

John Bluett of Taunton – Token Issuer and Collector

Gary Oddie

Introduction

One of the scarcer silver tokens of the nineteenth century series is the shilling issued by John Bluett of Taunton in 1811.⁽¹⁾ Very little has been published about the issuer and the most recent book, whilst finding an early print showing Bluett's Grocer's shop, only speculated as to why the token is rarely found and gave no details of the issuer.⁽²⁾ A specimen of his token is shown below.

Obv. **PAYABLE AT JOHN BLUETTS. / 1811**

Around a shield containing a winged cherub's head and a crown. No trace of an apostrophe in BLUETTS.

Rev. **TAUNTON TOKEN** above

VALUE XII PENCE within an oak wreath

Details. Somerset D.72. Ar, oblique milled edge, 24.9mm, 4.165g. Shown $\times 1.5$.



Fig. 1. Shilling Token Issued by John Bluett of Taunton in 1811.

Having recently discovered that John Bluett was one of the recipients of Thomas Sharp's catalogue of the George Chetwynd collection of tokens, this suggested that he had more of an interest in tokens than just issuing them.⁽³⁾

A quick search of the National Newspaper Archive revealed that the first announcement of the dispersal of John Bluett's property appeared on Wednesday 9 July 1851.⁽⁴⁾ The advert lists various "Dwelling Houses and Lands" that were to be auctioned by Mr. Eales White at Giles' Hotel, Taunton, at 3pm on 14 July the following week. Bluett's residence, Haygrass House, with gardens, orchards, and attached land was to be let with immediate possession. At the very bottom of the advert appeared.

N.B. The entire and valuable collection of Coins, China, Shells, Preserved Birds (300 cases), antique Carvings, Models, Books, carved and valuable inlaid Cabinets, and numerous objects of Art and interest, culled by the late indefatigable Collector, together with about 1000 ozs. Of PLATE, and the greater portion of the excellent Furniture, will be offered by Auction early in August.

In March 1852 appeared the following notice.⁽⁵⁾

In answer to many enquiries Mr. Eales White respectfully announces that the whole of the well-known collections of the late John Bluett, Esq., namely—the coins, cabinets, rare and Oriental china. shells, cases of specimens of natural history (300), antique carved and other furniture, books, rare engravings, paintings, plate, and a quantity of various curious and useful property, will be positively Sold by absolute Auction, at Haygrass House, about the first week in April. Catalogues are in preparation.

At the same time will be sold the whole or live and dead stock, cider and casks, agricultural and garden implements, plants, &c., together with the horses, 2 phaetons, fire engine, Bath chair, aviaries, with silver and mottled pheasants, doves, &c.

The catalogue is not listed by Manville, which is not too surprising as a one-off sale by a provincial auctioneer.⁽⁶⁾ A further search of the internet revealed that a copy of the auction catalogue had been exhibited by Hugh Pagan at the British Numismatic Society meeting in September 2010.⁽⁷⁾

An auction sale catalogue of 'the interesting collections, and other valuable property' of the late John Bluett, Haygrass House, Taunton (Eales White, Taunton, 13–19 April 1852), which included 237 lots of coins, medals and tokens.

An email to Hugh confirmed that he still had the catalogue and he added⁽⁸⁾:

Bluett had a very respectable coin collection - Roman, Anglo-Saxon, English hammered and milled, Scottish, medals, tokens - but unfortunately the cataloguer found the task of cataloguing the “provincial halfpence” and so on too much for him, and they were offered undescribed in very large lots. But lot 11 in the series of lots devoted to “Books etc” was “Sir George Chetwynd’s catalogue of Copper Coins, plates, presentation copy, with autograph

Thus it would seem that issuing his own silver token was only a very small part of John Bluett’s story and so the search began.

John Bluett and his Family

As with many popular names there are several strands to the Bluett family in the Taunton, Holcombe Rogus and Pitminster areas of Somerset. After some work with Ancestry and findmypast and the National Archives, the following is suggested for some of the family of two generations of John Bluett.

