

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 mail@leadtokens.org.uk. Please note that the old david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Happy New Year



1 A cheerful little fellow to greet in the New Year {Fig.1}, except that if you notice, he isn't actually a person at all. He just looks like one, thanks to the skill of the engraver in putting a heart on top of what, depending on the issuer's trade, is a roll of either tobacco or cloth, then adding a star each side to look like waving hands, and finally some rays around the heart to suffice as hair. It is a uniface piece, which momentarily leaves you a little disappointed that there is no mark of identity, until you realise that the issuer's initials, probably GC, are inscribed on top of the circular roll. It is only 13mm across, so I have magnified it 2:1; still not enough to appreciate the initials with ease, but let nothing detract from what is a magnificent piece of humorous token design. Date, early 17th cent.

Fig.2 is quite amusing also, and I will leave you to decide (i) what it depicts and (ii) which way up it is meant to be. The pictures are of the same piece; I have just orientated it three different ways to make the question easier. Superficially, it is a diamond-shape with protrusions sticking out on all four sides; like the piece above, nothing human about it at all. However, if you look at Figs.2b+2c, you could talk yourself into thinking that the small diamonds to the side are ears and the larger protrusion at the bottom a neck and bust. The trouble with that is that he appears to have two necks, one on top and one underneath. Alternatively if you want to forget the people idea, the nearest to what might be faint initials in an obvious position is given by the rendering of Fig.2a. This one is a late 18th cent degenerate, and their designers did sure make it difficult for us to fathom their intentions.



:-:-:-:-:-

Birds of a Feather {plus a whole page more overleaf}



Birds of a Feather Flock Together....

Herewith a plentiful display of bird tokens for you to enjoy and compare. Readers may care to notice how many birds face which direction and speculate on what that has to say about how many of the engravers were left- or right-handed. There is just one, of the standing examples, which has a head-on view, and two which depict the head alone, rather than the whole bird. See if you can find them! A few, wanting a little more space, have escaped to the overflow area at the foot of the back page.



Possible Gamekeepers' Tokens

My thanks to Martyn Gleaden for kindly sending in Figs.1-2, which I have intentionally magnified 3:2; the first so that you can enjoy its detail, the second because it is small. The piece in question is the first; the second is a fairly typical late 15th cent BNJ54 type M, provided for comparison.



Martyn was rightly unconvinced when one or two folk tried to suggest that Fig.1 was an early pilgrim's token. To me it looks nothing like; a far cry from Fig.2, which may well be one, and is certainly for some ecclesiastical use. Fig.1 is undoubtedly a very pleasant piece, because of the variety of features depicted, but almost certainly late 17th cent; possibly even very early 18th. At somewhere around an 18mm diameter it sits just between the earlier and later phases of main series 17th cent tokens, which were mainly 15-17mm from 1648 up to about 1663/4/5 and 19-21mm thereafter. There are no exact sizes and a few do buck the trend, but by and large the size of both lead & brass pieces was gradually increasing and 18mm suggests an approximate date of Q3/17th cent.


Other features which support a 17th cent date rather than a mediaeval one are the presence of initials {hardly ever seen before the reformation} and the possible blank reverse; pilgrim tokens tend to have double-sided designs, especially the pewter ones. There is, however, a clue that the reverse might have something to say; there are hints of lettering, which admittedly looks tolerably early, sticking out of each end of what is probably wear. Why, though, would the two sides of a token wear so unevenly? it is not a badge, to be always worn the same way round. Perhaps the lettering is the remains of an undertype, the remains of some old token which was recycled. Stylistically, too, Fig.1, is later; the mediaeval BNJ53 pieces do just touch 18mm at best {type C}, but, apart from being mostly of pewter, they have a much higher standard of workmanship. The church had money and skilled manpower to support the quality of its token production, whilst the issuer of Fig.1 probably lacked access to the best facilities.


In terms of the classification system, the piece is a type 17/18 hybrid; both bird and tree loom sufficiently large to warrant consideration. To me it shows a gamebird, a tree and a pair of initials, with no obvious ecclesiastical context whatsoever. I find all three elements pleasing, and the piece has caused me to ponder whether tokens were issued in respect of gamekeepers' activities, either as a pass for permission to be on the land or as payment for units of work done {or birds shot}. "WN" will be the landowner, and the fact that the second letter is in lower case gives a slightly older feel to it than if upper case had been used. The piece-rate use of tokens in this way would work in a similar way to those used for vermin control or fruit picking, both of which LTT has already discussed.



