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Aristocrats of Crime: The Hulk Token of Barrington and Dignam

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Introduction

Engraved coins are unique records of personal events such as births, marriages or even enforced separations. Many such coins represent mementos of affection that were given to family members, loved ones or to close friends. The practice of giving an engraved or stamped coin as a keepsake replaced the exchange of a bent or broken coin as a token of affection¹ and came to a peak in the 18th century. Convict tokens are an important category of engraved coins, offering a unique record of the lives of some of the notorious British criminals of the time. Since the publication of the groundbreaking book *Convict Love Tokens*², other convict token 'stories' have also been published.^{3,4} According to Millet⁵ and later Bendall⁴, the making and giving of convict tokens arose during the period the Australian colonies were being established. Not all of the tokens relate to transportation to Australia, as a small number predate the voyage of the first fleet in 1787. Apart from being metallic documents that reflect the social history of Georgian England, these early convict tokens present us with a unique opportunity to study convict life in some detail. Fortunately, research in this area is facilitated by the fact that the advent of convict tokens coincided with the rise in the interest of reporting on the trials of notorious criminals in newspapers, magazines and the widely read *Newgate Calendar*.⁶

In the 18th and 19th centuries, crimes carried the set penalties of either hanging, or

transportation, or imprisonment. When the sentence of death-by-hanging was imposed, a convicted felon would often seek leniency in the form of transportation to a colony. Such a plea for leniency could be made, but leniency was not necessarily automatic. The judge might decide on hanging⁷, or commute the sentence to *transportation beyond the seas*, usually for life, or for periods ranging from seven to twenty-one years. *Transportation beyond the seas* could mean transportation to America (prior to the War of Independence of 1776) or to Australia (from 1788 to 1868). *Beyond the seas* could also mean serving time in one of the rotting hulks moored in one of England's estuaries—frequently at London's Royal Docklands on the Thames or at Portsmouth Harbour. These hulks consisted of the hulls of old warships that had been transformed into makeshift prisons.^{8,9} In the 18th century the hulks of London were euphemistically called *Mr. Campell's Academy* after Duncan Campell, the man who was contracted by the government in mid 1776 to provide accommodation for prisoners on board his ships the *Tayloe* and *Justitia*.

Millet and Lane note several tokens relating to the hulks, including the 'Censor and Compro' token which shows a hulk on one side and Joseph Compro in leg irons, with a wheelbarrow and spade beside him.¹⁰ These tokens each refer to a single convict. This article deals with a hulk token that is unique because it depicts two convicts, namely the notorious George Barrington and David Brown Dignam. In order to learn



Figure 1: (a) obverse of token depicting George Barrington; (b) reverse of token depicting David Brown Dignam.

more about the lives of these convicts and how they were connected, we examined the well-known *Newgate Calendar* as well as other 18th century magazines.

The Token

The token was made by engraving by hand both sides of a blank round planchet—most likely a smoothed English copper halfpenny of George II or George III. The token now weighs 7.05gm and is 28mm in diameter. Description of the token is as follows:

Obverse: A convict with long hair flowing behind his head, wearing a buttoned dress coat, tight hose reaching below the knees and a hat, walking on ground to left, his hand resting on a shovel. A chain hangs between his legs and ends in two leg irons fastened above his ankles. Inscription around left, GEORGE, and around right, BARRINGTON. Around the top and bottom are plant tendrils with leaves. The rim is decorated with slanting, alternating long and short dashes. (fig. 1a)

Reverse: A convict with long hair trailing behind his head, wearing a buttoned dress coat, tight hose reaching below the knees and a hat, pushing a wheelbarrow to left on ground. A chain hangs between his legs and ends in two leg irons fastened above his ankles. Inscription around top, DAVID BROWN DIGNAM. Around the bottom is a plant tendril with leaves. The rim is decorated with slanting, alternating long and short dashes. (fig. 1b)

George Barrington

George Barrington was one of the most infamous pickpockets of his time. He earned the title *prince of thieves* due to his numerous thefts, which resulted in fourteen arrests and three prison terms. Much has been written about him, some of it pure fiction. In fact, the difficulty in researching Barrington's life is that many of the contemporary so-called accounts are highly embellished while pertinent details are often completely lacking (eg, we still do not

know the names of his wife and daughter or their fate). Three useful biographies have, however, been published¹¹⁻¹³, one of which makes an attempt to separate fact from fiction and gives an excellent account of his life.¹³ The following outline of the life of Barrington is based largely on these three biographies as well as contemporary documents, all of which offer information that does not always correlate.

