

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 Please note that the old david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Putting a Face on it

My thanks to Richard Arlott for sending in Fig.1, found in the grounds of Waverley Abbey, near Farnham, on the Surrey/Hants border. It is 35mm in diameter, so the rule that the diameter of lead pieces most frequently accords to that of the smallest or most commonly used low-valued coin of the realm suggests a date in the era of cartwheel pennies and large trade tokens; i.e. 1787-1820, or possibly even a little later. The style of the lettering accords with that date, and a pair of initials like this “GF” is just what would most often appear on a private issue token of the time.



Farnham happens to have been the centre of a small hop farming area, about 15-miles across. The Kentish hop fields in particular were famous for their prodigious use of tokens, so one has to ask whether the Surrey/Hants border hop farmers, along with others, used them as well. It is indeed very likely, but no pieces to my knowledge have been firmly identified as such, despite quite a number of crude leads being found in the area. In Kent, values were usually stated on the pieces, and one this size would have been for a large value, maybe 60 or even 120 bushels. No reason why one area should follow another, of course, but, whilst I am inclined to think that this is not a hop piece, and that a commercial penny is intended, the idea cannot be wholly ruled out.



The object depicted is fairly obviously the sun, with a face drawn on it. Eyes, nose and mouth can all be clearly made out, whilst the wedges around the edge are the sun’s rays. It is not uncommon for token designers to include facial features when depicting the sun or moon, either on lead tokens {Figs.2-6} or brass {Figs.7,8 illustrate 17th and 18th cent examples respectively}. Most of them are admittedly rather earlier than Fig.1, but “The Sun” has always been a popular pub name and there would certainly have been plenty of them around c.1800-20. My suspicion is that GF was probably the proprietor of some such establishment. As to why he felt a need to make his own tokens rather than use the official money of the day, two of the most likely reasons are that:

- ⇒ There was not enough of the latter around.
- ⇒ He was implementing some special deal for his customers. They had special offers in those days as well!

The Sun was, of course, also the name of a long-established insurance company. In France there were jetons associated with the insurance industry in profusion, but there is no known equivalent here. However, one does see 18th cent insurance plaques on walls, to indicate that a company’s fire protection has been bought, so the idea of a token for the same purpose of identity is not impossible.



Fig.8: An example issued by Banbury bookseller William Rusher in the 1790s. {Dalton & Hamer, Oxford.1}

Readers' Correspondence

Following on from my article on concentric circles on the back page of the last edition, my thanks to Tony Gilbert for writing in to say that he had heard an expert on lettering design speak in a lecture as follows:

⇒ “These concentric lines were made by the designer/engraver on his chalk/plaster/soft material flan in order to set the upper/lower limits of the lettering.”

That makes sense, and I am grateful to know, but the most marked example, reillustrated here, clearly shows faint concentric circles across the entire field. Perhaps in such cases the engraver set up a machine to draw such lines as preparation before he started his work, so that he could decide which of them to use later when he got going?



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Fig.2 shows two well-preserved “county” seals, kindly sent in by Andy Frappe. We have discussed these before, in LTT_107 and 111, and, although they are not technically tokens, some of them look superficially as if they could be monetary pieces of the “klippe” type; that is, round designs struck on flat metal sheet, which are then cut out using a pair of shears. It is good to see them once in a while, especially in this condition, if only to be reminded what they aren't as much as what they are. The second one is a design which I have not seen previously, and I am not sure exactly what it signifies. Most commonly these pieces are from southern counties and from the middle of Charles II's reign; the dated one, Somerset and 1675, feels very much mid-range.

Figs.3-5, courtesy of Jeremy de Montfalcon, were found at Headbourne Worthy, north of the city of Winchester, some years ago. The field concerned has also produced many mediaeval artefacts and coins over the years, and this little group were found quite close to the Pilgrims Way, along which pilgrims would travel on their way to Canterbury Cathedral many miles to the east. These tokens were detected in one area of the field near a known Roman road, but they are undoubtedly late mediaeval, and as usual for the period quite small, for which reason I have magnified them 3:2. It is good to see a group of similar pieces from the same mould, if only because it happens so rarely in the world of crude lead. Jeremy



would be interested to know if anyone else has found the same or similar; if so, please write in.