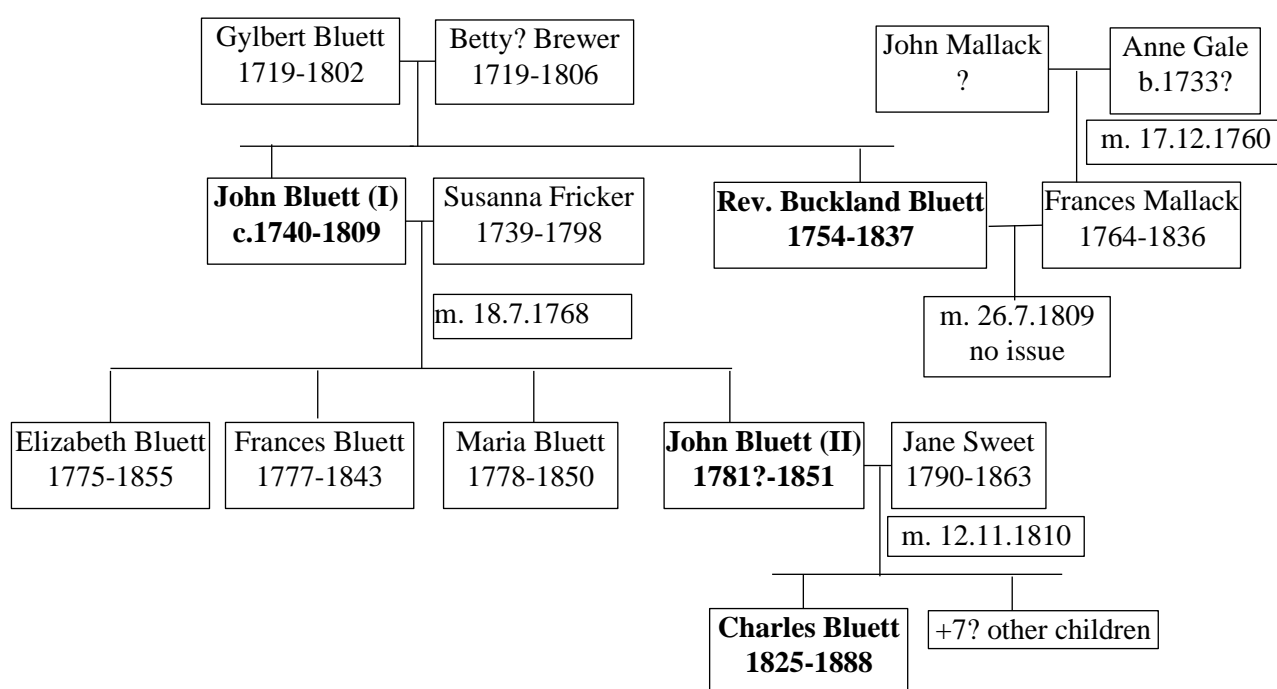


Fig. 2. Two generations of John Bluett and their families.

Inconsistencies have been found in some of the secondary records and question marks have been added where it has not been possible to verify from primary sources.

The Wills of John Bluett (I)⁽⁹⁾ and the Reverend Buckland Bluett⁽¹⁰⁾ are necessary to tie the story together, but also add questions. The Will of John Bluett (I) names all of his children correctly but leaves the money and businesses in trust to his brother Buckland Bluett until his son becomes 21 years old. This suggests that the Will was written several years before his death. The only other connection found between Buckland Bluett and John Bluett (I) is when he leaves some of his money and properties to his nephew John Bluett (II) the son of his late brother. Buckland Bluett had no heirs and bequeathed £100 to the Taunton and Somerset Hospital and other similar significant sums to his many nephews and nieces. His home, Haygrass House in Pitminster and other properties were left to his nephew John Bluett (II).⁽¹¹⁾

On inheriting Haygrass House and £600 from his uncle in 1837, John Bluett (II) retired from business.

John Bluett's Shop

John Bluett (I) was a successful grocer, tea dealer and later a wine and spirit merchant. Records show him taking on apprentices in the 1770s, but the location of his shop at that time is unlikely to be found, as the centre of Taunton was being significantly redeveloped about this time.

Hammet Street in Taunton was part of a redevelopment devised by Sir Benjamin Hammet (1736-1800). He acquired wealth and status by marriage and became a businessman, building contractor, banker and politician. He was High Sheriff of London in 1788 and MP for Taunton 1782-1800. He was elected Lord Mayor of London in 1797, and though pleading ill health failed to take the position and was fined £1000.^(12, 13) He was also responsible for the purchase and restoration of Taunton Castle. The redevelopment of the town centre had begun with the 1771 turnpike act, and the creation of paved streets, but in 1788 Benjamin Hammet proposed an Act of Parliament that allowed the purchase and demolition of several old buildings close to St. Mary's church. The result was the construction of Hammet Street.^(14,15) The street and buildings still frame an excellent view of the church tower.

It is likely that John Bluett (I) was the first occupant of the purpose-built shop premises on the corner of Hammet Street and Fore Street, looking out over The Parade.