It is now generally accepted that Barrington was born as George Waldron, sometime in October 1755 in Maynooth, County Kildare, Ireland. His father was a silversmith and his mother a mantua-maker (dress-maker). We know virtually nothing about his early childhood and only pick up his story when as a young teenager he was apprenticed to the Dublin apothecary, Jones. There is an oft-repeated story that his intelligence so impressed a church dignitary by the name of Dr Westropp, that he enrolled Barrington in the Blue Coat School in Dublin; but Box doubts that this ever took place.¹³ Around 1771 Barrington got into a fight and stabbed a fellow pupil and to avoid punishment, ran away, but not until after stealing the headmaster's gold watch and 12 guineas. Over the next two years (1771–1773) his criminal career took root. At Drogheda he fell into the company of a band of travelling actors led by a John Price. He discovered his talents at acting, adopted the name of Barrington and was tutored by Price in the art of picking pockets. When Price was arrested in Dublin in 1773, Barrington fled to London by ship where he fell into the company of some young aristocrats. This new circle of friends offered Barrington new criminal opportunities, the first exploit taking place in London at Ranelagh Gardens.

The period 1773–1775 represents another gap in the record of Barrington's life, with his criminal career being scantily recorded. In contrast, Barrington's exploits for 1775 are recorded in some detail. In April of that year he was charged with robbing a lady of her purse, but the charge was dismissed for lack of evidence. In July he was committed to trial for stealing the watch of a Captain Sutherland. Once again he seems to have been lucky, as the trial was dropped due to the fact that Captain Sutherland's regiment was sent to America at the outbreak of the War of Independence. Sometime in autumn the notorious pickpocket Miss West attempted to rob Barrington. Discovering the tools of his trade in his pocket, she struck up a friendship with him and became instrumental in completing his criminal education. Around this time Barrington also fell into the company of a Mr Lowe, who provided him with access to dealers of stolen goods. On 26 October, Barrington attempted to steal Count Gregory Orloff's diamond snuff-box (given as a gift by the Russian Empress Catherine and estimated then to be worth £30,000). Barrington was arrested and held in custody for two days before appearing before Sir John Fielding. Count Orloff did not proceed with the prosecution, however, and as a consequence Barrington was acquitted. Although his name was suppressed, the case generated much media interest because of Barrington's acquittal. In fact Barrington acquired a certain degree of notoriety through this exploit, as the incident was published in several newspapers.

The following year was equally eventful for Barrington. In January, disguised as a clergyman, Barrington successfully robbed the Earl of Mexborough of his diamond order. Too valuable to dispose of in England,

it was sold to a Dutch Jew for £800. In February, Barrington was caught robbing a Miss Hurst of a silver watch and £5. He was once again examined by Sir John Fielding but again acquitted due to faulty evidence. December saw Barrington attempting to steal a Mrs Anne Dudman's purse at the Drury Lane Playhouse. He appeared for a third time before the now blind Sir John Fielding, who recognized Barrington by his fluent testimony and cultured voice. Barrington was confined to Tothill Fields Bridewell to await trial at the Old Bailey. From his confinement quarters he wrote a letter to Mrs Dudman in an attempt to get her to drop the charges.

On 16 January 1777, Barrington appeared before Justice Amhurst and was found guilty of the Dudman theft. He was sentenced to three years hard labour on the hulk *Justitia*, but in early 1778 after serving less than a year of his sentence, he was released for good behavior. His freedom did not last long, however, as he soon reverted to his old ways and was once again arrested for stealing and sentenced to hard labour on the *Justitia*—this time for a period of five years. In 1781 he received a remission for good behaviour, but was banished from the kingdom.

During the period 1781 to 1783, Barrington travelled around Ireland and Scotland and with the aid of various disguises continued to earn his living as a pick-pocket. His return to London in 1783 did not escape the notice of the authorities and he was arrested for breaching his banishment order and forced to serve out his remaining sentence in Newgate gaol. Barrington was set free in 1785, but did not reform. He managed to avoid conviction when he stood trial for the 'Bagshaw' case in April of that year. No further robberies

are recorded until January of 1787, when he was arrested for stealing 23 guineas and the pocket watch of a Mr Havilard Le Mesurier at Drury Lane theatre. Once again he was found not guilty, and left London to roam other parts of England and Ireland. On 5 July 1788, Barrington was arrested for picking the pocket of the Reverend Wardilow at Newcastle upon Tyne's Theatre Royal. Problems with incorrect procedures and blunders with paper work meant that for this crime there were two trials, which dragged on for nearly two years without a final conviction being made. Barrington's luck finally ran out in 1790, when he failed to sway the jury from convicting him of having robbed Henry Hare-Townsend at the Enfield Races (in September). He was sentenced to transportation overseas and was shipped as a convict to Australia, on board one of the vessels of the *third fleet*.

While Barrington's life in the early colony is relevant to Australian history, as is the mystery surrounding the author of Barrington's account of his voyage to Australia, a detailed discussion of these is beyond the scope of this article. Barrington was eventually emancipated and made a constable of Parramatta, New South Wales in 1792. By March 1804, Barrington was relieved of his duties as head constable at Parramatta due to insanity, eventually dying on 28 December of that year.

David Brown Dignam

Various contemporary magazines give an account of Dignam's crimes and trial.¹⁴⁻¹⁶ Several versions of the *Newgate Calendar* (where his surname is variously spelled as Dignam, Dignum and Dignan)^{17,18} make

mention of him, indicating that he had a certain degree of notoriety. In fact, Lambert's book on Barrington goes so far as to state that

*In April [of 1777] the monotony of life on the 'Hulks' was varied by the arrival of a criminal whose notoriety was temporarily as great as that of Barrington himself. David Browne Dignam (or Dignum) has been for the best part of a year carrying on a series of ingenious frauds peculiarly suited to a society where graft and interest were the normal aids to a successful career in the public service.*¹⁹

Despite his notoriety, Dignam has in recent times received much less attention than Barrington. Even the most basic details of Dignam's early life such as his place and date of birth are lacking. All the accounts on Dignam paint a portrait of an educated man, which is consistent with the comparatively sophisticated nature of his crimes of fraud.²⁰

The first public complaint against Dignam was made on 13 March 1777 by a John Clarke, who gave evidence at the public office in Bowstreet that between 18 June and 8 July of 1776 he had paid Dignam a total of one hundred pounds, two shillings and ten pence as a gratuity for investing him with the office of Clerk of the Minutes in His Majesty's custom-house in Dublin. Clarke provided a stamped paper bearing the signatures of Lord Weymouth and Thomas Daw, which he had received from the prisoner as a legal warrant appointing him to that office. Although endowed with real seals (probably taken from other documents), this warrant was a fake since Daw

proved that both his own as well as Lord Weymouth's signatures were counterfeit. Dignam was also charged with a similar offence by a Mr Brown, from whom he had obtained one thousand pounds under the pretence of securing him an appointment as writer for *The London Gazette*. Brown also produced a warrant which had been forged in a similar fashion.

The magistrates who heard this evidence were of the opinion that Dignam's offences did not fit the description of the laws for forgery. They recommended that instead, he stand trial for fraud at Tothill Fields Bridewell. On 5 April 1777, Dignam was indicted at the Guildhall in Westminster for defrauding a Mr Clarke. Upon hearing the evidence, the jury found him guilty without even leaving the court. The magistrates debated Dignam's punishment at some length but eventually sentenced him to work five years on the River Thames.

There seems little doubt that Dignam was afraid of his fate. All reports recount a failed attempt at getting out of his punishment by manufacturing a conspiracy. At the house of Lord Suffolk, Dignam requested and received a private audience where he claimed that he was involved 'in a conspiracy with some gentlemen of rank and fortune to shoot the King'. His list of co-conspirators was supposed to have included the Duke of Richmond, the Earl of Shelburne and the aldermen Sawbridge and Lee²¹; he even gave details of the supposed times and places they had met to collude. When asked by Lord Suffolk to make a detailed oath, Dignam declined with the delaying pretext 'that as the scheme was not yet ripe for execution, no inconvenience could therefore ensue from the delay'. Dignam said he wanted to wait until the next morning so that he could

report to Lord Suffolk on the outcome of a supposedly intended meeting with the conspirators. The next day he was again urged to make a full disclosure, but again asked for another day's delay. By now, however, Lord Suffolk had become suspicious of Dignam's reliability; he decided to have him as well as his so-called conspirators followed and watched. Dignam 'was traced only to the stews of debauchery', while the actions of the others revealed that they were in no way involved in any conspiracy.

Dignam was convicted of the Clarke fraud and held at Tothill Fields Bridewell. He appears to have been a 'troublesome guest', and is reported to have tried 'a variety of stratagems to obtain his liberty'. So desperate was he to avoid the inevitable incarceration that among other ploys, he attempted to bribe a prison warden with a 'bank-note of ten pounds', with the idea of escaping in a large chest. In fact, faced with the prospect of five years of hard labour, Dignam became suicidal. From *The London Magazine* we learnt that on 10 April 1777, Dignam was discovered in his cell half dead, having attempted to choke himself by tying a handkerchief around his neck. 'His tongue was two inches out of his mouth, much swelled, and his face had turned black'. But it seems that the warden had arrived on the scene in time and was able to cut the handkerchief from around Dignam's neck and revive him. Dignam was bled by a doctor and recovered from his ordeal.¹⁵

Because of his suicidal tendencies, Dignam was now becoming a problem for the authorities. As well as the charge against him for the Clarke fraud, he was apparently also still awaiting trial in another jurisdiction. It was decided that he needed to be transferred to a prison hulk as soon as pos-

sible. All of the accounts of Dignam repeat the story of how he started off 'on the wrong foot' with the hulk authorities. Financially well off, but suffering from delusions of grandeur, Dignam arrived at the prison hulk in Woolwich in a post-chaise accompanied by his Negro slave. He obviously believed that his money would ensure that he existed on board the hulk in relative comfort, attended by his slave. But he was sadly mistaken since the *keepers of the ballast-lighter* not only refused to allow the Negro to come on board the hulk, but proceeded without delay to put Dignam 'to the duty of the wheelbarrow'.

Dignam tried to get out of the hulks by sending a forged draft for five hundred pounds to the Charing Cross banker Drummond on Monday the 5th of May. Dignam found the hard labour difficult to endure and suffered badly under the harsh and sub-standard living conditions. 'He soon fell ill, and though he was suspected of malingering and threatened with an extension of his sentence, had to be given medical treatment in July'.²²

In his book on English prison hulks⁸, Johnson relates how Dignam suffered in the hulks and tells us that after he was examined and found to be genuinely ill and not feigning, he was taken to hospital for treatment. According to Johnson, the hospital care available to him as a prisoner proved not only inadequate but came too late, 'and within a short time he was dead from gaol fever'.²³ This solitary report of Dignam's death is, however, not confirmed by either *The London Magazine* or *The Scot's Magazine*, although the latter does report that by July 1777 Dignam had 'been ill for a week'.²⁴

The Link

The engraved token features both Barrington and Dignam as convicts at work, suggesting an obvious hulk-related link between the two convicts. This link was confirmed through our research into the primary and the secondary literature on English prison hulks, as discussed in further detail below.

Honour Among Thieves

Johnson summarises evidence gleaned from various sources and reconstructs an intriguing story of a theft perpetrated on Dignam by Barrington's associate, Miss West.²⁵ After George Barrington was sent to Woolwich to serve time on the hulk *Justitia*, he is reported to have been a model prisoner. He is described as having been mild mannered, humble and patient and his bearing was apparently so *genteel* that he had 'become an object of commiseration'. He seemed to have come to terms with the futility of his criminal past and by working diligently at his enforced labour 'in a state of true contrition', he was *the picture* of a reformed criminal.

But it is in 'his associate and close friend' Miss West that we are now interested. She was left to carry on the task of earning an income by picking pockets during Barrington's incarceration. To cheer him up, she sent him two guineas a week and visited him regularly in the hulks.

In one of these excursions she fell into the company of the celebrated David Brown Dignam...who, having plenty of cash, was selected as a proper object for the display of this

*lady's talents, and she actually perpetrated the deed in the seat of punishment, and congratulated herself not a little on the brilliancy of her success.*²⁵

Thus she not only managed to pick Dignam's pockets and relieve him of his money but managed to do so within the confines of prison! Barrington, however, was a strong believer in 'honesty among thieves' and compelled West to 'restore the plunder; though much against her inclination'.

This account in Johnson, of the accidental connection between Barrington and Dignam through the actions of Barrington's *girlfriend* West, is borne out in the two contemporary sources, the *Newgate Calendar*²⁶ and the 1790 memoirs of Barrington.²⁷ Both reports are virtually identical, with the latter giving details on the last days of West. West is reported to have been convicted three out of the seven times she was put on trial at the Old Bailey. She committed her last offence on 14 February 1777 against a Gilbert Affleck; she robbed him 'of a watch, chain, and seals, value £8'²⁶, but was caught while trying to pass the stolen goods to an associate. For this offence she received three years imprisonment in Newgate, where she fell victim to *gaol distemper*—and just two weeks after her release from prison she was dead.

From their backgrounds outlined above, there is no doubt that Dignam's and Barrington's stay on the hulk *Justitia* overlapped by about two months—Barrington appeared on board the *Justitia* sometime after 16 January 1777 and was released at the beginning of 1778, while Dignam appeared on board the *Justitia* sometime in April 1777 and was taken ill with 'goal fever' some-

time in July 1777, after which he died.²⁸ The key anomaly in this association between the two ‘aristocrats of crime’ has been noted in a footnote in Lambert’s book on Barrington²⁹—Miss West was arrested before Dignam had arrived on the *Justitia*.

Notwithstanding the problem revealed by this romantic tale of the association between Barrington and Dignam, further research was undertaken in 18th century magazines and newspapers in order to clarify the connection between these two notorious criminals.

Dignam, and Barrington on Thames

We discovered two articles in *The London Magazine*³⁰, which include an engraving of Barrington and Dignam shackled together (not previously noted by Barrington scholars; fig. 2), as well as a picture of convicts at work (fig. 3). These articles give

An account of the two noted Criminals, David Brown Dignam, and George Barrington, Sentenced to work on the River Thames (with accurate likenesses).

Both articles more or less repeat the accounts already told about Barrington and Dignam but make a clear connection between the two while they are confined in the hulks. Given the novelty of watching notorious criminals repay their debt to society through hard labour, it seems the pair received visits by a number of curious on-lookers:

A number of persons have been induced to visit Woolwich and the river Thames, to have a sight of these two gentlemen convicts. Those who went when they were on the sick list were disappointed. Others have been

gratified with seeing them at the wheelbarrow and other servile employments. May their present situations, so different from their former sphere of life, produce in them proper sensations, and a thorough reformation of principle and conduct! And may their example deter others from ambition, pride, idleness, and every unlawful means of providing for their subsistence.

In the articles, Dignam is described as the son of an ‘Irish gentleman’ of good reputation. He was given a ‘liberal education’ and

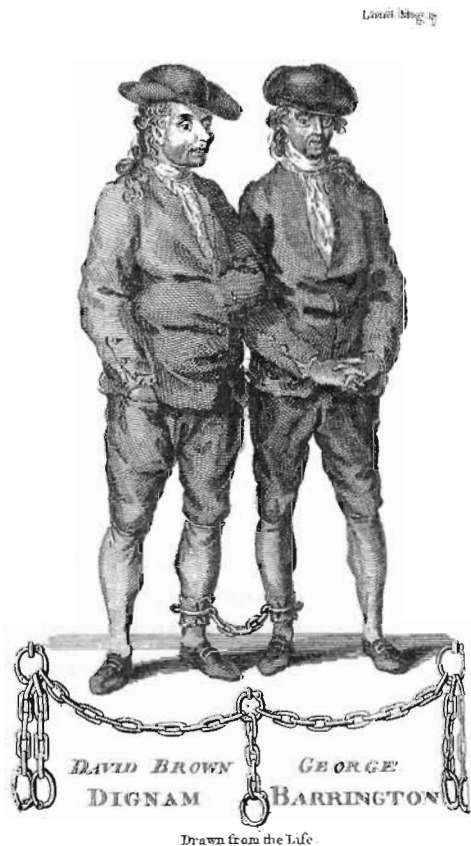


Figure 2: Drawing of George Barrington and David Brown Dignam. *The London Magazine* issue 8, May 1777.

