

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Please note that the old david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Readers' Correspondence

Even the most ordinary of our lead token stock designs provide many variations on their basic theme, and my thanks to Michael Lee for sending in Fig.1, a 30mm diameter 6-petal found in a village location near Shrewsbury. Its size suggests a late 18th cent date, or even early 19th, but its unusual feature is the presence of a couple of issuer's initials, IH or HI, in the angles. Usually they would be on the back, and looming large; on this piece, the reverse is blank. The petals looking rather randomly inserted, as well; whether they have meaning is anyone's guess. The norm is for them to be more evenly distributed. Finally, the use of I for J is a custom which gradually declines over time; I is probably more normal in the 18th cent, J by the 19th. The issuer's initial could genuinely be I, of course, but J is more common. On balance, of probability, the I slightly argues for a late 18th cent date rather than a 19th.



Thanks next to Bryce Neilson for Fig.2, a 23mm uniface token or jeton {uncertain} depicting a large lion rampant holding a handful of arrows. Bryce writes:

⇒ *It is very similar to Elizabethan lead/pewter jettons but with Flemish lion holding sword and 5 arrows - after Union of Utrecht in 1579 and before United Provinces of the Dutch Republic 1584 (7 arrows), reverse blank*



The last quarter of the 16th cent was a period of turbulence in the Low Countries' history during which the northern confederation, which eventually became what we now know as the Netherlands, was in a formative and volatile state. The rampant lion was its badge, and number of arrows represents the number of provinces in the confederation at the time of issue; some of the country's silver coins show different numbers of arrows, and others different numbers of shields; six in the mid-1580s, seven in the mid 1590s. I do not know the exact dates, but Bryce is very much along the right lines.

Fig.3 is another example, albeit without the arrows, 28mm and uniface, found on the Thames foreshore at Rotherhithe. In no way does that findspot stop it being Dutch; foreign sailors visited each other's shores and very considerably dropped a few of their local artefacts for us to find.

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Fig.4 comes from Gloucestershire-based detectorist Andy Frape. And was found near Newent. In terms of classification, it is an irregular geometric {type 9}, but I think the most likely interpretation is an attempt to construct circular inscriptions by someone who was both illiterate and incapable of doing so. The long deep line at 4 o'clock on one side is simply a duct mark where the metal has flowed into the mould. As to the rest, the manufacturer has in his time probably seen both the inscriptions on 17th cent tokens and the cross designs of mediaeval pennies, and, in endeavouring to choose a design for his own use, produced a hybrid of the two. The style and size feel early 18th cent, plus or minus a little. The size argues that it might be slightly earlier, the degeneracy of the artwork slightly later.

The hole suggests either (i) use as a badge or (ii) nailing into door lintels as a talisman for warding off witches. If the hole had been central, I would have favoured the latter; as it is, with the hole near an edge, it could be either. If a badge, that would have been its only use, and it would probably have been in connection with access to something, e.g. permission to go on, or be in, part of a big estate. It is well worth asking, when confronted with this type of piece, i.e. a potential pass, whether there are any big houses near the findspot. If a talisman fixed to a cottage door, then that would probably be a secondary use of a piece rendered obsolete in connection with some other earlier {probably commercial} local purpose.

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Regular Dutch correspondent Alex Kussendrager has sent in two interesting pieces {Figs.5,6}. The first, found near Gouda {Netherlands}, has already appeared in one detectorist magazine inviting comment, to which a reader replied that he thought that it might be a British communion token of the late 17th or early 18th cent. Having his doubts on this, Alex passed it to me for comment.

The piece may have a shape which suggests CT but there the likeness ends. Pure lead CTs are usually early and quite small, and such CTs as do reach this size are usually 19th cent and/or made of other metals. The design is highly unusual and not one which one would expect to find on a CT; indeed, there is a hint of modernism about it, which feels quite strange. The depiction is of a sitting man, not a kneeling one, and for a piece of simple abstraction is surprisingly effective. The crudity of the casting may make it feel early but the artwork is so well done, and so styled, as to suggest a much more recent date. Maybe it is a 20th cent bus/train/tram pass.

