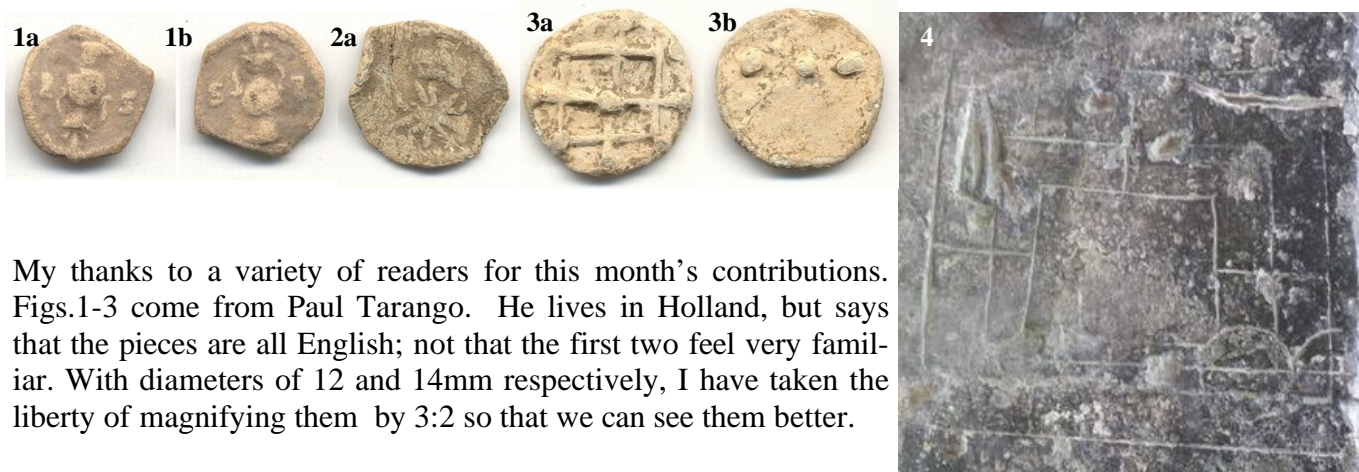


Editor: David Powell

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@powell8041.freemove.co.uk. Please note that the old [LJ Editor@aol.com](mailto:LJEditor@aol.com) address advertised on some earlier versions of LJT is no longer active.

Picture Gallery



My thanks to a variety of readers for this month's contributions. Figs.1-3 come from Paul Tarango. He lives in Holland, but says that the pieces are all English; not that the first two feel very familiar. With diameters of 12 and 14mm respectively, I have taken the liberty of magnifying them by 3:2 so that we can see them better.

Fig.1 reminds one of the old trophies pictured on Roman coins. They look superficially like a person, but aren't. A vessel perhaps, but I am not sure how practical a one; they look too narrow at certain points. The flanking initials, which are modern rather than Lombardic, add significantly to the appeal. I would guess that it is late 16th cent. Fig.2, perhaps half a century later, is more enigmatic. It could be a crowned star, although that is not a particularly frequent combination.

Fig.3 is life-size, and Paul on consulting the Dutch lead token author J.E.L.Pelsdonk {see bibliography} said that the latter thought it might be a token for Nine Men's Morris; a simple board game, which some of you may remember playing in your childhood, or perhaps more recently in the pub. By chance Ted Fletcher had just come back from a short holiday during which he had photographed some graffiti on the floor of one of our English cathedral precincts. One of them {Fig.4, copyright Edward Fletcher} features, no less, a board for this very game. Obviously the monks were not satisfied by their primary occupation and found it necessary to do something else to while away the time. The design of Fig.3 is reasonably common, and you can expect to see others. The three pellets are probably a value or, if the game theory is correct, a player identity.



