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 Please note that the old LTTeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Some Lead Tokens in 17th Cent Main Series Style

17th cent lead tokens in main series style are always a matter of interest, and it so happen that we have three to report this month. The first {Fig.1} is a piece of Christopher Flower, a known London draper, and bears on one side his full name and on the other the guild arms of that profession. Perhaps the small fleur-de-lis in the middle is his shop sign. It is 13mm in diameter and weighs 1.44gm. My thanks to Tim Scotney, for sharing some interesting genealogical information about the issuer; from the available evidence, he inclines to an issue date c.1650-52 as being most likely.



You may notice that the edges of the piece are rather banged up; an occasional phenomenon at this date, particularly on the brass and copper tokens, and one even more frequently repeated on various regal coppers of the 18th cent. Debate varies as to the precise purpose of this; the later coppers are generally thought to be love tokens, even when there is no engraving or counterstamping to support the theory. Back in the 17th cent, it is conjectured that they might be either love tokens or weights, but none is really certain.

On the 18th cent love tokens, which are obviously chunkier, it is occasionally the practice to inscribe the edges, but I have never seen anyone attempt it on lead...until this one turned up. The piece is very small and the markings very fine, none of which preserves as well on lead as it does on copper, but there is a very definite hint of something there. Am I just looking at the marks made by pliers as the edge was tooled, or is there something more? they are fairly evenly spaced, and do not all look just like vertical lines. Sorry, I'd love to photograph, but very difficult with the rim of a piece this size!

Fig.2 is a tiny, thin uniface piece found near Crook, Co.Durham. It looks unremarkable, but the three visible numerals of what is obviously the date, 1667, have the style and regular spacing of a typical Williamson series token of that date. Moreover, there is also one of those nice little floral mint marks below, again also a regular main series feature. Alas, only three letters to be read {...R/..AY}; obviously, whoever the issuer was, he obviously had a very short name.

My apologies to regular Dutch correspondent Alex Kussendrager for not featuring Fig.3 before, but I thought that it might be too poor to illustrate. Having seen it you may well still agree with me. 19 mm in diameter, probably single-sided and 1mm thick; found in a field near Ouddorp, a small place in Zeeland, it depicts a heraldic lion rampant left, around which Alex reckons he can make out the text: "GEO..VEN.OF.EXON". I certainly agree with the latter, not sure I can make out the "GEO". Suffice it that Exon is a common short form of Exeter, being an abbreviation of the city's Latin name, and that Venn is a scarce but singularly Devonian surname.



Just a reminder that if anyone would like a copy of Ron Kerridge and Rob de Ruiter's West Sussex token book, as advertised in LTT_94 {Dec 2013}, John Newman still has some going at a fiver plus p+p; anybody interested, please contact John on johnnewman1@sky.com or 07814-793312.

A Chronological Miscellany, Part 3



What better way to start an article on the 18th cent than with a dated piece from its very first year {Fig.1, origin unknown}; although somehow there is something rather French about it, compared with its much more typical and very English counterpart alongside {Fig.2}. Notice the somewhat delicate style of Fig.2, not uncommon on some pieces of the period including a few of those below. Included



amongst these are quite a number of the wildlife pieces, either animals or birds {Figs.3,5,6}, which have been popular for some while now and seem to become even more so. The greyhound of Fig.3 is probably a shop sign, or possibly a hunt-related permit {the former more likely}; he looks lithe, agile and as convincing as the uncertain object of Fig.4 is not. Uninspiring, and on the borders of being consigned to the unknowns, I suggest that the latter is probably an agricultural implement; a plough, harrow or the like. If a plough, it also may be a shop sign.

Two pleasant avian representatives of the finely drawn type at Figs.5,6, followed by a rather chubbier but not the less chirpy specimen at Fig.7a; they all seem to be enjoying life. Note the radial dashes on Fig.7; no doubt a relic of the sometimes fairly large beading on 17th cent main series tokens, and at the same time a forerunner of the minute beading which has continued on regal coinage into very modern times. Note the lis with which our feathered friend is paired {Fig.7b}; again, fairly delicate.

