

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 LTTeditor@aol.com or dmpowell@waitrose.com

Williamson's Uncertains: the Door to a Numismatic Abyss

Some of you may be familiar with G.C. Williamson's "Trade Tokens of the Seventeenth Century", the standard reference work, first published in 1889 but still very relevant, in which you can find virtually any piece of the main 17th century token series which is kind enough to offer you either a issuer's name or location. Which most of them considerately do. Every now and again new pieces are found, and more recent authors such as Michael Dickinson have kindly recorded them; since 1889, I understand that the number of known types has gone up from roughly 12,700 to over 14,000. Each new piece is welcomed and enthused over.... provided it has a provenance.

Late in his third volume, after he has meticulously worked his way through the counties of England, Wales and Ireland {Scotland's solitary piece doesn't exactly take long}, Williamson lists on pages 1421-1428, and almost as an afterthought, some 116 pieces which he was not able to place anywhere else. He categorises them in increasing degrees of obscurity, as follows:

- Unc. 1-23. Uncertain towns.
- Unc. 24-62. Without names of towns, but with full names of issuer.
- Unc. 63-89. Without names of towns, and with initials of issuer only.
- Unc. 90-116. Without any identity of either issuer or location.



One can pore through a dealer's trays and see one of these pieces occasionally, sitting, alone and unloved, at the end. Perhaps even one that didn't manage to register its presence by 1889, but looks as if Williamson might have let it through the back door if it had arrived in time. Occasionally it doesn't even have the decency to be copper or brass; to be uncouth, it is lead. Welcome to these pages, little farthing; you have friends and admirers who appreciate you, in the readership of LTT!

This article aims to illustrate and enthuse over a few of the attractive and interesting pieces which hover on the boundary; some of them one side, some the other. Firstly, a few that made the cut, plus one near miss:



Fig.1, in brass, is Williamson's Unc.73, a piece oozing as much Royalist sentiment as any you are likely to find; "Touch not Mine Anointed" on one side, "Feare God, honor the King" on the other, and the date of the restoration, 1660. The reverse, albeit worn, depicts a bible; the obverse initials, CR, are those of the king, as is the head, and after that there was not exactly much space for W.S. or I.N. to say who they were or where they came from.

Next, the copper pieces intended as money Fig.2, {W.Unc.92} is that of a staple merchant who wished for whatever reason to remain anonymous, whilst Fig.3 {W.Unc.69} is the issue of someone who was happy to declare himself but whose design was too large for his flan. The piece feels that it might have been originally intended as a penny, but that the issuer changed it to a halfpenny without scaling down. Fig.4, depicting a pelican feeding its young, was not known to Williamson; of the right size and metal to qualify, its only abnormality is its diamond of initials, instead of the usual triad. D/PL would be absolutely standard, but the L below has no less prominence than the three letters above it. Two brothers or a married couple who just fancied bucking the trend? or is there more to it than that?



One or two of Williamson's unknowns are thought to be either issued by a church as small change or else as communion tokens; if the latter, they differ from the rest of Williamson's pieces in that they have no direct monetary value. The IHS with cross on Fig.5 {W.Unc.97} makes it clearly a communion piece, even without "The Comomon Cup" {sic} on the reverse; the spelling a result of partaking of its contents too freely? Fig.6 {W.Unc.66} depicts a church, but is

less obviously communion-related; it could possibly relate to parish finances, perhaps the distribution of charity, although that is only conjectural. PC? Perhaps C=church, and P is the name of the parish. Finally the highly enigmatic Fig.7 {W.Devon.134}, one of Williamson's few lead pieces, which appears at first glance to be the issue of one Mary Moore., and which depicts a small type 11 wineglass. One might imagine Mrs/Miss Moore being a publican, or the like; but no, she is a church, St.Mary Major. Not that her clientele would have disputed the chosen legend "Drink yee all of this" in either case.

-:-:-:-:-

Even the most serious students of major numismatic series sometimes lose interest as pieces, however rare, descend into unprovenanced anonymity, yet to the crude lead enthusiast any piece falling into either of the first two of Williamson's two "uncertain" categories above would come quite high up the social strata. Just as Williamson regarded his 116 "uncertains" as just above the cut of acceptability, so we are finding quite a number of pieces just below it; pieces which show their kinship with those of the Cromwellian period by exhibiting well-known token features of the times, such as the triad of naming initials, or the standard 15-17mm farthing diameter. Looking at the selection below, I defy anyone to say that their anonymity renders them uninteresting.



