SOMERSET APOTHECARIES’ TOKENS AND THEIR ISSUERS

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Tradesmen’s tokens formed an illegal but tolerated money of necessity privately issued by merchants between 1648 and 1679 when regal small change was scarce or non-existent. The standard work on the subject is Trade tokens issued in the seventeenth century originally published by William Boyne in 1858, revised by George C. Williamson in two volumes 1889–91 and reprinted in three volumes by B.A. Seaby Ltd. in 1967. This work is now popularly called ‘Williamson’ and will be referred to as such in this paper.

Williamson listed no apothecaries’ tokens of Somerset but included five which bear the device of a mortar and pestle and three with that of a unicorn. There is proof that two of the first group were apothecaries and evidence suggesting that several other token issuers of the county were apothecaries.

Unfortunately all the probate records of the Diocese of Bath and Wells, which was virtually identical with the historical county of Somerset, were destroyed in an air raid on Exeter in 1942 so it is impossible to see the wills of the Somerset token issuers.

Fig. 1 Token of James James. Drawn from a photograph of a specimen in the Somerset County Museum, kindly supplied by Mr. S.C. Minnitt. Actual size 1.6 cm. diam.

APOTHECARIES’ TOKENS

1. John James of Crewkerne

O. IOHN . IAMES . 1666 — A mortar and pestle.
R. IN . CREWKERNE — I. T. I (ld.).

Williamson gave no information about the issuer of this token which was included in the lists of apothecaries’ tokens of the Chemist and Druggist and of Trease. The inventory of ‘John James, late of Crewkerne in ye County of Som’st apothecary’ was made on July 29 1677. His premises comprised ‘Ye fflore Chamber, ye studdy or Clossett Chamber, ye Kitching Chamber, ye Cellar
Chamber, ye Brewhouse Chamber, ye Kitching, ye Brewhouse, ye Cellar, ye Cockloft and the Shopp.' The total was £238. 13. 02 and the goods in the shop amounted to £178. 11. 08. They included 'Three Brass morters & one marble stone morter wth. their several pessells.' There were also numerous sets of boxes, scales, 'small dishes of pewter for bleeding', measures and containers with 'several sorts of Physick & other apothecaries things' and 'other implements belonging to the foresyd practise.' The appraisers were Richard Charlock, John Greenway, Edward Morefield, John Shire, Edward Cossenies and Richard Caswell. Greenway was a merchant, Cossenies a haberdasher and Shire (q.v.) an apothecary. All issued tokens. John James paid 4s. for two hearths in 1664/5. 7

Fig. 2 Token of James Shire. Drawn from a photograph of a specimen in the Norweb collection, kindly supplied by Mr. R.H. Thompson. Actual size 1.6 cm. diam.

2. John Shire of Crewkerne
O. JOHN . SHIRE — A mortar and pestle.
R. IN . CROOKHORN . 1666 — I . A . S. (d.d.)

Williamson gave no information about the issuer of this token which was included in the lists of the Chemist and Druggist4 and Trease.5 John Shire was probably the person of that name whose will was proved at Taunton in 1694.6 On November 11 1715 Philip, son of Margaret Jones of Hinton, Somerset, was bound to John Shire, apothecary of Crewkerne, for seven years at a premium of £15.7 His apprentice-master seems certain to have been the son of the token issuer and the person of that name whose will was proved in 1722.8

On July 7 1725 'Page Shire, son of Margaret of Crewkerne, Devon (sic), was bound to James Fisher, of Somerton, Wiltshire, (sic) at a premium of £51. 10s.9 Margaret appears to have been the widow of John Jr. and her will was proved at Taunton in 1757.8 Unfortunately none of these wills is extant.

It thus appears certain that the token issuer was an apothecary as were his son and grandson. In addition to using one of the apothecaries' favourite devices on his token he took the inventory of another apothecary, as was often the case.

Fig. 3 Token of Jane Blatchford. Drawn from a photograph of a specimen in the Norweb collection, kindly supplied by Mr. R.H. Thompson. Actual size 1.7 cm. diam.
PROBABLE APOTHECARIES' TOKENS
Jane Blatchford of Montacute
O. IANE . BLATCHFORD — A mortar and two pestles.
R. OF . MOVNOTGEG — T. H. B. (½d.).

Williamson gave no information about the issuer of this token which was included in the Chemist and Druggist and Trease lists. She seems likely to have been the widow of an apothecary but no person of that surname is in the list of Taunton wills.

John Chapman of Chard
O. JOHN . CHAPMAN . FOR — Three cloves.
R. NECESSARY . CHANG — Three cloves. (½d.).

Williamson wrote 'Although no town is mentioned, this token and the following one have been assigned to Chard, as many of them have been found there, and it also appears that a John Chapman was Mayor of Chard in 1657. The next token reads:-

O. JOHN . CHAPMAN — Device not ascertained.
R. HALF . PENNY — Pair of scales. (¾d.).

The spelling JOHN occurs in Williamson but is probably an error as I was invariably used instead of J on tokens.

