

Taunton Tokens of the Seventeenth Century.

BY HENRY SYMONDS, F.S.A.

AN attempt will be made in the following pages to compile a supplement to the list of Taunton tokens of the period 1650-72, as drawn up by the late Mr. Wm. Bidgood, when he edited the Somerset portion of the second edition (1891) of Boyne's text-book on the subject. This list was also printed by our Society, with other kindred matter, in Vol. xxxii of the *Proceedings*, and afterwards separately as a pamphlet. The extension of Mr. Bidgood's work will take the form of re-arranging the tokens, as far as possible, according to the streets in which the issuers lived, with additional biographical notes where such are available.

This method of arrangement has been rendered practicable by the discovery at the Public Record Office of an unusually full and perfect Hearth-tax return for the year 1664-5, wherein the taxpayers are scheduled under the various streets, and not according to parishes, as was the more general custom. I have been able to locate about four-fifths of the persons mentioned in Boyne's catalogue, and to append to their names the number of their fire-places, for each of which an annual payment of 2s. was demanded by the Crown. These details form an approximate guide to the size of the houses and the *status* of the occupants, and indicate the districts which were chiefly used by the trading community during the Commonwealth and Restoration times. It has been needful to abandon Boyne's alphabetical classification,

but his numbers have been retained in order to facilitate reference to his two volumes.

It is, I think, not unlikely that many of these pieces were actually struck in the town by travelling die-sinkers or metal-workers, who periodically visited the neighbourhood during the quarter of a century when this unauthorised currency was in favour with the public. There is sometimes so strong a resemblance between the minor details of tokens issued in places not far distant from each other, as to raise the inference that they were produced by one pair of hands using one set of punches. There is, as far as I am aware, only one known case in which a trader had a pair of dies cut for his sole use, and that was in Derbyshire. If the latter practice had been at all general, we might have expected to find other survivals from among the thousands of dies which must have been in existence throughout the kingdom, as such an instrument is almost indestructible except by intent.

In one respect the Taunton series differs from those elsewhere, viz., in the comparatively few instances where the Arms of one of the Livery Companies of London were adopted, either wholly or partially, to denote the occupation of the trader. There are just fifty issuers at present identified, of whom only five or six made use of such heraldic bearings, the great majority preferring more distinctive emblems, which probably also appeared upon the sign-boards of their dwellings, thus adding to the interest of these little items as aids to local history. The exhibition of a sign did not, of course, necessarily imply that the house was an inn or an alehouse; at that time a pictorial, rather than a written, form of announcement or advertisement was almost universal.

The earliest date on a token of Taunton is 1652 and the latest 1667, but the undated specimens may have made their appearance at any time between 1649 and 1672. The farthing issued "By the Constables" (presumably on behalf of the manor court) is dated 1667, and therefore had a life of

only five years before the whole system was abolished by royal proclamation. Nevertheless, these town pieces, as they are now called, were both numerous and widely circulated, for the obvious reason that the credit of the local governing body stood higher than that of any individual trader, to which consideration may be added the fact that the official token was superior in size and weight to those put forth by private venturers, which might in itself impart greater confidence to the holders. The anonymous Constables who gave to the town these "promises to pay" were Stephen Savage and Henry Crosse,¹ who held office in 1667, and it is somewhat remarkable that the books of the Court Leet do not contain any minute authorising the issue, or any account of the expenditure involved. There is also a much less familiar variety of the town piece bearing only the word "Taunton" by way of legend; this was almost certainly earlier than the farthing last mentioned, but its history is at present obscure and its circulation must have been very limited.

Where the hearth-tax or subsidy rolls of the period mention only one person whose names correspond with those of a token issuer, I have felt justified in assuming that they point to the same man, when there is no evidence of a contradictory character from other sources. Direct testimony is very difficult to obtain, as the wills and inventories of these traders never, as far as my experience goes, throw any light upon their past efforts to provide "necessary change" for everyday purposes.