Fig.8 shows a very different type of lis; both wildlife and stock types come in many different guises, and one could if one was minded put together a varied collection of any single one of them, for all their superficial sameness. This piece is defined by its three rather prominent rims, two on one side and one on the other; somehow that 6-petal looks more attractive with its band around, than if it occupied the whole field. This empty band around the edge between inner and outer rims is sometimes called the Durham ring, because it often seems to be a feature of those parts; and sure enough, this piece is from Walkworth, Northumberland, which is not far distant.

Figs.9,10 seem almost to borrow their subjects from the coins of antiquity, e.g. the altar of Constantine or the fire-



altar of the Sassanians, but surely that cannot be; nevertheless, it is worth contemplating whether a brazier, a relatively unusual subject, is intended. Fig.11 shows another fine-lined bird, by someone less skilled, although his effort at a plough, rake or whatever on the reverse is a little better. Again, it looks a mystery, until one appreciates the hooked blades on the right hand side.



Fig.12 looks an absolute jumble, but it is amazing how some pieces with a few seemingly random lines generate plenty of character. It is not a cartwheel, because nothing is straight, but one can see in those flailing limbs possibilities of a variety of vivacious, young animal life. There are too many limbs, of course, and no head, but don't let that put you off; one can imagine a puppy, for example, in that skittish mood. Tilt it 45 deg clockwise and you might even imagine a drunk waving his hands around. Perhaps a cock with protruding feathers would better account for all those lines... or maybe it is just a badly drawn sun or star!



Fig.13 is a better example of mankind making merry; we will take him for a country squire, although what his choice of reverse is I am not sure. One of those main series woolpacks, also used as a mint-mark on hammered silver, is about as near as I can guess, but it is not convincing. Again, unknown provenance; as also is Fig.14 although, as Fig.15 is known to come from Essex, I will conjecture that this might too. It is very similar in date as well. It is not often that one sees two pieces from different sources which have both the same initials on and a remarkably similar subject and style of reverse; in addition to which, lettering in combination with pictorial subject matter is a pleasant feature, seemingly a little scarce by this mid-18th century date. In the days of Williamson's main series tokens, it was comparatively common.

Fig.16, still mid-18th cent, is a delightful depiction of something, although whether a horse or a bird I am not certain. The previous owner was from East Sussex, although I do not know whether it was a local find. There are still some interesting designs quite late into the 18th cent, although they become rarer. Fig.17 looks somewhat Roman; hint of a Constantinian portrait on one side, and of a VOTA inscription, of similar 4th cent date, on the other. It isn't, however; although not obvious, it is a date, 1780, in a cartouche. It is an unusual rendering of a date on lead, with a nesting bird underneath. If he stood up, he would bang his head.



Fig.18 looks far too thick and chunky for the design which initially come to mind, namely, the very common candlemaker of the Williamson series; but no, the piece is worn, and on a closer look one can see a man with outstretched arms; his tools of trade, if so they be, are to the side, in his hands, rather than out in front. Is he a shepherd, holding a crook? A scarecrow? A watchman, with a light, or a guard barring the way? If the piece was better, it would probably be obvious; the solution to the problem all depends on what he is carrying.

