

Editor: David Powell

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@powell18041.freemove.co.uk. Please note that the old LTTeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.



A Chronological Miscellany, part 1

We celebrate the end of 2013 and the arrival of its successor, as we have once or twice previously, by showing a succession of new material in approximately chronological order from 16th to 18th centuries. Indeed, there is sufficient of it that it may occupy several issues; and then, when that sequence is complete, I will go back to review the mediaeval series, which we have not touched much for a while.

As usual in recent times, all the 16th and 17th cent pieces in this article have been magnified 3:2 for greater visibility; with the exception of the early dated pieces above, which are near life-size to fit our Christmas display. Before leaving these, note that amongst the five there are three which have the date on both sides; which on any coinage, token or main, is fairly scarce. Significantly, the dates on those three are also very close together. The 1579 and 1581 pieces look very much from the same stable, with differences only in very minor points of style.

In the 16th cent even 3:2 enlargement does not make many pieces very sizeable; as shown by Figs.1-4, some of which are only 10mm across. Room enough for two initials maybe but not three, and sometimes only one. One simple design is the order of the day, as per Figs.1-2, but to attempt a rider and horse as in Fig.3 is, at this date and on a flan of this size, remarkable. I have seen three specimens of this piece to date, and one appears to come from a different mould to the other two. Fig.1 looks delightfully jaunty; presumably intended as a sword rather than a cross, it simultaneously conveys the impression of a man walking at a brisk pace, arms swinging swankily, down the road. The sun of Fig.2, no doubt a shop sign, is more conventional.





Figs.5-9 are more of the same; indeed, I see that Fig.6 is another specimen of Fig.3! The 16th cent was very much the age of the merchant mark, and no fewer than three are shown here. Note the transitional Fig.9; initials embodied in a merchant mark, or flanking it. There are a few of these, but they are not over common; where the initials are letters which are composed of straight lines, it is not always easy to deduce whether they are intended as initials or not.

Also worth considering is whether this hybrid of merchant mark and initial is the precursor of the 17th cent Stafford or other knot types, common in the main Williamson series and occurring also occasionally on lead {Figs.10,11}.



Also making their appearance by the second half of the 16th cent are the birds and animals, only previously seen in the mediaeval period in ecclesiastical context as Paschal Lambs and the like; now there are a whole range of domestic animals and the commoner birds to enjoy, not to mention the occasional more exotic creature as well. Sometimes these creatures merge into each other sufficiently to defy identification; Fig.7 is fairly clearly meant to be a hen or cock, but Fig.8 is probably meant to be something rather more domestic than an ostrich. A duck with long legs? A goose with anorexia?



It is a delight to behold the general good order and standard of execution on many of these small pieces {Figs.1-9} between about 1540 to the early 1660s, and we continue the theme with Figs.12-16,17-22. Figs.12-16 are all probably from the early 17th cent, with one or two of them bearing dates and initials to confirm it; the other indicator being that their diameter has crept just slightly up, from 11-12 mm to 13-14mm. When they reach 15mm, put them around 1650, rather than 1600-30.

One piece speaks its date, 1620-something, but unhappily the last digit is lost {Fig.13b}; and I think that that may be another, 1640 or 1647, lurking above the initials in the top two quarters of Fig.12a. The shield of Fig.12 and the dog of Fig.14 look just main series farthings pieces without the inscription, as becomes an increasing tendency.

The uniface Fig.15, bearing the symbols of royalty flanked by initials which may stand for Iacobus Rex, could be either a commemorative or commercial piece struck in honour of that monarch' accession, in which case it would from the first decade of the 1600s; but equally, it could just be the initials of some shopkeeper of royalist sympathies. Commemorative pieces are thought of at that date, and for a good while after, as being something for the well-to-do; but might not the new regime use lead, if it wished to advertise and promote itself to the general populace? However, if monetary, the crowned feathers/fleur-de-lis would fit in well with the small silver pence and twopences of the same period, which



emphasise the union of the Anglo-Scottish monarchy by depicting a rose on one side and a thistle on the other {Fig.16}.



