

TWO NOTES ON TRADE TOKENS A MYTHICAL SEVENTEENTH CENTURY HALFPENNY OF CAMBRIDGE

By DAVID WILMER DYKES and KENNETH A. JACOB

Two years ago one of the present writers contributed to this *Journal* some notes on a number of seventeenth century Cambridge tokens¹. In the course of his paper, he commented on the possible misattribution of a halfpenny token which appeared to be listed in George Williamson's second edition of Boyne's *Trade Tokens issued in the Seventeenth Century* under Cambridge (Cambridgeshire no. 15) and again under Cowbridge, a small market town in the Vale of Glamorgan about twelve miles west of Cardiff (Wales no. 30)². The Cambridge token seemed to be known from only one specimen—in the Fitzwilliam Museum—but although the author had been unable to find any local record evidence to point to the existence of its issuer there could be no ambiguity about the reading of the place name 'Cambridge' on what is a reasonably well preserved piece.

Correspondence with the other writer of this note revealed that the token attributed to Cowbridge by both Boyne and Williamson not only existed but indeed was known from a number of specimens. In this case again there could be no doubt whatsoever as to the name of the place of issue being correctly read as 'Cowbridge'. Although the description of the Cowbridge token given by Williamson's Welsh contributor is not as full as that supplied for the other halfpenny by his Cambridgeshire sub-editor, the resemblance between the two is disconcertingly striking:

Cambridge: O. WILL. BASSETT. MERCER = In three lines: HIS/HALFE/PENNY. MM. on both sides; a rose of six leaves.

R. IN. CAMBRIDGE. 1669 = In the field W. K. B. (see Fig. 1).

Cowbridge: O. WILL. BASSETT. MERCER = HIS HALFE PENY.

R. IN. COWBRIDGE. 1669 = W. K. B. (see Fig. 2).

Despite the apparent difference in the spelling of the word 'PENNY' ('PENY') on the obverse of the two tokens as described in Williamson an examination of nine Cowbridge halfpennies immediately available and a comparison with the unique Cambridge token in the Fitzwilliam Museum at once showed that the ten pieces came in fact from the same obverse die³. As can be seen from the illustrations, there are several clear pointers to this die identity: the initial mark of a sexfoil is set at a slight angle and a petal just touches the inner border of pellets; a number of letters have the same peculiarities of alignment (the F and E of HALFE and the P and Y of PENY—*pace* Williamson not PENNY in the case of Cambridge), while others are larger than their fellows (the Y of PENY and the S of HIS).

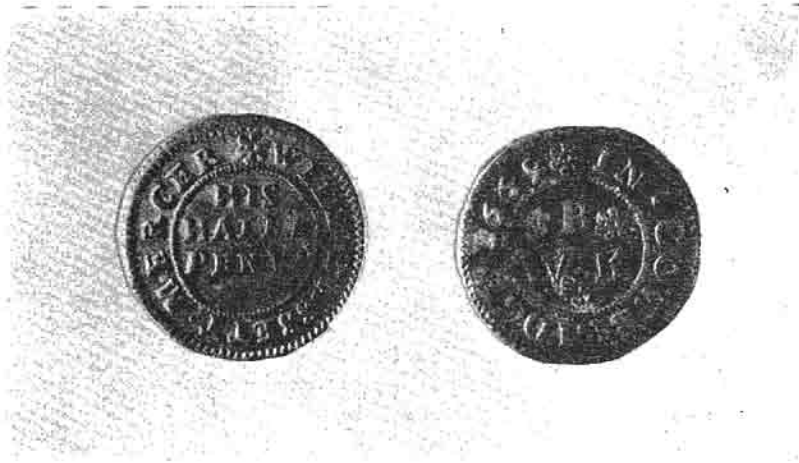
¹ Kenneth A. Jacob, 'Notes on some Seventeenth Century Cambridge Tokens', *BNJ* xxxii, pp. 221-2.