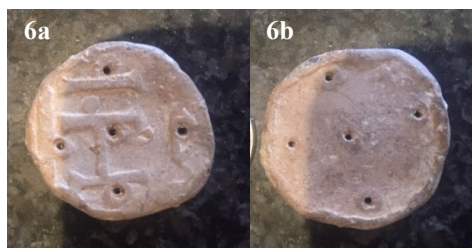


Fig.6, from Kent-based James Venton, reached me as shown; vague hint of mediaeval upright cross in the design, until you turn it 90 degrees and it becomes very obviously a standard 18th cent, two initials hop token. It is amazing how many would-be depictions turn out to be issuer initials when you give them a little attention! However, the main interest is in the holes. Multiple holes can sometimes be for use as a badge or a button, for stitching on to a garment, but the other frequent use is an indication of value. If you want to issue values one to six but only want to be bothered making one token, doing so and boring different number of holes in them is a cheap practical option {provided that the locals who use them understand the meaning}.

Continental Counterparts, part 5: Drink related

The brewing industry is well known for using a large number of tokens in recent times, notably most of the 19th cent and the first part of the 20th; there are pub tokens in profusion in this country, and biermarken in Germany, principally from around 1830. It is obvious from lead tokens which depict jugs, flagons, wineglasses etc in this country that such things existed a lot earlier, even if their relative quantity or precise usage is not known. The barrel is not seen very much on lead, but is certainly represented on a number of 17th cent main series pieces. Beyond this, however, and far outnumbering those which depict utensils and the tools of the trade, are those many tokens with designs which are meant to represent shop signs {however imperfectly on lead}; and whilst before 1764 many of them do represent shops rather than inns, a great many undoubtedly emanate from pubs. It is obvious that the pub token is, in the form of the day, alive and well back into at least the mid-16th cent if not before.

There seems to be no great profusion of recognisably alcohol-related pieces on mainland Europe in these early days, although there are a scattered few. On the 1546 piece previously shown in LTT_136 {Fig.1 here}, the initials BHT stand for Brau Haus Teken, or brew house token. Neumann, who lists numbers of these early tokens whilst saying next to nothing about their usage, breaks his usual silence and remarks that the issuer of Fig.1 invented a well-beloved Weissbier, i.e. white beer, in 1526. I imagine that that might mean he was rather partial to it.



Other pieces, such as Figs.2-3, show crop grains and either name, or state the initial letter (s) of, the various constituents from which the beer was produced: G = Gerste {barley}, M = Mais or Maldtz {maize or malt} etc. "Sch" on Fig.3 is "Scheffel", which is the German equivalent of bushel. Figs.3-4 show the Augs-

burg pinecone, a well-known city symbol, and it may be that these issues, of which there seem to be a few around the 1620s, are municipal supplies of grain, possibly for bread and other usage as well, rather than for brewery use alone.

There seems to be little sign of individual rather than corporate token issuing in the European refreshment industry before the 19th cent. There are two terms in use, brauzeichen and biermarke, which may well be different words for each other, although I am more inclined to suspect that they have distinct functions. The biermarke is more obviously what we call in Britain a "pub token", relating to an individual hostelry, but I find the term "brauzeichen" more ambiguous. It is either a token issued by a brewery, or concerned with the taxation of its products.

Figs.4-5, from the Bavaria towns of Mering and Seefeld respectively, dated 1704 and 1731, and clearly by the same manufacturer,

both depict barrels with the numeral "½" above; however, there is inconsistency in the explanations of what I have been told the "P" of the abbreviations "PR-ME" and "P-S" stand for. Neumann's suggestions of "Praeuamt" or "Praeuhaus" trigger any consistent online explanation, and I am left in some doubt as to whether a brewery or an excise office is intended.



Neumann's work dates from 1877 and, whilst invaluable, is notorious for misspellings. The mid-18th cent pieces of Figs.6-7 from Schliestedt in Lower Saxony show lower values, a quart and a half-quart. These are more the denominations which one might expect to find on a pub token, but they are anonymous, leaving one again in doubt; would a tax official be interested in volumes that low?

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As the British lead tokens which we are seeking to compare reach little into the biermarken period, I shall not discuss them much here other than to show a couple of mid-19th cent examples. Fig.8 is a white-metal piece of German publican Conrad Fischer, bearing his initials; he was known to be active c.1847-66 and the denomination on it is clearly ½ litre. The term Mass, variously spelt {Maass, Masse, Maß} is also occasionally encountered on tokens; that means a standard measure, in current days a litre; yes, they do have glasses that large. I've had one with a meal; very pleasant too, and it saves going up to ask for your second pint separately. Finally, Fig.9 is probably mid-late 19th cent in British "unofficial farthing" style. It offers an unusual deal; 18 kreuzer to enter the premises, against which the first 12 kreuzer of expenditure will be refunded. We know that brass pub tokens were sometimes sold to tempt people into bargains in Britain, e.g. five 2½d drinks for a shilling, or a game of skittles thrown in, and this is just a rather unfamiliar variant on the theme. Possibly some of the later lead tokens were used in similar manner?