Communion tokens do occasionally have retrospective lettering but it is comparatively rare; the ministers were educated people and would usually take care of the quality of anything which went out in their names. Assuming the piece to be genuine, one has to ask, having dismissed the CT idea, what it might be used for. A ticket for a ride on an early vehicle, maybe? a sitting figure would be appropriate for that. RT would be the proprietor of the company which operated it, and most likely the sole operator.



Alex's second piece {Fig.6} is of unknown provenance, 35mm across and 21.6gm in weight. A date, 1790-something and not readily visible, flanks the heart, on which a "V" is superimposed. The hole at top centre says a badge or pass, the crown that it is an official badge or pass. The fact that the issuer needed to date it means that it has an annual period of validity, so it may be a licence to practise some activity for the year in question; for example, a porter's badge. Allied to that idea, it could be a membership badge, e.g. for the then equivalent of a trade union; alternatively, it could be a badge to indicate that the person wearing it was in receipt of charity. In the latter case V would indicate the initial letter of the category concerned, whatever type it was; in Britain, V for "Vagrant", indicating a wandering beggar, would be a viable option. As the country of origin is unknown here, one has to start thinking of what V might stand for in different languages. V = Victory, or a language variant, has also been suggested. If you have any ideas regarding either of these pieces, please let us know.

Tony Gilbert writes, concerning the token that last month I tongue-in-cheek suggested might be a urine token {Fig.7}, that maybe the "U" represents a horse harness? Or maybe a horseshoe; both are certainly very feasible. A blacksmith's or leatherworker's token, if that conjecture is correct. Fig.8 is worth comparing, even if its likeness and use may be only coincidental. I slightly favour it being O/zero rather than U, possibly O for oil, but it has an I/one on the other side.





Tony also responded to my article in LTT_140 concerning concentric circles appearing on a number of 19th cent white metal {lead alloy} tokens, to say that he once attended a talk given by a current-day medallist who explained that these circular 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. Figs.9,10 show two pieces from the earlier article, illustrating the phenomenon.



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A rather timely contribution next from Simon Fruss {Fig.11}, given the copper equivalent at the bottom of page 6, is this 50mm piece found near the Notts/Derbyshire border. Not many people want to use coins or tokens that large, especially not in lead, and both size and fitment holes argue for it being a badge. Some professions were licensed, with authorised personnel having to display a badge of office, on which renewals of the licence were indicated by annual counterstamping. There is an extremely robust example of a London porter's piece shown in LTT_84, but this one doesn't look thick enough to be fit for purpose, as appears to have been proved when one year it seemingly failed to withstand the annually-repeated blows of the hammer.



The piece may be a casual loss by the owner, but equally, assuming that the issuing authority did all its licence counterstamping in the same place, the findspot could be the issuer's spoilheap. As to the design I would be guessing, but maybe the crossed keys are symbolic of permission being granted to enter or practise something, or the sign of the issuing facility itself. The "D"s and other symbols could be the personal symbols of the licensing officer. There are no dates on it, unlike the other two examples I have mentioned above, but maybe that is determined by the number of counterstamps on it, if the system was started in a known year.

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Fig.12, sent in by Robert Ball, also comes from Derbyshire, from near the village of Elton. It is very white, as is often the case with items which have been exposed to prolonged cold, and one of those occasional pieces whose two sides hint at different dates..



The poorer side hints at an amusing face with two prominent eyes, but I think that that is only coincidence caused by the distribution of wear; in practice, I think that it is either an issuer's initial "I", or an upturned anchor, interspersed by decorative pellets. "J" was usually rendered as "I" until the 18th cent, and was often cross-barred, sometimes almost excessively so. The style is early 18th cent, or possibly mid-late 17th.

