

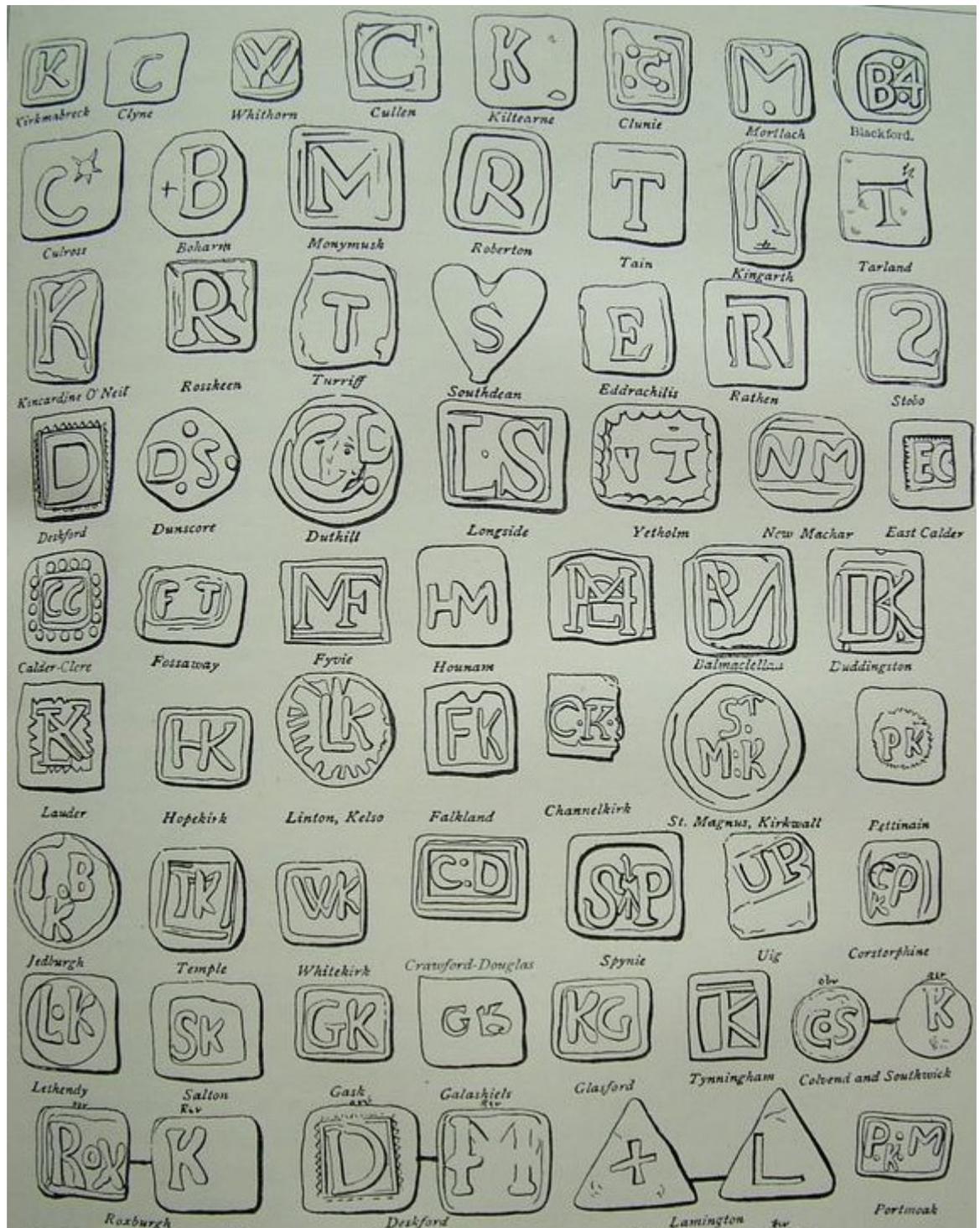
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A free newsletter to all who share our interest in these fascinating and often enigmatic pieces. Please send the editor at least one 300 dpi JPEG scan, or a sharply focused photo print, of any interesting leaden token or tally in your collection. Send images as email attachments to dmpowell@waitrose.com or david@powell8041.freeze.co.uk. Please note that the old LTT editor@aal.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

The Passing of the Years

It has been our custom in some previous December and January issues to see in the New Year with a display of communion tokens, mainly lead, in order that readers may contrast these local issues from north of the border with lead issued, albeit for rather different purposes, in England. This year we show a display of early pieces c.1650-1710 from Rev.Thomas Burns' "Old Scottish Communion Plate" {Edinburgh, 1892}; undated ones this month, dated ones next.

