

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 Please note that the old LTTeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

The 18th Century Sophistication of the Stock Design

As is well known to everyone familiar with British crude lead, there are a small number of common stock designs which occur in great quantity. These begin in the late 16th cent and continue throughout the 17th and 18th until, or almost until, the end of the series c.1840-50. To recap in terms of the classification system types, these are:

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Petals | 12. Quartered geometrics |
| 3. Cartwheels, with or without rings | 14. Crosses, with or without pellets |
| 4. Lis/tridents/feathers | 30. Single geometric shapes {except circles} |
| 5. Anchors | 31. Circles and ellipses |
| 7. Grids | |

Obviously, many of these pieces are very plain, particularly in the early years; dare one say even tedious. Many of them remain so, but not all, and one interesting and quite attractive feature of the 18th cent is that engravers were increasingly willing to develop and impose their own variants on these common themes. Quite a number of these pieces are formed simply by superimposing two or more of the simpler designs {e.g. petals, cartwheels and crosses} on top of each other; which, with play on the subsidiary pellets and rings as well, makes for a lot of potential variety.



That such pieces tend on the whole to be larger, argues for a late 18th cent or even early 19th cent date; most are at least halfpenny size, whilst one or two are clearly from cartwheel penny days. Of the ones shown, only Figs.1-2 look pewtery. These are possibly the oldest, with Fig.2 also being the simplest, and hence least removed from the original design. Fig.3 is possibly next in sequence, in terms both of date and sophistication. Fig.11 looks a little tinny and is possibly a foreign intruder, but figs.4-10 are all fairly definite halfpenny-size 18th cent pieces.



It would be interesting to know if the majority of these more artistic renderings came from any one section of the community, e.g. gentry estates.

It could be argued that the three largest pieces, Figs.12-14 overleaf, quite possibly have a minimum date of 1787; since that is the time that chunky pennies came in, first with the Condor series of 18th

cent tokens, before being introduced into the regal coinages of 1797/99 and 1806/07. On the other hand, none of Figs.12-14 are particularly thick, so perhaps they belong 20-30 years earlier and are intended to mimic the halfcrown and crown as per the gentry pieces shown in LTT_80 {Dec 2011}.



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Readers' Correspondence

Tony Gilbert has kindly written in regarding some of the pieces shown in recent issues. On page 1 of LTT_83, I should have said that the heraldry depicted in Fig.1 is the royal coat of arms of the period, i.e. that of James I and Charles I. Regarding the "lettered quarters" article on page 5 of the same issue, Tony favours the would-be crown being either a belt buckle {indicating a leatherworker} or a Lombardic letter E. I can go along with either of those, but favour the latter. He also remarks that Fig.14 could be a carpenter's or builder's piece, since three of the quarters arguably depict a set square, a trestle and a double ladder. For convenience, I show these last two pictures again.



Concerning the Cotchinel piece on the front of LTT_84, Tony points out that I have accidentally let MS Publisher invert the pictures! Sorry, didn't pick that one. Herewith the piece the correct way round. Could probably have got away with it, given that so much crude lead lettering is retrograde anyway; however, it is not in this case. Tony, who loves old books, has also found the following obscure definition: Halliwell's 'Dictionary of Archaic Words, 1850', gives COTCHEL - a sack partly full (South of England)." In other words, he is opening up the possibility that it could be a sack token, and certainly the hole, for the string which might tie said sack, is consistent with that. Sack tokens were a particular feature of Cornwall, and can also be found for the London markets. Herewith a selection:



Concerning this subject, Brian Edge writes interestingly in his "First Dictionary of Paranumismatica":

"Mill owners, corn dealers etc found themselves in the position of having to provide sacks, not only for their own use, but also for the use of many small farmers, in order to enable them to bring their produce to the mill. These sacks were expensive to produce and it seems that the best incentive to ensure their return to the owner was to collect a cash deposit on all sacks taken away.

In order to prevent sacks being returned for repayment of the deposit by anyone other than the hirer, a token was issued with every sack hired. In order to reclaim repayment of the deposit, both the sack and the token had to be produced, much in the same way that market tallies were used.”

