

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 Please note that the old LTT editor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Picture Gallery

My thanks to Frank Osborne for Fig.1, an unusual piece which was found by his father seventy years ago in Cleadon, Co.Durham. It is a big one, some inch and a half in diameter and quarter of an inch thick, a size which suggests the cartwheel penny heyday c.1800-1820. The condition is pleasingly good, but for all that the subject matter of the design is not obvious, and one can but wonder whether it represents someone's attempt to picture an item of machinery from one of the many local coalfields. The local pits at Marston and Whitburn were joined by a railway to South Shields, and the known associated tokens are described on Mark Smith's mining memorabilia site at <http://www.mining-memorabilia.co.uk/> {click on "Paranumismatics" to the left when you get there}. OK, the pieces which Mark discusses are late 19th cent and very early 20th, but it is easy to imagine some similar need a few decades earlier which might have been met by lead, both at these sites and others.



Fig.2a/b/c consists of what looks like a lead jeton, sent in by Robert Mitchell, alongside a specimen of a genuine Lauffer jeton supplied by Philip Mernick, who also kindly identified it. The latter is, if not identical to the original, very near it. Why make jetons in lead? They were cheap enough, as Robert pointed out, so why bother? Perhaps what the issuer really wanted was a token, didn't care what was depicted, and a jeton just happened to be the nearest thing to press into the mould to provide a design. Anyone else out there seen any more would-be jetons in lead?



In terms of size, if it were a token, this uniface 33-34mm piece {Fig.3}, dug up in their garden by Kevin and Maggie Kitching from Embsay, North Yorks, would be late 18th cent; however, its style is mediaeval. Early tokens are usually quite small, in the approx range 11-18mm range, compared with this one's 33-34mm. So, is it something else?

Two clues lie in the minor damage at the opposite ends of a near-diameter, which suggests that the piece might be a badge and the damage the remains of a fixing. Badges are usually significantly larger than tokens, and would often be used as security passes; possession granting the right to go on the issuer's estate, or some part of it.

The design, which would certainly not be out of place on a token, is a little uncertain but appears to be a cross with crescents in each quarter. There is what looks like an inscription, but may just be an illiterate attempt at one, round the edge. I would suggest that the centre design is armorial, and that the clue to identification lies in establishing what family of gentry it relates to; however, easier said than done. An obvious attempt at the latter would be to see who owned what castles or religious houses in the vicinity, and what arms or other marks they used; however, there is no guarantee that the person who dropped the piece was one of the locals!

Gopsall, Leics: An Example of the Use of a Token as a Pass

We have written within these pages, quite frequently, when conjecturing as to the use of a lead token, of the possibility of it being a pass; i.e. permission to travel over private land. It is, of course, always quite vague; few lead tokens actually say what they were passes for, although the presence of some armorial device often hints at a gentrified issuer. When you move from lead to copper, you sometimes get a bit more detail: a monogram, or a more realistic coat of arms, perhaps intelligible to those skilled in heraldry; occasionally even some wording, such as “The Kings Private Roads” {Fig.1} which, although the pieces doesn't actually tell you where they ran, are known to have gone from Westminster to Fulham. The Kings Road in Chelsea is well known, and the entire route can be readily traced on a modern map to this day.

