

Margaret Reynolds (1625-1688), Merchant and Early Quaker of Chichester, Sussex

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Margaret REYNOLDS of Chichester was a Quaker widow who issued a halfpenny token in 1667 (Sussex BW59, N5205). She was part of a group of Quaker merchants across Sussex who issued tokens at that time.

The Quaker movement in Sussex is believed to have begun with the founder George Fox's visit in 1655. The Quaker beliefs of a personal relationship with God, not requiring the clergy, and the equality of all men and women were attractive to people from all walks of life, including many of the merchant class.

Despite the persecution, the Quakers found strong support in the towns of West Sussex, where in 1682 the famous Quaker William Penn left his home at Warminghurst for the New World with about a hundred Quakers. There he founded the town of Philadelphia and a township a few miles to the west called, nostalgically, Chichester.

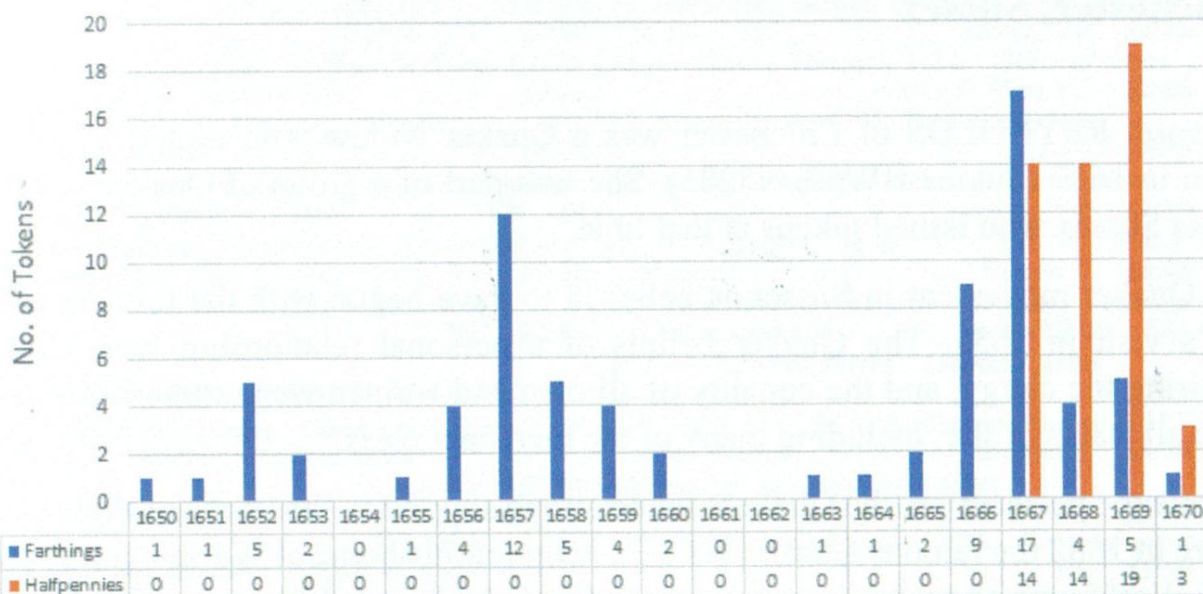


Margreat [sic] Reynolds' token, 1667, with Bakers' Guild coat of arms.

Sussex 17th Century Tokens – Some Background

Over 230 Sussex 17th century tokens have been identified. This includes die varieties so the number of different issuers is somewhat less than this. The relatively low number is probably a reflection of the population and economy in Sussex towns and villages compared to places like London where a few thousand were issued. It is said that much of Sussex came late to token-issuing, the first being issued in 1650 and the last in 1670. The following chart shows the fairly slow uptake.

