For the second part of my Address I would like to return to the theme of eighteenth-century provincial coinage and its manufacturers, a subject I broached last year when I spoke about the work of John Gregory Hancock and the Westwood brothers and their joint concern in token-making. This evening I would like to say something about the other Birmingham token manufacturers of the time and to concentrate on one of them in particular. Like Caesar’s Gaul my talk is divided into three parts: some remarks about the manufacturers in general, then a few words about my principal subject, Thomas Mynd, and finally an examination of the tokens that are attributed to him. It is an exercise in reflection that, as you will see, raises more questions than it can answer.

The eighteenth-century token as a generally acceptable substitute for small-denomination currency owed its introduction to Thomas Williams, the copper magnate and originator of the ‘Druide’ pennies and halfpennies of the Parys Mines Company of Anglesey. His abandonment, in 1789, of the manufacture of these tokens and of the halfpennies he made for John Wilkinson to his arch-rival Matthew Boulton after little more than two years left the production of trade tokens in the hands of Boulton and Williams’s own protégé John Westwood. Between them, Boulton and Westwood dominated the field for the next three years. At the outset, the money they produced continued to be rooted in the demands of industrial society but as it became more familiar to the public at large it rapidly extended from the masters of heavy industry to commercial enterprises in the ebullient sea ports and manufacturing towns at the spearhead of the economic revolution. Up to roughly 1792 vast quantities of so-called provincial coinage were produced for such customers. By the latter year, however, a sea change was taking place, both in the nature of the token itself and in the type of manufacturer.

Large-volume orders from manufacturing and commercial firms began to decline dramatically and new markets, centred primarily on the smaller country towns south of the Severn-Trent divide, began to be opened up by newcomers to the token-making trade. By now, the formerly coin-starved parts of the country were, on the whole, well served with tokens and the new men found it difficult to intrude into such areas. Even John Wilkinson could complain in November 1792 that there were ‘so many private coinages on foot and so much interest used in circulating their different ½ pence that I cannot vend in my own works one-fourth of what would have passed without trouble a year ago’.

**Note** This paper, with footnotes now added, formed the second part of my Presidential Address to the Society in November 2000.

**Acknowledgement** My thanks are due to the National Portrait Gallery, London, and the National Maritime Museum for permission to reproduce the illustrations in Figs 4 and 10 respectively. I am grateful, too, for their help to Marjorie Bennett (Herefordshire Archives), Michelle Cosse (The Post Office Heritage Services), Val Loggie (Soho House), Richard Sabin (Natural History Museum), Liza Verity and Colin Starkey (National Maritime Museum), Graham Dyer and Charles Farthing.

**Abbreviations**

- DNB - The Dictionary of National Biography;
- GM - The Gentleman’s Magazine (London, 1731–1922);
- W - Paul and Bente Withers, British Copper Tokens 1811–1820 (Llanfyllin, 1999).


2 For the transfer of token manufacture from Thomas Williams to Matthew Boulton, see David Vice, ‘The Soho Mint & the Anglesey Tokens of the Parys Mines Company’, *Formar*, 33, 2–9; and for Boulton’s token making, Richard Doty, The Soho Mint & the Industrialization of Money (London, 1998), especially pp. 297–339. The halfpence of the merchants Thomas Worswick (Lancaster), Thomas Clarke (Liverpool) and Gilbert Shearer (Glasgow) are examples of this development.

What the new men, with William Lutwyche (1754–c.1801) and Peter Kempson (1755–1824) very much in the van, were to tap was an outlet among local shopkeepers and dealers largely in the south-east where they exploited an urban custom based primarily on the manufacture of comparatively low-volume issues. Tokens became as much ‘supply’ as ‘demand-led’, and a peddled rather than a commissioned commodity. Riders or travelling salesmen, equipped with pattern books, were sent out from Birmingham to drum up business. The evidence of the tokens themselves, for instance, shows that during 1794 Lutwyche was undertaking a concerted sales campaign in Kent and Sussex, securing orders in at least eighteen towns and villages. Indeed, it is not too fanciful to trace his agent’s route from Canterbury to Sandwich or Deal, along the coast to Hastings, and thence back through the Weald to Maidstone. At the same time Kempson was developing a not dissimilar clientele in East Anglia.