The design of the better side is clearly based on the medieval penny and/or 17th cent token. Lead token manufacturers often borrowed their designs from the past, either because they were easier to reproduce or because they thought that it would give their product the appearance of greater authority, and in consequence it is not unknown for late mediaeval ideas to be reused until as late as the 18th cent. The token appears to be of quite a reasonable standard of manufacture despite its wear, with a well-formed centre, and although only a few letters of the inscription are visible they seem to be proper letters rather than, as is often the case, pseudo-alphabetic gibberish. Whether the inscription actually means anything is anyone's guess; without much space to work with, it may even be a set of initials. The lettering seems to be post-medieval. Stylistically, my first guess was mid-late 17th cent, revised later to early 18th when I was told that the diameter was 25mm.

One Piece, Several Views



Figs 1-5 are five pictures, magnified, of the same piece kindly sent in by Andy Frappe. Very often such duplication is not necessary, and a solitary photo does the job, but here each one adds a different aspect to the story. Looking first at the sole picture of the reverse, Fig.2, two blobs only suggests the broken fastening of a badge, but it is not unknown occasionally for token makers to deliberately insert a raised section into their design to make the piece easier to pick up when laying on a flat surface. It even happens on brass pieces of quite modern date.

Moving now to the obverse, which is more complex, Fig.1 suggests the top half of a typical trident, but Figs 3,5 bring out the fact that the other half, although worn, is in fact present. Fig 4 confuses the issue slightly by suggesting that the top half of the trident and the right-hand flanking object are a bent arrow, but I think that that is an illusion produced by the central indent. The big question is to what the flanking objects are, and I incline to favour candlestick {or flagon} and wineglass {see Fig.6, which is Fig.3 rotated}. A second possibility is an initial pair, I-Y, with the "Y" filled in by crud and the "I" having the popular central bar of the time, but I prefer the candlestick/flagon and wineglass on balance.

I'll keep an open mind on the token/badge usage, but the candlestick and wineglass would presumably favour commercial....unless it was a ticket to a party! I have already shown a copper example of one of those in LTT_104 {page 5}, but such an issue would have to come from the big house, and I can't imagine its gentrified guests being happy to wear or carry lead to prove their credentials.



One question to ask, if the two blobs did represent the end of a badge fastening, is how the design would sit on the other side, i.e. the face, when the badge was in use. If the piece was fairly well upright that would increase the chances of it being a badge; if at 45 degrees or sideways, that would lessen it. However, against that must be weighed how much the issuer and/or manufacturer would care about such matters in a crude lead environment.

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The Type 1 Petals: A Very Longstanding Device



Some of the designs on our lead tokens are of unusual longevity, as has been discussed before; they are handed down through folk memory, or because people find things, and it is not unknown for 14th cent depictions to be occasionally reincarnated in the 18th. Few, however, will be as old in origin as the very common petal design, and my thanks to Ted Fletcher for sending in this fine picture of a late 4th cent Roman siliqua reverse which shows quite clearly that same petal design on a soldier's shield. The design is



said to have been used as a Christian symbol, and its appearance on a Roman coin may therefore be looked for at any time after Constantine's conversion in AD 312; having said which, the specimens you look for it on had better be good ones, as such fine detail will be amongst the first to wear off!

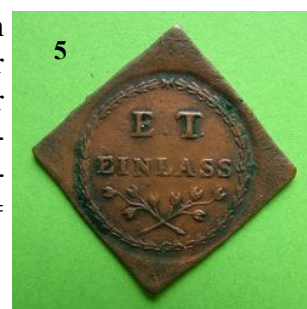
Continental Counterparts, part 6: Tax & Tolls

Civil authorities have always taxed their citizens, albeit in a variety of weird and wonderful ways over the centuries, and in some cases on the Continent tokens have been used. Whether bought up front for later payment, or whether given as receipt after the money had passed hands, is not always certain. A look at the LTT index will show that we have already discussed several possible lead examples in past issues, but here are some other, better defined and less controversial, copper and brass ones.



“Zoll pfennig” means “Tax pfennig”, and two city states, Kurlinie-Pfalz and Hesse-Darmstadt, issued tokens, in 1766 and 1777, respectively, with the term on specifically {Figs.1-2}. Why only two, you may ask? was it just something they tried which didn't work? No; other places just did it differently.