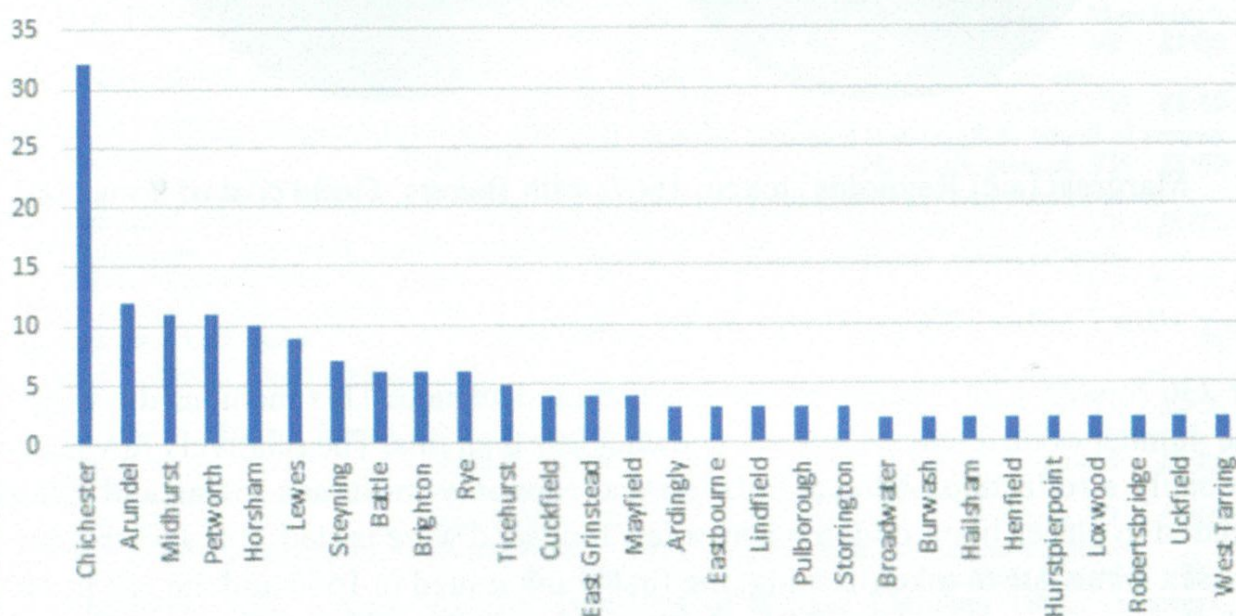
Farthing and Halfpenny Tokens Issued in Sussex 1650-1670



Note: Data in the above chart excludes die-varieties but not multiple issuances by the same merchant in different years or in different denominations. The data also excludes the substantial number of undated tokens, about 34% of total issuances.

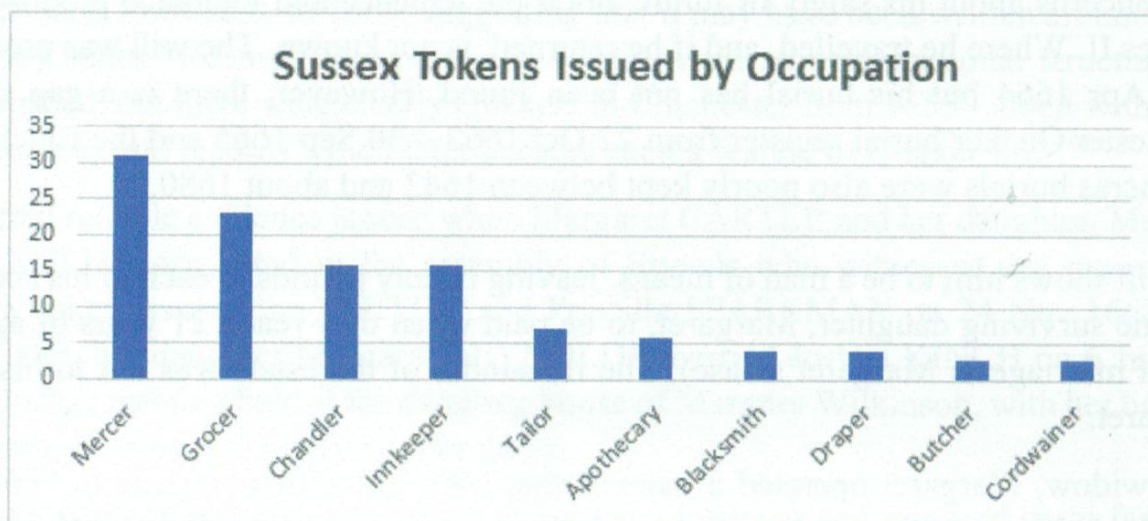
West Sussex dominated the issuance of tokens, with Chichester, the old political capital, the standout. The East Sussex town of Lewes, the county town of Sussex since the 15th century due in part to its more central location, comes in sixth and leads the issuances for East Sussex.