Figs.5-6 genuinely come from Holland, courtesy of Alex Kussendrager, who has featured in these pages before. The first of them is from Diemen, near Amsterdam; however, readers who remember our July issue will recall that two other specimens were shown there, with the conjecture that their wreath rendered them British pieces from the Cromwellian era. Now I am not so sure, after hearing of one found abroad; so, does anyone know of any more? Alex thinks the counterstamp on his piece might be a Z/flat-2, like the July example; I was wondering whether it was a horseshoe.

Alex wondered whether Fig.6, found near Bergen op Zoom, in Brabant, might be a communion token {CT}; there are Scottish examples not that dissimilar, made c.1700. CT expert Andrew MacMillan rather inclines to doubt it; he thinks that the hole in the corner suggests it has been tied to something (like a bale of wool or cloth), and that PAF either identifies a merchant or implies that duty has been paid. In the latter case the letters would probably be the initials of the relevant taxation authority.

{continued overleaf}

Thanks to John Feenan for Fig.7, which looks late 18th cent. Measuring 33mm across, it is artistically very degenerate, although in terms of condition still good enough to enjoy. What looks like the bottom half of a man with ape-like arms is, I believe, a “W” upside down; “U” was often rendered “V” in those days, and “double-U” was very much what it says, one “V”, i.e. “U”, on top of another. I hesitate to be too dogmatic about the rest of it, except to say that the character to the side of the W may be another initial, or possibly just possibly part of a two-digit date {“65”, implying 1765}. However, I favour the initial, with the would-be 5 and the rest of the peripheral ornamentation being an imitation of the type of inscription which people would have been familiar with both from other coins and from 17th cent tokens.



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The Variety of mid-17th Century Reverses: Type 20

We continue here our discussion on the variety of subject matter types on 17th cent tokens, and in particular the contrast between the crude lead and main copper/brass series, as expressed in terms of Powell classification types. As previously stated, due to the small size of most pieces concerned, pictures in this sequence of articles will continue to be magnified 3:2.



Type 20

Williamson lists seventy-odd merchant marks {ex, Figs.1-6} and twenty-odd monograms {Fig.7} in a period when the former were in decline and the latter a perfectly acceptable alternative way of rendering initials. Monograms, either simple joined letters or script, had been appearing on tokens for some decades before the Williamson period and continue to occur occasionally on other lead pieces for many years after, not to mention their frequent use both on the regal coinages of various nations, and on various other types of token, into quite modern times. In other words, they express an artistic preference, more than anything else, and are not the property of one particular series, although it may be reasonably said that the upper echelons of society were more likely to use them than the lower.

In the mid-17th cent merchant marks probably appear on lead in a similar proportion to what they do in the main series, and probably linger on a little after the latter has finished {Fig.8}; however, it is not to be expected that they will be very numerous on late 17th cent or 18th cent pieces. A small number of the type 9 irregular geometric of these period may be crude attempts at classical merchant mark designs, or attempts to ape the practice with some personal badge of one’s own, but this is conjectural. Fig.9 is an attempt at a complex monogram on late 17th cent lead, containing some combination of T,L,B,S and C, but I don’t expect you to get very excited about it. Conjoined letter-pairs are seen occasionally, and are more common.



Merchant marks are very individual and cannot readily be described or compared except by drawings or photography.

<u>Key to 17th cent main series tokens:</u>	
1. Suff.281, Samuel Fitch of Rickinghall	4. Norf.322, Thomas Hering of Gt.Yarmouth
2. Kent 406, Chreston Houdgben, Margate	5. Lond.595, Mermaid Tavern, Cheapside
3. Som.209, John Byrnt of Shepton Mallet	6. Glos.66, Isaac Small of Cirencester
	7. Lond.40, Walter Jones, Aldersgate Street

Single Letter Tokens

{NOTE: 17th cent main series magnified 3:2 to show detail; the lead is lifesize }

Some of you may have noticed on Ebay last August a set of halfpenny-size copper tokens, probably early-mid 19th cent, depicting a private armorial crest on one side and the name of a trade on the other. The examples seen were “Labourer”, “Sawyer”, “Paver”, “Mason” or “Carpenter”, although of course the original series may originally have been larger. The usage of such pieces may be conjectured; probably they were either passes, allowing workman to prove their authenticity, or they were pay for a unit of work, perhaps a day, which would be exchanged later for cash according to some scale which differed for the respective trades.