It can be difficult to distinguish between toll tokens and those concerned with more general taxation. Tolls had usually to be paid at a bridge, gate, border station or when crossing a certain area; most typically on entering a town or city. The word “Einlass”, meaning entry or entry-point, e.g. a gate, is a guarantee that the piece is a toll token. On those of Frankfurt {Figs.3-5}, the initials of the entry point are named: AT = Allerheiligen Thor and ET = Eschenheimer Thor, two of the city gates. FT = Friedberger Thor also exists.



Two pieces from Mainz {Figs.6-7} helpfully provide the clue that two kreuzer was often the amount of toll charged; one again bearing the word “Einlas” {Admission}, and initials Z and BZ standing for Zoll and Brucken Zoll {bridge tax} respectively. They date from about 1795, and the second one has the same design on both sides. Fig.8, a bracteate from Saxe-Coburg, states four kreuzer; values of 1,2,4,6 and 8 are known, so it is likely that a graduated scale was in operation for different categories of traffic. The smaller Fig.9, issued for one of the Berlin river bridges and bearing the initials of its operators, looks to be of later style; one source suggests a date range of 1825 to 1879, and I would guess at perhaps the middle of that. Bridges were often well within the bounds of a city, rather than on its perimeter, so bridge tax was not an entry tax as such; probably more like the tolls on the Dartford crossing and Severn Bridge in recent times, to recoup from their users the cost of putting the bridge up.



Another class of toll tokens related specifically to horses and wagons rather than people. Fig.10 was one such, issued at Hildenheim in 1609. One online description of its usage runs along the lines of:

- ⇒ When cities used to be protected by walls and gates, some of them issued t(h)ormarken to monitor the entrances and exits. Every wagoner received a slip of paper at a gate by which he entered, and which he handed over at the central toll booth on the Oberngünne, and where he had to release a token to the clerk against payment of the customary gate money due when leaving the town. The stamps were the receipt that the road toll had been paid.
- ⇒ The tokens are round and mostly of copper, rarely of lead. Old copper pfennigs were usually used, the original embossed images of which had been ground off. The obverse shows the coat

of arms with the year 1609, from the same die used for other types of tokens. On the back are the numbers 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 depending on the number of horses that passed through the gate.



Two hundred years later, c.1800, Frankfurt issued some large chunky pieces {Figs.11-12} whose connections with horses were more explicitly stated: “four batzen für zwei pferde”. A pferde is a

horse, although why two different designs were needed for the same thing I am not sure. Perhaps the various shapes referred to different gates or bridges. Fig.13, of about the same date and bearing two countermarks of Lippe-Blomberg, is probably of similar purpose, indicating a pass for two horses; notice that it is essentially a countermarked blank, a means of token issue which appears from time to time in Europe. A similar piece with value 3 and three countermarks, is known. Fig.14, from the

Württemberg town of Schorndorf, is similar. Like lead, some of these pieces are pleasantly {or frustratingly, as you see it} enigmatic!



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Moving on from access levies, there are also a few tokens associated with the taxation of specific products. Beer we have already discussed last month, but there are others. Fig.15 is a Bavarian tobacco-handling token of 1692, bearing the state arms, whilst Fig.16 is a more general excise token, commodity unstated, from Anhalt-Lindau. There are at least four similar pieces of the latter type, all bearing the date 1680 {rather faint on this slightly double-struck example}, but with different initials, each corresponding to a known regional tax office.



Next time we discuss the municipal issue of small change, both for general use and poor relief.

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More on Porters' Passes

Readers may remember that we showed a huge London Porters' badge in LTT_84, 55x54mm and in lead, which exhibited yearly dated counterstamps on it authorising the bearer to practice during the period 1838-1845. I have just come across another example, in copper rather than lead, which is much smaller {27x23mm, magnified here} but which appears to work along the same lines. It is not a badge with a pendant hole, but appears to be for just carrying in the pocket. It may be from mainland Europe, because that is where its last owner lived, but that is not certain. The numbers 53-59 almost certainly refer to 1853-59, and alongside each are the symbols of each year's authorising officer.