Sussex Tokens Issued by Town/Village 1650-1670



Note: Does not include towns that issued only one token or less.

The chart below shows the top ten occupations where this is known for the token issuer, although it must be remembered that many had more than one trade. The Mercers, Grocers, Chandlers and Innkeepers (which includes alehouse keepers and tavern keepers) are clearly the top issuers.



So from the statistics we can say that Margaret REYNOLDS issued her halfpenny token in the year of maximum issuances in Sussex (at least among the dated tokens); that she lived at Chichester, the town which issued more than double the tokens of any other Sussex town; and that she was the only merchant to declare her occupation as baker in all the Sussex tokens issued between 1650-1670.

Margaret Reynolds of Chichester

Margaret EXTON was baptised 5 Feb 1625/26 at Chichester St Pancras, daughter of John and Alice. It was there she married William REYNOLDS on 6 Mar 1644/45.

They had nine children:

Margaret REYNOLDS: b. 7 Dec 1645, Chichester St Pancras; m. 1669 Joshua KINCH.

Elizabeth REYNOLDS: b. 24 Feb 1646/7, buried 26 Dec 1647, Chichester St Pancras.

Samuel REYNOLDS: mentioned in his mother and father's will.⁽¹⁾

William REYNOLDS: b. 4 Sep 1648 at Chichester St Pancras.

John REYNOLDS: b. 24 Oct 1650 at Chichester St. Pancras.

Francis REYNOLDS: b. 27 Oct 1652 at Chichester St. Pancras; m. 1681, Mary BOWBROOK.

Henry REYNOLDS: b. 23 Sep 1655 at Chichester St Pancras, d. 1724 at PA, USA.

Mary REYNOLDS: b. 20 Jun 1657, d. 31 Dec 1659 at Chichester St Pancras.

James REYNOLDS: b. 10 Oct 1660 at Chichester St Pancras.

William REYNOLDS, gentleman, made a will on 18 Feb 1660/61 before embarking on "a great journey about my necessary occasions, and not knowing whether it be the will of God that I shall returne againe".⁽²⁾ The will was written nine months after the restoration of the monarchy following the English Civil War period and it may reflect

concerns regarding his future. William CAWLEY, the Chichester MP who played a major role in the fall of Chichester to Parliamentary forces in 1642, had been exiled to the Continent having been one of the signatories on Charles I's death warrant. William REYNOLDS, said to have been paymaster to the Garrison of Chichester,⁽³⁾ may have had concerns about his safety or future albeit the lenience and tolerance promised by Charles II. Where he travelled, and if he returned, is not known. The will was probated on 9 Apr 1664 but his burial has not been found. However, there is a gap in the Chichester Quaker burial register from 22 Oct 1662 – 30 Sep 1665 and the Chichester St Pancras burials were also poorly kept between 1642 and about 1680.

His will shows him to be a man of means, leaving twenty pounds to each of his six sons and one surviving daughter, Margaret, to be paid when they reach 21 years of age (or day of marriage in Margaret's case). The remainder of the estate was left to his wife Margaret.

As a widow, Margaret operated a baker's shop. We know this because in 1667 she issued a halfpenny token in her name with the coat of arms of the Bakers' Guild. Her token reads: MARGREAT.REYNOLDS around a beaded circle with the Bakers' coat of arms within, and on the reverse: LIVEING.AT.CHICHESTER around a beaded circle with HER HALF PENY 1667 within.

