Leaden Tokens Telegraph

Editor: David Powell

Picture Gallery

Happy Christmas, everyone. St.Nicholas' Day is upon us, so I guess that this is the right issue for any Boy Bishops which have turned up since last year. Sorry, none available, will a girl bishop do instead? I understand that certain dioceses have relented and allowed them since 2014 {St.Nick's festivities do still take place}, but in 1570 it would have been a bit revolutionary. The young lady in Fig.1 looks a tad stroppy, as if recently informed that Santa forgot to leave any sweeties in her stocking. We will leave her jumping up and down in her vestments, barking orders.

Whilst on matters ecclesiastic, we have not had many communion tokens recently. By and large they are not very pictorial, and when they are mainly in the later white metal days of the 19th cent; however, earlier ones do occur. Buildings usually make for good viewing, on lead or any other series, and Figs.2-3 are from South Leith and Dalkeith respectively. The latter is inscribed DK/1742 on the reverse, which is quite early for a piece hinting of white metal alloy. Fig.4 is back to the quality of depiction which lead enthusiasts are used to; the church is lost in the fog, sorry wear, but a counterstamped table number adds considerably to its interest. They are common on white metal pieces, but less so on lead and, when they do occur on lead, they are usually on the back.

Our last CT {Fig.5} is but plain, but a single "D" always poses a question, where it cannot be accounted for by the parish initial. The piece comes from Longformacus, Berwickshire, which on this occasion is covered by LK on the obverse. It so happens that the minister on this occasion has been identified as one Daniel Sinclair {1715-34}, but it is unusual to express personal initials in this manner; DS alongside as a pair would be more usual. There are instances known where the minister sponsored the purchase of the tokens and donated them to the parish, in which case his initial followed by "D", for donavit {he gave}, is the format for indicating it. As Mr.Sinclair's initial is also "D", the piece is ambiguous.

Fig.6, a rather non-typical and decidedly chunky pewter piece at 14.23 gm, looks a bit churchy at first glance; however, its initials and long cross hover between merchant mark and monogram. I am informed that it comes from Jersey and/or Sark and that the arms on the back are those of the de Carteret family, date c.1584-1601. Finally, another subject traditionally associated with Christmas: namely, nuts. Or more specifically, the squir-

rels who are renowned for hoarding and cracking the things. I can only imagine that Fig.7 is some sort of vermin control piece, given to a rural squirrel-catcher as temporary reward prior to being converted to money later when he has caught a few more. The previous owner thought that it might be foreign, but I guess that they have the same issues with squirrels in mainland Europe as well.

Initials: Names or Locations?

I am grateful to Nigel Mills for an observation that the initials on certain lead tokens are widely believed by the Thames metal detecting fraternity to relate to the place of issue rather than the name of the issuer, in consequence of large numbers of some of them being found in appropriately named places; examples of note being CB for Castle Baynard and SP for St.Pauls, both localities near each other in the City of London.

I understand that there are a few other suspected examples, not all in the capital, which poses a certain ambiguity since most two-digit combinations of initials are also encountered fairly frequently amongst personal names. This makes knowledge, and preservation, of the provenance very important.

Castle Baynard was actually a ward of the City of London, rather than a parish, and represented an area which would have contained several, albeit tiny, parishes. Also, it was a civil rather than an ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Fig.1 is a fairly unremarkable 8-spoke cartwheel piece of the type mentioned; it has CB on the back, and was found in the middle of Castle Baynard territory. The implication must be that it represents some sort of general municipal issue, its function being different in some way from those pieces put out by the church. Maybe is was just low-denomination money, with no strings attached. At 16mm, I would guess mid-17th cent.

The groat-size piece of Fig.2, with TH on the rear, is of similar metallic construction and fairly similar provenance. The suggestion is that TH might be a location, but if so I know not what. The design is interesting in that, whilst the petals and grenetis hint at an ornate pseudo-groat, there is amidst the dark patination a flower-pot at 6 o'clock in one of the angles. Petals of this type, looking as if they have been described with a compass, are normally thought to be symbolic, but the implication is that this one was intended to be an actual plant. I suspect that, due to the hybrid nature of the design, this one is later than might first appear; maybe mid-18th cent.

