

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](mailto:mail@leadtokens.org.uk). Please note that the old [david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk](mailto:david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk) address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.*

*Lis, Trident or Feathers?*

Ever since I first designed my classification system way back in 2004, type 4 has embraced those items which have three, or occasionally more, tines or protrusions; however, over the course of time it has become obvious that these fall into three slightly different sub-categories: namely lis, tridents, and feathers. Since 2010 the system has remained unchanged, but my one reservation during the last decade is whether I should have divided type 4, nominally lis, out into its constituent parts. Herewith a goodly display, so please form your own opinion and, if so minded, write in.



I'm not numbering all these, so for any correspondence, please just quote page, row and item number!

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## *Readers' Correspondence*

Once again a number of contributions this month from members of Tony Williams' "All Things Lead" Facebook group, to which I heartily recommend you. It has somewhat in excess of 4800 members now and, amongst its many and varied artefacts discussed, you will certainly find quite a number of tokens. Some of the more interesting ones will be shared with this audience, but there are plenty of others. Thank you, everybody, and to those whose pieces don't appear I am probably holding them back for specific articles.

Thanks to Andrew Marriott for Fig.1. I am never too sure what to make of this rather stylised obverse design, which is fairly scarce but occasionally encountered. A pub called "The Sun" with a possible board game on the back is obviously one possibility, but I am not sure whether I am reading too much into it. It could be the late 17th/18th cent equivalent of some of the 19th cent brass skittles tokens, but for a board game instead; maybe the pub offered some sort of game + drink deal. Alternatively, it could be a low-stakes gambling token for local use within the pub. All just guessing, however. Maybe the second side is merely somebody's chosen form of doodle.



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Ian Ham's neat rectangular Fig.2 in pewter has just that superficial hint of Glaswegian communion token about its texture; until you look at the counterstamp, that is. Some CTs retain their corners, others have all four lopped off; this piece retains two. However, there the similarity ends; this is a coin weight or small trade weight, with the indented symbol being that of the issuing authority. The cut corners are almost certainly an attempt to adjust down to exactly the weight that was required, having made a rectangular first attempt that was fractionally too large. If you made a weight too big you could always cut it down, but if you made it too small you had to start again. Play safe and make it a tad oversize, then cut it down bit by bit until you got it to where you wanted.



Blain French's interesting little piece with its Chinese-looking character on one side, and something like Sherlock Holmes slinking along whilst trying to hide under his cape on the other {Fig.3}, is intriguing. I have had to magnify it, for you to enjoy; the real size is only about 12.5mm. The character is a merchant mark, an alternative form of individual identifier used mostly in the 14th-17th cents and peaking in popularity in the 15th and 16th. Usage may well come down to determining what is on the back; if ecclesiastical, a date just before the Reformation is slightly favoured, if secular, after. Alternatives to my rather facetious suggestion above are a dubious would-be bell or a squashed down mitre, compressed to fit on a small flan; the latter are often depicted with trailing ribbons on tokens. However, mitres are ambiguous, they can represent ecclesiastical authority {bishops} or be pub names. There are some similar pieces shown in BNJ54, page 150.



Colin Smith's Fig.4 has one of the neatest 18th cent bird depictions that I have seen. It has a very common design, but what really makes it so good is its symmetry and balance, combined with its excellent condition; at first glance, one could superficially think they were looking at the double-headed eagle so beloved of other series both here and on the continent. It obviously isn't one, because the heads are missing and you have a head and tail feathers here replacing the usual wings, but there is enough to float the suggestion fleetingly. The claws are particularly good. Alongside it, one of the Beata Regina/ God Save the Queen jetons of the 1574-1614 period, discussed in LTT\_120, for comparison {Fig.5}.

After Shirl Murphy's water carrier last month it is a delight to be able to follow up with Fig.6, 18th cent and from Martin Wood, so shortly afterwards. This is one of those type 9 "irregular geometrics" where you wonder what on earth the engraver is trying to depict, but I think we can be fairly confident that the guy in the hoodie in Fig.6a is trying to carry something, represented by two large pellets in lieu of buckets. Not sure about the other side, but that is also worth thinking about; it appears to be somebody hard at work, standing behind an item of machinery.



