

# NORTH-WEST LONDON FAMILIES AT THE ROYAL MINT

K. J. VALENTINE

For centuries the Company of the Moneyers at the Royal Mint was responsible for manufacturing the coin of the realm as required by the monarch. Appointments were made on the strength of personal recommendation; and, because of the high standards of probity required, membership of the Company developed a strong tendency to run in certain families. The present note attempts to describe the place held in the Company, during the 18th century and for half of the 19th century, by families in Middlesex to the north-west of London and especially by a group of inter-related families living in north Willesden on the high ridge which runs from Neasden through Dollis Hill to Oxgate. Much of the research for this note was done some years ago for the author's recently published book on Neasden (Valentine 1989).

During the first quarter of the 18th century John Braint of Hendon was the Provost (leader) of the company; his grandson Daniel Kemp, also of Hendon, later held the office for over forty years from about 1750, dying in 1797<sup>1</sup>. But in about 1718 Thomas Nicoll of Hendon married Susan Haley and moved across the Edgware Road turnpike to the largest farm in Neasden, taking into Willesden two Haley family traditions: innkeeping and moneying at the Mint. This migration was the chief reason why, at the end of the 18th century, half of the moneyers were from Willesden compared with none at all from Hendon.

One branch of the Haley family were Quakers who kept an inn at Guttershedge in south Hendon. Henry Haley of Guttershedge in 1679 married Hannah Symonds, daughter of a Quaker in Hammersmith. Their first child Henry, born at Hammersmith in 1680, was later apprenticed as a young man in the Company of Moneyers, rising to be Provost by 1742. When he died 'of a lethargy' in 1748 he was interred in the Quakers' burial ground at Hammersmith<sup>2</sup>. His younger brother John, born in 1698 at Guttershedge, also became a moneyer and was buried beside his brother when he 'died of a sore throte' in 1760<sup>3</sup>. The two brothers seem to have lived partly in Hammersmith and partly in Hendon, both of which were centres of Middlesex Quakerism.

Another branch of the Haley family included Richard Haley at Mill Hill (d. 1719), whose son John (b. 1699) became a moneyer, probably under the tutelage of Henry Haley his kinsman<sup>4</sup>. Undoubtedly it was this John Haley who sponsored his sister Susan's third son Joseph Nicoll, born at Neasden in 1729, for an apprenticeship at the Mint<sup>5</sup>. Joseph Nicoll continued as a moneyer until his death in 1773, by which time he had inherited the Nicoll interest (40 per cent) in the freehold of Neasden House, the remaining 60 percent being held by the Duke of Chandos. Joseph Nicoll was the first of three generations of Nicoll moneyers at Neasden House, his successors