Fig.3 is one of the relatively small number of early 17th cent pieces with a large flan {19-22 mm}, in a style which we have hitherto though to be largely if not exclusively provincial. It may indeed be, for the SP on the reverse can stand for a profusion of things other than St.Pauls. Nevertheless, there are five initials in all, and only two of them can be those of the issuer. The third may be a wife's initial, or it may be an occupation; cooper, chandler or the like. In some cases, where front and back balance each other symmetrically, a second initial pair can be taken as indicating an equal pair of business partners or churchwardens; but in this case, I feel that it is probably a place. Not necessarily a London one, of course.

Finally, Fig.4 shows a tiny 12mm of the early 16th cent, counterstamped with a lis-like object above a rectangular cartouche, containing CB, below. Place or person? I favour place, but who knows. I suggest that, whilst personal names probably still predominate by far, it does no harm on looking at a piece to think about what location names exist in the vicinity, particularly when they come from Thames foreshore sites near where the practice of location naming is already suspected..

Beggars' Badges in the Media:
Part 1, General Notes, & Usage in Scotland

In our series of historical articles about what has been written in the media about token-related objects and their usage, we come now to beggars' badges, which have appeared occasionally in these pages before; not tokens per se, although they have sometimes been formed from tokens and sometimes mistaken for them.

1 and 2, brass mould for casting badges; A and B, slots to form tongues to hold pin; 3, Dundee badge (in Dundee Museum); 4, Kirkwall, 1674; 5, Keith, stamped and punched; 6, Dysart, punched.
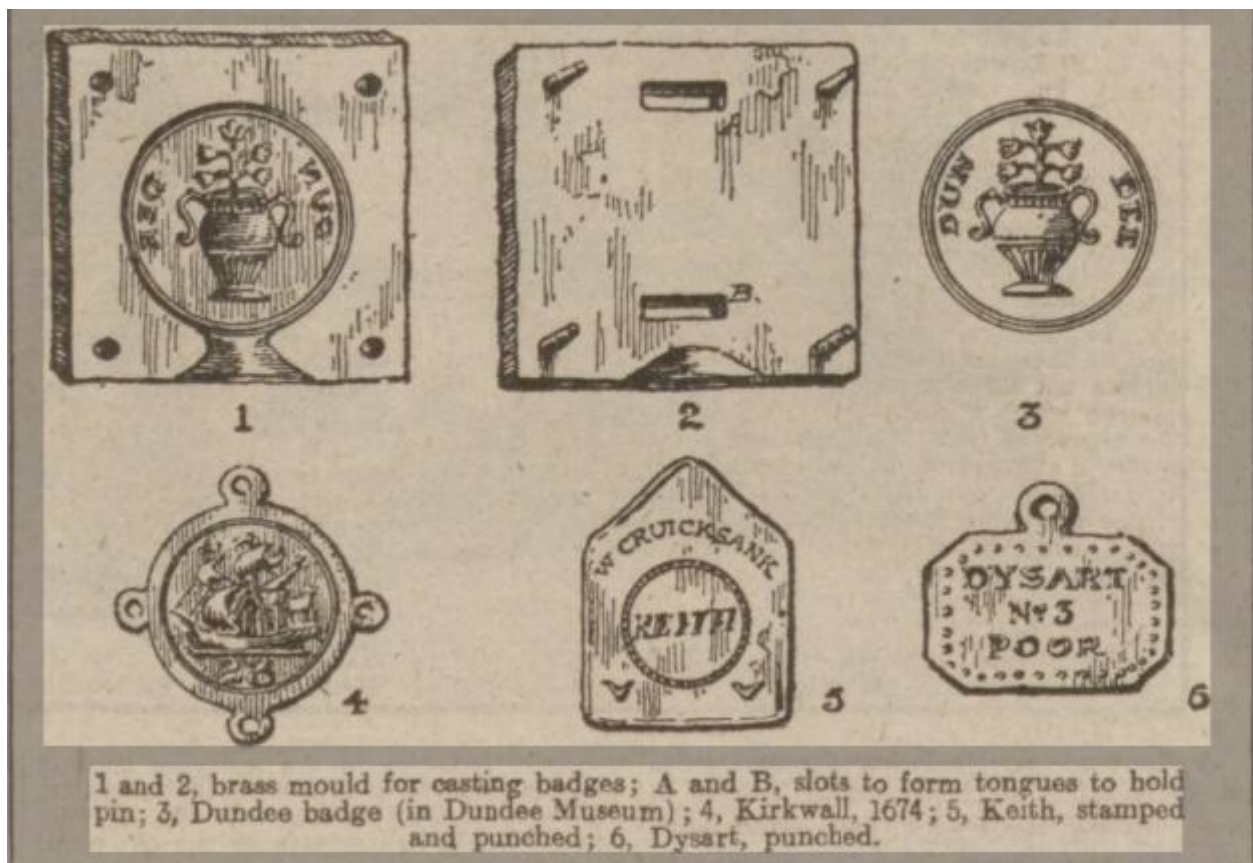
Illustration of several beggars badges, and a pair of moulds,
from the Dundee Courier of 30 April 1928