Fig.17, again uniface, could be another example of the evolution of the type of knot mentioned above. One sometimes asks whether pieces of this period which are uniface are one step further down the stage of degeneracy than those which are not; but whilst this might be, the I-R piece of Fig.15 is most decidedly not.



More of the same in Figs.18-20, probably from the 1630s and 1640s, before reaching 15mm and the Williamson period as per some of Figs.21-26 below. Figs.18-19 are, again, main series in style without the inscription; "II" on the obverse is almost certainly initials, probably to be interpreted "JJ", rather than a value. There is hardly a J or a U to be seen in the main series, and one should not expect lead to be any different; whether I or J, U or V is unseen, and Isaac Johnson and Joseph Johnson would both be given the same initials.

The merchant mark, although now in slight decline, is not dead; examples linger throughout the Williamson period, and in places like Colchester they were still very popular for some time to come. Fig.20 is a Thames piece, as are most but not all of the more pewtery pieces shown here. The reverse is curious, and I wondered whether a date might be lurking in the angles, like Fig.12 overleaf; but alas, no such luck, it appears just to be filler.



Some mid-century examples now, with the exception of Fig.26 which might be a trifle earlier; starting with the "quartet of numerals" type which seems to have a range of approximately 1648-1664. It is quite likely that when this reverse finishes, this phase of London lead token issue closes with it.

The triad pieces {Figs.21,23-25} are standard enough, although wear leaves one in some doubt as to whether the IW of W/IM in Fig.25 is a monarch, an academic or a Quaker. Non-conformist traders were often enthusiastic token issuers, and in consequence appear to be disproportionately represented in the main series. However, Quakerism didn't start until 1648, and in this case I favour Henry VIII.

Fig.22 is an oddball; it looks to be employing an early 17th cent size stamp on a mid-17th cent flan; yet, the design feels mid-cent also. Why did the maker just not use the whole flan? It is also the only piece of the group which is uniface. Anchors are sometimes symbolic; does this piece have some different use, such a dockyard pass? As usual, plenty of answers possible, none of them certain.

Fig.26 also stands out; two sets of initials in the 13mm era is decidedly unusual, and it is probably two or three decades earlier than its companions. Also, its subject matter is slightly mysterious. Two traders in partnership, or two officials running an organisation? again, who knows.

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Looking at all these better-executed pieces, from the Elizabethan period onward, it is difficult not to see in them certain common themes whilst simultaneously admiring their variety, and must wonder whether there were not for a hundred years before David Ramage came on the scene, manufacturers who operated from an urban base and sent agents around the country, as he is believed to have done in the Williamson period, selling their wares.

Whilst London was the obvious centre both for their manufacture and use, they do, however, turn up in smaller numbers around the country. Fig.27 is a Yorkshire find, and an intriguing reverse it has too. It is somewhere between a bird and a stag, depending on how much you think has been lopped off the bottom of the flan and whether you think the bits on the back of the head are ears, antlers, main or.... initials! Is it too much to imagine that there is another set of initials, C or E followed by V or P, in addition to the more conventional RB on the obverse? Having answered that, somebody please tell me what they think that object is behind the creature's head. Let's guess at a woolpack, until we can come up with something better.



It is certainly the case that most of the finest pieces of this 1540-1665 subseries do have designs on both sides. A few do not. Is it too presumptuous to think that it may one day be possible to distinguish some of these manufacturers by the style of their lettering, and/or their use or otherwise of reverse designs? Note I say distinguish, not identify; that is a whole new magnitude of difficulty!

To conclude this section on high quality London pieces with something appropriate to the season of cheer and goodwill, here is a nice mid-17c Thames find {Fig.28} depicting a whisky still. We will continue next month with some less artistic and possibly provincial pieces of the same period, largely pure copper rather than lead, before moving on to some issues from the later part of the century.



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We Three Kings of Ireland Are....?

