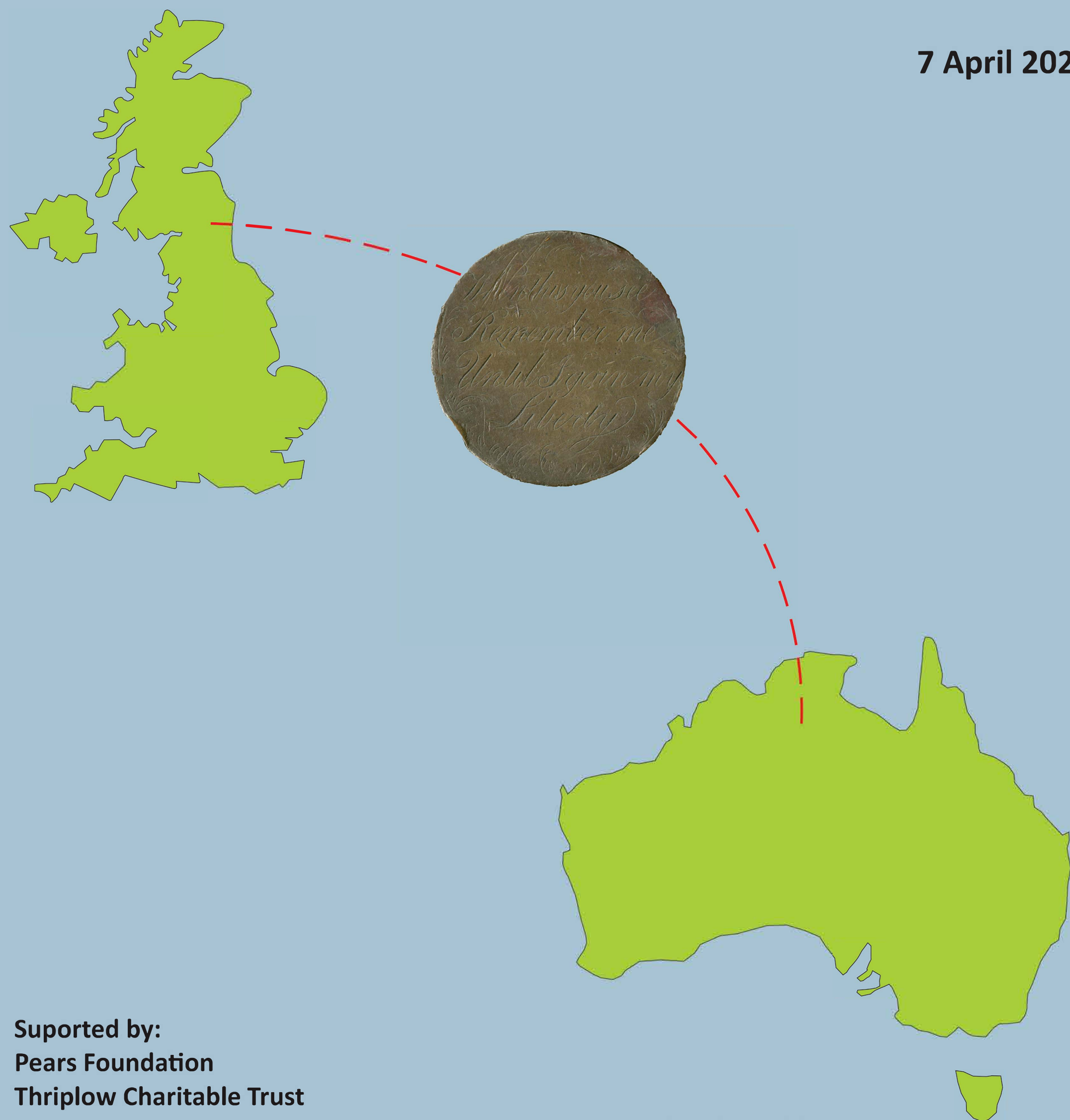


*Message not in a bottle:
Coins as markers of a life-long journey*

7 April 2022



Supported by:

Pears Foundation

Thriplow Charitable Trust

Soudavar Foundation and the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust

Message not in a bottle:

Coins as markers of a life-long journey

Silver and copper coins were traditionally reused by traders and sailors as farewell gifts. In addition, in the 18th and 19th centuries convicts gave them as a final gift to their loved ones before their transportation to faraway destinations.

In prison amateurs and professional forgers were commissioned to create these love tokens. The surface of the coin was flattened and then hand engraved on one or both sides. Messages of love and separation were engraved or punched with pin picks. These are the only records of the poor and marginalized members of society found in historical accounts.

The inscriptions were inspired by popular literature. They record people's lives and contribute a great deal to our understanding of the convicts' state of emotions.

Also known as “leaden hearts” these objects are surviving relics of a sad journey to unknown destinations and with no hope of return.



When this you take in hand think of your cursed son in A forigen land S P

If you wait till i return you May wait till the day of Doom

Love tokens

18th -19th century, Britain
Copper alloy

These three tokens were engraved on coins of King George III (r. 1760-1801) by British convicts awaiting transportation to Australia. The prisoners gave them to their loved ones before their final departure. The messages engraved on both sides are sentimental and refer to separation, slavery and a journey of no return.

1938,1214.7; 1952,0904.236 & J.3302

1938, 1214.7

OBVERSE (Front):

When this you see
Remember me
Until I gain my
Liberty

REVERSE (Back):

Graham?
Sarah Wolf

1952, 0904.236

OBVERSE (Front):

When this
you take in
hand think of
your cursed
son in A
forigen
land
S P

REVERSE (Back):

If you
wait till i
return you
may wait till
the day of
Doom

J.3302

OBVERSE (Front):

When *****
This You See
Remember Me
When I Am
Bound For
Slavery

REVERSE (Back):

From
J Stonehener (?)
To Mary Rivers (?)
Nov 24
1834