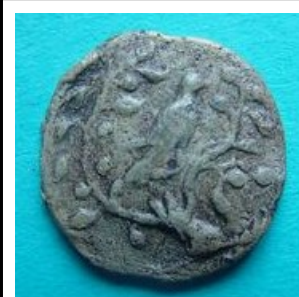


Editor: David Powell

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 Please note that the old david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

{Spring and} “Summer is A-Coming In”

1st March is thought by many to be the start of spring these days, by those unwilling to wait for the equinox, but I thought that just a tad early to celebrate with this display of various local 16th, 17th and 18th cent artists’ renderings, on lead tokens, of the local botanical specimens in their neighbourhood. I was further influenced into delaying it until this month by a very helpful article on a Worcestershire wildlife website, which provided a long and interesting list of first cuckoo sightings covering over 80 years, and enlightened me that mid-late April is the norm, even extending occasionally into May. If you wish to consult, <http://www.wbrc.org.uk/WorcRecd/Issue11/Cuckoo.htm>



*The First Cuckoo
of Spring?*

So, enjoy the summer with its warmth and lengthening days, everyone, and if any gardeners and horticulturalists amongst you care to try and ascertain the identity of some of the botanical specimens put before you, good luck. Some are obvious, but some are certainly not!



Rounding up the Escapers from the last page....



A few more of these pictorial comparison articles are contemplated for LTT, along the lines of what you have just seen on page 1. Herewith several examples of hybrids {Figs.1-6} which whilst they might belong with the plants and flowers of page 1, are at least partially suggestive of some other types. Fig.3 has hints of a comic face, Fig.5 of a crown, Fig.6 of an anchor. This ambiguity is a common feature of lead tokens, and simultaneously one of their frustrations and one of their pleasures. Is it that we cannot guess the manufacturer's intentions, or that he is teasing us, having a little fun at our expense? Probably both, at various times. Fig.4, as well as being potentially a group of stemmed flowers, could be a set of pipes, racks of which were kept on the walls of some establishments for visiting customers. That would almost certainly make its issuer either a tobacconist or an innkeeper.

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Readers' Correspondence

My thanks to a number of members of Tony Williams' "All Things Lead" group who have kindly allowed me to show some of the more interesting of their finds.

Some readers will remember my article in LTT_134 in which I commented on the scarcity of tokens connected with water provision, so it is a delight to report a couple more. Shirl Murphy's piece {Fig.1}, found by her husband Allan in East Sussex, sits very nicely with the previously shown 17th cent copper piece {shown again as Fig.2}. These days we pay for our water via water rates; in those days you either paid the owner of the water for permission to carry it away from the well yourself or you paid someone else to get it for you. The unit of water was the pail/bucket, so this piece probably allows you one trip or two buckets, like the Parisian piece in LTT_134 Fig.8, which also showed two buckets. I am not fully sure of the diameter of Shirl's piece, but the style suggests mid-late 17th cent or early 18th.



Ginger Carl Edwards' token {Fig.3} is of a type which we have seen before, albeit not very often: a water wheel. Imagine a bucket on each of those hooks. Doubtless it would be sat in a river and motion supplied by the strength of the latter's flow; possibly, the purpose was to supply some agricultural or early industrial process with water, rather than for individual use like Figs.1-2. It feels more definitely mid-late 18th cent. Even more 18th cent, and possibly even early 19th, is Rob Garner's Fig.4, which looks for all the world like a well-formed Kentish or East Sussex hop token; but no, he {and it} come from the Staffordshire moorlands. Intriguingly, whilst a lot of crude lead deteriorates stylistically toward the end of its era, the hop tokens of the South East usually maintain a good quality. The chief points of interest about Rob's piece are:

- ⇒ Between the letters at the bottom here is a residual hint of the "knot" decoration which adorns so many 17th cent main series copper pieces.
- ⇒ The issuer's initial is rendered "J" rather than "I", which marks it as being of later date. There is no hard and fast rule of when the "J" starts to appear, but it cannot be too much before 1800.
- ⇒ The piece is uniface, whereas a Kentish hop token would usually have a value on it.



