

Editor: David Powell

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Please note that the old *LTJ* Editor@[aol.com](mailto:aol.com) address advertised on some earlier versions of *LTJ* is no longer active.

## Picture Gallery

Many lead tokens are so much of a muchness that one sometimes despairs of being able to distinguish regional differences, yet every so often a batch comes up which, without being remarkable, do not seem quite run of the mill. Figs 1-6 depict a group found in the Chew Valley, just south and south-west of Bristol, and an area not particularly renowned for producing many crude leads.

Only one of the designs is fundamentally unusual: Fig.2, a geometric which seems to depict an elaborated barrel, although whether that was the intention or not I do not know. As it is symmetric about the vertical, I guess it has to be type 34; it is too regular for type 9. Also seen from this area, but regrettably not available as a picture, is a quite delightful and most unusual piece depicting a crossed spade and fork; a more obvious hint of agricultural use there could not be. However, the other pieces have their own distinctive renderings of common themes. Fig.1 is clearly an 8-petal type 1 made of superimposed 4-petals, rather than just eight equally spaced petals; there is a gap in between each pair. Fig.5 likewise depicts, not a simple 8-spoke cartwheel, but four spokes forming a central cross plus four more, not centred, but each quite deliberately coming off, at right-angles to each other, a little way down each arm.



Fig.4 depicts the division of the field not into the usual four, but three; instead of a cross, a T runs to the edges, with pellets between. It does not look as if an initial was intended, not does it look as if it was meant to be a 3-spoke cartwheel. I guess that this one will have to go into the type 9 irregular geometrics! For the record, all five pieces, plus the spade-and-fork, are uniface.

There were also a couple of seals in the batch. The Star of David {Fig.3} has a number on the back, and is probably quite modern, perhaps 19th cent; whereas Fig.6 was found at Stanton Wick, in the same general area, and is a Baltic bale seal, no doubt brought in on a length of cloth purchased by a Bristol merchant. If anybody has any more finds from rural North Somerset I would be grateful if they could please let me know; many of my genealogical roots are in the area, so it holds a special interest for me.

-:-:-

Also in the same category of being mildly unusual versions of common types are Figs.7-8, this time both Yorkshire pieces; again, an area which I have heard has lead, but which I have not seen over-represented. Fig.7 shows simple initials, swathed in a larger than usual number of pellets; whereas Fig.8 shows initials enclosed within an oval cartouche, an ornamentation which appears more often on copper pieces and others of the more regular metals. The shield-like symmetry with the slight point at the bottom is also interesting, although that may be accidental. Again, more examples from this area, please!



Fig.9, to conclude, is a Fifeshire communion token find which appears to be unknown to Burzinski. The line under SHI suggests that the letters should be that way up, but there are no obvious nearby parish names which begin with them; in addition to which IHS is a well-known and often-used Christogram.

## Readers' Letters and Emails

Time to do a little catching up on some of the photographs and other correspondence which have come in during the last few months. First of all, courtesy of Paul Johnson, Fig.1, which was found on the Herts/Bucks border near Tring. The style looks 17<sup>th</sup> cent main series, despite being lead, and the diameter, 20mm, is typical of the 1660s.



The lis is a device found not infrequently on 17<sup>th</sup> cent tokens, as well as on crude lead before and after. The quality of manufacture of the piece looks quite good, and moreover the legend appears to be meaningful, even if the execution of some of the letters is a bit bizarre; likely the chap who made it was only partially literate. Some of it reads letters-inward, some letters-outward, and one or two letters may even be retrograde; not to worry, even the Romans sometimes changed their minds about which way round they wanted their lettering {look at their denarii of the 70s and 80s AD}.

Fractional inscriptions often present an interesting challenge, and this one is no exception. The word on the right of the lis is ROBE(rt), whilst on the other side we have to make sense of OVIN followed by retro-C or G. Bovington is a village near Hemel Hempstead, in Herts but not far from the Bucks border; however, I can't make the B out of that thing which looks like a sideways eight. Then I had another idea; I think it is CO run together, and that they are the first two letters of a surname; in other words, that the issuer is ROBE(rt) COVIN(ton). A look at genealogical database confirms that this is a surname particularly connected with Beds, northern Herts and SE Cambs.

Fig.2, sent in by PAS volunteer Rod Trevaskus, is only the second piece in these pages found in Montgomeryshire; the first {LTT\_\*\*} was about the crudest we have shown, and this is little better. The obverse depicts two eye-like annulets above a horizontal with some indeterminate lines, like the top of a set of cricket stumps, beneath; maybe a mouth is intended, with the line representing a nose and the whole forming a face. The reverse hints more strongly at foliage, but is too weak to enjoy. The diameter is 17-18mm.

Fig.3, found by previous contributor John Bromley in the Cheltenham/Gloucester area, is, at 9x11mm, extremely small; my gut feeling is that it is provincial and early 16<sup>th</sup> cent, perhaps 1530 plus or minus 20, but I could easily be wrong. Any other opinions out there on the matter? John thinks that the design could be based on a pheon, a device which frequently occurs as a mintmark in the early-mid 16th cent, and I am inclined to agree. I magnify it by a factor of 1.8 to enable you to appreciate it. It is uniface.



