

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 Please note that the old LTTeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Picture Gallery

Readers Tony Gilbert and Mark Jennings are both convinced that the gent depicted as Fig.2 on page 1 of LTT_107 is, from his dress, a Scotsman. I can certainly see their point, even though it is a Thames find. Scotland is not renowned for commercial lead as early as the probably late-17th cent date of this piece, so maybe our friend had settled down south amongst the Sassenachs and was running a small business down here. Mark thought that it might relate to the 1745 rebellion, which would hint at a recruiting piece; but, whilst a very early 18th cent date is possible, I don't feel that it is that late. A third possibility is that it is a shop sign, but if so I would have thought it rather an unnecessarily inflammatory choice of subject given the political mood of the times.



Before we leave the unlikely subject of recruiting pieces, they did exist; herewith a copper one {Fig.2} enjoining the Royalist supporters to make their choice between the objects shown on the reverse, namely the sword or olive branch, representing war and peace respectively. Not an impossible usage for lead!



Whilst on the subject of interestingly-clad heads and shoulders, mudlark Dean Castle has kindly sent in another Thames find {Fig.3} depicting what looks superficially like a Roman centurion but which he thinks could well be an admiral. Again, it is most likely a shop or pub sign; before 1764, many other shops had identifying signs outside them in the way that pubs do now. Think of likely names from pubs you have known, e.g. The Admiral, The Dragoon or The Soldier's Rest, and you will get the idea. The piece is not that easy on the eye, so I have magnified it 3:2.



Only a head, without a bust, on the next one; Rod Blunt of the UKDFD has written in and asked if we have any ideas about Fig.4, 20mm in diameter and found recently near Earsdon, Tyne and Wear. Stylistically it feels very much from the later part of George III's reign, and maybe a copper coin of 1806/07 has been used to make the obverse mould. The wreath on the reverse feels very typical of a number of the chunky tokens of the 1811-20 period, and that I expect is the date of this token also. We think that the letters on the reverse, arranged in a diamond, are A/PR/W; they look vaguely familiar, but we cannot find them in any of the well-known reference books of the period. It is possible that there is another very worn letter between the P and the R, but we suspect not.



In LTT_100 we showed a display of fractional leads, i.e. cut farthings, halfpennies and the like, followed in LTT_102 by a photo of a cut silver three farthings sent in by John Bromley. Peter Goebel has kindly sent in another one {Fig.5}, but again, it is a coin; in this case, so I am informed, French, c.1100-ish, of Philip I or II. Come on, chaps, let us be having a lead one; the race is on to see who can find the first!



Please note that an updated version of the LTT Index has recently been published, and may be accessed from the website homepage in the usual manner.

Some More from South Yorkshire



Herewith a few more from Tony Williams and his detecting colleagues in the Dinnington area of South Yorks, which I did not have room for when I showed their other pieces last time round. I am not too sure of the size of all of them, so I have magnified the first three up to what I think is about 3:2. The 18th cent Fig.4 is probably about lifesize. Fig.1 illustrates a dolphin, which is a fairly common shop or pub sign, and had it been even more worn then there might have been argument for it being a fleece, having the appearance of a hung sheep, which is likewise frequent. However, the ends of the creature clearly show a dolphin. It is pretty worn, but its interest lies not in its subject matter but its shape. It has two edges at right angles, suggesting that maybe it was an intended round piece struck coincidentally on the corner of a sheet of lead, which is very rare.

The elaborate crosses of Fig.2 turn up occasionally and I am inclined to think that they may be continental; the crosses on Forgeais' French pieces, for example, tend to be more fancy than the English ones on show in BNJ53/54. Pieces of this type nearly always seem to be in soft metal and found well oxidised. I would expect it from the style to be moderately early, maybe late mediaeval or just after, although the finder thought from the context that it might be 18th cent.

Fig.3 is a good clear example of a very common type, capturing one of the key moments in the evolution of the mediaeval cross {type 14} into a later quartered geometric {type 12}. The diameter is about right for the 16th or early 17th cent and on one side {Fig.3a} this feels like a late evolution of the 15th cent "radial grenetis" pieces, i.e. BNJ54 type M. Concerning the other {Fig.3b}, some mediaeval cross pieces had letters in the angles rather than pellets. One can imagine the letter A mutating into a wedge, as here, but the wedge not as yet quite mutated into a right-angle or series of right-angles parallel to the arms of the cross, as happens on later stock pieces. Alternatively, perhaps what we are witnessing is a wide-banded cross with a thin one within, degenerating slightly by virtue of the arms of the bands not being fully parallel. Either way, an interestingly intermediate piece in a chronological progression.