There is no necessity for foliage to appear on a gamekeeper's piece, and some of the pieces with a single bird on may well fall into the same category. Whether a piece refers to vermin control or gamekeeping could well be a difficult judgment, with the balance of probability determined by the species concerned. Figs.3-7 are a few possibles, but there is a goodly display of our feathered friends on the other pages of this edition, so I will leave you to conjecture which tokens were used for what.

Continental Counterparts, part 7: Military

We come this month to issues related to military activity. The Continent was a melting pot of rival nations and armies in a way that England, by and large, was not; as a result of which, ¹ the number of such issues we have over here is fairly small. Nevertheless, the tokens arising merit some attention, as to what monetary needs might have arisen in wartime had we not been so geographically placed; and also, because is it not inconceivable that there exist, even in Britain, the odd wartime token which has fallen beneath the radar. For a start, what is one to make of Fig.1, found at Low Crosby, a little east of Carlisle and a few hundred yards from the river Eden? It is of a light pewtery alloy, or possibly billon, and was found in the company of a quantity of small change from both sides of the border; it is the size of a silver penny of the time, has a value “1” above a KAR monogram {doubtless short for Carolus}, and a mid Civil War date, 1646, below. 

For many years, notably in the 16th-18th centuries, it was the habit even in this country for each parish to raise, and train, militia from amongst their inhabitants; typically for keeping the Spanish, French, or whoever else, at bay. Often their services were not called upon in earnest, but their practice sessions would have caused them expense, not to mention time away from their normal employment. So, were they compensated in any way, or was this always wholly amateur? In Holland, in the 17th cent, Leyden paid its militia using tokens made of lead until 1645 and of silver thereafter {Fig.2}; they had a value of ten penning {pence} and could be later exchanged for that sum. If we had paid our militia in this country, other than in coin, any tokens would almost certainly have been in lead. Could the huge Fig.4 on LTT_93, page 2, been such a piece? Its date, (16)85, was a year in which England experienced a lot of political turbulence. 

Both in Britain and on the Continent many towns and cities have been subjected to siege over the years. It is something of an anomaly, but cataloguers tend to include siege pieces in with their countries' main coinage {e.g. the Civil War issues have long enjoyed a place in the main English catalogues}; however, they are essentially tokens. Other countries are no different. What does vary, however, is the capability of the besieged location to produce coins for its own needs. Was it:

- ⇒ a mint town to start with, possessing the machinery for professional production?
- ⇒ a town without mint machinery, but with fair technical capacity to knock something together?
- ⇒ a town with relatively little metallurgical skill and/or metal to practice it on?



If the first, you get some good quality issues such as were produced at Lille in 1708 {Figs.3-4} or Antwerp in 1814 {Fig.5-6}; Fig.5 is a little rough round the edges, but for the most part these pieces are of reasonable quality. Note that they are struck, presumably because the makers had die-producing capacity. Where the production capability was limited but copper or brass was in good



supply, one might have to cast instead; an example of this is the one sol piece issued by Franz II's defending Habsburg forces during the siege of Luxembourg by the French between November 1794 and June 1795 {Fig.7}. If the production capacity was tolerably good but metal was in short supply, you got an issue such as at Cambrai in 1595 {Fig.8}; and note, this one is in lead! Finally, if you really didn't have any capacity to issue something which looks like coin, you just took a bit of scrap metal and stamped it, as at Breslau/Wroclaw in 1645 {Fig.9}. In Britain, we have certain well-known siege pieces during the Civil War, but could any other of our towns, in need during unusual times, have resorted to lead like those Cambrai folk in 1595? Perhaps such tokens lurk yet, unidentified as such.

Whether in attack or defence, an army would have supplies which it needed to control, and in 1690 Bavaria issued a token {Fig.10} as part of its mechanism for controlling the supply of gunpowder. Given that gunpowder is such a potentially dangerous commodity, one wonders whether a few other towns might have considered doing likewise. Another excuse for issuing some anonymous lead....



Moving now from defence to attack, the monetary needs of invading armies presented their own problems; if you moved into someone else's country then, once you left camp, you needed their currency and not your own. You might want to issue some money and force it on the locals; and if you did that, then it might be easier to do everything in their currency. Figs.11-12 were used by Swiss troops participating in the siege of Paris in 1590, whilst Fig.13 was used by the Austrian army in Poland {specifically Galicia and Lodomeria} during the Kościuszko uprising of Mar-Nov 1794.



So, plenty of scope for token issue in the military area, and who knows whether those known pieces in quality metal and with statements regarding their origin are just the tip of the iceberg? Not impossible that there are also a whole range of anonymous issues out there, made for similar purpose, and if so then lead is very much the type of metal which one might expect them to be made of.

---:---:---:---

A few escapers who flew the nest from pages 1-3:

