

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 LTJEditor@aol.com or dmpowell@waitrose.com

Picture Gallery

A selection here of local finds kindly sent in by a detectorist in SW Surrey. The first pleasing thing to notice is the commonality of patina; also, it would appear that several show signs of having been made in seal style, i.e. the two halves manufactured in adjacent moulds, then folded over and clamped together. One or two of them may actually be seals, but I think that most of them are tokens.



The basic designs of Figs.1-6 are fairly ordinary; having said which, with a certain amount of variety in them, probably due to the lack of skill of the maker as much as anything else. Fig.7 is clearly the pick of the bunch; a type 28 which if viewed one way up {Fig.7a} appears to be a face, but which if turned through 180 degrees {Fig.7b} might be genitals. I'm not joking; genitalia may be rare on British crude lead, but they were by no means rare on Roman tesserae, where they almost certainly indicate use as brothel tokens. If only all such pieces gave clues to their use! However, I favour the face in this case.

Fig.8 is one of those type 27 hearts which we have discussed before; reasonable common, but we don't yet know with certainty what they stand for. Love token? The design also appears on communion tokens {CTs} occasionally, but around Guildford that is probably just coincidence. The two pieces which are halfway between common type 3 cartwheel and scarcer type 31 whorl {Figs.9,10} are also interesting; they don't seem to come from the same die, but they do both have the initials IH on the back and are almost certainly from the same issuer.

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Herewith a couple of previously unknown hop tokens, readily recognisable as such from the style; the first {Fig.11} from that well-known hop-farming county, Morayshire {I jest}, where it had for some years belonged a collector ignorant of its origins. Fig.12 was dug up in Burwash, East Sussex on 12 March. I have since been corresponding with Alan Henderson, one of the experts on this series, and from our combined genealogical resources we think the issuer is quite probably Joseph Gouldsmith {1775-1861}, whose father Walker in 1785 occupied Brickhouse Farm, and was joint owner and occupier of Gutshole Farm and Wood, according to the East Sussex Land Tax register of that year. Not that that is exactly where the piece was found, nor that the Gouldsmiths stayed in the same part of the parish the whole of their lives. We have the census from 1841, of course, but Joseph's precise location is not given in that year, and by 1851 he was living in the main village, presumably retired. What survives in any individual case is rather a matter of luck; in this case, we had only the International Genealogical Index {IGI} and a couple of electoral registers to cover the intervening years between 1785 and 1841. We can't be dead sure that the issuer was Joseph, but equally there don't seem to be any other obvious candidates.

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Hop Tokens: An Introduction {Part 3}

As we have seen, early pieces of the Henderson period, late 18th or early 19th cent and almost invariably lead, typically have one of these numbers in large bold type on the reverse, with the farmer's initials on the obverse; that is, they are type 2 on one side and type 8 on the other. When we meet these same combination of characteristics in rather cruder style, there is therefore a reasonable chance, if the provenance is right, that we have a transitional Kentish hop token of the early-mid 18th cent.

However, just as communion tokens moved gradually from lead to pewter and white metal, and to greater artistic elaboration, so did hops, albeit probably not quite as early; the high values of these alloy series frequently bear dates, which are most commonly in the range 1835-1875. The latest series of this type known is 1883 {Fig.3}. In terms of artwork the higher value alloy pieces are amongst the most attractive of the series, often depicting floral motifs and/or the issuer's initials in script; only very occasionally does this extend to full pictorial representation, such as an oast house, running fox or, in the case of the grandly-named Sir Anchetil Ashburnham, the owner's family arms {Fig.1}. A display of some of these more decorative higher-value pieces will appear on the front page of a later issue, probably in early autumn; there is considerable individual variety, although one suspects that relatively few manufacturers might be responsible for them. Some of these pieces name the farm as well as the farmer {Fig.2}.



Amongst various curious phenomena:

- The 1856 pieces of Thomas Levett {Fig.4} , when examined close-up, have very fine radial markings which are clearly something to do with the process of manufacture.
- Although none of these late alloy pieces have the lettering retrograde, the top value of Walter Russell's series has the numerals backwards: 4871, instead of 1874.
- A small number have designs which incorporate a central hole.
- A number of them have very faint manufacturers' initials on them, which may only be readily seen under high magnification.

