

# Countermarked 1811-12 Silver Shilling Tokens

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## Introduction

Collecting coins and tokens often involves acquiring a single specimen of each type or variety, often in the best condition possible. Cherry picked from the surviving population, many years later this results in accumulations, pleasing to the eye, but distant from what was in contemporary circulation.

Of the many hundreds of issues of silver tokens issued mainly between 1811-1812, well catalogued by Richard Dalton<sup>(1)</sup> and with additions published by James O'Donald Mays<sup>(2)</sup>, the vast majority of the pieces issued entered the melting pot a long time ago. The more worn or damaged the piece, the less likely it is to survive. Deliberate damage in the form of a countermark or piercing etc, is almost a guarantee for consignment to the melting pot.

In the past I had considered that finding a single example of a countermark to be an accident, two examples a coincidence and three or more to be part of a deliberate process. Whilst there may be one-offs, any countermark cannot be the result of an accident, it is the result of someone creating a punch capable of stamping metal and actually stamping the metal. This note presents some countermarks that have been found on 1811-1812 silver shilling tokens.

## Somerset – Bristol – D32 – Countermarked - indent with raised marks

Obv. BRISTOL TOKEN FOR XII PENCE  
Around arms  
Rev. TO FACILTATE TRADE | ISSUED IN  
BRISTOL AUG<sup>T</sup> 22 1811  
around PAYABLE | BY MESS<sup>RS</sup> | FRA<sup>N</sup>  
GARRATT | W<sup>M</sup> TERRELL | EDW<sup>D</sup>  
BIRD | LAM<sup>T</sup> BECK & | FRANN H. |  
GRIGG.



Notes: Whilst illustrated, the countermark is not noted by Dalton or Mays.  
D30-D36 are listed as contemporary forgeries, so this mark might have been used as a cancellation.

## Somerset – Bristol – D33 – Countermarked - indent with raised marks<sup>(3)</sup>

Obv. BRISTOL TOKEN FOR XII PENCE  
Around arms  
Rev. TO FACILTATE TRADE | ISSUED IN  
BRISTOL AUG<sup>T</sup> 22 1811  
around PAYABLE | BY MESS<sup>RS</sup> | FRA<sup>N</sup>  
GARRETT | W<sup>M</sup> TERRAIL | EDM<sup>D</sup>  
BIRD | LAM<sup>T</sup> BECK & | FRAN<sup>N</sup> H. |  
GREGG.



Notes: D33 but with an additional countermark. This appears to be the same as the countermark illustrated in Dalton (D32). A not quite circular impression with raised cross hatching.

Ag 75.4%, Cu 23.7%, Si 0.6%, Pb 0.1%, Bi, Zn, and Au < 0.7%.

This is almost certainly a contemporary counterfeit made from debased and recycled silver (75% with traces of gold).

## Staffordshire – Bilston – D2 – Countermarked - G

Obv. BILSTON SILVER TOKEN | ONE  
SHILLING  
around Arms  
Rev. ONE POUND NOTE FOR 20  
TOKENS  
Around COMMERCIAL CHANGE  
| 1811 | PAYABLE | BY |  
RUSHBURY | AND | WOOLLEY



## Staffordshire – Fazeley – D11 – Countermarked – small dot<sup>(4)</sup>

This very subtle mark was first discovered when looking for an illustration of a good specimen of Staffordshire D11 to illustrate the “JK” countermark to be presented later in this note.

Obv. FAZELEY SILVER  
TOKEN | 1811 | PAYBLE  
BY PEEL<sup>s</sup> HARDING &  
C<sup>o</sup>  
around a shield  
Rev. ONE | SHILL<sup>g</sup>  
within wreath



Initially considered spurious, a brief search revealed that around half of the surviving tokens of this issue also have a small mark in the middle of the O of ONE. Here are another eight examples hiding in plain sight.



1. GMO



6. DNW 21.11.2016 lot 273



2. GMO



7. eBay carolintraus-0



3. DNW 01.10.2014 lot 386



8. ebay lodge-hill



4. DNW 03.10.2012 lot 141



9. ebay johnnyqc

It is also interesting to note that the mark has only been found on Staffordshire D11 and not D10. As such it might be concluded that that this mark is official and some form of accounting procedure by the original issuers.

### Warwickshire – Birmingham – D6 – Countermarked - D

- Obv. BIRMINGHAM TOKEN | 1811 | ONE  
SHILLING around a building
- Rev. ONE POUND NOTE | PAYABLE AT  
| THE WORKHOUSE | FOR 20  
TOKENS  
around a shield



### Yorkshire – Thirsk – D74 – Countermarked - SCURR THIRSK

- Obv. THIRSK | 1812  
around shield
- Rev. THIRSK ASSOCIATION |  
ONE SHILLING  
around SILVER | TOKEN



Richard Scurr had premises on the east side of Thirsk Market Place is listed in contemporary directories as an ironmonger, jeweller and watch and clock-maker. The business was still operating in the 1850s.

