

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 Please note that the old LJFedi- tor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LJT is no longer active.

Picture Gallery

A pleasant little group of mainly 16-17th cent pieces this month, which have been magnified 3:2 for greater visibility.



The first two are both Thames finds; typical 13mm triad pieces, suggesting early 17th cent. The anchor {Fig.1} is one of the stock types seen on much crude lead country-wide, and it is good to see it appear as a type on both the better London leads and the main Williamson series; something which suggests it has a status in its own right, probably as a business sign, apart from as a stock type. Fig.2 is slightly more enigmatic, with what would be a shield if it wasn't for those two parallel lines at the bottom, which rather suggest the shaft of a spade. What, too, is that nestling within the handle of the spade, if spade it be? some unknown object, or perhaps even the last two digits of the date?



Figs.3-4 were also found together, and those familiar with early 17th cent London pieces such as the above will but imagine that Fig.4 is another from the same stable, this time from an unmarried issuer who had only two initials to contribute. The font type is, oh, so London, typical shield as well.... except that, the findspot was West Lo-

thian. They don't usually have commercial crude lead up there, so the strong possibility is that they are communion tokens; Burzinski is not the last word in what exists, and new varieties are cropping up all the time. Abercorn is a possible parish, unless AB was an itinerant minister. A good example of a piece not being what it looks; if we didn't know the provenance, would we have guessed? So, a lesson for those of you who are not already doing so, do please record where things come from!

A group next of what we might call "delicate and decorative"; the first three particularly. The orb {Fig.5} is 14mm and of unknown origin;



very finely drawn, and with an ecclesiastical subject one wonders whether it comes from an earlier age than the 17th cent which its diameter suggest, perhaps before the Reformation. There is a "1" to the left, however, and it is near the size of a contemporary silver penny, only a little larger; which perhaps, argues for the 17th cent again. Fig.6 looks like a decorated shield, making very full use of the space; with Fig.7, a couple of millimetres larger and with a visibly greater lead content, somewhat along the same lines. Both are uniface; the more sophisticated Fig.6 is from London, and Fig.7 possibly Lincs.

Again on the theme of inverted arcs, which come under type 31 in the classification system, we have Fig.8; more visibly provincial, it comes from Oxfordshire. Fairly obviously 17th cent, the rose is not the usual stock-type flower and may well be a business sign. To conclude, a tiny piece {Fig.9}, provenance unknown, which is probably a weight or possibly a seal; one would like the numeral to be a date, but I think not!



Emerging from the Williamson Era: The Late 17th Century

After several months of ploughing through the main series of 17th century tokens and considering their relationship to crude lead, we reach the question: "what next?". In 1672, once the new regal copper coinage had got going, copper and brass tokens were outlawed by official decree and disappeared very hastily from the scene; but as we all know, lead tokens were the great survivors. Official decrees had not stopped their flow before the Civil War, and no more would they now. In addition, there were almost certainly many lead pieces, contemporary with the main series, which Williamson does not mention. Not every trader would have given their token order to the travelling salesmen of David Ramage and the like, to be taken back to their firms' London workshops; many would have been happy to continue in their old ways with crude lead, whether for reasons of cost, convenience or just personal taste.

Not very much of the lead which we considered earlier, before we digressed to discussing reverses, was, as far as we were able to date it, much after about 1660. There is almost certainly a significant lead issue from the period 1660-72, as well as after that date. We have now to try and pick up the pieces and work out what is what.

One obvious observation is that the high quality London lead which predominated in the early 17th cent is, after about 1665, no more. London leads there doubtless still are, but they start to degenerate in the same way as the rest of the country. Outside London, most lead was probably already a little degenerate, so there was maybe little immediate stylistic change.

Another observation is that, whilst some 22-25mm tokens started appearing alongside the regal farthings of that size in the late 17th cent, there still seem to be a vast number of tokens in the 19-21mm range running, according to the dates on a few of them, well up in to the early-mid 18th cent. In other words, the latter size of lead token did not go out of favour for a very long time, and was almost certainly issued alongside both Williamson main series pieces and many of the later, larger leads which started to emulate the disc size of the new copper farthings.



{ This group of pictures courtesy of Tony Pilson }

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What we need to do therefore is to look for successive categories of token which, starting from near approximation to earlier issues, gradually move away from those concepts as part of a process of evolution. To that end I make a few general suggestions, not that lead ever fits within any finite set of rules; you will find pieces out there which contravene every point I mention, but for guidance:

- Uniface pieces with initials which nearly approximate to the early-17th cent style are most likely to be c.1650-63 if of 15-17mm diameter, and after that if 19-21mm. There is a change in the Williamson main series pieces around 1663; between 1660-62 the series had been slightly on hold, as people waited to see whether the new administration following the Restoration would have any effect on the lower-value coinage, and when it was discovered that it did not, token issuing broke out again in force. The trickle of tokens broke into a flood, but whereas small flans, dateless pieces and farthings had previously been in the majority, larger flans, dates and halfpennies became more the accepted norm. One can reasonably expect this overall trend to reveal itself on the lead.