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I do like these occasional pieces, like Fig.4, where turning them round makes them look like something else completely. In an attempt to find meaning, one of the first things you see in Fig.4a is a possible capital "B;" but turn it round 90 degrees anti-clockwise and it looks like you have got a crown over a rather ornate date, probably 1740 or 1790. Just to add a bit more confusion, the would-be third numeral could just be a crude rendering of a wineglass. Keep looking; there was a lot of unintentional abstract art produced by 18th cent lead token engravers!

Last but not least, I regret that the final piece was too poor to illustrate. I can but give a description:

Oby: Central standing figure as per the style of a Byzantine follis, all within a circle; blank grenetis outside.

Rev: Noughts-and-crosses nine-box arrangement of a banded cross; blank in each corner, mixture of "X"s and shading in the remaining five boxes.

For those of you who don't know what a Byzantine follis looks like, see Fig.5. The use of a style which dates from several centuries earlier and comes from a long way away seems amazing, but I guess that either the manufacturer, or his customer, had seen an original.



Update from Holme Cultram Abbey

In April 2010, on the front page of LTT_61, we featured a piece kindly submitted by John Mattinson which was found during a dig at Holme Cultram Abbey by the West Cumbria Archaeology Society. John has recently written in again to report that more tokens of largely similar type were found during further excavations in 2015, including the following:



Piece 1:	Obv. Crowned R {Fig.1a};	Rev: Uniface
Piece 2:	Obv: Smith's tools {Fig.2a}	Rev: SEVIL around edge {Fig.2b}
Piece 3:	Obv: Fleur-de-lys {Fig.3a}	Rev: Uncertain lettering or animal {Fig.3b}
Piece 4:	Obv: SEL {Fig.4a}	Rev: Uncertain, possibly mitre or scales {Fig.4b}
Piece 5:	Obv: FLE {Fig.5a}	Rev: Running deer or stag {Fig.5b}
Piece 6:	Obv: Uncertain	Rev: Stag's head {Fig.6b}
Piece 7:	Obv: Uncertain	Rev: Uncertain, tudor rose or crown

Piece 4 is as per the earlier article and the same scaling {2:1} has been used. Comments:

- ⇒ In isolation, without knowing from the historical context whether such a suggestion is reasonable, a crowned R {Fig.1a} would seem to suggest a monarch with such an initial, Richard III being the most consistent with the date conjectured in the earlier article.
- ⇒ The word SEVIL {Fig.2b} suggests that maybe a Spanish connection should be considered, but Spain does not seem to have an appropriate R-initialled monarch to fit. Maybe SEL {Fig.4a} is an abbreviation for it. It would be nice to know what FLE {Fig.5a} stands for; the wording is all in very similar style, and the various inscriptions feel associated.
- ⇒ Very pleasant to see a blacksmith's token {Fig.2a}, and a good depiction it is too: hammer, tongs and horseshoe. Maybe a receipt for goods taken in for repair, or a chit to be accumulated for later payment at end of day or week. Similar usage to be expected in the secular world?
- ⇒ The lys {Fig.3a} is a symbol of authority, but whose is uncertain; it authorises use of the piece, and assures whoever does use it that they can trust its {known, to them} issuer. Just a hint of a lobster about the claws of this particular lis, suggesting a cook's token, but I don't think it is. Reverse of this piece {Fig.3b} very vague, with just a fanciful hint of jumping piglets.
- ⇒ Various suggestions in LTT_61 regarding the identity of the object in Fig.4b; bishop's mitre {authority} or scales {quartermaster, sutler or other supplier's token} now favoured.
- ⇒ The deer/stags {Figs.5b,6b}, like the blacksmith's piece, are almost certainly a piece associated with someone's duties: either a person who was meant to tend the animals and look after their welfare, or a butcher. A large ecclesiastical estate would probably need the former and definitely the latter.

