it is imaginary.

In 1963 these peripatetic producers were reduced to ‘travelling tin-smiths’, who would call upon the tradespeople of the village, town, or county, and offer to strike off any number of pieces; but the tinplate industry was an eighteenth-century development. In 1966 engravers were assumed to have travelled, with David Ramage striking tokens at Bristol, Gloucester and Oxford; but the presence of his initial on the tokens of those cities does not prove that he struck them in the cities. More recently, the identity of punches used for issuers from various towns suggested the existence of itinerant coiners who took their ‘simple equipment’ from town to town, in a fashion reminiscent of the travelling mints of antiquity; but this model has as little claim to reliability as that of Anglo-Saxon moneymen.\(^8\)

What seems at first sight the most substantial evidence for itinerant engravers is the

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\(^{5}\) Williamson, p. xxiii [= p. xxi in the 1967 reprint]. He was more circumspect in his Jottings on the Regal Coinage and Token Currency of Guildford (London, [1884]), adding notes as to the reappearance of the name of the moneyer ‘to test Canon Pownall’s opinion...’ (cancellans between pp. 8 and 9). On the very same page xxiii Williamson states also that many tokens were struck in London, and consequently names of both issuers and places ‘incorrectly’ spelt.


\(^{7}\) BNJ 5 (1908), 433–4. The authorship of the remarks is not quite certain since three papers were reported together.

following entry in the Bath City Chamberlain’s accounts, dated 12 October 1672, and covering income and expenditure for the previous twelve months.9

‘Item pd Mr Garill for makeing & vending of farthins by compositon 20|00|00’

If Garill had vended as well as made the farthings he would clearly have needed to be in Bath. Publishing this entry, Sydenham saw it as of special interest as giving the name of the maker of the 1670 Bath farthings, approved on 7 March of that year. He added the following comments written to him by Williamson: ‘Garill was a die sinker in Birmingham, who, I believe, travelled about striking Tokens in many places. I have met with his name in Hull and in Exeter also, and in the latter place there are entries of orders given to him (Garill) for the supply of Tokens’.10 Williamson’s reference to Hull and Exeter is unexplained; his reference to Birmingham is inexplicable.11

The strange word ‘composition’ Sydenham took to mean that, instead of Garill being paid so much per thousand or by weight, the amount was compounded for by a lump sum. Yet it can refer to more than a debt, and mean the settling of a liability by some mutual arrangement. The entry must in fact record, not a payment for doing something, but a payment for not doing something; for John Garill, a common informer who specialised in the prosecution of token issuers, was willing to compound for expenses until forbidden to do so by the Privy Council, which granted pardons in 1671 to a number of towns, among them the City of Bath.12 The recorded payment to Garill should therefore be understood to have been in compounding for the making and vending of farthings by or for the City of Bath, and not (belatedly) for his making and vending them.

That some seventeenth-century tokens were not made in the place of issue is evident in the following three cases of incorrect legends. Will Bassett, mercer in Cambridge, is from the same obverse die as Will Bassett, mercer in Cowbridge (South Glamorgan), where one William Bassett died about 1680, and another in 1704 whose widow’s inventory reveals them to have been merces; so the Cambridge reverse must have been prepared in error from misread instructions in a place where Cowbridge was less well known. Secondly, Edward Tomson in the Vale of Lincoln is from a reverse die which was subsequently altered to read BALE of Lincoln, in which state it was again paired with the same obverse; so the Vale reverse must have been sunk in error in circumstances in which The Bail of Lincoln was unfamiliar, and a vale of Lincoln could be supposed to exist. Lastly, William Groves in Sheffield is from the same obverse die as William Groves in Sheffield in Bedfordshire (pl. 16, 2–3), so clearly one is wrong; the first may be unique, whereas two out of the three specimens of the second recorded in 1928 were in Bedfordshire, so Sheffield must have been entered in error in some place distant from Sheffield. Neither could such a mistake have been easily made in the vicinity of Sheffield, which already was a centre for metal working.13

9 Bath City Record Office, Chamberlain’s Account Roll no. 117, from which a photocopy was kindly supplied by the Bath City Archivist.

10 S. Sydenham, ‘Bath City and traders’ tokens issued during the 17th century’, Proceedings of the Bath Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club, 10 (1905), 423–525 (at pp. 437–9).


These cases argue strongly against travelling engravers. Moreover, support for this hypothesis has often resembled blown straws, to be plucked from windy orations, and the reported proceedings of societies. Not once has it been built into a firmly-argued structure that could withstand the scrutiny of critics. This first hypothesis suffers from a total lack of clear evidence. Itinerant engravers are, to borrow from Rochester, senseless stories, idle tales, dreams, whimsies, and no more.

