

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Please note that the old david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Eating and Drinking Utensils on Lead Tokens

Our series of displays on various classification types has this month come round to type 11, which depicts the utensils related to eating and drinking. It is not as numerous as many other categories, for the proprietors of most hostleries chose to put their shop-signs or their initials on in preference, but what it does introduce is a fascinating ambiguity. Before I explain, a display:



We have, in the above selection, a variety of different vessels for storing liquid refreshment in and drinking it out of, accompanied occasionally by a container which looks as if it may be to keep accompanying bread or cheese fresh. Wine appears to have been the most popular tippable; although there are a couple of beer mugs in the bottom row {I will leave for now the issue of whether the engravers were left-handed}; plus, at the end, the extremities of time represented by a Roman amphora {contents possibly used for washing rather than drinking} and, for the teetotallers, a good honest cuppa. Yes, apparently, even in those days, although one may conjecture the exact nature of the brew!

Whilst contemplating a 17th/18th cent ploughman's lunch purchased with one of the above, let us also remember that there was another big user of wine, apart from pubs, which leads us to our next subject;

the Church also uses wine, but for a very different purpose. Some tokens are obviously secular, some are obviously ecclesiastic; no-one, for example, would suggest that those two beer-mugs on the front page represented CTs. Equally, no pub token is going to have a religious text on the back. However, there are certainly quite a number of pieces with less obvious assignments to one side of the pub/church fence rather than the other. Are you fully confident, for example, that pieces 3-4 on the bottom row of the front page are inn tokens rather than CTs?

It is our purpose, in the next article, to look at categories in between, in the grey area between those represented by the beer mug and the verse of scripture. Since CTs are predominantly a Scottish phenomenon, the odds probably favour secular to the south of the border and religious to the north; however, it is not cast in stone. Scottish sailors visited English ports, nor were they exactly averse to a wee dram back in their homeland. Sometimes the probability switches towards one end of the spectrum, sometimes the other; occasionally it sits intriguingly in the middle.

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Unknown Scottish Tokens: CT or Commercial?

My thanks to Howard Simmons for sending in Fig.1, which is 22.3mm square. Superficially, it looks like a communion token {CT}, but is it? It certainly has a number of very common features announcing its Glaswegian heritage, namely:

- ⇒ It is square, and of an approximately typical CT size.
- ⇒ The central design is enclosed by an inner circle.
- ⇒ It is decidedly pewter compared with many CTs from elsewhere in Scotland.
- ⇒ There is a simple floral ornamentation in the corners.



The design was used for CTs as far back as 1725, and continued in various forms well into the 19th cent, as has already discussed way back in LTT_19; the pieces on the right are just two of a dozen shown there. However, whilst most of Scotland's early tokens are often presumed to be CTs and not much else, Glasgow's pewterers had other customers for their wares, and the Church were not the only numismatic ones.



Initials and monograms such as those on Howard's piece {"WG" in this case} were in favour c.1805-20, and I suspect the dating of the piece to be about that. However, what about the "B" on the back? Communion tokens sometimes have a number counterstamped, which indicated the number of the specific table you went to, to take the sacrament; but whilst one well known rugby team is famous for bucking the trend and putting letters rather than numbers on the back of the players' shirts, one cannot imagine an 18th/19th Church of Scotland parish doing likewise. So, there has to be another meaning.



My guess is that "B" = bread; either the Glaswegian equivalent of the bakers' farthings recently discussed for other parts of Scotland in LTT 125-129 and 147-150, or if not that then a bread token from a soup kitchen or other emergency supply centre. Fig.4 is an Edinburgh example of such a piece dated 1799, so a Glaswegian equivalent of approximately similar date is certainly viable.

Fig.5 which has the inscription "Thomas Small 1778" on the other side, was formerly owned by a well-known CT collector, who was only willing to part with it after coming to the conclusion that, on balance, Thomas Small was more likely to be a publican than a reverend.



Do look out for these interesting pieces which display some ambiguity about their usages or exhibit features which are reminiscent of each others' series. To whet your appetite, herewith a number of pictorial examples of various categories of piece which are all either Communion or commercial tokens, but don't always tell you which.

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Previously undiscovered CTs, like other leads, are turning up all the time, and of the following only Figs.7 and 8 were known to the latest major CT author, Lester Burzinski, when he wrote what is now the latest standard reference work on the series in 1999. All the tokens shown are uniface, except where stated.



To start, some which exhibit features of Howard's Glasgow piece on the previous page {Fig.1}:

6. This is fairly obviously a CT; anonymous, pewter and typically Glaswegian. Rectangular pieces like this are usually in white metal; the shape suggests c.1830-ish, rather than the start of the century.
7. This has the script of Fig.1, but a text on the back, not shown, gives the game away. CTs do not have the monopoly of the oval shape, however; there are a few commercial ones as well. In Burzinski, the piece is B.7665.
8. Square & pewtery, rather than pure lead; Glaswegian shape and construction, but the design is a bit more Perthshire. Whilst parishes usually called on the pewterers and diesinkers of their nearest large city for their CTs, there are exceptions where they preferred a supplier from the other side of the country, possibly because of some recommendation. Nobody actually knows, however, where this one comes from; Burzinski has it in his anonymous section {B.7681}.
9. This is a commercial piece issued by Glaswegian baker Thomas Gentle, who is known to have had premises in the High Street for a number of years during the first two decades of the 19th cent. The wheat sheaf, although occasionally a pub sign, is a common feature of bakers' tokens.
10. This piece has no known provenance. The shape suggests CT, and the initial K {often indicating "Kirk"} suggests an increased probability, with the parish initial being E; however, a trader with initials EK is obviously possible. In this case I favour the CT.