The following entry appears in the Society of Apothecaries Court Minute Book of September 7 1675 'Joseph Chapman s. Jn of Chard, Co. Somerset, mercer, exd., appr. & bound to Jonathan Leigh for 8 years.' He was freed on May 6 1684. On February 7 1709 Joseph, son of Joseph Chapman, citizen and apothecary, who 'had served John Channing divers years', was freed by redemption. He was probably the son of the token issuer’s daughter Elizabeth Channing, Channing, who came from Chard, had been apprenticed to Joseph Chapman Jr. and freed in 1692.

On August 2 1715 Thomas Chapman, son of John, late of Chard, mercer, deceased, was bound to Joseph Chapman of the London Society. The author has been unable to find his freedom. He appears, like Joseph Jr. to have been a grandson of the token issuer.

Mr. Derek M.M. Shorrock, Somerset County Archivist (pers. comm., May 1981) has supplied the following information which helps to elucidate the family tree:

“Our personal names index includes a precis of the will of John Chapman of Chard, mercer, (proved 1680) which gives the beneficiaries as wife Elizabeth, sons, John, Thomas, Aaron and Joseph and daughters Elizabeth Channing, Ann Pinney and Mary Fourscore. The same collection of documents also contains letters of administration with the will of John Chapman 1711, proved 1715, the beneficiaries being wife Sarah, son William, son John by first wife, daughter Mary. There is also a deed of 1652/3 being an assignment of interest in a messuage between John Barcroft, late of Chard now of London, merchant, and Robert Barcroft to John Chapman of Chard, merchant and Henry Tooley of London, Haberdasher.” Mr. Shorrock also gave the following entries from the parish registers:— Baptisms of sons of John Chapman — Thomas, October 17 1650; Aaron, February 17 1653; Richard, February 25 1655. The mother’s name was given as Elizabeth only for Richard. John Chapman, Sr. mercer, was buried on July 27 1679 as was Thomasin, wife of John Chapman, on September 22 1682. She was presumably the first wife of John Jr. The borough account book showed John Chapman as Mayor in 1658 but did not give his occupation. He was Constable in 1647 and in 1655 was paid £3.15s.0d. towards his law suit.”
Another John was Constable in 1680 and was portreeve in 1683 when there was some disagreement as to the amount of town rents collected.

Although John Chapman was described as a mercer when his son was bound and in his will, the first token bears the device of three cloves from the Grocers' arms and the second a pair of scales, a device often used by grocers and grocer-apothecaries.

It seems certain that there were in Chard at least two John Chapmans and two Joseph Chapmans, all of whom were probably apothecaries or mercer-apothecaries. They may well have been members of a joint guild of mercers, grocers and apothecaries in which the mercers were the most numerous or prominent. In many towns such as Chester, Derby and York, such a guild was called a mercers' company and apothecaries in them were sometimes called mercers even when they appear to have been practising mainly or exclusively as apothecaries.

Walter Chapman of Bath
O. WALTER . CHAPMAN — The Mercers’ arms.
R. IN - BATHE . MERCER — W . A. C. (4d.).

Williamson gave no information about the issuer, who belonged to a family containing many apothecaries and possibly related to that of Chard. Derry wrote of the family: 'Between 1630 and 1798 the name Chapman appears 18 times in the roll of Mayors. Of these it appears from the Abbey Registers that Walter Chapman (buried 13th August 1624), Mayor in 1617 and William Chapman, Mayor in 1617, received visitors into their houses. They may have practised as apothecaries.' My researches have shown that many apothecaries, including several of Bath, had private nursing homes.

The token issuer was probably the son of the Walter mentioned above who had numerous children christened between 1639 and 1649. His wife's name was Anne which corresponds with the additional initial on the token. He may have been Walter Chapman, Alderman, who was buried on May 8 1655 or the gentleman of that name buried on January 26 1682/3.

On July 4 1693 Scarborough Chapman, son of William of Bath, gent., was bound to Thomas Soaper of the London Society and turned over to Mr. Finch in 1694. There is no record of his freedom and he probably returned to Bath where he died in 1706. He seems likely to have been a nephew of the token issuer.

Fig. 4 Token of John Cornish. Drawn from a specimen in the British Museum Collection, with permission. Actual size 1.4 cm. diam.

John Cornish of Taunton
O. IOHN . CORNISH — A unicorn.
R. IN . TAVNTON . 1655 — T. D. C. (4d.).

Williamson gave no information about the issuer. There were numerous apothecaries etc. of the surname in Somerset. The issuer may have been an
ancestor of Matthew, son of James Cornish, yeoman, who was bound to Richard Baker, apothecary of Taunton, on October 3 1715. The following may also have been relatives:- William Cornish of Yarlington, Somerset, bound in 1719 to John Flower, apothecary of Axbridge, Somerset; John Cornish, son of Thomas, bound in 1731 to Thomas Chapman, apothecary of Ilminster. This apprentice may have been John Cornish, surgeon, etc. of Chard to whom Benjamin Dove was bound in 1743.