² See Williamson, vol. I (1889), p. 63 and vol II (1891), p. 1190. Significantly the Cambridge token is not listed by William Boyne in his original 1858 edition of *Tokens issued in the Seventeenth Century*. The Cowbridge halfpenny is, however, described

on p. 532 (Boyne, Wales no. 18) and illustrated on plate 37 (no. 7).

³ The nine Cowbridge tokens are in the British Museum (1), the Ashmolean Museum (1), the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff (5), the Royal Institution of South Wales, Swansea (1) and in D. W. Dykes's cabinet (1).

On the other hand, it is equally clear that the reverse of the Cowbridge token is from a different die from that of its Cambridge counterpart and that neither place-name has been altered from the other.

[FIG. 1¹]

[FIG. 2]

It would seem to be asking too much to have two Will Bassetts of the same trade issuing almost identical tokens in the same year, Will Bassetts, moreover, with their own initials, and presumably those of their wives, the same. It is, however, more than tempting to think that when one of the tokens was ordered from the manufacturer, the die-sinker produced

¹ The photograph in fig. 1 is reproduced by courtesy of the Fitzwilliam Museum. Both tokens in figs. 1 and 2 are magnified $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.

the correct obverse die but made a mistake in the spelling of the place name on the reverse. Then as soon as the error was discovered a correct reverse die was made and coupled with the original obverse.

This hypothesis is borne out by the obverse die identities of the Cambridge and the Cowbridge tokens and the difference between their reverses. It will, too, be seen readily from the illustrations that whereas the size and form of the letter-punches used for both sides of the Cambridge token correspond, the reverse lettering of the Cowbridge token bears no relation to that on its obverse. The lettering is much larger and this significant point of difference goes a long way to confirm that the Cowbridge token is the later and the correct version.

To support our hypothesis there is the evidence provided by the number of surviving tokens—at least nine attested Cowbridge halfpennies against the unique Cambridge specimen—while, in addition, there is local documentary testimony. The lack of any Cambridge record to support Will Bassett's existence in that town was remarked upon two years ago and no fresh evidence has subsequently come to light apart from the fact that the surname of Basset—or perhaps Bafset—has now been traced in a local parish register¹. On the contrary, there is no paucity of proof of Bassetts living in Cowbridge. 'Basset' is a surname of some antiquity in the Vale of Glamorgan and it is by no means uncommon in South Wales even today². Contemporary seventeenth century references are also readily to hand and although one cannot speak with certainty they may well be associated with the token issuer. We know, for example, that a William Bassett of Cowbridge died about 1680 while another William Bassett who was a bailiff of the town in 1682 died about 1705³: it is not inconceivable that the former was the token issuer and the latter a son or near relative.

The Cambridge halfpenny is almost without doubt a die-sinker's freak but its presence alongside the correct Cowbridge version lends convincing support to the theory that, particularly in the sixteen sixties, a very large number of dies for local tokens were cut in one centre by a select group of specialists as the uniformity of the style and fabric of tokens from widely different parts of the country has already suggested⁴. The Cambridge-Cowbridge tokens, with their sexfoils and borders of diamonds and pellets, are indeed typical of the workmanship of the centre's engravers in the later sixties but their existence points to more than central die cutting because it suggests also that the actual tokens themselves were struck centrally.

¹ The entry in the register reads: Baptism. John Bafset, sonne of (John and Francis?) Bafset. 23 June 1661.