It is in this context that we must view the activities of the Birmingham token makers recorded in the table of die-sinkers and manufacturers that Charles Pye included in the quarto edition of his Provincial Coins and Tokens. Here he lists seventeen manufacturers: Matthew Boulton; Thomas Dobbs; John Gimblett; James Good; John Gregory Hancock; Bonham Hammond; [John] Stubbis Jordon; [Joseph] Kendrick; Peter Kempson; William Lutwyche; William Mainwaring; [Joseph] Merry; Thomas Mynd; James Pitt; Samuel Waring; [John] Westwood, senior; [John] Westwood, junior. Strangely, he omits three referred to in his detailed ‘Index to the Provincial Coins’ that follows a few pages later: R B Morgan; William Simmons; and Obadiah Westwood.

For reasons I gave last year I believe we should remove from this list the artist and die-sinker, John Gregory Hancock, except in so far as he was a ‘partner’ of the Westwoods. We should possibly also remove William Mainwaring who, although a plated-bucklemaker, seems, except for his early medallic work, to have worked largely for Lutwyche. On the other hand, we should probably add William Whitmore, the machine maker, who, on the evidence of Miss Banks, was responsible for some at least of the halfpennies of the Birmingham Mining and Copper Company given by Pye to Kempson. Miss Banks’s intervention should give us some pause in accepting Pye’s attributions too blithely. It may imply a greater complexity to token manufacture than his apparently ex cathedra pronouncements have traditionally led us to believe. It may, for instance, indicate an element of subcontracting that could help to explain some of the edge-oddities that occur among the tokens; a subject I hope to turn to on another occasion.

Of the manufacturers listed in Pye only one (Lutwyche) describes himself in contemporary directories as a ‘provincial coin’ maker and indeed produced halfpennies and farthings specifically to publicize his trade. Two are copper rollers and dealers in metals (Dobbs and John Westwood, the latter also a ‘general manufacturer’ as was Boulton), two are buckle-makers (Mainwaring and Merry), two are toy-makers (Mynd and Simmons), one is a locksmith (Pitt), and seven, understandably, are button-makers (Gimblett, Good, Hammond, Kendrick, Kempson, Morgan and Waring). All had access to hand-operated machine tools, especially presses which, even by the 1750s, had become fairly refined implements — Whitmore and Company, in fact, made them, supplying large machines to Thomas Williams in the early days of token-making — so that even if coining was peripheral to their main businesses everyone of them would have had suitable minting equipment readily available. Its ubiquity in the Birmingham toy trade was, of course, an explanation for ‘Brummagem’ s dire reputation for illicit coin making.

What emerges from an analysis of Pye is that apart from Kempson and Lutwyche — together with Boulton and the Westwoods whom I have excluded here — the separate issues made by these

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4 See, for example, the letter from Samuel Garbett to Lord Lansdowne in December 1794 (British Library; Shelburne 19, f. 87) and the report to the Home Secretary in March 1794 of the activities of a travelling salesman in the Chester area (Copy of a letter from Thomas Griffith to Henry Dundas in Public Record Office: MINT 1414, pp. 243–4). The ‘sales campaign’ of Lutwyche and Kempson in the south-east and East Anglia was remarked upon by the late John Board in a paper given to the Society in April 1793. When delivering my address I was not aware of this important lecture which was subsequently drawn to my attention by Graham Dyer.

5 Charles Pye, Provincial Coins and Tokens, issued from the Year 1787 to the Year 1801 (Birmingham, 1801), [p. 2].

6 [Sarah Sophia Banks], Ms Catalogue of Coin Collection, VI - Tokens, p. 186: BM, Department of Coins and Medals, Arc R 19.

7 D & H: Warwickshire 210 and 482. Kempson described himself as a ‘Maker of Buttons, Medals &c’ on his Birmingham ‘Buildings’ series of tokens; D & H: Warwickshire, pp. 280–3. The trade descriptions cited in this paragraph are taken from contemporary Birmingham directories. Jordan cannot be identified from these sources as a token manufacturer. His first appearance in the directories is in 1797 as a manufacturer of iron window-frames. I have omitted from my list Obadiah Westwood and his son, John Westwood, junior, because of their involvement in the elder John Westwood’s business activities.

