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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 [mail@leadtokens.org.uk](mailto:mail@leadtokens.org.uk) Please note that the old [david@powell8041.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:david@powell8041.freeserve.co.uk) address advertised on earlier versions of LTT will not be active after 31 May 2017.

## Welcome to 2019

It is that time of year again, when we celebrate as one year takes over from another. The calendar is celebrated on lead, as on most coins and tokens, by dates; in many cases, dates of years now long gone. This year LTT will see in the New Year by looking at that other measure of time, the clock.

Clocks are a fairly rare choice of depiction on lead and other small tokens, one reason being that, like St. George and the Dragon, they require a lot of detail to be placed on a fairly small flan. There is one example in the 17th cent Williamson series, William Knibb of Oxford {Oxon.151}, and examples frequently command prices at auction which are disproportionately high for the rarity of the piece. The other possible reason for the rarity of clocks on lead is that, clock makers and repairers being metal-workers by definition, they are probably more likely than most to choose a higher quality of metal for their tokens.

Lead clock tokens of the 17th cent or early 18th do exist, however, and a couple of examples are shown as Figs.1-2. The numerals, invariably Roman, are not perfect by any means, but the intent is obvious. Fig.1, probably the earlier, has a series of characters around the edge which are perhaps one up on the familiar nonsense inscriptions, whilst Fig.2 has a series of upright combinations, of varying lengths, which correspond to the lower Roman numerals.



We know not to be too finicky about the fine detail on lead, and even Mr.Knibb got in a bit of a muddle on his copper token because of the problems caused by the numerals on the left hand side {VII, VIII, IX} using more space than the ones on the right {II,III,IIII}. When VIII was used instead of IX, as was sometimes the case, it got even worse.

There are also, in the 17th cent, quite a number of examples of toy clock faces which look token-like in appearance, even if it is obvious they are not {thanks to Tony Williams & Co. for Fig.3}. These have the luxury of larger flans {Fig.4, for example, is 33mm}, but even they can get crowded on the left-hand side.



Fig.5 is a larger, late 18th cent example from the age of lead token degeneracy; about three Roman numerals in view, and little more than a pellet-cum-chevron for the hands. It provokes the question of whether any of the other pieces featuring a pellet in a ring, accompanied by a radial grenetis, are meant to be clocks. Fig.6 achieves greater accuracy, but looks suspiciously modern.



## Tokens in the New Year Traditions of Continental Europe

Prosit Neujahr! which means, being roughly translated, have a happy, joyous and slightly boisterous, dare I say it, somewhat alcoholic, celebration of New Year, accompanied by much laughter and merriment. The phrase has appeared on copious Austrian tokens, centred on Vienna, since 1933 or thereabouts, and the mood of the occasion can be gauged from the subject matter which appears on the pieces. The chief characters on Prosit Neujahr tokens are the pig and the chimney sweep, plus a few elves, all accompanied by various lucky symbols such as the four-leafed clover and the horseshoe.



1933 may have been the year that the Austrian Mint started producing annual calendar medals, followed very soon afterwards by New Year tokens, but the Prosit Neujahr {PN} tradition stretches way back. PN postcards, many of them bearing the New Year's date on the front, became prolific from about 1900 {Fig.1}, and in the late 1880s one of the German states overstruck the words on a few of its stamps {Fig.2}. The postcard shown is typical, and in broadly the same spirit as the tokens which followed it.



In rather more serious vein is a pendant, of German origin, dated 1887 {Fig.3}, which despite its near date to the other items hints of classical symbols of good fortune; the guardian angel above, and the anchor, probably of salvation, below. If we further go back to Strothotte's "Die Zeit in der Numismatik", the current work on international calendar medals, we see an example of a Bohemian piece from 1544, where instead of a sweep humping a pig, we have Christ humping the Paschal lamb {Fig.4}. The same Paschal Lamb, no less, who appears on many of our 13th cent English pewter pieces from BNJ54 types A,C, D etc. {Fig.5, magnified}.