Communion Token Anecdotes in Books and Newspapers (1)

Because of the social and moral aspect of the processes with which they were associated, the references to communion tokens in the press of the day are more varied and probably more frequent than those of other token types. Since writing my earlier CT articles in LTT_83/4/5, largely based on material from Thomas Burns' book on "Old Scottish Communion Plate", I have also come across one or two other books of similar date; which, conveniently, have in some cases been reprinted in recent times, and are now therefore readily available. Together these anecdotes makes for a very interesting story.

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The reasons for use of communion tokens were threefold:

- Social control: The CT was seen as a ticket of worthiness
- Practical: Logistics of administration
- Security: A pass to prevent betrayal by spies {in the 17th cent}

Allied to this, the reasons for excluding someone from communion were:

- Intellectual: Ignorance
- Moral: Behaviour
- Issues of affiliation: Desire to keep other denominations & beliefs at bay

If you think that the average person who kept his head down and didn't do anything too obviously bad was immune from the adverse attention of the ruling ecclesiastic hierarchy, think again. You didn't have to resort to fornication or alcohol to upset the elders; according to Robert Shiells in "The Story of the Token" (2nd edition, 1902), one parishioner was debarred from communion for riding to church on a bicycle.

References to communion tokens in the contemporary media fall into a number of categories, which we will deal with in turn:

- Debates over intellectual capacity
- Debates over moral fitness {which, to an elder, includes debates over affiliation}.
- Legal disputes, either civil or ecclesiastical, between church members & ministers
- Losses of batches of CTs due to burglary or fire
- Losses of individual CTs due to petty theft
- Depositions of CTs under church foundation stones
- Contemporary expressions of numismatic interest

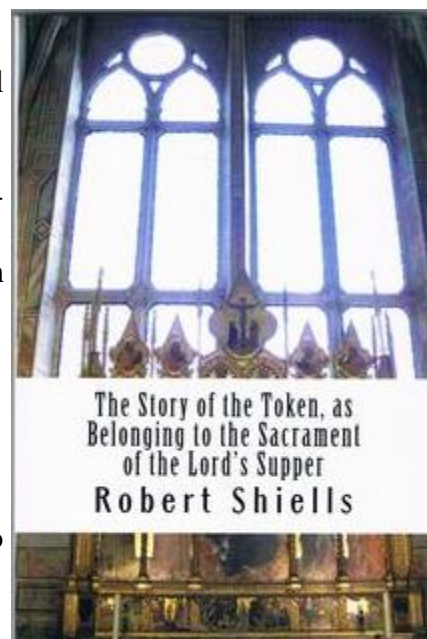
In order to understand some of the incidents, it will be necessary to appreciate the hierarchic structure of the ecclesiastical courts:

- Assembly (national)
- Presbytery (regional)
- Kirk Session (parochial), consisting of the local minister, known as the Moderator, ordained elders, and associate members

The Session could act in an advisory role to the minister, if he allowed it to; for example from Deskford, reported by Burns, in 1744:

"The Session are in favour of granting a token to Ann Duncan contrary to the intention of the Minister, as they thought she was exposed to less sin by living separately from her husband than living with him, because they could not agree."

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DEBATES OVER INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY

These are rare, primarily because they are the one thing which most people could agree on. There is, however, one very moving passage in the Elgin Courier of 23 January 1857 :

“An illiterate female, in humble life, applied for admission to the sacrament but at the customary examination, could not frame one articulate reply to a single question that was put to her; and yet there was a certain air of intelligent seriousness, and the manifestations of right and appropriate feeling--a heart and tenderness indicated, not by one syllable of utterance, but by the natural signs of emotion which fitly responded to the topics of the clergyman. The minister, overpowered, handed to her a sacramental token ; and with good reason, although not a reason fell in utterance from her.”

EXCLUSION ON MORAL GROUNDS

Some of the debates in this area are rather less savoury. The first case under this heading from the Edinburgh Evening News of 11 June 1878, seems reasonable enough, since expressing unity on Sunday did not sit well with being at odds the other six days of the week:

“THE IRISH PRESBYTERIAN ASSEMBLY. The appeal of Miss Taggart, Coleraine Synod, was proceeded with. It appeared that Miss Taggart, who was a member of congregation, had been refused a communion token by her minister until a litigation case in which she was concerned had been decided. She appealed to the Synod, but they concurring in the refusal, she appealed to the Assembly. The appellant addressed the house personally at considerable length.”