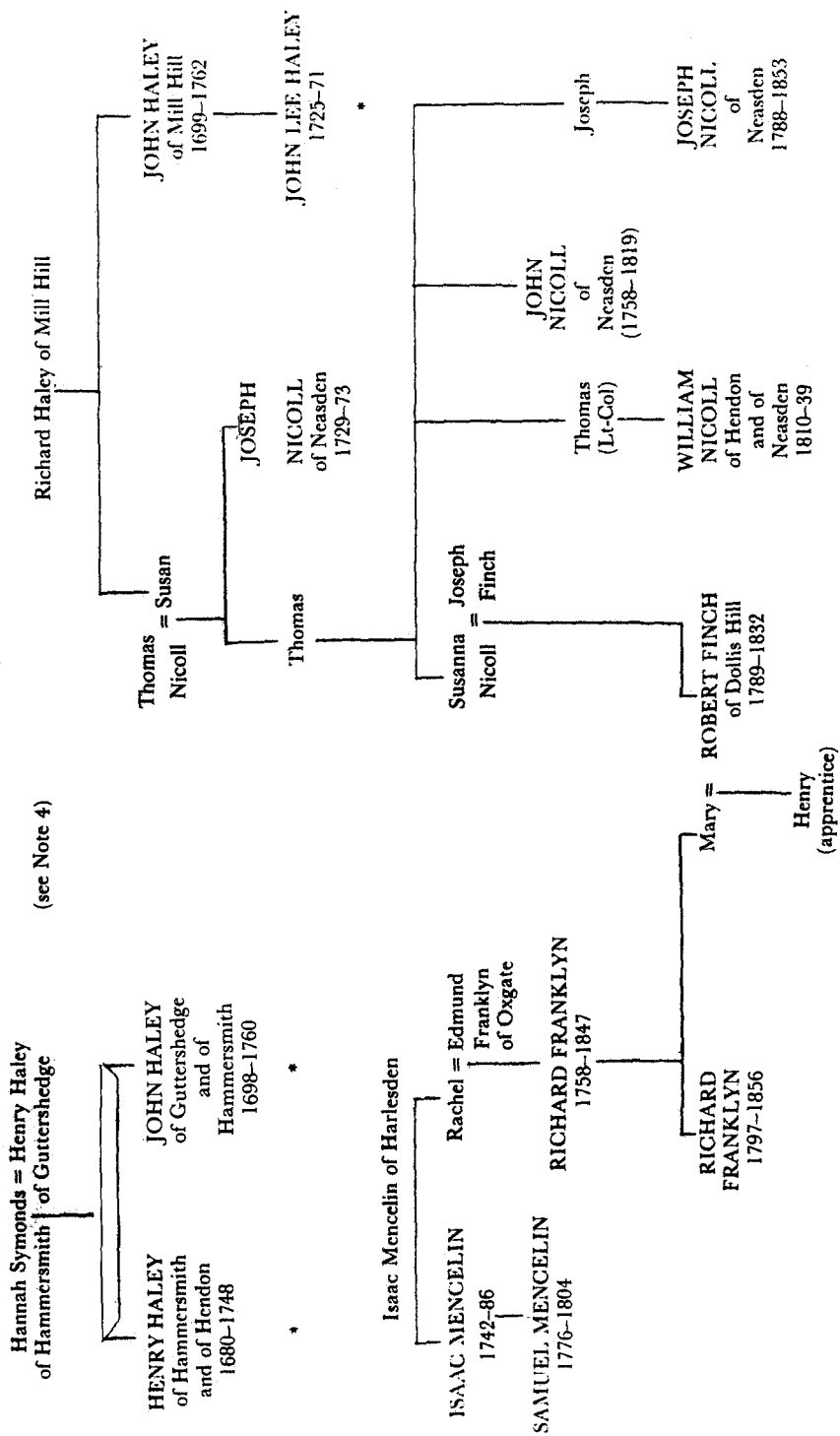


Fig. 1. A Network of Moneying Families at the Royal Mint, c. 1700-1850 (moneyers, names in capitals)

being his nephew John Nicoll (1758–1819) and later Joseph Nicoll (1788–1853), nephew of John. John Nicoll was the first of his family to own the Neasden House freehold outright.

Another line of Willesden moneyers was headed by Isaac Mencilin (1742–86, son of Isaac Mencilin of Harlesden), who took the oath of loyalty at the Mint in 1761, a year or two after his sister had married into the Braint family. His son Samuel (1776–1804) started an apprenticeship in 1791. Isaac's sister Rachel became the wife of Edmund Franklyn of Oxgate and the mother of Richard Franklyn of Cricklewood (1758–1847) whose career as a moneyer was crowned by his promotion to Provost at the age of 75, on the death of the octogenarian Atkinson in 1834. His son Richard Franklyn junior (1797–1856) was a senior moneyer when he gave evidence to the Royal Commission on the Mint set up in 1848.

John Nicoll of Neasden also sponsored at the Mint Robert Finch (1789–1832), son of John's sister Susanna, who had married Joseph Finch of Harlesden and settled at Dollis Hill. The Finch and Franklyn families had been together at the Mint for some fifteen years when Robert Finch, a moneyer since 1812, married Mary Franklyn, sister of Richard Franklyn junior, in 1820. Robert's son Henry Finch (1831–1913) had not completed his seven-year apprenticeship, begun in 1846, when the Company was dissolved in 1851.

Another nephew of John Nicoll was William Nicoll (1810–39), second son of Lt.-Col. Thomas Nicoll, a native of Neasden who had inherited Copt Hall, Hendon and had lived there since 1804. William was introduced into the Mint in 1827 not by his uncle John, who had died in 1819, but by his cousin Joseph, a moneyer since 1811 who made room for William and his wife in Neasden House, where William died in 1839.