Although the Government tacitly, but unwillingly, sanctioned this minor currency, some of the issuers in the adjoining county of Wiltshire were prosecuted at Quarter Sessions. Oddly enough, the offence charged against them was not the striking of unlawful money, but that the tokens were of insufficient size! For instance, John Bushell, mercer, of Great

1. Stephen Savage, East Street, three hearths; Henry Crosse, Fore Street, five hearths.

Bedwin, was indicted in 1670 for uttering farthings 100 of which were only of the (intrinsic) value of 16d. Our Taunton traders, presumably, did not offend in the same way, or, maybe, the justices of Somerset took a more lenient view of the situation.

It may be useful to repeat again here that when three initials are shewn in triangular form on the field of a token, the two lower letters represent the Christian names of husband and wife respectively.

The two documents at the Public Record Office from which the information has, for the most part, been extracted, are Lay Subsidies, nos. $\frac{256}{18}$ and $\frac{172}{18}$.

The wills quoted are from the Probate Registry at Taunton, except when otherwise stated.

EAST STREET.

242. *O.* CHRISTOPHER COOKE = A bunch of grapes.

R. IN TAUNTON . 1667 = C . R . C

Two hearths. He was an overseer of the will of Hugh Gray, a neighbour. The will of a namesake, perhaps a son, was proved in 1730.

251. *O.* MATTHEW GAYLARD = A hand holding a woolcomb. 1666.

R. OF TAUNTON . 1666 = M . A . G

The tithingman's list of 1662 shows "Matthew Gillard" of this street. The same name appears on the Association Oath Roll of 1695 (P.R.O.).

253. *O.* HUGH GRAYE = A woolpack.

R. OF TAUNTON . 1666 = H . A . G

Two hearths. He was married in 1643, 31 Dec., to Ann Stone, at St. Mary's Church. His will, dated and proved in 1670, describes him as "sergeweaver," and mentions Ann his then wife, three sons, John, James and Hugh, and a daughter Mary. Two of the overseers were Tobias Osborne and Christopher Cooke.

254-5. *O.* ROBERT GRAY = A caldron.

R. IN TAUNTON . 1659 = R . K . G

In 1660 he and his wife contributed, under the heading "East St.," 2s. towards disbanding the forces of the kingdom (subsidy $\frac{172}{18}$), but he died before 1664, in which year Katherine Gray, widow, executed her will, mentioning three sons, William, Jonathan and John. In 1635 one Robert Gray founded almshouses in the town, and his monument survives in St. Mary's on the north side.

257. *O.* JEFFERY GROVE IN = The Clothworkers' Arms.
R. TANTON DEANE . 1664 = I . R . G
 Five hearths. His name appears among the debtors of Richard Palmer, a contemporary fuller, who was a brother-in-law of Richard Snow, another token issuer.
270. *O.* PETER PARRY OF = A hart sejant.
R. TANTON . CLOTHWORK = P . P . 1654.
 Four hearths. In 1657, 15 June, Peter Parry married Shusannah Blake at St. Mary's. The Feet of Fines, Mich., 19 Chas. II, show him as the "querent" (probably the purchaser) of two houses, etc., and two acres meadow in St. James's parish.
271. *O.* THO PEARCE . AT YE WHITE = A lion rampant.
R. LYON IN TAUNTON . 1664 = T . E . P
 Four hearths.
- 274-5. *O.* JAMES PITTS . 1661 = A pair of shears.
R. IN TANNTON = I . A . P
 The tithingman's list, 1662, gives this name under East Street.

FORE STREET.

236. *O.* SAMVE BINDEN IN = A pair of scales.
R. TAUNTON . SOMMERSET = S . S . B
 Five hearths. Samuel Bindon was Mayor in 1680 and 1689, and signed the Oath Roll of 1695. His will, dated 1696 and proved in the following year, describes him as grocer, and mentions three sons, Samuel, Joseph and John, and a daughter, Elizabeth. The Feet of Fines record that in 1652 he was the querent in respect of a house in Taunton, locality unnamed. He was Constable in 1670 and again in 1676.
239. *O.* THOMAS CARPENTER = A soldier.
R. OF TAUNTON = T . A . C
 The subsidy roll of 1660, already cited, places him in Fore Street. In 1633 a wine licence was granted to one of the same name, and certain litigation concerning the dyeing of cloth tells us that he was rated in 1652 "after the proportion of £100 by the year." The will (P.C.C. 262 Wootton) of Thomas Carpenter, clothier, dated in 1657, mentions "Alice, my now wife," four sons, Richard, Robert, Samuel and Edward, and a daughter, Thomasine. Two freehold messuages on the south side of East Street, in which Edward Webber sometime dwelt. A life interest to his wife in two leasehold messuages wherein the testator then lived, "heretofore known by the name of the King's Armes and now by the name of the Valiant Souldier," and then also used as a tavern, with a licence granted for the lives of himself and his son Richard. Two overseers were Roger Gale the elder and John Porter of Taunton Castle, yeoman.
 The will of Alice, the widow, was proved at Taunton in 1661, her son Robert being described as a pewterer of London. The inventory refers to French wines and the like.

