

New and Unusual Hairdressers' Tokens

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Introduction

From the 1870s to the 1940s, brass checks were used for internal accounting in barbers' and hairdressers' shops. For some years the exact origin and use of the tokens was questioned as they are mostly just simple tokens with the name of the supplier rather than the establishment using them, and as well as in the UK, they were commonly found in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. The doubt was eliminated by the late Roy Hawkins in 1971⁽¹⁾ and afterwards⁽²⁻⁴⁾, when he identified several of the named manufacturers as UK wholesale suppliers of products to the barber and hairdressing trade. The proprietor would buy a set of tokens from his supplier, with suitable denominations for the services offered. Each assistant's chair number (or letter or group of dots) would be punched on the reverse in the space provided. When the client had been attended to, the assistant handed checks to the amount of the charge to the cashier to collect the cash⁽⁵⁾. Thus all of the cash was handled at the front desk.

Over the years the details of the suppliers have been determined in more detail and the number of known denominations increased. A few new types have been found, along with contemporary advertisements including details of the wooden token holders kept by the cashier and assistants. Before presenting the new and unusual pieces a brief summary of the usual types will be given⁽⁶⁻¹³⁾.

Usual Types

Obv. **RH & SONS** monogram **LON | DON** either side, all within a pentagon, **TRADE MARK** below
Rev. **1/-** above **Nº**

Details Br, 28.2 mm, plain edge, 150%, [GMO]



Robert Hovenden opened in Finsbury in 1827/29 as a wholesale perfumer, comb maker, and hairdressers' haberdasher. '& Sons' was added in 1862. Main address moved to City Road, London 1863-1951. Various other London addresses. 'Ltd' Added in 1900. The 1910 catalogue is 685 pages long! The business was acquired by Timothy White's in 1951. A detailed account of the early years of this business has been written⁽¹⁴⁾.

Obv. **L & S**
Rev. **1/-** above **Nº** counterstamped **3**.

Details CuNi?, 28.0 mm, grained edge, 150%, [GMO]



Lambert & Son of 41 Collins St East, Melbourne, Australia in 1869, later at 252 Collins Street⁽¹³⁾. Business put up for sale for £840 15s in May 1917, remaining fittings auctioned in December and a final auction of remaining stock (Human hair etc.) in 1919. Die links to Robert Hovenden 1/-. Therefore it is concluded that these were made by a common manufacturer in England, and exported to Australia.

- Obv. Outer beaded and plain circle, inner beaded circle
- Rev. 1/- above N^o separated by a line. **P & O** in very small letters at bottom. Counterstamped with an inverted 1.

Details Br, 27.0 mm, grained edge, 150%, [GMO]



Charles Parton partnered with William Henry Osborne, active in Birmingham c.1870-1882. The partnership would split into Parton & Co (no checks, but later Parton, Son & Co, see below) and Osborne (see below).

- Obv. **P S & C^o** within outer beaded rim and two inner circles.
- Rev. 1/- above N^o separated by a line.

Details Br, 27.2 mm, grained edge, 150%, [GMO]



Several Obv. die varieties, many denominations, see below^(7,9,10,11). Continued the Birmingham business and from 1889/90 and had an address in London. 'Ltd' added in 1901; lasted until 1913. Very similar style Rev. to P&O, likely same manufacturer.

- Obv. **O.G & C^o** with ornaments above and below
- Rev. 1/- above N^o

Details Br, 27.1 mm, plain edge, 150%, [GMO]



Many Obv. Die varieties, punctuation and decorations, and many denominations known, see below^(7,9,10,11). T.W. Garrett started in London in 1882 as a wholesale perfumer and was joined by the Mr. Osborne in 1883. from the Birmingham partnership mentioned above. This London company had its base at 51 Frith Street, W1 and also a Birmingham branch in Cornwall Street. In 1935 they occupied the following addresses: London, W1 51-54 Frith Street, 8-11 Bateman Street and 34/35 Dean Street, Soho W1; Birmingham, 10-11 Temple Street; Glasgow, 14 Bothwell Street and Manchester, 4 Regent House, 28 Cannon Street⁽¹²⁾. Still going in the 90s. Now dissolved.

- Obv. **Ogee** in script
- Rev. 1/- above N^o counterstamped with two dots

Details Br, 27.5 mm, grained edge, 150%, [GMO]

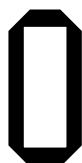


This is a brand name and logo for the O.G. & Co business.