Xmas Greetings to all our Readers!



The Variety of mid-17th Century Reverses: Types 17-18

We continue here our discussion on the variety of subject matter types on 17th cent tokens, and in particular the contrast between the crude lead and main copper/brass series, as expressed in terms of Powell classification types. As previously stated, due to the small size of most pieces concerned, pictures in this sequence of articles will continue to be magnified 3:2

Type 17

For the main series, Williamson keeps his trees {Figs.1-4} anonymous and only the oak, a notable symbol of royalty, gets regularly singled out. One or two other specific examples exist, but very rarely, e.g. walnut. Trees as a whole are reasonably numerous, but the bush, which occurs very frequently on crude lead, is not; Williamson cites the hawthorn,



holly and rose once each. Similarly the various component parts, sprigs, branches, leaves and the like, occur once or twice apiece, and are much rarer than on crude lead. As they are not obvious business signs, we have therefore to ask what their significance is on the crude lead where they occur so commonly. Are they agricultural symbols, in some way related to the tasks for which they were given? Perhaps one should view them as generic types for use on pickers' tokens.

Apples, pears and grapes {Fig.5} are the only edible fruits to occur on main series 17th cent pieces; the latter being the commonest, and perhaps chosen by premises engaged in the wine trade. The grapes are usually in bunches, and sometimes whole vines are depicted; I have not seen them on crude lead....unless some of those groups of pellets in type 30 are an attempted rendering?

The only non-edible fruit recorded by Williamson is the acorn; several examples, but probably symbolic again of royal sympathies, suggesting that the young Charles II is the acorn from which the restored monarchy would grow.



Vegetables are rare, the main series recording only one example each of cauliflower and artichoke. There are seven examples of thistles, which rather than relating to anything agricultural could indicate that their issuers had Scottish connections. The Glastonbury Thorn {Fig.6} is another rare example which could actually be mistaken for a bunch of grapes; not that one would expect any lead equivalents, for that is an area much further west than most lead findspots.



The moderately frequent presence of a variety of flowers {Figs.7-8} on the main 17th cent series is somewhat enigmatic, in a period where the lives of the more humble section of the population who used them was more concerned with things functional than decorative; floristry at this time would surely be considered as something more confined to the gentry, and kept for the most part behind their walled gardens. Sometimes they are in vases {Fig.8}. A few flowers only are contenders for either trade signs or heraldic symbolism, leaving the rest apparently unaccounted for; or were they more



widely used as trade symbols, and personal badges, than we might think from today's surviving business signs? Imagine going to a pub called "The Daffodil"!



Flowers, discounting the stylised stock type 1 and the royal rose, are even rarer on lead, perhaps indicating that trade in them was small. Most of the leaden type 17s we see are small bushes; Figs.9-13 show different levels of realism. Often they are highly stylised as per Fig.14, and on occasion this is taken to extreme, with horizontal arms making the depicted item look more like the top of a telegraph pole than a bush.

Fig.15 is a welcome departure from crude lead's type 17 norm, depicting a sprig rather than a bush; however, it is probably early 18th cent, and thus rather later than the other pieces.