**London Dies and Local Mints**

Close examination of seventeenth-century tokens shows that with few exceptions they were struck from dies. The exceptions are mostly castings in lead or pewter, a vernacular technique not confined to any one period; although in addition the Bushey hoard revealed a lead piece, presumably contemporary, which had been squeezed between two die-struck tokens. The dies were sunk from individual punches for the letters and for certain devices such as the arms of Bristol. The existence of so many punches places production of the dies in a large-scale establishment, where alone would it be in any way economic to have quantities of punches available for individual token issuers.14

Neither would this large-scale establishment have been newly erected. The regular use of the capital letter-form -I- to represent the sounds of modern I and J, and the use of the form -V- to represent U and V, point to a traditional die-cutting workshop, for the modern differentiation according to sound had been usual in printing since the 1620s. The same may be inferred from the initial use of the two letters -VV- to represent W, for Latin, which has no W in its alphabet, was not used for current coins from 1649, the year in which the main series of tokens began.15

The location of this die-cutting establishment is suggested by the signature ‘R’ on city tokens of Bristol, Gloucester and Oxford (as mentioned above), also on various private tokens. This identifies a recognisable style of dies, and has been firmly attributed to David Ramage (died 1662), a member of the Company of Moneyers at the Tower mint. The conclusion from all this, and from the similarities between tokens from different areas, must be that the dies of an overwhelming proportion of seventeenth-century tokens were sunk in London.16

Where, however, were the London-made dies put to use? It would have been possible, in principle, to send them to the issuers for use in their localities, as had happened for coinage

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15 R. B. McKerrow, *An Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (Oxford, 1927), pp. 310-12. It would appear that William Munck of Blandford Forum (steward of the almshouses 1654-5, 1655-6, and bailiff 1657) was a devotee of the reformed spelling, insisting that his surname be written not with -V- but with -U-, which the diesinker, however, could only represent by -II-; *SCBI* 38, Norweb 854-5, and references. For examples of -VV- see Milne, *Oxfordshire*, 180, 188, and *SCBI* 31 and 38, Norweb 186, 231, 919, 1283, 1728, 1753.

16 For examples of -R- see *SCBI* 31 and 38, Norweb 185-6, 379, 1127; for Ramage see Milne, *Oxfordshire*, pp. xiv-xv. Of the 1,789 different tokens in *SCBI* 31 and 38, Norweb Parts I and II, numbers 70, 647, 812, 1395, 1453a-b, 1504, 1514a-b, and 1506a-b were either cast from moulds, or struck from engraved dies. In addition, two cast pieces have been transferred from Colchester to an Uncertain category, and tokens of Jeffrey Masmere of Wantage, and John Marrat of Ashbourne, categorised as Forgeries. Apart from the sixteenth-century square farthings (1444-50), all the remainder, to which are added many duplicates, appear to have been struck from London dies.
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(but with rocker-press and rotary-press dies) as recently as the 1640s. Indeed, there have been specific suggestions of local token mints at Huddersfield, Bradford and Sheffield; at The Mint in Rye; at the premises of a brasier cum pewterer in Winchcombe; at an inn called The Old Mint at Southam in Warwickshire; in the West Country for Bridgewater and Taunton; and most recently in Birmingham, 'and one can safely assume that other towns made their contributions to the industry'. From the appearance of John Murrey's 1668 Manx penny tokens 'it seems likely that they were produced in Birmingham', according to Mackay; but 'are much more likely to have been struck on the island from London-engraved dies', according to Dolley. In May 1989 the Keeper of Coins and Medals at the British Museum assured the British Numismatic Society that seventeenth-century tokens must have been struck locally, on the grounds that that is where the dies are found.

Most influentially, Samuel Pegge provided in 1757 a highly circumstantial account of how the affair of coining was managed and conducted by the private tradesman. His fourth paragraph reads as follows. 19

... At the borough of Chesterfield in Derbyshire, Mr Edward Wood, and afterwards his son Richard Wood, were both of them apothecaries, coin'd money amongst others; and on the death of the late Mr Edward Wood, son of the said Richard, the dies and the press were found in the house, from whence we are enabled to comprehend the whole process, which may be presum'd not to have been very intricate. These Woods coined only halfpennies, and there were two sets of dies, one for the father's, and the other for the son's money, who I suppose had a set of dies made for himself on his father's decease. They were apothecaries, as was mentioned above, and the device was accordingly Apollo Opifer. These dies I have seen, and by the favour of the gentlemen concern'd, to whom I am greatly oblig'd, one set has fallen into my possession. What I mean by a set is an obverse and reverse; these were cut upon two small pieces of steel, which were afterwards welded upon a larger block of iron, of which the size and the form are expressed in the plate, fig. 8. The press consisted of four pieces of good oak, not less than four inches thick, & very strongly dove-tail'd together. In the upper cross piece was fasten'd an iron box with a female screw, thro' which there passed a stout iron screw of an inch or more diameter, to the bottom of which was fixed one of the dies, whilst the other was received into a square hole made in the bottom cross piece, where it lay very steady as in a proper bed. The screw was wrought by hand, in the manner of a capstan, by means of four handles affixed to the top of it, of about 9 inches each long. And thus, after the copper was reduc'd to a proper thickness, shorn to a size, and commodiously rounded, many hundreds of halfpence might be coined, by two persons, in a very short time, by a man we will suppose to ply the screw, and a woman or boy to put on and take off the pieces. And yet, I assure you, sir, these Chesterfield halfpennies were extremely well struck (see fig. 1. 7).