How common was this practice? and how many of our leads could have been used for such a selfsame purpose? We shall never know the exact answer, of course, but it would provide one very plausible explanation for those pieces which, by virtue of having only one initial on them, seem one letter short of a full person.

Not that that is the only possible reason for a single initial, of course. In the early days, in the 16th cent, 11-12mm diameters were an obvious reason; if you wanted your forename and surname initials on a piece of that size, it was normally assumed that you would have to put them one on each side. Then came the trend for triads, putting your wife’s forename initial on as well as your own; by which time the typical diameter was up to 13mm so, being now able to get two initials on one side, the third had to go on the other. Fig.1 is a rare example of a Williamson main series 17th cent token which apes the 16th cent theme; readers may notice its similarity to Fig.11 on page 3 of LTT_45. But what when pieces got larger? Why would people occupy a whole side with a single initial then?



One reason is hinted at by Hants.12 {Fig.2}, one of the relatively few 17th cent main series pieces to depict just a single letter within its circular inscription. A large capital “A” clearly stands for Andover, and the rest of the wording, plus other pieces {e.g. Fig.,3} which share the same second side, leave one in no doubt that this is a town piece, issued to provide the poorer members of the community with small change. Perhaps it even featured as part of a charitable distribution. This is a rarity of style amongst the main token series {although the piece itself is quite common}, but how many other town and parish authorities might have issued similarly in lead?

That such municipal issues were common is shown by the large number of towns which issued municipal tokens overall in the 17th cent main series, particularly in certain parts of the country such as the south-west. They usually depict some combination of the municipal arms, a statement of purpose, and the initials/name of the mayor or other senior official in charge of their disbursement; features, of course, which constitute more details than lead can cope with. The majority rank amongst the commoner pieces of the series, and are therefore a viable subseries to collect if one is so inclined. A selection are shown overleaf; below, are what might be their poor leaden relations.



Villages were probably not so wealthy as towns, and would have less resources at their disposal, so... how better for the parish officers to discharge their duty, than to make available some local currency, and what better to put on it, for easy recognition, that a large letter equating to the first letter of the parish name? Then guess what metal that might well be in. You've got it; lead.

Figs.4-11 depict a variety of lead examples, and perhaps some of them fulfilled just such a purpose as that just described. However, there are amongst them a number of particularly neat and well-defined style which, moreover, accord stylistically with some of the Kentish/Sussex hop tokens enumerated in Alan Henderson's book {see bibliography}. The latter are mainly end-18th cent onwards and, whilst they mostly have two initials for the issuing farmer, single letters for the surname are not unknown on some of the smaller-sized values. I will conjecture that some of our neater single-initial leads, where of a quality that one feels they belong to a recognised lettering style, might well be mid-18th cent pieces which fit onto the front of the Henderson hop token series.

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Examples of pieces which express their purpose in words {Figs.12-16}....



...or more graphically at St.Ives and Midhurst {Figs.17-18}, whilst in the cities of the south west it was common to have the initial C {city} followed by its initial letter. Figs.19-21 show Bristol, Gloucester and Bath respectively.



Note that Fig.20 states "Luke Nourse, Mayor", in other words, the name and rank of the man taking responsibility for the issue. It is not always the mayor; at Langport {fig.22} it is the portreeve, John Mitchell, whose initials flank the portcullis on the reverse. Fig.23 looks like a town piece from its wording; is IH keeping his job title quiet? Opinion apparently now favours this being a private trader, despite its appearance to the contrary.



These pieces still have their secrets, and probably even more so do the lead!