I have never understood the strange habit of bending coins, usually small silver ones in very worn condition, and using them as love tokens, i.e. gifts to sweethearts for them to remember you by. I have not heard of the practice using lead pieces, but if you were of too modest means to own a silver one, why not? Diane Weir's Fig.7 certainly hints at the possibility, especially the right-hand piece. It is possible for any lead piece to sustain some change to its shape due to a random thump from an agricultural implement, but these two exhibit compound changes of shape suggesting something more deliberate. There could be some other purpose, like in the left hand example maybe the desire to fit a collar round something; however, it does stretch the imagination a little to work out what that these purposes might be. As to what the reactions of girlfriends were to being presented with a bent bit of lead grot as a token of their lover's affection, I am not aware that that has ever been recorded for posterity. Probably just as well!

## Continental Counterparts, part 10: Guilds

In this country we have the arms of trade guilds and the tools of those trades featuring frequently on 17th cent main series tokens, and more occasionally on the better quality lead of the time; these pieces advertise the nature of their issuer's business, but they are intended as money, i.e. small change.. On the continent guild arms and tools of trade are also commonly used, on what are called *gildepennig*; however, their use is very different to the British. They fall into two categories:

- (1) Those which are impersonal, and merely depict the arms of the guild and the tools of its members.
- (2) Those which are personal, and concentrate more on the details of the individual member.

The purpose seems either to have been to check on the attendance at guild meetings or, in the case of the personal pieces, also to act as a proof that a person had acquired formal recognition in his chosen trade.



The main areas for these types of piece seem to be France and the Low Countries, and examples are plentifully illustrated in the works by Forgeais {1860s} and Minard-van Hoorebeke {1877-79} respectively. In eight earlier versions of LTT {40/41/44/47/50/55/60/64} we showed and discussed many of Forgeais's French pieces, albeit without saying much about their purpose.

Figs.1-3 above illustrate three examples of the impersonal type from Antwerp, representing the guilds of the stonemasons {1546}, hosiers {1563} and graincoopers {1605} respectively. Whether those dates are foundation dates of the organisations or just the date of issue of the piece, I do not know, but certainly the styles are consistent with other copper *méreaux* of the period. The presence of no less than five different tools on Fig.1, including everyday objects like hammers, trowels and picks, give it a pleasant feeling of relating to the real world. Fig.2 has the patron saint of the guild on one side, a concession to the ecclesiastical token style of the times, but the frame for manufacturing leather breeches on the other side brings it back into line. Fig.3 show guild arms on one side and, pleasingly, three ears of corn. Why the graincoopers felt that they needed a different guild from the folk making barrels for wine, I don't know. Maybe there was rivalry.



Figs.4-5 show two of the personal *gildepennig*; name of the individual and the date of his entering, or rather buying in, to the guild on one side, and a pictorial description of his trade on the other. Hendrik Naminck was a corn porter admitted in 1791 and Geugjen Smit a shipworker registered in 1751. The pieces of the *Korendragers* {corn porters} are amongst the commonest; there are several varieties, but they all depict the same outlandish headgear. Doubtless the load was carried on the head, and the poor porters were obliged to wear some protection to prevent their hair being worn away. Fig.6, overleaf, shows one of the anonymous variety, issued by the turf {peat} porter's guild; it displays the name of the guild quite clearly on one side and, unlike Fig.4, the basket rather than its carrier on the other.





So far this seems all very formal, with the gilddening of a high standard of production, fairly well as one might expect from a body entrusted with promoting its professional standards and interests. As no such corresponding series is evident in Britain, one could therefore be forgiven for thinking that it may not exist, but surely the same needs would arise? Surely, surely, such august bodies would not sink to lead for the purpose...would they?

There are slightly less sophisticated Continental examples. If the copper struck pieces of Fig.1-3 were largely 16th and early 17th century, and engraved brass ones like Figs.4-6 typically 18th and early 19th cent, then there was quite a substantial in-between. Fig.7, dated 1661, is one such; maybe it came at a time when the guilds were thinking of moving over to personally-named items, and perhaps contemplating that engraving rather than striking was the way to go about it. Johan Fridrich's trade is not stated, but there are a couple of tools at the bottom to give you a guess, and there is a centrally placed hole to tell you that he normally wore it around his neck, no doubt to make it regularly and easily available.