The ministers & elders were often highly dictatorial, and every now and again some brave parishioner put his or her foot down, as per this incident reported in the Belfast News-Letter of 18 April 1834.

“A complaint was made by Mrs. Clark, of the Invercauld Arms Inn, Braemar, against the Minister of Crathie, for refusing to give her a communion token in July last. It had been the practice of the innkeepers at Castletown to give a ball at the beginning of the new year; and to put a stop to these amusements, the Minister issued an edict, prohibiting the innkeepers continuing the practice, under the pain of forfeiting their licenses, and of being refused Church privileges. Mrs. Clark, however, disregarded the order, and held her ball last year as usual. The consequence was that she was refused a token.”

Sometimes the animosity was at a more personal level. The following is a summary of a lengthy paragraph in the Aberdeen Journal of 1 April 1897:

“William Kennedy, of Springbank, Coull, was denied a communion token for no stated reason, other than “he has happened to impair his character since June 1895” (reason not given). “He applied to Tarland & Migvie, who would have accepted him, except that procedure demanded a disjunction certificate from Coull. The Rev. Alex McKenzie of Coull refused to cooperate so Kennedy had to go to his solicitor, whereupon McKenzie wrote several letters making unfounded accusations to the latter.”

Obviously some of the clergy had no compunction about taking communion themselves when in a state of enmity, however differently they treated their parishioners.

The denial of a CT was seen as a statement of defamation, and it was not unknown for those denied to treat it as slander and go to law over it, if they thought that their business interests would be affected by it. One such was the plaintiff, Thomas Davidson of Ballymena. suing the minister, Dr.Mullan, in this case reported by the Belfast Newsletter of 13 March 1874. One again it is a long story, but here is the evidence of one witness:

“DAVIDSON v MULLAN: I remember the 9th of Oct., the fast day before the communion. I remember the plaintiff getting a token for the communion that day. I saw Dr. Mullan about twenty minutes after Mr. Davidson got the token. Dr. Mullan said there was a gentleman who had a token that day who should not have got one. I asked who the person was, and he said Mr. Davidson. He said he kept an irregular house, and that two of his young men had not turned out as well as he expected in consequence of getting drunk in Mr. Davidson's house.”

EXCLUSION ON GROUNDS OF AFFILIATION

If there was one thing that ministers were really touchy about, it was perceived affronts to their own personal status; they wanted to be top dog, and have everyone bow down to them. Congregations represented the building and retention of empires, and offences of drink and sex were as nothing compared to that of the humble parishioner who decided that, for whatever perfectly good reason, he would prefer to worship somewhere else or nowhere at all.

The following case, reported in the Edinburgh Evening News of 11 June 1878, requires a little explanation. A quoad sacra parish is one created and for ecclesiastical purposes only; typically, when a town is expanding and becomes too large for one parish, which the Church decides for practical reason to split into two. A new church will be built, boundaries for the new parishes will be drawn up, and normally the members of the congregation will go to the church in whichever of the two new parishes they reside; which, in most cases, will be the geographically nearest and physically most convenient. The problems may occasionally arise, however, whereby reason of personal convenience, friendships, family tradition or whatever, the occasional family may wish to worship in the other parish than that to which they have been assigned.

There are few things more calculated to infuriate a minister than to be deprived of a following in this way, and more importantly to him, a contributor to his collection plate; hence the treatment meted out to poor George Scott in the following, and the lengths to which he had to go to remedy it:

“...a petition from George Scott, his wife and family, setting forth that the Kirk Session of Largs had, without premonition or warning of any kind, expunged all their names from the communion roll, on the ground that the house in which they reside was included within the bounds of the recently-erected quoad sacra parish of Skelmorlie, while they believed this pretended cause to be insufficient, and the whole circumstances lawless and oppressive, and asking the Presbytery to cite the Largs Kirk Session before them to be heard in the case, or to order the names of Mr. Scott and family to be restored to the roll.”

