

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](mailto:dmpowell@waitrose.com) or [david@powell8041.freemove.co.uk](mailto:david@powell8041.freemove.co.uk). Please note that the old [LJEditor@aol.com](mailto:LJEditor@aol.com) address advertised on some earlier versions of LJT is no longer active.

## The Early 17th Century: London Reverses

The 17th century sees a rapid widening in the range of subject matter depicted on pieces, and I propose to look at this more closely in future issues; however, for the moment let me just display, for the record, what choices of reverse were made by the designers for the lead pieces whose obverses were shown last month. They are numbered as per that issue, so that you can match them up; only pieces 1,18 {uniface}, 17 {not lead} and 21 {shown last time} being missing.



Here we see designs many and various, heralding the way for the main 17th cent series in copper and brass, and indeed several of the more complex designs are probably contemporary with the latter; Figs.15,16 20 and 27, in particular, are starting to show a lot of detail. Fig.20 is St.George and the dragon, in case you haven't sussed it; even some main series depictions of it look fairly cluttered. There are other full-length figures, too, in Figs 16,19 and 23; you certainly wouldn't expect these in the 16th century. Fig.23 is the Man in the Moon, a well known pub/business sign; as also is the Woodman, although whether that is what Fig.6 intends I am not sure; he appears to be carrying a club rather than an axe. Fig.19 looks vaguely Roman, although that is probably only because he/she is indistinct.

There are not many pieces here which would look really out of place on the main series, if surrounded by an appropriate inscription; a few, such as Figs.19,22,24, lack some quality of execution, but their subjects are well on target for the period.



There are a couple of oddities, in Figs.7 and 26, but whilst the lead series has more identifiable types than the main 17th cent series, the latter is not without its own mysteries; even now, 120 years after its writing, a Williamson description is occasionally proved wrong. The halberd of Fig.14 is also quite unusual; an ordinary axe would be a little commoner, but weaponry and armour of various descriptions does make occasional appearance in the main series. I will suggest {I may be wrong} that Fig.7 is an hourglass, or egg-timer in modern parlance; but Fig.26 defeats me, and I welcome suggestions. One thing is certain; it is not a mere doodle.

## *Norman and Early Plantagenet Lead Tokens*

One question which is well worth stopping to ask is why, when the Romans produced tesserae in large quantities back in ancient times, do British lead tokens only seem to start in the 13th cent? To quote British Numismatic Journal, vol.53: “After this...”, i.e. the Roman period, “...there was a hiatus during the Anglo-Saxon and Norman periods in England, following which base metal tokens once again assumed a prominent position in the local economy during the decades around 1200.”

My thanks to Martin Grist for sending in Fig.1, and to Ted Fletcher for extracting Fig.2 from a Noble sales catalogue. Both pieces are clearly Norman, and the sales catalogue goes on to



explain that these have been identified as probably being customs receipts, thanks to the research of Marion Archibald {London and Middlesex Archaeological Society Special Paper 12 [1991] pp. 326-346}. She lists some 61 pieces in her article running from issues of Aethelred II to Stephen., with William I being the most frequently represented; however, this may be due to the largest single source being a group {34 pieces} from Billingsgate, which do not start before Edward the Confessor. Certain moneys appear to be predominant, and Marion feels it likely that the task of striking these customs pieces will have been assigned to certain of them, rather than being universally distributed. Several pieces have been found by metal-detectors from dump sites in Essex, and a few come from sites further afield, usually in the middle of historic cities..

Marion has thoughts of trying to update her paper in the light of the last two decades' new finds, so if anybody has any further pictures or find information which I can pass on to her, she {and I} would be very grateful. In the meanwhile, I recommend her existing article to you.

Moving on just a little, we also seem to have nothing much by way of lead tokens from the earliest Plantagenets; Edward I heads and matching pellet reverses maybe, but the period from Henry II through to Henry III, the Long and Short Cross penny area, is unrepresented. Fig.3 looks suspicious, with its jagged edges and hexagonal shape; I am afraid I am cheating, it is uniface and, despite having lost most of its protrusions, the remains of a badge. Nevertheless, with its c.1200 short-cross look, it serves as a pleasant reminder of what might have been!



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## *A Crude Lead piece in main series 17th Cent style*

My thanks to Paul Johnson for showing me the piece on the right, 20mm across but deliberately magnified 3:2; a lead piece which, despite being uniface, is otherwise in 17th cent main series style. I will guess it dates from just after the main series, i.e. towards 1700, as it is not significantly different in size. It was found on the Herts/Bucks border, near Tring, and is flat on the back; there is no indication that it was a button or badge.



I decided that the word on the right of the lis is meant to be ROBE(rt), whilst on the other side I was trying to make OVIN followed by retro-{C or G} into something meaningful. Bovington is a village near Hemel Hempstead, in Herts but not far from the Bucks border; however, the character preceding OVIN does not look very B-like. Finally I realised, it is C and O run together; the issuer's name is Robert Covington, and there is no location mentioned. Use of genealogical tools suggests that the surname Covington was indeed strongest in Beds and north Herts, which fits conveniently with the findspot.

## Trade Guilds: Objects Depicted on Shields

In our examination of 17th cent pieces, whether lead or main series, one of the subjects which we are frequently going to come up against is heraldry; i.e. items depicted on shields, which mean something to the initiated as an indicator of what the issuer's means of employment might be, but for most of us remains a mystery. Often, not always, these items occurs in threes. Heraldic devices occur in varying complexity: the Full Monty with bearers at the side and a crown at the top; the cut down versions of these with one or both of the embellishments dispensed with, giving in the latter case just a shield; below that, a version which gives the components of the shield in position but with the shield itself removed; and finally, instances where the trade is represented just by the primary component in isolation. In numismatic terms lead, compared to the more favoured coinage metals, tends to the latter, i.e. lower, end of the scale.

Think how often, on lead tokens and occasionally 17th cent main series as well, an attempted shield falls off the edge of a flan which is too small for it. A cure for this, for an engraver who doubts his skill to get the whole shield within the available space, is to reduce the symbolism to a single object.

The reason I mention this is that, when interpreting the meaning of a lead token, an attempt may be made by an engraver to draw an object which appears meaningless, but may not be. Moreover, in the 18th cent particularly, the object may not be drawn very well; so that, in addition to having to work out what it means, we may have to guess what it is.



Some of the items which appear on shields correspond to the trade which they immediately suggest; e.g. arrows, barrels, baskets, bows, bridles, horseshoes, horns, needles {crowned}, saddles, spectacles, and wheels. Others, however, vary from the less obvious to the thoroughly obscure; so, for those of you like me who do not know or readily absorb the mysteries of heraldry, here is a list of a number of items which you might find on tokens, and the trades which they often represent:

Item depicted	Trade
Barley sheaves	Brewers
Bibles or books	Stationers
Brushes	Haberdashers
Caps	Skinners
Castles	Masons
Catherine wheels	Haberdashers
Columbine flowers	Cooks
Compasses	Carpenters
Cranes	Poulterers
Crowns	Drapers
" "	Needlemakers
" "	Skinners
Dolphins	Fishmongers
Doves	Tallowchandlers
Escutcheons {shields}	Painter-stainers
Goats' heads	Cordwainers
Hammers, crowned	Blacksmiths
Helmets	Armourers & braziers
Keys of St.Peter	Fishmongers
Lamps	Tin plate workers

Item depicted	Trade
Leather bottles	Horners
Leopards' heads	Weavers
Lilies	Coopers
Lions	Broderers {embroiderers}
Madder-bags	Dyers
Mullets {5-pointed stars}	Bowyers
Oat sheaves	Innholders
Phoenix heads	Painter-stainers
Rams	Glovers
Roebucks	Leathersellers
Roses, without stalks	Armourers & braziers
" "	Wax chandlers
" "	Weavers
Roses, with stalks	Pewterers
Shuttles	Weavers
Swans	Poulterers
Swords, pairs of	Cutlers
Tents	Upholders {Upholsterers}
Tuns	Vintners
Wheat sheaves	Bakers

The list is not exhaustive, and some ambiguities do occur; nor does the choice of an object invariably indicate that trade. For those of you who wish to research individual pieces further, I recommend books on old shop signs such as Bryant Lillywhite's "Old London Signs" or Sir Ambrose Heal's "Sign Boards of Old London Shops". Both give many more examples but for starters, and to whet your appetite, I have kept it simple and just given some of the more common ones.

PS:A madder bag, by the way, is like a sack but with a knot in each corner.

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## *Contemporary References to Unofficial Small Change in Historical Documents, Part 2 of 2 {continued from last month}*

The Numismatic Chronicle for 1845-46, p.116-7, quotes the following set of payments from the account book of a Norwich church. It implies that the tokens were for ecclesiastical rather than charitable use, but it nevertheless suffices to give the general gist regarding the suppliers and their costs:

1632.	Paid for moulds to cast tokens in:	4s 0d
1633.	Paid to Norman for lead tokens:	0s 6d
1640.	Paid to Thomas Turner for 300 tokens:	3s 0d
1644.	Paid to Howard the Plomer for tokens:	0s 0d {misprint?}
1659.	Paid to Goodman Tenton for cutting a mould for the tokens:	2s 6d
1680.	Paid to the widow Harwood for lead tokens:	5s 0d
1683.	Paid Mrs.Harrold for lead tokens:	1s 0d
1684.	Paid Mrs.Harrold for lead tokens:	1s 0d
1686.	Paid for tokens bought, and herbs for the church:	2s 6d

I could be wrong, but the general impression given is that Howard the Plomer, Goodman Tenton, Widow Harwood and Mrs.Harrold did not constitute a sleek commercial manufacturing business, let alone the Royal Mint. It would be interesting to know how many of the named individuals were agents or church officials, and how many were regular rather than occasional employees of manufacturers.

The following entries for the same church are somewhat enigmatic, in that they seem to make reference to communion tokens {CTs}, which one thinks of primarily as passes, yet at the same time imply that they had a monetary exchange rate:

1682.	Paid for bread & wine, more than received by tokens:	£0 19s 1d
1683.	Paid for bread & wine, more than received by tokens:	£0 15s 1d
1685.	Received by tokens:	£3 0s 11½d
1686.	Received by tokens at eleven communions this year:	£3 18s 6d
1687.	Received by tokens at eleven communions this year:	£3 2s 3d

We will leave the mystery alone for the moment, for I intend to write about some of the practicalities of CT usage and production in Scotland later this year; however, this is the first time that I have come across entries which seem to imply the doubling up of CTs as passes and money. It would appear to suggest that the church charged an entrance fee to the communion service in order to cover the costs of the consumables.

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