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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.freesevive.co.uk. Please note that the old *LTT* Editor@aal.com address advertised on some earlier versions of *LTT* is no longer active.

Picture Gallery



A nice little group of Thames finds this month, magnified by 3:2 as we have done often recently with these tiny pieces; all are within the 11-13mm range and are probably 16th cent. Figs.1-3 have shield obverses, of which there are a great variety in this series. Fig.1 shows the theme at its simplest, displaying just an inverted chevron, but it has the advantage of clarity over Fig.3, whose indentation hole does not help us to appreciate the detail. Fig.2 is rather more unusual, showing a star and crescent on its shield; presumably meant to be the sun and moon respectively, although the likeness of the crescent to a mouth gives it a rather comical appeal. Fig.4, delicately drawn on both sides, appears to have a crossbow on its obverse, although a small sailing vessel is not impossible.

The reverses are interesting too. Figs.1,3,4 depict, respectively, a ewer {jug}, a hand and a bell. All are delicate, and one must ask whether, being found together, they originated in the same workshop. The hand reverse of Fig.3 is not unknown with a coin in it, symbolic of small change in a commercial environment and alms in an ecclesiastical one; but alas, the invalidation hole is where the coin would be.

Figs.5-7 are just a touch less pewtery and, despite their lesser diameter, on average a little heavier. In other words, they contain more lead. I suggest they are probably later, touching 1600, and indeed, with three initials, Fig.5 is likely to be. This is how triads were first rendered on London lead, before the flans were large enough for the familiar arrangement. Fig.6 is uniface, but depicts nevertheless a pleasant rendering of a crown, which was no doubt the business name of its issuer. The attempt to render W as doubled Vs as in Fig.7 is common, although this is not exactly the neatest attempt; is "1" on the back a second initial, or a value?

The provenance of Figs.8-9 is a little more uncertain, but they are probably early 17th cent. Fig.8a is what appears to be a W sitting on a line, but let us see it the other way up; sure enough, it is one of those old-styled chevron-barred "A"s! The newer "A" tends to take over during the course of the late 16th and early-mid 17th cent, although a



few later ones are known. Fig.9 is what is often referred to as a "klippe", better known in Scandinavian coinage of the same date although the phenomenon is also found in association with the Harrington, Lennox, Matravers etc farthings, of 1613-48 over here. Basically, the design is stamped out on to a round sheet, which is then roughly hacked up into approximate squares...which aren't always very square, as you will see! Sometimes these pieces are rounded off with cutters, other times left as they are. This one could be a weight.

What Constitutes a Hop Token?

Hops are traditionally thought of as being primarily associated with Kent, but the issue is wider than that, as an excellent little article by D.C.D.Pocock, “Some Former Hop Growing Centres” {British Agricultural History Society”, 1965 {Vol.13, part 1}, explains. He deems the following counties worthy of mention:

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| SE England: | Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hants |
| West Midlands: | Worcs, Herefordshire |
| Other: | Notts, Suffolk, Essex |

Pocock quotes figures to illustrate the decline, fall and relative importance of the different hop-farming areas, and his main purpose is to explore in some detail the history of the minor, lesser-known ones. There are a couple of maps, which define the particular localities concerned, and which those of you who come from Notts, Suffolk or Essex may care to consult in order to consider whether, in fact, some of your lead pieces may not be the hop tokens of those areas. The article is online on the BAHS website at www.bahs.org.uk/13n1a2.pdf

I have been shown a number of lead tokens from the small area on the Surrey/Hants border round Farnham; whether they are hop or not I do not know, but apart from one or two slight idiosyncrasies of design they do not stand out from the main body of crude lead. Some of the areas outside the South-East also experimented with card tokens {East Anglia} and counterstamped tin/brass {Worcs/Herefs}, but nowhere else other than Kent and East Sussex is there such a long-running and well-ordered series, with known issuers' identities and values, as Alan Henderson has put together in his book on the subject. It is not surprising, for the hop output of those 1½ counties increasingly dwarfed the rest of the country put together. So much so that, for numismatists, the term “Hop Tokens” is generally taken to refer to the issues of those two counties specifically.



Alan's is an excellent book, and he has covered what he knows and can geographically locate. There is a lot of known historic findspot data, and some manufacturers' archives survive. The farmers give the author a fair runaround with all their movings, mergers and takeovers, but for the most part he has kept a handle on it quite nicely for a period extending back to, say, the end of the 18th cent. There, things start to get a bit murky, and the confirmed tokens start to get fewer and farther between. By about 1770, one gets the impression that that is the end of the known hop token universe. However, hops had been in Kent since the early 16th cent and there were by the 1770s the best part of 20,000 acres under cultivation in the area, rising to about 60,000+ at the end of the Henderson period; so, there is a fair bet that there were quite a few tokens around before the ones which Alan formally lists.

Alan states as much, and illustrates a few crude leads as samples. The game for us, as crude lead enthusiasts who may have a mix of provenanced and unprovenanced pieces, is to guess which of them actually come from Kent and Sussex, and may therefore be missing pieces in the jigsaw puzzle. Of course, if you happen to be a detectorist, you can influence whether they are provenanced by recording the findspot, which is a great help, but let's not get too much into that!

So, quiz coming up: which of this lot are Kent/Sussex and which are not? My conjectures in the text following; probably right for the most part, but not guaranteed. Have a browse and guess before reading on.



Kentish hop tokens, and those of East Sussex as well, have a tendency to be small and neat, in the same way that early 16th London leads tend to be small and neat. Some of them, however, are smaller and neater than others; and occasionally one is very definitely not. So, what about Figs.1-7? I quite strongly fancy Fig.1 as being hop; Fig.2 is perhaps the least convincing. Most of the others are fairly well-formed, but most have some slight lack of symmetry; does that matter? I'm open-minded on most of them, whilst feeling that the odds are good. All are uniface except Fig.4, whose reverse consists of two or three concentric circles with something tiny in the middle. What is it? The alternatives would seem to be (i) pellet, (ii) letter P, for penny, or (iii) the numeral 1, again indicating a value. I favour the last-mentioned, which would be in keeping with the way the hop series subsequently developed.

Moving on, Fig.7, again uniface, contrasts with Figs.31-32 overleaf, both known Henderson pieces; I would guess that it is of not dissimilar date, and possibly even by the same maker. I am pretty certain that Fig.8 is also hop; I haven't bothered to illustrate the second side, but note there that the two are identical, which is another frequent feature of later low value pieces. Likewise I think Fig.9 is hop; it is very neat. Fig.10 possibly, I'm not so sure. On Fig.9, a date has appeared alongside a fairly formal font; early, but a feature which is going to become more common as the years go by.

With Fig.11 we come to more exotic script initials; in both the hop and CT series there are a number of these, and monograms, although neither are that numerous. With CTs this script writing tends to date mostly around 1790-1820; on hop, it tends to predominate on the early-mid 19th cent white metal pieces. I'll guess that this one is somewhere around 1800-20. It's reverse is interesting; an actual attempt at a hop plant. It looks somewhere between a type 1 petal piece and a type 9 irregular geometric, but it is actually a very individual and perhaps even quite realistic type 17. A stem and set of leaves, the latter not merely stereotyped petals, may be clearly seen.



With Figs.12-14 we come to numbers, in these three example combined with letters. I suspect that these are probably later than some of those pieces which feature initials alone, although in the hop series even those sometimes run on quite late. Beaded edges are not over-common on hop tokens, especially ones drawn in so disciplined and regular manner as this, so attribution to the series must be dubious....but certainly possible! G on one side, two more initials on the other ; that is probably our old friend the triad, with the surname and forename initials split between two sides to make way for the number. 3 is a moderately common number to find on a hop token; sometimes occurring with the initials, at other times initials on one side, number on the other. Fig.13 is a clearer, but cruder, example of the same idea. It is uniface, and comes from Romney Marsh.

Fig.14 depicts "S VI", which may mean six shillings, over something rather worn which is probably a plant but may be an inscription. Roman numerals are not however normal on any lead, let alone hop tokens specifically, and it may be that "VI" is a retrograde N to go with the similarly reversed S on the left. The reverse is a traditional 5-petal, rather than the blanks which we have been encountering on most these pieces above.



So far, none of the above pieces have been in Henderson, which for the most part shows pieces rather less crude, if still very plain, than the bulk of our crude lead. The heritage can be seen, however, and Figs.15-21 following are all known, provenanced pieces in Alan's book. They are not so very far different from the unknown ones we have discussed above. Note, too, the innocuous little twinkle above the letters on Fig.20; it had been occurring for years on crude lead, before this piece was made. You may have noticed another one above the "F" in Fig.6.

Similarly with those pieces which bear numbers only; Figs.22-23 are in Henderson, whereas Figs.24-30 are unknowns. How much difference is there between Figs.22-23 and Figs.27-28? Of the unknown pieces, Figs 24,26, the only two which are uniface, are probably by the same maker and for the same issuer, and likewise Figs 25,29, which both have the triad S/IM on the reverse. The remaining three all have an initial, or two, on their second side.



Interestingly the two Henderson-listed value-only pieces {Figs.22-23} are both uniface; does the lack of any initials therefore hint that, without that sophistication, they are perhaps earlier than some of the others? Not at all; progress comes gradually, and is not uniform across the board. A trend comes in, but is not universally implemented; old preferences may linger in some pockets a good while longer. There is a fuzzy boundary between what is known and provenanced, as published in Henderson, and what is unknown and undocumented. I believe that the two categories overlap both in date and style, even if the unknowns are for the most part earlier.

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Finally, we move on to a few larger pieces, which because of their greater scope for expression often reveal themselves as more obviously hop, even where they have not previously been known. Two of the group below are in Henderson, the other three have come to light in the last few years. Before reading on, guess which is which....



Answer: I've swapped them round this time and, in contrast to above, shown you the two Henderson piece before the unknowns!

So, think hop, especially if you finds come from the south-east corner of England, and try and work out which of them might be part of this series. I am in touch with Alan Henderson, so please record your findspots and I will be delighted to pass on to him, for the benefit of us all in the future, any new examples which come to light. Plus, yes, I'd like to put them in LTT in passing!