

# John Brabin's Trade Token

In March 1991 a coin-collector in Hertfordshire wrote to say that he had a "token" coin with the name and date -

JOHN BRABIN OF CHIPPING IN LANCASHIRE 1668 HIS HALF PENY.



Enlarged



Actual size

Around 1668 there was a serious shortage of small-value coins because Government was not minting them. To overcome the problem some tradesmen had their own unofficial coins made to their own design, with their own name and the date. Mostly these were half-pennies but pennies and farthings were also made. Several thousand different 17th Century tokens are known, mostly from southern England.

Trade tokens were less common in Lancashire but between 1664 and 1671 two tradesmen in Whalley, five in Clitheroe and eight in Lancaster issued tokens (Victoria County History). The use of tokens was forbidden in 1672.

The fact that John Brabin issued his own half-penny tokens is an important clue towards understanding his business, but as yet it seems that only this one token has been found. Mr Sugden, the coin expert at Manchester University Museum has taken an interest in it and has put a description in a collectors' magazine, ("Spink Numismatic Circular", November 1991, page 292) so we may hear of other specimens. Unfortunately the mere finding of a coin or other object is only a small part of the evidence. It is useful to know just where it was found, and what it was amongst, etc, so as to get a much better picture of its historical background.

The date, 1668, is also the date over John Brabin's shop (now Chipping Post Office). Perhaps when John opened his new shop he also invested in a batch of brand-new tokens.

This quite unexpected new discovery poses more questions than it answers. The Society would like to know more. Meanwhile, when digging the garden or springcleaning the attic keep an eye open for anything interesting!

## Still short of brass ....

The shortage of small change continued in the Chipping district well into the eighteenth century. Peter Walkden made detailed notes in his diary about his shopping and business dealing. Often money was left owing...

Sunday 5th October 1729 ... returning from Newton "I came to Chipping and at John Wilson's I got a penny pot of ale, but neither I nor the landlady had any brass. I left it to pay."

From the "Diary of the Rev. Peter Walkden for 1725, 1729 and 1730."  
Published. Preston 1866.