

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 Please note that the old LTT Editor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.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

My thanks to Mike Lucraft for Figs.1-2, which are most appropriate contributions just at this time when LTT is leaving Williamson's main series 17th cent material behind and starting to ask, "what next?". They come from NW Berkshire, and I particularly like Fig.1. The style of initials above, line across the middle {or near-middle} and date below is common enough, from late 17th cent to early 19th; however, this piece is near the beginning of that range, in good condition, the numerals are well executed and it does look pleasantly individual.



The size of the 1693 piece is around 22-23mm, which is typical for that period. I'm not sure exactly what animal it is meant to depict, but just enjoy the artwork for what it is; that of an enthusiastic amateur, with limited ability, making his best efforts! Wildlife is a popular choice subject choice for tokens throughout the 17th & 18th cents, and this one hints at a rather curious animal, possibly intended to be a bull, with a wild swishing tail. Presumably it is forced to stick it up in the air for lack of any horizontal space to put it; space constraints make for some interesting artistic licence! I have seen a similar creature on lead once before.

Fig.2 is probably about 20-30 years earlier, at a guess. The pair of rather neat initials is typical of many pieces from the early 17th cent onwards, but the size {19mm} is that of the later 17th main series tokens, and the reverse design incorporates a pseudo-inscription which looks as if it was intended to mimic the name-and-location description that was common to most pieces of that series. Probably the issuer and/or the engraver was illiterate and, whilst wanting to conform to the style of the day, was unable to do so either because of that or because of some limitation imposed by his skill or tools. It was very difficult to get an inscription of much length on lead, even if you could read and write.

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From the next century, Fig.3 looks as if it ought to be a gentry piece; the design is complex and looks somewhat abstract, and one presumes that those might be flanking initials on the obverse without being able to work out immediately what they are. Is that an A by intention at the bottom, or just the base of an ornamental design? It probably dates from around 1750.



No such doubt in the next case; the date, 1759, is there for all to see, even if a little off flan. A large crown size piece, almost certainly a Kentish {or East Sussex} hop token, these sixty and 120 pence/bushel pieces are regarded as the kings of their series. This may be no.190 in Alan Henderson's book on the series although, as he neither illustrates it or mentions the presence of a date, I cannot confirm.



Readers' Correspondence

Just catching up a little on some of the correspondence sent in over the winter; thanks to you all, and sorry I haven't had a chance to use some of your interesting material earlier. I haven't been able to fit you all in this month but there will be some more of your contributions in July.

First up, this one {Fig.1} from Amy Downes, the North & West Yorks FLO, which has a distinctly mediaeval ecclesiastical look and was found not far from Finchale Priory, a few miles NNE of Durham. During much of its history the priory served as a rest facility for the monks at Durham, so Wikipedia informs me.



The piece is not typical and does not fit into any regular patterns. Tokens don't usually come this large in the late middle ages, not that there is any absolutely invariable rule, and amongst those which are substitute money this sort of diameter is more to be associated with the early-mid 18th cent. However, the design feels much earlier than that, and there is no attempt at personal identity, so I definitely favour some usage associated with the priory. The 17th cent tokens of County Durham contain an unusually large percentage of pieces depicting the king {Charles II}, and I am wondering whether the crowns here are an indication of the abbey's royal allegiance.

The piece may be a pass, intended primarily to convey that the bearer was associated with the abbey in some way; e.g. a clergyman, a workman, a pilgrim, or a beggar entitled to benefit from its charity. I would conjecture that that is its most likely use, although the possibility of its being some sort of local money, according to some interpretation understood only in the immediate vicinity, cannot be ruled out.

The item has particular significance for the finder's family as it was virtually the last thing thing he found before his death; therefore, if anyone can add to the above from their local knowledge, Amy and I would be very grateful to know so that we can pass the information on.

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From a similar period, another contribution from Notts-based John Gough, who found Fig.2 in Farnsworth. On one side there is a cross of unusual design which stands quite proud; the other depicts a cross which, whilst still a little in high relief, is rather like the quartering on a hammered penny but no pellets.



John quotes the dimensions: "15.93mm x 4.13mm; weight 3.9gm". I tried measuring a batch of 19th cent farthings to two decimal places once, and measuring diameters at right-angles I still got discrepancies of up to 0.04mm quite regularly. That was with modern technology, so imagine what it is like with crude lead! Generally, the smaller-sized and better-organised the coinage, the more accurate you need to be with weights and measures readings; for example, 17th cent main series tokens require a greater accuracy than crude lead.

