

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@powell18041.freemove.co.uk. Please note that the old LTTeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Defective Petals

My thanks to Sheila Gunn for sending in Fig.1, a more than usually interesting example of the type which we sometimes refer to as “defective petals”. We are used to regular arrays of petals, usually five or six, but on occasion anything from three to eight. We are also aware that some of these very common type 1 pieces are better executed than others, and that the poorer depictions are off-centre, have the components irregularly distributed, or sometimes have one side of one or more petals missing. Grotty artwork or execution, we think; or have done to date, but this specimen asks the question: is there more to it than that?



Fig.1 is actually rather amusing; there are five petals, one of which is filled in solidly, and the other four of which are defective. The impression is given that we are not looking at a stylised flower, but a humorous drawing of a chap jumping up and down. Is that an accident, or was it intention?



Certain of the defective petal type 1 pieces seems to have one side of one petal missing, allowing one to feel that the remaining side of that petal is a stem; is Fig.2 such a piece, or is it worn, or was the other side of the lowest petal inadequately filled with metal, or was it accidentally omitted by the engraver when cutting the mould? Fig.3 appears at first glance to be one of those pieces where the shape of the petals are inconsistent, they do not come together in the middle, and bits of some of them are actually missing. In this case there are two would-be stems, which isn't very realistic; but then the quality of the piece is quite good, and that appears to have been intentional. What of the rest? is it a flower, or is it something more complex? If not a flower, something perched on a stand is a possibility, and a pair of cooing birds not beyond the stretch of imagination.

Fig.4 is a not uncommon type, in which every petal is only half drawn. What happened here? Did the engraver run out of patience, or not see the need to complete a set of petals, or did he have something else in mind entirely? Four of the elements are curved enough, and one immediately thinks, “petal”. A further glance reveals that the fifth is nearly straight, and I ask myself whether I should have placed the picture the other way up. Perhaps it is only straight by coincidence. In concept, the piece is quite near Sheila's Fig.1. above, except that the curves go the other way and the top component in her's is (i) wider and (ii) filled in.



Fig.5 has six nice evenly divided, er, somethings. Very tempting to say petals, because you don't see six of anything else laid out like that. They are of even thickness rather than curved, and compared with most petals they have very stubby ends; if there were four of them instead of six, one would say without much thought that they formed a wide-banded cross. Figs.6-7 show two 17th cent main series tokens, magnified to a similar size, depicting respectively a windmill {Luke Chynnell of Richmond, Surrey.223} and a turnpike {Edward Lawrence of Wadesmill, Herts.197}. Could Fig.5 be depicting, not a 6-petal, but one of these?

A Hoard of Scottish Communion Tokens found in Holland



Herewith a group of communion tokens from Kirkmabreck, Kirkcudbrightshire, which were found some 30-40 years ago in, of all places, Holland! specifically, in a plastic box in an attic in Harlingen, Friesland. Their previous history is unknown. There were originally about 70 similar pieces, although a few have been dispersed.

It may be noticed that the obverse of the middle of the three examples below comes from a different mould than the other two. Lester Burzinski, the author of the current CT catalogue, listed the Kirkmabreck piece as his no.3572, but was aware of no such variety. He did not have one of either variety to picture; an indication normally that it might be regarded as fairly rare, although that is not surprising if, after being retired from use in their native parish, the main batch was sold or sent for further use across to the continent.



Did an outgoing minister take them with him to a new post on the continent? not that CTs were generally used in Holland, although a church in Amsterdam did in the 19th cent commission the foremost Edinburgh manufacturer, Alexander Kirkwood, to make some Dutch language pieces in white metal {see below, courtesy of reader Alex Kussendrager}. Shown alongside it are some high-level magnifications, illustrating the way in which a small percentage of the white metal communion tokens had the manufacturer's name sited on the rim {not the edge}. The majority of CTs are anonymous, even in the white metal era, and the most of those which are not are Kirkwood's; usually they read "A.KIRKWOOD" or "KIRKWOOD & SON", followed by "EDINBURGH", {or some abbreviation}.

This is one of the few to add that Edinburgh was in Scotland.



Readers' Correspondence

Some 18th cent pieces this month {Figs.1-4}, starting with a group submitted by Stuart Elton on behalf of Jack Nash. They look ordinary enough except that:

- ♦ Jack alone has managed to turn up over a hundred cloth seals at the same location {see Stuart's website , <http://www.bagseals.org> for details}.
- ♦ The place has a conveniently useful name which may hint at why it is so productive: Clothall Common, nr. Baldock, in the NE corner of Hertfordshire.