Pride of place should probably go to Fig.8, a pewter piece found about 3½ miles E of Carlisle, between Hadrian's Wall and the River Eden. Specimens of both English and Scottish small silver have turned up nearby and, although the back appears to be blank, one can at various angles imagine that the form of a Scottish hardhead of the 1550s are discernable underneath. KAR= Karolus, rather than Carlisle; "1" above = one penny, the silver version of which had at the time the exact same diameter.

Scarcely larger and also in pewter is Fig.9, depicting a baker's peel, or shovel, used for extracting from the back of the oven; this has the conventional triad, as also does Fig.10, a rather darker pewter piece whose 14mm diameter is edging closer to the 15-17mm norm of the earlier Williamson pieces. Of similar diameter and also with a triad, albeit unconventionally placed, is the decidedly chunkier pewter of Fig.11. The horse on the reverse is regrettably obscured by a counterstamp, which was the occasional method of indicating a cessation of validity.

Fig.12 is good quality copper, 15mm diameter with standard triad; of all the non-Williamson pieces in this selection it most nearly conforms, except that on the reverse it depicts... a dog, surmounted by the word "Juggler". Ideas welcome, please. There is another specimen in the British Museum.

The remaining pieces are in lead; starting with three which, although they do not conform to Williamson's pieces in size, nevertheless share a limited similarity of style. Fig.13 shows an early example of a triad; except that the pair of letters is on the top and the single one underneath, instead of vice versa.

Again, what do the extra letters, on the reverse, stand for? another person, or a place name? It was discovered at Foxton, Cambs, in the 1950s, along with the identically patinated Fig.14, the two themes of which might, with different stylistic rendering, both well appear on the main 17th cent series. I will guess that it is of similar date to its companion. Fig.15 was discussed in May, and I include it again here for completeness, as a rare example of a lead which depicts the traditional 17th century feature of an issuer's name around the rim.

Finally three leads of nearer the traditional size. Fig.16 is only 12-13mm; both that and the style of the ship on the reverse suggest that it might be 16th cent rather than 17th; however, it does have a triad, and that tends to argue 17th. Which is right? Fig.17 is also probably light of Williamson by half a century, although with a fine merchant mark and bird which, with an inscription around them, might again have adorned a piece of the 1650s or 1660s. Finally, a lead arguably related to a Williamson issuer! London.3506 is listed as follows:

Obv: "John Bell 1663", around a bell.
Rev: "In Great Woodstreet"; B/IA in centre.



Fig.18 has no verbiage, but it has identical central designs to the above with, just visible to the two sides of the bell, the date 16-59. Williamson was not averse to lead, leather or any of the other more perishable token media other than copper or brass; it was just that not much of it survived, and he could only record what he saw. In the 1880s he did not have the advantage of detectorists to find things for him. Now it is different, so carry on the good work..... but please remember to record it for everyone when you've done it!

-:-:-:-:-

Picture Gallery

One may guess who BB is, in Fig.1; we have no monarchs of recent times with those initials, yet both letters are crowned. The lord of the manor and his lady, perhaps? The piece is an imposing 33mm in diameter.

Next to it, Fig.2 is a type 28 rim piece with an unusual design in the centre. Is that meant to be a mill wheel in action, or some rotating device for scooping up buckets or other containers? in which case, the token would almost certainly be that of the place where the machinery operated. Finally, Fig.3 is a small but unusually fine Boy Bishop piece, the size of a mediaeval penny.



Websites

Those of you who have been following LTT's series on communion tokens may be interested to know that a fine range of early literature on the subject, originally published in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, is available in its entirety online. Each article concludes with an excellent series of line-drawings, which is in some cases fairly extensive, and even those of you who are not interested in CTs may find it well worthwhile to study the crude lead pieces for their range of design.

http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/PSAS_2002/pdf/vol_041/41_453_604.pdf {Brook, 1907}
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/PSAS_2002/pdf/vol_075/75_144_150.pdf {Kerr/Lockie, 1940 -41}
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/PSAS_2002/pdf/vol_077/77_049_146.pdf {Kerr/Lockie, 1942-43}
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/PSAS_2002/pdf/vol_079/79_026_080.pdf {Kerr/Lockie, 1944-45}
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/PSAS_2002/pdf/vol_081/81_118_133.pdf {Kerr/Lamb, 1946-48}
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/PSAS_2002/pdf/vol_084/84_038_056.pdf {Kerr/Lockie, 1949-50}
http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/PSAS_2002/pdf/vol_087/87_118_126.pdf {Kerr/Lockie, 1952-53}

Be warned that some of these files are several megabytes long, so only attempt if you have Broadband.