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There are several discernable varieties of brass:

- The earliest type {Fig.5}, struck in or shortly after 1819 for Messrs Richardson and Watson when a fragment of metal became conveniently available for recycling after an accident to a church bell. These have the lettering so prominently struck up that it gives the pieces an impression of being decidedly concave.
- Later in the 19th century an issuer or two took the unusual step of sending off to Daniells or another of the main Birmingham diesinkers {Fig.7}, rather than manufacturing locally.
- There exists a type with a rather mottled background, evidencing that the blank was cast, and rather browner than usual in consequence {Fig.6}. The lettering on these pieces lacks taste, and I suggest that they may be quite modern.



- Right at the end of the series similar recourse was had to the Neal family {Fig.8}, better associated with the manufacture of 20th century market checks for London and other big cities.



Please forgive me for discussing brass and copper pieces in these pages but, as before, the lead pieces of a series are but one part of the story, and should not be viewed in isolation. More next month...



CT Corner: Are they or aren't they?

Following our recent articles on communion tokens {CTs}, Stirlingshire reader Brian Kenny has kindly showed me a number of pieces from the Bo'ness area of West Lothian {Figs.3-7} and from Kincardine, a few miles away on the opposite side of the Forth {Figs.1,2,8,9}.

The only one clearly identified as a communion token is Fig.8 {Burzinski 7242}, from Whitekirk, which is 40+ miles east from its findspot in East Lothian. Fig.2 also looks very CT-ish, c.1690-1710, although it is very worn and as yet unidentified.

Fig.9 reminds one of the Scandinavian habit of making monograms out of the king's initial and number, although it is probably fanciful to imagine that this piece has anything to do with Christian IV, who ruled Denmark and Norway from 1588 to 1648; having said which, the habit did start in the middle of his reign, and continues on some Scandinavian coinage to this day.



Fig.1 does not look anything like a CT and might be a seal. Although the "7" tempts one to think that the four figures might constitute a date, the "7" being the second of them {which would conveniently make the piece 18th cent as we expect it to be}, nothing obvious can be deduced. Perhaps the number is a code, as per those Russian bale seals last November?

AE in Fig.7 {or is it AF?} could be a CT, perhaps from Anstruther Easter, on the Fife coast; it approximates to pieces already known for that parish, without being exactly similar.

Overstrikes are unusual but not unknown for CTs; another example is shown in Fig.11. You would go a long way to find a person with the initials UQ, so there probably has to be another explanation: in this case a parish name, Urquhart. Whether AK and FG {Figs 3,6} have similar meanings I do not know. Andrew MacMillan, whom I thank for a number of the observations made here, reminds me that Bo'ness is not a rural spot; it is a seaport that was involved with timber imports, shipbreaking, and with the export of coal, bricks and pottery. Figs.3-7 could all have had some industrial or commercial use, tallies perhaps, and finished up in a local dump; a fate which does not, incidentally, usually befall CTs, whose disposal was usually treated with more decorum. Fig.10, however, is a confirmed CT, despite its oddity; from Dull {Perthshire}, which these pieces certainly aren't.