Fridrich's piece is more basic than all the preceding pieces and also quite a bit smaller. One is, possibly, slightly surprised... until you see Fig.8. That is lead, folks; with the inscription "Turf Dragers Gilde", even if the last word is a little blurred by counterstamping damage, to prove it. Evidence that at least one guild did, at some stage of its existence, use lead; and if one, how many more, and in how many places? What "LO 24" means on the back, I have no idea; it looks like a 24 bushel

stamping on the back of a crude Kentish hop token. I have also seen "LO 28", which implies both that LO was probably a phrase or locality rather than a pair of personal initials and that the number was a serial number rather than a value. If the piece was English I might guess at something like "Licensed Officer"; maybe in Dutch/Flemish it is Loge {= Lodge} or Loon {= salary, implying pay chit}. However, an encouraging sign to finish with, stimulating us to ponder whether a few more of the crude and badly drawn pieces out there might be trade body tokens of some sort.

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## *Beating the Bounds*

In a couple of issues' time we shall be resuming the series of articles which we started in LTT\_125-129, in which we discussed the Scottish lead farthing issues of Edinburgh and Leith. This time we shall be considering the rest of the country, outside Glasgow; again, commercial issues from a range of towns, and similarly relating to the period 1805-15. One piece which was originally going to be included, but failed to make the cut, was Fig.1. It is uniface, with the arms and motto of Peebles on one side, and I had assumed that it was probably a town farthing; but reader Michael Dickinson, author of several books on small copper tokens, thought that it did not feel farthing-like and that it dated from slightly later in the century, nearer 1850 than 1800. This I felt quite prepared to accept, for not only is the style rather one-off but also there are no other known lead town tokens, as compared to individual tradesmens' pieces, north of the border. The piece weighs 9.40gm, is 24.4mm in diameter, and the blank central part of the reverse is, unusually, slightly concave. So, if



it isn't a farthing, what is it? Ideas welcome, please write in, but I have one on my own account; I would be interested to see if you think it fits. Read on.

The border folk do like their ridings; week-long festivals, traditionally with an equestrian flavour, during which jollity there are, amongst other things, mass circumnavigations of the local boundaries by the celebrating populace under the guidance of a chosen local leader. The latter will not usually be a bigwig, just a popular local tradesman. The precise details, and what the principal figures are called, vary greatly from town to town, but in some cases he is assisted by a young lady from one of the local schools who fulfils a role which, down in England, would be described as a carnival queen.

For further details I will refer you to the Wikipedia entry on "Common Riding" and to the various individual town sites to which that points; it sounds like a great time is had, and long may all enjoy it but, at the end of the day.... perhaps a few of the adult celebrants, when the carnival queen is safely tucked up in bed, are a tad thirsty? I was just wondering whether Fig.1 might be the equivalent of a pub token, used to control an allowance of ale made to each of the participants? There are other control or admission functions which it could have been for, but this seems the most likely.



Fig.2: MARY I 1897



These events are not without other known tokens, even if only commemorative. Lanark has been producing tokens/medals for its Lanimer Day parade since the mid-1890s, and those of the first few years are impressively reminiscent of regal pennies; Mary I {alias Wilson, Fig.2} above is depicted on her coins {Fig.3} with all the dignity of a genuine queen, despite the fact that she is in her early teens at most. Fig.4 shows a piece from 1902 in white metal of a style which, with minor changes, went on for many years and may do to this day. I imagine that they may have been given out by the queen to her subjects during the parade as bounty. Or, for those of you who are into all things Roman, Liberalitas!



In England and Wales the equivalent, practised in many parishes, is "beating the bounds", i.e. walking the parish boundaries; effectively, doing the same as the Scots but on foot. Such tokens as exist, probably celebratory rather than functional, are nearly always for places in the extreme north of the country. Fig.5 is one of four from early-mid 19th cent pieces from Gateshead, whilst Fig.6 is from Hareshaw Common, near Bellingham, in Northumberland. The celebratory pieces are probably all now known, but other functional ones, maybe beer tokens or the like hiding behind the anonymity of lead, could still be out there. Keep a look out!