To put these allied families into perspective we need to consider the total size of the Company to which they belonged. In the half-century to 1850 the average number of Fellows in the Company, including the Provost but excluding the apprentices, was seven; and slightly more than half of these were from Willesden families. In the forty years beginning 1819 no fewer than five moneyers were buried quite close together in vaults in Willesden churchyard: John and Joseph Nicoll, Robert Finch, and the two Richard Franklyns, the father being brought back for burial from Totteridge and the son from Gazeley near Newmarket. Earlier, both of the Mencilins had also been buried here.

Although this was by far the most extensive family network in the Company of the Moneyers between 1750 and 1850, several unconnected surnames persist from the start of the 18th century almost to its end; for instance, there were three generations of Collards from Walthamstow. But the only other notable complex of families was that to which the Atkinsons belonged. Henry William Atkinson, Provost from 1821 to 1834, was a nephew of the moneyer W. W. van der Esch, whose father Henry had been Deputy Master of the Mint for about 30 years before standing down for health reasons in 1762. Similarly William Gregory, who succeeded Van der Esch as Deputy Master, introduced his son William into the moneying business. Atkinson's son Jasper, knighted in 1842, was the last Provost of the Company. His nephew Robert Rintoul was apprenticed in 1839, following the death of William Nicoll; he became a moneyer in 1846.

Nepotism of this kind naturally caused people to ask whether it accorded with the public interest. On this question the Master of the Mint and his deputy, who contracted with the moneyers on the

Crown's behalf, evidently saw advantages in keeping the Company a closely-knit body where family traditions would help to maintain standards. It became normal for the Master, when approving the admission of a new recruit, to refer to his family's connexion with the Company, as when Charles (later Earl) Cadogan on 20 January 1774 approved the admission of 'John Nicoll . . . nephew of the late Joseph Nicoll, a Fellow of the said Company' and 'Richard Franklyn . . . nephew of Isaac Mencilin, one of the present Fellows of the said Company'.<sup>6</sup>

There is an interesting sequel to this story. When the Company was dissolved in 1851, its estate of houses in Hoxton known as The Moneyers Land, which included Provost Street, Moneyer Street and the Moneyers Arms, was sold by the Company under its common seal to the senior moneyer, Joseph Nicoll of Neasden, in whose family it remained until compulsorily purchased by the London County Council in 1934–5 for slum clearance and redevelopment. The vendors listed in the 1851 deed were simply the moneyers then existing, no mention being made of the moneyers existing more than a century earlier when the land originally came into the moneyers' hands<sup>7</sup>. This seems to demolish comprehensively the strange dictum of the numismatic historian Rogers Ruding that 'the moneyers never were a corporate body exclusive of the other officers of the mint; and therefore it is impossible that they should possess property as a company'.<sup>8</sup> It seems that Ruding in 1840 did not know of this estate with its Mint-based names, although these had been appearing in

London directories for over ten years—some still survive today. The land was known in the 1740s as Blood Field<sup>9</sup>. Shown on Chassereau's map of Shoreditch (1745) as belonging to 'Ingram Lee and moneyers', the field is unlikely to have been purchased deliberately by the Company; more likely it had been offered by a debtor as collateral for his debt and became the Company's property by default.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### NOTES

1. The records of the Company of the Moneyers were never divulged and have not survived, the best source being the official MINT records at PRO, Kew. Also valuable are the printed reports (with evidence) of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Royal Mint (1837) and of the Royal Commission of Inquiry (1849). The main secondary source is Craig (1953).
2. RG6 1512/91.
3. RG6 828/18.
4. Richard and Henry Haley junior were good friends (see Richard's will dated 1717 and Henry's attestation to Richard's handwriting) but the exact family link is obscure (see Fig. 1).
5. John Haley of Mill Hill died on 23 December 1762; on the large Haley monument in Hendon churchyard the year is wrongly shown as 1763.
6. MINT 1/12 218.
7. MDR 1851 12/74.
8. Ruding (1840) II 51.
9. LT lists.

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 MDR: Middlesex Deeds Registry at Greater London Record Office.  
 MINT: Royal Mint records at Public Record Office, Kew.  
 RG6: Registrar General's records (Society of Friends) at Public Record Office, Chancery Lane.

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