people was quite limited. In counting specific issues Kempson and Lutwyche far and away lead the field with something like 72 and 75 issues apiece. For the rest the count is: Dobbs, 2; Gimblett, 1; Hammond, 1; Good, 13; Jorden, 4; Kendrick, 4; Mainwaring (if he did strike his own tokens), 4; Morgan, 1; Mynd, 6; Pitt, 4; Merry, 1; Simmons, 1; Waring, 3; and Whitmore, 1. Furthermore, with the exception of Mainwaring and Whitmore, most of these manufacturers do not appear on the scene until quite late on: Dobbs in 1794–95 (an entrance probably associated with the rundown of the Westwoods’ business); Hammond not until 1797; Good 1795–97; Jorden 1795–96; Kendrick 1796–97; Pitt 1796–97; Merry 1795; and Waring 1793 and 1795. John Gimblett and Thomas Mynd are the odd ones out, Gimblett being apparently responsible for the Birmingham Overseers half-crown as early as 1788 and Mynd for the Basingstoke Canal token a year later. Gimblett’s half-crown is his only recorded production while Mynd’s shilling stands out because the remainder of his tokens straddle the years from 1794 to 1797. These particular tokens are remarkable too because of their high-value denominations for copper pieces.

I am afraid that there is little that one can unravel about the actual individuals listed by Pye. Even Boulton, despite his extensive archive, is, as a person, an elusive figure and the others are almost beyond history, virtually unknowable members of a stratum of society that, living a generation or two before the age of bureaucratic enquiry, left little record of themselves.

Thomas Mynd is just such a denizen of this ‘Land of Missing Persons’. A prime example of a group who were for the most part quite modest workshop masters what we actually know about him can be compressed into little more than a paragraph. We do know that he was born in Ross-on-Wye in Herefordshire in 1741, the son of William Mynd, a local attorney, whose family had been long established as yeoman farmers in the marchland bordering Monmouthshire. The elder Mynd was a man of some substance and at his death in 1769 he left four sons: William the eldest who succeeded to his father’s practice; John, a Ross ironmaster with iron-making interests in the Forest of Dean as well; Philip, described as ‘gentleman’ and farming the family estates outside Ross; and Thomas the youngest son. Thomas, who received a settlement of £500 and the expectation of a share in the profits of the ironworks, was already in Birmingham. It seems clear that with the prospect of a limited patrimony he had been put to a trade. He does not appear in any Birmingham directory, however, until 1787 when he emerges as a toy-man in Whitall Street, off Steelhouse Lane, where he followed this trade until his death in June 1799. One can only speculate that in the interim, from beginnings as a Birmingham apprentice, he had spent much of the time as a journeyman toy-maker in some other master’s workshop.

In his will, proved for under £300, he left everything to his wife Sarah and a daughter of the same name. What is interesting, however, is that Sarah Cox, a widow, was Mynd’s second wife whom he married only in 1797. Although there is a virtual blank in Mynd’s Birmingham biography before 1787, we do know that in January 1762 he married Catherine Boulton, the sister of Matthew Boulton, who bore Mynd at least five children between 1763 and 1771. In January 1762 Mynd would have been barely twenty-one but would presumably have just completed an apprenticeship to enable him to become a journeyman and marry. The possibility is that his articles had been with the Boultons but we do not know. Nor do we know what happened to Catherine Boulton but the Mynd/Boulton familial connection was a close one and the eldest daughter Ann Mynd was companion to Boulton’s invalid daughter (also Anne) and housekeeper at Soho House from about 1787 until she married in 1794. She is the ‘Miss Mynd’ frequently referred to in the Boulton papers. By all accounts Ann Mynd was not well liked; she was opinionated, regarded herself as

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9 I must stress here that I have included only genuine provincial coins and shop tickets that probably also circulated as small change, discounting private, overtly metallic or specious pieces. No distinction of die varieties or separation of repeated batches of the same token have been made.

10 The Birmingham Workhouse pieces are sui generis and were probably never intended for circulation as currency. There are specimens in silver, white metal and brass as well as copper.

11 The phrase comes from The Forest and the Fort (London, 1943) by Hervey Allen (1889–1949), the American historical novelist, himself now a largely forgotten figure though immensely popular in his time: ‘The past is the Land of Missing Persons; and it is only by a combination of diligence and good fortune that anyone who is not monumentally remembered can be found there’ (p. 13).

12 The biographical data in this and the next paragraph are based on material in the Herefordshire Archives and Birmingham City Archives; see also Eric Delieb, The Great Silver Manufactory: Matthew Boulton and the Birmingham Silversmiths 1760–1790 (London, 1971).
the 'mistress' of Soho House, and her treatment of her cousin was not as it should have been. Charlotte Matthews commented to Boulton that she wished her no greater harm than a husband to take her off the manufacturer's hands.13

And that really is about all that at present we can say about Thomas Mynd; a blurred picture of a younger son of a rising middling-sort of provincial family, put to a trade in a burgeoning industrial town, marrying into what was to become a successful manufacturing family but somehow at the end of the day never seeming to fulfils his potential and frequently exuding an air of recklessness. What then of the tokens of this unfulfilled toy-maker? Clearly, they were very much a sideline to his main business, unless this was even more straitened than one would imagine, for he struck only six distinct issues. They were, though, productions, that despite their generally mediocre manufacture, would have gladdened the heart of James Wright of Dundee when he first saw them, for they illustrated all the energy and sense of progress of later eighteenth-century Britain, capturing, in their themes, the nation's commercial development, its growth of communications, improving lifestyle and, underlying all, the strength of its naval power.14 But each of the six presents in its own and different way a variety of problems.

The first of Mynd's tokens conveys, very directly, the sense of the industrial token, for it lies at the heart of the early enterprises that did much to advance the dramatic economic evolution of Britain in the latter part of the eighteenth century. This is the Basingstoke Canal shilling (Fig. 1).

The Basingstoke Canal, built at the height of the canal mania that swept the country in the early 1790s, extended some 37½ miles from Basingstoke to the river Wey navigation near Byfleet.15 It was intended, through this link with the Thames, to open up northern Hampshire to London bringing up timber, malt and grain to the metropolis and returning coal, groceries and household goods as down traffic. It was begun in 1788 and eventually completed in 1794, some two years late because of administrative mismanagement and persistent debt. It has been suggested that the canal 'proved of great value to Basingstoke and the adjoining county'.16 The reality is that it was almost bankrupt from the start, never developing much more than an essentially agricultural traffic and failing to carry the tonnage or earn the tolls that its projectors had estimated; the problem was that it could not compete with an improving road system either in terms of cost or speed. Ironically, years later, it did have something of an Indian summer carrying material for the building of the London and Southampton Railway but this very business bore the seeds of the canal's own destruction.

The canal token is a piece of diameter (30 mm) a fraction larger than that of a normal provincial halfpenny but its weight is much greater, on average being 13.8 g. Its obverse bears the design of a sailing barge carrying a large tree trunk and other goods and the reverse a spade and mattock in a wheelbarrow, apposite designs for a trading link intended to furnish London with timber for the navy and for a highly labour-intensive scheme dependent on the simplest of tools and the brawn of a myriad of navies. The obverse die has an obvious correction to the date where the die-sinker ('Wyon') has altered an original '8' to a '7'. a correction common to all the specimens I have seen. Its edge is engraved with what has been described as an overlapping feather17 but which seems to me more likely to have been intended as a flowering plant.

James Wright was told that the token was actually a medal struck for Pinkerton, the 'canal company secretary', for presentation to each 'proprietor of the canal stock'.18 Pye, on the other hand,
suggested that it was 'circulated among the workmen employed in cutting the canal' as a form of wages. Sharp echoed Pye. Hamer, following Samuel, conflated the two theories. The token, he noted, was 'said to have passed current among the workmen engaged in making the canal. John Pinkerton was the Secretary, and doubtless several of the early impressions would be given to shareholders and others, who would naturally be interested in the undertaking and also in the novel local currency'. Prima facie, Hamer's conclusion would seem to be a sensible solution. The standard authority on the history of the canal claims that the tokens were issued to the canal navvies as part wages redeemable, for instance, at the George Inn at Odiam where the canal contractors had their operational headquarters. No doubt, too, they could have been given away as curiosities and the same authority hints at the existence of silver versions that, in the unlikely event that they ever were produced, may have been presentation issues.

Pinkerton's shillings are by no means common today and even in Wright's time (1796) specimens were costing collectors several shillings each. Most extant specimens exhibit little wear and there appear to be only a single obverse and reverse die. They obviously saw little use and were never issued in the quantity that a labour-intensive operation would have required. If they ever were intended as currency their circulation probably met with resistance because of their perceived inflated value in comparison with other weightier but lower denomination tokens like the 'Druid' pennies and their issue was quickly abandoned. What is more likely, though, is that Pinkerton's shillings were never intended for the payment of wages and that Wright's informant was much nearer the mark in suggesting that they were presentation pieces. More of this in a moment.

