

## A Countermarked 19th-Century Worcester Penny Token

Murray Andrews

In October 2021 a countermarked 19th-century Worcester penny token was advertised on eBay by a High Wycombe-based antiques dealer. It was subsequently purchased by a private collector and made available for study. The token is described as follows:



Obv.: CIVITAS IN BELLO IN PACE FIDELIS, Worcester City Arms overstruck with incuse countermark WEAVER.

Rev.: WORCESTER CITY AND COUNTY TOKEN / VALUE / ONE / PENNY // 1811, Value between olive and palm branches.

Copper-alloy; Withers 1254; 36mm; 0°; 27.60g.

Engraved by the Birmingham medallist Thomas Halliday, this token belongs to a series of silver, copper, and card tokens issued by the Worcester House of Industry in late 1811 to 'accommodate the public in the present scarcity of small change'.<sup>(1)</sup> It has endured circulation prior to the application of a rectangular punch reading WEAVER to the obverse, an action that has partially obliterated the centre of the reverse. The token's provenance is unknown, and while light corrosion and soil adhesion on its surface and within the countermark indicate origins as a metal-detected or chance find, no corresponding records have been identified on the Portable Antiquities Scheme or UK Detector Find Database websites.

Countermarking is a phenomenon periodically observed on 18th- and early 19th-century bronze coins, but is less frequently encountered on copper and bronze tokens of the same period. While no tokens matching this description appear in the standard catalogue of British countermarked coppers and bronzes, comparable specimens are known from collections, including an 1811 Norwich halfpenny (Withers 913) countermarked with GRIFFIN, an 1812 Sheffield penny (Withers 1010) countermarked

with BAGSHAW, and an 1815 Sheffield penny (Withers 1027-32) countermarked with SANDERSON.<sup>(2)</sup> Scott offers provisional attributions for the GRIFFIN and SANDERSON pieces, identifying the former with William Griffin, a Norwich builder and joiner recorded in the 1840s/50s, and the latter with John Sanderson, a Sheffield saw manufacturer recorded in the 1810s/20s.<sup>(3)</sup> The WEAVER named on the Worcester token may be similarly identified with William Weaver (1771-1842), a blacksmith and farrier operating from premises on Gardener's Lane, Worcester, from 1813 onwards.<sup>(4)</sup> The purpose of his countermark remains unclear, although some combination of receipt, trade card, and truck functions seems plausible.<sup>(5)</sup>

## References

1. The earliest tokens produced for the Worcester House of Industry were silver shillings (Dalton 1), which had entered production by mid-September 1811: Berrow's Worcester Journal, 19 September 1811, p. 3. These were followed by card 2s. 6d. tokens by mid-October, and subsequently by copper penny (Withers 1240-59) and halfpenny (Withers 1270-1) tokens by late November: Berrow's Worcester Journal, 17 October 1811, p. 3; 21 November 1811, p. 3. The tokens were exchangeable for banknotes at the House of Industry's offices on Friar Street, Worcester.
2. J.G. Scott, *British Countermarks on Copper & Bronze Coins* (London, 1975), pp. 32-40, nos. 24.4 and 40.33; Dix Noonan Webb, 16 January 2019, lot 673.
3. Scott, *British Countermarks*, pp. 85-95.
4. William Weaver was named as a blacksmith in an 1813 conveyance of the Sansome Fields Estate, and by 1820 was described as a blacksmith and farrier of Gardener's Lane: Worcester, Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service, Ref. 899:749 BA 8782 6/B4/7; S. Lewis, *Worcestershire General and Commercial Directory* (Stourbridge, 1820), p. 66. Gardener's Lane ran between Foregate Street and the Butts, and was renamed Shaw Street after it was enlarged in 1844. Weaver appears as a resident of St George's Lane, Claines, in the 1841 census, and was remembered as a blacksmith after his death in February 1842: Kew, The National Archives, HO 107/1209/5A, p. 13; Worcester Herald, 29 June 1844, p. 1. His son, William Jr (1806-1845), was also a farrier, and ran the family business until his death on 2 July 1845: Berrow's Worcester Journal, 10 July 1845, p. 3.
5. J.G. Scott, 'Countermarks on copper coins by cutlers and other tradesmen', *Token Corresponding Society Bulletin* 1:9 (1973), pp. 192-3.