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Type 18

Birds are a much beloved type on both the main and lead series, and indeed are to be found in moderate numbers for nearly a century before the Williamson period and for over a century after. On the main series the Swan, the Cock and the Eagle are, in that order, the commonest; the first two being common trade symbols, and the third a frequent heraldic component. Found in smaller numbers as choices for copper/brass farthing and halfpenny pieces are the following:

- Commonplace: Choughs, Doves, Finches, Magpies, Martins, Pigeons, Ravens, Rooks, Sparrows, Swallows, Wrens {Figs.16-17}
- Poultry: Ducks, Geese, Cocks, Hens, Turkeys {Fig.18}
- Game: Peacocks, Pheasants, Woodcocks
- Birds of prey: Eagles, Falcons, Hawks, Vultures {Fig.19}
- Exotic: Canaries, Cockatrices, Cranes, Ostriches, Pelicans, Storks {Fig.20}
- Heraldic: Martlets

OK, rather more of the first group would be eaten than are today, and perhaps a few of the exotic have a symbolic reason for being, but on the whole relatively few are business signs which we would see now. We met this phenomenon in type 17 above, and will meet it again in type 19; and, as things were rarely done without reason in these times of hard necessity, I am fast reaching the conclusion that, in days when more business signs were needed than currently, a wider range of subject matter was needed than now to accommodate them.

Birds on 17th cent main pieces are almost always identifiable, at least by someone with ornithological skills; on lead, whilst some are, quite a few are not. Having said which, it should be remarked that the standard of execution of birds {type 18} on lead is, on average, considerably higher than those of animals {type 19}, as we shall see next month. Of the birds mentioned above, the Swan and Cock are frequent on leads of this and later date, whereas the Eagle mainly



tends to appear earlier. Ducks and geese are usually recognizable, and are the two species to occur noticeably more often on lead than in the main series. A large number of other leaden birds look vaguely domestic and familiar; a few predators and gamebirds appear rarely, and even the odd long-legged wader, but exotic species are almost wholly absent.

Some of these pieces are no doubt traders' signs, as per their Williamson counterparts, but others are quite possibly to do with the trade in foodstuffs {supply and transport, as well as selling}. Some may be connected to the control of vermin, which at this time certain of these birds were considered to be; concerning which, please see the earlier article in LTT_36 {Mar 2008}.



Key to 17th cent main series tokens:

| | |
|---|--|
| 1. Suff.222, John Stagoll of Laxfield | 7. Worcs.57, John Lacey of Evesham |
| 2. Suss.48, Thomas Godleman, Chichester | 8. Dev.10, Axminster town piece |
| 3. Glos.159, Samuel Bubb of Stroud | 16. Surr.274, John Otter of Rotherhithe |
| 4. Lond.1112, Thomas White, Cripplegate | 17. Suff.361, Henry Stebbing of Woodbridge |
| 5. Kent 418, William Kempster of Milton | 18. Lond.27, Nicholas Cook, Aldersgate St. |
| 6. Som.147, Henry Gutch, Glastonbury | 19. Glos.44, Cirencester town piece |
| | 20. Not in Williamson or Dickinson |

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Distribution of Dated Lead Pieces

Comments are sometimes made in these pages about the dating of British crude lead. Obviously the number of pieces which bear dates is very much a minority, and the practice did not gain favour until a certain stage anyway, but readers may be interested to see the distribution of a collection of 75 dated pieces, from which all obvious seals and foreign pieces had been removed:

| | | | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|----|-----------|---|
| 1540-1619 | 2 | 1680-1699 | 3 | 1760-1779 | 9 |
| 1620-1639 | 2 | 1700-1719 | 16 | 1780-1799 | 4 |
| 1640-1659 | 4 | 1720-1739 | 13 | 1800-1819 | 3 |
| 1660-1679 | 1 | 1740-1759 | 15 | 1820-1849 | 3 |

In terms of centuries, the 16th-19th cents produced, respectively, 2, 10, 57 and 6. No surprises there; we have always known that the 18th century's dated pieces were predominant.

From the time when dating became the norm on regal coins and main series tokens, around the time of the Commonwealth and the introduction of Charles II's milled series, c.1649-62, it may be reasonably expected that the proportion of date-bearing crude lead remains fairly unchanged; i.e. that the above figures may be construed as a fair indication of the relative sizes of the crude lead issues as a whole. OK, a larger statistical sample uninfluenced by the collecting preferences of its compiler would be better, but it is good enough to give the gist.