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Next we have, courtesy of Phil Blake, a slightly off-centre piece {Fig.3}, uniface and 15x13½mm, which from its general shape looks as if it is probably more seal than token. I've magnified it 3:2 to render its detailed design more readable. It was found a little SE of Bishop's Stortford and is about 1mm thick. The clue to dating range is obviously in the heraldry, which is partly damaged, but the general appearance is late 16th or 17th cent. The apparent presence of two harps rather than the usual one is a little enigmatic.



The Variety of mid-17th Century Reverses: Types 32-37

We conclude this month 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.

Type 32



Full length people appear on the main 17th cent series in fairly large numbers and can be divided, approximately, into the following categories. The tradesmen are by far the commonest; followed by the angels, although there are nearly four times as many of the former than of the latter.

- Unknown figures
- Kings {some identifiable}
- Queens {some identifiable}
- Other known figures
- Foreigners {non-specific}
- Soldiers & sailors
- Peasantry
- Angels
- Mythological characters
- Trade in action
- Country pursuits
- Ecclesiastical
- Entertainers
- Judiciary



As with the animals of type 19, a much higher percentage of human figures are unidentifiable on the main series compared with lead. Those found on lead tokens as being distinguishable from the general anonymity include angels {commonest}, plus a scattering of farmworkers, paupers, and riders; Fig.13, depicting a milkmaid, is a particularly detailed example. The Man in the Moon and the Green Man are symbolic types used as business signs, and have both been seen on lead; as also a group of three nuns, thought to be likewise a sign. Readers may like to contrast the lead and main series' different renderings of the Man in the Moon in Figs.14-15, and of the George & Dragon in. Figs.6 and 17.



Enthroned monarchs and working candlemakers are usually seen half-length {e.g.Fig.10}. Other less obvious standing figures include a chap wielding a club {Fig.16} and another holding an arrow. I have only encountered one example of a classical mythological character {Apollo} on crude lead of this date so far; unless Fig.16 is meant to be Hercules, rather than a woodman. Ted Fletcher wonders whether the engraver had the Cerne Abbas giant in mind, not that we have any idea whether the piece came from those parts.



As with type 21 I shall not in this case go into the full list of subjects matter listed by Williamson for the main series as it is extremely lengthy. For purposes of comparison, the foregoing simplification will suffice.

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Type 33

The range of body parts listed by Williamson for the main 17th cent series is as follows:

- Arms, including forearms and hands {Fig.18}
- Legs, including knees and feet {Fig.19}
- Genitals
- Miscellaneous: Neck, tongue, tooth, hair, skulls, bones.



With the exception of the skulls, of which there are eleven, the miscellanea can for the most part be seen as one-off oddities; I am not aware of any examples seen to date.

The other categories appear on both main series and lead, although not that frequently on the latter. The issuers are, for obvious reasons, usually glovers or hosiers; although on looking at Fig.19, one wonders whether an artificial leg is depicted. If so, the issuer would have found a significant market for his products after the Civil War.

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Types 34/35: These have little if any relevance to the Williamson series.

Type 36: Hearts, already discussed in LTT_48 {Mar 2009}. Both the arrow-pierced and plain varieties occur with moderate frequency in both the lead and main series, and there is no particular contrast of distribution or style to be made between them. They also occur, incidentally, on early lead communion tokens, although no-one is suggesting for a moment that all occurrences have an invariable ecclesiastical link. It would be interesting to know, however {not that we will ever find out}, how many of the various commercial issuers who chose this type had a strong religious faith, compared with the proportion of people in society as a whole.

Types 37: Scenic views are rarely seen on main series pieces, let alone lead, because of the amount of space taken to depict them. There are but a handful of examples in Williamson, amongst which is the town piece of Beccles {Fig.20} depicting the municipal arms of a sheep-fold in front of building. I have seen no further lead examples since introducing the type in LTT_65 last year, and even there the example shown was not of British origin.



Key to 17th cent main series tokens:

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| 1. Lond.370, Three Mariners, Boss Alley | 9. Lond.3322, Francis Palmer, Wapping Wall |
| 2. Lond.2327, Robert Ellis, Radcliffe Cross | 10. Oxf.247, John Young, Witney |
| 3. Lond.1106, Labour in Vain | 11. Lond.2629, Gilbert Tayler, St.Katharines |
| 4. Surr.163, Thomas Edmonds of Lambeth | 12. Beds.31, Joseph Lake, Cople |
| 5. Oxf.128, Richard Carter of Oxford | 14. Lond.3301, W.Gaunt, Wapping Wall |
| 6. Lond.2621, Thomas Lacy, St.Katharines | 18. Northants 85, John Twigden, Northampton |
| 7. Kent 511, James Mead, Tenterden | 19. Suff.73, Martin Seyden, Bury St.Edmunds |
| 8. Lond.2471, Backside of St.Clements | 20. Suff.5, Beccles town piece |

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