In addition to issuing her halfpenny token in 1667, Margaret REYNOLDS decided to marry again. On 19 Mar 1666/67 Margaret REYNOLDS, widow of Chichester St Pancras, and John CARTER, cordwainer of Chichester, obtained a marriage licence. They married the same day at Merston, near Chichester. John was possibly a widower as there is an earlier marriage of a John CARTER, cordwainer of Chichester St Pancras, to Mary BRADFIELD on 23 Jun 1664 but there are no burial records to be able to confirm Mary's death.

Margaret's will made many years later shows that she had made an agreement with John CARTER before her marriage, retaining a degree of independence. It was unusual for a married woman to make a will as under the law of coverture, a woman's legal rights and obligations were subsumed by those of her husband - only an unmarried woman or widow had the right to own property and therefore make a will. However, Margaret did make a will as a married woman stating that it was "according to and in pursuance of an Agreement made with my said husband John CARTER before my intermarriage with him".

It is after her marriage in 1666/67 that we start to see evidence of Margaret's involvement with the Society of Friends (Quakers), although it is likely to have begun earlier than this. A clue to when that could be may be the fact that their last child baptised in the Anglican Church at Chichester St Pancras was Mary in 1657. The subsequent child James is missing suggesting that they may have become Quakers

about 1658-60. Although the birth of their children is recorded in Quaker records from 1652, this is not evidence that they were Quakers at that time. It is almost certain that these records were written at a later date as it is believed that the movement did not begin until after George Fox's visit in 1655. The Quaker birth register is written neatly in one hand from 1651 to 1669, suggesting that it may have been written around 1669. Wooley states "Records are sparse until 1668 when an organisational structure was established, but there were clearly Quakers in Chichester from 1655 - albeit without all the minutes and records which later became such a feature of Quaker life".⁽⁴⁾

The first reliable evidence is seen when Margaret CARTER and her daughter, Margaret REYNOLDS, are listed in the assembly of Friends who witnessed the marriage of fellow token issuer John SMITH⁽⁵⁾ and Priscilla SPARKMAN on 24 Nov 1668. One year later, her daughter Margaret REYNOLDS married Joshua KINCH on 6 Jul 1669 at a Quaker meeting held at the dwelling house of Margery Wilkinson, with her brothers William, Francis and Henry in attendance.

Being a Quaker in these early times was a risky business and required great faith and dedication. Having a Quaker marriage, as daughter Margaret did, could get you into trouble as these couples discovered in 1673:⁽⁶⁾

"In this Year *Elias Ellis* of *Warbleton*, and *Mary* his Wife, *Tristram Martin* of *Arundel* and his Wife, and *John Cuoknall* of the same Place, and his Wife, were prosecuted in the Ecclesiastical Court, and excommunicated, for cohabiting as married Persons, because they had not conformed to the Ceremonies of the Church of England in that Behalf; but had publicly declared their Marriage in another Form"

The Anglican Church and local officials were often relentless in their efforts to punish Quakers for holding their meetings, non-attendance at church, non-payment of church tithes and refusal to swear oaths and serve in the military. The punishments included fines or goods distrained and long periods in gaol in terrible conditions. Conditions started to improve after the death of King Charles II in 1685 and the passing of the Toleration Act in 1689 which granted freedom of worship to Nonconformists.

However, there is no mention in the Quaker Sufferings of Margaret REYNOLDS/CARTER. In fact, Chichester seems to have been spared the harsh and vicious treatment meted out at Lewes, although violent disruption of meetings and fines for attending Quaker meetings are recorded. So perhaps Margaret was more cautious and risk averse than her fellow Quaker and token issuer, the widow Mary AKEHURST of Cliffe, Lewes (BW73, N5213) who did suffer terribly. Also, the people of Chichester may have been a little more tolerant as it was after all a Parliamentary/Protestant town during the Civil War.