Finally, a rather delicate matter, for when you have finished consuming your quart, barrel or whatever of beer. The above 1697 tokens from Braunschweig {Brunswick} are, according to their inscription, "Urinzeichen". I'll leave you to work out what that might mean, whilst leaving you with the clue that some German words are not that distant from similarly-sounding English ones. It depicts a barrel, into which a rectangular slot has been cut. To the side are a couple of rectangles, looking like a toilet-roll holder and a push button respectively, although this is hardly to be imagined in 1697. I cannot find any operating instructions for this device online, so I will just leave it to your imagination and say that I hope the whole lot was surrounded by some sort of small tent or booth. The conclusion must be that the concept of "spending a penny", or at least the German equivalent, was alive and well by the end of the 17th cent, and one state made special tokens for the purpose. Brunswick was a state not unassociated with Hanover, whose monarch became the British monarch also in 1714; so, maybe he and his entourage brought one or two of their own traditions and innovations with them. In which case, what type of tokens would likely have been used for that? Not lead, perchance?

The foregoing is one possible explanation; there is another. In the first century AD, the Romans so valued the use of urine in the tanning industry that they imposed a tax upon it. So, perhaps this piece is instead the token of a urine seller, or of a state authority levying a tax on it. Would we do such things in Britain? Fig.14 is an 18th cent British lead, uniface, with a large "U" on it. If anyone has any alternative suggestions as to what it might stand for, please write in.

We have now moved from private industry to the public domain, and the next issue will concern itself with toll tokens and others which can be more definitely linked to the raising of revenue.

Laetitia cum Bibite, or rather Bibite cum Laetitia: an Update

Readers of our older issues may possibly remember the following extract from LTT_34, page 2:

“There is a piece of Cologne, dated 1730 {not lead}, which bears the legend “Laetitia cum Bibite”. The meaning is “Drink ye with joy”, indicative of the relationship between God and man at its best, an outgoing effusion of generous, unfettered celebration. Those less charitably inclined might interpret otherwise; namely, that the delectable Laetitia was running an alehouse or a brothel, and wished to encourage her clientèle to use her services rather than those of her rival ladies of the night.”

Since then I have both seen more pieces of this type and learned the story behind them, so following the article above this seems a good place to update you on whether this 1730 piece, and its since-discovered fellows, are ecclesiastical {communion tokens} or secular.



My original feeling was that the piece might have been a city CT issued centrally on behalf of all the Protestant churches of the town; but no, it now transpires that it is a Ratzeichen, or town token, issued in connection with the consumption of wine by councillors at their meetings. The series commenced in 1497 with further issues in 1500/15/46/97, 1606/72 and 1716/30. Intermittent strikings using the 1730 die continued at intervals, no doubt as more councillors were appointed or their predecessors lost their tokens, and their usage continued up to 1796. By the latter year, more than 183,000 of the final {1730} issue had been struck, so I am informed. That is a lot of councillors. Who else was jumping on the bandwagon?

So, nothing too reverent and churchy about that, and the idea of a biermarke with the date 1497 on it is intriguing. Figs.1-3 above are later, showing the issues of 1606, 1672 and 1730 respectively.



A few other German towns and cities also issued ratzeichen, notably Regensburg {Figs.4-5} and Aachen {Fig.6}. Regensburg's are in copper, around the 23mm mark, and I had originally thought that they might be poor money, but apparently not. Figs.4-5 are dated 1651 and 1673 respectively, but others exist. Aachen's piece of 1708 {Fig.6} is in silver, however, and shows what is presumably a young lady rather than a priest dishing out wine in flamboyant manner, using what looks like a yard-of-ale measure in her right hand to pour into what must be a rather large wine glass, if the relative dimensions are to be believed, in her left. I think that we can safely conclude that the piece is neither poor money nor a communion token.

The French equivalent is the jeton de presence, and they abound; pieces nominally given to the holders of honorary posts, as a compensation for their not being paid. Depending on local practice and tradition, it seems that they could be traded for drink, kept as awards, melted down for bullion, or used as substitute money. Did we have nothing similar? Not that we know of, but English councillors were no doubt as human, and got as thirsty, as everyone else. Lead tokens might not be plausible for use as medals, but trading for a refreshment allowance, or being used as admission tickets for a dinner, are very plausible uses. The type 11 pieces from our classification system, depicting the utensils of eating and drinking, must be prime candidates.