

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 [dmpowell@waitrose.com](mailto:dmpowell@waitrose.com) or [david@powell8041.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:david@powell8041.freeserve.co.uk). Please note that w.e.f. 19 April 2008 the old [LTJEditor@aol.com](mailto:LTJEditor@aol.com) address is no longer active.

## Picture Gallery



A collection of 18th cent larger flan pieces this month, all around the 24-28mm range; none of the neat ordering of last month's pewter, but a pleasant range of patination on display. A very large star, perhaps intended to be the sun, in Fig.1; the reverse AG/1724, too poor too illustrate, indicates that it was made in the year of Britain's third-last total solar eclipse, which may be significant. In identical patina, Fig.2; a type 11 depicting a rather unusual flask, which one imagines it might be rather difficult to stand up. The reverse is a pleasingly robust but very ordinary 6-petal flower; both are of Cambridgeshire origin..

Fig.3 invites a guess, but seems to suggest the idea of a man standing, holding the letters B and H in outstretched arms; however, I could be wrong. Equally, it could be a complex merchant mark. The piece is a chunky 19.56 gm, and is reputed to have come from Devon; not a common county for lead.

Fig.4 looks as if it might be based on the dump halfpennies and farthings of George I, which means that it dates from around 1720. It weighs 13.53, is uniface and comes from an uncertain location in Kent. We have seen Georgian heads on Romney Marsh leads before.

Nothing too remarkable about Figs.5 or 8, other than to remark that some of the subvarieties of common types seem to come up time and time again; about time to start listing them soon, methinks. Not perhaps so much an extension of the classification system, other than a set of distinct themes to look out for, particularly under certain of the more common types, which are starting to emerge the more specimens we examine. There may be some articles on the subject in 2009. These two show variants of the cartwheel.



Even initials can be, and are, often ambiguous. Looked at one way, Fig.6 looks to be a fairly clear "IR", with the crossbar so common to the "I" of the day; but seen another way to looks to be an equally obvious "FR". Is that an upper crossbar, or an imperfection on the flan induced by a fault in the die.? A coin with such a fault might get discarded; with lead tokens, it is all part of the fun of the game.

Fig.7 is another of those "is it, isn't it" type 9 geometrics; a possibly meaningless set of lines but which might add up to something. In this case a boat is one possibility. Plain and to the point, Figs.9 and 10; the former with some pretence of style, the latter none at all. Type 30, nine pellets and four respectively; the numbers significant or random?

More class about Fig.11, one of the most humorous representations of a bird I have seen; a chunky 19.24 gm from Surrey, somewhere round the Hogs Back area. The reverse is a very ordinary cartwheel. Fig.12 is also amusing, but in a very different way; it doesn't seem to know whether it wants to be an anchor or a plant. Some types you might expect to produce hybrids quite often, but those two seem a rather unlikely combination.

Fig.13 is another very pleasant hybrid; two outer rings, with a 6-petal inside. One maybe, but two is unusual. The reverse has slender, finely-cut initials, "WA". It comes from Cambridgeshire.



Fig.14 shows a hybrid which I have only fairly recently become aware of, but have now seen several examples of. It consists of a type 7 grid which is less clearly-defined than as usual, but on which the would-be blemishes turn out on closer inspection to be characters, probably initials but possibly numbers. They don't read easily, but they are the main subject matter; the grid is but a backdrop. Finally, Fig.15; a delightfully crude star or sun, or a deficient cartwheel? Dubious enough to call a type 26/3 hybrid, but I'm going for the star.

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## *I spy, with my little eye, somebody beginning with X*

I am sometimes asked, when provided with a two-initial type 2 token and an approximate findspot, whether I can tell the enquirer anything about the issuer. I have written before on the improbability of being able to do this, due to the extreme common nature of most initial pairs, but for good measure I include at the end of this issue {on page 5} a table, based crudely on Williamson, which gives some idea of the approximate frequency distribution of each initial pair, per million people, in the 17th century. It might alter very slightly in other centuries due to changing naming patterns, but I suggest not significantly.

One initial fails to put in an appearance anywhere, as either forename or surname, in any of Williamson's 12,700 or so entries; as you may guess, "X". An "X" on a lead token appears often enough, and we have merely to decide whether it is a doodle, a cartwheel {type 3}, a cross {type 14}, or a pair of crossed swords or batons {type 27}. If a doodle, we decide which of the other types it was most likely meant to be; but never, never, do we put it in type 2.

