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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 or david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk. Please note that the old LTTeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

A Hybrid Old/New-Style dated Token?

The slightly oval piece on the right is uniface and shows nothing but a number; supposedly 65½ at first glance, although there is a hint of a vertical line to the left of the 6 which may possibly conceal a “1”. The issue comes down to trying to assess whether the part of the line immediately left of the number is stronger than the bit above and below or not.



One possibility is that the piece may have been a seal, and that 65½ {ells, yards or feet} might have been the length of the cloth; however, if the “1” exists, then 165½ ells is rather long for a roll of cloth and it may represent a hybrid date. During the period 1582 to 1752, particularly the latter part of it, when the New Style calendar was in use on much of the Continent and was increasingly gaining favour here {without yet having been officially adopted}, dates such as 1651-2 or 165½ were often used to avoid the ambiguity created during the first three months of the year due to the Old Style {OS} calendar having a year commencement date of 25 March and the New Style {NS} calendar having one of 1 January. If the date you wanted to render was in that early part of the year, e.g. February 1652 according to modern thinking, you might describe it as 1651-2 because the Old Style calendar was still in 1651; there being the need, of course, to distinguish from the previous winter 1650-1 and the following winter 1652-3.

Would a token issuer, striking in early 1652, have bothered with such fine detail or not? There are no known examples of dual dating in Williamson; but then there are no known example of X-initials in Williamson either, and we have just found one of those {LTT_43, Oct 2008, refers}.

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Rotations

An occasional feature of these pages has been to display the same piece twice, one version being rotated either 90 or 180 degrees round from the other.. Even ordinary alphabetic initials sometimes deceive; an Ebayer recently displayed the first of the two



pieces {26mm} above in the form shown at Fig.1a, when no doubt Fig.1b was probably correct; although in his defence it could be said that the middle crossbar on the I {why did those 18th cent folk need one?} is very wide. On the better formed 16th/17th London pieces “I” has no crossbar; as the series evolves and degenerates, a pellet at the centre of the upright, and beyond that a small bar, become more and more common. This, however, is the widest I have seen. The figure before it is a retrograde P, in two parts to disguise it a little, and looks rather shoved into the corner rather than being given equality with the I. Turned round as the Ebayer showed it, it has almost a Chinese look; but on the other side, the commonest of 6-sided petals leaves no doubt of its British and probably 18th cent origin.

Fig.2a deceived me at first; I thought that a pickaxe with pellets around was an unusual item of subject matter until I turned it upside down, and I was intrigued by the over-emphasis of the radial beading. All was revealed when I looked at it upside down; the pickaxe became a nose, the beading hair, and the pellets the remainder of a face! So, stand on your head in front of your computer screen and look at those pieces all ways up....

Forgeais' Guild Pieces, part 4

The piece of the libraires, librarians {Fig.1}, naturally depicts the same patron saint and same materials as that of the very closely-related imprimeurs {part 3, Nov 2008}. It appears older, but with no less than three dates {1414,1434,1451} in the Lombardic inscription one has to question what they all mean. Not more than one, and perhaps not even that, can be a date of issue. They are probably significant dates in the guild's history and, whilst late 15th cent origin is probably favoured, it could probably be any time until mid-16th.

From the maçons-tailleurs de pierres, or stone-masons, a solitary but very descriptive piece {Fig.2} bearing the Lombardic Roman-numeral date, 1489, very typical of its time.



Maréchaux-ferrant {Figs.3-5} was one of the titles I had trouble with. The first half is presumably the word from which "martial", as in "field-marshal", suggesting an organiser; "ferrant" might be a carrier; however, the tools on the reverses all suggest a blacksmith. We have however already had some of those, in the fondeur {Part 3, LTT_nn}. I will conjecture that perhaps the fondeur's province was manufacturing and decorative metalwork, whilst the Maréchaux-ferrant was the chap who shod horses. St.Eloi, in attendance, looks a young and relatively cheerful soul.



Forgeais records the menuisiers, or joiners, as producing both large and small types, albeit all 15th cent. Only the second guild in our list to choose a lady patron; St.Anne and the Virgin Mary seem to be quite chummy. On the two large pieces {Figs.6-7}, the smaller tools are appropriate enough, but why two crossed long-handled axes suggestive of guardsmen? One cannot imagine St.Anne and friend setting to with those.



By contrast, the menuisiers smaller pieces {Figs.8-9}, with their usual double grenetis, depict what a Roman catalogue would call a tetrastyle temple, i.e. with four arches; or is it intended to be something more modest, like a hut or a house? Forgeais uses the word tabernacle, which he suggests is a wooden structure; the ability to make which would mark one out as an accomplished menuisier. In other words, it is symbolic of completing one's apprenticeship.

The mercer is one of the commonest of all trades in the British 17th cent series, and no doubt there were many of them in Paris as well; but represented in Forgeais by only one piece {Fig.10}. It depicts the crowned arms of France, however; did the merciers have special status? Lombardic inscriptions on both sides; on the obverse St.Louis is one of the few saints to proclaim his link to a guild explicitly, whilst the reverse is a Roman-numeral date, 1460.



