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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](mailto:dmpowell@waitrose.com) or [david@powell8041.freesevce.co.uk](mailto:david@powell8041.freesevce.co.uk). Please note that the old LTT editor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

## The Passing of the Years

As last year we are seeing in Christmas and the New Year with a display of communion tokens from Rev. Thomas Burns' "Old Scottish Communion Plate" {Edinburgh, 1892}; this month's selection homes in on pieces with ministers' initials. Readers may contrast these local lead issues from north of the border with those issued, albeit for rather different purposes, in England.

*Xmas Greetings to all our Readers!*



## 18th Century Gentry Pieces

There is a certain family of 18th cent lead which looks as if it has aristocratic connotations, which is certainly possible if it was manufactured as the local money of a large estate; or, indeed, if the land-owner wished to control access rights to his various lands and premises by means of passes. A higher than average number of such pieces are dated, usually in the middle of the century.



Well-to-do families often had coats of arms, so heraldry, either in the form of a full shield or of an individual component from it, is a likely indicator. Fig.1 is a typical example. Fig.2 is even more a gentry piece; those elaborate flourishes top and bottom, on both sides, almost certainly increase the odds. Fig.3, uniface, is superficially uncertain; the heraldic lion could in theory indicate a pub/business sign, but somehow one feels that a ducal estate is more likely. Would a pub owner have had the inclination, or assets to the necessary engraving skills to design a piece this well? By and large, we tend to think of most “pub-sign” pieces as being quite small and a bit earlier, whilst the later, larger pieces tend to be cruder and more anonymous; but whether this is over-stereotyping is open to debate. As usual with lead, nothing is quite certain.

Some rich and wealthy landowners became such by virtue of their military connections; just look at the breeding of that horse in Fig.4, with its smartly-attired owner on its back. One thing is certain; that horse never pulled a plough, or drew a cart to market. It could conceivably be for military rather than agricultural use; a pass for access to the regimental stables, perhaps, for the grooms. Who knows? This particular piece, which is uniface, is not uncommon; I have seen several examples.



Fig.5 is a larger size piece in the same vein as Figs.1-3, with, on the unshown reverse, some large and neat initials {WC} of a format which would not look out of place in the Kentish hop series. For this diameter, it is quite thin. A number of these gentry pieces are big and brash, as if trying to convey their owner’s personality; particularly, those which speak of the hunt. Fig.6, the issue of another and very different WC is similarly modest in its reverse design, initials only, but the stag on the obverse gives some hint as to its owner’s purpose and/or interests. The mould is not very deeply cast, and the date flanking, possibly 1725 {or retro 1752}, is rather lost in consequence; a pity, given the unusual design, that the engraver did not take more trouble.

Nothing quiet or modest about the uniface Fig.7, or the splendid crown-size piece of John Collins {Fig.8}, however; the latter, in particular, suggests that the owner wanted his name known to the heavens. Fig.8



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depicts the squire, Mr. Collins presumably, riding to hounds. Evidence of a similarly sanguine, rumbustious personality is displayed by whoever issued Fig.9, which comes from around the Retford/Newark area. Most names and initials on tokens at least mean what they say, when you get given any, and there are obviously some people called Tom Lob(b); however, Ted Fletcher has pointed me out some online evidence that this name was once used for a semi-fictional, semi-mythological character of somewhat Falstaffian disposition. A bit like the way John Bull, Joe Public and Joe Soap are used now, perhaps, except that Tom Lobb had probably had quite a lot more to drink. Perhaps more like the Jester in a group of Morris dancers, unwinding at the end of a session; but in any case, someone who does

not look as if he is taking life very seriously. If for some reason this issuer did want to keep an apparent anonymity, be in no doubt that the locals would have known who he was.

Fig.10-11, by contrast, depict not the rider but the hounds themselves. Not all the hunting fraternity advertised themselves so loudly as Mr. Collins; Fig 10 is much quieter but, like the horse in Fig.4 overleaf, both the dress of the man and the deportment of the animal speak volumes concerning the social status of its issuer. Those with knowledge of period clothing may care to date the gentleman depicted, whilst animal-lovers may wish to confirm or deny the suggestion put to me that the dog is a talbot.