Reader John Mills has found this pewter Lyon counter of Elizabeth I; one of three main types quite often found, although this one is about as good as they get. One of the others is the type with the crowned rose and double eagle, shown in these pages before {LTT_57, page 2}. They start in 1574 or shortly after, and according to the UK finds website, which has examples of all three, there is documentary evidence to show that the Lyon pieces were well known by at least 1583.



Our regular Dutch contributor, Alex Kussendrager, has written in about a recently published item in the Dutch press concerning a shipwreck discovered in June off the coast of Terschelling, an island in the north of the Netherlands. Many of the goods on the ship were bundled up by tying with a copper thread, to which was attached a lead seal of the type shown. It is thought that the ship might be from Sweden, although that has yet to be ascertained. Anyone seen anything like it?

Also from Alex, this detector find from Sluis, in the Dutch province of Zeeland; diameter 23.5 mm, and the weight a chunky 19.86 grams. Once again, he asks if I, or we, have seen anything similar. One side appears to depict a late mediaeval bishop, but anything of the size and weight given is, in this country, almost invariably much later. What is the item on the reverse? Alex suggests a basket or hamper, but although unconvinced I cannot come up with anything much better. Aerial view of a 3-tined garden leaf-rake? or perhaps some modification of the lis/trident variations which we are so familiar with over here? Once again, any suggestions, or reports of similar findings, welcome.



11 This next one, from John Gough on behalf of owner Gavin Phillips, is interesting. A uniface Nottinghamshire find, it weighs 6.6gm, measures 21mm across, and is 2.9mm at its thickest {not easy to measure, depth}. It looks superficially like the letters C-W flanking an upright figure, but I am wondering whether the W and C are the front and hind quarters respectively of an animal on a previous token on which the standing figure has been overcast? One doesn't usually think overstrikes with lead; I am not sure what would happen if a token was heated up enough to be malleable, but not to melt, and then re-used. Am I being over-imaginative?



Finally, this interesting little armorial piece, probably early 16th cent, found between Maidstone and Ashford; only 14mm, so I am going to cheat and magnify it 3:2, just so that you can see it. It isn't that identifiable even when blown up large, although as both sides are the same you at least have two chances. No prizes for guessing what the animals are, but any advance on the owner's suggestion of "The animals look a bit like a squirrel and a teddy bear, but probably aren't" will be welcome!



Christmas Edition 2012 - Advance Notice

Please note that, despite the fact that LTT has been bi-monthly for most of 2012, there will be editions in both December and January; so, please remember to look out for our Christmas special next month!

The Degeneration of Heraldry on 18th Century Lead

Our chronological series on the evolution of British crude lead, which I regret having had to put on hold during the early part of 2012, has now reached the more degenerate 18th cent period; and with it, the stage at which we have perhaps to say rather less, but sit back and admire and imagine rather more. There will be two more articles to follow this one shortly, one labelled “Late Degenerates” and the other simply “Mysteries”. For this one, however, we can retain at least some reasonable level of knowledge and understanding as to what is going on; the pieces shown are all attempts to imitate type 16, the shield or coat of arms, so beloved of the main series 17th cent {Williamson} tokens.



Not that, given the size of some of the lead pieces here, the 17th cent can wholly escape the blame for producing, in some cases, such unartistic rubbish. There are nevertheless, some good honest attempts amongst them, even if very few users could distinguish the personal arms of their landlord or the guild arms of the issuer's trade from the depiction. Plus, of course, there are also, not shown here, a small number of fine gentry pieces, as discussed in an earlier article in LTT_80 {Dec 2011}. Of the pieces shown below, only Fig.25-26 comes anywhere near their standard.



There are even some pieces in the above selection where one could query whether they have been placed in the right category. For example, at what stage does a type 16 shield become a type 7 grid {Fig.2}, a type 13 framework {Fig.13} or a type 30 unaccompanied simple design {Fig.3}? One makes a guess and lives with it. When we get to the “Late Degenerates” and “Mysteries”, you will have to guess a lot harder; where you fail, they join the doodles in type 9, irregular geometrics!