Regarding fellow Quaker token issuers, there is an interesting comment by Woolley in his book "The Quakers of Chichester 1655-1967":

"Sussex Quarterly Meeting requested Ambrose Galloway, a draper from Lewes, to collect information from Friends about their sufferings. He recorded them year by year starting back in 1655 listing fines and imprisonments."

This is of interest because Ambrose GALLOWAY was a merchant who also issued a token in 1667 (BW112, N5225). So we have Margaret Reynolds, Mary Akehurst and Ambrose Galloway, all Quakers and all issuing tokens in 1667. They doubtlessly knew about each other and I am sure that Ambrose would have met both Margaret and Mary in his travels, perhaps discussing the problems of coinage and tokens!

Margaret made her will in 1684 and probably died in 1688 as the will was probated in that year.⁽⁷⁾ A summary of her will is as follows:

Margaret Carter wife of **John Carter** of Chichester in the County of Sussex Merchant

To John Carter, my husband, four shillings

To my son Samuel Reynolds, five shillings

To my daughter Margaret Kinch, wife of Joshua Kinch, fishmonger of London, ten pounds

To my son William Reynolds, five shillings

To my son John Reynolds, five shillings

To my son Francis Reynolds, ten pounds

To my son Henry Reynolds, ten pounds

To my son James Reynolds, twenty pounds

Legacies to various grandchildren

To Mary Plummer, wife of Thomas Plummer of London, mariner, two pounds ten shillings

Son James Reynolds sole executor, Joshua Kinch overseer

Margaret's burial has not been found, but there is a gap in the Chichester St Pancras burial register 1686-1694 (except for one burial in 1687, another 1691) and the Quaker burials seem to have been poorly kept at that time. Her husband's burial has not been found either.

In her life, Margaret demonstrated a sense for business and independence, similar to Mary AKEHURST of Lewes. Their endeavours would have been supported and respected within the Quaker community which was unmatched in providing the most equitable roles for women in the Christian tradition at the time. From the very beginnings in the 1650s, the prerogative to speak at a Quaker meeting was open to women, and Quakers were heavily involved in establishing movements for women's rights in the 19th century.

Postscript

Research by others shows that Margaret's son Henry REYNOLDS emigrated to Pennsylvania, America in 1676 and married there in 1678.⁽⁸⁾ I have not verified or followed up on this.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Nigel Clark for his support and feedback.

Notes and References

- (1) In both the will of William Reynolds and Margaret Carter, their son Samuel is mentioned first in the list of children, suggesting he was the eldest. His baptism has not been found and his birth doesn't seem to fit in before his brother William's, raising some questions.
- (2) Will of William Reynolds of Chichester, made 18 Feb 1660, proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 9 Apr 1664. (The National Archives: PROB 11/313/408).
- (3) <https://www.reynoldspatova.org/getperson.php?personID=I9583&tree=reynolds1> (this has not been verified – source not given).
- (4) Woolley, Michael. The Quakers in Chichester 1655 – 1967, 4th Edition 2006. Viewed online at: <https://michaelwoolley.weebly.com/> (visited 25/1/2022).
- (5) John SMITH is the person who issued an undated halfpenny token at Chichester (BW61, K37a). The token depicts St Lawrence the martyr holding a book and a gridiron (on which he was martyred), perhaps in recognition of his own sufferings as a Quaker. My research shows that this John SMITH is likely to be the same person who issued an undated farthing token at Chichester (BW60, K37) although it is not certain as there is another John Smith (-1675) who is also a candidate for that.
- (6) Besse, Joseph. A collection of the sufferings of the people called Quakers, for the testimony of a good conscience from the time of their being first distinguished by that name in the year 1650 to the time of the act commonly called the Act of toleration granted to Protestant dissenters in the first year of the reign of King William the Third and Queen Mary in the year 1689 (Volume 1).
- (7) Will of Margaret Carter of Chichester, made 8 Dec 1684, proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 15 Oct 1688. (The National Archives: PROB 11/393/127).
- (8) <https://www.reynoldspatova.org/getperson.php?personID=I10794&tree=reynolds1> (visited 25 Jan 2022).

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