John Smith's Fig.5 has straight forward initials IW on one side but poses many questions on the other. The reverse almost has a colonial feel; people holding flags at angles, and possible scenery below, both are more common on overseas pieces. Scenery is very rare on lead, but there are no signs of any break-ages or protrusions which suggest that it is anything other than a token.

Next up, David Nimmo's Fig.6, one of those nice mystery pieces which provokes different ideas depending on which way round you exhibit it; so, I will show you three aspects to compare. I think it depicts a man smoking a pipe, which is a not uncommon theme, although interestingly one of the browner pictures suggests the alternative of a stick-man with bow and arrow. The latter is probably coincidence, however; I am fairly certain that the pipe, indicating a tobacconist or inn token, is right.

Fig.7, from Paul Smith, is a beauty.; for the shape as much as anything, with its curved insets considerably designed for you to get your fingers round. The depiction, bold and crisp, is an ecclesiastical monogram, comprising cross, anchor and possibly an initial. Elsewhere the anchor often represents maritime interests, but sometimes as here it is a religious symbol, representing Christ/faith as an anchor in the troubled waters of life. I reckon the piece is probably a pass, either for use by pilgrims or in connection with the administration of an ecclesiastical estate.



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Some from other sources now. My thanks to Phil Payne for sending in Fig.8, a 30-31mm type 12 quartered geometric which he found near Tong, in Shropshire. It is a more elaborate example of the type than most, no doubt due to its 18th cent designer taking advantage of having a larger flan to work with than was normal for most of his predecessors. The internal right-angles within the quarters are themselves ornamented, in this case with incuse triangles, which I am not sure I have ever seen before; although obviously you need the piece to be in fairly good condition, as well as quite large, to appreciate it.

I have deliberately shown two renderings of Phil's piece, Fig.8a being as found and Fig.8b when cleaned, to illustrate the fact that dirt sometimes has a positive part to play in enhancing the look and that one should not always remove it. This one is a close call, and certainly the version with muck on it is no worse than the other. Interestingly, the muck has the effect of accenting the recessed area on the internal right-angle band, whilst the cleaned version raises the profile of the dividing lines between those areas. Fig.9 is another example of this phenomenon {enlarged 3:2}; a 17th cent brass token from Williamson, Thomas Bull of Bury St.Edmunds {Suffolk 44}, showing one of the earliest wheeled vehicles to appear on a token. Thomas was no doubt a carrier by profession. A delightful piece, covered for the most part in a light but even dried-mud patina, which brings out the fine detail of the wagon nicely. Clean it, however, and I expect that that would wreck it, destroying the colour contrast which so much enhances its appearance.



Continental Counterparts, part 9: Labour and the Poor

This month's contribution concerns some of the tokens issued for the poor by various authorities both civil and ecclesiastic. We have already discussed this subject once before in LTT_78, with a follow-up on the back page of LTT_90, and I shall try as far as possible to avoid repetition by choosing different examples.

First up a civil issue, Fig.1, from Middelburg {Netherlands}, which is a direct equivalent of our AH/TC {Alms House/ Town Coin} leads. The initials on it stand for:

⇒ OB: Opziener van de Beurs = Overseer of the purse

⇒ AH: Almoes Huis = Almshouse

It is a brass piece, 33mm in diameter, which in this country would be surprisingly large for 1670. I include some early-mid 18th cent British equivalents {Figs.2-4} alongside it for comparison.