Whatever their true purpose Pinkerton's shillings were never issued by the canal company itself. Nor was John Pinkerton the company's secretary. The practice with most canal developments seems to have been to appoint a local attorney as secretary to the promotional committee or board of directors. This is what happened at Basingstoke where a local lawyer, Charles Best (1748–1816) who was also the Town Clerk, held the office on a part-time basis for nearly forty years. So who then was John Pinkerton? Canals were built by contractors who, working under the direction of a supervising engineer responsible for the canal's design, hired and paid their own workforce. This was the case here. William Jessop (1745–1814), perhaps the greatest expert on canal construction of his time, was the engineer and surveyor appointed by the company while John Pinkerton (d. 1813), a Yorkshireman and one of several brothers who were among the foremost canal contractors of the day, was the main contractor for the scheme. In fact the Pinkertons were the biggest and best-known firm of early canal contractors, the only eighteenth-century concern to take on countrywide contracts. John Pinkerton, an early member of the Smeatonian Society like Jessop, was the family member the engineer best liked and trusted and was someone on whom he had relied already for a variety of projects since the 1770s. Pinkerton was thus the man on whom the day-to-day construction of the canal and the organization and payment of its labour force depended.

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19 GM, as in n. 18. Wright's opinion was that Pinkerton's shillings were 'RR' – 'the second degree of scarcity in coins'. Pye, as in n. 18, classified them as 'r'.
20 Vite, as in n. 15, passim.
Pinkerton's token is dated 1789 and for a long time I have worried whether this is a commemorative date or its actual date of issue. The canal was begun in the autumn of 1788 and the date fits in with what would have been a critical period for Pinkerton in organizing the wage requirements of his navvies – male and female – or, indeed, alternatively, of publicizing his contract among the canal subscribers. Pinkerton came to Basingstoke from Birmingham where he had been working on the Birmingham and Fazely Canal and promissory tokens would have been well known to him. But why approach Mynd? Why not John Westwood or Matthew Boulton? They were, after all, the only producers of this form of currency at the time. Perhaps he did approach Boulton who directed him to his brother-in-law either because Boulton was too busy with his other coinage projects or because he was mindful of the latter's need for work, having set up in his own business only two or three years before. A more tenable hypothesis to me, however, is that, despite its declared date, the token was in reality a product of the mid-1790s falling within the period when Mynd is known to have been manufacturing such pieces. The summer of 1794 marked the completion of Pinkerton's work on the Basingstoke Canal and it would have been appropriate at this juncture for him to have presented the canal proprietors with a memento of his constructional skills over the previous five years or so. But, for the present in the absence of concrete evidence, this must be conjecture, though a date approximating to 1794 would be more credible if the die-sinker was, as Pye says, Thomas Wyon.

As a pure aside, I would just mention that it is said that when the canal was being dug through the grounds of Basing House a local watchmaker discovered a cache of 800 'guineas' reputed to have been buried during Cromwell's siege of the house. I have, though, found no contemporary corroboration of this find of gold coins whatever they were.22

Mynd's next venture into token work can definitely be dated to 1794 and takes us away from the industrial token – even if in sense only – to the phase of the shopkeeper's ticket. Mynd's second token, a standard halfpenny (again engraved by 'Wyon'), was ostensibly struck for an 'I Fowler', payable in London (Fig. 2). The mystery here is who actually was Fowler. Samuel suggests that he was a John Fowler, an oil merchant and tinplate worker of 78 Long Acre 'but the fact is not free from doubt'. I have not been able to establish the source of Samuel's identification but the iconography of the token would accord with its issue by such a tradesman.23

Fig. 2. John Fowler's Halfpenny [D&H: Middlesex 306].

The token is of the usual halfpenny diameter of 28 mm with an average weight of 9 g. The obverse of the token is graced with a head of Neptune – which Samuel considered to lack the sea god's majestic mien and to be more reminiscent of an ordinary Jack Tar (his hair and beard being 'of such very modest growth') – and the reverse with a whaling scene. Whale oil, it must be stressed, was an essential commodity to late-eighteenth century living especially in the newly burgeoning urban communities. The lighting of streets, of houses, factories and shops had increasingly come to depend on it. As early as the 1740s five thousand street lamps, burning whale oil, had been introduced into London. Whale oil was used in the manufacture of soap, varnishes and paint, of cordage and in the preparation of coarse woollen cloth such as the military serges that

22 The supposed find is referred to in Vine, as in n. 15, p. 30. A 'Saxon idol' was also said to have been found during the excavations of the canal basin at Basingstoke: Arthur Freeling, Guide to the London & Southampton Railway (London, 1839), p. 79.
23 [Samuel], as in n. 16, 28 June 1882, 685. There was a William Fowler, an oilman with premises in Grays Inn Lane, whose son John (born in 1756) may well be Samuel's man.
were much in demand at this period. And, of course, in the new machine age it had an extensive and increasing usage as a lubricant.24

Fowler’s trade as an urban oilman would have been concerned primarily with the domestic market, with the provision of paints, putty and varnishes but particularly with the sale of lamp oil and candles though he might well have been a street-lighting contractor, too. Perhaps one of those London oilmen who were to be so bitterly obstructive to the introduction of public gas lights a few years later. Among his domestic supplies he would have included spermaceti candles, generally held to be superior to the old-fashioned tallow sort because of their lack of smell, better illumination and duration.