From the foregoing it is evident that Thomas Carpenter, the issuer, was both cloth-weaver and inn-holder, and I draw the further inference that Richard, who was taxed for eleven hearths in Fore Street in 1664-5, was then the occupier of the "Valiant Soldier," after the death of his mother. This sign is not noted in Hotten's *Sign Boards*, nor does it occur in this form on any other token.

240-1. O. WILLIAM CHACE = A unicorn.

R. IN TANTON . 1662 = W . E . C

Four hearths. On 8 Aug., 1661, Wm. Chace married Elisabeth Gunston at St. Mary's.

256. O. ANDREW GREGGORY = A globe.

R. IN TAUNTON . 1655 = A . M . G

In 1660, Andrew Grigory and his wife, of this street, paid 15s. to the State; and in 1658, Easter Term, Andrew was the querent in a Fine levied of two houses and eight acres of land in the town. Constable in 1650.

264-5. O. JOHN MEREDITH . 1666 = For necessary cheng.

R. A castle, with TANTON below.

Five hearths. He was the querent in a Fine of three houses in Taunton in Mich. Term, 18 Chas. II. Constable in 1664 and 1672.

268. O. THOMAS MUNDEN = a T and a tun, as a rebus.

R. IN TAUNTON = T . E . M

This inhabitant of Fore Street, "and his wife," contributed 2s. to the subsidy of 1660; and a Thomas Mundy signed the Qath Roll of 1695. (See also Mathew Munday, of North Street).

272-3. O. ANDREW PITTS IN TANTON = A roll of tobacco.

R. IN SOMERSETSHIRE . 1652 = A . A . P

The tithingman's return for Fore Street in 1649 shows this name, and in 1640 Andrew Pitts was assessed on land in Taunton of 20s. annual value.

276. O. JOHN POWEL AT THE = A lion rampant.

R. RED LYON IN TAUNTON = I . D . P

Twelve hearths, of which "one is only a privat oven and noe hearth." In 1670 the "Redd Lyon a message" was owned by Obediah Arosmith. In 1669, Trinity Term, John Powell, with others, sold a house and garden in the town. The will of a carrier bearing the same names, proved in 1690, mentions the testator's mother, Dorothy, who may well have been the wife of the issuer of the token.

277. O. JOHN RADFORD = A hand holding a pen.

R. IN TAUNTON . 1653 = I . E . R

Three hearths. The device on the obverse is that of a writing master, or scrivener. This sign is very uncommon, as only eight other instances of its use are known among 13,000 specimens throughout the United Kingdom.

282. *O.* JOHN SPRAKE IN TANTON = A pair of scales.

R. IN SOMERSET SHIER = I . G . S

Two hearths are entered against the name of Grace Sprake, widow, whose initials correspond with those on the reverse. In 1640 John Sprake was taxed 8s. for land worth 20s. *p.a.*, but apparently he had died before Trinity Term, 1663, when Grace, a widow, was querent, and John (probably the son) was deforciant in a Fine relating to a house in St. Mary's parish.