Messagers de l'université {Fig.11}; think we can translate that one OK, but not what we would think of as a guild over here. A grandiose piece, not in keeping with the rest, although it coincidentally shares its three lis with the merciers above; what passes as a crown above, but is not, is {apart from the book} uncertain. The most obvious feature is the modern lettering; never is this 15th cent. Forgeais thinks the closing years of the 16th, if not the beginning of the 17th. Charlemagne {742-814}, one of the nation's stalwarts, stands guard.



Forgeais records the orfevres, goldsmith or silversmiths {Figs.12-19}, as having a preference for small and simple pieces, invariably recording {with different variations} a crown on the obverse and a cross on the other. One or the other may be elaborated in various ways, but the basic formula does not deviate. It would be worth considering whether any English pieces, bearing the same combination, derive from the same occupational source.



We come next to the patissiers, or pastrycooks. They subdivide into patissiers-oublieurs {Figs.20-22} and patissiers-gaufriers {Figs.23-28}, no doubt according to their speciality, whose arms seem to be three horns and a shield of three lis respectively. "St.Michel presides over both; busy chap, we've seen him several times before. "Oublier" means "to forget"; how you can have a pastry-forgetter I do not know. More of immediate interest is that those same three horns appear on a number of English 17th cent tokens, and thus almost certainly place their issuer's trade. The oublieurs were considerate enough to date their piece; Fig.nn is 1508, and Figs.nn-nn 1538. Interesting that they made two different varieties in one year.



Gaufriers are apparently waffle-makers, and the long-handled grid-shaped irons which with they are made flank the shield on the reverses. Forgeais reckons that Figs.23-24 are 15th cent and Figs.25-26 16th cent, although apart from St.Michel's posture I am not sure that I can see much stylistic difference. All sword-wielding athleticism on most pieces, St.Mick is taking a break on Fig.24, as if to say, "that's another dragon gone". I'm still trying to work out whether he's naked, too; but we'll forgive him, it must be hot work killing dragons. Fig.27 has a modern date; pity someone has nibbled off the last two digits.



{continued overleaf}

Have just discovered another gaufrier piece {Fig.28}; this one does feel stylistically different. 16th cent again, apparently. Design of flanking waffle tools accords with Fig.25 but not with the others; is that significant? Those evenly-spaced notches are intriguing; if this was a communion token, that would be table 3. Perhaps it means oven 3; just a thought, even pastrycooks might have officina numbers. Alternatively, it could be an invalidation mark? Or a special piece for an imperfectly sighted pastrycook? Options endless, although one thing is certain; they aren't accidental.

{to be continued}

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Lead Tokens in the Scottish Border Country

My thanks to Alan Donaldson for these three pieces from Melrose, found in an area not normally associated with crude lead. Melrose has an abbey, so it could well be that they are something to do with the ecclesiastical community there. The crosses give Figs.1,2 the appearance of being late mediaeval, although it must be remembered that some of the stock designs lingered on and can still be found at quite a late date.



Figs.1,2 seem to fit the traditions of crude lead well enough, even if the local rendering is stylistically different; you could find either reverse elsewhere, if not usually as delicately manufactured as on Fig.1. The obverse of this piece is decidedly unusual in execution; one cannot make out with certainty whether it is a monogram {HH}, or a lis upside down, a doodle, or a statement of value {III}. Ted Fletcher thinks it might be two matchstick men. The wide double-band is interesting, and appears on both sides of Fig.2, albeit in one case as a part of the cross. I will guess that they are by the same maker, of similar date, and that that might be his trademark.

Fig.3 is a seemingly anonymous Melrose communion token {Burzinski.7315/6}, which illustrates well how CTs can not always be distinguished from crude lead used for other purposes. The piece is not as devoid of clues as it looks, however; the design is believed to be a rebus, made up of a hammer or mallet {Latin MAL-leus} and a ROSE. Readers may like to look for other examples, on tokens of any series; we have seen before that some of the 17th cent issuers were not averse to a pun.

It would be easy to conclude that, as Scotland does not normally produce many lead tokens other than CTs, that Figs.1,2 are imports from south of the border; however, I favour the abbey theory. I would welcome receiving any other reports of crude lead found in Scotland, or other unusual areas.

...and a Scottish one that lived Further Away

The owner of the piece on the right had had it for 40 years and had come to the conclusion that, because of the decorative floral sprig at the bottom on both sides, it must be a Kentish hop token. It is clearly better formed than most crude lead and, whilst the triad might have the quality of a 17th cent London pewter, it very clearly isn't. The date is 1756, however, and that is eleven years earlier than the first dated piece in Alan Henderson's book on hop tokens; which raises suspicion, but where to go next?



The "M" made me suspicious; it might be a surname initial, but it might just stand for "Minister"; which indeed prove to be the case. A quick look in Burzinski confirmed that the piece was a CT rather than a hop token, and that we could immediately move its supposedly Kentish provenance to Lundie & Foulis, 500 miles away in Angus. It is a communion token; M/IA stands for "Minister, James Anderson", and the "202" is the serial number of somebody on the electoral roll. The latter feature, used by the larger churches as an alternative administrative device to table numbers, is quite rare outside the big cities.