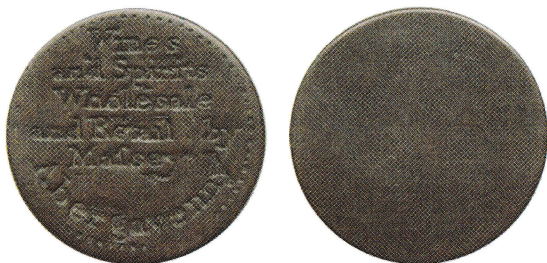


Massey's Countermarked Wine Tickets

Murray Andrews

In his seminal study of British countermarked bronzes, Gavin Scott listed three remarkably similar uniface wine tickets from Abergavenny (Mon.), Kidderminster (Worcs.), and Ludlow (Salop.), each of which were issued for wholesale and retail vintners named Massey. The tickets can be described as follows:

Abergavenny type



Obv.: Wines / and Spirits / Wholesale / and Retail by / Massey / Abergavenny; legend in six lines within border.

Rev.: Blank field.

Copper alloy; Scott (1975), 41, no. 50.1. Specimens observed by author: 1) British Museum, acc. no. 1870,0507.1939, 7.68g; 2) Rare Coins and Tokens, January 2017, 7.4g (illustrated, courtesy of Glen Ward).

Kidderminster type



Obv.: Wines / and Spirits / Wholesale & / Retail by / Massey / KIDDERMINSTER; legend in six lines.

Rev.: Blank field.

Copper alloy; Scott (1975), 37, no. 39.1. Specimens observed by author: 1) British Museum, acc. no. 1906,1103.5044, 10.5g; 2) Private collection, ex

ABC Coins and Tokens, 16 September 2020, 7.04g, overstruck on George II 'Young Bust' halfpenny (illustrated); 3) E. George collection, Simmons Gallery, 30 September 2020, lot 255, 8.1g; 4) Dix Noonan Webb, 8 November 2017, lot 750, 6.6g; 5) R. Ward collection, Dix Noonan Webb, 7 December 2015, lot 325, wt. unknown; 6) Whitmore Coins Tokens & Medals, wt. unknown; 7) G. Scott collection (Scott 1974, 80), wt. unknown, overstruck on William III halfpenny.

Ludlow type



Obv.: WINES / AND SPIRITS / BY MASSEY / LUDLOW; legend in four lines within border.

Rev.: Blank field.

Copper alloy; Scott (1975), 34, no. 30.5. Specimens observed by author: 1) Private collection, ex Whitmore Coins Tokens & Medals, 8 January 2021, 6.42g, overstruck on William III halfpenny (illustrated); 2) Dix Noonan Webb, 8 November 2017, lot 744, wt. unknown; 3) Shropshire Museums obj. no. N.00013, wt unknown, overstruck on William and Mary halfpenny.

As can be seen, the three tickets exhibit some common features. All examples known to the present author are struck on copper alloy flans of 26-28mm diameter, with at least four visibly overstruck on official or counterfeit English halfpence. The designs are all uniface, and feature an incuse legend of four to six lines rendered in either upper case serif (Ludlow) or mixed upper and lower case serif type (Abergavenny and Kidderminster). In each case, the legends follow the standard formula of 'Wines and Spirits [...] by Massey [...]', and omit an issue date. These attributes, coupled with their shared nomenclature and close regional affiliations, suggests that the three tickets from a single coherent series, presumably issued by one or more 'Massey(s)' active in the western British wine trade.

The attribution of this series poses an interesting numismatic puzzle. Drawing on the evidence of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century commercial directories, Scott was able to propose two issuers for the Abergavenny and Ludlow types: these were given

respectively to Elizabeth Massey, a dealer in wines and spirits active in 1811, and Francis Massey, a wine dealer active from the 1820s to the 1850s⁽¹⁾. While no candidate was identified for the Kidderminster type, Scott inferred 'some connection with Elizabeth Massey' on stylistic grounds⁽²⁾. Recent historical and numismatic research, however, suggests that Scott's attributions of the Abergavenny and Ludlow types are incorrect, but provides significant new support for his theory concerning the Kidderminster type.

The objections to Scott's attributions of the Abergavenny and Ludlow tickets are essentially chronological: the tickets predate the independent careers of the issuers he attributes them to. Research into a corpus of 12 Massey tickets in museums and private collections has identified at least four specimens overstruck on halfpence of William and Mary (Ludlow), William III (Kidderminster, Ludlow), and George II (Kidderminster), providing *termini post quos* of 1695 for the Ludlow type and 1729 for the Kidderminster type. These are, of course, only the earliest possible dates for the tickets, which may well have been overstruck on coins that had already been in circulation for some time: evidence from two bronze hoards from Upper Thames Street (London), and Ripple (Worcs.), for example, confirms that halfpence in the names of William III and George II populated the English currency pool well into the final decades of the eighteenth century⁽³⁾. It is entirely conceivable, then, that these halfpence were removed from circulation and overstruck with Massey types in the mid- to late eighteenth century, several decades after their initial manufacture. Cut-off dates for this process are afforded by the introduction of Boulton's large-scale halfpenny issues of 1799, 1806, and 1807, which significantly diluted the share of earlier bronzes in the English currency pool; a definitive *terminus ante quem* can be set at 1814-7, when Tower halfpence were finally withdrawn from circulation⁽⁴⁾. In the case of the Abergavenny and Kidderminster types, an earlier *terminus ante quem* is implied by the use of the 'long-S' letter form (Mafsey, Maffey), which had been abandoned in print typography by 1800⁽⁵⁾. Taken as a whole, the numismatic evidence suggests that all three tickets in the Massey series belong to the eighteenth century, and most probably the mid- to late eighteenth century. The tickets would, therefore, predate the known careers of Scott's two candidates: Francis Massey's (1796-1853) involvement in the Ludlow wine trade is not recorded before 1821, while Elizabeth Massey (*d.* 1810) did not trade independently until the death of her husband in 1800⁽⁶⁾.