284. *O.* AT THE 3 WIDDOWS = R . E . P

R. IN TAUNTON . 1655 = R . E . P

This is, fortunately, the only case in which a private issuer withheld his name. There were two taxpayers whose initials were the same as those on the token, *viz.*, Rich. Purchase (nine hearths), and Rich. Palmer (two hearths), but the probabilities seem to favour an attribution to the first named. The sign of the "Three Widows" is still known in Fore Street, where R. Purchase lived when the return was made in 1664. On the other hand, the will of Richard Palmer, of St. Mary's parish, proved 1670, shows that he was a fuller, or a dealer in cloth, whereas the premises were undoubtedly used as an inn, as will presently appear; again, the R. Palmer of the 1664 return was a resident of East Street, and was by reason of his poverty "not rated to church or poor." In a Chancery suit of 1662 (*Webber v. Webber*, ser. 2, 467/17), it is stated that "an innhouse in Taunton known by the name of the Three Widdowes" was then of the yearly value of £35, and that Margaret Webber, formerly Saunders, had a life interest in the property. This substantial rental indicates a building with large accommodation, and supports my belief that Richard Purchase, who was taxed for nine chimneys, occupied the inn and circulated the token.

285. *O.* HENRY TANNER = 1664. The Haberdashers' Arms.

R. IN TAUNTON DEEN = H . A . T (or, "Tanton Deane.").

One hearth. In the year 1660 he and his wife paid 2s. to the subsidy collector, and 1695 Henry Tanner subscribed the Oath Roll as "postmaster." The will of an inhabitant bearing the same names was proved in 1712 and describes the testator as a haberdasher, but the date is so late that the will may refer to a son or relative.

286. *O.* STEAPHEN TIMEWELL = A hat and feather.

R. OF TAUNTON = S . E . T

Seven hearths, but he had "returned one too many by mistake." Two Stephens, father and son, were living at this time, but it will be probably correct to assume that the older man was responsible for this token, and that it was he who filled the office of Mayor in 1683. The Feet of Fines for Easter Term, 21 Chas. II, record that Stephen Tymewell and Elizabeth, his wife, were deforciant of two houses, etc., in St. Mary's parish, and in Easter, 36 Chas. II, Stephen the younger and the elder were parties to another Fine. A Constable in 1671 and in 1677 bore the same names.

288. *O.* GEORGE TREAGLE OF = An open book.

R. TAUNTON IN SOMMERSET = G . F . T

Five hearths. He was aged 57 or thereabouts in 1652, when he gave evidence in an Exchequer suit; and in the same year he and Frances, his wife, were joint deforciant in a Fine relating to a messuage in the town.

GRASGROW.

(This district or street is stated on the roll to have been in St. James's, but the place-name no longer survives there in this form. Probably it is a variant of Grasprow, now Grasscroft, in North Town, occupied as a timber yard and forming part of a charity endowment purchased with a bequest made by John Meredith, the tokener, in 1677).

248. *O.* EDWARD DAWLEY = A woolcomb.

R. IN TANTON IAMES = E . T . D

Three hearths.

279. *O.* JOHN SACHELL = A castle.

R. IN TAUNTON . 1655 = I . M . S

Two hearths. The will of John Satchell, shoemaker, of St. James's parish, was proved in 1684, but unfortunately his wife's name is not given. A Taunton man with the same names was implicated in Monmouth's rebellion.

HIGH STREET.

232. *O.* THOMAS ANDREWS = A woolpack.

R. IN TAUNTON = T . I . A

Six hearths.

233. *O.* THOMAS ANDROSSE = A woolpack.

R. OF TAWNTON . 1666 = His halfe penny.

This name is on the tithingman's list for High Street in 1649, and on the Manor Court minutes of 1662. It is probable that this token and No. 232, last mentioned, were issued by the same person.

249. *O.* HENRY DUNSCOMBE = A hand holding a "card."

R. IN TANTON . 1654 = H . A . D

Five hearths, with a marginal note that H.D., the owner, had made no return, had refused to pay, and was then in prison. This illustrates the unpopularity of the chimney tax. On 7 July, 1641, Henry Dunscomb married Agnes Martaine at St. Mary's.

250. *O.* ROGER GALE OF = The Grocers' Arms.

R. TAUNTON . 1652 = R . E . G

Seven hearths. Here, again, we have father and son with identical names, the latter living in the same street and being assessed for six hearths only; having regard to the dates, I would assign the farthing to Roger the elder, who was 43 years of age in 1652, when he was sworn in the Exchequer proceedings already mentioned. The will of Roger Gale the elder, proved 1682, mentions his sons Roger, Thomas, Benjamin (then deceased), and Philip; to the last named is given the Bell Inn, in High Street. To a daughter, Elizabeth, the Sarazen's Head, in the same street. Other relatives are not forgotten. The inventory of goods and chattels amounted to £1,171, showing that the testator was a wealthy man. He had been Constable in 1645 and Mayor in 1678.