Stuart at first assumed that the name Clothall was derived from the Cloth Halls of England's cloth making past; English wool certainly extends back to Norman times and cloth had become important enough to tax by the 1300s . However, he has since found other references to the fact that the manor of Clothall, formerly Cleyhull, was in existence before the Norman Conquest. The date of the name change is in doubt; did Cleyhull become Cloth Hall when it developed one, or is it all just coincidence? Whatever, it is certain that something fairly important was going on there, whether a fair or other trading centre, despite the fact that it is now a very rural location.



Another of Jack's finds at Clothall which Stuart showed me was Fig.5. A short while afterwards, Belgian reader Redgy Dewulf sent in the near-identical Fig.6. He doesn't say exactly where it came from, just that most of his pieces were found in the coastal region of northern France. So, we have two pieces in the same series , with different values {3 and 4}, which purportedly come from a location {Kent} distant from both findspots. Was WM a hop-farmer, or the like? Having said which, county names are not often found on older tokens, other than a few of the 17th cent main series, and if a location were to be included, then surely that of the town or village would be much more useful. The pieces might of course be seals, but the reverse of the "4" piece, at least, looks tolerably plain. Anyone who finds any more of these, please write in.



Redgy says that to date he has only found two confirmed English tokens as a result of his continental detecting, the other being an Elizabethan "God Save the Queene" jetton of the type seen in these pages several times before; however, either the moon-and-seven-stars type of Fig.7 or the house of Fig.8 look as if they could easily be English. More obviously continental, and pick of the pack, is Fig.9; an obviously ecclesiastical type, as shown by the upright cross and crozier. Beautifully clear, with a date, and two sets of initials; what more could one ask? Early dates are more common on the continent, and examples in good condition pre-1600 are to be prized. The initials are probably those of the church/monastery {St. Something} and that of the location or the senior cleric who issued it. Fig.10 is a simple piece, Lombardic "a" on one side and an intriguing squiggle on the other; but as it was found near Nieuwpoort, Redgy was wondering whether the latter could be an "np" monogram.

Fig.11 is a typically continental cross-and-pellets of the type which one might expect to find in Forgeais; the obverse, with B visible above a double-banded and wide-angled cross, is decidedly non-British. Talking of non-British types, Redgy has drawn my attention to a very useful article about the halfbeard designs {my type 34}, to be found on Jacques Labrot's CNRJMMMA Eklablog site. CNRJMMMA = Centre National de Recherche sur les Jetons et Méreaux du Moyen Age, to give it its full name; Jacques is the expert on early French méreaux, as tokens are called over there, and the whole site is worth a good look. Go in on <http://lecnrjmma eklablog.com/bulletins-du-centre-le-livre-des-mereils-c24849696> for a full list of bulletins, the halfbeard one is number 59.



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My thanks to Stuart Johnson for showing the next two pieces. Fig.12 is a klippe, i.e. a token cut with shears from a piece of metal sheet. You can do it with either a square or a round design, but if you go for the latter then not only do you have to cut the sheet off but you also have to trim the edges of each piece in turn. The maker of Fig.12, which was found in Jevington, East Sussex, sensibly thought he would save himself the trouble. Once again, a date, and beautifully clear cut. The dragon might make one think superficially that it ought to be Welsh, but neither the findspot or the style argue in favour. Once again, it is down to heraldry; anyone recognise it? The largest concentration of klippe manufacture was in Scandinavia, which may or not be a clue.

Fig.13, also from Stuart, is one of those tokens whose depiction is obscure; a general jumble, which feels as if it ought to be interesting if you could just work out what it was. Its most unusual feature, however, is that it has a milled edge! Very common on higher value official coinage, almost unknown on lead. It is 18th cent, so maybe it was the milled coinage which gave its maker the idea.

The last two pieces have been veiled in mystery, but you might think that some things are more obvious. What more English and 17th cent could you get, than Figs.14-16? Wrong again! They were found in Groningen, in the Netherlands, and come courtesy of reader Alex Kussendrager, who acquired them from the finder. However, I still feel that they originated here, notwithstanding. So, how and why did they get out there?



British Numismatic Journal

Reference is frequently made in these pages to BNJ53 and BNJ54, the volumes of the British Numismatic Journal in which the two articles by Mitchiner and Skinner are found which contain the most comprehensive descriptions to date of the earlier British lead pieces up to the mid-17th cent. For those who do not have access to physical copies of BNJ, please note that these articles are now online at:

◇ http://www.britnumsoc.org/publications/Digital%20BNJ/pdfs/1983_BNJ_53_7.pdf

◇ http://www.britnumsoc.org/publications/Digital%20BNJ/pdfs/1984_BNJ_54_11.pdf