Coplestone Warre Bampfylde (1720–1791) was a British landowner, garden designer and notable draughtsman and artist. In 1791 one of his works (original not found) was turned into a print, by A. Marsingall, with the title "A view of the Tower of St. Mary Magdalen's Church, Taunton" for inclusion in a newly printed book on the History of Taunton.⁽¹⁴⁾ The print also includes the shop front Bluett Grocer in the righthand foreground.



Fig. 3. Bluett's shop, sometime 1788-1791.⁽¹⁴⁾

The main shop is on the corner of Hammet Street and Fore Street and had 16 rooms with two side entrances on Hammet Street.⁽⁴⁾ It was occupied by C. Baker in 1851 when the building was sold. Bluett owned several other properties on Hammet Street, numbers 2, 9, 10 and 11 that were also sold in 1851. Number 2 Hammet Street was then run as a Temperance house by Mr Hellard.⁽⁴⁾ The Taunton and West Somerset Coffee Tavern Company Ltd. would be incorporated in 1878 with the registered office at 3 Hammet Street, issuing its own tokens for use at various premises in Taunton.⁽¹⁶⁾



Fig. 4. Hammet Street, Taunton. One of a set of five aquatints of Taunton drawn by C.C. about 1810. John Bluett owned several of these houses and his shop is at the far end on the left.

The business evolved and by 1842 was known as the Parade Wine Vaults with Bluett and Whitmarsh as proprietors and later Bluett, Whitmarsh & Co.⁽¹⁷⁾ On 3 December 1851, Charles Bluett announced he had started a new wine and spirit merchant's business at 13 Hammet Street. This is half-way along Hammet Street and seems to be a separate business.⁽¹⁸⁾



Fig. 5. View across the Parade c.1950 with the ornate Lloyds Bank building replacing half of the other side of Hammet Street.



Fig. 6. Briggs Stores extending the shop front into Hammet Street, on a postcard franked 19 October 1976. The Lloyds bank building on the left has received another 'upgrade'.



Fig. 7. The building survives today as a Clintons Greetings Cards store, c.2020.

Haygrass House

Haygrass house is located in Pitminster, three miles south of Taunton. It is now a Grade II listed property with 13 bedrooms, a three bedroom lodge and a two bedroom flat, with tennis court, swimming pool, cinema room and extensive gardens.^(19,20,21)



Fig. 8. Haygrass House.⁽¹⁹⁾

It was built around 1800 and the first occupants were John and Anne Mallack. John was an attorney at law and owned other properties and land in and around Taunton, including no. 2. Hammet Street, which he would also bequeath to John Bluett (II). John and Anne had just one daughter, Frances.

Buckland Bluett (1754-1837) studied at Exeter college and later became the reverend of Pitminster. He married Frances Mallack in 1809, but they had no children.

The house and contents were bequeathed to John Bluett (II) in 1837 and the contents auctioned. John Bluett retired from business and moved to Pitminster. At Haygrass House the 1841 census shows John Bluett of independent means living with his wife and six children aged 5 to 21 with four domestic staff and a merchant visitor. The 1851 census has John and Jane with three of their children and a grandson living with four domestic staff.⁽¹⁹⁾

When John Bluett died just after the 1851 census, his widow Jane moved to Park Street, Taunton, with two of the staff. Haycroft House was to be let and the rest of his properties and land were to be auctioned. His collections including coins, medals etc and 300 cases of stuffed birds were also to be auctioned. Jane Bluett died in Park Street, twelve years later in 1863.⁽¹⁹⁾

Considering the size of Haygrass house, it appears that John Bluett's collecting habit had expanded to fill the space available. There would likely have been very little space left in the house!

Haygrass House has had several other owners since then, though at times being vacant, the history is colourful and typical of a wealthy country residence.⁽¹⁹⁾ When it was sold in 2022 by Knight Frank, it was for offers in excess of £2.5M.

The Auction Catalogue

Having found a first copy of the auction catalogue via Hugh Pagan, the search began to see if another existed. An entry in the National Archives pointed towards the holdings of Somerset Heritage Centre (South West Heritage Trust) and communications began. Amongst papers relating to John Bluett was a copy of the auction catalogue that had annotations, extra lots, and the hammer prices of the lots pencilled in.⁽²²⁾ The folder also included a contemporary flyer for the sales of the property. A copy of the catalogue was acquired along with the flyer. The cover appears to be missing, leaving just the title page.