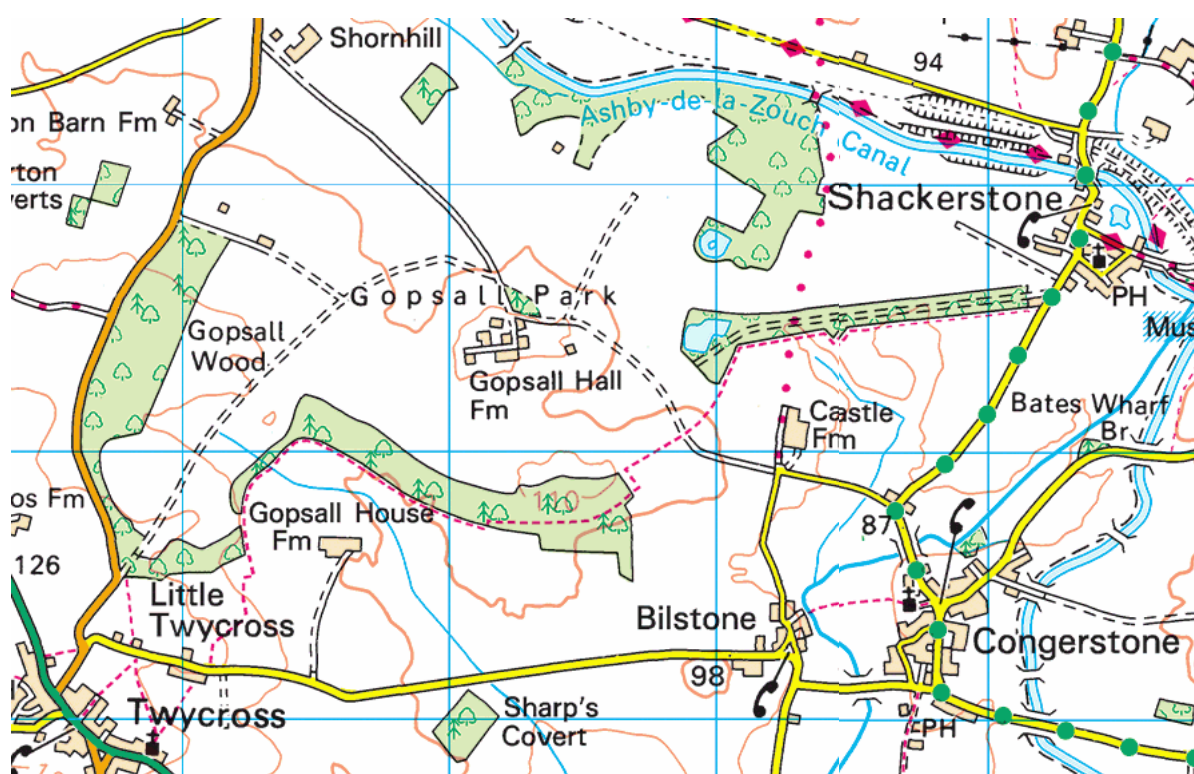


Fig.2, however, is a rare example of a piece which states not only the estate to which it refers {Gopsall Park} but the end points of the road concerned {Congerstone Lodge to Farm Lodge}. The location is in Leicestershire, a little west and lightly north of Market Bosworth, and is shown in the map above.



From 1750 to 1952 Gopsall Hall was a magnificent mansion owned and visited by those connected with the upper echelons of society; who, naturally felt it necessary for security reasons to exercise some control over who, however legitimately, might enter their estates. In 1952 it was dismantled, and replaced by the farm which now occupies the site; but from the map, it is still evident where its internal roads were. The outline of the estate is

bounded by the public roads, in yellow and brown on the map, and the river to the north. The lesser tracks, leading from the central building to the perimeter, are those for which passes might have been issued, and it just remains to identify the termini named on the piece. Congerstone being the village bottom right, it seems reasonable to think that the lodge of the same name was at the entrance to the estate near Castle Farm; whilst Farm Lodge was perhaps at the main entrance at Little Twycross, although the Shornhill entrance top-left is another possibility. Whichever was correct, maybe there was another token for the other one!

The Gopsall piece of Fig.2 is of quite a late date, but the geographic scenario is typical and will apply to many of our earlier lead passes: big house in the middle, and private roads leading to perhaps two or three exits. Remember that map when next time an 18th cent lead pass ends up in your hands!

Readers' Correspondence

My thanks to Tony Gilbert for some helpful comments on some of the Holme Cultram Abbey pieces which we showed in LTT_110. I have extracted the relevant ones with their original numbers.