An occasional type of token on the Continent is one which expresses its value in terms of units of work done, usually a day or a half day. Fig.5, from the German town of Jerstedt, is along those lines; “In Volltag handt dienst” seems to mean “in full service”, i.e. “fully employed”; although “Volltag” on its own hints at a full day. So, it is either a pass of authority, proving that the holder is in employment, or it is pay for a day's work to be cashed, no doubt, later. There is no date on it, but Andreas Vischer is known from online sources to be a local yeoman and estate manager whose widow, aged only in her early thirties, remarried in 1671. So, the piece is probably from about the 1660s which, given its stylistic likeness to our British main series tokens of that decade, I find very fitting.



“Ganze Tages Arbeit“, in Fig.6, translate more directly as “a full day's work”. This large and quite chunky 38mm Austrian piece is much later, probably c.1850. It has a smaller companion piece, reading “Halbe Tages Arbeit“, i.e. “a half day's work”.

At the other end of the scale both in terms of time and size, Fig.7, a delightful little Regensburg piece of 1544 states on its reverse “Digno Est Operarius Mercede Sua”, translating as “The worker is worthy of his wage”. No actual statement of value, but whatever it was it will have been understood by the locals. At 18mm it is the size of an average 17th cent British main series farthing; yet here we are, encountering copper of decent quality and greater thickness over a hundred years earlier. It is to the credit of the Continentals that they produced such fine tokens so early. Similarly modest in its dimensions, and even more so in the amount of information it wants to give away, so much so that I can learn nothing about its origins, is Fig.8. P, probably for “pauvre” {poor} but possibly not, plus 1681; that is all it wants to tell you. This is the type of design which one could easily imagine in lead.



One poor man's token which bears an even earlier date on, however, is Fig.9. A date of 1480 on a copper token is difficult to believe, even if stylistically the design, other than the name and date, looks to be borrowed from that period. The piece, issued by the Antwerp, Chambre de Pauvres {i.e. poor law authorities} actually dates from 1680, and is intended as a bicentennial celebration of a well-liked 15th cent mintmaster called Hippolyte Vledincx, alias Ypol Terrax, who when he died in 1480 left a large legacy in his will, to be used for the distribution of bread to the poor of the city.



So far our tokens discussed here have been presumably either for use as small change or as work receipts to be converted into small change, but there can be little doubt as to the intended use of the resultant money: namely, for the purchase of essential commodities. The Antwerp piece of Fig.9 does not say, but it is known to be for bread by the terms of Ypol Terrax's bequest. Quite frequently charitable pieces, whether issued by municipal or ecclesiastical authorities, have the initial of that commodity on them; Fig.10 is another Antwerp example. A frequent problem of ambiguity arises due to the fact that initials sometimes also stand for the issuing towns! Does B mean Brussels, Bruges or brood {bread}?



Bread is not the only commodity distributed charitably via the use of tokens, although it is the commonest. Fuel was another common need, and the brass bracteates of Figs.11-13 from Wimpfen {Hessen}, of surprisingly large diameter for their mid-16th cent age, are for wood. Fig.13 may look like it depicts a meerkat, but it is actually meant to be a tree. The eight rings of Fig.14 may indicate either a different commodity and/or perhaps a statement of value. Fig.15, from Wangen {Württemberg} probably has some similar purpose, although in this case the would-be pellets are not a value indicator but heads, part of the city arms. We are back here to the type of design simplicity which we see on lead.



Another initial which we have to be wary of because of ambiguity is "A", because it might stand for "armen". This is German word for "poor", and the Dutch is not much different. It appears in a number of token inscriptions and, if you have a keen eye, can be detected lurking in that of Fig.10 above. Six churches in the German city of Münster each issued armenpenning {poor man's pennies} to a standard format in 1699, as per Fig.16, with their own names on one side and the phrase "Fur die Armen", i.e. "For the poor" on the other.

The churches of mainland Europe issued tokens, or méreaux as the earlier French ones are called, in abundance, and many of them were for the relief of the poor, but it is not my purpose here to discuss any for which the purpose can be definitely ascertained and compared. A plentiful array of them have already been shown in LTT_78, pages 2-4; Figs.17-18 give a taster.