

Theatre Royal Silver token no 28.

There is no image of number 28 but it would have been the same in every way except its number to the one shown here.



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When a new theatre in King Street was proposed in the 1760s 50 supporters pledged £50 towards the cost of construction. In return for their investment they were each presented with a silver token.

The tokens were inscribed on one side '*King Street Bristol Theatre. May 30 1766*' and on the reverse the ticket number and '*the Proprietor of this ticket is entitled to the sight of every performance to be exhibited in this house*'. These tokens entitled the owner and their descendants the sight of every performance and are still valid today.

The theatre became known as the Theatre Royal and it is now the home of the Bristol Old Vic.

The tokens were numbered 1 to 50 and no 28 was purchased by a Bristol resident on e-bay in 2011. Researchers have tracked several of the tokens over the years and they were able to confirm that no.28 had been owned by Sir Hugh Smyth of Ashton Court in 1816. In 1856 it was loaned by or to an F. Beeson but from 1861 it was owned by Sir John Smyth and 3 of his relatives (Edward Gore Langton, Edward Sampson and the Rev. Henry Hugh Way).

Similar tokens resurface from time to time. In 2015 a collection of 3 silver tokens and 1 gold token accompanied by their histories were donated to the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. They joined the 5 tokens already held by the Theatre Collection which also holds the Bristol Old Vic archives.