

John Stone Trade Token 1670

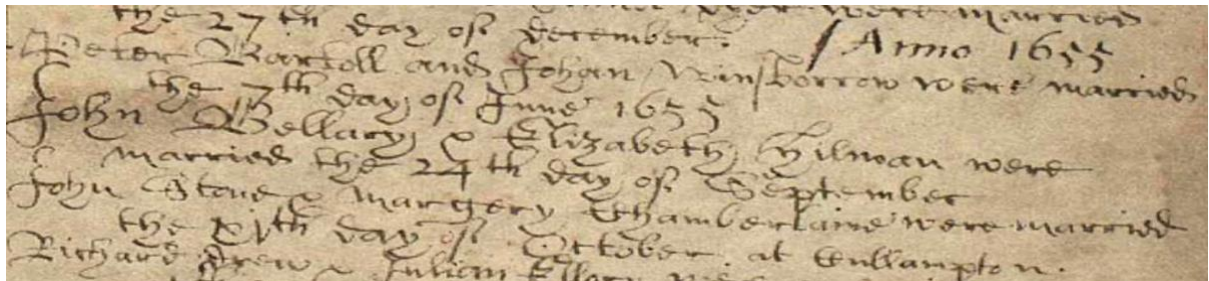


From the 17th to the early 19th century tokens were commonly issued by merchants when there was an acute shortage of coins to enable trading activities to continue, and to pay servants and apprentices. The token was in effect a pledge redeemable in goods. These tokens never received official sanction from government but were accepted and circulated quite widely.

In England the production of copper farthings was permitted by royal licence in the first few decades of the 17th century, but production ceased during the Civil War and a great shortage of small change resulted. This shortage was felt more keenly because of the rapid growth of trade in the towns and cities, and this in turn prompted both local authorities and merchants to issue tokens between 1648 and 1672 when official production of farthings resumed.

These tokens were most commonly made of copper or brass. Most were not given a specific denomination and were intended to pass as farthings but there are also a large number of halfpenny and sometimes penny tokens. Halfpenny and penny tokens usually, but not always, bear the denomination on their face. Most such tokens indicate the name of their issuer, which might either be his or her full name or initials. Where initials were provided, it was common practice to provide three: one for the surname, and the other two for the first names of husband and wife. Tokens would also normally indicate the merchant establishment concerned, either by name or by picture. Most were round, but they are also found in square, heart or octagonal shapes.

This token is a halfpenny, issued by John Stone in Sampford Peverell in 1670. It has an S for Stone, and then the initials I (used for J) and M. These represent John and his wife Margery née Chamberlain – they were married on 6th October 1655 in Cullompton according to the Halberton parish register:



John Stone, his wife and his son are listed on page 1 of the 1658-63 manorial survey of Sampford Peverell which is on display here. It also gives their ages.

We cannot be sure what John Stone’s business was, but the 1696 manorial survey is helpful, as it was drawn up a year before John died. He was buried in Sampford Peverell in 1697. In the survey we can see some entries for John Stone deleted and a new name, Thomas King, inserted.

Thomas King was a serge weaver with relatives doing other cloth-related things. Part of the land that Thomas was renting was ‘little waterland and part of Morles’. With all the waterlands, as far as we know, being behind Morrells farm, this could point towards Thomas King living in or near Kings (cottages which used to be next to Morrells in Lower Town) and having various parcels of land around. So, as Thomas had taken over the same land from John Stone, that indicates that John Stone may have been in the same line of business, perhaps paying his employees with these halfpennies and them buying their goods from his pub or shop.

Mannor of Sampford Peverell	Tenants	Lands	Rent	Herriotts Yearly Value
Coppay	John Stone	Two Tenements and Several Closes of Land containing 27 acres.	01 : 02 : 07	Two Part Beasts 26 : 00 : 00
	Thomas King John's wife	2 closes called Bowhill & little waterland cont. in 101. Acres parcel of mortg. Tenement.	00 : 03 : 06	01 - 00 - 00