Fig.11 shows a dog allowed off its leash and, freed of formal requirement, allowed to enjoy itself a little more; depicted bounding into the distance, one fancies that there might be a fox in the offing. This piece also is uniface; for all their status, neither of the issuers of Figs.10-11 volunteered their initials. I wonder if, for some of the gentry, it was thought common, or impolite, to do so?

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One style which does crop up from time to time is that of the 17th cent farthing, magnified up occasionally to proportions which can even be almost crown-sized. These are perhaps men who were more modest and more conservative in their ways than some, and preferred the simplicity of just stating their name on the piece, in the time-honoured way to which the main 17th cent series had introduced them; namely, name round the edge, some small device of one's choice in the middle. We may be grateful to them for, unlike the many who put just their initials, or not even that, we at least know who they are.



The main 17th cent tokens circulated copiously throughout most of the major towns of the country, so that even if there weren't any for your own particular village you were likely to encounter someone's whenever you went into town to market; so, the decision to persist with their basic design for lead issuers was not surprising. Even a century on, there would be the odd ones lying around in people's homes, and would-be lead issuers who could remember older folk talking of them.

Fig.12 is clearly a seal, but it is in the style described; John Clitsome chose his surname initial for the centre, but the name around tells us all we need to know. Being a seal there is, of course, no meaningful design on the back. We don't know what Mr.Clitsome's social status was, but it wasn't every

Tom, Dick and Harry who used seals, so we will assume he was moderately high up the pecking order; a yeoman farmer at the very least. The piece comes from the Quantocks.

The next two come from Berkshire, somewhere around Didcot; perhaps the issuers knew each other, or were at least familiar with each other's pieces. Richard George {not that he spelt it that way, Fig.13}, used the standard type 1 petals as the central motif within his inscription, and quite effective it looks too; you don't find those on the Williamson series, so the design is a one-off despite its components being individually very common. John Boniwell's piece {Fig.14} is very modestly sized so perhaps he was just the publican of a village inn called the Crown. Thomas Chowne's piece



{Fig.15} by contrast is nearer the other end of the scale, Georgian halfcrown size, which perhaps indicates the intended value; not many village folk handled those. The reverse, however, is quiet; an artistically but weakly drawn tree, with more realistic branches than most.



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## *This Really Takes the Biscuit*

We have something seasonal for you, thanks to reader Peter Goebel, who found Fig.1 in a book called "The Magic of Fire", by a contact of his, William Rubel. A nice type 1 six-petal, you are thinking, with a grenetis? Certainly, a design which could happily adorn a crude lead; but no, this is not a token, it is a *tigelle*. A what? you've never heard of them; neither had I. Sounds like the female version of a wild animal species; but no, our good friend Wikipedia reveals all, as usual: "a *Tigelle* is an Italian small, round, thickish flat bread that is traditional in Modena. Moreover, Mr.Rubel is not the author of a numismatic work, but a *cookery* book! I kid you not; Peter has sent me the first page of the recipe to prove it, and this fine design is what you finish up with if you bother to decorate the finished article with traditional artistry.



Christmas is upon us yet again, and with it all manner of pleasant edible goodies; including, for some of us no doubt, shortbread. Have you ever looked at shortbread in a tin and contemplated how many of the designs are near to those on lead and other simple tokens? Herewith some from last year's supply: a nice type 4 lis {Fig.2}, a rather bawbee-looking thistle, for those of you know the main Scottish coinage {Fig.3}, and an upright cross which would not look too far out of place on a CT {Fig.4}. Look closely and you may even see the sugar on them. There was also a type 3 seven-spoked cart-wheel and a number of fine type 16 shields in our tin, but unfortunately they all got decirculated, i.e. eaten, before I got round to photographing them.

So, when you get to the other end of December, start looking.... Do mail us if you encounter any other interesting examples! and if you get fed up with trying to practice the classification system on them, do ponder why biscuits and tokens should share similar designs. Answers welcome!