11. This one looks CT all the way. BAL is the first three letters of the parish of issue, but no idea where it is.
12. No "M" for minister or "K" for kirk on this one; just "Perth, 1814" and a couple of initials. So, the verdict could go either way, except that shiny white metal at that date favours CT rather than shop token. Those in the know tell me that there was a famous preacher called Ebenezer Erskine active at that time; if a minister was itinerant, rather than assigned to a specific church, he occasionally had his own set of tokens.
13. Favour CT for reasons similar to those given for Figs.10,12 above; having said which, when did you last see a sun in splendour on a CT? Those are more frequent on shop tokens, both lead and the 17th cent main series. However, gut feeling still says CT.



Figs.14-25 are all fairly early CTs, typically 17th cent, which have been found in fairly recent times {since the Burzinski book} but whose issuing parishes and ministers have been calculated with fair probability from the findspot. CTs rarely travel far, which can be very handy when trying to identify them. Some of Figs.22-25, with their triads, when taken in isolation, look passably like commercial tokens, which often also featured triads, south of the border. However, there the easy bit ends. The remaining pieces on this page and next were either stated by their previous owners as being probably Scottish, or accumulated by CT enthusiasts on the offchance that they were, but without much evidence.



26. This looks as if it could be a CT, even if a little non-typical; however, it was found in Kent.....
27.likewise this one. 1644 is an earlier date than any which appears on a British CT; issue may have started several decades before that, but early pieces were almost uniface. My feeling on this one is that "IL" was a Kentish trader and that the piece is probably a farthing.
28. Incuse, not that that determines the issue. Either RL and AK were a business partnership, or RL was the minister of the K{irk} in a parish beginning with A. Favour the latter.
29. This looks like a standard type 11 pub token until you look closely at the upright on the right-hand object. Does the upright shaft project above the crossbar of the handle, forming a cross? In which case, we could be looking at a cover to keep the Eucharistic bread fresh. On the other hand, if not, just an inn piece. Or maybe it is a cross, but by coincidence rather than design, and it is still a pub token but we are trying to read too much into it. The Church doesn't have the monopoly of crossbars.

With this last type of piece, it may be necessary to go to the other side for supporting evidence, notably initials. If the second side is blank, almost certainly pub token; CTs without any initials or wording are almost unheard of. One initial, inconclusive; parish initial, or single commercial initial as per the small 11-12mm late 16th cent tokens. Two initials, inconclusive as previously, a K for the second one may swing the odds. Does the findspot have anything to add?

Fig.30 is an oddball. It is non-typical; it is considerably larger and later than most other CTs which only have a single initial on, and the two sides don't look as if they are the same token. However, they are. Perhaps "C" stands for communion, and it was marketed as a stock token by some pewterer who saw a possible need for such things? After all, there were white metal stock tokens in the 19th cent, which had a text on but no name of minister or church.



Let us return to where we started looking at, with some more pieces which remind us of our original Glaswegian token {Fig.1}.



31. “TG” monogram, similar script; a crisp pewter piece, a little lighter than many others but perfectly in keeping. I can think of a Glasgow area CT of the early 1820s which preserves the original style but in light-coloured pewter rather than white metal; maybe this dates c.1805-25.
32. Unusual piece, initials “JK”; Glasgow shape, but with a noticeably thick cooper flan, and without the usual décor. The script is slightly different from the others, but we are clearly talking a different maker anyway, so that is reasonable enough. If the “K” of JK stands for Kirk, rather than being a trader’s surname, then there aren’t very many parishes beginning with “J”. Nor many CTs made of copper. Jedburgh issued one of them in 1816, with a size and texture very much like that of a Victorian bronze halfpenny. No idea, but are we getting near?
33. I have had it put to me by one of the country’s foremost CT collectors that this copper piece, which he hadn’t seen before, may be a folly; I’ve no idea, he may be right, but I can’t say either way. On the front, S/RH triad, date 1755 around; on the back, a solitary “C”. The latter could stand for “Communion” or alternatively “Cob”, which is a type of loaf; so, both church and commercial options still open. Or perhaps even the would-be C is a horseshoe....
34. This proven baker’s farthing from William Tait of Gilmerton is from the eastern side of Scotland rather than the west but is included here because, being dated {1813}, it shows when the use of script was in fashion. The piece has been previously discussed in LTT_148, page 5.



35. I rather suspect that my correspondent who told me that Fig.33 was a folly would say the same about this one. Does it depict a church or a warehouse? I have magnified the picture, so please email in and vote one way or the other, but even with a good piece highly magnified I am still not sure. Glasgow in shape, again copper rather than pewter, and beautifully smooth to the touch on the totally plain reverse. The date could be about right for a genuine piece, but dates aren’t usually counterstamped; that practice is more commonly used for serial numbers. Only one church in Scotland is on record as having serial numbers which go into four digits: St.Cuthberts, in Edinburgh, in 1847 and 1865.
36. Wineglass and initials, probably personal; absolutely no way of telling. From the size, probably 17th cent. In favour of it being an inn token.
37. Again, inconclusive. There is a faint hint of a pair of initials, in a different style, on the back. It turned up in a group of would-be CTs, but I slightly favour commercial.
38. Finally...a strong, well formed piece, which feels stylistically to be like an Edinburgh baker’s farthing. TM is the baker, but what could “R” stand for? F=farthing, B=bread, C=cob, those have all been seen elsewhere. One of its previous owners apparently believed that “R” stood for Rosehall, a parish in Sutherland, but I don’t know who he was to ask why.