If neither Elizabeth and Francis were responsible for the Abergavenny and Ludlow types, it raises the possibility that a single, third, individual bore responsibility for the entire ticket series. One such candidate can be identified in the historical record: Thomas Massey. Presumably born in Shropshire in *c.* 1750, Thomas Massey married his wife, Elizabeth (née Tranter), at Ludlow's parish church of St Lawrence on 4 July 1774⁽⁷⁾. Their first son, John Alexander, was baptised at Ludlow on 4 June 1780, and was named for Thomas' two brothers, the eldest of whom was a noted local cabinet

maker and a witness at the couple's wedding⁽⁸⁾. A second son, Edwin, was baptised on 13 September 1781, but died in infancy; his burial in the churchyard at Ludlow was entered in the parish registers on 19 March 1782⁽⁹⁾. Within a few years of Edwin's death the family relocated to Kidderminster, where Thomas would prepare a will in 1782-7 bequeathing his entire estate, including all his stock in trade, to his wife Elizabeth; evidently still mourning his son, the will contains an unusual clause requesting that he be buried close to Edwin, provided that it was not too costly to convey his body back to Ludlow⁽¹⁰⁾. After the baptism of their daughter, Elizabeth, on 2 June 1787, the family moved from Kidderminster and settled in Abergavenny, where Thomas operated as a wine and brandy merchant from premises on Cross Street until his death in December 1800⁽¹¹⁾. Whether occasioned by familial insistence or an onerous bill-sheet, Thomas' executors forewent his request to be buried in Ludlow, arranging instead for his interment at Abergavenny's parish church of St Mary on 9 January 1801⁽¹²⁾. Once Thomas' will was proved on 4 July 1801 Elizabeth received the residue of his estate, enabling her to trade independently until her death on 29 April 1810. This is evidently the same Elizabeth Massey that Scott associated with the Abergavenny tickets: in other words, he was quite correct to propose 'some connection' between her and the Kidderminster issuer.

In Thomas Massey, then, we have a single documented vintner known to have traded at Ludlow in the 1770s, Kidderminster in the 1780s, and Abergavenny in the 1790s, a concise time frame that is fully consistent with the evidence of the tickets themselves. It would seem reasonable to reattribute the entire Massey series to this individual, a conclusion that underlines the power of tickets as an early form of retail marketing: if they did not yield results, it seems unlikely that an issuer would go to the trouble of producing them on three separate occasions.

References

1. Scott 1975, 87-98.
2. Scott 1975, 90.
3. Rhodes 1989; Abdy et al. 2012, 245, no. 206.
4. Dyer and Gaspar 1992, 448; Craig 1953, 266-7.
5. Nash 2001, 9-15.
6. *Hereford Journal*, 14 March 1821, 3; *Bristol Mirror*, 5 May 1810, 3. For this Elizabeth Massey, see below.
7. Fletcher 1915, 1196.
8. Fletcher 1915, 1004; *Hereford Journal*, 20 March 1799, 3.
9. Fletcher 1915, 1010-16.
10. Kew, The National Archives, PROB 11/1364/86: Will of Thomas Massey of Kidderminster, proved 4 July 1801.

11. Worcester, Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service, Microfiche BA 8426 Ref 850: Baptism Register of Kidderminster St Mary, 1784-1801; Bristol Mirror, 5 May 1810, 3.
12. Cwmbran, Gwent Record Office, D/PA 42.6: Parish Register of Abergavenny St Mary, 1801-12.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Glen Ward for permitting me to reproduce an Abergavenny ticket that he sold in January 2017.

A Token from Lambeth Wells

Lara Maiklem

I'm an avid mudlark on the River Thames in London. I try to get down to the river at least once a week and I run the London Mudlark Facebook page, which is also on Instagram and YouTube. It's fair to say, I'm a little obsessed with scratching around in mud.

Over the years I have found a wealth of ordinary everyday objects, thrown away and lost by London's past inhabitants. My collection is wide and varied: prehistoric hand axes, Roman game counters, medieval buckles, Tudor shoe soles, love tokens, coins, pottery, bottles and many clay pipes. I also have a good selection of tokens, from medieval trade and ecclesiastical tokens to political tokens, James I plantation tokens, Conder tokens and porter tokens from the foreshore in front of Old Billingsgate Market. My most recent token find has, however, proved to be my most interesting