Perspective View of the CONVICTS at Work on the THAMES, Drawn May the 8th 1777 from the BUTT at WOOLWICH

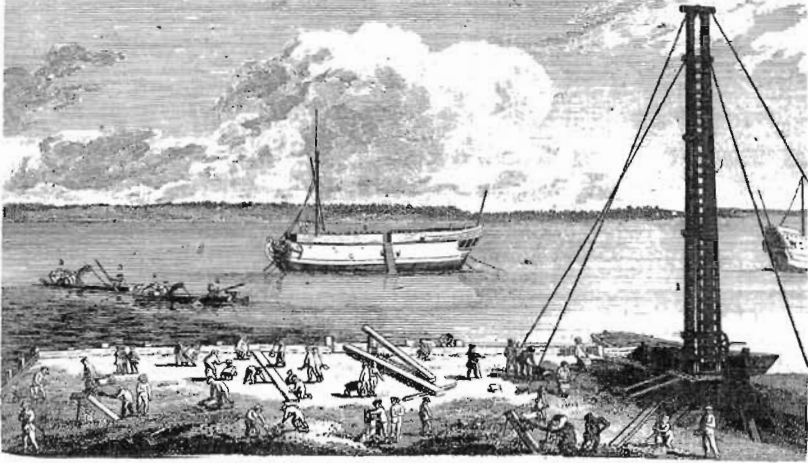


Figure 3: Drawing of convicts at work, with the hulk *Justitia* in the background. Ibid.

was a charming and polite young man. Through his respectable address he was able to gain the confidence of and become closely acquainted with various highly placed people, including ‘members of the nobility’. It was claimed by some that he was on intimate terms with a secretary of state who employed him as a spy; by others that he was a clerk to the secretary and was rewarded with certain distinctions and privileges for his services.

But Dignam was ambitious and in trying to live up to the affluent lifestyle of the company he kept he was soon living beyond his means. He took ‘recourse to fraud and was even charged with forgery’ to cover his expenses. He also resorted to fabricating conspiracies in which he included ‘leading members of the minority in parliament’ as well as close friends of ‘the present rulers’. But these so-called plots were soon revealed as fabrications, (as detailed earlier in this article), and Dignam ended up being sentenced to five years labour in the hulks on the Thames. The account reiterates how

Dignam tried first to bribe his way out of the prison sentence and then unsuccessfully attempted suicide on a number of occasions. Some details added to the story of Dignam’s arrival at and subsequent stay in the hulk in Woolwich are that his servant accompanying him was dressed in livery and provided a fine dinner for him; that his servant returned next day with some veal cutlets but was refused entry and was told, ‘that his master had other meat provided for him with his felonious messmates’; that he arrived wearing a gold laced waistcoat, but was forced to put on the regulation prison garb; and that in the hulk, he had to share a bed with another prisoner.

Barrington’s story is briefly outlined but with the connection to Dignam emphasised:

George Barrington...after a life of what is called genteel dissipation, and a course of illegal methods to support the expense and appearance of a gentleman is classed, and turned over to the like occupation, with David Brown Dignam.

Barrington is described as ‘the accomplice

and paramour of the noted pickpocket Miss West'. His success at picking the pockets of the unsuspecting was largely due to his polite bearing and speech. He managed to avoid conviction on a number of occasions, but was eventually caught stealing a woman's purse in the Drury Lane playhouse and immediately arrested. He attempted to wriggle out of the impending conviction by writing an emotional letter to the woman but she refused to drop the charge and in spite of passionate pleas to the judge that he would be unable to bear the adverse conditions of hard labour, 'he was sentenced to the ballast lighter' on the hulks.

The article in the London Magazine, 'Remarks on the Convict Act', provides interesting background reading on the reasons for eventually changing the convict act as well as modifying work and life on the hulks. This subject is outside the scope of this article and will not be elaborated on here, but the engraved illustration from this article, of convicts at work—with the hulk *Justitia* in the background—is important because it clarifies the working conditions and type of labour that convicts sentenced to the hulks were subjected to (Figure 3).