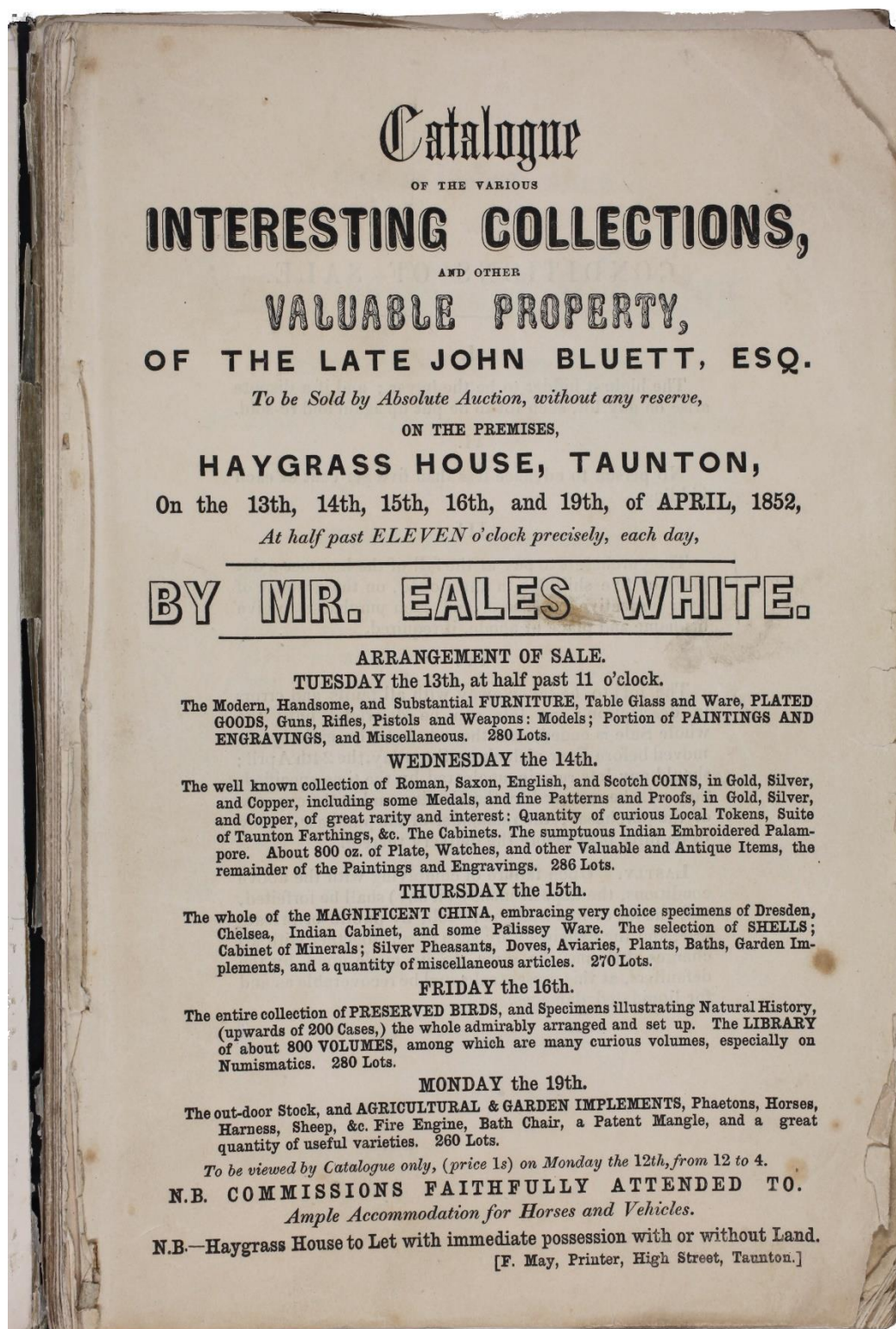


Fig. 9. Front page of the John Bluett sale catalogue. (SHC A/APS/7/1).⁽²²⁾

At 11:30 on Tuesday 13 April 1852 the auction began with the “kitchens and miscellaneous”. Lot 1 was catalogued as “Sundries”, and was annotated as a pair of “Bellows + Copper Warmer” selling for 2/6. The kitchen equipment was followed by “Glasses &c” then the furniture in the “Library, Study and Dining Room”, “the “Drawing Room, Vestibule, &c.”. This was followed by lots of “Engravings and Paintings in carved and gilt Frames”, “Plated Goods” before moving to the “Bed Rooms and Dressing Rooms” and a final “Miscellaneous section”. A few items were unsold and most sold for a few shillings. A 190-piece Dinner and Dessert service sold for 46/-, a large double mahogany wardrobe for 165/-.

