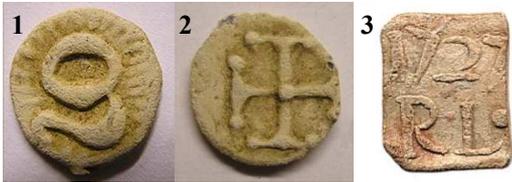


Editor: David Powell

A free newsletter to all who share our interest in these fascinating and often enigmatic pieces. Please send the editor at least one 300 dpi JPEG scan, or a sharply focused photo print, of any interesting leaden token or tally in your collection. Send images as email attachments to LTJEditor@aol.com. See page 4 for information on back issues, etc.

This Month's Gallery



My thanks to readers Rod Blunt and Colin Henderson for showing me the attractive late mediaeval pieces on the left {Figs 1,2}. Lombardic lettering was replaced by modern in Europe at various dates between 1460 and 1550, with England tending towards the end of the range, although the precise dates are not clearly defined; some engravers at the time of the changeover preferred one, some

the other and even on the official coinage latitude seems to have been allowed at certain points for each to letter as he wished. Ornamental crosses are scarce on the lead series and, although Fig.2 bears a certain superficial similarity to the Portuguese pieces of the 17th and early 18th centuries {some of which circulated in England}, I believe this is coincidental. Fig.1 is almost certainly an ecclesiastical piece, although "G" is not to my knowledge the name of any of the services for which tokens of attendance were sometimes given to the officiating priest, and which he could later exchange for payment. According to the BNJ, Vol 54, the letters concerned were M,L,P,H,C,A and B; standing respectively for Matins, Lauds, Prime, Horae Breves, Compline, Ave and Beatae Mariae; look out for these on mediaeval issues.

Fig.1 also shows a rim of radial dashes, which occurs quite frequently, and I am interested to know whether these relate to any particular time period. Your opinions on this issue, please.

Fig.3 was found by detectorist Nigel Tucker in a village somewhat to the east of Exeter. It has all the appearance of a Scottish communion token, but Burzinski does not list it. All the way down there, in Devon? Could such a thing happen, or is it mere similarity of design? Just before Nigel wrote, another correspondent notified a reciprocal find; a main series Devonian token of 1666 found in Glasgow {Fig.4}; which is equally ridiculous, since Scotland had better copper provision in the 17th period and conspicuously abstained from such token usage as was indulged in down south. Not as far fetched, however, as the all-time record for a 17th cent token which, so I am kindly informed by Robert Thompson, features a 1657 Kentish farthing found in the stomach of a five-foot shark caught off Galveston, Texas, in 1931.



Every now and again on these pages we show you something large, lumpy and horrible made by someone from whom access to decent manufacture was denied. My thanks to John Bromley, a previous correspondent, for the latest contributions in this category. Cutting grooves in blanks {Figs 5,6} is one thing. Fig.7 doesn't even have any obvious shape, but it does have some remnant of a design, however worn.

After that, I feel you deserve something a bit prettier to end up with. Work out Fig.8 if you can, but is Fig.9 a winking face? A light, bright cartwheel {Fig.10}, and just a hint of a Durotrigan stater in that upright on the right {Fig.11}.



WANT TO READ MORE ABOUT LEADEN TOKENS AND TALLIES?
Buy Treasure Hunting Magazine
 where you'll find articles on LT&T topics occasionally published.

David Powell On His Classification System

Type 21: Symbols and Implements of Trade

This is a very common type in the main 17th century series; sometimes the actual manufacture is depicted; sometimes the goods themselves, the container in which they are stored, the scales in which they are weighed. A sample selection appear in Fig.1-10. Note that in two cases {Figs 1,4} the wording implies that the picture indicates the name of the premises, which probably indicates either the original owner's or current owner's trade, depending on whether he renamed it when taking possession.

In both the two cases mentioned, the depicted object often appears in its own right, regardless of the name {if any} of the premises; sugar loaves are often the subject of grocers, whilst shovels, or peels as the long-handled variety for getting to the back of ovens are known, indicate maltsters and bakers respectively. On a 15mm piece it is difficult to depict anything with a long handle, so the two can become confused.

Examples of main 17th century tokens series illustrating trade symbols and implements:

1. Sugar loaves {London, W.3294} - W references are to Williamson.
2. Whisky still {Essex, W.351}
3. Malt shovel {London, W.1263}
4. Crossed shovels = Maltster? {London, W.392}
5. Barrels {Surrey, W.42}
6. Scales {Bucks, W.101}
7. Pipes & tobacco, with trade sign {dragon} in between {Beds, W.39}
8. Glover {Northants, W.85} - see below
- 9-10. Candles & candlemakers {Herts, W.80; Oxon W.247} - see below



I am inclined to suspect that the lead pieces of similar theme are from very much around the same date, but they are, however, very much scarcer. The comb of candles {Fig.11} is a very common theme in the 17th century series, which not uncommonly depicts the maker leaning over them. The candle in use {Fig.12}, rather than being made, is unusual.



Fig.15 is the peel/shovel just discussed, on a delightful pewter piece of only 12 mm diameter. The reverse of the latter is the typical 17th century triangle of initials {B/WI or B/WY}; as also is that of the bell piece {Fig.16}, whose reverse is B/IA. The latter is more normal at 15mm, and is one of the very few lead/pewter pieces of this period to bear a date {1659}; the components of which, however, are not very readily readable to each side of the bell. Was it struck by a bell founder? there were some in London, including a famous one in Whitechapel, founded in 1594, whose premises are still there. If not the issue of a bell founder, I should correctly be putting this piece in type 27.