Obv. **R G T & S** with ornaments above and below

Rev. **1/-** above **N^o** scratched 11.

Details Br, 27.2 mm, grained edge, 150%, [GMO]



Punch links to the *Ogee* and O.G.&Co checks. The letter O is almost octagonal with a rectangular hole. Therefore it is concluded that these are made by a common manufacturer in England, and exported to Australia. R. G. Turnley & Son Pty. Ltd. The business 'Turnley's Hair' was established in 1909 by Robert Goulburn Turnley and his son Cyril, at 264-266 Flinder's Street, Melbourne⁽¹³⁾ as 'importers and manufacturers of hairdressing and toiletry lines'. Renamed Turnley (Aust) Pty Ltd in 1985 and there are now four branches operating in Melbourne in 2021 and others elsewhere.

A table of the known denominations for: P&O, P.S.&Co, O.G.&Co, *Ogee* and R.H. & Sons, can be found on p387 of Ralph Hayes' article on Toilet Club tokens⁽⁷⁾. It is repeated here for completeness and updated.

Value	P & O	P.S. & Co	O.G. & Co	<i>Ogee</i>	R.H. & Sons
n/v				✓Uniface	
1 ^D		✓	✓		✓
1½ ^D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2 ^D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2½ ^D		✓			
3 ^D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4 ^D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4½ ^D		✓	✓		✓
5 ^D		✓	✓		✓
6 ^D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7 ^D			✓		✓
8 ^D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9 ^D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10 ^D		✓	✓	✓	✓
1/-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1/1 ^D					
1/2 ^D		✓	✓	✓	✓
1/3 ^D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1/6 ^D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1/9 ^D			✓	✓	
2/-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2/3 ^D			✓	✓	
2/6 ^D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2/9 ^D			✓	✓	
3/-			✓	✓	✓
3/3 ^D			✓		
3/6 ^D			✓	✓	✓
4/6 ^D					

Table 1. Known denominations of the various haidressers' and barbers' checks⁽⁷⁾, expanded **GO**.

There are several other pieces known to have been issued by barbers and hairdressers, but they typically explicitly state the trade and name of the proprietor or location ^(6,7,8). Here only the 27-28mm diameter pieces with an **N^o** and space for a seat number are considered.

To these can now be added the the pieces presented in the pages below.

Bithrey's of Bedford

Obv. **BITHREY'S | 31, HIGH STEET |
BEDFORD**

Rev. **2^D above N^o**

Details Br, 28.0 mm, grained edge, 150%, [GMO]

Die links to Robert Hovenden 2^D pieces.



Searching through the directories and genealogy sites it is possible to piece together the story. John Bithrey was born in Bedford in 1797 and appears as a Hairdresser on the High St. in 1830 (Pigot & Co.) and 1839 (Robson's). He married Susannah Coleman (b.1817) in Bedford on 5 February 1843. John Bithrey died and was buried on 31 October 1843. In 1853 Susan Bithrey is listed on the High St. as a Hairdresser and Perfumer (Craven & Co), in 1854 as a Hairdresser &c (Post Office) and in 1862 as a Hairdresser (Cassey & Co). The 1876 Harrod's directory gives Mrs. S. Bithrey at the Music Warehouse at No. 31 the High Street. This is likely connected with the business of a Charles Bithrey: Piano Forte maker, Tavistock St. (1854), and Professor of Music (1862). Other Bithreys are grocers and confectioners in Bedford around this time. The census records give Susan as a widow, usually with two or three assistants living on the premises at No. 31, the High Street, Bedford.

In 1890 Susan Bithrey is listed as a Hairdresser and Tobacconist at No. 31 (Kelly's). Susan Bithrey died in 1900 and the business became S. Bithrey & Co., Hairdressers 1903-1940 (Kelly's). In the 1938 Bedford Directory the business appears as Bithrey, St. Paul's toilet saloon (Bedford) and in 1949/50 as Bithrey & Co. (St. Paul's Toilet Saloon) with S.W Seymour, proprietor, Hairdressing Specialists (Kelly's). The photo below shows members of the Women's Land Army on Bedford High Street during the visit of Princess Elizabeth in 1946.



Fig. 1. Bithrey's on Bedford High St. in February 1946.