Day two began with the “Medals and Medallions” in “Bronze” and then “Silver”, three lots of “Roman Coins in Brass” and then 16 lots of “Roman Coins in Silver” all multiple lots with the best price of 50/- for lot 24, “A Suite of the 12 Caesars”. The “Anglo-Saxon and English Silver Coins” followed, in smaller or single lots ranging from a few shillings to 46/- for a penny of Edward the Confessor struck by Manwine at Dover (Lot 52). A full set of Portcullis money of Elizabeth I in excellent preservation (lot 80) sold for 84/-, that is about ten times face value! The Stuart coins sold mostly in small groups for a few times face value. Lot 97 was an exception with a Charles I, Worcester halfcrown mintmark pear/three pears – as fine as when it left the die selling for 32/-.

Lot 104, an Oxford mint twenty shilling dated 1642 – “this has been a little restored” sold for 50/-.

The final silver, lot 143 was a fine collection of Maundy Money from Charles II to Victoria, 108 pieces went for 40/-.

The “English Gold Coins” ranging from Elizabeth I to George III were sold in 11 lots at just above face value.

The “Patterns and Proofs in Silver, Gold and Copper” began with lot 155, comprising an Edward I groat (very poor), a shilling of Henry VII by Stewart and two “Pledge Pennies” of Elizabeth I, which failed to sell. A pattern £5 piece in “the very finest of state, in a case” sold for 120/-.

There were nine lots of Scottish coins ranging from William the Lion to William III. This was followed by nine lots of silver medals including Charles I and later commemorative medals, including European.

The miscellaneous section began with various medals and coins, including lot 186, “sundry hammered coins, sold per ounce” for 38/- with an annotation “5/8 per ounce” and lot 188 described as Miscellaneous and annotated “Taunton Farthings” which sold for 52/-.

These are probably 17th century tokens and there were two keen collectors of this series in the room on the day. A “very fine” proof set of William IV (Lot 190) including £2 down to farthing, in a morocco case, which sold for 140/-.

The tokens ran from Lot 199 to lot 237:

	199	Tray of copper farthings	130
36	200	Ditto	130
	201	Ditto	208
	202	Ditto	108
7-	203	Tray of Miscellaneous	108
	204	Tray of provincial halfpence	90
16-	205	Ditto	80
	206	Ditto	80
	207	Ditto	90
	208	Ditto	80
	209	Ditto	80
	210	Ditto	80
42	211	Ditto	80
	212	Ditto	80
	213	Ditto	80
	214	Ditto	80
	215	Ditto	80
	216	Ditto	80

Fig. 10a. Catalogue entries for the token collection. (SHC A/APS/7/1).⁽²²⁾

Miscellaneous continued.

37/-	217	Tray of provincial halfpence	80
	218	Tray of provincial pence	56
	219	Ditto	56
	220	Ditto	60
	221	Ditto	58
	222	Ditto	63
7/-	223	Tray of Miscellaneous	70
	224	Tray of medals, in white metal	23

The above lots of provincial tokens are in fine condition, and many are proofs.

	225	Tray of early provincial tokens and medals, in white metal	
	226	Another	
	227	Ditto	
	228	Ditto	
nil	229	Ditto	
	230	Ditto	
	231	Ditto	
	232	Ditto	
	233	Ditto	
	234	Ditto	
	235	Sundry	
	236	Ditto	
	237	Ditto	

Fig. 10b. Catalogue entries for the token collection – continued. (SHC A/APS/7/1).⁽²²⁾

It would seem that the cataloguer did not recognise the importance of the collection and for lots 225-237 didn't even count the tokens in the trays. Looking at lots 209-216 and 217-222 a total of 480 and 373 halfpennies, including many proofs, sold for 42/- and 37/- respectively. That is about twice face value, suggesting no collectors or dealers were aware of the sale.

This was followed by "Cabinets and Miscellaneous Varieties", including lot 239, a remarkably fine cabinet enriched with rare marble and gems, with numerous secret drawers, which sold for £20-0-0. The penultimate section contained "Engravings and Paintings" selling from £1-£6. The final section of "Plate etc." was sold by the ounce (4/6 - 5/2 per oz.) with the 18 table spoons in lot 277 selling for £7-7-6.

The third day of the sale began with sundries ranging from bird cages to garden furniture and lot 383 was a Constable's truncheon engraved "Bernard Smith, Mayor of Taunton, 1694" which sold for 20/-. The rest of the day was spent on lots 391-590 of "Oriental, Dresden, Chelsea and Cabinet China" mostly going for a few shillings, though lot 559, "A mahogany double cabinet with its contents of minerals, fossils &c. in eleven large trays" sold for £3-0-0.