² It is interesting to note that fifty-eight persons named Bassett are listed in the G.P.O. Telephone Directories (November 1964) for South Wales, East, and Swansea and South West Wales, only one of whom can be said to live in South West

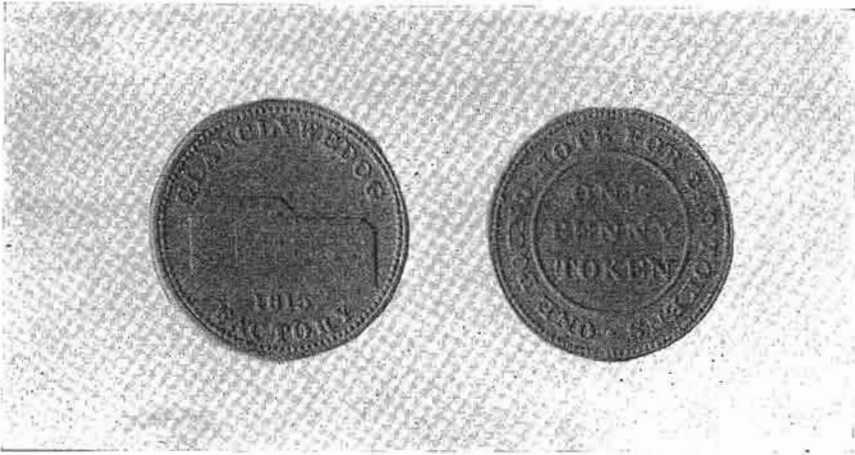
Wales.

³ L. J. Hopkin-James, *Old Cowbridge* (1922), p. 63 and p. 125.

⁴ See the late Dr. J. G. Milne's excellent introduction to his *Catalogue of Oxfordshire Seventeenth Century Tokens* (1935) and cf. also R. H. M. Dolley, 'An unpublished Seventeenth Century Token Halfpenny of London', *BNJ* xxviii, pp. 659-61.

THE GLANCLYWEDOG FACTORY PENNY

By DAVID WILMER DYKES



[FIG. 1]

THIS brief note has been prompted by the continued misattribution of a nineteenth century token to the wrong county and its purpose is simply to record the correct location of the place of issue and to throw a little light on the issuer.

The token in question is the copper penny put out in 1813 by the Glanclwywedog Factory. By no means a common piece it is of one type only and was originally listed under Denbighshire by Thomas Sharp, the Warwickshire antiquary, in his catalogue of the Chetwynd Collection¹.

Apart from its place of issue, the only other information Sharp ventured about the token was a brief description and a note that its die-sinker was Thomas Halliday, the Birmingham token manufacturer and die engraver. Sharp, himself, in the Preface to his catalogue was only too conscious of the imperfections of his work as it related to nineteenth century tokens and modestly lamented the absence of a 'guide to direct his steps . . . a cotemporary (*sic*) collector, who, like Mr. Welch, should have watched the progress of this second issue [i.e. the nineteenth century issue of tokens] and taken notes of the respective pieces as they were produced'².

Sharp's reference was to Thomas Welch of Birmingham who had assiduously followed the activities of the die-sinkers and manufacturers of the eighteenth century series of tokens and supplied much of the information used by Pye in the 1801 edition of his *Provincial Copper Coins*³. Nevertheless, although he may not have had the benefit of the contemporary

¹ Thomas Sharp, *A Catalogue of the Provincial Copper Coins, Tickets and Medalets issued in Great Britain, Ireland, and the Colonies during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries . . . Described from the Originals in the collection of Sir George Chetwynd, Baronet, of Grendon Hall, in the County of Warwick* (1834), p. 193.

² *Ibid.*, p. ix.

³ Thomas Welch is said to have written the advertisement to Pye's catalogue and also to have lent many of the rarer specimens from his token collection for the engravings. His collection which was sold by King (Junior) at Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, on September 17 to 19, 1801, was

stated in the sale catalogue to be 'unquestionably the completest ever formed, and contains almost every coin, either engraved or described in a Work lately engraved by C. Pye, and published by L. B. Seecy, Ave Maria Lane, London to which Publication the Numbers refer. There are several unique pieces, many very fine Proofs of scarce coins, many unfinished Proofs of Private and other scarce Tokens, and almost every Coin is in the highest state of Preservation'. The collection was disposed of for £138 16s. 6d. Waters accounted this the first token sale of note and included a reprint of the catalogue in his edition of Pye (1916).

spadework of a Welch or a Pye, his identification of the die-sinker of the Glanclwywedog token is hardly without substance since he himself was personally acquainted with the major die engravers and manufacturers responsible for the nineteenth century issues and could also draw on the wide-ranging knowledge of Sir George Chetwynd¹. It is also not without point that the design of the Glanclwywedog penny is of similar style—the reverse is exactly similar—to that put out by the Flint Lead Works in the same year of issue and also said to be engraved by Halliday.