In 1961 S.W. Seymour is still the proprietor of Bithrey & Co (St Paul's Toilet Salon) is described as a ladies and gentleman's hairdressing specialists and tobacconists. By 1963 the address is empty. The ground floors of the buildings at Nos. 29-41 have since been knocked through to form a Wilco shop.

Wigzell of Sydney

Obv. Outer beaded and plain circle, inner beaded circle. **WIGZELL** | **SYDNEY** counterstamped in middle.

Rev. 1/2 above N° separated by a line. **P & O** in very small letters at bottom. Counterstamped with a **3**. Also a large dent, deliberate?

Details Br, 27.3 mm, plain edge, 150%, [GMO]



Die links to P&O 1/-.

The Wigzell Family had emigrated from Kent, England in 1850 aboard the ship *Isabella Hercus*⁽¹⁶⁾. Charles Edward Wigzell established his hair salon in Oxford Street, Sydney, in 1854.



Fig. 2. Wigzell family members in front of hairdresser shop, Oxford Street, Sydney, before 1883.

The Turkish baths, and showers in the smaller adjacent building on the right, were opened to much fanfare in 1883.



Fig. 3. Wigzell's Hairdressers and Turkish Baths. Illustrated Sydney News, 29 September 1883.



Fig. 4. Wigzell Hairdressers and Turkish Baths at 95 Oxford St, Sydney in the later 1880s.

TURKISH BATHS. HOT WATER BATHS.

Ladies' Turkish Bath:
Monday and Thursday Mornings Only.
REMAINING PART OF THE WEEK, GENTLEMEN.



Ladies' Turkish Bath:
Monday and Thursday Mornings Only.
REMAINING PART OF THE WEEK, GENTLEMEN.

CHARLES E. WIGZELL,
Ladies' and Gentlemen's Hairdresser,
SEAGRAM AND STREET WIGMAKERS, FINE ORNAMENTAL HAIR WORKERS,
IMPORTER OF HUMAN HAIR, FANCY GOODS, &c.,
137, 139 & 141 OXFORD STREET, SYDNEY,
NEAR CROWN STREET.

The best Hair Dyes, Washes, Restorers, Pomades, Cosmetics, Perfumes, Face Powders, &c., direct from the Manufacturers. London and Paris Novelties in Ornamental Hairwork to hand each Mail.

REMEMBER OUR TURKISH AND HOT WATER BATHS—THEY ARE SPLENDID.

MISS VON FINKELSTEIN, of Jerusalem, Holy Land, wrote in Visitor's Book that our BATH is the best she has seen in the Colonies—the nearest in arrangement to the real Turkish Bath of the East, and attendance excellent; also that she would advise everybody to take at least two Turkish Baths a week if they want to be well and happy.—August 25th, 1888.

Fig. 5. Advert from Sands Trades Directory 1891 giving the address as 137, 139 and 141 Oxford St.