Tony thinks that “R” in Fig.1a might just be for “Rex”, indicating a generic issue, rather than the name of a specific king. At national level, most people would be happy to continue using the previous monarch's coinage after he died, unless he was particularly hated, but certainly this generic approach is a valid alternative on an unofficial coinage. It would save anybody feeling that they had to make a new design whenever the king's initial changed.

For Fig.4b, Tony favours a ship over my suggestions of mitre or scales, and invites me to compare the {admittedly more elaborate} examples which were frequently the choice of depiction on English and French gold coins. I remain open minded on the subject, but it is certainly a very valid alternative interpretation. This piece looks slightly simplistic for a ship, but there are other examples equally so elsewhere, and not just in the lead series.

Regarding Fig. 4a, Tony reminds me that SEL is French for salt, a product which has been frequently and widely taxed in the past; so, maybe this is a piece concerned with the payment of that tax. All of which sets us up to start thinking what FLE {Fig.5a} might be the French word, or abbreviation, for. Tony's best guess is FLEUR (de farine), or milled grain. That certainly sounds viable, although I am not sure where the running deer on the reverse {Fig.5B} then fits in. Meanwhile, original contributor John Mattinson has written in with the suggestion that SEVIL {Fig.2, left} may be short for Seaville, a village only a mile from Holm Cultram Abbey; which not only sounds extremely plausible, but also implies that the Abbey's smithy may, if the reverse is anything to go by, have been situated there.



Tony Gilbert also has some suggestions regarding a couple of the pieces in LTT_108/109. Fig.2, on the front page of LTT_109, he thinks might be a Royalist piece, intended as a pass to prove your sympathies to others of like persuasion. That is certainly possible, although in my experience such pieces tend to be larger than 16mm. Also, there are quite a number of tokens in the main mid-17th cent {Williamson} series which demonstrate their issuer's Royalist loyalties, and indeed in Co.Durham that theme is dominant. Therefore, some similarity on lead tokens, intended as money, is more than likely, and personally I still favour this one being an unofficial farthing.



Finally, on page 5 of LTT_108, Tony thinks that the small C on the Edinburgh baker's farthing of Fig.6b may stand for “Cob”. No idea whether he is right, but it sounds a very reasonable theory.



Revisiting the Doit/Duit: Part 2, Usage in England

In the last edition we spoke about experiences of the Dutch doit as an alternative coinage in Scotland; this month we look at records of it down south. This report of 13 June 1764 again comes from the Caledonian Mercury, which supplied most of last month's data, although the column is all of London shipping news and the river mentioned is the Thames:

“Thursday evening a box containing near 5000 Dutch doits, was found on board a ship in the river from Holland. It is said they are the property of a certain publican, and imported with the lucrative view of being occasionally substituted in the room {sic} of English farthings in the way of business. Eight of these doits go for one penny Stirling in Holland.”

-:-:-:-

The Old Bailey records, happily online for 1674-1913, are a useful source of information regarding offences involving coin. The doit gets a number of mentions, albeit mostly relating to London.

On 12 October 1726, Sarah Douglas was indicted for having some days previously assaulted a boy, Thomas Cooper. in the High-way, and robbing him of two Holland Half-pence and 18 pence. On being brought to the Watch-House, Sarah was found to have the 2 Holland Pieces upon her but she denied the 18 Pence. She was acquitted for lack of conclusive evidence, and there was no adverse comment in the record regarding her possession of Dutch money. I think, however, that we can safely say she was not a numismatist!



Less fortunate was Henry Williams, a 12-year-old boy convicted on 24 February 1768 of raiding the till of a chandler's shop in Hatton Garden. The proprietress of the latter also mentioned two Holland duits when declaring her monetary assets, again without further comment.

These crimes were relatively petty, however, compared with the substantial housebreaking charge on which Maria Ann Doone appeared on 18 October 1780. The list of items which she was supposed to have stolen occupies quite a substantial paragraph, and includes the following:

“21 pieces of foreign copper coin called doits, value 6d., and a piece of foreign copper coin called a liard, value an halfpenny ”.

