

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 pleasantly patinated piece of 1724 from Haddenham, Cambs, for starters {Fig.1}; an extremely attractive colouring, good strong letters and numerals, plus three lis rather than one on the reverse. The latter give it rather a French feeling; you will find such an array on many of their 17th and 18th cent coins. It classifies under type 4, but is unlike any other that I have seen.

Fig.2 is somewhat indeterminate, but appears to be a standing figure, type 32; rather Roman in style, but being chunky with a 23mm diameter it looks unlikely. The reverse reveals a very standard type 3 cartwheel, which enables us to dismiss the ancient idea completely.



Well, now; what on earth is Fig.3? A Scottish lead find, with a most attractively engraved incuse thistle; whether produced as a work of art or for use, is uncertain. Probably not all that old, but not the less attractive for it. The shape also is curious; it looks damaged at first glance, except that the curves of the supposedly damaged part look too smooth.

Fig.4 is a fine robust hunk of metal, 31.88gm, 28mm in diameter and rising at its midpoint to about 6.7mm thick. What it was used for I don't know but you certainly wouldn't want to carry too many. The uniface reverse is very smooth, albeit not polished for the purpose of sliding, as game pieces sometimes were.

Figs.5 comes from West Berks; uniface, with a date 1714 above two sets of initials. Whilst the latter usually indicate the two parties co-administering some public office, or a business partnership, the identical surname initials could additionally indicate brothers, cousins or the like; less likely husband and wife, who would probably be arranged TN/T or TT/N in keeping with tradition. Fig.6 is of similar geographic origin, and indicates a lis/fork with an even number of tines. This is unusual; there are usually three, occasionally five. That is if they are tines; no join being visible, they could be plant stems, possibly even indicating a specific crop. The issuer's initials are retrograde, although that is common enough.



Finally, two of what are probably badges; ; Fig.7 possibly, Fig.8 definitely, by virtue of its pendant, around which a string to hang it would be tied. Beggars badges probably; a way of controlling administration of the poor law, whereby no relief would be given to anyone not wearing one. An odd number on Fig.7 might argue more strongly against it not being a weight.

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Hop Tokens: An Introduction {Part 4}



The “1”s are usually but not always uninteresting little pieces, by virtue of their size allowing them little scope to be otherwise; Figs.1-2 show a couple of sets containing more attractive examples. Generally, the larger the piece the more decorative. Most are round, but “6”s, for some reason, are often variously shaped {Figs.3-6,14}. There is a limited sense of some sets deriving from a common maker, especially in the pewter/white metal period, but this is not as marked as with communion tokens and no attempt to classify them into families has to my knowledge yet been made.



Some issuers employed only counterstamps, but these are well distributed over the period. Note the common patina of the five pieces in Fig.8 Some are very light in colour {Figs.7,10}. Fig.7 is also noteworthy for the style in which it spells out its information in full, and indeed there is another piece in the series which does similarly for the date, including day and month. The latter piece, which I have not seen, is dated 4.XII.1748, i.e. 4 Feb 1749 given that this is pre-calendar reform, so perhaps {but not necessarily} this is of similar date.... Not that it has to be! Figs.9-14 illustrate a number of series {9-12} or individual pieces {13=14} showing counterstrikes of what are probably rather later dates.



Figs.15-17 overleaf illustrate a variety of pieces, all mid-late 19th cent and mostly specifically dated 1875, which illustrate a number of features of later counterstamping. Firstly, there are sometimes more than one set of initials on a piece; fair enough, a farm changes ownership, and the new man takes the pieces on. Perhaps the farmer dies and his son inherits; perhaps he takes a partner; perhaps he moves to another farm and takes his pieces with him, or decides he doesn't want to use tokens any more and sells them to someone who does. There are all sorts of reasons why another set of initials might be added; or even a name, if you have a short one like Mr.Rugg in Fig.17.

Counterstrikes do also occur on the later white metal pieces, although not over frequently; P may be the initial of W.Piper's son in Fig.18. Cases have been seen where the value, e.g. “60” is repeatedly



stamped, perhaps three times, despite being already stated on the piece; with what purpose, I am uncertain. It seems unnecessary overkill. Finally an overstruck piece of the most modern and tasteless type from the last days {Fig.19}, made possibly of zinc, from the 1920s or 1930s.



The “line across the diameter” {Fig.20} is a frequent feature of counterstruck and non-counterstruck pieces, and it may be that those which share it emanate from a common source; some manufacturer who produced blanks, which could then be struck or stamped according to taste., with either the initials above and the value below the line, or vice versa. Fig.12 on the previous page shows the type of counterstrike employed.