It is not generally known except amongst genealogists and historians, however, that, "X" being the symbol of Christ, a fair proportion of Christophers, abbreviated heir name to "Xpofer" or "Xofer" to save them selves the hassle of writing eleven letters when all the Toms, Dicks and Harrys in this world could get away with 3,4 or 5 respectively. Such abbreviations may be found from time to time in parish registers, and also in indices referencing lists of old documents. A Christina might, also, similarly abbreviate, although I have never seen one.

There are 84 people in Williamson whose names begin with "Chris" or "Kit", but none of them use "X". Perhaps the old form was going out of fashion by the 1650s, but herewith a pewter piece from perhaps half a century earlier, on which an "X" appears clearly to be an initial {magnification factor 1.5}. Xerxes, Xavier, Xenophon or Christopher? Whichever, he seems to have good taste in his choice of reverse; a bear-like creature {perhaps a dog}, with sprigs above and below. The piece is 13mm diameter, and a Thames-side find.



Old English writing also had one or two other abbreviations, still current in the Secretary Hand script of the 1500-1650 period; of these one, a rather elaborate ornamented P-like symbol for "per" or "pro", usually occurs at the start of a word. Whether it {or any others} ever occurred as an initial I rather doubt, although it might be worth looking out for.

## *Datestones on Houses - kindred to tokens?*

Tokens are not the only objects to bear dates and initials during the 17th and 18th centuries. A display of datestones from houses and other buildings here; if you look at their style, and in the case of the more complex ones their doodles and other subject matter, you will find some of them not so far removed from the tokens of the times.



1676, top left, is on the side of an old inn, and depicts all manner of objects which you might find on a main series 17th cent token. 1652, bottom left, exhibits two objects, rather than letter, flanking its date; unable to get as near as I wanted, but the right one looks like a tower. What did they indicate?

1694, top right, contains a heart and two pelletless crosses; nearer the sort of features we get on lead, here, as also in the ornamentation of 1684, bottom right. Did any of their iconography derive from the same sources? Some graffiti from probably a much earlier age, bottom middle, which again would be at home on a lead. The rectangles of the third row one feels, if taken out of context, could easily be communion tokens, although 18th cent rather than 17th. 1723, middle of 3rd row, looks like an Aberdeenshire CT of the early 19th cent. Some early-mid 19th stones, although less ornate, also look very CT-like.

The examples shown are all from or near the Yorkshire Dales, where they are common; in Somerset, by contrast, I found very few. Which causes one to wonder, how the geographical and date distribution of these stones correlates with that of dated tokens? Not very much, one would think, but it does no harm to contemplate!

## *Fancy Carrying a Few of These Around?*

In reply to our question in March as to whether the counties such as Berks, Oxon and Gloucs had a tendency to monopolise the largest lead tokens, how about this magnificent 60mm piece, that's a huge 2.4", from northern Nottinghamshire, near Retford? 44mm is about our next biggest to date, so what was such a monster used for?



“Tom Iob 1724”; that is a clear enough inscription to read, but should it be interpreted Lob{b}, or Job{b}? The International Genealogical Index {IGI} shows strong indication that Lobb was a surname associated predominantly with Devon and Cornwall, so most likely I is used for J in the normal way and Job{b} is indicated; however, here let me tell you a story.

One of my grandmothers has a markedly West Country surname, which I have researched way back, and there are several small pockets of origin, scattered around the borders of Somerset or just over its borders in Wiltshire or Devon. With one exception; shortly after Monmouth's rebellion, a whole branch suddenly springs up in Nottinghamshire. Perhaps Thomas Lobb was another Westcountryman who, in the 1680s, felt the need to make himself scarce? although, regrettably the Notts IGI does not support this. Neither, however, does it now of many Jobbs either, and of the few it does, none are called Thomas. Nor were there any Yobbs in those days; at least, not in name.

It is sad not to be able to crack the derivation of such a magnificent piece, especially when the condition is so good and the name moderately scarce; however, one thing we can say about Thomas is that, from his dress, he was almost certainly a squire. He has a rather arrogant bearing, which sits well with the extravagance of such a huge piece, and the engraver has taken more trouble with the portraiture than is normally the case with crude lead. There is shape to the head, to the hair, to the hat; detail, right down to the wart on the cheek.

One possibility remains, but again we have to dismiss it: Job 1724 could be a biblical text. Not that the subject looks particularly divine, nor is there the dot that one would expect between 17 and 24 were it a text. Anyway, Job 17 has only sixteen verses; therefore, end of that theory as well.