This suggests that a duit was valued a little higher in London than in Edinburgh or Shetland, although one wonders whether some rounding has been done for convenience. If the locals were using a coin worth two-sevenths of a penny on a regular basis, it would certainly do wonders for their mental arithmetic.



Finally, a real hybrid collection of foreign money, reputedly lost from a ship moored on the Kentish bank of the Thames, as reported in this case of 17 September 1800:

“JOHN ELDERTON was indicted for feloniously stealing, on the 25th of August , thirteen half joes, value 23l. 8s. a rial, value 7s. seven dollars, value 28s. two quarter-dollars, value 2s. two gilders, value 3s. 4d. seventeen foreign shillings, value 2s. 10d. five stivers, value 5d. a half-

stiver, value a halfpenny; thirteen pieces of other foreign coin, value 4d. twenty-four doits, value 2d., a piece of St. Kitt's coin, value 1d. four half-guineas, two half-crowns, six shillings and one sixpence ”

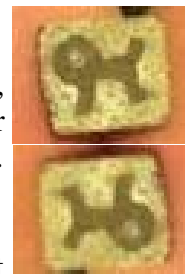
Twenty years after the previous case, the doit had reputedly fallen to a twelfth of a penny. Does that ring true? I just feel sorry for a population which had to contend with such a diverse variety of coinage and such fluctuating exchange rates , and expected to deal with it by cabals of negligent politicians and unsympathetic churchmen.

--:--:--:--

A Competitor for the Smallest Token

The piece shown on the right is the second smallest shown in LTT, after the strange 8mm diameter Herefordshire pieces discussed on page 2 of LTT_69. For obvious reasons I have magnified it so that you can enjoy it, but for the record it is a massive 9x8mm. I normally like them a bit larger than this, but it does have some positive features; it is crisp, and pleasantly ambiguous whilst still offering hope of being meaningful.

Possibilities for the depiction are (i) a monogram/merchant mark, (ii) the number 16, (iii) a dog. I favour an apothecaries' weight; a lot of those in lead were very small, and/or had curiously-coded marks on them, had this sort of shape, and were usually uniface. Date, no idea. Gut feeling says 15th/16th cent, in the heyday of merchant marks.



A dog would be nice from the humorous point of view, but I think that unlikely. If a “16”, that could be a very low value denomination, either weight or monetary {e.g. a sixteenth of a penny}, but I feel a strong inclination towards it being a symbol. Fig.10 from LTT_24, page 1, reproduced on the left, shows another example, this time a would-be twenty-fourth of something. I didn't mention it in LTT_24, but the bell implies that it is a commercial piece, in which case the style suggests a date around (16)24, which may or may not be coincidental. However, this latest piece is rectangular, which is a rare shape for a commercial token and a much commoner one for a weight, particular an apothecary's.

Design from the Dark Ages?



The piece on the left is a 20mm lead token of maybe the late 17th cent or early 18th, with a very ordinary and not particularly well-executed type 7 grid on the back. Its origin is uncertain but South Yorkshire is suspected. The piece on the right, magnified to approximately the same size, is a billon {low-grade silver} Series E “porcupine” sceat of the early Anglo-Saxon period, dating from almost exactly a thousand years earlier. The design is a common



one of the period c.695-740 and, to quote Spink's Standard Catalogue, is now recognised as a degenerate diademed bust. Am I alone in thinking that the two look rather similar? Anyone who has any more modern British lead out there which looks as if it borrows its artwork from the Iron Age, Roman or Saxon period, please write in....

The lead piece does not obviously conform to any other known 17-18th cent design and, whilst it could be argued that the hair-cum-bristles round the left hand side could juts be an off-centre and poorly-executed grenetis filler, the remainder bottom right does not look like anything usual either. So, for the moment it is a type 10, because that is where “degenerate diademed busts” reside!