The description of the engraving, as noted in the London Magazine, is as follows:

In the front, the convicts are at work making a wharf to land their balast upon; some bring it out of the lighters in baskets, others are wheeling it in barrows, skreening it, &c.

1. The machine used in references in driving the pile to make the wharf.

2. The manner of getting up the balast on board the lighters, with a windlass, &c.

3. The scoop just let down, and a person making it fast with a rope.

4. The scoop drawn almost up, full.

5. The Justitia.

6. The Taylors; two Hulks, on board of which are upwards of 300 convicts sentenced to this labour for different terms of years, according to their crimes.

The articles and their accompanying illustrations are important because they make the connection between the two convicts by placing them together, both working on the hulks at the same time. Figure 2 connects the two convicts in an obvious way, by picturing them shackled together. Figure 3 represents an important early visual record of the labour that the convicts were subjected to. It also strongly suggests that tokens depicting convicts with barrows and tools such as shovels can be regarded as being related to convicts sentenced to 'hard labour in the hulks'. Together, Figures 2 and 3 are valuable visual documents which provide insights into the hulk token (Figure 1). Thus Dignam and Barrington are depicted wearing the same prison clothes in both the token as well as in Figure 2. This is also consistent with the story of Dignam being required to exchange his finery for prison garb, as discussed above.

Conclusions

Going by the period of joint confinement of Barrington and Dignam (April – July 1777), we can safely assume that our token, even though undated, is one of the earliest convict tokens so far discovered.⁴ Given that the London hulks had been operational for less than a year (since late 1776), this token

also represents the earliest hulk token recorded to date. The reason for producing a token which commemorates two notorious convicts is still open to speculation. It seems unlikely that it was meant to be a love token since the typical remembrances—for example, *when this you see remember me*, etc—found on love tokens are absent. With the connection between Barrington and Dignam discussed above, it might represent a token of friendship between these two convicts. Alternatively, given the notoriety of Barrington, whose exploits were widely reported in his day and even led to the manufacture of a Staffordshire mug³¹, a possible explanation is that this token represents a souvenir for those members of the public that had been allowed ‘to visit Woolwich and the river Thames, to have a sight of these two gentlemen convicts’.³² Whatever the explanation, this simple token represents a real touchstone to two truly notorious *aristocrats of crime*, whose victims included Beaumarchais²¹, Count Gregory Orloff and the Earl of Mexborough as well as other members of the upper echelons of the Georgian aristocracy. Both attempted suicide to avoid enduring the horrors of the hulks^{8,9} and while Barrington managed to survive the hulks and eventually played a notable role in the early colonial history of Australia³³, Dignam appears to have succumbed.

Acknowledgments

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ganize these photographs; and the librarians from the Baillieu Library Special Collection at the University of Melbourne and the Matheson Library at Monash University. Finally we acknowledge the valuable comments of both Peter Lane and Peter Fleig on the first draft of the manuscript.

Notes and References

1. *Crooked* coins were created and kept as good luck charms, which is the source of the nursery rhyme: ‘There was a crooked man and he walked a crooked mile. He found a crooked sixpence against a crooked stile. He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse. And they all lived together in a crooked house.’
2. M Field and T Millett (eds), *Convict Love Tokens*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 1998.
3. H Maxwell-Stewart, P Donnelly and T Millett, in L Frost and H Maxwell-Stewart (eds), *Chain Letters: Narrating Convict Lives*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2001, ch 12.
4. S Bendall, ‘Robert Allen, Housebreaker’, in *Numismatic Circular*, vol. CIX, August 2001, pp 245-6; the author refers to the earliest previously published convict token, which, although undated, appears to have been manufactured in 1778.
5. See ref. 2, p 12.
6. There is no single text called *The Newgate Calendar*, which was originally the name of the document compiled by the Deputy Keeper of Newgate Prison to record the names of all prisoners admitted. In 1776 the Ordinary Chaplain at Newgate collated various broadsheets and chapbooks on the condemned in a four-volume collection *The Annals of Newgate*. After that, various volumes under the title *The Newgate Calendar* and its variants appeared. All *Newgate Calendars* begin with 1700 and most continue up to about 1820. The *Newgate Calendar* was found in many English homes until the 1850s, with many versions written as cautionary tales for children. For a discussion, see the preface to R Heppenstal, *Reflections on the Newgate Calendar*, W H Allen, London, 1975.
7. A George II or III halfpenny planchet hand engraved to commemorate the hanging of a criminal was recently offered for sale by Spink, London, in their *Numismatic Circular*, Vol. CIX, August 2001, item MS1843. Description of the token is as follows: obverse, a hanged man with the date 1768 on either side. Inscription within a circle, J CURTIS HUNG IN

