

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 [LSJEditor@aol.com](mailto:LSJEditor@aol.com) or [dmpowell@waitrose.com](mailto:dmpowell@waitrose.com)

## Hop Tokens: An Introduction {Part 2}



The main metals for Kentish hop tokens were lead {approx 56%}, lead alloy {pewter or white metal; 19%}, followed by tin {8%}, brass {7%}, zinc {6%} and copper {3%}. The remaining 1% was made up of cupro-nickel, iron, bronze, bone {Fig.2}, paper and cardboard; which last mentioned I believe was more



popular amongst the farmers of the Cambridgeshire fens, not that I know the details. As with communion tokens, the lead {Figs.1,3} tends to be early and the alloy later; examples of the other media will



be illustrated as the series progresses. The Yalding pieces of Fig.2 are believed to date from c.1810.

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The method of manufacture of the metal pieces were, very approximately, 65% cast, 30% struck and 5% counterstamped. Only about 10% of Kentish hop token series are dateable, and even then in many cases the date only appears on the higher values. Most of the dates are after-1835, on struck pewter or white metal pieces; some early ones are shown in Figs 3-4, although it must be stated that the Catts Place pieces of Edward and Rosamund Monckton of 1774 {Figs.4-5} are not typical. Are Figs.6-8, all in very different styles, by the same issuer? JR or IR {I was the old J}, plus the number XXX, seem to be a common feature. Some issues clearly come from more than one die, the 1823 pieces of E.Catt {Fig.9} being particularly unusual in that as many as eight or nine, albeit all bearing the same date, are known.



Most hop tokens would be issued by farmers or minor gentry, who might possibly have access to better manufacturing facilities than those of some other crude lead; in consequence of which, the proportion of well formed letters and numerals approximating to official type faces is particularly high. Some 60-65% of the pieces in Henderson have been traced; in the remaining cases, the initials of the issuer have not yet been interpreted; a high proportion of unassigned, which encourages us to think that perhaps some type 2 crude leads, as yet unassociated with the series, should probably be numbered amongst their company. Full names appear only on higher value pieces, and then not always, especially in the earlier days. High value pieces are often more expressive than lower; Fig.10 illustrates another fine one from the earlier period, to supplement those shown above, and I will show a display of the later pewter and white metal examples in a future issue.



There is a gradual move towards pieces, still in lead, which have more regular lettering and numeral forms; this is gradual, and Figs.11-14 are probably good examples of intermediate forms, followed perhaps by the likes of Figs.15-17. It is difficult to put exact dates on many initialled pieces because, although the provenance may be known, and although the researcher has recourse to the census and parish registers in various forms, there are still often several members of the same family sharing the initials on the token; especially if, as was often the case, a forename was passed on from grandfather to father to son.



There are also quite a number of pieces which follow the trend set by crude lead type 28 {Figs. 18-20}; is this coincidental, or not? If not, perhaps that is some indication of when those particular type 28s, with radial line or dot fillings, might have been in vogue.



Radial dashes are also in evidence {Figs.21-23}, and in one or two cases {e.g. Fig.22} look to link adjacent issues of the same person. Fig.22 also demonstrates two other well-known features of crude lead; the occasional appearance of retrograde lettering, and {in the right-hand example} the “seal” method of manufacture, where one half of the piece appears to have been clamped on to the other and, by virtue of the two sides not being quite in alignment, revealed the fact. Both these features are, however, much scarcer on the Henderson hop token series than earlier crude lead.



In many cases the full set of values of a hop tokens set has not survived. Where only one or two are known, some of the others may be conjectured. Some pieces, usually in mid-series, have the letters P,D,S or B either beneath the issuers initials on the obverse {in which case the implied value is one unit}; or alternatively above or beneath the number on the reverse, which enables some other value to be indicated. These stand for, respectively, penny, penny, shilling and bushel. Fig.24 illustrates.



..... {to be continued}

## The History of Communion Tokens: Part 2

Gradually, at the end of the 17th century, letters other than the parish initial appeared; K for Kirk after the parish name, and/or M for minister followed by his initials. Be careful, though; names and places can begin with K and M as well! A number of the earlier tokens have minister's initials and nothing else, which has led some observers to the opinion that in some cases the minister took his pieces with him when he moved on. Certainly a significant number marked the beginning of their incumbency in the same way that a monarch does his reign, with an issue of pieces bearing his initials or name, but in other parishes they were struck simply as need arose.

If either a minister's initial or the parish are known, the latter perhaps from a findspot or knowledge of local geography, there are denominational reference works, available in some major libraries, which may come to your aid. Two of the more likely are:

- Fasti Ecclesiae Scotianae {7 vols}
- History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church, 1733-1900

Dates appeared; the first known is 1648, although they are rare before the 1690s and even after that not universal. Brechin's whole-name piece of 1678 {Fig.1} was ahead of its time, but from the 1690s most dates



can be found. Most early pieces are small, and quite often uniface {Figs.7,8,10,11}; where the parish name is attempted, it often has to be abbreviated to three or four letters. Many parishes had names which were too long to fit the token, and imaginative ways were sometimes devised to make it do so. More often it was abbreviated {Fig.6}, although the manner of doing so was not always obvious.