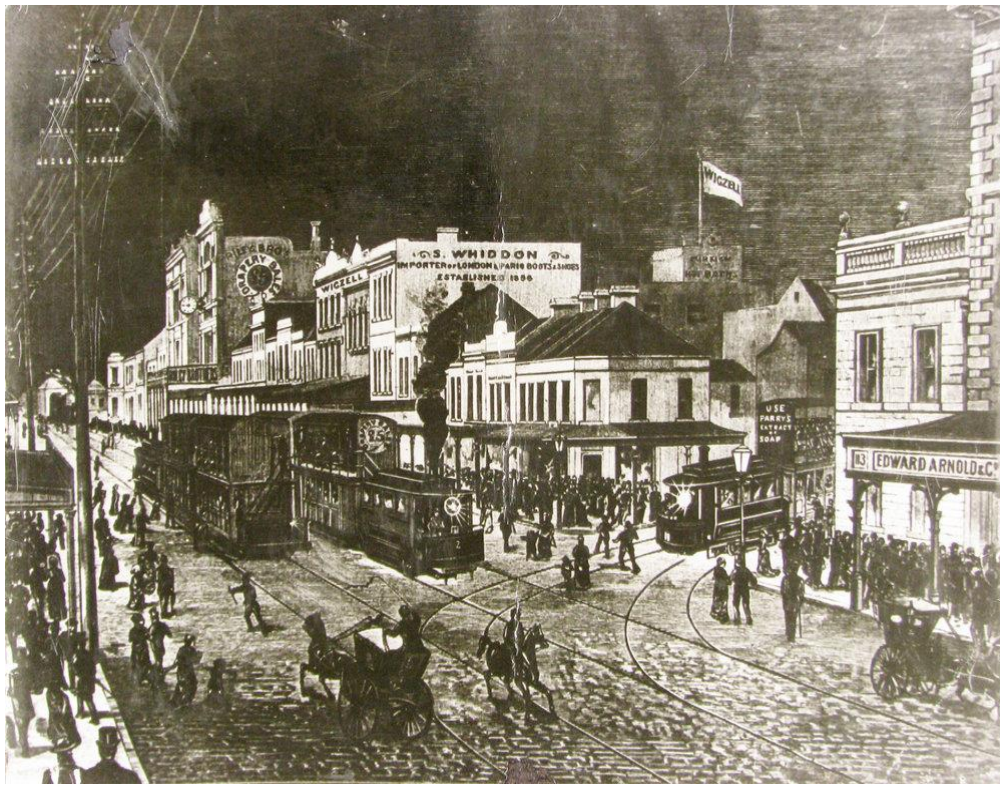


Fig. 6. Looking south from the corner of Oxford Street and Crown Street, Sydney. Wigzell advertising flag flying in the background. c.1900.

The family opened another shop (or moved) further down Oxford Street. Figure 7 shows 193-195 Oxford St, at the corner of Flinders St in 1931 looking southwest showing W.G. Wigzell Hairdresser and Tobacconist (195 Oxford St.), Mrs L. Buik Newsagent and Darlinghurst Fruit Mart (193 Oxford St.). Conflicting dates for the final demise of the Wigzell's family hairdressing business, but the image below is the latest date found.



Fig. 7. W.G. Wigzell Hairdresser and Tobacconist to the left, at 195 Oxford St., in 1931.

Anonymous - Unusual Reverse Type

Obv. Outer beaded circle only

Rev. 1/- above N°

Details Br, approx. 27.0 mm, grained edge, 150%,
[Ebay Australia 153888050598 Ended 7 June 2020,
with: L&S 1/-, RGT&S 6d, and 2× OG &Co 1/-]



The wedge-shaped slash in 1/- is noticeably not of British origin, more typically Australia, New Zealand or Tasmania and rarely South Africa. The outline of the 1/- is in much higher relief than the other issues.

More Connections

On opening up this colonial can of worms, it turns out that there is a significant group of Australian Haidressers', Barbers' and Toilet tokens^(16,17,18). Following communications with Malcolm Johnson and a search of the web, especially the archives of Noble Numismatics Pty Ltd⁽¹⁹⁾, the following table can be compiled.

Value	R.G.T. & S	L&S	WIGZELL	Anonymous
	As PS&Co	As RH&Sons	As P&O	Australian Manufacture?
n/v				
1 ^D				
1½ ^D				
2 ^D				
2½ ^D				
3 ^D	✓		✓	✓
4 ^D	✓			✓
4½ ^D				
5 ^D				
6 ^D	✓		✓	✓
7 ^D				
8 ^D				
9 ^D	✓			✓
10 ^D				
1/-	✓	✓	✓	✓
1/1				✓
1/2 ^D				
1/3 ^D	✓			✓
1/6 ^D	✓			✓
1/9 ^D	✓			
2/-	✓	✓		✓
2/3 ^D				
2/6 ^D	✓	✓		✓
2/9 ^D				
3/-		✓		
3/3 ^D				
3/6 ^D				
4/6 ^D	✓			

Table 2. Known denominations of some of the Australian haidressers' and barbers' checks.

There are several other tokens that also fit into this pattern: 27-28 mm with clear manufacturer, die or punch links to those presented above.

Obv. **ALF. F. | POSGATE**

Rev. **6^D** above **N^o** separated by a line. **P & O** in very small letters at bottom

Details Br, approx. 27.0 mm, grained edge, 150%, P&O rev. Issuer not yet traced. [Malcolm Johnson archive].



Obv. **POTOSI HAIRDRESSING SALOON | SYDNEY | CRAIG & AITKEN | 680 GEORGE ST**

Rev. **3^D** above **N^o** counterstamped with a **6**

Details Br, approx. 27.0 mm, grained edge, 150%, As Anonymous rev. [Malcolm Johnson archive]
6^D, 1/-, 1/6 also known. . . 1885, 1888, 1925 . . .
Wholesale Tobacco and Cigar Merchants and Importers of Hairdressing Requisites.