Sharp gave no clue as to manufacturer but if this was not Halliday himself it is very likely to have been Sir Edward Thomason for whom Halliday frequently worked as a die engraver.

Sharp's attribution was accepted without question by W. J. Davis who described the token in the following terms²:

DENBIGHSHIRE
GLANCLYDWEDOG (*sic*)
PENNY

COPPER

1. O. View of a mill showing a bell at the end of the higher building. Legend, GLANCLYDWEDOG FACTORY. Under the building 1813.

R. ONE PENNY TOKEN in a circle. Legend, ONE POUND NOTE FOR 240 TOKENS.

Halliday.

Davis's ready acceptance of Sharp's siting of the Factory in Denbighshire is the more surprising since some doubt had already been cast upon it by R. T. Samuel in *The Bazaar, the Exchange and Mart* nearly twenty years before (July 6, 1887, p. 20) when he observed that Glanclwywedog was "an establishment which does not, however, appear to have left its mark upon the topographical or manufacturing history of Denbighshire." Samuel's reservations were unhappily ignored not only by Davis but by other subsequent writers and it is only recently in a numismatic work that they have been revived. Mr. R. C. Bell, drawing upon Samuel's articles, has emphasised the fact that 'no mention either of the factory or manufacturer can be found in the records of that County'³. This silence on the part of the Denbighshire records is not surprising since the Glanclwywedog Factory was never situated in that county but instead at least twenty-five miles away from its southernmost tip, in Montgomeryshire.

The Glanclwywedog Factory was, in fact, a flannel factory on the left bank of the Clywedog river a very short distance outside Llanidloes and was not without importance in the industrial development of North Wales⁴.

To Arthur Aikin visiting North Wales in the summer of 1796 the flannel industry, centred on Montgomeryshire, constituted 'the grand and most important of the Welsh manufactures'⁵

¹ Sir George Chetwynd also had personal contacts with manufacturers, die-sinkers and dealers, particularly Matthew Young, but although as a youth he had collected some tokens at the time of issue it was not until the latter part of 1830 that he seriously took up collecting.

² W. J. Davis, *The Nineteenth Century Token Coinage of Great Britain, Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man* (1904), p. 190. The mis-spelling of Glanclwywedog is corrected in the corrigenda. The token is illustrated as no. 8 on Plate F.

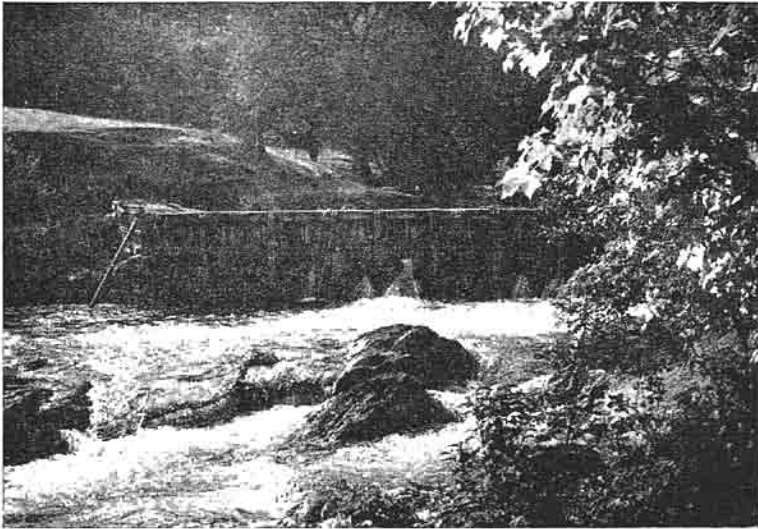
³ R. C. Bell, *Copper Commercial Coins, 1811-19*, (1964), p. 149. I am grateful to Mr. A. W. Jan for generously allowing me to borrow his bound set of Samuel's *Bazaar* articles.

