

Boxed Coins Issued for Jubilees and Coronations

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The finishing touches are just being made to a new book on Bedfordshire tokens etc.⁽¹⁾ The net has been cast widely and a small group of boxed coins has been found issued by local councils and companies to celebrate Coronations and Jubilees. These are just ordinary coins in specially printed boxes. They were given to anyone aged 70 or over on the day of the event. Once separated from the box, this is just an ordinary coin and would be spent and the box discarded.

This note will list those boxes known to the author, with the expectation that many more once existed.

Kempston Urban District Council issued a boxed half-crown to local pensioners for the Silver Jubilee of George V in 1935.



Details. Half-crown dated 1937 in a mauve mount, inside a small red card box labelled KEMPSTON SILVER JUBILEE – H.M. KING GEORGE V 1910-1935. [NKL].

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of Friday 29 March 1935 (p10) had a short note describing the JUBILEE HALFCROWN. “Mrs. Martin reported that the Old Folks Sub-Committee had agreed to give one Jubilee Half-crown to each person who reached the age of sixty-nine years before 3 June, 1935, the date of the King’s birthday. There would be about 2000 recipients and the cost would be £250. With incidentals, the amount they required was £270”.

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of Friday 10 May 1935 (p13) included a note describing the celebrations. “Tea was provided free to all children and old people in the Church End School, which had been decorated, and about one hundred and seventy enjoyed the meat’tea (sic). Jubilee mugs were presented to the children by Mrs. Tolson, and the men received a present of tobacco, the old ladies a packet of tea, and the children a tin of toffee. Earlier in the day Mr. R.H. Beaumont had presented Jubilee half-crowns to all parishioners of seventy years of age and over. About three hundred persons sat down to the tea which followed, and for which a charge was made. Sports and side-shows were held in the Vicarage meadow”.

The Bedfordshire Times of Friday 10 May 1935 (p13 col 6) had “Kempston’s Gala Day – All out for the New Recreation ground. . . The children’s tea was a great event, and a thousand children between the ages of three and fourteen were entertained at various centres. The old folks were not forgotten and all residents of seventy years of age and over were presented with a jubilee half-crown in a small box suitably inscribed”.

The above box is entry [230](#) in the Bedfordshire book. The following pieces are also listed.

- 015.** Bedford Borough Council issued a boxed half-crown for the 1935 Jubilee. Not yet seen but found described in local newspapers.
- 016.** Bedford Borough Council for the 1937 Coronation. There was a local shortage of half-crowns dated 1937 and so the box contained a florin and sixpence. The Town Arms are printed on the box.



- 203.** In 1935 Elstow church issued a boxed half-crown to celebrate the Silver Jubilee. This was seen on eBay many years ago [NKL] and there are contemporary newspaper records of the issue.
- 292.** In 1953 Skefco Ball Bearings of Luton packaged Coronation crowns as gifts for their employees.



On a similar theme from nearby Cambridgeshire a 1977 Jubilee crown was presented by “The People of Comberton”, in a specially printed box, to all of the children attending Comberton school.

A search of the British Newspaper Archives suggests that it was quite common for local authorities to give half-crowns to people over the age of 65 or 70, and sometimes the unemployed, as part of Jubilee or Coronation celebrations. As might be expected when just a coin is given out, there are several newspaper reports of the celebrations ending in court for drunkenness.⁽²⁾

WIGAN “NUISANCE” AND HIS JUBILEE HALF-CROWN

“I had a good drop of drink through getting a Jubilee Half-crown.” Stated Charles Gerrard, of Hardybutts, Wigan, when charged at Wigan, today, with being drunk and riotous in King-street last night.

Police-Sergeant Foster said that Gerrard was shouting, “The King’s done nowt for me.” He asked him to go home five times, but he refused. Gerrard said in court, “King-street is a funny place to shout in.” He was stated to have made sixty-five previous appearances in court.

The Chairman (Mr. T.J. Arkwright). – You are being brought up continually like this, and you are becoming a nuisance to the town.”

Gerrard was fined 40s.

Coins distributed in specially printed boxes, however, seem to be very unusual. Readers may know of other examples, but hopefully not Bedfordshire!

Reference and Acknowledgement

- (1) G. Oddie. *Bedfordshire Tokens, Tickets, Checks and Passes*. St Neots Press, forthcoming, 2023.
- (2) Liverpool Echo, Saturday 4 May 1935, p8 col6.

Thanks to Nigel Lutt, formerly of the Bedford Record Office, for first bringing these to my attention and for the illustrations of the Kempston and Skefco boxes.