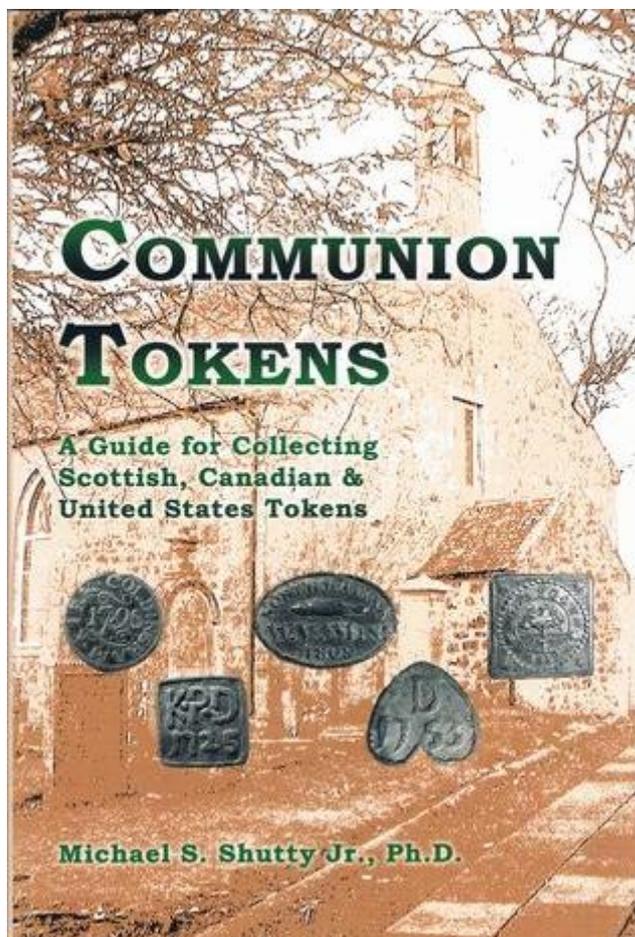
Another popular 17th cent subject in Fig.19, namely, a well-rigged sailing ship, and a particularly nice one at that. This is a pewtery Thames find, and uniface; at 25mm, between farthing and halfpenny size. I suspect it is earlier than most of its similarly-sized companions on this page.

Some Interesting New Lead-Related Websites

It is with pleasure that I bring to your attention, for those of you who have not spotted them already, a couple of other interesting looking websites of which I have recently become aware.

The first, supported by an excellent little paperback book, is Michael Shutty's entertaining blog on Communion Tokens {CTs} at <http://communiontokens.blogspot.co.uk/>. Written in a pleasantly informal style, there are usually a couple of articles each week: one commenting on the CTs which have recently appeared on the market {typically Ebay}, and another on some aspect of the subject which has taken the author's fancy. The latter are many and various. The theme, like mine on LTT, is very much one of sharing enthusiasm and inviting discussion. Like me, Michael has been fascinated by the various shapes, designs and regional variations, and shares my preference too for the lead pieces over the later white metal. Having said which, I am getting increasingly interested in the latter as well.

Readers are continuing to report CTs amongst their lead finds {obviously mainly to the north of the border}, and articles on them will continue to appear occasionally in LTT. I intend shortly to do a "Survey the Scene" display of CTs, not in Burzinski, which I am aware of as having come to light in fairly recent times. Meanwhile, please enjoy browsing Michael's site, and I wish him well in furthering interest in the subject. Details of his book, which is an easily-readable introduction to various aspects of CTs and their use, are available on the site.



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Next up, a very pleasant find in the form of a site reaching out to another of LTT's frequent interests; namely, Baltic bale seals. I hadn't until a few weeks ago heard of Ged Dodd's PeaceHavens Project, <http://12121.hostinguk.com/BaleSealsHome.htm>, but it is obviously very much ongoing; there is some serious research going on, which he reports, and new sections have appeared even in the short amount of time since I came across the site. There are plentiful illustrations of the type of pieces which we have previously shown here, and some more besides; apart from adding further data of the type in John Sullivan's book, there are sections on such things as {for example} specific hoard findspots and the outputs of the different ports, plus a potted background history of the industry. Do have a browse, especially those of you with unidentified 18th or 19th cent seals; you may find yourself able to link heraldic designs with specific locations or date ranges.



Ged operates an identification facility, and I first became aware of his site when I acquired the piece on the left and queried with the vendor his assertion that it was a St.Petersburg bale seal. Not that I doubted him, for an S and part of a P are visible where one would suspect them at the top, and I felt the idea very viable; but 1739 was two years earlier than the eldest dated piece mentioned in Sullivan, which started to get me excited. My contact came back promptly with the reply that he had consulted PeaceHavens, and that they had confirmed. As for the piece itself, at 30.57 gm and about 33mm across, it is very much in keeping with the 1740s-dated pieces in Sullivan.