- Uniface pieces which feature pictorial subjects of fair quality, which are well drawn and are readily identifiable, probably date similarly. Absence of any identity is certainly one sign of degeneracy; but on the other hand, there may have been good reason for it, such as, after 1672, the need to avoid prosecution!
- Pieces of these sizes which are of cruder execution and which retain the old stock designs {cross & pellets, cartwheel, petals, lis etc} are probably of similar date, but more likely to be provincial. They are also more likely to be homemade, rather than contracted out.
- Pieces with traditional triads are likely to be earlier rather than later, i.e. probably 17th cent rather than 18th.
- Pieces which are 22-25mm in diameter but which emulate main series style or are of high artistic quality are likely to be from the period after 1672, possibly up towards the end of the 17th cent or even into the 18th.
- Some late 17th and early 18th cent pieces will be post-1672 farthing size and some halfpenny size, with a gradual move from one or the other as time goes by; there will probably not be many of the latter early on.
- Some halfpenny-sized pieces and most larger ones will date from much later, well into the 18th cent if not towards the end of it. We will deal with those later.

The post-Williamson era does also in due course introduce its own new styles, but for the moment let us illustrate the renderings in lead of those which it inherited. In the remainder of this article, and for a month or two to come, I will illustrate with occasional comment numerous examples of the types de-



scribed above; in approximate chronological order if I can manage it, although you may find the odd intruder!

As one of the major features of the evolving lead coinage is change of size, and the latter ones are going to get quite large, I shall revert to life size pictures rather than applying the 3:2 magnification which I have been using in earlier articles of this series.

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With the above ideas in mind, here are two dozen or more initialled pieces from the period, which I invite you to place in one or other of the various categories approximately. Nearly all are uniface, which most earlier 17th cent pieces are not. Figs.1-4 look particularly neat and well-formed, causing one to think that they might not be much after the Williamson main series period 1648-72; except, Fig.4 is one of the occasional pieces with a date, 1697, to give the game away. Several of the others {Figs.9, 12, 15,16} are not significantly worse, and all are well within the 21mm maximum which forms the approximate upper bound of the main series period. What is "C4" is Fig.12? that is a bit off beat, as also is

Fig.10, the only one of the group to have a single letter, and an archaic “A” at that. Perhaps it belongs to an earlier date, despite being 16mm.

Fig.5 is also very neat; although it is one of only two or three in the set to have a retrograde initial, which inclines one to think it later despite its quality. Moving on, there are a number with slightly larger lettering {Figs.8,11,19,21,23,24}, which feel just that little later in time; although they might well not be, they are still only around the 18-19mm mark. Both letters on Fig.19 are retrograde, so for that one favour later rather than earlier. Figs.7,17,18 go one further; they introduce the barred “T”, which is definitely an 18th cent feature, usually associated with larger pieces than these; however, not to say that it didn't start at the end of the 17th. One of the trio is very neat {Fig.17}, one medium {Fig.7}, one decidedly not {Fig.18}; that could well be their chronological order.

A few neatly ordered pellets and other bits of ornamentation are not, of course, unknown on London's high quality early-mid 17th cent lead, but you will see that, for the most part, they are noticeably absent in the majority of the pieces shown here. Figs.1-2 are perhaps residual from that series, and hence retain that element of its legacy; however, most of the others have a clear field, except Figs.5 and 6. The pellets in Fig.5 are moderate in number and carefully arranged, so much so that they might even be a value; however, on Fig.6 alone is there a profusion of fairly random pellets, which are again a feature of the 18th cent. I would be inclined to think that this one might be c.1720 plus or minus a couple of decades.



The exergue is also a post-Williamson feature, coming in as it does with the new regal coinage of 1672; that is, the separate segment at the bottom defined by the existence of a horizontal line. On proper coinage the lower segment is normally used to contain the date, only, and is almost always quite small; however, on lead, the line is often so high as to almost reach the midpoint, thus creating two halves rather than a major {design} and minor {date} portion. By the time of 19th cent hop tokens this is frequently intentional, a diameter being quite deliberately used to separate issuer's initials above from denominational value below.

Fig.25 is a piece which borrows from mid-cent London neatness but incorporates a coin-like exergue; the proportion are as on Charles II and subsequent farthings. Fig.22 is moving towards more typically lead-associated lines; there is an exergue, and it contains the date as per the new farthings, but it does occupy about 40% of the piece. The date isn't very readable, but it looks to be either 93 or 97, there being no room for the other two numerals, almost certainly “16”, which should precede it. Pieces in this style with 18th cent dates, usually imperfectly rendered, are common; usually with larger flans than this and, of course, with a later style of lettering..

Monograms are occasional throughout the 17th and 18th cent, on early London lead, main series pieces and now these; Fig.26 is a late 17th cent example. How many of them are intentional is open to debate. Maybe some of those makers who were not aware whether a letter was retrograde, or didn't care, saw the upright on the first initial they engraved and opportunely, on the spur of the moment, decided to save themselves some work by reusing it for the second.

Finally, Figs 27 and 28, which represent the new designs of the emerging age; we shall see both again. The use of structures top and bottom as per Fig.27 seems to be an innovation of the closing years of the 17th cent and very early 18th, whilst the use of radial dashes as per Fig.28 is a very 18th cent phenomenon; note it here in connection with barred “T”s, spoken of above. Again, it often appears on larger pieces than this. No doubt is an evolution of the rim beading which, having become familiar to many on the main series 17th cent tokens of the 1650s and 1660s, translated itself to lead tokens as well. Figs.1,2 illustrate an earlier stage of the process, when beads were still beads, rather than dashes; having said which, there are a number of main series Williamson pieces where elongated lozenges, albeit usually joined rather than spaced, were already in evidence.