

British Conder Tokens

Bend Coin Club
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Boeing Employees Coin Club
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by Eric Holcomb



In Memory of Bill McKivor

1940-2021

*Photo (2009): Bill McKivor
(left) receives award for his
talk, "Talbot, Allum, and Lee
– The Conder token that
never was," from numismatic
theater chairman Gawain
O'Connor (right).*



Conder Token Introduction

- In Britain, these tokens are known as **18th Century Provincial tokens**. Collectors in the United States have adopted the name of one of the first catalogers of the series, **James Conder** of Ipswich. James Conder put out his catalog in the late 18th century.
- James Atkins followed with an updated reference in 1892.
- Between 1910-1917 **Richard Dalton** and **S. H. Hamer** published — in sections — what has proven to be a masterwork and is still the standard reference for the series. A recently updated version can be purchased for about \$135.
- Reasons for the issuance of the tokens will be covered on the next two slides. The time period was 1787-1797, and there are thousands of numbered token varieties.
- Conder Token collecting is now fairly popular in both the US and the UK. They combine the fascinating history of Great Britain with the beauty of old copper.

Photo: Obverse of Conder's Ipswich token. (Reverse on title slide.)

Ref.: William McKivor, The Copper Corner, thecoppercorner.com.



Conder Token History (1)

- The Industrial Revolution in England drove an exodus to the cities, where the need to pay wages was hampered by a lack of small coin.
- George III had discontinued minting copper coins in 1775. A main reason had to do with the huge number of counterfeit copper coins in circulation, which would be spent first. Legitimate coins were also melted to make lightweight copies.
- Small towns out in the “provinces” were often completely without coin. Money flowed to the major trade centers, never to return.
- In 1787, the Parys Mining Company, located in Anglesey, Wales, began producing Penny and Halfpenny tokens, of the correct weight, nice design, and a edge legend that stated they were payable in Regal funds by them. They were avidly accepted!
- The idea caught on, and by 1795 thousands of issues of tokens could be found. Due to the improvement in the way tokens could be manufactured, the commercial tokens were not only of the correct weight but could be made with wonderful designs. About 95% of the tokens produced were halfpennies. Penny tokens were generally produced in small number, with a couple of notable exceptions.
- These tokens not only caught on with the buying public and merchants, but also created a groundswell of collectors determined to get one of each. Some issues were made for collectors only, at a premium cost.



*Photo: An Anglesey Penny, for the Parys Mining Company, with druid design.
This token is Anglesey #250, a pattern piece for the first steam presses.*

Ref.: William McKivor, The Copper Corner, thecoppercorner.com.

Conder Token History (2)

- Tokens usually came with a lettered edge. On a correct piece, the edge gives information on the issuer, and where he could be found to refund the token into Regal coin. Varieties were made using incorrect edge markings, giving collectors one more thing to find — and the user often nowhere to go to redeem the pieces.
- Others saw the advantage of making tokens, as well. Tokens were produced to advertise, espouse political views and social problems.
- By 1795, the supply of these tokens exceeded demand, and the quality had deteriorated. The government finally stepped in, and called a halt to the tokens, issuing copper two penny and one penny coins in 1797.
- For a ten-year period extending from 1787-1797 almost the only “coins” in circulation in Britain were the Provincial, or “Conder” tokens. As they were designed and manufactured by the public, they were not limited by any rules or regulations. Taken as a group, the tokens form a history of a people in a way never seen before — or since!! Through them, we can look in on life in late 18th century Britain. We can see how they lived and thought through their commerce, politics, advertising, and even view their architecture. Avidly collected at the time of their issue, many of these tokens survive in wonderful condition, pieces of history that can be held in the hand. Collectors today find them perhaps even more fascinating than they did years ago.



Photo: Very popular token with the Hyde Park ice skater; Middlesex 535.

Ref.: William McKivior, The Copper Corner, thecoppercorner.com.

The Soho Mint

- The firm of Matthew Boulton and James Watt was formed in 1775 and became a major force in the industrial revolution.
- Watt's improvement of the steam engine made many things possible. One of Matthew Boulton's pet projects was that of a better coinage, and he was sure that with steam power he could produce the best coins that had thus far been made. He succeeded, and the firm of Boulton and Watt went on to make not only coin, tokens, and medals, but the steam engines that drove England to the forefront of the industrial revolution.
- According to Wikipedia, the “Soho Mint was created by Matthew Boulton in 1788 in his Soho Manufactory in Handsworth, West Midlands, England. A mint was erected at the manufactory containing eight machines, to his own patent design, driven by steam engine, each capable of striking 70 to 84 coins per minute.”
- The Soho Mint produced a wide variety of items including Conder tokens, medals, and the large English penny and two penny coins of 1797.
- The Soho Mint continued well into the 1800s. After the demise of the mint, some of the machinery was bought at auction, in 1850, by the new Birmingham Mint of Ralph Heaton II.