And this brings us back to the token. The appearance of Neptune may simply be intended to add to its nautical flavour. But his conjunction with the whaling scene, if deliberate, might well suggest a source of oil in the Southern whaling grounds that in the aftermath of the American War and the colonization of Australia had become of importance to Britain, partly because of the existence of the sperm whale producing the valued spermaceti but also because of the large aggregations of the right whale, Eubalaena glacialis, which in the 1790s accounted for something like a third to a half of all whale-oil imports.25 It is, in fact, a right whale that is shown on the token. It has two spouts – not as a recent commentator has said ‘an element of artistic licence’26 – but, rather, although highly stylised, an attempt on the part of the die-sinker to capture the effect of the bushy V-shaped double-jet that characterises the right whale.27 The scene is no doubt reasonably accurately reproduced in small-scale from a contemporary print but it presents a falsely placid picture of a desperately dangerous calling. Seconds later the scene might have become very different as the stricken whale tried to shake off its pursuers (Fig. 3).

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25 For the development of the Southern Whale Fishery at this time, see Jackson, as n. 24, pp. 91–116; and Vincent T. Harlow, The Founding of the Second British Empire, (London, 1964), Vol. II, pp. 293–328. The right whale was also important for its whalebone or baleen used for the stiffening of ladies’ garments, carriage whips, fishing rods, &c., and brush bristles.


Spermaceti brings us to our next token or rather series of three; for, among his other activities, the father of the man they commemorated was a chandler and spermaceti merchant in Bath besides having interests in the theatre and a brewery. Thomas De Quincey tells us that the son, John Palmer (1742–1818, Fig. 4), ‘accomplished two things, very hard to do in our little planet, ... he had invented mail coaches and he had married the daughter of a duke’.28

The second achievement, in any case unfounded, need not detain us. The first, however, must because it was in recognition of his introduction of the mail coach and his reform of the transmission of the mail that this series of tokens was struck. There were three distinct types, two are undated and the third, a smaller and thinner piece, is dated 1797 (Fig. 5). The undated pieces conform to the normal halfpenny diameter of 28 mm and on average weigh 8.75 g, the dated piece being 27 mm and weighing 7.5 g. The obverse, broadly common to the three, depicts a mail coach travelling at speed with variations of an essentially similar legend, the dies of the dated halfpenny being fairly faithfully copied from the ‘JF’ token. Despite the vigour of the coach scene the dies are not skilfully engraved (by ‘Wyon’ again, according to Pye), particularly those of the ‘AFH’ token and especially with regard to the lettering.

Pye does not help us over the dates or the issuers of the undated pieces. With regard to the dates we can get some pointers from contemporary catalogues. John Hammond’s first catalogue, that supposedly edited by the fictitious ‘Christopher Williams’ – actually Hammond himself – which was published in early 1795 records only the ‘JF’ token. Spence’s catalogue, published slightly later but certainly available by the middle of May 1795, records both the ‘JF’ piece and the ‘AFH’ halfpenny. Hammond also includes both in his second edition that had come out by August 1795 and both dealers noted that the ‘AFH’ tokens were ‘NEW’. We can actually pin these two pieces down even closer through the help of the indefatigable Miss Banks for she tells us exactly when she acquired her specimens: January 1795 for the ‘JF’ and May of that year for the ‘AFH’ halfpenny. Thus we can reasonably date and put in order the three distinct issues: 1794/95 for ‘JF’, the spring of 1795 for ‘AFH’ with a gap of two years before ‘1797’ appeared.29


29 ‘Christopher Williams’ (John Hammond), *A Descriptive List of the Provincial Copper Coins* (London, 1795) – purchased by Miss Banks 7 May 1795; [Thomas Spence], *The Coin Collectors’ Companion* (London, 1795) – purchased 16 May 1795; John Hammond, *The Virtuoso’s Guide in collecting Provincial Copper Coins* (London, 1795) – purchased 15 August 1795. The dates of Miss Banks’s purchase of the catalogues are inscribed by her in her copies and library catalogue now in the Library of the Royal Mint.
What Miss Banks does not do is to identify ‘JF’ and ‘AFH’. Nor does any contemporary cataloguer. Hamer connects the initials ‘AFH’ with Anthony Francis Haldimand, a London merchant, while others attribute ‘JF’ to a contemporary engraver, James Fittler. Neither, at first sight, has an obvious relationship with Palmer and Waters dismisses Hamer’s attribution out of hand.30 There is some case to be made for Fittler, though. For he engraved George Robertson’s famous painting of the Bath Mail (Fig. 6) and dedicated the engraving to Palmer in words that some commentators have taken as being reminiscent of the tokens:

To John Palmer Esq Surveyor and Comptroller General of the Post Office:
This Plate of the MAIL COACH is respectfully Inscribed
By his obedient humble Servant, James Fittler.

George Robertson died in 1788 but we do not know when the engraving was done. The published version was not put out by the Islington print-seller Robert Pollard until 1803. Yet the fact that it refers to Palmer as ‘Surveyor and Comptroller General of the Post Office’ implies that it was executed before or about 1793 when he was dismissed from office. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the print falls into the category of pro-Palmer propaganda that I refer to below and, despite the absence of other evidence, one should not dismiss too lightly the conjunction of the initials on the token with those of James Fittler (1758–1835), marine engraver to the king, even though the depiction of the mail coach on the token bears little resemblance to Fittler’s engraving and is much more reminiscent of the vignettes that appeared in coach office advertisements.  

There is a much less obvious case to be made out for Haldimand although he cannot be completely ruled out of the argument either. Anthony (‘Antoine’) Francis Haldimand (1741–1817, Fig. 7) was a significant City figure. Born in Turin of Swiss extraction he had settled in London as an importer of Italian silks but was soon involved in a number of other large scale commercial ventures including the international loan market and banking, his firm in the next generation funding the development of Belgrave Square. He was certainly someone who would have appreciated the new mail coach service and it could well be that he was involved in a meeting of City merchants at the London Tavern in February 1792 engineered by Palmer to protest at a delay in the mails. His name, though, does not appear among the promoters of the meeting and while it is not impossible that he was ‘AFH’ one has to recognise that this suggestion is even more speculative than the identification of ‘JF’ with James Fittler.

Fig. 7. A.F. Haldimand 1772 [Painting by John Francis Rigaud]. [From [Auguste Prevost], History of Morris, Prevost & Co., 1904.)

But what was the purpose of these tokens? This is not the place to spend time on Palmer’s career at the Post Office. It is perhaps enough to say here that, appointed Comptroller General by Pitt in 1784 to carry through his reformist ideas on the carriage of the mail, his outsider zeal and his arrogant personality cut across the entrenched attitudes of the office establishment and eventually

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31 For Fittler, see DNB.
32 For Haldimand, see [Auguste Prevost], History of Morris, Prevost & Co. ([London], 1904), pp. 1–6; and DNB under ‘Sir Frederick Haldimand’ (his uncle) and ‘William Haldimand’ (his son).
compromised his relations with Lord Walsingham, an equally dynamic and assertive Postmaster General who Palmer refused to recognize as his chief. It was a complex situation but Palmer’s machinations to secure a role that he regarded as independent of the control of the Postmaster General eventually led to his suspension from office in 1792 and his dismissal a year later. Palmer’s next twenty years were spent in attempting to obtain restitution of his office or compensation for his loss of emoluments amid a welter of pamphleteering and the other mechanics of the spin of the day. It is probably in this scenario that the *raison d’être* of the mail coach halfpennies lies; not so much as genuine provincial coinage, although the condition of many suggests that they did pass as small change, but as a means to keep Palmer’s name before the travelling public, sponsored by allies at Palmer’s own instigation. They have no redeeming authority and I do not accept Samuel’s view that they were an expression of gratitude on the part of those coach offices or inns that benefited from Palmer’s reforms. This is far too naive a judgement for no coach office or inn would have issued such a token without publicizing its own existence and location. What is much more to the point is that the apparent dates of issue of the tokens coincide with periods when Palmer was at his most publicly energetic in pressing his claims.

My last token (Fig. 8) is again one put out by a tradesman and, as befitted someone operating in a naval dockyard town during the Revolutionary war with France, it is both patriotic and maritime in theme.