The parish having decided that a person was a deserving pauper worthy of their charity, there remained the task of deciding how best to administer such almsgiving. They could give the person money, in either real or token form; they could do the same with essentials supplies; and/or they could licence the person to beg. We have discussed the use of tokens before, whereby local tradesmen would be authorised to supply paupers in return for tokens, quite possibly lead, and the parish would recompense the shopkeeper accordingly. What we are talking about here is something different; not the transaction itself, but the authority to engage in it.

Whether a person was authorised to beg, or to purchase supplies via tokens on a charitable basis, the would-be supplier of money and goods had to have some way of knowing that the pauper was genuine. The normal way of doing this was for him to hang an instantly-recognisable parish badge around his neck, although an alternative option in the case of supply purchases was for the tokens to be numbered instead {or, as well}. From the evidence., the latter doesn't seem to have happened very often.

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So, we have beggars' badges; what form did they take? There were two main options:

◊   A purpose-made badge with a clasp-hole extension at the top, incorporated into the design.
◊   An object with a hole in it, usually metal, which may or may not have been an ex-token.

...in addition to which, it could have been possible for the pauper to have been given some less externally-visible form of pass, unholed, which he carried round with him and produced on request, as we do railway season tickets today. I doubt the latter would have been very common; in those days most parishes would have wanted their paupers to be readily visible as such, and to carry their shame around with them, as an inducement to others not to get themselves in similar position.

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According to the following day's Dundee Courier, the bishop of St.Andrews wore a beggar's badge on 13 September 1934 when opening a church fete, in order to illustrate a point in his speech.

> "The badge was dated 1801, and entitled the wearer to beg within the parish of St Andrews. It was marked number 6. He did not know where the other five beggars were, but he suggested they might be found at the stalls."

Such badges would be little known by that date, as indeed the bishop remarked, and the object would have added considerable surprise value to his talk. But how many badges did a typical parish have? one cannot assume that, simply because one has a numbered piece, that that number is the highest.
On 11 March 1893, and reported in the following Wednesday's Aberdeen Evening Express, a hoard came to light in a church vestry, which one may reasonably assume to be that church's whole supply:

> "FIND OF BEGGARS' BADGES. On Saturday there was found in an old box in the vestry Keith Parish Church no fewer than 20 beggars' badges bearing the word "Keith" impressed thereon, along with the "badger's" name, and the word " blind" or such-like cut in with a small iron. Along with them was the original iron stamp, made apparently in 1816. Such stamps are now exceedingly rare in Scotland, and even the largest museums contain only a few specimens of badges."

These were clearly individualised, although I suspect that numbering was more normal ,on account of its offering greater flexibility or re-use.

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Reports of sales occasionally offer useful background information, as for example this accompanying extract from the Aberdeen Journal of 24 April 1934:

OLD ABERDEEN BADGE.

> "At the beginning of the 17th century natives of certain towns were allowed to beg provided they wore little badges. In 1696 a Law of Settlement required every person receiving relief to wear on the shoulder or the sleeve a badge with a large Roman P and the first letter of the parish whereof such person was an inhabitant, cut either in red or blue cloth. These badges were later made of tin. The towns represented in the collection were: Aberdeen, Keith, Fraserburgh, Kirkcaldy, Dundee, Ellon, and Kirkwall."

Tin was sometimes used for communion tokens, particularly in the Aberdeen area in the late 17th cent, and it would be natural enough if beggars' badges subsequently moved towards lead at the same time as CTs. Nine years earlier there was another much more extensive article in the Aberdeen Journal which described the background and evolution of beggars' badges much more thoroughly. Herewith a few extracts and paraphrases:

"BEGGARS' BADGES IN SCOTLAND: Origin in early 15th century.

The prevalence of beggars at the present time and the difficulty of distinguishing genuine cases, suggest that there is a good deal to be said for the practice, one time quite common, of awarding badges to the deserving poor, without which they were forbidden to beg under most severe penalties. The first reference to this custom far as Scotland is concerned is an Act of James I. passed in 1424, which permitted sick and impotent persons who were unable to earn their own living to beg, and enacted that they should have a licence for that purpose in the shape of a badge, to be granted by the Sheriff in the case of a county, and by the Town Council in the case of a burgh {town}.

