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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 Please note that the old LJFeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LJT is no longer active.

Seasonal Communion Token Display, part 1

It has been our custom in some previous December and January issues to see in the New Year with a display of communion tokens, mainly lead, in order that readers may contrast these local issues from north of the border with those issued, albeit for rather different purposes, in England. Our previous two displays having featured mainly dated issues, this year's homes in, with one or two exceptions, on undated ones. The date range is c.1700-1820.



Panel 1:

Kelton, Kirkcudbrightshire
 Lochs, Isle of Lewis
 Muthill, Perthshire
 Uncertain, possibly Kilmallie

Panel 2:

Kingarth, Bute
 Mauchline, Ayrshire
 Kinclaven, Perthshire
 Little Dunkeld, Perthshire

Panel 3:

Oxnam, Roxburghshire (2)

Panel 4:

Huntly, Aberdeenshire
 Dunning, Perthshire
 Orphir, Orkney
 Lauder, Berwickshire

Panel 5:

Kirkmichael, Perthshire (2)
 Menmuir, Angus
 Muckhart, Perthshire

Panel 6:

Anstruther Easter, Fifeshire
 Ashkirk or Aberfoyle
 Auchinleck, Ayrshire

Panel 7:

Port of Monteith, Perthshire
 Creich, Sutherland
 St.Ninians, Stirlingshire

Panel 8:

Newburn, Fife
 Innerwick, Perthshire
 Hownam, Roxburghshire
 Cullen, Banffshire

Panel 9:

Botriphnie, Banffshire
 Dalry, Kirkcudbrightshire

Larger Pieces of the Late 16th Century

We conclude our article on larger 16th cent pieces this month, so that we can get on with the smaller ones, which are the mainstream series, in the New Year. These large pieces peter out, and have no obvious successor of any scale in the century which follows.

London:

Whilst BNJ54 lists a handful of oddball larger pieces for the late 16th cent, they are without much common ground; in crude lead, there will always be the odd guy doing his own thing. The commercial sector started issuing as never before, but the vast majority went for the small 11-13mm flan.



In 1574 or thereabouts, however, there started an issue which is quite common, and with which I imagine most London-based searchers will be familiar; the “Beata Regina” series, named after the distinctive inscription on most of their obverses {Fig.1}, which depicts a crowned rose. The obverse, which has no inscription, shows a double-headed eagle; a choice of subject matter, also occurring on late 19th cent poor man’s pub checks, which may seem odd to those English paranumismatists whose experience of it has been previously confined to continental, chiefly German and Austrian, coinage.

As to the precise purpose of the Beata Regina pieces I am uncertain, although from the use of such heraldic devices one supposes that they might have enjoyed rather more official backing than the generality of small lead, against which there was a series of ongoing murmurings from officialdom. There are a number of varieties; “God Save The Qveene” {Fig.2} is an alternative to “Beata Regina”, whilst there are a variety of eagles. For example, one depicts two heads on a common neck {Fig.1b}, rather than the usual pair of necks and heads {Fig.2b, feature occurs with both inscriptions}; this may perhaps be the work of a different engraver or manufacturer, but who can say? Half size versions also exist, although are rarer; in the one I have seen, instead of the inscription, ER flanks the rose.

Of the same size and conveying similar royalist sentiments, but rather more pewtery than the distinctly lead-based Beata Regina pieces, is Fig.3; no inscription this time, but the crown surmounting a portcullis rather than a rose, and with ER flanking a lion rampant on the other side.

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Provinces:

The later and more degenerate Boy Bishops are classified by BNJ54 as series R, although I regard their division from the earlier pieces, series P, as rather artificial. The grenetis which replaces the earlier inscription is various, consisting amongst other things of wavy lines {Fig.4}, radial lines {Fig.5}, pellets, or segmented pellets.

Fig.4 is still quite attractive and probably of earlier date than Fig.5, which may be as late as the end of the 1550s; it would appear that the boy Bishop tradition, based on St.Nicholas, survived the dissolution of the monasteries but that the ascendancy of the Protestant Elizabeth, in 1558, probably did for it. Whatever the need was for these tokens, it seems to have survived in East Anglia in some form, for BNJ54 mentions the presence of Suffolk-based issues





depicting a crown c.1570-90, suggesting that this would be more acceptable than a mitre. Fig.6, I imagine, is one such piece; crown on one side and serriffed cross on the other, both within a crude radial grenetis, it retains the degeneracy of its predecessor.

Finally, there are other late-16th cent derivatives which move one more stage towards the stock tokens of a century or more later. In style one side of Fig.7 is quite similar to one of the London pieces shown last month on Page 2 {Fig.3}, except that it is uniface; the back is one of those faces which you half feel that someone has had an attempt to score, without being really serious about it. Possibly it is a

London stray which has managed to evade the Thames mud, but certainly it is lead as opposed to the other piece's pewter; the colour is more typical of the provinces. Fig.8, uniface and fairly unattractive, is probably a penny-sized late successor of the type of piece shown in series 6. I would guess a date not too far short of 1600, and suggest that this may be the sort of interim issue which carries the medieval cross-and-rim design {with or without pellets} into folk tradition and thus preserves it into a far later century, the 18th, than one would expect to encounter it.

Next month we will start looking at the smaller pieces which form the main London series of the 16th cent.

