

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Please note that the old david@powell18041.freeserve.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Tokens depicting Mounted Cavalry Officers

Readers Alex Bliss and Tony Williams recently sent me photos of mounted cavalry officer tokens on consecutive days {Figs.1,2 respectively}, which I will display alongside three others {Figs.3-5} for comparison. Although attractive when in good condition, they are not uncommon. There is also a well-known 18th cent copper token of Blything, celebrating the Suffolk Yeomanry, which depicts the same theme {Fig.6}, and it would be interesting to know whether this precedes or succeeds the lead, and whether the lead comes from the same part of the country. The Blything piece is dated 1794.



I have previously suspected that the lead pieces date from c.1775-80, having once seen one dated 1771 in the exergue, but on lead I always distrust dates which are made up exclusively of ones and sevens, simply because they are the two easiest digits for the unskilled to carve. It may be that 1771 is a pseudo-date, carved for effect with the design of the 1770-75 regal halfpence in mind. Such a date is not too far out, however, even if spurious; one feels that they are almost certainly from the closing quarter of the 18th cent, even if the quality of engraving is superior to that of most lead depictions of the period.



These pieces seem all to be of fairly standard size at about 25mm. Not all the horses have the same stance; some face right and some left, whilst others are trotting sedately and others galloping flat out. The riders would appear, however, always to be dressed in smart military uniform. Most of the reverses are blank, although Fig.2 depicts something which looks like a couple of nails and Fig.3 a standard 6-petal stock design. Perhaps Fig.1 is a blacksmith's token for use when getting the animal shod!

There are, of course, other tokens depicting galloping horses, riderless horses{Fig.7} or riders otherwise clad, but these are probably to do with racing or hunting; readers may recall having seen Fig.8 before, in LTT_80.



Any more sightings of these cavalry pieces, however, please write in and let us know, so that we can build up more of a picture of their use and distribution. It would be good to know, for example, whether they come from a particular part of the country.



Probable Identification of a London Lead Token

The piece shown, and only recently noted, is one of those which sits on the boundary between crude lead and the better-known main series 17th cent tokens of Williamson's book. By lead standards the production is good, but on the obverse it has only initials, which puts it on the lower side of the divide; but on the reverse it has a good description of the location, of similar quality to that often encountered on main series pieces. Williamson and the authors who have succeeded him have not been wholly averse to lead, but few lead pieces have met their qualification criteria. To quote them as expressed by one of those successors, Michael Dickinson:



"I think the way to go would be to ignore pieces with initials only, unless a pair or trio of initials combined with a device on a lead piece link up with a copper or brass token of arguably the same issuer at a definite location."

Would it not be fun, I thought, to take a lead token from time to time and try and get it promoted over the qualifying line, either by fulfilling the above criteria or establishing the unstated issuer?

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The piece illustrated is of diameter 15mm, weight 2.07gm, although I show it double size here so that the detail of the inscription can be appreciated. The style suggests that it will date from the mid-17th cent, possibly just pre-Williamson, but will not be later than 1665. Lead tokens with full inscriptions on one side are fairly scarce, but with the issuer identified by initials only, this one looked at first glance to have a fair chance of retaining its anonymity:

Obv: Initial triad K/IA, with ball in centre

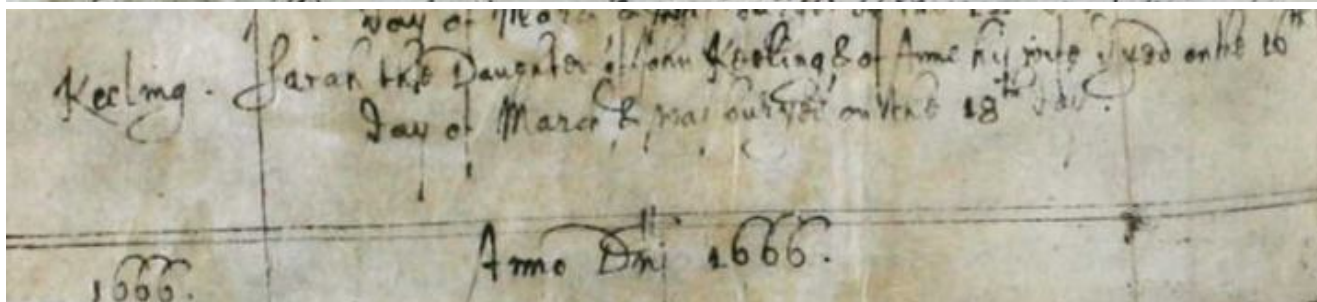
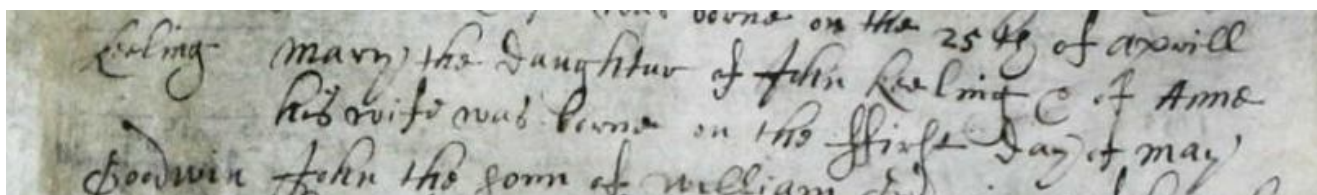
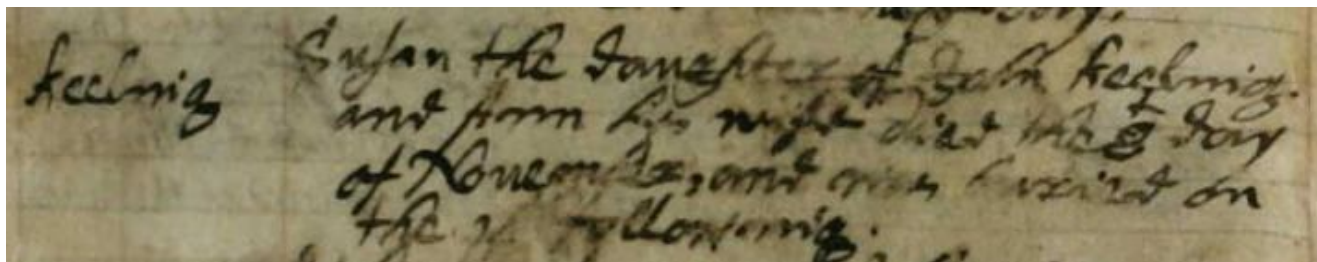
Rev: AT THE / BALL IN / DISSTAF / LANE

However, K is a reasonably scarce initial, so maybe there was just a chance. Having tried to assess which wards and parishes Distaff Lane was in or adjacent to, so that I could get some locations to search on, I went looking in the PRO wills. The most promising one, and containing a reference to Distaff Lane specifically {line 3}, was the following; the will of a merchant tailor called William Keeling, proved on 5 November 1625. WK instead of IK, admittedly, but his first named son and heir, on inspection of the document, turned out to be called John {line 15}. Of vital importance later, not that I could read it at first, was the name of the church in which William wished to be buried {end of line 10}:

In the name of God Amen the fourth daie of October 1625 in the yeare of
 our sovereign Lord Charles by the gract of God of England Scotland France and Ireland the first yeare
 of William the first of Distaff Lane London Merchant Taylor being at this present tyme sick and weak in
 bodie, but of good and pfect memorie first God praise for the same doe publish and declare this my last
 will and testament in manner and forme following, that it is to wit first I commend and comitt my soule in
 the hands of the holy and blessed Trinity hoping and assuredly trusting by and through the merits, death
 and passion and resurrection of the sweete passion in the trinitie namely Ihesus christ and by none other means
 to obtayne full pfect pardon and forgiveness of all my sinns, and after this I desired to have the fruition of
 eternall glorie and happines in the world to come, my bodie I comitt to the earth wherof it was first formed
 to be decently buried at the discretion of my executors hereafter named in the parish church of St Dunstons
 in London nothing doubting but according to the Articles of my faith it shall be raised againe at the last
 daie and be united to my soule and receive full immortality and felicitie in the Kingdome of Heav'n for ever
 more and for ordaining and disposing of all and singular the goods chattells Jewells ready money ready
 money and other things what so ever it hath pleased God to bestow upon me my will and mynd is at
 followeth first I give and bequeath to my sonne John Keeling the sum of two hundred pounds to be paid
 into the Chamber of London Item I give to my brother David Keeling five pound five shillings to my sonne