278. *O.* ANTHNEY REYNOLDS = A bell.

R. IN TAUNTON . 1652 = A . A . R

Eleven hearths. This was, without doubt, the hostelry owned by the Gale family. The tenant, Reynolds, was perhaps engaged in the twofold calling of innkeeper and carrier, if he was identical, as is not at all improbable, with the plaintiff in a Chancery suit of 1649 (see Bridges, 9/44), in which Anthony Reynolds, of Taunton common carrier, relates his misadventures while bringing from London a little bag containing £60 for the defendants, John Markes and James Hollway. He tells the Court that he was seized at Wincanton by soldiers of the late king's party, which was then very strong in the Western parts, and that the money was taken from him by violence; that the defendants had brought an action against him at Taunton Assizes to recover the amount, notwithstanding an agreement that he should not be responsible for loss, and that consequently he appealed for relief to the Court of Chancery. The defendants aver that Reynolds gave the money to the troopers in order to save his own horses, or to save the innkeeper and inhabitants of Wincanton from plunder.

280. *O.* ROBERT SMITH = A pair of shears.

R. IN TANTON . 1665 = R . E . S

The will of Robert Smith, fuller, was proved in 1699. It mentions a house in High Street, and another house in the same street in which the testator lived. The lateness of the date, 1665, may account for the absence of his name from the subsidy and hearth tax rolls.

HOLWAY.

("et extra portam S. Marie Magdalene.")

237-8. *O.* JOHN BOBBETT IN = A madder bag, corded.

R. TAUNTON . CARYER = I . A . B

In 1660 he contributed 4s. to a subsidy. The will of James Napper, proved in 1661, bequeaths an inn known as the "Maydenhead," in the Eastern postern tithing, adjoining the house of John Bobbett, carrier. An inhabitant of the same name signs the Association Oath Roll in 1695.

259. *O.* ROGER HOW OF = R . C . H

R. TAUNTON . 1653 = R . C . H

"Mr. Roger How" paid 10s. to a subsidy of 1660, under the above heading. The will of Roger How the elder, of Holway, was proved in 1676, and mentions his son Alexander and two daughters, Joane and Elizabeth.

NORTH STREET.

243-4. *O.* WILLIAM CORICKE = A shuttle.

R. IN TAUNTON . 1655 = W . I . C

Three hearths; "he hath beaten up one." William Corrocke, in his will, proved 1698, refers only to his mother, Mary, who, in her will of 1702, bequeaths a tenement on the east side of North Street and another house in the same street; but neither document furnishes any direct evidence as to the issuer.

258. O. MARTIN HOSSHAM = A Catherine wheel.

R. IN TAUNTON . 1655 = M . I . H

Three hearths. The surname is spelt "Horsham."

260-2. O. THOMAS LOWDELL = A cock.

R. IN TANTON . MERCER = T . L

One hearth; "not worth 20s. per annum." The surname is written "Ludwell," and on another roll, "Lowdall." Although a poor man, he issued two tokens; one apparently before and the other after his marriage.

266. O. ROBERT MIDDLETON = A crown.

R. IN TANTON MAGDALEN = R . E . M

Four hearths. To a subsidy of 1660 "Mr. Robt. Middleton and his wife" paid 6s. He was Constable in 1659.

267. O. MATHEW MUNDAY = A woolcomb.

R. IN TAUNTON = M . W . M

Although this name is wanting on the hearth tax and subsidy rolls, I am disposed, in the light of the annexed will, to regard the issuer as a North Street man.

P.C.C. 25, Dyke. Matthew Monday the elder, of Plymmtree, Devon, clothier. Dated 25 Oct., 1 Wm. and Mary (1689). £5 to the poor of Taunton St. James, viz., 4d. a piece to those who should apply at the church on the day after the testator's funeral. To son Matthew the inn called Three Crowns in North Street, Taunton, held under lease from Sir W. Portman, and the goods therein. Legacies to daughter Elizabeth, the wife of Robt. Gannett, and her issue, and to the issue of son-in-law Joseph Hilliard. To son Thomas the residue; his children, Mary and Ann, are also mentioned.