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## *What are those four letters in the angles?*

I deliberately held back one of John Dunsford's pieces last month for discussion. It is of a style occasionally seen, where there appear to be four characters, sometimes definitely letters of the alphabet, sometimes more arguably so {ornamentation being the alternative}, in the four quarters of a cross. Immediately that happens, the piece becomes much more interesting than an ordinary, straight-forward type 14. What do the letters stand for, and do any particular combinations occur with regularity?



Reader Tony Pilson has a theory, which sounds reasonable, that AHCT occurs reasonably often and has some such meaning as Alms House Charity Token; moreover he reports that some of them are dated, usually somewhere in the range 1675-1800. There may be other combinations, not exactly similar because of differences of local terminology, which mean approximately the same. Write in with your observations, please; we'll look forward to hearing.

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# *Approximate Frequency Distribution of Forename/Surname Initial Combinations in the 17th Century, per million people*

		Surname initial																									
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
A	1384	4126	3420	1484	735	1426	1701	3498	203	817	692	1612	2225	706	317	2336	57	1733	3502	1441	57	185	3071	0	157	4	
B	439	1310	1086	471	233	453	540	1111	65	259	220	512	706	224	101	742	18	550	1112	457	18	59	975	0	50	1	
C	644	1921	1592	691	342	664	792	1629	95	380	322	751	1036	329	148	1088	27	807	1631	671	27	86	1430	0	73	2	
D	509	1517	1258	546	270	525	626	1286	75	300	254	593	818	260	117	859	21	637	1288	530	21	68	1129	0	58	1	
E	2310	6888	5709	2476	1226	2381	2840	5840	339	1363	1155	2691	3715	1179	530	3899	95	2893	5846	2405	95	310	5126	0	262	6	
F	824	2456	2036	883	437	849	1013	2082	121	486	412	959	1325	420	189	1390	34	1032	2085	858	34	110	1828	0	93	2	
G	1384	4126	3420	1484	735	1426	1701	3498	203	817	692	1612	2225	706	317	2336	57	1733	3502	1441	57	185	3071	0	157	4	
H	1559	4650	3854	1672	828	1608	1917	3943	229	920	780	1817	2508	796	358	2632	64	1953	3947	1624	64	209	3460	0	177	4	
I	172	513	425	184	91	177	212	435	25	102	86	200	277	88	39	290	7	216	435	179	7	23	382	0	20	0	
J	9741	29046	24076	10444	5172	10042	11975	24628	1431	5749	4870	11347	15665	4971	2234	16444	402	12201	24653	10142	402	1305	21615	0	1105	25	
K	33	98	81	35	17	34	41	83	5	19	16	38	53	17	8	56	1	41	83	34	1	4	73	0	4	0	
L	278	830	688	298	148	287	342	703	41	164	139	324	447	142	64	470	11	348	704	290	11	37	617	0	32	1	
M	1109	3307	2741	1189	589	1143	1364	2804	163	655	555	1292	1784	566	254	1872	46	1389	2807	1155	46	149	2461	0	126	3	
N	663	1976	1638	710	352	683	815	1675	97	391	331	772	1066	338	152	1118	27	830	1677	690	27	89	1470	0	75	2	
O	95	284	235	102	51	98	117	241	14	56	48	111	153	49	22	161	4	119	241	99	4	13	211	0	11	0	
P	615	1834	1520	659	327	634	756	1555	90	363	307	716	989	314	141	1038	25	770	1556	640	25	82	1365	0	70	2	
Q	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
R	4905	14627	12124	5259	2604	5057	6030	12402	721	2895	2453	5714	7889	2503	1125	8281	202	6144	12415	5107	202	657	10885	0	556	13	
S	1351	4028	3339	1448	717	1393	1661	3415	198	797	675	1574	2172	689	310	2280	56	1692	3419	1406	56	181	2997	0	153	3	
T	4795	14299	11852	5141	2546	4944	5895	12124	704	2830	2398	5586	7712	2447	1100	8095	198	6007	12137	4993	198	643	10641	0	544	12	
U	4	11	9	4	2	4	5	9	1	2	2	4	6	2	1	6	0	5	9	4	0	0	8	0	0	0	
V	26	76	63	27	14	26	32	65	4	15	13	30	41	13	6	43	1	32	65	27	1	3	57	0	3	0	
W	4642	13841	11472	4977	2464	4785	5706	11736	682	2739	2321	5407	7465	2369	1065	7836	191	5814	11748	4833	191	622	10300	0	526	12	
X	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Y	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Z	29	87	72	31	16	30	36	74	4	17	15	34	47	15	7	49	1	37	74	30	1	4	65	0	3	0	

Forename initial