

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 Please note that the old LTT Editor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Picture Gallery



First this month, a batch from Gloucs-based Andy Frape; all, from the size of them, probably 18th cent. Fig.1 is ordinary enough, the expanded cross type which we have seen before, and which sits in the classification system on the boundary between type 1 and 14.. The design starts c.1500 as a crude derivation of BNJ54 type M {see LTT_51, page 3, Fig.16} and continues through to the latest issues.

Figs.2 and 3 are both superficially damaged pieces from which about one-third has been sheared off; but look at Fig.2 carefully and you will see that the would-be cut is both rounded and symmetrical, suggesting deliberate intention. A single initial is accompanied by a half-hearted date in the exergue below, as was commonly done by illiterate makers copying the same idea from the halfpence and farthings of the time, without understanding what the figures stood for. Fig.3 is a genuine recipient of a spade or plough cut, and it is a pity that its remaining data is lost to us, for it is one of that class of tokens which depict a letter or symbol in each corner, and it would be good to know what the rest were.

Figs.4 and 5 are both shield pieces, the first cast as such with some sort of decorative surround, and with a cross & keys on the reverse which is too poor to display. My apologies for having to omit it, but at least it shows that business signs were still actively featuring on mid-18th cent pieces. Fig.5 is even worse; it is encrusted, and one wonders whether the armorial design, which is incuse, was scratched after the original design had been obliterated. Perhaps it was initially blank, and the shield was inscribed as an afterthought; although how long would the piece take to get into that condition? The reverse depiction does survive, albeit poorly {Fig.5b}; an animal or bird, although which at first is not immediately obvious.



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Figs 6a,6b are two depictions of the same piece, sent in by Nottinghamshire based Jeff Oscroft and John Gough. It is one of those which defies telling you which way up you are meant to look at it. We are all used to lis, Prince of Wales feathers and tridents degenerating in various manners, to the point where the side components become separated, but this is taking them a stage further. John thought that the central component might be a sword, and indeed if you take away the flanking “C”s, that is a very reasonable interpretation; one of those heavy, double-handed types of sword which you flail around. Dismiss the central bar as background and it could be a sledge hammer, whilst the weight at the top could also be the counterbalance of a long pendulum. Put the base at the bottom, and you could almost manage a man waving two bananas. But no, on balance, I don’t think it is anything offbeat; just our ordinary symbolic lis/trident with a base! Slightly oval, the piece measures 20 x 18 x 2.3mm. and weighs 5.4gm.

Fig.7, 27mm and almost certainly 18th cent, is unusual if somewhat worn. The galloping rider suggests perhaps a gentry piece, maybe a pass rather than small change.

{continued overleaf}

8



Next, this contribution from John Bromley, again from Gloucs, a nice little cloth seal, maximum diameter 20mm {Fig.8}; which qualifies for inclusion here by virtue of being very much in Williamson main series 17th cent style. The Roman numeral above the issuer's initials {sorry, no place for his wife's in consequence} are probably some indication of length, weight or quality.

Fig.9 is a church communion token, not that there would be anything to stop a clergyman issuing a private token, particularly if he happened also to be a gentleman farmer. Most "Reverends" came from well-to-do families in those days. But if the Rev FS is the issuer, who is P.Shaw or Shaws? Be aware of the odd ambiguous wording which may throw you; Pollokshaws is a place in Renfrewshire, now a suburb of Glasgow!



Fig.10 is an example of what is called "hack metal", a piece made from a sheet of metal which has been roughly cut into approximate squares or rectangles and then stamped. It is a neat piece, but neither its purpose or country of origin is known. It may not even be British. Is "12" a value, a weight, or the serial number on a pass?



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A Worcestershire Pewterer's Piece

My thanks to Alan Perks for these pictures of a piece found a few years ago in Wribbenhall, to the East of the River Severn opposite Bewdley, in Worcestershire. It was found near to Whispering Street where properties are known to have been built as far back as the early 14th Century. Alan writes: "The token displays what I first took to be a fish but on closer inspection appears to be a bird. On close inspection two legs can be seen on the bottom curve of its body. The other emblem appears to be a flower."



An interesting and unusual depiction which, although enigmatic, seems to be fairly well thought out and executed even if we cannot understand its full meaning. Alan remarks also that Wribbenhall was once a well-known pewter production centre, so perhaps the requisite artistic skills were to hand; although this piece, from its weight, is clearly lead. One of the main pewtering families in Wribbenhall at this time were the Bancks and Alan conjectures that a James Bancks, associated with this trade although not the main business owner, might be the owner of the initials "IB" on the reverse. Another possibility, and perhaps the preferred one if the token is local, is John Beales, a noted merchant trading between Bewdley and Bristol in the late 17th/early 18th cents.

Strangely, it is often quality tokens like these which have the very casual initials on the back, which look as if they have put on as an afterthought; the "IB" here is small and off-centre, and certainly does not command attention. From the diameter, about 31mm, the piece is probably 18th cent. Like many it has a tapered "slopy-edge" construction, the reason for which probably being that moulds were originally cut that way to enable the newly-cast token to slip out easier. The less assistance pieces have to be given to part company with their moulds, the less damage is likely to be done to them in the process.