The above series to be concluded with a display of the more modern white metal pieces, plus a guest article, in October.



CS Corner: Notches, Nibbles and Numbers

In some of the Scottish churches which issued communion tokens, it was found administratively convenient to do so from a number of tables, scattered around the church, and to direct the congregation to specific tables so as to ensure an even distribution and optimum flow. The usual method of doing this was to counterstamp the token, either on the back if it was uniface, or in a space left in the main design specifically for the purpose. A minority of table-numbered pieces have the digit struck as part of the design, as per the rest of the detail, although these tend to be more in the post-1843 white metal period than in the crude lead days; one disadvantage of pre-striking being that the church was stuck with what pieces it had, and lost the advantage of being able to counterstamp selectively.

One would think that it was the larger city churches which found the greater need to indulge in such practices, but it was not necessarily the case; some of what you would think were quite modest rural parishes seemed to find the need for more tables than you would have thought. The frequency of table number obviously decreases as the table number increases; the highest number observed on a token is 13, although it is on record that 29 tables were used to serve 2361 communicants on one occasion in Perthshire in 1791, and that even as early as 1725 the Methodist George Whitefield needed seventeen for one of his evangelical campaigns at Cambuslang.

These latter were special events, no doubt, and this article is devoted to what was the norm in table-numbering churches during the years, pre-1843, when lead and pewter was still dominant. The practice {usually only associated with the established Presbyterian Kirk} was in occasional use by 1690, although it remained somewhat uncommon for much of the 18th century, only increasing in frequency towards its end. Figs.1-5 illustrate a number of pieces on which the reverse contains nothing more than a counterstamp, plus sometimes the word “TABLE” or “No.” above. Figs. 1,2,4 date from the 1780s, Figs.3,5 from the 1820s.



Fig.6, from Dalry, Perthshire, is undated but likely to be one of the earliest with prestruck number, perhaps c.1735-50; having said which, no number other than “1” has been seen, which argues that it might have some other meaning. Figs.7,8 are two examples, dated 1798 and 1803, where the number is counterstruck into the obverse design; in one case into a space vacant to receive it, in the other straight over the top. Fig.9, from Huntly, Aberdeenshire, dates from 1761 and is of a type where a numeral is known on some example to the right of the parish letter; which makes sense, as why otherwise would the latter be placed off-centre? This example seems to have an insignificant mark to the right, akin to those found on crude lead type 24, but with the aid of photography a rather unconvincing “4” is hinted at. Fig.10, from Rosemarkie, Morayshire is also quite early; if, of course, that mark above the date is a “2” rather than a meaningless squiggle.



We seem to be back into type 24 territory here; i.e. do those marks mean anything or don't they? It has been suggested that some parishes marked rather than numbered their tokens; do those four notches in Fig.11 from Dennino, Fife, indicate a table number or are they just part of the design? Fig.12, from Hawick, looks as if it has had a nibble taken out of it; however, the one illustrated in Les Burzinski's book doesn't. So what, you say; my specimen must be malformed. If it has, it has been done very neatly; perhaps Hawick had two tables, one for the fully square tokens and one for the notched ones.

We can drive ourselves crazy here, working out these notches and marks. Damage, malformation, purpose; which? Fig.13 from an uncertain church in Inverness-shire is one of the few totally incuse Scottish pieces, and this specimen has four distinct punch marks on the back; probably therefore table 4. However, Figs.14-17 have a solitary notch which is probably indicates the point at which the metal flowed into the mould, rather than a table, whilst Figs.18-22 have each had a sharp implement jabbed into them at some point in their history. So what, lead is a soft metal and things get damaged. However, perhaps these are invalidation marks, deliberately inflicted to indicate that the period of currency has expired, such as are seen occasionally on 17th cent tokens? I think that that is the more likely explanation.

It has been suggested that Figs.23,24 from Kilwinning Ayrshire, which have no marks and date from c.1710, are a “his “ and “hers” set; although why such would be needed, I do not understand. Surely even the most straight-laced church official would be able to distinguish the sexes without the aid of a token! Nevertheless, the idea is posed that perhaps, where the number of variations is only two, as in the notched and unnotched Hawick pieces discussed above, that this rather than table control may be the purpose. Fig.25 from Elsrickle, Lanarkshire, appears malformed; again, not all its fellows are; deliberate, meaningful, or not?



Finally, a thought; perhaps, on other lead series also, nothing to do with CTs, punchmarks, notches and the like may have similar meanings. Numbers of holes, indicating values, certainly appear occasionally on hop tokens.