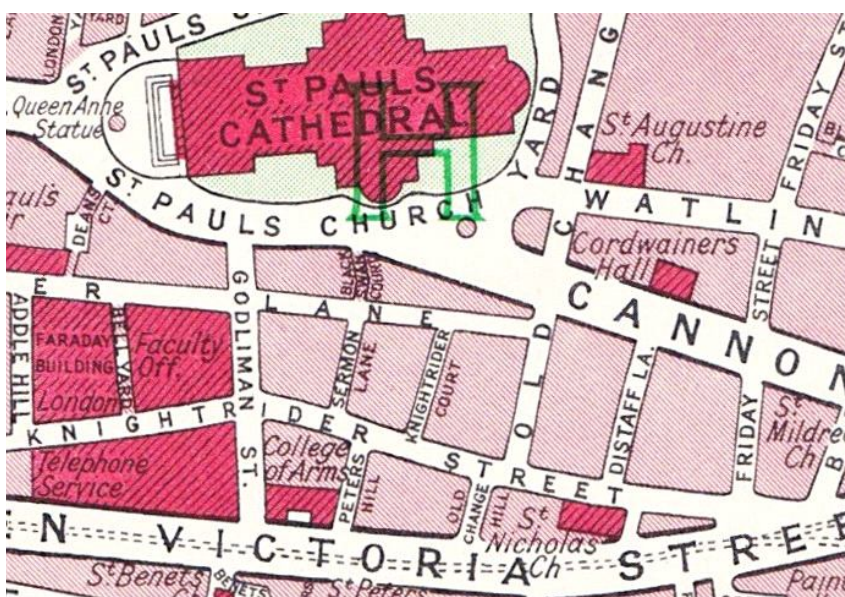
More clues needed, and what next to try but the parish registers; an exercise which might well prove to be fairly fruitless in view of the devastation caused in that part of the City of London by the Great Fire. I went looking on Ancestry for events relating to children of John Keeling in the City of London, hoping that if any were found he might just have an A-named wife. This produced the following children of John & Ann, all in the registers of St. Augustine, Watling Street:

- ⇒ Susan, died 8.11.1650, buried 10th
- ⇒ Mary, bapt. 1.5.1654, buried 10.8.1656
- ⇒ Rebeckeh, bapt 4.11.1659
- ⇒ Sarah, died 16.3.1665-66, buried 18th.



Watling Street? to some of us less versed in the minutiae of central London geography, that is the Edgware Road, north of Marble Arch. A map or two quickly informed me {see the top right hand corner of the one below}, and to my delight St. Augustine's was only just over the boundary of the parishes and ward in which I had been looking. Cannon Street is the old Distaff Lane and the present Distaff Lane is the old Lower Distaff Lane; so, John would have had only a very short walk to the church of his choice. I went back to his father's will and, sure enough, that name at the end of line 10 which I couldn't work out was... St. Augustine!

My feeling is therefore that, with reasonable probability, this John and Ann Keeling can be identified with the K/IA of the token, and that John took over his father's mercantile interests in Distaff Lane.



William Howard's lead token: Problem sorted!

On the back page of LTT_130 I illustrated a 17th cent lead farthing of William Howard of E..ham, annoyingly pierced through so that the place of issue was obscured. I am delighted to report that reader Peter Olivant has kindly responded by sending in photographs of a better specimen of the same piece, which reveal the missing letter, "G", as it happens, and that we now therefore know that the piece comes from Egham. The forename, William, is also confirmed, although the obverse is rather too dark to picture here; whilst a date, 1652, is also clearly visible.



Also very pleased to hear the news is Surrey token author Tim Everson, who says that the piece is the first new piece for rural Surrey, as opposed to Southwark, discovered since he published his book on "Seventeenth Century Trading Tokens of Surrey and Southwark" in 2015. He assures me that it will get a place {as no.69A} when eventually he publishes his next edition!



So, my thanks to Peter, and an encouraging reminder to all readers that, sharing our knowledge, it is sometimes possible to crack these seemingly impossible identification problems. There are two such solutions in this issue and a third, Robert Davies of Paisley, due to follow shortly. So, please keep the ideas, and the pictures, flowing!

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Readers' Correspondence



My thanks to Emma Swindells for sending in what I think is the first 17th cent lead example of a mermaid {Fig.1} recorded in these pages, although Williamson records about forty in the main series, of which London.595 {Fig.2} is one. Fig.3, which is uniface, is an 18th cent example, again not all that common, although the choice is logical enough if that is the business sign of your shop or pub.



Fig.4, from Tony Williams, is another token-or-amulet in the style of those discussed in the front-page article of LTT_125. I favour the religious amulet, but the shape is near enough round for the token option to be considered. The depiction is Christ on the cross or a woman having a rave, depending on how your mood takes you. It is amazing what contrasting ideas a token picture can suggest.

Finally, from John Bromley, something really ugly {Fig.5}, which reminds us just how lead token manufacture works, and what happens when it goes wrong. I suppose one could call it a token and a half. There is a duct joining two moulds, through which enough lead has flowed to form half a second piece, and someone has thrown the whole lot away rather than cut away the sprue. In truth, the main piece, although decidedly uninspiring, is no worse than many of the poorer tokens which were given the nod.