Fig.4 is another Baltic bale seal, which we have discussed before but not seen many of for a while; like the last piece, also from north Wales; this time Mold, in Flintshire. Apart from John Sullivan's article, mentioned in the LTT bibliography, the best set of illustrations that I can find on these is on the Colchester Treasure Hunting web-site at "<http://www.colchestertreasurehunting.co.uk/baleseals.htm>", to which I recommend you.

In LTT\_62 {May 2010}, I mentioned that the issuer of the 17th cent lead piece with a bird on the top of the initials {Fig.20 on page 2} had been conjecturally identified as the Oxford watchmaker Michael Bird. Reader Malcolm Butler has kindly sent in a picture of the latter's main series piece, which I show alongside for good measure. The main series piece of 1668 is 20mm diameter in real life; I have magnified it by 3:2, for purposes of contrast with the smaller lead.



## *The Variety of mid-17th Century Reverses: Types 1-9*

Last month we looked at lead token subject matter in the light of Williamson's main series list, and gave a breakdown by Powell classification type of such categories as occurred in the latter. Some of these deserve to be further expanded and commented on, especially where the terms used in the table were necessarily too generic. In making the comparison we need to bear in mind that main series were almost invariably directly-spensible money, whereas lead tokens, whilst they could be, often had others uses.

It is not the purpose here to comment at any length on why the subject matter was chosen, so much as to contrast the differences between the main and crude lead series in what was. Due to the number of types discussed, this series of articles will be spread over several editions. Apologies to those lead token enthusiasts who feel that the next few months' issues show too much copper and brass, but the two series are very closely connected, and it would be foolish not to draw on the data which the main series offers. Due to the small size of most pieces, pictures in this series will continue to be magnified 3:2.

Readers should remember again that the use of visual business signs was much wider in this period, and until the 1760s, and was not confined to pubs as it is today.

-:-:-:-:-

**Type 1** is a stock type which appears exclusively on lead.

**Type 2:** Initials appear extensively on both series, and require no further comment.

### **Types 3,4,5**

In the lead series these are largely stock types, and are extremely prolific. In the 17th cent main series there are a few pieces which confirm to them, although some of these could arguably reside elsewhere. Figs.1-3 illustrate types 3-5 respectively.



-:-:-:-:-

### **Type 6**

Strangely, 17th cent lead token manufacturers were not as frightened of trying to depict a ship within the confined space of a contemporary flan as they were other detailed subjects such as a building, a person or an inscription. It may be that this was because both the rigging and outline of a sailing vessel lent themselves to simple lines. Lead-based ship depictions may be slightly simpler than their main series counterparts, but they were certainly attempted.



Figs.4-9 show a variety of Williamson main series depictions, and it may interest those with more shipping knowledge than me to contrast the range of vessels described; having said which, I doubt if the owner of your average pub/shop was going to worry too much about exactly which he chose. Overleaf, by way contrast, in figs.10-14, are several leads which look likely from their size to date from the last third of the 17th cent. It should be remarked that nautical subjects, namely ships and anchors, make interesting examples for discussing the degeneration of types into the otherwise meaningless arrays of lines covered by type 9; concerning which, please see the next page.



### Type 7

Portcullises and chequer boards appear on the main 17th cent series {Figs.15-16}; mainly as business signs, the boards deriving from a connection with financial counting houses, although the portcullis is also occasionally appears as a symbol of authority on municipal tokens. On crude lead type 7 the grid is by and large thought of as a later type associated with more degenerate pieces, although the frequency of specimens in the 15-20mm range suggests that it was common from the mid-17th cent onwards. A couple of 13-14mm specimens have been seen, suggesting that the device was probably in use by the early 17th cent; although these rather coarse grids should not be confused with the very fine graining sometimes used as a background on 13th-14th cent Winetavern tokens and their derivatives.



**Type 8:** Numerals indicating dates and values appear on both lead and main series, the only different being in the frequency and style. Hence no further comment.

### Type 9

Irregular geometrics are almost unknown on the 17th cent main series because the artistic degeneration of types had not set in by 1672 when they ceased to be struck. On the lead series, deterioration of style probably set in at about this date, probably as a result of the better-quality manufacturers shutting down as a result of the 1672 edict and gradually giving way to backstreet establishments whose standards were not up to those of their predecessors. Readers are welcome to ask themselves, for example, how many of Fig.17-22 they recognise as obviously relating to maritime subjects; to my mind, Figs. 17,19 and 20 tax the imagination rather more than the other three. Fig.20 might even be a crown. Nor are these the worst; so, when you find yourself looking at seemingly pointless designs on type 9 in future, especially 18th cent ones, pause and consider what that mess of lines might be.



*...{to be continued next month}*

#### Key to 17th cent main series tokens:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Som.258, Martin Hossham of Taunton  | 6. Kent.223, Thomas Kite of Dover           |
| 2. Som.2, William Hopkins of Axbridge  | 7. Hants.96a, Newport IOW town piece        |
| 3. Suff.97, George Crisp of Clare      | 8. Southwark.340, Edward Brent              |
| 4. Lond.440a, Ship Tavern in Budge Row | 9. Hants.156, Edward Pearse of Portsmouth   |
| 5. Kent.504, Ralph Robins of Sandwich  | 15. Som.175, Langport town piece            |
|  | 16. Kent.66, Jeremiah Masterson, Canterbury |