OBRIDGE.

238A. O. THOMAS BURRIDGE = A Tudor rose.

R. IN TAUNTON . 1663 = T . E . B

Three hearths. This token was unknown to the compiler of the second edition of *Boyne*; it was described by the present writer in *S. & D. N. & Q.*, x, 30, from the farthing in his cabinet, which is apparently the only example that has yet been noted. The will of Elizabeth Burridge, widow, of St. James's parish, was proved in 1716, and makes reference to her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Among them were her sons, Thomas and Mark, a son-in-law, Thomas Gunston, and a granddaughter, Elizabeth Kyte, who was to be executrix. The will of William Burridge (1698), also of St. James's, yeoman, mentions an inn called the Half Moon, lying on the east side of North Street, and a message, known as the Plough, in Fore Street.

269. O. TOBIAS OSBORNE = A fountain.

R. IN TAUNTON . 1666 = T . S . O

Four hearths. He was one of the overseers of Hugh Gray's will, and he signed the Association Oath of 1695. In Michaelmas Term, 19 Chas. II, he was the querent in a Fine relating to four houses and two orchards in St. James's.

PAUL STREET.

(Generally written "Poll" or "Pole.")

283. *O.* JOHN TAMPSON = I . I . T*R.* IN TAUNTON = 1654.

Two hearths. The will of George Thompson, of St. Mary Magdalene, fuller, was proved in 1661. The testator's son John and brother John are among the legatees.

SHUTTERNE.

246-7. *O.* ABRAHAM CROCKER OF TAUNTON = The Weaver's Arms.*R.* FOR NESSESARY CHANGE . 1666 = A . P . C $\frac{1}{4}$.

Two hearths. He is scheduled as a debtor of R. Palmer in 1670, a list in which Jeffery Grove, of East Street, is also mentioned.

There remain nine private tokens which I have been unable to assign to any street or district. The absence of these names from the lists, whether local or otherwise, may in some cases be due to the fact that the owners were not householders in the town, but lived outside in Taunton Deane. The unplaced items are as follows:—

234. Thomas Ash.	281. Richard Snow.
235. John Barton.	287. Robert Tompson.
245. John Cornish.	289. John Tubb.
252. John Glyde.	290. Henry Young.
263. Joseph Maber.	

It is rather surprising that no evidence as to the dwelling-place of Richard Snow is forthcoming, seeing that the mayors of 1681, 1690 and 1698 bore his names, and that the will of Richard the elder, of St. James's parish, was proved in 1702. This document mentions the testator's sons, Richard and Francis; his daughter, Jane, the wife of Richard Bobbett; and his granddaughter, Mary, the wife of Henry Moore of Kentisbeare, and her daughter Edith.

With a view of ascertaining to what extent the trading population of Taunton was permanent or floating, I cast back for about a hundred years and examined a few subsidy rolls of

Edward VI, but did not meet with a patronymic which corresponded with any of those appearing on the fifty different tokens of Charles II's reign. Taking a date midway between these two periods, I noted under 1597 the names of Roger Gale of Obridge, also Thos. Carpenter, the widow Crocker, Thos. Mundaye, James Rainolds and Thos. Pitts ; but all without any precise addresses.

Two other extracts may be added as being of some local interest, apart from the subject matter of this paper. (1) William Gill, the last mayor before the withdrawal of the charter in 1660, was still described as "maior" in 1664-5, when he was living in a house in Fore Street containing fourteen hearths ; his is the only name to which any title or description is appended. (2) The largest house in the town was then apparently the home of Henry Pullen of East Street, who was taxed for twenty-three hearths. There is no clue to the identity or calling of this burgess who occupied a building which, in point of size, was greatly in excess of the average standard of accommodation, even among the well-to-do.

I am indebted to Mr. H. Byard Sheppard for having kindly examined the books and papers of the Court Leet, and to Mr. C. Tite and Mr. A. J. Monday for help with regard to the topography of the borough.