![Fig. 8. Thomas Haycraft’s Deptford Halfpenny [D&H: Kent 13].](image)

The token (29 mm in diameter and averaging 9.45 g) was issued by Thomas Haycraft, a dissenting ironmonger in Deptford in 1795. The obverse, with its recollection of a legendary scene from Kentish history, is no doubt intended to emphasize British scorn of enemy pretensions. The reverse is much more obvious but its design is peculiar for two reasons. First, most ships depicted on tokens were shown broadside on; there are exceptions, the row on the Thames and Severn Canal halfpenny [D&H: Gloucestershire 58–61] being the most dramatic. Here the convention is broken to show in startling clarity the stern of a ‘three-decker’ warship, probably taken from an architectural drawing not unlike the one illustrated in Figure 9 although the latter is from a much later history of naval architecture.

While being deliberately specific about the name of the ship represented on the token, the diesinker (unidentified by Pye), working within the constraints of scale imposed on him, sought only

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34 [Samuel], as in n. 16, 23 August 1882, 202. Cf. the halfpence issued at the George and Blue Boar (D&H: Middlesex 339 and 342) and the Swan with Two Necks (W: 840 (p. 129)).
35 Clear, as in n. 32.
36 The token issuer is almost certainly the Thomas Haycraft whose son (also Thomas) was christened in the Bull Lane Independent Chapel, Deptford on 4 May 1778.
37 The scene represents the mythical confirmation of Kentish rights by William I after the Battle of Hastings: for the story see Bell, as in n. 16, p. 69. There is no authority earlier than the thirteenth century for this story and although the Conqueror was met by Anglo-Saxon envoys bringing him oaths of allegiance at various places *en route* to London his progress through Kent was actually marked by a trail of devastation with little recognition of Kentish susceptibilities: cf. Edward Freeman, *The Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1875), III, p. 538, n. 3.
to convey a general interpretation of the stern of a first-rate man-of-war and it is impossible to particularise from it. The view, not unnaturally, brought to Samuel’s mind the ‘Royal George’ that foundered so famously at Spithead in 1782. What we have here, however, is the successor to Admiral Kempenfelt’s ill-fated flagship: the fourth ‘Royal George’ (Fig. 10) launched at Chatham in 1788 and very much in the news in 1795 as Alexander Hood’s flagship in the recent action off the Ile de Groix and a participant in Howe’s acclaimed, if somewhat Pyrrhic, victory of the ‘Glorious First of June’ the previous year.\(^{38}\)

Once more little or nothing is known about the issuer. Deptford was a major victualling depot as well as being a naval dockyard and it may be that Haycraft was a naval contractor but this conjecture should not be too readily written into the subject of the reverse. With a large resident and marine population to cater for as the only token issuer in Deptford Haycraft’s coin was issued in comparatively large numbers; at least three obverses and two reverses are known and, in one version, the token was said to be redeemable in Chatham and Dover as well as in Deptford. All in all, it is probably best to accept the halfpenny as the issue of an ordinary tradesman with an eye to designs that would appeal to the patriotism of the local population both local and transient.

So much then for Mynd’s tokens. Apart from Pinkerton’s shilling – and even that is spoilt by a die-sinking error – they proclaim themselves to be the relatively cheap product of a small workshop. Their manufacture is by no means outstanding but neither is the engraving of their dies; the designs are imaginative but their execution leaves a lot to be desired. Pye tells us that – with the exception of Haycraft’s halfpenny – Mynd’s die-sinker was ‘Wyon’ and the only Wyon he lists in his introductory table is Thomas Wyon (1767–1830). The standard of engraving, though, must make one hesitate about too readily attributing unsigned ‘Wyon’ work specifically to Thomas himself or to his brother Peter (1767–1822). After all, the Wyons operated as a family concern – directed, until his death in 1796, by the father George Wyon and with two other younger brothers in the studio.\(^{39}\) It could well be that Mynd’s dies were even the work of apprentices and assistants since the Wyon studio was so heavily engaged elsewhere in the seventeen-nineties. Mynd, unlike Kempson, could not perhaps command the best that the Wyons could provide. But, again, as so

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38 Both victories were the subject of a number of popular tokens and medals, the most recent being Kempson’s celebration (engraved by Hancock) of the Ile de Groix action (BHM 406).

39 Thomas and Peter Wyon do not appear in the Birmingham directories until after George Wyon’s death, their first occurrence being in Pye’s directory of 1797. Previous to this the only Wyon in the directories was the father, George.
Fig. 10. HMS Royal George, 1788–1822. (From an aquatint of 1806, after a painting by Dominic Serres, in the National Maritime Museum.)

much in this paper, this is speculation and only serves to emphasise the unknowns and uncertainties attending an exploration of the ‘Land of Missing Persons’ in token making and the necessity of testing and re-testing much of what has been written, especially in recent times, about the tokens themselves.