Friday 16 April 1852 brought the fourth day of the sale and the "Natural History and Books" went under the hammer. For the ornithology section, lots 591-809, "Each lot will be found neatly cased, and the specimens admirably and naturally set up". Most sold for five to ten shillings with lot 705, a Little Bustard at 63/- and lot 754 a Snowy Owl at 40/-.

The next section "Books", the first group being of numismatic interest.

Books, etc.		
Volumes on Coins.		
— 1	Gronovius de Sestertius, sive Pecunia Vetus, fine old frontispiece, 4to,	1691
10/- 2	Snelling's View of English Coins, fol. plates and MS. notes	1762
3/- 3	Evelyn on medals, plates	1697
3/6 4	Medailles de l' Empire Russie, plates	
10/- 5	Martin Folkes' English Coins, plates	1763
13/- 6	Simon on Irish Coins	1749
— 7	Mudie's National Medals, with copious letter-press	
15/- 8	Pye on Copper Coins, plates and notes	
4/- 9	Nummi Anglici et Scotici, plate, cuttings and notes	
5/- 10	Stukeley on Ancient British Coins	
52/- 11	Sir George Chetwynd's catalogue of Copper Coins, plates, presentation copy, with auto- graph	

52		
26/- 12	Ruding's Annals of the Coinage, 5 vols, 8vo with the additional 4to vol of plates	
4/6 13	Condor on Coins, plates	
6/- 14	Eighteen catalogues of various sales of coins, mostly priced	
7/6 15	A series of 12 plates of silver English Coins, with valuable annotations by the collector; a brief account of the number of ancient silver coins which have been sold at different sales during the last fifteen years past, exhibiting at one view the number of each king's coins, and what the whole was sold for, together with the value of each on average, very useful to purchasers and collectors	
4/- 16	Essay on coins; Till's Coronation Medals; sundry	

Fig. 11a and b. Catalogue entries for the numismatic books. (SHC A/APS/7/1).⁽²²⁾

The highlight was lot 11, the catalogue of Sir George Chetwynd's catalogue, selling for 52/-, and thus two bidders recognised the rarity of the book even then. Similarly Pye's copper coins at 15/- had been recognised, whereas Condor's (sic) catalogue, lot 13, was only rated at 4/6. The typographic error is maybe understandable after the 300 lots of avian taxidermy listed previously.

The rest of the day, lots 17-184, comprised the remainder of the library, portfolios, engravings, maps etc, mostly selling for a few shillings each.

The final day of the sale on Monday 19 April 1852 covered the "Remainder of the Garden Articles, Dairy, Laundry, Cellar and Miscellaneous". From lot 185 where eight baskets sold for 2/- to lot 265, a "Capital Patent mangle" at 95/-, a "Light Useful Phaeton" at £12/10/- (lot 265) and the associated "Pony" for £5/10/- (lot 266). The sale finished with a group various of cider casks, cows, dogs, a cart-horse, roof tiles, hay and timber.

The Property Auction

Also in the folder with the auction catalogue was an advertising flyer for the sale of John Bluett's properties.

VALUABLE FREEHOLD HOUSE-PROPERTY,
IN THE BOROUGH OF TAUNTON.
LAND, &c.

MR. EALE WHITE

IS requested by the Executors of the late JOHN BLUETT, Esq., to SELL by POSITIVE AUCTION, at GILES' HOTEL, Taunton, on MONDAY, the 14th July next, at 3 o'clock precisely, subject to certain conditions to be there and then produced, unless disposed of by private treaty, of which due notice will be given, the following Lots (or in such Lots as may be determined on at the time of Sale) of

DWELLING-HOUSES AND LANDS.

LOT 1—A convenient DWELLING-HOUSE of 8 Rooms, with Shop, situate in Silver-street, Taunton, now in the occupation of Mr. HOOPER.

LOT 2—FIVE TENEMENTS adjoining the same, as tenanted.

LOT 3—An excellent DWELLING-HOUSE of 6 Rooms, situate in Church-square, with Offices and Conveniences, now occupied by Mr. BUSSELL, together with a range of Four TENEMENTS, adjoining the same, in good occupation.

LOT 4—All that capital DWELLING-HOUSE and PROPERTY, No. 2, Hammet-street, containing Eleven spacious Rooms, with underground Cellarage, numerous Offices, Back Entrance, &c., now tenanted by Mr. HELLARD, and appropriated as the Temperance Hotel.

LOT 5—Another desirable DWELLING-HOUSE of 11 Rooms, with Courtlage and Offices, No. 10, Hammet-street, ready for immediate occupation.