Mr. S.C. Minnett, Assistant County Museums Officer, Somerset County Museums, (pers. comm. Dec. 1985) has informed the author that Mr. Robin Bush, Deputy County Archivist, has tried to find the occupation of the token issuer but has been unable to do so. He has found that there was a Unicorn Inn in Taunton from at least as early as 1675 so it is possible that Cornish was a publican. Since, however, the token bore one of the favourite devices of the apothecaries and its issuer was a member of an apothecarial family it seems probable that he was of that occupation.

Fig. 5 Token of John Hooper. Drawn from a specimen in the Norweb Collection. Kindly supplied by Mr. R.H. Thompson. Actual size 1.8 cm. diam.

**John Hooper of Nether Stowey**

O. IOHN . HÖOPPER — A mortar and two pestles.

Williamson gave no information about the issuer of this token which was included in Trease’s list. Samuel, son of Samuel Hopper apothecary, whose son and namesake was bound in 1715 to Francis Palmer, apothecary of Bristol, may have been a descendent.

Fig. 6 Token of John Newton. Drawn from a specimen in the Norweb Collection. Actual size 1.8 cm. diam.

**John Newton of Milverton**

O. IOHN . NEWTON . OF — A mortar and pestle.

Williamson gave no information about the issuer of this token which is included in Trease’s List. The wills of persons of Milverton called John Newton were proved at Taunton in 1617 and 1697. The former was probably the father of
the token issuer and the latter, who was called Sr., was probably the issuer who seems to have had a son of the same name. Although described as a mercer the issuer seems likely to have been an apothecary or mercer-apothecary as may well have been his father and son.

A POSSIBLE APOTHECARY'S OR BARBER-SURGEON'S TOKEN
William Cosens of Crewkerne
O. WILL. COSENS — A bird on top of a pair of scales; below a skull. W. C.
R. OF. CROOKHORNE — W. M. C. (4d.).
Williamson\(^3\) gave no information about the issuer. Commenting on a token bearing the device of three human skulls he wrote ‘This is probably an apothecary’s token.'\(^2\) The device of a skull was often used by apothecaries and barber-surgeons and William Cosens may have been of one or both of these occupations. He was possibly a relation of Edward Cossenes who appraised John James’s will and of Francis, son of William Cossens of Dorchester, who was bound to John Lyle, apothecary of Chard in 1724.\(^2\)

TOKENS BEARING DEVICES OFTEN USED BY APOTHECARIES
Cock — Thomas Lowdell of Taunton issued two tokens, one dated 1658 and the other undated and on which he was called a mercer.
Cross — Ambrose Seward of Yeovil issued an undated token bearing a cross pattée, the form of cross frequently used by apothecaries. He may have been an ancestor of Samuel, son of Samuel Seward, Clerk, of Sutton Bingham (a village about three miles from Yeovil), who was bound to William Wareham, barber-surgeon of London in 1720.\(^2\) Unicorn — William Chace of Taunton, occupation unknown, issued a token dated 1662 with a unicorn facing to the right and an undated one with a unicorn facing to the left. The Chace or Chase family was an apothecarial one. Stephen, John and James Chase were three generations of Royal apothecaries between c 1649 and 1718.\(^2\) John was Master of the Society of Apothecaries (1664/6) and James in 1688/9. Another John Chase was Master in 1753/4.\(^2\) John Clother of Montacute, occupation unknown, also issued a token with the device in 1655.

OTHER POSSIBLE APOTHECARY TOKEN ISSUERS
John Bush of Bath, who issued in 1656 a token bearing the Mercers’ arms may have been an ancestor of Samuel Bush, apothecary, who had persons buried from his house at the Walks, Bath in 1723 and 1724.\(^14, 16\)

Robert Haviland of Bridgwater, who issued an undated token bearing a merchant’s mark may have been the ancestor of several apothecaries etc. of Somerset. Two persons of the name called Sr and Jr., surgeons, etc. had numerous apprentices bound to them between 1771 and 1792.\(^2\) They were called surgeon-apothecaries in the Medical Directories of 1779–83.\(^32\) They were probably ancestors of James Haviland, (fl. c 1798–1821), surgeon-apothecary who was parish medical officer at Cannington, a village about three miles from Bridgwater.\(^2\) Thomas, son of John Haviland, gentleman, of the same village was bound in 1712 to Thomas Tucker, surgeon of Gosport. They may have been descendants of the token issuer and ancestors of the two Johns and James. Thomas Haviland, apothecary of Bath, who
subscribed to books in 1740, 1753 and 1774 and had Charles Arden bound to him in 1765, was probably of the same family. The name was also spelled Haveland and Heaviland.

John Tuthill of Axbridge, who issued in 1669 a token bearing the device of an angel, may have been an ancestor of Richard, son of James Tuthill, who was bound to William Keate, apothecary of Axbridge in 1741. Another James Tuthill was bound to Thomas Giles, surgeon of Bridgewater in 1757 and a surgeon-apothecary called Richard Tuthel, of Axbridge, was listed in the Medical Directories of 1779–83. He was probably the apprentice of 1741. It seems quite likely that all these persons were of the same family and that a practice existed in the town for over a century.

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Editors' Note
Sadly, Dr. Whittet died in April 1987, shortly before this paper was sent to press.