

## 17<sup>th</sup> Century Trade Token



17<sup>th</sup> century Edenbridge trade token issued by Katherine Hubbard of the Crown Inn. Halfpenny.  
Eden Valley Museum Archives

The cost of minting low denomination coins was almost the same as for gold and silver. The government only issued a small quantity of them. The lack of small change affected poor people very badly because they could only afford to buy cheap goods. When copper coinage was in short supply, merchants issued trade tokens to support the local economy. They were issued between 1648 to 1672. Trade tokens were banned when Charles II introduced a new currency.

The majority of trade tokens struck in the 17<sup>th</sup> century were issued by inn keepers. Inns not only provided a

meeting place for entertainment but also served as a venue for indoor markets and auctions of hops, seeds, corn and cloth. They were used widely by all sectors of society. Taverns sold wine but inns only sold beer and provided overnight accommodation. Inns did not serve food unless travellers bought their own for the inn keeper to cook.

The trade token shown here was issued by Katherine Hubbard of the Crown Inn in Edenbridge. Katherine and her husband John had two children, Elizabeth and Henry, whom Katherine outlived. Her financial circumstances appear to have been quite favourable. After John died, Katherine acquired property and land in Bromley. She died in 1675 leaving £100 to each of her three grandchildren, a significant sum at the time. Katherine was previously married to a collier named Philemon Wolfe who is also known to have traded in bond wood.



The Crown Inn, Edenbridge c.1920. The inn is next door to Eden Valley Museum.  
Eden Valley Museum Archives

Trade tokens were struck in copper, brass, lead, pewter and leather. They were generally circular, although some were made square, heart, diamond or octagonal in shape. The symbol on the obverse side of the token represented the occupation of the issuer, although some used their initials instead, such as the mercer, John Osborne of Cowden. Henry Constable, a mercer from Penshurst used the symbol of a crown. Mercers, Robert Alchorne and Will Ablet featured the arms of their guild and produced the only other issue for Edenbridge.

Mercers in the Weald dealt in Kent broadcloth, a heavy woollen cloth that was dyed before weaving, a method known as 'dyed in the wool'. The cloth was standardised and measured just

over a yard in width, a minimum of twenty-eight yards long and weighed at least eighty-six pounds. Wealden cloth was made as an export commodity. The industry was in decline by the 1660s owing to an Act of Parliament passed in 1566 which banned the export of unfinished cloths. Provincial mercers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century were often shop keepers and sold other goods as well.



17<sup>th</sup> century Edenbridge trade token issued by Robert Alchorne and Wil Ablet. Halfpenny. The symbol depicts the Mercers Arms, the head of a maiden with flowing tresses  
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