- CHAINS NEAR SARUM MAR 14. Reverse inscription, FOR THE MURDER OF WOLF MYERS, and in a smaller inner circle, DEC 28 1767 PIT.
8. W Branch Johnson, *The English Prison Hulks*, Christopher Johnson, London, 1957.
9. C Campbell, *The Intolerable Hulks: British Ship-board Confinement, 1776-1857*, Heritage Books, Bowie, Md, 1994; no references to Dignam or Barrington are made in this book.
10. See ref. 2, p 21.
11. R S Lambert, *The Prince of Pickpockets: a Study of George Barrington, who left his Country for his Country's Good*, Faber & Faber, London, 1930; an early book on the life of Barrington.
12. S Rickard (ed), *George Barrington's Voyage to Botany Bay: Travel Retelling a Convict's Narrative of the 1790s*, Leicester University Press, London, 2001; an excellent introductory biography.
13. S Box, *The Real George Barrington?: the Adventures of a Notorious London Pickpocket, Later Head Constable of the Infant Colony of New South Wales*, Arcadia, Melbourne, 2001.
14. *Scots Magazine*, 1777, vol 39, p 270.
15. *The London Magazine* (or, *Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*), 1777, vol XLVI, April, pp 221-2.
16. *The Universal Magazine*, 1777, vol 60, March, pp 163-4.
17. W Jackson, *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar*, printed for Hogg and Co by J Hartnell, London, 1800-1812, vol V, pp 235-40.
18. A Knapp, *The New Newgate Calendar*, printed and published by J Robins and Co, London, 1819, vol III, pp 379-83.
19. See ref. 11, p 101.
20. Dignam may well have been the author of the book on the principles of the political economy, reviewed in *The Critical Review/Annals of Literature*, 1776, vol 42, p 72.
21. See ref. 8, p 21, where we learn that 'Dignum had caused Beaumarchais, the librettist of *Le Barbier de Seville* and *Le Mariage de Figaro*, to be falsely charged in London as a French spy'. See also ref. 11, p 102, where the same story is repeated. While we have been unable to confirm that Dignam accused Beaumarchais of being a spy, it is well established that Beaumarchais did act as a spy for France and was actively involved in the American War of Independence. See for example W D Howarth, *Beaumarchais and the Theatre*, Routledge, London & New York, 1995.
22. See ref. 11, p 103.
23. See ref. 8, p 22.
24. *Scots Magazine*, 1777, vol 39, p 344.
25. See ref. 8, pp 20-21.
26. Knapp, *New Newgate Calendar*, vol IV, pp 41-2.
27. *The Memoirs of George Barrington: Containing Every Remarkable Circumstance from his Birth to the Present Time*, printed for J Bird and Simmonds, London, 1790, p 13.
28. We have not been able to find the exact dates of their tenure on board the hulks. See D T Hawkins, *Criminal Ancestors*, Alan Sutton, Phoenix Mill, 1992, pp 234-6, where the author notes that the earliest hulk records still in existence date from December 1777 for the hulk *Taylor* and from 6 January 1778 for the hulks *Censor* and *Justitia*.
29. See ref. 11, p 263, fn 2.
30. *London Magazine*, vol XXVI, May, pp 227-8, 264-5.
31. Pictures of this mug have been published before; see Rickard, *George Barrington's Voyage*, pl. 2, and Box, *The Real George Barrington?*, fig 2.
32. In eighteenth century London the use of checks and passes for entry to parks, private museums, etc, was widespread.
33. For an account of Barrington's life in Australia, see *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1966, vol. 1, p 62.

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