19 Thomas Bushell used a rocker-press at Aberystwith, then Shrewsbury, Oxford, and Bristol, and Oxford again, and Sir Richard Vyvyan likewise at Truro and Exeter: the tokens show no evidence of the pinching at two opposite points on the edge which characterised the products of such a press. A rotary press, as used at York, seldom produced designs in a perfect circle, and might result in coins with a turned-down edge, or with portions of two impressions on one side, or coins incompletely cut from the strip (Scrib 33, Brooker, Charles 1, pp. xxvii–xxxi); the tokens do not exhibit these characteristics, and do have 'curved clips' (see below), which means that the blanks were cut out before striking. None of the known token dies are for a rocker or a rotary press.

18 Sketches of Hall Celebrities, or, Memoirs and Correspondence of Alderman Thomas Johnson, the whole compiled and arranged for publication by William A. Gunnell (Hull, 1878), p. 46, and H. S. Gill, 'Unpublished Yorkshire tokens of the seventeenth century, with contemporary notes', NCn.s., 20 (1880), 234–52 (at pp. 242, 245); L. A. Vidler, 'A numismatic history of Rye', BNJ 22 part 2 (1946–7), 247–56 (at p. 253); T. E. Gray, 'Some 17th-century token-issuers', Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 84 (1965), 101–9 (at p. 105); D. M. Starley, 'Old Mint', Daily Telegraph, 8 April 1970, a reference I owe to Mr John Walker of Reading (the letter-writer's grandmother had owned the Southam inn, then known as the Horse and Jockey, but renamed The Old Mint after 1936, although the coin's only coins were minted there were 17th-century tradesmen's tokens'). M. B. Mitchiner and others, 'The chemical compositions of English seventeenth-century base metal coins and tokens', BNJ 55 (1985), 144–63 (at p. 150); Tony 'English merchant tokens', p. 151; J. A. Mackay, The Pilot Encyclopedia of Isle of Man Coins and Tokens (Sutton, Surrey, 1977), p. 14; M. Djoyle, review of Mackay, BNJ 47 (1977), 150–2 (at p. 151). The Johnson memoirs were comprehensively shown by J. R. Boyle, A modern literary fraud: the Johnson MSS: a paper read to the members of the Hull Literary Club, 19th December 1892 (Hull, 1893), to be a forgery by John Richardson, with Gunnell as his amanuensis. Gill pretends to have condensed his notes from the published memoirs, but Cyprian Venture, and his tokens minted by Ramsker of Sheffield, do not appear therein; either this was invented by Gill, or it was supplied by C. E. Fewster from the three volumes of Johnson MSS in his possession (Boyle, p. 13), or most likely, Cyprian Venture was produced by Richardson and Gunnell to order (cf. Boyle, pp. 36–7). The catalogue of lots 319 and 322 in Spink Coin Auctions 51, 16 April 1986, is perhaps Richardson's latest victim.

Fig. 1 The Gentleman's Magazine, 27 (1757), plate [xix] facing p. 300.
This account by Pegge was summarised by Boyne, printed by Williamson to the extent of his comments on the press, and copied in full by Peck, in all cases without the plate which is reproduced here as fig. 1. The scenario of tradesmen obtaining their dies from London for use locally informs Milne’s introduction to his Oxfordshire catalogue; and according to Dr Michael Dolley we must allow for the possibility that the die-engravers may also have supplied, as well as dies, standardized blanks which were struck locally in presses of the type described by Pegge.

Pegge’s account, therefore, warrants close attention. ‘The dies and the press’, he wrote, ‘were found in the house’; and ‘these dies I have seen’, and he illustrated two of them (although Pegge’s engraver failed to put the final image in reverse). He made no such statement about the press, and did not illustrate it; so it is permissible to separate his account of the press from his first-hand description of the dies. Pegge was undoubtedly a careful scholar, and of Chesterfield origins; nevertheless, the identity of the press, and its association with the dies, do appear to depend on the report of certain ‘gentlemen’. His knowledge of it was second-hand, or third- or fourth-hand if the source of the identification were the ‘feeble-minded’ Edward Wood. Between the Chesterfield coining-press and Samuel Pegge there is another stage of transmission, and of possible misinterpretation.

It may be observed that Pegge describes no means of separating the upper die from the rotation of the screw, a necessity if coin impressions are not to be blurred. The squeezing motion which four handles would impart means that this was not a coining-press in the classification of presses. Pegge’s suggestion of many hundreds of halfpence ‘in a very short time’ would need to be understood very flexibly, for such a press would have been slow to operate; the rate of production (depending on the pitch of the screw) could hardly have exceeded two pieces per minute.

I rely here on the advice of Mr David Sellwood, who has also sought to reproduce the essentials of the press described by Pegge. A nut was held in a vice; a three-quarter-inch screw through the nut was turned by a nine-inch spanner, on which the force of two hands pushing or pulling was estimated to be approximately equal to the force on two handles of one hand pushing and one hand pulling; below the screw two bars of mild steel punched with simple designs represented the dies; and between these bars blanks 15-millimetres in diameter of cast and annealed aluminium were selected as approximating to the hardness of copper. It proved hard to turn the screw with only a nine-inch purchase, and the resulting impressions were weak and unsatisfactory. The experiment was not, however, conclusive either way.

Other doubts arise over Pegge’s account. As can be seen (pl. 16, 5), blanks were not ‘shorn to a size, and commodiously rounded’, but cut out in a single operation with circular cutters. Moreover, the Richard Wood dies, as may be seen from his token (pl. 16, 4), neither claimed to be for a halfpenny, nor bore the device of Apollo; and since the token can be dated to the 1650s, the issuer did not follow but preceded Edward Wood. It may be attributed to the Richard Wood who died in 1659, father of Edward (died 1700), whose son

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20 W. Boyne, Tokens issued in the Seventeenth Century (London, 1858), p. xi; Williamson, p. xiv; BMC Copper, pp. 581–2; Milne, Oxfordshire, p. xvi (three issuers struck from dies . . . dies were ‘used in Oxfordshire . . . ’; issuers had inferior dies made ‘for striking . . . ’); M. Dolley, ‘An unpublished seventeenth-century token halfpenny of London’, BNJ 28 part 3 (1957), 659–61, his preceding words being ‘the fabric of tokens of identical style is so homogeneous that one would be tempted to assume that they were not struck by individual tradesmen, but . . . ’. In February 1959 he referred to ‘the centralisation of the cutting of the token dies, although the tokens themselves were made locally’, NCirc 67 (1959), 100.

21 Mr Ernest Danson has kindly reported Mrs Rosemary Milward’s findings that Wood wills, and inventories of their establishment, neither itemise the dies nor mention (more difficult to overlook) a press. For their references, and the description of Edward Wood, see T.D. Whittet, ‘Derbyshire apothecaries’ tokens and their issuers’, Derbyshire Archaeological Journal, 108 (1988), 66–76 (at pp. 71–2, 76).

Richard (dead by 1715) was not born until 1657; it was the second Richard’s ‘feeble-minded’ son Edward who died in 1757 shortly before Pegge wrote.23

Sufficient difficulties are raised by Pegge’s description of a press for everything he wrote about it to be considered, if other evidence requires it, a misconception. For example, at the Wood house, where three generations had been apothecaries, there might have been an oil press ‘for the drawing of oyles by pressure out of any sort of ingredient’, or a tincture press for expressing the alcohol from vegetable tissues.24 The only other report of a token press, apparently, comes from the premises in Kendal of Thomas Sandes, a cloth merchant and token issuer, where what were identified as two coining presses and other instruments of his ‘mint’ had been found ‘a few years ago’ in 1832; no further details seem to be available, except that twenty years later their location was unknown.25 Nicholson was clearly aware of Pegge’s account, indeed his general remarks on tokens copy those of Pegge almost word for word. His identification of coining presses may have no greater independence.

Indeed, the technical requirements of coining really put Pegge’s press beyond serious consideration as one designed for coining. His plate illustrates Edward Wood’s two dies on square bodies, which are entirely typical of the token dies which survive; and such dies are for mounting in a screw press. Appropriately he allows for an iron screw; yet long metal screws at that period had to be laboriously cut with chisel or file, and were consequently more expensive than the economics of token production are likely to have supported, even if these supposed local mints were in towns rather than every village. Moreover, the heavy blow needed for coining (less, admittedly, for small coins), and the high torque transmitted from the suddenly-arrested lever to the base of the press, required both a screw and a frame of the strongest materials available, already bronze or wrought iron in the sixteenth century.26 A capstan-type press with its squeezing motion, and a frame of wood, are just not credible. A wooden-framed press would have sufficed only to flatten cloth, to press cheeses, to imprint paper, or to crush fruit.

In the Borough of Marlborough Chamberlain’s Accounts for 1669–70 appears the following entry:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
£ & s. & d. \\
\hline
\text{Pd for bringing the Last farthinges} & 10 & 10 \\
\text{Barrel Letter paper and threed and mendinge of one of the Engines} &  & \\
\end{array}
\]

Mr E. G. H. Kempson understood this engine to be a home-made press for stamping tokens locally, the ‘farthinges’ being farthing blanks transported in the barrel. It is possible, however, to see the farthings and engines as separate items, connected only through having been transacted together on the same visit to London. The engines could be fire engines, like the ‘engine to quench fire’ which Gloucester ordered from London in 1648, Reading in

23 Whittet, ‘Derbyshire’, pp. 69–72. One may suppose the Richard Wood dies to have been more cursorily examined or less fully recorded than the set possessed and engraved by Pegge. As an alternative explanation. Dr Juanita Barnby tells me that at the relevant period there was in Chesterfield at least one other Richard Wood, who might have been the issuer of the known token, especially in view of its lack of allusion to apothecaries.


1665, and Norwich in 1679. That this is indeed the correct explanation Mr Kempson accepted in 1985, after finding references to engines in the Chamberlain’s Accounts back to 1649, the Marlborough Farthings being all dated 1668. They included in 1650 a payment ‘To Mr Hunt for the engine and carriage . . . £32’, which bears comparison with the London-made Engine, a word which ‘use in this City hath confined to signify that which is used to quench Scare-fires therein . . . William Burroughs City Founder . . . hath made about threescore of these Engines for City and Country . . . the price thereof [may] be compassed for thirty five pounds’.27

Local token mints would have required not only presses but also supplies of blanks. Yet certain specimens lack a segment from their circumference which is cut along the arc of another circle of the same size (pl. 16, 5), thus showing that the blanks were cut out from a rolled-out sheet of metal by means of a circular cutter; the helpful American term is ‘curved clip’. Moreover, the evidence of Bristol farthings is that the blanks for at least these town pieces were made to a standard weight, the standard lying in the number to be struck from a pound of the metal.28 Further, certain tokens incorporate plugs of a different metal (pl. 16, 6), just as did various Commonwealth patterns as a precaution against counterfeiting.

The production of blanks, therefore, used more sophisticated equipment, methods, and controls than many localities are likely to have had available. Moreover, these are expensive: melting, rolling, and blank-cutting are the most capital-intensive operations of a modern mint.29 Published analyses provide little support for the localised or regional production of blanks: tokens of pure copper came from Cambridge, Devon, Gloucester, Kent, London & Middlesex, Norfolk, Somerset, Suffolk and Warwickshire (Coventry); low zinc brass from Bristol, Gloucester, Kent, London & Middlesex, Norfolk and Oxfordshire; standard calamine brass from Kent, London and Surrey; higher zinc brass from Norfolk and Somerset; and high zinc brass from Somerset.30 To suppose that not only dies but blanks also (and presses?) were supplied from London for unskilled local striking seems an extravagant notion, and a tactical nonsense. Neither do the differing metals point to different mints, for they occur with the same pairs of dies. The hypothesis of London dies and local mints looks quite improbable, with little real support and much against it. Better to turn to the third hypothesis.

London Mint and Localised Dies

It has been established that the dies for the seventeenth-century tokens were normally made in London, and that the supposed evidence for their use locally does not really stand up. They were normally struck on well-made blanks cut from sheet metal by circular cutters; they were struck with the die faces properly held in the same plane; obverse and reverse dies appear to have been physically inter-changeable, yet never to have been interchanged. The evidence of die axis in particular argues strongly against local striking as the normal method

28 Other examples of ‘curved clips’ are SCB 31 and 38, Norweb 94, 431, 470, 931, 1020, 1088, and 1725. For Bristol see SCB 38, Norweb Tokens Part II, pp. xxxvi-xxxii.
29 For example, at the end of 1967 in the Operative Department at Tower Hill 58 were employed on melting and 233 on rolling, cutting, annealing and marking, against 157 on the actual coining. Royal Mint Annual Report, 99 (1968), p. 30.
of production. Dies with square bodies are capable of being placed in four different relative positions. While issues not infrequently exhibit two die axes, they seldom exhibit more; and many exhibit a consistent axis on every specimen examined, for example John Gaynes of Olney, Bucks., with forty-three specimens all at 180°.31

The best case is that of the Bristol farthings dated 1652-62. Two die-pairings exhibit two different axes, showing that variation was technically possible; but 124 die-pairings exhibit a single consistent axis, although as many as seventy-eight die-duplicates have been examined. Thus, great care and consistency were exercised in the use of the dies, such as a professional establishment would provide.32 One may conclude that where the dies were sunk from punches, where there was the equipment for rolling out metal and cutting out circular blanks, where there was the skilled personnel, there also were these tokens struck: at the Mint in the Tower of London.

Once an issuer’s tokens had been struck off, what was to be done with the dies? It is evident from the tokens themselves that dies were not necessarily destroyed or re-cycled, and that an issuer sometimes returned a decade or more later for a repeat order which employed one old die and a new one by a different diesinker.33 Moreover, there is occasionally a die-link between successive proprietors of the one establishment, as at the sign of The Leopoldus in Dover (pl. 16, 7-8), where the same obverse die was used with a 1651 reverse bearing the initials D| CM, and a 1666 reverse bearing the initials F| GM. There are really only two places in which such dies might have been stored: with the issuer, or at the Mint.

In 1650 the view was that it should be treason to make farthings anywhere but in the Mint; and in 1652, that if tools used in making copper farthings were kept by private persons, it would be impossible to prevent counterfeiting. It seems likely, therefore, that the Mint, or rather the moneyers, were prepared to store token dies and retrieve them on demand, despite the problems of warehousing. In the absence of token dies surviving in the Mint to the present it may be impossible to prove that this happened. Consider, however, current practice at the Rijks Munt, Utrecht. Tens of thousands of dies are stored and readily retrieved for the same private contractor; if a proprietor insists on taking his dies he can (they are first made unusable if they bear the mint master’s privy mark), but for a repeat order he must pay as though for new dies, on the grounds that the Mint does not know in what conditions the dies have been kept.34

This alternative of dies delivered to an issuer, or as one might say, localised, can be hypothesised for seventeenth-century tokens also. As early as 1651/2 a cost for dies was identified to an issuer of tokens attributable to Ramage (pl. 16, 9): ‘Brasse Tokens & for a Box to put them in & Two steele stamps 18s. 2d.’ Other examples are Gloucester’s 1656–7 payment for the ‘Stampe’ for the City farthings, and Marlborough’s 1668–9 payment for the ‘Stampes’. Knowing that the cost of his tokens included a charge for dies, an issuer may well have felt the right to receive any dies which remained serviceable. Having been paid for, they could be considered his property; and inasmuch as they might be used again, they had a value. Conceivably this might have been an option available for a small extra charge, but more likely not. That it was an option is evident from Norwich. On 28 September 1667 the

32 SCBI 38, Norweb Tokens Part II, pp. xxi–xxiv. This care and consistency remains true even after the recognition of occasional ‘spotting’ on dies to facilitate (but not compel) a consistent axis, for which see Thompson, ‘Mechanisation’. This paper also discusses rollers, cutters, and presses for tokens.
33 e.g. SCBI 31 and 38, Norweb 90, 271–272, 501, 855–836, 908, 1188, and 1779.
34 CSP Dom, 1650, p. 182, and 1651–2, p. 238; Catalogue of the Coins, Tokens, Medals, Dies and Seals in the Museum of the Royal Mint, by William John Hocking (London, 1908–10); Dr. A. A. J. Scheffers of the Rijks Munt Museum, Utrecht, pers. comm., 10 Sept. 1988. Similarly the Royal Mint at Llantrisant stores medal dies (and the necessary master tools) for future use, although a private client may on request take what are his property; for a repeat order no special charge relating to the dies is made unless they require replacement or substantial renovation (Mr Graham Dyer, pers. comm., 31 August 1989).
Corporation desired Christopher Jay, MP, when next in London, to advise about coining farthings; on 14 November he was requested to send for two hundredweight of farthings, and to 'take care that the stamp of the said farthings be sent down'.

So it is that a 1667 Gloucester die survives in Gloucester, with wax impressions from Gloucester dies of 1654 and 1669. Pegge illustrated two Chesterfield dies found in Chesterfield. Two 1666 obverses of a Rickmansworth issuer were (and are understood to be still) in the possession of descendants. Kendal dies of 1667 were found in Kendal. A 1669 Pulborough die was found in Pulborough. Dies for the Henley on Thames 1669 halfpence and farthings are still in the possession of that or a successor corporation; and the 1670 Beccles Farthing dies survive in Beccles. A 1670 die known to be the reverse for Thomas Dawson in Leeds was in Thoreby's museum at Leeds.

The survival of dies lacking any known association with the place of issue may also be noted. A pair of dies for Kinerton are preserved in the Ashmolean Museum. Dies for the Stourbridge halfpenny, and for Francis Waterman of Faversham, were in an early nineteenth-century sale. A reverse die naming Bristow Place, Chippenham (Williamson, Wiltshire 47), and the reverse die for Christopher Simson in York, were in the British Museum from 1865, but sadly must have been lost in the war-time destruction. The 1657 reverse die for Thomas Brinkwell of Foxearth in Essex survived long enough to be struck on a William and Mary halfpenny, and the pair of 1668 dies for John Hoopes of York long enough to be struck on worn William III halfpence.