### Ireland – Dublin – D1 – Countermarked - Crowned Harp, Hibernia

- Obv. Seated female with  
ship on horizon  
(Trade and  
Navigation?)
- Rev. SOLD BY CLARK  
WEST & C<sup>o</sup>  
around FOR | ONE  
BRITISH | SHILLING | 1804



Clark West & Co were goldsmiths and jewellers at 9 Capel St, Dublin, c.1803-1820. These marks are very similar to those found on Dublin silver of this period, but no exact punch match yet<sup>(5)</sup>.

### Ireland – Dublin – D9 – Countermarked - NO

- Obv. PUBLIC HAPPINESS | 2<sup>DWT</sup>  
20<sup>GS</sup> | STERLING | 1804  
around and altar
- Rev. PRO BONO PUBLICO  
around a female figure leaning  
on a plinth HEALTH TO THE  
KING



Mark not found in Pickford for a silversmith anywhere in the UK<sup>(5)</sup>.



## The JK Countermark

The survival of the following three countermarked shillings adds new insights into the circulation of silver at this time. The pieces from three different token issuers from three different locations have been countermarked using the same punch.

### Cheshire – Nantwich - D1 – Countermarked - JK

- Obv. NANTWICH TOKEN | VALUE  
ONE SHILLING  
around a shield
- Rev. ONE POUND NOTE | FOR 20  
TOKENS  
around PAYABLE | 1811  
around AT | THE OLD | BANK



Details: 4.780g; Ag 87.3%, Cu 11.5%, Si 0.07%, Pb 0.3%, Fe 0.1%, Au, Zn, Bi < 0.06%

### Staffordshire – Fazeley – D11 – Countermarked – JK<sup>(4)</sup>

- Obv. FAZELEY SILVER TOKEN | 1811 |  
PAYBLE BY PEEL<sup>s</sup> HARDING &  
C<sup>o</sup>  
around a shield
- Rev. ONE | SHILL<sup>g</sup>  
within wreath



Details: 3.361g; Ag 84.5%, Cu 14.7%, Si 0.5% Pb 0.2%, Au 0.1%, Bi, Zn < 0.1%

### Wales – Flintshire – D3 – Countermarked - JK

- Obv. FLINTSHIRE BANK |  
AUGUST 12 1811  
around a shield
- Rev. FLINTSHIRE | BANK TOKEN |  
I O S & O | ONE SHILLING



Details: 4.008g; Ag 90.7%, Cu 8.0%, Si 0.6%, Pb 0.1%, Bi, 0.02%

The tokens were quite worn when countermarked (grading maybe fine at best) and after collecting and counterstamping must have entered a route, possibly circulation, in order to survive to today. The immediate sources of the three pieces, over 20 years, are uncorrelated.

There may have been a small amount of subsequent circulation, but wear on the bumps appearing on the other side from the countermark suggest just two centuries of bad storage. It is thus suggested that the silver tokens still circulating around 1816, most of which were struck from low-relief and finely-engraved dies had already worn down to poor/fair/fine.

The countermarked tokens only form a small part of the circulating silver at this time. Countermarks are also found on worn regal shillings and also on shilling sized discs, slap tokens, worn beyond identification of the host coin.

Examination of a small sample of countermarked regal shillings circulating at this period (116 pieces, often with just one countermark), shilling-sized slap tokens (139 pieces often with two or more distinct countermarks) and foreign-silver shilling-sized coins found in the UK (six pieces, including two bearing two marks), has not revealed another example of this mark.

## Conclusions

The Mint had issued no sensible quantities of silver coin since the late 1750s. In 1811-12 many tradesmen and bankers issued silver tokens, sufficiently light to avoid the melting pot, and these worked hard and went, in a small way, to satisfy the needs of the issuers and their customers. Some of these silver tokens received countermarks.

The survival of three worn tokens from three different issuers, but all bearing the same countermark, gives insight into the state of the circulating silver tokens around the time of the silver Recoinage of 1816-17.

If anyone has any silver coins, tokens, slap tokens or foreign silver bearing this exact countermark, the author would be pleased to hear.

## References and Acknowledgements

1. R. Dalton. *The Silver Token Coinage 1811-1812*. 1922.
2. J. O'Donald Mays. *Tokens of Those Trying Times*. New Forest Leaves 1991.
3. G. Oddie. Bristol Silver Tokens of 1811 – Additions. *TCSB* v12n3 p95, June 2017.
4. G. Oddie. Countermarked Fazeley Silver Shilling Tokens of 1811. *TCSB* v12n6 p213, March 2018.
5. C. Jackson. *Silver and Gold Marks of England, Scotland and Ireland*. Edited by I. Pickford, 1991.