...well, probably not, but the three little pieces below {Figs.1-3} make you think. It is perhaps not that well known that the late mediaeval pennies of Ireland traditionally had the king's head within a triangle, as opposed to the circular frame used in England and Scotland.; as witness this Edward I Waterford penny shown at Fig.4. A few leads also employ this triangle, with some filler instead of an inscription, and whilst the contents of the triangle are clearly not a head, one must ask whether it is purely coincidence that the design was chosen. The pieces below are all the same size, and all the leads have shaded filler passing as a pseudo-inscription. Debatably one might just be a yacht but... coincidence or not?



Ron Kerridge, 1938-2013

It is with great sadness that we have learnt of the death on 13 June of Ron Kerridge, whose fine collection of Sussex pieces featured in our main articles in LTT_23 and 24 {Feb/Mar 2007}. Ron, who lived in Worthing, was a local historian who wrote a number of books about his immediate area, and who in particular collaborated with his fellow Worthing Coin Club colleague Rob de Ruiter on an excellent paperback on the tokens of West Sussex, published in 2009.

Ron was a good friend of lead tokens who enjoyed a sympathetic relationship with his local metal detecting fraternity, and someone whom I was always glad to catch up with at the Token Corresponding Society congress each year. This interest reflects in his book and he devotes a whole chapter to the subject, which not very many authors have been willing to do. In particular, Ron was very interested in the workings of a certain market site near Shoreham.

Ron's co-author Rob de Ruiter has a formal Royal Photographic Society qualification and his depictions in the book are superb; in particular those of the 17th century main series pieces, good examples of which the pair of them have gone to considerable effort to track down. It was, in fact, the effectiveness of Rob's use of magnification in this book which persuaded me to start enlarging the earlier and very small tokens in LTT.

If anyone would like a copy of Ron and Rob's West Sussex token book, I understand that another of their Worthing colleagues, John Newman, is selling them off for a fiver plus p+p; anybody interested, please contact John on johnnewman1@sky.com or 07814-793312. They are excellent value.

Likewise, if anyone out there is interested in the Token Corresponding Society and its annual autumn Congress, please visit our website at <http://www.tokensociety.org.uk/> or mail me {at the usual LTT address, see page 1} for further details. It is a friendly group, and new faces are always welcome.

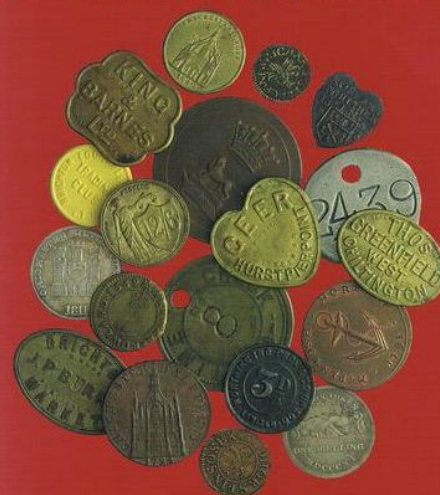
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Readers' Correspondence

It seems very appropriate, given the above, that we have a picture of a recent Shoreham find to hand, kindly mailed in by reader John Lyne. The piece is the size of a later main series 17th cent token but is stylistically much later, with the third numeral of the date looking like a "5", implying the 1750s. It depicts what we generally term a "mill cross"; i.e. it looks like a banded version of the crosses depicted from mediaeval times, but is probably intended to be a set of mill sails. If so, RM will no doubt be the initials of the miller.

Ron Kerridge writes in his book concerning these pieces: "It has been suggested that these tokens may have been used as deposits for sacks of flour taken from the mill {returnable sacks}. There was at least one mill known on the Shoreham site". My inclination is very much to go along with this interpretation. Brass sack tokens are known in the 19th cent in other places {e.g. Cornwall, and the London markets}, and it is very much likely that lead was used for similar purposes before the Industrial Revolution took hold.

THE TOKENS, METALLIC TICKETS, CHECKS AND PASSES OF WEST SUSSEX, 1650-1950.



Three hundred years of paranumismatic and related social history of the county.

Ron Kerridge MA and Rob de Ruiter LRPS