TOKENS struck onto other tokens do not really amount to evidence of local striking, which was Boon's conclusion in the case of a 1668 Abergele penny overstruck on a 1669 penny from Corwen, about thirty miles away. The overstrike is well centred, with both die faces properly held in the same plane, and it looks professionally struck; overtype and, apparently, undertype (the illustrated specimen is much worn) fall within the same Preston-Morley & Pegg group K; and the overstrike could be attributed to confusion at a central minting-place if two issuers ordering at about the same time differed in how they dated their forthcoming issues. This explanation is particularly compelling in the light of an overstrike the other way around, Corwen over Abergele, which Mr Boon was shown by Mr Roger Shuttleworth in 1979. Further support may be found when other overstrikes are properly published, for example John Stewart of Belfast, 1657, on a City of Wells token of the same date.
Alternatively, to economise on the cost of blanks in the event of a re-issue, dies if held locally might have been sent up to the Mint accompanied by the token stock of another issuer who had failed or died, or by any accumulation of tokens which a tradesman could not hope to return to their distant issuers. The average distance people travelled to market in England and Wales as a whole was seven miles; so that in seventeenth-century terms Abergele to Corwen was far, as were the localities involved in the comparable case of a 1664 Southampton token overstruck on a 1665(?) token of Ringwood, about twenty-five miles distant via Romsey and the New Forest.\(^{39}\)

It has to be accepted, however, that with dies held locally some attempt might have been made to use them locally. Often there must have been one die only (whence die-links between the work of different diesinkers). When there was a pair, the difficulty of substituting for the four-screw chucks which held the square dies, the absence of appropriate iron presses to provide sufficient force, and the problems of acquiring a supply of suitable blanks, are likely to have resulted in the sort of object shown in pl. 16, 10. The same London dies as in pl. 16, 9 have been applied to a mis-shapen disc of pewter, with the impressions only partly registered. The case of the Salisbury St Edmund communion token suggests, incidentally, that the specific mention of dies in local records may be evidence of the receipt of dies locally.

**Conclusion, and Documentary Support**

The striking of tokens in London and subsequent localisation of the dies is the hypothesis which best reconciles both documentary evidence and the physical evidence of the main series of tokens. This judgment needs to be qualified in respect of Ireland, where local styles of diesinking appear beside London styles, and token manufacture has been documented in Dublin and Waterford.\(^{40}\) Nevertheless, in England and Wales, only a handful of seventeenth-century tokens are not of a London style. If there were small-scale local operations, perhaps casting from moulds, perhaps hand-striking from engraved dies, they have still to be substantiated.

Once the essential correctness of the third hypothesis is accepted, various documentary references are seen to support it. In 1656-7 Gloucester paid on account of its farthings ‘for cariedge postage of them and about them’; so those Gloucester farthings were evidently not struck in Gloucester, where a later Gloucester farthing die yet survives. Marlborough, similarly, paid for carriage of farthings on four occasions between 1668-9 and 1671-2; and Sherborne’s ‘Account for the Farthings’ includes three payments for ‘carriage’ between 1669 and 1672, and one for ‘Cariage of the Farthings’.\(^{41}\)

Certain records relating to the production of tokens specifically mention London. Salisbury City Council decided in 1658 that ‘Mr William Stone and Mr James Heely doe nowe in London take course for stamping of Five pounds worth of farthings’. Grantham in 1667 ordered that the Chamberlain ‘do send to London for brass half-pence’; and Stamford Corporation, referring in 1668 to the town halfpence ‘lately came from London’, agreed that the mayor ‘shall send the moneys agayne to London for more halfe penys’. Wisbech in 1668 ordered the town bailiff ‘to lay oute five or ten pounds in farthings at London’. In Lincoln in 1669 it was ‘ordered and agreed upon that one stamp . . . shall be forthwith


provided and gotten, and so many halfpennies stamped therewith as twenty pounds will purchase', which the sheriffs were to pay to the mayor 'as soon as they can get them from London'. In 1670 the Norwich mayor, aldermen etc. sought pardon for having 'sent to London and had some farthings coined for them', and the Great Yarmouth bailiffs etc. for vending and exchanging halfpence and farthings: 'They sent for some to London'.

These references are confined to tokens issued by corporations, but it is from corporations, of course, that almost all first-hand evidence of token-issuing survives; and the private and corporate issues are of identical fabric. The Oxford chandler whom Hearne interviewed to so little effect might be expected to have had more than a vague memory of 'Coyning' if he had been obliged to set up and learn to use a screw press. The other contemporary statements mentioned at the beginning may be understood either to have been ignorant of the real circumstances, or to mean that tradesmen caused farthings to be minted, a possibility for which, indeed, some of the statements allow.