Photo: James Watt commemorative death medal. Bust of James Watt (obverse) / Steam engine (reverse). This 45mm medal is in copper, by G. Mills.

Ref.: William McKivor, The Copper Corner, thecoppercorner.com.

People

Examples of Conder Tokens depicting people



Left to Right: (with Dalton & Hamer catalog numbers; city or series)

Sir Isaac Newton, Physicist, Mathematician, Mint Master (D&H Middlesex 1033; Political and Social Series)

King George III (D&H Warwickshire 218; Birmingham; one of many pieces made by Kempson)

Princess of Wales (D&H Middlesex 981d; National Series)

John Howard, Philanthropist (D&H Hampshire 55; Portsmouth)

William Pitt and Lord Thurlow (scarce white metal piece; D&H Middlesex 219; Political and Social Series)

Buildings

Examples of Conder Tokens depicting buildings



Left to Right: (with Dalton & Hamer catalog numbers; city or series)

Grey Friars Steeple (D&H Warwickshire 259; Coventry; the first four pieces here are all by Kempson)

Meeting Paradise St. Erected 1786 (D&H Warwickshire 167; Birmingham)

Barracks Erected 1793 (D&H Warwickshire 177; Birmingham)

Bridge Gate as Rebuilt 1728, Taken Down 1766 (scarce penny token, D&H Middlesex 76; London)

Ipswich Cross — note Conder's name on the reverse! (D&H Suffolk 35; Ipswich)

Naval Themes

Examples of Conder Tokens depicting naval themes



Left to Right: (with Dalton & Hamer catalog numbers; city or series)

Neptune / Whale Fishery (D&H Middlesex 306; Fowler's — London)

Sailing Ship on Emsworth Halfpenny (D&H Hampshire 10; Emsworth)

Seashore with ship/seashells (D&H Middlesex 465; Ratley's) — 72 struck for collectors!

Earl Howe / Anchor; reference to battle against France (D&H Hampshire 35; Emsworth)

The Sun (an important navigational aid at sea!) on a bookseller token (D&H Oxfordshire 1; Banbury)

Various Topics

Examples of Conder Tokens depicting various topics



Left to Right: (with Dalton & Hamer catalog numbers; city or series)

Druid Head / Harp (D&H North Wales 8) — The Druids were a pre-Christian religious order of priests.
The popular Lady Godiva on Horseback; castle, elephant on reverse (D&H Warwickshire 231; Coventry)
Boy with coin tray — for a coin and medal dealer! (D&H Middlesex 322; Hancock's)
Lion / Tiger (D&H Middlesex 344a; James'; in this case the "a" denotes the plain edge variety)
Squirrel on a Northiam Halfpenny (D&H Sussex 35; Northiam; Edge: Payable at G. Gilberts Northiam)



Resources for Conder Tokens

- Books:
 - Pye, Charles, *Provisional Copper Coins or Tokens*. 1796.
 - Conder, James. *An arrangement of Provincial Coins, tokens, and medalets*. 1798.
 - Atkins, James. *18th Century Tokens*. 1892.
 - Dalton & Hamer, *The Provincial Token Coinage of the 18th Century*. The "bible" of the series; originally published 1910-1917; reprints with updates available.
 - Bell, R. C., *Commercial Coins, 1787-1804*. One of five related books by Bell in the 1960s.
 - Doty, Richard R., Dr., *The Soho Mint and the Industrialization of Money*. 1998.
Dr. Doty was the first president of the Conder Token Collector's Club, and wrote many books on tokens. He was also the curator of the National Money Museum at the Smithsonian. He passed away June 2, 2013 after a battle with cancer.
- Websites/Journals
 - Conder Token Collector's Club / *CTC Journal* - <https://ctcc.info/>
- Local Dealers
 - Seattle: Bill McKivor (The Copper Corner), <http://thecoppercorner.com/> deceased – website still available
 - Portland: Jerry Bobbe, jbobbe@comcast.net