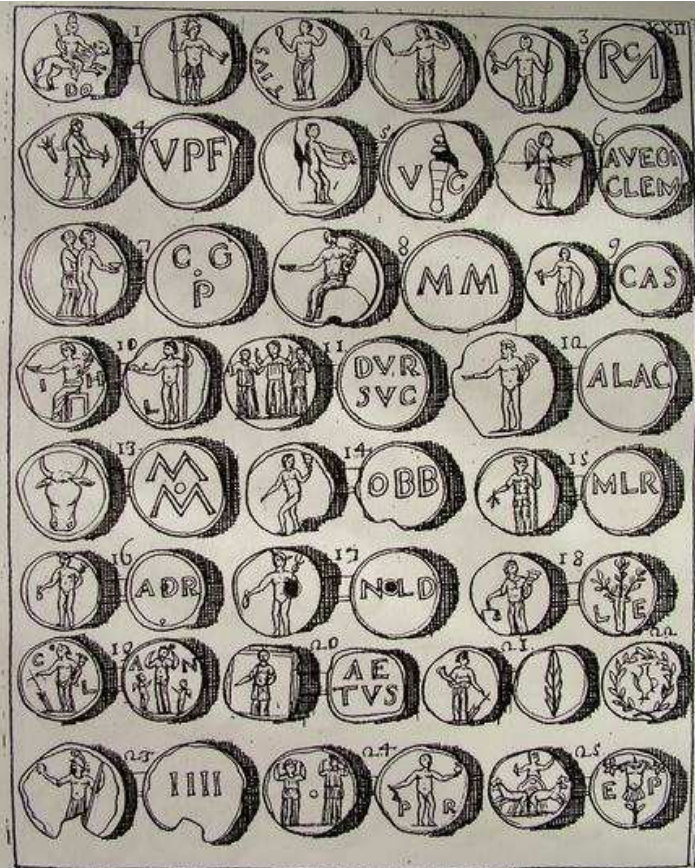
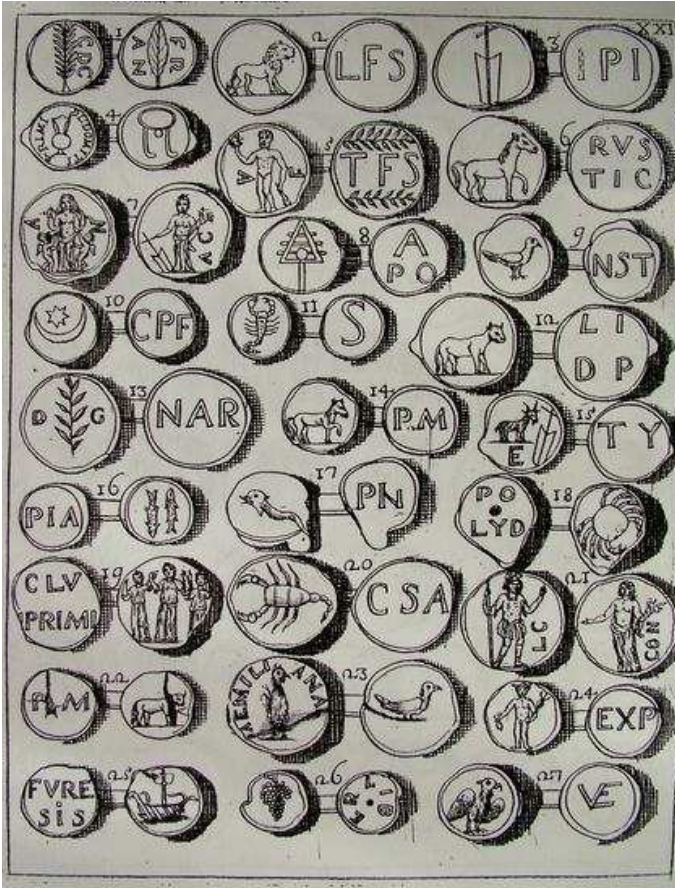


Possibly in the same category is Fig.12, again one of Brian Kenny's, which might from its colouring be mistaken for a potato crisp if it weren't for the markings. Is it only in Scotland that crude lead was square or rectangular, with any frequency? Perhaps the scored lines in one direction indicate 5, and those in the other direction 1, as is sometimes done when accounting. Or perhaps we are looking not at a tally, but a gaming piece; perhaps an early form of domino? Once again, a very simple piece {size 20x12mm, by the way} opens up wide possibilities.



A Taste Of Tesserae

We haven't had any ancients for a month or two, so herewith a few more of Francisco Ficorini's line drawings; remarkable how good decent line drawings are, and with series like this one often better to the eye than the real thing. Whether you think they are the real thing, or whether you think that Francisco was indulging his artistic licence to screw a few bob/lire/soldi out of his artistic sponsors, I leave to your imagination {opinion welcome from any Roman enthusiasts amongst you}. The pieces are slightly scaled down to fit the page, but not excessively so; the smallest tesserae in real life are about 10mm in diameter.



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AT THREE CRANES
If you have any lead tokens with part of their legend reading *AT THREE CRANES* please contact **Phil Memick** who is researching them.
Email: phil@mernicks.com
Phone: 020-8980-5672

Howard and Frances Simmons remind me that they have a nice display of communion token photographs on their site at <http://www.simmonsgallery.co.uk>. It relates to some of the pieces in the recently sold collection of Andrew MacMillan, one of our readers whose helpful advice and opinions have occasionally appeared in these pages. The sale itself is now past and the pictures will no doubt not remain indefinitely, so readers may like to browse whilst they are still there. They include quite a large proportion of crude lead, and a number which are not pictured in Burzinski. The Irish section is particularly worth a look, to contrast their styles of crude lead with those of the British mainland.