If going to another church of your own denomination was bad enough in the eyes of its leaders, going to one of another was deemed even worse. This from the Dundee, Perth, and Cupar Advertiser of 23 January 1852, referring to the case of a Mr and Mrs. Adam. The latter is speaking to start with:

“We explained that for a short time we had been attending the parish church of King-Edward'. The Moderator said, ' We hold you to have been absent from religious ordinances altogether—we hold the Established Church to be no church.' The Moderator, addressing Mrs Adam, most rudely and violently asked what she had to say for her conduct, and said, ' What has become of your Free Church principles ? You were a Free Church person from the commencement, I thought.' Mrs Adam, in reply, said ' I was unable to come to Macduff, and rather than hire a conveyance on the Sabbath day and keep a person from church, I thought it my duty to walk to the church within my reach.”

Which all sounds pretty reasonable, but folk who have studied too much theology tend not always to think so.

PARISHIONER RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CLERGY & ELDERS: A POSTSCRIPT

Most of the preceding anecdotes show the parishioner in a somewhat adversarial position, often being bullied by the ecclesiastical authorities and often with no good reason. It would be good to hear what the parishioner's view was when he was meeting them one-to-one, on equal terms. An anecdote from the Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald of 18 August 1894 hints at the last-mentioned subject of affiliation in a gentler way, with dry humour, in the form of fictitious conversation:

Minister: "Why weren't you at the kirk, on Sunday?"
 Rory: "I was at Mr. Dunlop's kirk."
 Minister: "I don't like your running about to strange kirks in that way. No' that I object to your hearing Mr. Dunlop, but I'm sure ye widna like yer sheep straying away into strange pastures."
 Rory: "I widna care a grain, sir, if it was better grass."

Whitstable is not exactly where you would expect to find mention of Scottish church matters, and even at that date news was being regurgitated round the country by local papers where it was thought to be interesting. The Dundee Courier of 11 August 1927 got hold of the following, and it would be interesting to know what Presbyterian elders, who could not countenance one of their regulars riding a bike, would make of this incident had it occurred on their patch rather than down south in Somerset:

“COCKEREL IN CHAPEL: YOUNG MINERS DISTURB SERVICE FOR TWOPENCE - Two young coal miners, Lawrence Wilfred Collins, of Timsbury, and Ronald George Maggs of Radford, Paulton, pleaded guilty at Templecloud Police Court yesterday to wilfully disturbing a service at the Primitive Methodist Church at Withy Mills, Paulton. During the service the door was opened and a cockerel was put in, which caused a great disturbance. Collins told a constable that a man offered him and another young man twopence between them if they would put the fowl inside the chapel. The trustees asked the Bench to be lenient, and the magistrates asked the defendants to find sureties of fifty pounds. Failing this they would be committed to the Quarter Sessions at Bath.”

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ACCIDENTAL ABUSE OF THE COMMUNION TOKEN SYSTEM

This was an internal matter, hence not likely to get very much mention in the press, and indeed I have not yet found any; but there are examples in Burn {see LTT_84, page 3}, and Andrew Edgar's "Old Church Life in Scotland" mentions some more:

“In 1771 an unlucky lad in Mauchline gave a sixpence instead of a token to the elder that was lifting tokens at one of the communion tables. The lad was a communicant admitted to the table on that occasion for the first time. The tokens were in size as like sixpences as possible, and the act of the lad was evidently a mistake for which none could be more sorry than himself in respect that it threatened to involve him in the loss of sixpence.”

Edgar also mentions another case of a farmer who used a farthing as a CT, hinting that it might have been accidental, but does not say whether it was so. Both farmer and lad would have been put through the mill by the Session, even if subsequently found not guilty. This example is also interesting; good to record that this time the man was considerably dealt with, and allowed to take part:

“Two or three English soldiers presented themselves at that communion, and one of these came forward without a token. He happened to be seated near the upper end of the table, within whispering reach of {Rev.} Wodrow himself. He was seen by Wodrow to have no token, and he was desired by Wodrow to come out to the churchyard for a moment's private conference. He was then asked outside why he had presumed to seat himself at the Lord's table without a token of admission. "In my native country," said the man, "there is no such custom as you refer to, and if I have given offence it was not of intention, but in ignorance of Scottish ways.”

{to be continued}