

Unrecorded White Metal 18th Century Tokens?

Gary Oddie

Introduction

Whilst recently sorting through the last boxes of the late Dave Allen's dealer's 'stock', at the bottom of the barrel appeared four eighteenth-century white metal tokens that are shown below.

Obv. **ROCHDALE 1791** around a Fleece.
Rev. Man at a weaving loom.
Edge. Plain, struck in collar.

Details. White Metal, 29.46 mm, 11.813 g. 125%.
Sn 90.9%, Sb 6.0%, Cu 2.2%, Pb 0.2%,
P 0.1%, Ti 0.5%.

Notes. Obv. as D&H Lancs. 140, 141, Rev. as D&H Lancs. 143-146a.



Obv. **ROCHDALE 1791** around a Fleece.
Rev. **PEACE AND PLENTY** around dove with olive branch and cornucopia.
Edge. Plain, struck in collar.

Details. White metal, 29.44 mm, 11.855 g. 125%.
Sn 91.5%, Sb 6.0%, Cu .2%, Pb 0.2%,
P 0.1%.

Notes. Obv. as D&H Lancs. 140, 141, Rev as D&H Lancs. 150.



Obv. **ROCHDALE 1791** around a Fleece.
Rev. **INDUSTRY HAS ITS SURE REWARD** around a beehive and bees.
Edge. Plain, struck in collar.

Details. White metal, 29.45 mm, 11.878 g. 125%.
Sn 91.3%, Sb 6.0%, Cu 2.1%, Pb 0.4%,
P 0.1%, Si and Ag detected.

Notes. Obv. as D&H Lancs. 140, 141, Rev. as D&H Lancs. 148 (and many others).



Obv. **PROSPERITY TO THE WOOLLEN MANUFACTORY 1795** around a fleece.
Rev. Man at a weaving loom.
Edge. Plain, struck in collar.

Details. White metal, 29.40 mm, 11.866 g. 125%.
Sn 90.8%, Sb 5.9%, Cu 2.3%, Pb 0.7%,
P 0.2%, Si detected.

Notes. Obv. as Rev. of D&H Yorks. 28, rev as D&H Lancs. 143-146.



All of the pieces are die struck and appear to have been made using the original dies. So what are the chances of four pieces not listed in Dalton and Hamer⁽¹⁾ turning up at the same time, unrecognised as unusual by the vendor and dealer who bought them?

I am not familiar with the whole series, but know that white metal strikings are unusual, and it took a while to find the dies that were used to make these pieces, the originals being the usual bronze or copper. Immediately clear is that these four the pieces are unrecorded mules.

Looking more closely at the dies, all is not as it first appears. Zooming in on the Rochdale/Fleece die and comparing with a copper piece from the same die reveals the following.



Fig. 1. Details on a genuine copper token, Obv. D&H Lancs 140 (DNW 7 October 2004 lot 1316).

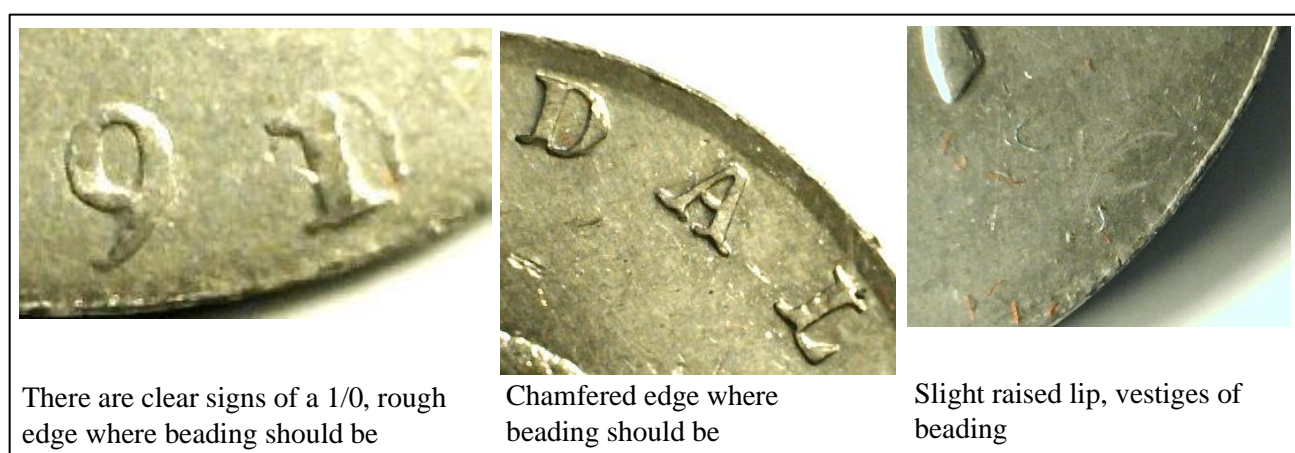


Fig. 2. Details on a white metal striking.

Accepted that not all 18th century tokens have well defined edge beading, due to the flans varying in size, the blanks aren't always exactly circular and the blanks are not always concentric with the die face when struck, however the chamfered edge and the raised lip of metal is very odd.

Following circulation of a draft of this note, Merfyn Williams (aka druids_revenge) sent images of a similar restrike in his collection along with an original piece.

