

## The Kingston tokens of Thomas Edmondess<sup>1</sup>

Since 1943 it has been known that tokens of the following type belong to Kingston upon Thames, though previously catalogued under KINGSTONE [Kingston] in Kent, near Canterbury:<sup>2</sup>

Obverse: THOMAS · EDMONDES around arms

Reverse: IN · KING · STOE · I650 around ·E· above T·M

Tim Everson has given biographical details for Thomas Edmondess, mercer, buried before 1661.<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting in particular that he was a member of the parliamentary party, kept the accounts of the Mercers' Guild in 1639 and 1652, was churchwarden in 1643 and 1644, and held the post of chamberlain in 1648, 1649, 1654 and 1655. Thus he appears to have had a financial competence which gained respect among his fellows.

One obverse for Thomas Edmondess has been identified on a token in the Norweb Collection which was too worn for Everson to reproduce.<sup>4</sup> Apart from that, he illustrated two reverses and in fact three obverses, for his figure 6 exhibits reverse B on the left, and on the right an obverse which may be designated '4', with the M higher than the following O, the N higher than the D, a centripetal mullet, etc. These are not insignificant variations but the attributes of different dies, which as tools had each their own life history, and their individual productive capacity. Where documents survive for 17th century tokens the mean output per die has been found to be just under 20,000 pieces, or £20-worth of farthings.<sup>5</sup> Edmondess' 4+2 dies are a comparatively small number, but exceptional for a single token issue in Kingston, and some measure of his importance.

The other remarkable feature of the tokens of Thomas Edmondess is the quartered arms they bear (fig 1). These do not correspond to the blazon of any Edmondess/Edmonds/Edmunds family in Burke, nor to any arms in Papworth or the 'new' Papworth.<sup>6</sup>



Fig 1 Thomas Edmondess 1650 (farthing) token (x2.5), Everson obv 3 + rev A = Norweb 4631, now in Kingston Museum. (Reproduced by courtesy of Tim Everson)

<sup>1</sup> The identity of the arms on Edmondess' tokens, and their possible significance, was raised as a question by the author at a half-day meeting on 'Surrey Tokens' on 19 March 2005, organised by the Surrey Archaeological Society's Local History Committee and held in Shalford.

<sup>2</sup> Hooper 1943, 25–6. The omission of n from the place-name (?Kingsto') is unexplained.

<sup>3</sup> Everson 2001, 48–9.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson & Dickinson 1992–9, V, 4629.

<sup>5</sup> Thompson 1994, 110.

<sup>6</sup> Burke 1884; Burke 1973; Papworth 1874; Chesshyre & Woodcock 1992; Woodcock *et al* 1996.



Fig 2 Kingston upon Thames seal, (Birch 1887–1900, 5037).

They can give the mistaken impression of royal arms, and Hooper referred to them as such, suggesting that the issuer kept the inn known as the King's Arms. Everson considers that they might have represented the royal arms in a vague manner because a genuine representation could have led to prosecution. While this is possible, such considerations did not prevent 'W & M C' at the King's Arms in Brentford from using royal arms on tokens of the Commonwealth period,<sup>7</sup> nor did they deter 'R & E C' at the Queen's Arms in Faversham from putting royal arms on their tokens dated 1651.<sup>8</sup> Both tokens are recognisably from the same workshop as Edmond's, so it is not reasonable to suppose that the maker could not represent royal arms correctly.

However, identification of the quarters is a problem. The first quarter does resemble royal arms in bearing *Three lions passant guardant*, and perhaps significantly, on the Kingston seal used in 1549 and 1613 (fig 2)<sup>9</sup> there were three (separate) lions *passant guardant* around the three salmon *naiant in pale*,<sup>10</sup> second, *Three escallops one and two*, as they now appear to the present writer, rather than 'three ?skins' as the Norweb specimens were described (fleurs-de-lis, ermine spots, water-bouquets and money-bags have also been suggested as the identity of these very small charges)<sup>11</sup>; third, *A lion rampant* (the raised foreleg appears on worn specimens to merge with the head); fourth, *A crescent*.

Notwithstanding occasional dismissals of the arms on tokens as imaginary,<sup>12</sup> many have been identified, and differ only in simplification for the small size. The published Visitations do not help to identify the above arms, although it may be worth mentioning that a Thomas Edmonds of Kingston was the son-in-law of Thomas Cure of Southwark, saddler to Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth.<sup>13</sup> In 1649–50, as mentioned above, the issuer was one of Kingston's two chamberlains, so probably he was chamberlain when the tokens dated 1650 were ordered.

A possible explanation of the arms on the tokens would be that Thomas Edmonds as chamberlain was promoting new corporate arms in the years following the Civil War, and before the 'scandal on the corporation'.<sup>14</sup> Gloucester in 1652 had a second 'Commonwealth coat' confirmed.<sup>15</sup> The presence of Thomas Edmonds' name on the tokens would not preclude a corporate issue, for the Gloucester farthing of 1657 names the mayor Luke Nourse, the Stamford Borough farthing of 1652 bears the initials of the chief magistrate and the chief

<sup>7</sup> Williamson 1889–91, Middlesex 13; specimen in the Norweb collection.

<sup>8</sup> Thompson & Dickinson 1992–9, III, 2567.

<sup>9</sup> Figure 2 is from Lewis 1845, ii, 678.

<sup>10</sup> Birch 1887–1900, ii, 5037–39, but describing the lions as *rampant*.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson & Dickinson 1992–9, V, 4629–32, and p. xxxvii at 5.14.118.

<sup>12</sup> Dickinson 1986, 18. The arms on some tokens were unauthorised.

<sup>13</sup> Bannerman 1899, 209–10.

<sup>14</sup> Kingston upon Thames 1982: T Edmonds is mentioned on pp. xvii and 5.

<sup>15</sup> Fosbrooke 1819, 203.

chamberlain, and the Kilkenny penny of 1658 names Thomas Adams, mayor in that year.<sup>16</sup> Chamberlains were the lead officers for the Northampton tokens of 1653–60, the Nottingham halfpence of 1669, the Bridgnorth farthing and 1665 halfpenny, and the undated Tamworth halfpenny.<sup>17</sup>

Against this possibility is the presence in addition to the name THOMAS EDMONDES of his wife's initial M, so that apart from the arms it looks like a private issue. Tim Everson has kindly looked through the Chamberlains' accounts for 1649–1651 without finding anything of relevance. No badges or devices have been found for Kingston's four trading companies, the Woollen-drapers, Mercers, Butchers (Victuallers) and Cordwainers (Shoemakers), which could have provided charges for those four quarters. There is nothing about their heraldry in the governing Ordinances.<sup>18</sup>

So one ends as one began, with a question. Is there any evidence, documentary, engraved, or painted, for the heraldry of Kingston's trading companies, or for heraldry used in Kingston upon Thames around 1650, to explain the arms on the tokens of Thomas Edmondess? Is it possible that they were intended as corporate arms by this chamberlain? No answer can be offered, but it may be worth putting the question on record for future investigation.

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<sup>16</sup> Thompson 1988, 1649–57; Thompson & Dickinson 1992–9, III, 2987, VI, 6288.

<sup>17</sup> Thompson & Dickinson 1992–9, IV, 3399–3403, 3523–24, 3880–81, V, 4216.

<sup>18</sup> Daly 1974, 151–67.

