

DID HENRY KENDALL TOUCH THIS TOKEN?



The above pictured tokens exist primarily because of the Gold Rush. Australia's population exploded from about 400,000 to 1,000,000 people in just a few years and this placed a great strain on many of the services in the community. Shortages were experienced everywhere and a shortage of mall change became one of the many discomforts of the day.

To overcome this problem, tradesman's copper tokens were struck in all Australian colonies with the first appearing in Victoria in 1849. The rising sun and kangaroo and emu were popular symbols on these unofficial coins which remained in circulation for some 10 to 20 years before they were suppressed by the various colonial governments - being declared illegal in Victoria in 1863, New South Wales in 1868 and 1876 in Tasmania.

As the rare above local examples show, the coins were also used to advertise the issuer - in this case William Allen's General Store in Jamberoo.

Occasionally some tokens were struck to commemorate historical events. Copper was the metal most commonly employed, but a small quantity of threepenny silver tokens were also issued. One of these is a so-called Tasmanian shilling dated 1823 but this date is thought to be that of the year in which the business it advertised was established.

It is possible that the 1855 date on the Jamberoo token pictured is not the date of issue but the date of the establishment of William Allen's General Store - but this has proved very difficult to establish.

Nonetheless, the token itself is a very rare piece of Illawarra Commercial History. It is also an early instance of the use of words 'Advance Australia' in conjunction with the emu and kangaroo coat of arms. In fact, although my research has not been exhaustive, I have yet to sight and earlier example of the two combined.

But what does Henry Kendall have to do with this Jamberoo token?

Well, in researching the Allen family of Jamberoo, I discovered the following reference in Arthur Cousin's *The Garden of NSW* (IHS, 1994, p. 244):

"In 1860 thee was, in Mr John Allen's store (one of the four then in Jamberoo) a young assistant whose mind, even then, was on much more than the goods he was selling. He was Henry Kendall whose sweet poetry was soon to attract the notice of all Australia and far beyond. he was the nephew of Thomas Surfleet Kendall, of Burrroul, Kiama.

Cousin's prose is a bit cryptic (does he mean all the four stores in Jamberoo were owned by Allens?) and it is hard to know if 'John' was really "William John" or if Cousin (writing, after all, eighty years after the event) has got the christian name wrong. Does any reader know? I would love to hear from you if you do?

What is interesting, however is Cousin's suggestion that Kendall worked as a shop boy at Jamberoo. I have seen such a suggestion in the writings of no other Kendall biographer but, in 1855, young Henry Kendall (born April 18, 1841) would have been 14 and therefore eminently suited to helping his mother out by taking on a shop job.

Henry's father, Basil, has died at South Grafton in 1851 and, bereft of all support, Henry's mother returned with her five young children to the home of her father, Patrick McNally, at Corrimal.

According to the anonymous (but well-informed) author of an early *Daily Telegraph* article (22/4/1927), Henry was about 10 at the time and remained at Corrimal until he was 14. The date fits perfectly with that of the above-pictured token.

So there is a chance that Cousins is on to something and the famous "Bellbirds" might actually have been inspired by the Jamberoo Valley rather than the Tarrawanna/Corrimal hills - or perhaps it was just the jingling of small change that reminded Henry of the bird calls in the entangled Illawarra brush?