Obv. **ROCHDALE 1791** around a Fleece.
Rev. Man at a weaving loom.
Edge. Plain, struck in collar.

Details. White Metal. 125%

Notes. As D&H Lancs. 140.



Obv. **ROCHDALE 1791** around a Fleece.
Rev. Man at a weaving loom.
Edge. **PAYABLE AT THE WAREHOUSE OF IOHN KERSHAW .x.**

Details. Copper. 125%

Notes. D&H Lancs. 140.



Looking even more closely at the four Rochdale/Fleece white metal pieces, their true nature is given away.

ALL of the pieces show some identical surface damage as shown below (Merfyn Williams' white metal Lancs D&H 140, 4× for the token, and about 16× for the zoom).



Fig. 3. Close ups of the white metal striking of D&H Lancs. 140.

Thus it is concluded that a die has been made by impressing a genuine token into a piece of metal – a transfer die. The damage in the original token (incuse) has been transferred to the new die (relief) and then reappears in pieces that are subsequently struck (incuse). These marks are the fingerprint of the false die.

Additionally the whole of the beading was not impressed and the edge of the new die has been chamfered in places. In other areas the white metal has flowed up the side of the die to produce a small lip. Similar discrepancies can be found on all of the white metal pieces.

As my own interest in this series is limited to the three counties; Beds, Hunts and Cambs, I only have three white metal pieces to compare, as follows.

Obv. Legend around view of King's College Chapel.

Rev. West Front of the 'New Building'.

Edge. Plain, no collar

Details. White metal. 33.2-33.9mm, 19.757g, 100%.

Sn 89.8%, Pb 7.3%, Sb 1.8%, Cu 0.5%, Si 0.4%, Bi 0.1%.

Notes. D&H Cambs 7.



Obv. **HOBSON CAMBRIDGE CARRIER** etc. Around horseman to right.

Rev. **JAMES BURLEIGH TOKEN** etc around view of Hobsons's Conduit.

Edge. Plain, struck in collar

Details. White metal. 36.16mm, 18.366g. 100%.

Sn 93.9%, Sb 2.9%, Cu 1.6%, Pb 1.2%, Bi 0.2%, Si 0.2%, Fe and Ag detected.

Notes. D&H Cambs 9a. Found in Australia glued into an old velvet lined display case! Probably late 19thC The glue has eaten into the metal.



Obv. **HOBSON CAMBRIDGE CARRIER** etc. Around horseman to right.

Rev. **JAMES BURLEIGH TOKEN** etc around Hobsons's Conduit.

Edge. Plain, struck in collar

Details. White metal. 36.14mm, 18.779g. 100%.

Sn 94.2%, Sb 2.9%, Cu 1.6%, Pb 0.9%, Si 0.2%, Bi 0.2%, Fe, Zn, Ag detected.

Notes. D&H Cambs 9a.



Discussion and Conclusions.

The XRF analysis of the metals makes the suspicions deepen about the new pieces. It is noted that the new pieces have almost exactly the same composition and a complete absence of Bismuth. The three Cambridgeshire pieces are made from dirtier or less well refined alloys, with D7 containing a good proportion of lead and all contain bismuth.

Since finding these pieces a request to the Conder Café facebook page, it would appear that many (100+) other examples of the white metal halfpennies are known, many with unusual die combinations (not in D&H).

A first inspection of the above pieces (Rochdale/fleece) suggest they were made using dies created from an original token. A few pieces might have made it into Bill McKivor's addenda. There are some suspicions of a manufacturer and route, but I will not put in print until there is proof. It would be interesting to hear the earliest date at which any of these pieces appeared and by what route they arrived in peoples' collections.

Whilst the sample presented here is small there is every reason to suspect the new white metal strikings of the 18th century tokens are far from contemporary. The presence of Bismuth in the genuine white metal pieces is a likely characteristic feature, but a larger sample is needed to confirm this.

In summary, all of the new pieces are to be considered modern concoctions (post 1918), made with a very high level of skill.

There remains a significant amount of work to be done on this group of tokens. Listing the known specimens and tracking them to their source would be a start. If anyone has a copper token with exactly the same damage as the white metal D&H Lancs 140, it is likely it was used to create the die. The provenance of that piece will be part of the story.

Then there is the thorny subject of 'what is an 18th Century token?' With contemporary muling, concoctions and medallic issues being made by manufacturers for collectors at the time, (and afterwards), along with dies passing between workshops as well as the off metal strikings, all making it into D&H, the definition is quite inclusive.

Outside my own counties, the interest for me is the method of making such good dies from an original token and also the metallurgy. The bismuth trace is very intriguing, but from such a small sample is not really proven and needs following up with many more analyses of definite 18th century white metal tokens and pieces from this new group.

References and Acknowledgements

(1) R. Dalton & S.H. Hamer. The Provincial Token Coinage of the 18th Century Illustrated. Originally published 1910-1918. Excellent reprint with new up to date addenda and corrigenda, 2015, by Bill McKivor, of The Copper Corner.

Thanks to Dave Allen's daughter, Nicci Martin and also to Nigel Lutt of the Bedford Numismatic Society for making the opportunity possible. Thanks also to Jeff Rock, Merfyn Williams and Michael Dickinson and other members of the Conder Café for useful comments and suggestions.