In those days, when few could read, it is easily seen why the licence took the form of a badge, which had the further advantage of being less easily destroyed than a written licence carried about in its possessor's wallet.

Originally it does not appear that these privileged beggars were restricted as to area, but by a later Act none was allowed to solicit alms outside their own parish. The plague of beggars, however, still continued, and in the years Acts passed which brought the Church into closer touch with the poor. The ministers and elders of each parish were ordered to make out lists of the poor, and the heritors were then to meet with the latter and appoint them places where they were to live, that they might be supplied by the contributions the Parish kirk. If these were not sufficient, they were to be granted badges to beg within their own parish.

It is evident from the records that the practice of giving badges to the poor by the town authorities prevailed all Scotland. The earliest instance recorded is found in the minutes of the Council of Edinburgh for 1502 when the Provost, Baillies, and Council determined that certain "leiden .taikins" be given to the puir failyeit folks……"

I'll spare you the rest of the Scottish dialect and the dire penalties inflicted for the offence of begging without a token, but I think we can all translate the phrase "leiden taikins" ! The article goes on to record that Glasgow spent 2s 3d on the manufacture of metal badges in 1575, and that Aberdeen commissioned "tokens" in 1546 and "tickets" in 1650 for the same purpose:

"The Baillies and Council on 18th May, 1546 proceeded to examine all the beggars and give natives of the town the town's token; by a later regulation they were ordered to wear this badge on their "utter garmounth" {outer garment} whereby they might be known. In 1650 William Scott, was ordered by the Council to make number of ticketis with "Aiberdein and the yeir of God" upon them to be given to the poor folks who had resided for seven years within the burgh."

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In one sale, reference is made to a <u>stone</u> beggar's badge, without in any way describing it, whilst another article conjectures that they might also have been sometimes made of wood, although no Scottish examples remain to prove it. Another sale, of 1931 included:

"….four beggars' badges in pewter, with oak and squirrel decoration, £2 15s"

So, they weren't all wholly plain and unadorned, as will be seen by the specimen on the right. Do I really believe that a rural Perthshire parish had 78 paupers simultaneously? Perhaps, like CTs and their serial numbers, there were various ways of doing it; each pauper having a unique number which was theirs for life, which saves possible ambiguity but re-

Supposed beggar's badge from Killin, Perthshire; serial no.78 below

quires more tokens, or having a smaller number of badges which were continually recycled. One can see the potential errors, even if accidental, deriving from the reuse of a number within a relatively short timescale.

Herewith a late addition after I wrote the above: my thanks to Ted Fletcher for pointing me to these three examples above in the Dundee, Perth, Forfar, and Fife's People's Journal of Saturday 5 December 1891. My apologies if they are not to scale, but the article does not state the actual size. I suspect that they would be somewhat larger than shown.

Finally, the basic purpose of the beggar's badge is summed up neatly in this short extract from the Falkirk Herald of 27 February 1907:

> "BEGGAR'S BADGE, A beggar's badge conferred the right to solicit alms within a certain district. It was generally made of pewter, and bore, in addition to the name of the parish from which it was issued, a number corresponding to that which the recipient held in the parish alms book."

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Beggars' Badges in the Media: Part 2, Usage in England

The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette of 8 October 1927 makes mention of a lead piece, issued by the town of Romsey, in Winchester museum. Although not illustrated, it is described as "a small cast lead badge with holes pierced at the side to allow of it being sewn on to a body garment" ; 4" by 3" in size, depicting a portcullis, and with the following inscription in eight lines of raised lettering:

> "I receive Allemes / of the Town / Made in the Mayorality / of Mr. Henry Squibb /
> Mayor of Romsey inf- / ra in Hamsir / Anno Domini 1678 / of Rumsey"

The same article also states that, although Canterbury does not have any beggars' badges in its museum, the city records state that some were commissioned there in 1530-31 and again in 1554-55. The latter reference states the size of the order: twenty-four.

> "For ii dosen Skotchens of lede for the poore people of the Citie that they might be knowen from other strange beggars."

An unknown beggar's badge, lifesize {46x35mm}, weighing 21.66gm. One wonders whether the three small indentations top centre are anything to do with boring through for suspension, or just part of the design.

Parishes often banded together into hundreds or other unions for the purpose of administering the Poor Law, and as such often shared a common workhouse. It is possible that the five pairs of initials are abbreviations of the name in one such union.