What the ecclesiastic authorities thought about Christ morphing into a chimney sweep and the Paschal Lamb into a pig over the course of 400 years I have no idea, but maybe it was all so slow that no-one really noticed. In the modern era, commercial token manufacturers also jumped on the bandwagon and started giving the official Austrian Mint some serious competition; some of them high quality products, typically brass, and others less so, deploying aluminium, tin or zinc. The majority of the early pieces of this type were generic issues, for general distribution, but gradually firms starting commissioning their own bespoke designs, a practice which both the main Austrian Mint and its main competitor, Schwertner, were happy to encourage. Since the 1990s there has been an explosion of such pieces, although for the most part they are often not seen outside their own country.



Figs.6-7 show two of the many Austrian Mint designs; Fig.8-9 were Schwertner's main classic designs for many years. Most of the rest, bar possibly Fig.10, are thought to be by Adolf Belada; note particularly the "drunk and lamppost" of Fig.11.

Austria does not have the monopoly of PN-type issues; there are others, such as:

- ⇒ BUEKs {Boldog új évét kívánok} in Hungary: <http://www.zsetongaleria.hu/index.php?cat=3>
- ⇒ PF {Pour Féliciter Nouvel An}, which translates as "to make the New Year happy", in the Czech Republic. These and BUEKs are in broadly the same vein as PNs,.
- ⇒ Vasilopita, translating "Basil's Bread", from Greece.

...plus also some more fragmentary issues from other countries. By and large the quality of these other pieces is not as good as the Austrian ones, but there are exceptions.



Figs.18-22 {left}:  
"Pour Féliciter"

Figs.23-25 {below}:  
Vasilopita

The Vasilopita tradition involves baking the tokens into loaves of bread for some lucky eater to find, as often used to be done with silver threepenny bits in Christmas puddings here; however, the effect of baking on indifferently-plated cheap tokens, as opposed to solid silver, sometimes has an undesirable effect on their final appearance! These, alone of the series mentioned, do not depict lucky symbols, and for some reason most of the older ones pre-2000 show modern British monarchs on one side and George and the Dragon on the other. Given who they depict, they show some very odd dates!

The Wikipedia entry for "Pour Féliciter" clearly states that the sending of New Year greetings in some form was clearly established in the Czech Republic area in the 15th cent, and Strothotte's Bohemian piece on the last page suggests something similar. It is likely that other countries celebrated also, and possibly at most levels of society. How they did it, and what form of simple gifts and messages they employed, we may not know, but for the English peasantry the obvious question is....were tokens and lead a part of it? And if so, which tokens were the PNs, now forgotten, of their day? The enigmatic hearts, with their arrows through, may be a possibility. Who knows, but think and dream on!

If lead tokens were used as New Year gifts in the Tudor or Stuart eras, then they had one advantage over their 20th and 21st cent counterparts: they are easier to photograph! It is not often that I have to take pictures of modern shinies for LTT.

## Readers' Correspondence

A bit of catching up to be done after last summer; my apologies if some of the items have not appeared as soon their contributors would have hoped! Let us start with a few from Tony Williams' group. Klippe pieces, such as Fig.1, often with round designs but with the metal cut roughly into rectangles, are a late 16th cent to mid-17th cent feature, particularly common in Scandinavia. Bristol produced some brass klippe pieces for city use in 1591. This feels similar in concept, but I have no idea where it actually comes from.



Fig.2 is an example of incuse engraving on what was initially a blank. The design is crude, and long exposure to cold weather has whitened the piece so that one side is struggling to make its design felt, but one has to admire the attempt; the engraver is trying hard, notwithstanding. There is a fairly complex armorial shield on one side, whose I am not sure, and a delightfully plump friar, or the like, on the other. One feels the latter is having the mick taken out of him, but possibly it is not intentional.



Fig.3 is a type which I have seen before, without being quite too sure where or when it comes from, so my thanks to Tony for supplying me with the following from Ged Dodd, of the Baltic seals website: "Forked Linear Cross with 8 pellets; stylized Celtic, 6.8 grams 24x23x3.5mm ... Thought to be a Celtic design token modelled after a druid coin, 1610-1658. Very rare. One has been seen drawn on a head stone {i.e. tombstone} marked 1617, with four dots." I can't comment, other than to say that, whilst the reverse could be argued away in terms of typical mediaeval design, the obverse is decidedly odd and can be expected to have an unusual explanation.