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A Suffolk Group



I won't claim that this little group of rather timeworn Suffolk leads are the most elegant set of pieces in the world, but they are not without interest. HRSP or HRPI in Fig.1, all retrograde; are they just the initials of a couple of business partners, or is there more to it? A rather half-hearted PR, small and off-centre, on the back. Fig.2 is one of the least petal-like type 1s I have ever seen; three crossed bands, with hardly any narrowing to indicate that they might be floral. It has a rustic head on the reverse, initially attractive but now too worn to illustrate. Fig.3 is a more convention 6-petal, with a very marked central hub; this really looks like a flower. This, and the others following, are all uniface or nearly so.

Fig.4. is one of those type 9 irregular geometrics which one feels ought to be a picture of something but you can't work out what; the lines are strong, however, so it was obviously made with a measure of intention. We will be trying to puzzle out more of these when LTT's current chronological series of articles reaches the 18th cent.

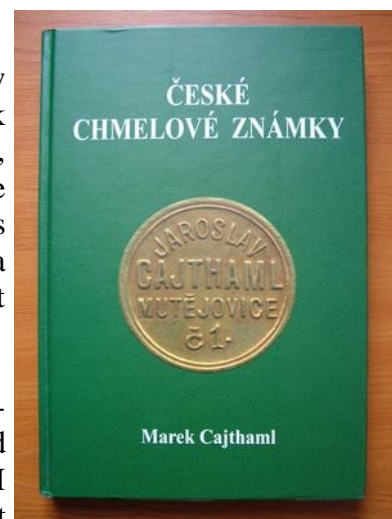
Fig.5 is of a type, occasionally seen, which depicts what might be a windmill but perhaps is more likely a beacon. We had such things on hilltops to warn against invaders like Napoleon, or the Spanish Armada; might it perhaps be a pass in connection with their access and activation?

Fig.6 is most likely a seal; if a token, it is very crudely constructed, along the lines more usually reserved for seals. The subject matter, seven stars {perhaps the Pleiades}, is its most attractive feature. Fig.7 is more interesting; very small, it has what appear to be two truncated lis without the stems, arranged in mirror image style. Perhaps a flower was the intended end-result, although it is not obvious. Fig.8 depicts cross arrows and is one of the very few crude leads which has a hole through it such that it might once have been a pendant displaying a symmetrical design when hung.

New Books: Czech Hop Tokens

I have just had a very pleasant surprise in the post, in the form of a new Czech book {as opposed to a cheque book}, courtesy of author Marek Cajthaml. There are flourishing token communities in other countries, even if we hear little of them, and Marek informs me that works have recently been published on Czech jetons and reckoning counters (2003), brewery tokens (2008), and hop tokens (2001), not to mention a variety of other things; anyone interested in making contact, please let me know and I will put you in touch.

It is hop tokens which are Marek's special interest, and it is my pleasure to comment on the last-mentioned work, his very well-presented and well-produced hardback "České Chmelové Znamky"; literally, if I interpret correctly, "Czech hop tokens". Books in languages you do not understand are always a challenge, however much you are interested in the subject, and the two things which make them accessible are (i) a profusion of good photographs and (ii) item listings which are broken up into small phrases, by means of which you can glean vocabulary from the context. Marek's book has the former in abundance, with over 700 sides illustrated and meticulously cross-referenced to the main catalogue in a logical and easy-to-follow manner.



The dozen pages of introductory text are punctuated by enough interesting tables to glean the regional geographical distribution of the 1774 locatable pieces in the main section, to work out that the main bulk of Czech hop token issues date from the period 1916-52, and that the main metals of choice were brass (62%), zinc (12%), aluminium or white metal (11%) and iron (1%). The remaining pieces were plastic (11%) and something which Wikipedia persists in translating as "honey" (3%). Can't win them all!

So, little if any lead, and virtually all early 20th cent; why put them in LTT? Simply for purposes of contrast; at least we know what equivalent somebody else had. This is the Czech equivalent of the Henderson series; perhaps they, like us, had some precursor like our crude lead, whose secrets still hide in the mists of time. The designs are as befit the contemporary tokens of other countries {including Britain} at the same period; names and towns frequently well-stated on the obverse, and with a more modern type of ornamentation. In addition to the located pieces, there are another 265 where, as is so commonly the case in the tokens world, the name and/or the town of issue is missing, inviting the local paranumismatic detectives to go about their work. There are a much smaller number of initial-only pieces than in the Kentish series, although there are some; likewise counterstamps. One of the unknown-location issuers is called Arthur Lang, which doesn't sound very Czech!

Marek, like myself, has sought to give his series some sort of structure by classifying the reverses. These, all 240+ described, photographed and arranged in families, are not unlikely the English hop series in concept; the majority have a value, whilst the last forty or mostly either state their function or depict a display of foliage. "Znamka na Chmel" means hop token, pure and simple, whilst Hopfenmarke is also readily guessable. Hints of German linguistic origin are also to be found on a certain number of the obverses, and no doubt can act as a clue to regional origins. Each piece in the main catalogue is assigned to a reverse type, and its diameter and weight stated.

As with the Kentish hop series, one or two range of values are to be distinguished. The usual units appear to be "vertelu" or "litru", which I take to be the equivalent of quarters and bushels or the like in English volume measurement; whilst ¼, ½, 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 25, 30, 50, 60, 100 are the main values discernible, there are some other unusual ones like ¾, 5/4, 1/8 or 1/16. Most of the fractional numbers have a "4" on the bottom, indicating vertelu/quarters, and sometime the number on the top indicating the number of quarters is itself fractional. From the ascending value order in which Marek illustrates, it would appear that the vertel is the larger measure of the two, equal to 30 litru or litres. I presume that the pieces without named value have one which is understood locally without being stated.