⁴ See A. H. Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales* (2nd Edit. 1951); Edward Hamer, 'A Parochial Account of Llanidloes', *Montgomeryshire Collections* v, pp. 36-38; and J. G. Jenkins, 'The Woollen Industry in Montgomeryshire', *Mont. Coll.* lviii, pp. 50-69.

⁵ Arthur Aikin, *Journal of a Tour through North Wales and Part of Shropshire* (1797), p. 76.

while Llanidloes at this time, though in due course to be outstripped by Newtown, was the heart of the industry¹. The Glanclwywedog Flannel Factory, one of the earliest in Llanidloes, had been in origin an old corn mill which was converted into a *pandy* or fulling mill and dye works about 1790 by one William Hunt. The works were further extended by Hunt's son-in-law, Edward Ingram, who added a carding and slubbing factory driven by water power. Ingram's early machinery, however, does not seem to have been altogether successful but about 1797 he was joined in partnership by Charles Cole, an Englishman of considerable means who introduced more efficient machinery and once more enlarged the factory.

Eventually Cole secured complete control of the concern and it was he who in 1813 issued the Glanclwywedog Factory tokens. The pennies, issued partly to make up the wages of his work people—although difficult to calculate since payment was for piece work, perhaps on average 5 to 7 shillings a week—and partly to meet the general shortage of copper coin in the Llanidloes district, are said to have circulated freely in the neighbourhood until their recall three years before Cole's death in 1821.²



[FIG. 2]

After Cole's death, Glanclwywedog was worked by a number of individual manufacturers, including his widow, until it was incorporated into the mammoth Welsh Flannel, Tweed and Woolstapling Company. By this time, though, the Montgomeryshire woollen industry was sadly in decline and today it is no more³. Glanclwywedog itself, so I understand, was closed

¹ Pigot and Sons, *National and Commercial Directory* (1835).

² Cole's Memorial in Llanidloes Parish Church tells us how 'by his active exertions he encouraged and extended the manufactures of the place, and by his liberality he provided employment for the industrious poor, to whom he was a kind and constant benefactor'.

³ Within eleven years of the formation of the 'Welsh Flannel, Tweed and Woolstapling Company' Worral's *Directory* of 1875 could report that the woollen industry 'due to a variety of causes has declined so that the production of the district is not one tenth of what it was thirty years ago'. Cf. Jenkins, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

about fifty years ago and its site is now (August 1965) occupied by a depot for delivery vans and a carpenter's shop. All that remains to remind one of the original factory is its weir on the Clywedog (Fig. 2) and the penny token, both memorials of a vitally important era in the industrial history of North Wales¹. The token has an added importance to the industrial archaeologist because it does not seem that any other representations of Glan-clywedog have survived. On the whole the designers of eighteenth and nineteenth century tokens appear to have taken great pride in the accuracy and detail of their illustrations and we may well have here a reasonably exact view of the buildings of an early factory of the Industrial Revolution which would otherwise be unknown to us.

¹ The virtual disappearance of the Glan-clywedog Factory gives added point to Mr. Arthur Griffin's plea that the task of collecting and collating information on tokens 'should be commenced while old records are still available and while old buildings

still exist; otherwise many of the tokens which are at present something of a mystery will no doubt remain so'.—'The "Dunkirk" Tokens', *BNJ* xxviii, pp. 171-4.