Another case for the Genealogical Detective....

The delightful piece illustrated, a chunky 18.21 gm and 33mm in diameter, comes from very nearly the same area as the Boniwell piece discussed on page 4 of the May issue; “on the Berks/Oxon border, definitely not far from Didcot”, was the most my correspondent was willing to offer.



On the obverse “RICHAD JAWDE”; sorry, Microsoft don’t supply the retrograde font which would be so useful for LTT. Assuming it is not “Cawde” or “Tawde”, of course; but neither of them approximate very obviously to any British surname. Not that “Jawde” is much better, once you’ve spotted that the first letter is most likely a retrograde J. Issuer Richard is seemingly not over-literate, to miss a letter from his forename and render three further letters back-to-front; so, we have to put ourselves in his shoes, think what his surname might have been, and how he would have pronounced it.

“GEORGE” is the best I can come up with, although I would welcome any alternative ideas. OK, “JAWDE” doesn’t have that J-sound at the end, but perhaps Richard didn’t pronounce it or, more likely, miscalculated and ran out of space before he got to it. So how many Richard Georges have we got in the area in 1761? The International Genealogical Index is not always exhaustive, nor are the parish registers from which it derives its data, but it has {fortunately} one and only one Richard to offer; the tenth child of a couple called James and Mary, who moved a little around West Berkshire as shown:

1. WILLIAM GEORGE - Baptism: 21 FEB 1715 Letcombe Regis, Berks
2. JAMES GEORGE - Birth: 27 SEP 1717, Baptism: 15 OCT 1717 Letcombe Regis, Berks
3. ELIZABETH GEORGE - Birth: 23 AUG 1718, Baptism: 16 SEP 1718 Letcombe Regis, Berks
4. HANNAH/ANNA GEORGE - Birth: 08 JUN 1720, Baptism: 28 JUN 1720 Letcombe Regis, Berks
5. ROBERT GEORGE - Baptism: 12 FEB 1721 Wantage, Berks
6. GEORGE GEORGE - Birth: 17 SEP 1723, Baptism: 03 OCT 1723 Wantage, Berks
7. MARY GEORGE - Baptism: 07 MAY 1727 Uffington, Berks {presumably died young?}
8. MARY GEORGE - Birth: 18 MAR 1730, Baptism: 18 MAR 1730 Uffington, Berks
9. MARTHA GEORGE - Birth: 18 MAR 1730, Baptism: 18 MAR 1730 Uffington, Berks
10. RICHARD GEORGE - Birth: 23 AUG 1733, Baptism: 05 SEP 1733 Wantage, Berks
11. BENJAMIN GEORGE - Birth: 09 FEB 1735, Baptism: APR 1736 Wantage, Berks

I don’t know anything else about them yet; whether, for example, they were humble folk or landowners. Also, Richard might have moved on somewhere else in the area by the time he was 28. Perhaps he was a parish officer, charged with the suppression of those species of birds who did so much damage to crops, and administered the local system for organising and paying for their destruction. That is a whole other subject, and one which we will discuss separately in due course; but certainly Richard’s piece is a fine one. Date in an arc round the edge, two figures each side of the central design; that is a coin type of design. Had he seen any European pieces, with eagles on, such as were common in Germany or Austria? Name in a circle round the edge, as per the coins of the realm; he may not have been very literate, but our Richard was certainly artistic and observant.

Finally, in the middle of the obverse, a link with the more normal world of lead; a simple type 1 as an inner design rather than occupying the whole field. But now, another one to show you; again with a bird on the reverse



{to be shown shortly}, and with the identical description of origin; i.e. again, West Berks. The initials look like BP {top}, IC and GH {below}; another triumvirate of parish officials? From the same parish? One thing is certain; the better you describe the findspot, the better the chance of working it out!

WANT BACK ISSUES ?

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

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

WANT TO READ MORE ABOUT LEADEN TOKENS AND TALLIES?

Buy Treasure Hunting Magazine where you will find articles on LT&T topics occasionally published.