It is allowed also by the 1672 proclamation against the tokens which, while referring to their issuers as 'makers' and 'private stampers', starts by charging that 'every Person and Corporations . . . have presumed to cause certain pieces . . . to be stamped with their private stamps'. The allowance of this possibility while tokens were still being produced is itself significant. Moreover, an order in council and a further proclamation in 1674 inveighed against those who were continuing to utter and use tokens, not against anyone who was continuing to make them. Most of those who had made tokens must by then have been engaged in producing his majesty's farthings and halfpence of copper; although references in 1660 to 'Presses for making Farthings . . . about London', and to implements of coining openly sold, indicate that there may have been production in London outside as well as inside the Mint. Again, in 1672 it was represented to the Privy Council that 'several presses &c. for coining are known to be in several parts of London, Middlesex and Surrey'. Any products of such extramural activities have yet to be identified; they may well have been isolated episodes, suppressed as soon as they occurred.

The lack of even an incidental mention in the Mint records may cause surprise, but the tokens must have been private business for the moneyers, the members of that soi-disant corporation whose last provost in 1848 took its records from the Mint, never to be seen. In fact one document does appear to provide evidence for the production of tokens specifically in the Mint. A certain James Yard (?) from Amsterdam offered Sir Robert Stone in 1652 an opinion on the problems of the English mint which includes the following:

And we hear — I pray enquire the truth of it — that your mint in the Tower of London is come to such contempt, where you were wont to coin forty thousand pounds a week and above twenty thousand pounds a week constantly in gold and silver, there is not so much coined in a year as was within this five year coined in a week, where you were wont to coin forty thousand pounds a week and above twenty thousand pounds a week

43 Hearne, Remarks and Collections, iv. 207.
45 By the King a Proclamation for making current his Majesty's Farthings and Halfpence of Copper and forbidding all others to be used (Whitchall, 1672), emphasis supplied, the text being most conveniently available in Williamson, pp. xx-i-xii. BMC Copper, pp. 605-6, or Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents, edited by Joan Thirsk and J. P. Cooper (Oxford, 1972), pp. 680-1. BMC Copper, pp. 606-7, for the order and proclamation, it being at the same time reiterated that making was an offence: H. W. Henfrey, Numismata Cromwelliana (London, 1877), p. 158, and CSP Dom. 1660-1, p. 307; CSP Dom. 1672, p. 283. What was being coined is not specified, but in seizing 'the said coiners with their presses and counterfeit coin, the messengers employed [were] to take the assistance and directions of Mr Garroll herein', i.e. John Garill the prosecutor of token issuers (Craig, The Mint, p. 173). Craig adds that the warden of the Mint was ordered to seek out and destroy all private presses.
47 Thirsk and Cooper, Seventeenth-Century Economic Documents, pp. 644-5.
pray enquire the thing out, it is a high dishonour to the nation in so sacred a place as the mint is, to coin nothing but counters and farthings and in so famous a mint as the Tower of London. For the honour of the nation, use your interest to let their mint not be employed rather than suffer such trumpery as counters or farthings to be made within the walls.

Evidently the moneyers preferred to be employed, even on such 'trumpery' as farthings, a word which must mean tokens.

Illustrations (pl. 16)

1. Travelling Token Minters of the 17th Century, signed “CLIFFORD THOMPSON | 1921” (the L of CLIFFORD is large and superimposed on the C, so that the name might possibly be ‘C. [or G.] Lifford’, or ‘Gifford L.’); pen and ink drawing, 10½ x 6½ ins. = 26½ x 17 cm.; seen on sale in The Hague in 1981, and purchased by Mr Philip Greenall, who has kindly permitted reproduction of it here.

2-3. Obv. -WILLIAM-GROVES- around Grocers’ Arms (but five cloves only in chief), same obv. die, reverses, -IN-SHEFFIELD- around 1666, and -IN-SHEFFORD- around 1666; Norweb 47 and 48; Norweb specimens.

4. Obv. -RICHARD-WOOD around three woodmen walking left in fess bearing staffs or similar, accompanied by a dog, rev. -OF-CHESTERFIELD around R-W; Williamson, Derbyshire 48; British Museum specimen.


7-8. Obv. -AT-THE-LEOPOLDVS around half-length figure of St Leopold of Austria holding staff, crown beside, same obv. die, revs. -IN-DOVER-1651 around D-J-M, and -IN-DOVER-1666 around F-G-M; Williamson, Kent 210 and 211; British Museum specimens.

9. Obv. -EDM-IN-SARVIM-1651 around skull, rev. -IF-THOU-BELIEVEST around heart; Williamson, Wiltshire 202 but EDM (no stops between); Devizes Museum specimen.

10. Same dies as fig. 9 struck on lead or pewter; British Museum specimen.
PLATE 16

THOMPSON: SEVENTEENTH CENTURY TOKENS