There is another type of token from this issuer (30 mm), with the address 680 George St, Sydney, which has a reverse die with details of the manufacturer in very small letters around the edge: W.H. BARTLAM MAKER POST OFFICE PLACE LT BOURKE ST. MELBOURNE counterstamped 6^D with a chair number. This may point to the manufacture of the anonymous issues.

Obv. **SHARP & Co | HAIRDRESSERS & | TOBACCONISTS | PERTH**

Rev. **2^{/s}** above **N^o** counterstamped with a **2**

Details Br, approx. 27.0 mm, grained edge, 150%, RH&Sons rev. [Malcolm Johnson archive].
Theodore Sharp, 1910-2005, 612-616 Hay St. Perth.
Now selling writing instruments and fine gifts.



Obv. **Ogee** in script

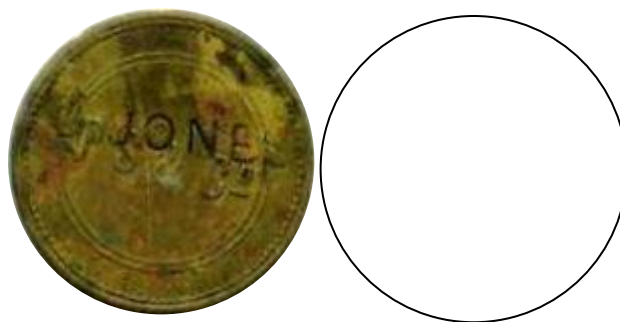
Rev. **C.S.F. | HAIRCUTTING**

Details Br, approx. 27.0 mm, grained edge, 150%, *Ogee* obv. Issuer not yet traced. [Malcolm Johnson archive].



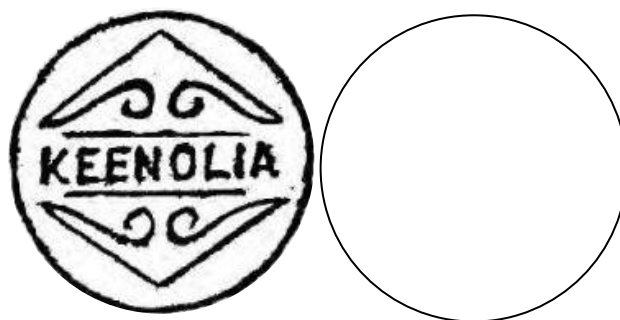
Obv. **P S & C^o** within outer beaded rim and two inner circles. Counterstamped **D. JONES**
 Rev. **1^d** above **N^o** separated by a line.

Details Br, approx. 27.0 mm, grained edge, 150%,
Ogee obv. Issuer not yet traced. [Malcolm Johnson archive].



Obv. **P S & C^o** within outer beaded rim and two inner circles. Counterstamped **D. JONES**
 Rev. **2^d** above **N^o** separated by a line?

Details Br, approx. 27.0 mm, edge?, 150%, very similar style to O.G.&C^o, rev. as O.G.&Co. Sell's 1919 Directory - Keenolia Co. (Ormside Chemical Co. Ltd.), hairdressers, sundriesmen; proprietors of the Keenolia specialities; Manufacturing chemists & wholesale & export druggists, 57 Poland Street, [London], W.1.⁽⁸⁾



Conclusions

This note has described some of the more usual hairdressers' and barbers' tokens found in the UK and Australia and presented one new and several unusual types. Interestingly, close inspection of some of the pieces known to be from Australian establishments: L&S, RGT&S, Wigzell's, Craig & Aitken and Sharp & Co are all linked to English issues either by dies or punches, suggesting manufacture in England followed by export to the user. The P&O, PS&Co, OG&Co, *Ogee* and RH & Sons tickets are generic issues, bought straight from the wholesalers' catalogues whereas, Bithrey's, L&S, RGT&S and Wigzells have had customised tokens manufactured for use in their own shop or chain of shops, possibly ordered via their wholesaler.

A reverse type with a characteristically Australian font has yet to be identified and though generic in nature, might yet be attributed to a particular manufacturer or wholesaler.

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Many thanks to Malcolm Johnson for sharing his data and also for pointing out the references in the Queensland NS Magazine. His website also includes a good listing of Barbers', Hairdressers' and Toilet tokens.
<https://sites.google.com/site/malsweights/toilet>.