LOT 6—A similar Dwelling House and Appurtenances, No. 11, Hammet-street, in the tenancy of Messrs. BEADONS & SWEET.

LOT 7—A capital DWELLING-HOUSE, No. 9, Hammet-street, containing 13 good Apartments, with abundant Offices; also, excellent Stabling, Coach-house, &c., occupied by J. W. STREET, Esq.

LOT 8—A Large WALLED-GARDEN, with Greenhouse, Summerhouse, Aviary, Coachhouse, Servants' Room, Courtlage for Stabling, with Pump, &c.

It be exceedingly desirable to any House Property surrounding the same.

LOT 9—A very desirable and capital DWELLING-HOUSE of 12 Rooms, ample Stabling, Coach-house, and large excellent Garden attached, situate in Church-square, Taunton, now tenanted by Coachman, Esq.

LOT 10—A range of most desirable COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS and PREMISES, commanding the very best situation in the centre of the town of Taunton, and comprising an elegant and spacious SHOP, 16 large Rooms, with Closets and every possible convenience; a suite of spacious WAREHOUSES adjoin, having the advantage of two Side Entrances from Hammet-street, the whole in the occupation of Mr. C. Baker.

LOT 11—A really valuable Piece of FREEHOLD LAND, of about 4 Acres, in the parish of Wilton, admirably situated for the erection of a Villa, commanding a beautiful view, and contiguous to the desirable and fashionable locality of Haine's Hill; it is at present rented by the executors of the late Mr. MAUNDER.

LOT 12—The CAPITAL FIELDS at Stepswater, of about 12 Acres, of the Richest Meadow Land, close to the town, deriving therefore considerable advantages, and now in the occupation of Mr. J. WHITE.

LOT 13—A Piece of ARABLE LAND about 12 acres, called Stockhams, situate near Orchard Portman, in the parish of Corfe, and tenanted by Mr. GAPPER.

LOT 14—A very prime and productive ORCHARD, called "Little Orchard," contiguous to Haygrass House.

The above two Lots, lots 13 and 14, are parts and parcels of the Manor of Taunton Deane.

The whole of the above Lots are well and profitably tenanted, and claim the attention of purchasers, either for comfortable occupation or good investment.

**THE DELIGHTFUL
RESIDENCE OF HAYGRASS HOUSE,**

With the admirable GARDENS, ORCHARDS, LANDS, &c., attached TO BE LET, with immediate possession

For further particulars relative to Haygrass, or to the above Auction, apply to CHARLES BLUETT, Esq., at Haygrass House, or of

Messrs. BEADONS & SWEET, Solicitors, Taunton.

N.B.—The entire of the valuable collection of Coins, China, Shells, Preserved Birds (300 cases), Antique Carvings, Models, Books, Carved and valuable inlaid Cabinets, and numerous objects of Art and Interest, called by the late indefatigable Collector, together with about 1000 ozs. of PLATE, and the greater portion of the excellent Furniture, will be offered by Auction early in August.

June 30th, 1851.

Fig. 12. Flyer for the sale of properties owned by John Bluett. (SHC A/APS/7/1).⁽²²⁾

This has the same wording, but slightly different typesetting to the notice that appeared on the front page of the Taunton Courier and advertiser on Wednesday 9 July 1851 with the properties being sold the following Monday, but the contents of Haygrass House and Bluett's collections would be sold a year later.

Taunton Tokens and John Bluett's Shilling

The 1791 edition of Toulmin's History of Taunton makes just a passing reference to the seventeenth century tokens issued in the town (p.56)⁽¹⁴⁾. The 1822 edition increases the page count from 192 to 607 and has a section devoted to "Taunton Coinage" (pp.108-120)⁽¹⁵⁾. The section begins with the Anglo-Saxon Mints and their mention in the Domesday Book, along with the numbers and some names of the moneyers and the payments made to the King's purse. A shortage of small change is used to introduce the Pledge Penny of Elizabeth and the farthings issued under Patents granted by James I and Charles I and then the section on seventeenth century Tradesmen's tokens.

The tokens described in the following list were all struck in Taunton, and are now in the collections of Mr. H. Norris and Mr. J. Bluett, of this town. It is believed that there are a few others extant, which are not in either of these collections.

The list includes one town and one Constables' piece, along with 38 private issues. Two hundred years later, the numbers are now, one town piece, four Constables' and 59 private issues (W/D 232-290) respectively, not counting minor die varieties.