The practice of putting very large crossbars on the initial I is common, and one might mistake "IB" for "FB" or even "EB". "I, is of course, the rendering of the time for "J", which is a very common initial. Occurrences of "II" are therefore moderately frequent, and when two such "I"s are put together, the appearance can be given, if the letters are almost conjoined, of a type 13 stretcher such as were used by porters at the time {see page 3 for an example from the 17th cent main series}. John Gough has sent in such a piece, shown on the right, found near Newark; which, from its diameter of around 14.2mm {magnification 3:2}, and weight of 1.6gm, is probably mid-17th cent.



The Variety of mid-17th Century Reverses: Types 10-16

We continue here our discussion on the variety of subject matter types on 17th cent tokens, and in particular the contrast between the crude lead and main copper/brass series, as expressed in terms of Powell classification types. As previously stated, due to the small size of most pieces concerned, pictures in this sequence of articles will continue to be magnified 3:2.

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Type 10

Williamson identifies a number of heads which can be identified with specific people or groups of people. Some of them are isolated examples, but kings are by far the most numerous; queens follow in second place, and Saracens or Turks in third. All these heads feature in common business signs. Although the main series does still feature a fair proportion of anonymous heads, on lead the proportion is a lot higher; indeed, at this date only the king's head is normally discernable. The British Museum does have a nice lead example of what is probably a Quaker, but that is exceptional. I dare say that a few of the lead token heads are meant to be Saracens, even if it is not obvious; although by and large heads are not very common on lead until the late 17th cent and the 18th, by which time the larger size flans render portraiture more viable.



Type 11

Items relating to inns and hostelries appear in both series and, whilst they are often attractive pieces, there are no major distinctions to comment on. Pub/business signs are covered in the Powell classification system by whichever category their design falls into; only pieces actually showing food, drink and utensils are actually type 11. Lead is more apt to depict these; the Williamson series will usually opt for the business sign.

Type 12

The quartered geometric type relates almost exclusively to lead.

Type 13

The most likely structure to be seen on crude lead is the stretcher, thought of these days in connection with injured people but in those days used for carrying and portering more generally. Even that is scarce. In the main 17th series, with their greater capacity for small detail, porters are more likely to be shown in action carrying the stretcher between them. Other occasional examples include fragmentary parts of buildings such as walls and hearths, and manufactured items such as lecterns.



Type 14

Exceptionally common on lead, where it may be regarded as a stock type, crosses also occur very occasionally in the main series. There is no particular distinction to comment on, except to remark that the 17th cent main series has no stock types.

Type 15

Ecclesiastical subject matter appears in limited quantity on both lead and main series pieces. By this period it is almost certainly all related to business signs, such as bishops' mitres, so there is no major distinction to comment on.



Type 16

Arms, whether personal or of tradesmen's' guilds, can almost always be identified on main series 17th cent pieces, and a very wide range of guilds are represented. Sometimes these have other adornments, such as crests. On lead there is hardly ever more than a shield, and the borders of the latter often go missing because they cannot be accommodated on the flan. Whilst many guild arms are too detailed to be rendered recognisably on a 13-15mm lead, a number have been seen and identified, amongst them:

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|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Bakers | Grocers | Salters |
| Clothworkers | Haberdashers | Tallow Chandlers |
| Fishmongers | Innholders | Weavers |
| Merchant Tailors | | |



The pictures above show one row of smaller 17th cent tokens and one row of larger; usually, but not exclusively, representing the early {1648-c.1663/4} and late {up to 1672} part of the series respectively. Figs.21-22, showing the arms of tallow chandlers and grocers respectively, are probably about the best lead is able to reach; Figs.23-25 show the standard to which lead fell not many decades after. Finally, Note that Fig.17 shows a rare example of a Williamson off-flan shield, common on later lead.



A list of the other guild arms encountered in the main series appears on LTT_13 {Apr 2006}, and theoretically any of them might be attempted on lead; likewise the City of London Arms, which being simpler does appear, although usually at an earlier date than this. Doubtless the various unidentified pieces are amongst such attempts. Try guessing whose arms Fig.23-25 represent, for example! Fig.25 is probably mid-18th cent, the other two late 17th.



<u>Key to 17th cent main series tokens:</u>	
1. Lond.966, Murat's Coffee House	12. Corn.59, Thomas Spry of Penryn
2. Kent 184, Kings Head, Deptford	13. Som.144, Mary Day of Glastonbury
3. Dur.13, Mathias Sowerby of Durham	14. Dur.32, Cuthbert Hetchinson of Durham
4. Lond.2865, Queens Head, W.Smithfield	15. Lond.297, Francis Hardy, Bishopsgate Without
5. Kent 528, Thomas Hinckley of Smarden	16. Yorks.129, John Wighton of Howden {personal arms}
6. Oxf.128, Richard Carter of Oxford	17. Unknown.69: Brewers' arms
8. Herts.165, James Partridge of Royston	18. Surr.187, Peter White of Mortlake
9. Dors.155, Sherborne town piece	19. Herts.158, John Skidmore, Rickmansworth
10. Cambs.52, Joseph Heath of Cambridge	20. Southwark 344, John Holland
11. Yorks.349, Robert Bell of Thrisk	