

A LISTING OF THE MAJOR VARIETIES OF WILKINSON TOKENS

by Ed Moore, CTCC Librarian

Dalton and Hammer tried to catalog every die variation at a time when dies were being made by hand; which naturally produced a great many varieties. They (Dalton and Hammer) also included most of the counterfeits which compounds the problem. Even if it were possible to collect the complete series listed in Dalton and Hammer, which it is not, you would not have a complete set.

Why is it impossible? Because some of the items assigned a number in D&H were unique die trials. In addition to that fact, there are several important variations that Dalton and Hammer did not consider and therefore did not assign numbers to. Let me point out a few. Souvenir tokens issued in silver or gold-gilt were not assigned numbers. The weight of the token blanks was not considered. You may remember reading that John Wilkinson complained to Matthew Boulton that he was getting only 32 tokens per pound instead of the usual 36 so Matthew Boulton reduced the thickness of the blanks to accommodate him. (This means that the initial Boulton issues weighing 14.4grams are scarce, and they were the only Forge reverse tokens actually issued in 1790, the others didn't make it into circulation until 1791 but carried the 1790 date.) There is no mention in Dalton and Hammer of the three distinct weights of tokens produced in 1790. Also, there is no mention of the rotation of the dies, either medallion or coin rotation, though both exist in the series. One might also consider the orientation of the edge lettering, some reading one way and others just the opposite depending on how the blank was oriented in the coin press, etc., etc., ad-infinitum.

So, how does one collect a complete set of John Wilkinson tokens? I know one collector who collected one token with each type of reverse: Forge, Barge and Vulcan and considered that he had a complete set. Many people opt for a token from each year that a reverse was used which makes a set of ten unless you include the silver token of 1788 which brings it to eleven. Forge, 1787, 1788, 1790, 1792, 1793, 1795. Barge, 1788.(+FINE SILVER), Vulcan, 1790, 1791, 1792.

The trouble with an eleven coin set is that many major varieties will be missing. There has to be a logical grouping which will include all of the major varieties but stops short of the infinite number of variations possible. I like to think that there are minor (hard to notice or identify) variations and major (obvious and easy to see) variations. With this in mind I have settled on the following twenty six tokens which, for me, makes-up a complete set of John Wilkinson tokens.

SHROPSHIRE (Mistakenly listed under WARWICKSHIRE in D&H)

JOHN WILKINSON - IRON MASTER.

BARGE REVERSE HALFPENNY TOKENS

EDGE MARKED: WILLEY SNEDSHILL BERSHAM BRADLEY

ENGRAVER: John G. Hancock, MINTED BY: Thomas Williams

1788 (ALL DATES SHOWN IN EXERGUE.)

336 BARGE REVERSE

337 FINE SILVER REVERSE, (VALUED AT 3S, 6D)

JOHN WILKINSON - IRON MASTER.

FORGE REVERSE HALFPENNY TOKEN

EDGE MARKED: WILLEY SNEDSHILL BERSHAM BRADLEY

ENGRAVER: John G. Hancock, MINTED BY: Thomas Williams

1787

- 340-348 STOP (PERIOD) AT BASE OF OBVERSE LEGEND, NORMAL REVERSE**
- 345 CHAIN PATTERN ON REVERSE RIM**
- 349-361 STOP AT CENTER OF OBVERSE LEGEND, NORMAL REVERSE**
- 358 DATE WITH STRAIGHT ONE & CURVED SEVENS**
- 359 NO BORDER TREATMENT, THIRD WALL WITH WINDOW SHOWN ON REVERSE**
- 362-368 NO STOP AFTER LEGEND, NORMAL REVERSE**
- 363 DATE WITH CURVED ONE AND SEVENS**

1788

- 375-380 WITH STOP AFTER LEGEND**
- 381-384 NO STOP AFTER LEGEND**

1790 ENGRAVER: Dumarest, MINTER: Matthew Boulton

- 385 WITH STOP AFTER LEGEND, CURVED ONE (Perhaps a Hancock die obtained from Williams.)**
- 386 WITH STOP AFTER LEGEND, STRAIGHT ONE (Perhaps a Hancock die obtained from Williams.)**
- 387-388 NO STOP AFTER LEGEND, (Engraved by Dumarest)**

1792

- 389 THREE BUTTON RIBBED COAT**

1793

- 393-394 THREE BUTTON RIBBED COAT, LARGE DATE**
- 409-410 FOUR BUTTON RIBBED COAT, SMALL DATE**
- 412-416 ditto**
- 411 FOUR BUTTON SMOOTH COAT**

1795

- 420-423 THREE BUTTON RIBBED COAT**

JOHN WILKINSON - IRON MASTER.

VULCAN HAMMERING REVERSE HALFPENNY TOKENS

EDGE MARKED: WILLEY SNEDSHILL BERSHAM BRADLEY

ENGRAVER: John G. Hancock, MINTED BY: John Westwood

1790

- 424-429 NO STOP AFTER LEGEND**
- 430 WITH STOP AFTER LEGEND.**

1791

- 432 NO STOP AFTER LEGEND**
- 433-438 WITH STOP AFTER LEGEND.**
- 438 NO BUTTONS ON COAT**

1792

- 448-449 JEFFERSON STYLE BUST WITH SMALL FONT.**
- 450 SAME BUT STOP IS NEAR THE BUST, THIS ONE USUALLY SHOWS DIE FLAWS.**

I have elected to show the list in the same order that Dalton and Hammer first presented their listing to keep the numbers in order. It should be noted that this is probably not the order in which the tokens were actually produced. D&H # 359 should actually start the listing and may have been issued at the value of a penny. The chain pattern reverse was probably second representing a failed experiment and so on but enough speculation, I am trying to simplify things, not make them more complicated. You will also notice that I have excluded the counterfeits from the list. The counterfeits, while interesting, have nothing to do with the genuine Wilkinson issues and should be collected separately.

I made this list for my own use and keep a copy in the back of my Wilkinson folder. I found that I refer to it often as a quick reference guide and so I thought I would share it with everyone in the hope that others may also find it useful. All of the tokens on this list are possible to collect and where a range of numbers is indicated, ie., 340-348, a single representative token within that range should be sufficient to exhibit the stated features. If I have included or excluded items that concern you I would enjoy discussing them with you, my email is listed in the guide on page 29.

To Slab or Not to Slab

by Mike Sussman

Many collectors, particularly those who collect US coins prefer to have them encapsulated. The major grading companies do a serviceable job providing a coin's identification, provenance if applicable, a large measure of protection, and a population survey; however, there are also problems with this method of preservation. My personal preference is for no slab, especially for old coppers. Whenever I obtain one that is encapsulated, I get my trusty hammer and crack it out. I feel that the slabs were not made for early coppers because they do not allow for a careful inspection of the coin's surfaces. Furthermore, scratches on the plastic often seem to be on the coin; and subtle and sometimes not so subtle toning or luster can be masked.

PCGS, NGC, and ANACS, the big three and others, not only encapsulate coins, they grade them. One problem is that when a coin is put into a slab, its grade is fixed. Yet the grading services make big money when standards change and collectors look to up-grade their coins. A premium is actually placed by some dealers on coins in OGH (old green holders) and "rattlers" because grading standards have changed so much since the earlier days of encapsulation. The emergence of the sticker market, for example CAC and others, shows how variable slab grading can be. Dealers jump at the chance to purchase gold CAC stickered coins because they know that the grades are probably inaccurately low. Furthermore, by changing grading standards to so called