Most early pieces were of fairly pure lead, although the differing colours bear testimony to the presence of what are probably additives, possibly in some cases to harden the pieces up. As the century wears on such pieces continue, albeit in smaller proportion, as a tendency towards more pewtery pieces develops; however, the lead content is still much higher than the white metal pieces typical of the mid-19th century, and in consequence the pieces, per unit volume, still much heavier. One of the first area to move generally towards light-coloured pewter was Fifeshire, whose local design consisted of unusually small rectangle with M/AB on one side {M=Minister, with his initials below; e.g. Alexander Barr}, plus parish abbreviation over date on the other. Such pieces illustrated by Figs.3,4, are in use by about 1700.

In the rest of Scotland medium-coloured, uniface pieces are still the norm, quite a number having an initial pair of the form MK in a sunken square or rectangle {parish initial, e.g. M=Muckart, plus K=Kirk, Fig.7}; occasionally, if the parish name is multi-syllabic, and space permits, the initial and the next most prominent consonant are squeezed in; e.g. NBK=Newbattle Kirk. {Fig.2} There are not many irregular designs in the early years of the 17th century, although an attractive one known as the Long Rectangle {Figs.5,6}, in which the parish name appears in mixed case with date below, is known by the 1720s.

The crude lead enthusiast should feel at home with most of the pieces shown below. Note, however, that styles often straddle quite a number of decades, and that whilst some parishes are ahead of their time, others are notable behind, even occasionally by as much as a century. The CK piece {Fig.15}, for example, is clinical and uninteresting in comparison to its companions; it feels as if it belongs to a much later date, yet is reputedly contemporary with Figs.7,8 and 11, all of which date from about 1720. Note the type 28-like dashes of Fig.8, and the old-fashioned barred A of Fig.11. The latter come from Lauder, Berwickshire, and Anstruther Wester, Fife, respectively.



## Picture Gallery

At last! A lead token with not only a full surname but also a rare one. Fig.1 was found near Didcot, and a search of the International Genealogical Index {IGI} for all Boniwells in England, after eliminating the entries which were either female or had wrong surname initials, and then doing a bit of geographical filtering, produced the following:



JAMES BONNIWELL - Christening: 12 MAR 1667 Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire  
 JAMES BONIWELL Christening: 08 JUL 1694 Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire  
 JAMES BONNIWELL - Marriage: 23 OCT 1729 Saint Nicholas, Abingdon, Berkshire  
 JAMES BONIWELL - Christening: 24 FEB 1731 Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire,  
 JOHN BONNIWELL - Birth: 29 SEP 1656 Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire  
 JOHN BONNIWELL - Christening: 13 OCT 1667 Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire  
 JOHN BONIWELL - Christening: 20 FEB 1698 Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire

OK, the IGI isn't exhaustive, but this is good batching and feels like strong circumstantial evidence; in addition to which the style and diameter {20m} suggest late 17th cent approx. Another website says that the Boniwells, formerly Bonvilles, had been in Sutton Courtenay since 1545. I don't know which part of the parish Mr. Boniwell lived in, but those of you who want to go and explore the place may wish to know that Didcot power station has been built on top of some of it. At least the latter will enable you to find it.

The IGI is available online, free, and I encourage you to use it.

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I saw three ships come sailing in..... Just a little late for Christmas, but herewith three delightful type 6s, all from the same parish of East Dean, nr. Eastbourne, the other end of Sussex from Ron's pieces above. The first piece looks like one of those fine old sailing barges which use to ply the Essex coast and Thames Estuary, and which one used invariably to associate with places like Maldon. The second looks a little more ocean going; the word clipper comes to mind, but I don't know if it is. Someone more nautical than I could probably tell me.. But the last; could you not easily mistake it for a type 9 irregular geometric? Almost certainly, viewed at any other angle, and even when upright its identity as a ship is not wholly obvious. So, turn those type 9s round a bit and see what those seemingly meaningless doodles bring to mind.



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Finally, an interesting group of leads courtesy of reader Jim Furner. Fig.1 is a type 32; rare to see a full standing figure on a piece of this period. The other side is a type 24; it has some characters which appear at first glance to start with a date, 161-something, but on closer inspection the last one seems to be an N. The

lower rows seem to be meaningless. A delightful sheep on the obv. of Fig.2, and what at first appeared to be meaningless characters on the rev. turned out after some work with a toothbrush to be "EB 1693", the last two numerals retrograde. This is the first time I have seen a type 28 with a date on it, so this is highly useful information. No less attractive is the rev. of Fig.3, which I think might be a weaver at work, or perhaps a hurdle maker {suggestions welcome}; 26mm diameter and fairly chunky, but very much in the spirit of the mid-17th cent.



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