Bells appear about a hundred times in Williamson's rendering of the 17th century series; ploughs {Fig.13} about forty, although one is not nearly so conscious of them. The pawnbroker's symbol {Fig.14}, however, not at all that I know of; or is Fig.14 meant to depict scales, which are decidedly common?

Until recently I have been inclined to put body parts in type 27; however, those examples which show single hands and feet {Fig.17} probably represent gloves and hosiers respectively, and should therefore reside here. Ditto cryptic references to the reproductive system, which appear occasionally on early pewter; I am informed that the Salisbury museum pictures 91,96,101 on page 4 of the Sept 2005 edition {LTT_6} are three such. Presumably these are mediaeval brothel tokens!



Type 25: Miscellaneous Objects, Royal

Objects with royal connotations, chief amongst them the rose and crown, are frequent in the lead series; this being so, they are taken out of the various series in which they would otherwise reside and put in type 25. Also encountered are the portcullis, the eagle {occasionally double-headed} and the lion.



The rose is naturally always suspected of being Elizabethan, especially when crowned as in Figs.1,4 or accompanied by the words “Beata Regina” as in Fig.7. The latter is generally thought to date from about the 1570s, and its reverse of double-headed eagle {Fig.2}, more commonly associated with 19th cent German coins or Victorian brass tokens of the 1880s, is often a cause for surprise. Also a giveaway as regards date, by virtue of bearing the initials of “Elizabeth Regina”, is the pewtery lion rampant of Fig.14, paired with the portcullis reverse of Fig.8. The portcullis is the design on Elizabeth’s tiny halfpennies of the period 1583-1602, which may or not be pertinent.

Of the other roses, Fig.6 feels contemporary with the above and Fig.5, which is a common type, even slightly earlier; only the non-typical Fig.3 feels even remotely 18th century, and even that may not be. The crowns which accompany the main designs of Figs.1,4,7,8 are all quite detailed and formal, as also the single crown of Fig.12; these pieces feel as if they have some official significance, and the more formal they are the higher the level of authority at which they were probably issued. Fig.12 might, for example, be a town piece, whereas I would favour Figs.1,5,7,8 all being of London origin; only my opinion, let us have yours! But struck by and for whom?

Figs.9-11 only, of the crowns, feel as if they might be local inn or merchant signs. Finally, another lion rampant at Fig.13. Who issued these pieces? Gentry, who had such creatures on their family arms, for use on their estates? Perhaps, in times when the country was split by such disputes as York v Lancaster, Protestant v Catholic, King v Commonwealth, issuers wanted, or thought it expedient, to show their loyalty in their chosen design. This phenomenon could also well be regional; in the 17th century main series there are some counties, e.g. Durham, which depict an abnormally large proportion of kings’ {Charles II’s} busts.

Finally, some 17th century depictions of royal symbols for comparison {Figs.15-25}, including George and the Dragon, and the Royal Oak of Charles II, which I have not yet found on a lead. Some are loyalist affirmations, but not all; there are town and guild arms amongst them, and a mayoral issue; one actual monarch {Fig.24, a Durham piece}, and two fictitious ones whose realms may be no larger than an alehouse!.



Type 23: Buildings

Buildings are few and far between in the lead series, although when encountered they make for very attractive designs; typically cottages {Fig 1}, farmhouses or barns {Fig.2} and the like, as befits their usually rustic origins. They tend to be larger and chunkier than many types, because of the volume of detail they have to describe. Fig.1 came from Bedfordshire, near Dunstable.



Fig.3 is another beauty, and appears to hint at the multi-columned temple coin designs of the Roman era; Fig.4, for comparison, is one of the silver antoniniani struck to celebrate the 1000th anniversary of Rome in AD 247. On the other hand, Fig.3 may just be a picture of some common utensil, such as a bucket. Take away the joining line at the bottom of the columns and it could well be a string of candles, as just described under type 21.

Houses are also very rare in the main 17th century series, although towers occur with moderate frequency, almost always on town pieces as symbols of municipal authority. Whether the lead piece of Fig.5 is meant to be one such I am uncertain; it may just be a bizarre depiction of a lis, in which case it should be in type 4. Similarly Fig.6 hovers between being a building and a type 9 irregular geometric.



The communion token series contains a number of delightful depictions of buildings, obviously churches, although these tend mostly to be from the 19th century when manufacture was moving away from local crude lead production towards centralised white-metal manufacture in major cities. These pieces are not often discovered by detectorists in the same way as other lead-based tokens, since the church assigned them some reverence and disposed of them accordingly; however, for completeness, and appreciation of their artwork, I append a few here {Figs.7-12}. It would be interesting to know, from those of you who detect north of the border, how many church tokens you find in your travels. The early ones have quite a lot in common, stylistically, with some crude lead; were it not for the almost mutually exclusive geographic ranges of the two series, some confusion might be possible.

Cut Halves

When we see a piece cut in two we tend to think of it as having been done deliberately if the two halves are of exactly equal size and of it being done accidentally by a plough, spade or other farming implement if not. Usually the deliberate cuts follow the lines of the old mediaeval cross. Recently, however, I have found what appears to be a diametrically cut Kentish hop token. Has anyone else seen these, or any other non-type 14 leads, apparently cut on purpose?



AT THREE CRANES
If you have any lead tokens with part
of their legend reading
AT THREE CRANES
please contact
Phil Memick
who is researching them. Email:
phil@mernicks.com
Phone:020-8980-5672

WANT BACK ISSUES ?

You can view ALL back issues at
www.leadtokens.org.uk