The final paragraph describes the introduction of the regal copper coins in 1672 and the later replacements struck in tin. A footnote to this section contains probably the earliest mention of Bluett's silver shilling token of 1811.

Mr. Henry Norris has in his collection one of Charles the second's tin farthings, and Mr. Bluett has the same farthings of Charles the second, James the second, and William and Mary. In the latter collection, there is also a scarce *Quatuor Maria Vindico* farthing of Charles the second, in copper and silver, and the half farthing coined by king James the first which is now rare.

In 1811, during the great scarcity of change, when shilling silver tokens were generally issued in all the principal towns in England, one was struck for Mr. John Bluett, and intended to be issued at Taunton, but was never circulated.

Conclusions

This note has presented details of the family, business and connections of John Bluett (II). Having inherited his father's business in 1809 and then significant wealth and property in 1837 from his uncle, the Reverend Buckland Bluett, he retired from business and focussed on collecting. His death in 1851 resulted in the sale of his properties and land in and around Taunton and an auction of all of his collections and library.

His collection of coins was good, including Roman, Anglo-Saxon, English hammered and milled, Scottish, medals, and some recently issued proofs. The prices for most of the later pieces were typically just slightly above face value, i.e. the metal price. The dispersal of his significant collection of tokens was not well done and the collection was grouped into large lots without descriptions, including proofs and off-metal strikes, and all selling for about twice face value.

The numismatic books fared slightly better with Bluett's copy of Sharp's catalogue of the Chetwynd collection of tokens selling for 52/-.

An almost contemporary reference (1822) includes a section on coins and tokens from Taunton and was written with input from John Bluett (II). A footnote mentions the 1811 silver shilling token of John Bluett (II) and confirms that his silver token was not issued, but the reasons are not given.

This is a rare token with certainly two and maybe four specimens found (i) in the Thomas Bliss sale⁽²³⁾ (ii) the Eric P. Newman and subsequent sale,^(24,25) (iii) illustrated in Davis⁽²⁶⁾ plate L no.19, and (iv) illustrated in Dalton⁽¹⁾. There is likely some double counting here as the Davis and Dalton plates aren't good enough to identify wear and scratches etc. Furthermore, Dalton's illustration is of a token probably not in Dalton's own collection as the imaging is different to that of other pieces on the same page, this shows up clearly in the 1968 reprint and Mays' edition⁽²⁾. Similarly the piece illustrated in Davis did not appear in any of his sales. There is thus the distinct possibility that the Bliss and Dalton illustration pieces are one and the same and the Newman piece was the one illustrated in Davis. There is no specimen in the British Museum or Taunton Museum.

References and Acknowledgements

- (1) R. Dalton. *The Silver Token-Coinage Mainly Issued Between 1811-1812*. 1922, Seaby Reprint 1968.
- (2) J. O'Donald Mays. *Tokens of Those Trying Times*. New Forest Leaves, 1991. p.31.
- (3) G. Oddie. Reuniting Sir George and Lady Chetwynd – A Tale of Two Catalogues. *BNS Blog* 21 June 2022. <https://britnumsoc.blog/2022/06/21/reuniting-sir-george-and-lady-chetwynd-a-tale-of-two-catalogues-gary-oddie/>
- (4) Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser. Wednesday 9 July 1851, p.5 cols. 1,2.
- (5) Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser. Wednesday 17 March 1852, p.1 col. 1.
- (6) H.E. Manville and T.J. Robertson. *British Numismatic Auction Catalogues 1710-1984. Encyclopaedia of British Numismatics Volume 1*. Baldwin & Spink, 1986.
- (7) Published in the Proceedings of the British Numismatic Society. *BNJ* v.81, 2011, p.309.
- (8) H.E. Pagan, Per. Comm. 15 May 2022.
- (9) The Will of John Bluett (I) – 4 July 1809: PROB 11/1500/70
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- (22) Somerset Heritage Centre, Southwest Heritage Trust - SHC A/APS/7/1
- (23) Thomas Bliss sale. Sotheby 22 March 1916, lot 896. Sold for £29 10s to Spink.
<https://nnp.wustl.edu/library/auctionlots?AucCoId=511728&AuctionId=525442>
- (24) Eric P. Newman collection, slabbed and graded by NGC as MS63.
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<https://coins.ha.com/itm/great-britain/world-coins/great-britain-somersetshire-taunton-silver-shilling-token-1811-/a/241418-17350.s?ic4=GalleryView-Thumbnail-071515>
- (25) Noonans, formerly Dix Noonan Webb, 1 October 2014, EF grade, lot 552. Now out of the slab and with lighter toning. Sold for £1850 plus premium.
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