Fig.4 doesn't look very typically English, either, although I presume that it probably is. The designer has built a human body out of what starts as six near-parallel lines. A stick-man, executed by someone of very modest ability; you get quite a few of those on the Roman barbarous radiates of the 3rd and 4th cent, but of course those are copper and tiny. This one in lead, being

halfpenny-sized, suggests a mid-18th cent date. I am not sure what is going on on the reverse, notwithstanding that the condition on both sides is very pleasing; it looks to be, by lead standards, quite a complex scene. Fig.5 is, if one did not have the clue provided by the flanking initials, one of those ambiguous pieces; is it a king wearing headgear {as rendered} or a crown {if turned upside down}? The E-R, for Edward Rex or Elizabeth Regina, determines. The diameter is 19-20mm.



Moving on gradually to more modern pieces now, Fig.6 is probably late 17th cent or early 18th, although the owner thought it might be Roman. The initials indicate the issuer in some manner; maybe GS practising a trade T, or G married to wife S {forenames} with surname T. I favour



the latter, although the undoubted presence of a female head causes one to doubt. Maybe she is the GS. About 4% of main series 17th cent token issuers were female, mainly widows running their late husbands' businesses, and something similar can reasonably be expected with lead. Fig.7, from the same period, is another superficially ordinary design which has a hint of being a clever bit of artwork. At first it looks like an unidentifiable animal with three pellets above, the middle of which may have been ringed to give an impression of the sun. However, the left-hand pellet could just conceivably be the head of someone with arm outstretched, holding a banner, pole or some such item.



Fig.8 is somewhere between an irregular geometric and a pure grid, but as it definitely isn't quite the latter then it probably is an attempt to draw an object. Suggestions welcome, please, as to what! The mid-18th cent Fig.9 is another hanging token, of a type which we haven't



seen for a bit; on this occasion a single hanging, rather than the double illustrated on the back page of LTT\_60 {Mar 2010}. I voiced my theory then {q.v.} that these occasional pieces were probably spectators' tickets for the inquisitive to get a better and closer view of such proceedings than might be obtained if one was merely part of the mob.; although an alternative but very outside possibility is that a pub or other business could have decided to use "The Hanged Man" as their shop sign. It does, however, seem a rather unlikely choice!

The less inspiring Fig.10, 18th cent and thin, is a variation on a cartwheel with annulets or characters in the angles; one wonders, without certainty, whether they are meant to form an inscription.

Finally, something large and chunky, the size of a Cartwheel penny {Fig.11}: a real good type 9 irregular geometric, yet with a design which is interesting enough to suggest quite a lot. It could be just intended as a cross with sprayed arrow-type ends, but there is something particular about the curved bar and the cross-ends, and the symmetry, which I like. The top cross-end could be a head, the bottom one a pair of legs, and the side ones two hands. Taken as a whole, the depiction could be a strong man flexing a bar; taking the bottom half in isolation, it could be a weightlifter trying to do the same above his head. Lots of ideas in this one, it is a great piece, and all credit to the mould-engraver who gave us so many options. The reverse is probably intended to be an eagle, although one might also remark that the body is somewhat similar to a Lombardic A and that the figure might just conceivably be a woman in a long dress, walking right and waving her hands.



## Help Required, Please....

My thanks to 17th cent token author Michael Dickinson for bringing Fig.1 to my attention; a 14mm silvered lead farthing which probably dates from about the 1640s. There is an upright invalidation hole which partly obscures various letters in the inscription on both sides, but it appears to be:

- ⇒ Obv: WILL...M / HOW..RD {two lines}
- ⇒ Rev: OF / :E..HAM {two lines}

Not too much doubt that our issuer's name is William Howard, I guess, but the other side is highly ambiguous. Where is E..HAM? The packing density of the letters suggests that there is only one character missing, and the colon at the front rules out options with a letter on the front, like Dedham. Other possibilities include:

- ⇒ East Ham {full stop missing}
- ⇒ Elham {"l" missing}
- ⇒ Egham {"g" missing}
- ⇒ Esham {"s" missing; used on a 17c token of Evesham}
- ⇒ Eltham {two letters "lt" missing, seems less likely}
- ⇒ Ebisham {17c rendering of Epsom, but seems too long}



Not all the parish registers of these possible towns and villages are online and as yet we have not been able to find any obvious William Howard who fits. Any more suggestions, please, as to what the missing letter(s) in the name might be?