Editor: David Powell

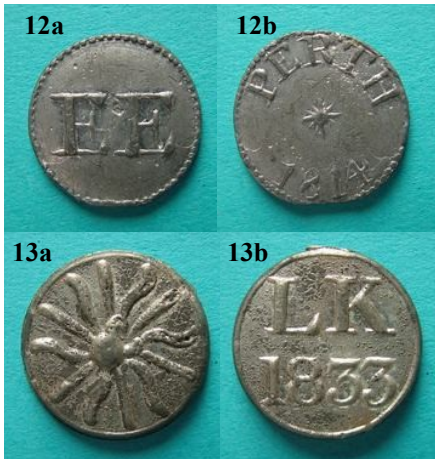
A free newsletter to all who share our interest in these fascinating and often enigmatic pieces. Please send the editor at least one 300 dpi JPEG *scan, or a sharply focused photo print, of any interesting leaden token or tally in your collection. Send images as email attachments to mail@leadtokens.org.uk Please note that the contact addresses advertised in earlier versions of LTT are no longer active.*

A Mystery Solved, and a new Scottish "Baker's Farthing"

My grateful thanks to reader John Irons for resolving a hitherto unknown piece previously shown in these pages, at the bottom of LTT_153, page 3, as Fig.12. The earlier article showed pieces which were dubiously assumed to be Scottish communion tokens {CTs} but were in some cases not wholly convincing, and needed verification.

Ebenezer Erskine was a well known Scottish preacher whose initials fitted the piece, and there were no other ministers matching them; however, as John now points out, Ebenezer Erskine died in 1754, much earlier than the date on the token. John believes, and it feels absolutely right, that the piece was issued by Edward Elliott, a grocer/merchant in Perth. He quotes Elliott's obituary from the Perthshire Courier, Thursday 1 April 1830, page 3, as follows:

Died, here, on the 16th March, after a lingering illness, Mr Edward Elliott, merchant, in the 42d year of his age. Mr Elliott was a man of active mind and industrious habits —of affable and engaging manners,—which, with his polite and obliging disposition, secured him the esteem of a numerous circle of friends and acquaintance. He was beloved by the Free Masons of the Lodge Royal Arch—to whom, as their Grand Master, and in other official capacities, he had rendered essential services. His funeral, which took place last week, was attended by the Brethren in deep mourning, as a mark of respect for his memory.



Edward Elliott is not listed in Pigot's 1820 directory but is listed in the more extensive Pigot's 1825 directory as a grocer in Athol Street. In 1825 Edward Elliott was presented with a silver punch bowl for managing the Perth Theatre and was the Grand Master of the Royal Arch Lodge. As Grand Master he would have had to have paid for several functions throughout the year, indicating that he was a reasonably wealthy individual by 1825. In 1814, the date of the token, Elliott would have been 26.

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We have, therefore, an addition to the Scottish lead series of 1805-15 described by Dalton & Hamer, and discussed further in this newsletter in LTT_125-129; colloquially known sometimes as bakers' farthings because that is the commonest profession represented, despite some issuers being of other trades. But what to make of companion piece Fig.13? Similarly of bright & shiny white metal, and chunky in the hand, it feels very much of the same texture as a baker's farthing, but…..:

⇒ if a commercial piece the date feels wrong, for copper was the favoured metal after c.1815-20.

⇒ if a pub token, as suggested by the picture, those were not normally made of white metal and in any case were more of an English phenomenon than a Scottish one. This piece feels Scottish.

⇒ if a communion token, the depiction feels wrong. "K" for kirk {or for a minister's surrname} was extremely common as the second half of initial pairs on communion tokens, and white metal was very much becoming the favoured metal of choice at the 1833 date concerned; however, the sun in splendour was a symbol much more associated with pubs and shops than churches.

I'm now favouring a commercial issuer, but suggestions welcome!

Readers' Correspondence

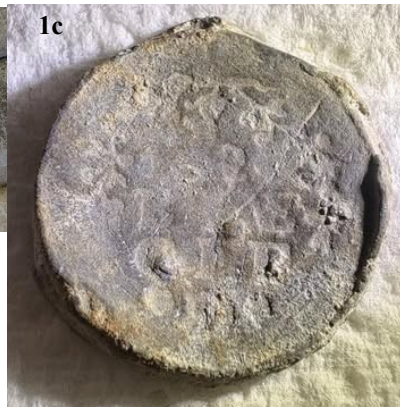
To start this month, a piece from Jo Seaman which shows a conventionally-engraved design on one side whilst using the compressed coin technique on the other. Fig.1b does not look very inspiring, for which reason I have magnified it considerably as Fig.1c on the right; however, what is clear, without knowing any of the background, is that there is some lettering vaguely visible. Next, to identify it|!


1a


1b

2


3


1c

The coins normally used for this impressing technique are British regal pieces, and specifically the side depicting the monarch's head, in order to convey a sense of official authorisation. The monarchs most usually found with their features thus rendered are those of the late 17th cent through to the early 19th. However, Fig.1 is unusual in that it is visibly not a British piece, nor does it picture a head. It is a Dutch duit, concerning which we have written in these pages before; a type of piece readily imported into eastern England, and extensively used in the late 18th cent as an alternative substitute for the other types of token, copper or lead, available. In this case the coin, as well as probably being used as a token in its own right, has been used to make others; an example of an original of the type used in this case, possibly with a different date, is shown in Fig.2. The lead piece itself was found near The Mint House in Pevensey, East Sussex, whilst the original from which it was made comes from the province of Gelderland, one of several Dutch provinces which made similar duits; examples of the others, also, may be found in England.

This method of production rarely produces results of high quality, especially since the originals may well be worn to start with. Jo happening to have a friend who is a pewterer and, being intrigued by a technique hitherto unknown to them, they decided to try it for themselves with a modern 2p. The results are shown in Fig.3.


4

Mimicking, rather than imprinting a cartwheel penny is Fig.4, courtesy of Max Fry. Others thought it to be a mediaeval seal, and I leave you to judge, but the rim and inscription felt so reminiscent of a cartwheel penny that I suspect it may be a token of that period. The inscription is crude, but there is a hint of a Roman numeral "III" amongst it, the outer ring is fairly even and the piece is of the right size.

Another large and even cruder piece now, from Tim Linsell {Fig.5}; a full 40mm across and 50gm in weight. Is it a joke piece, made purely for fun, or does it have a serious purpose? The two "O"s and an "A" are a good way of making a face, if that is what you want to depict! If a genuine token, it will be from around the time when copper coinage was of massive diameter as well; e.g. the cartwheel period, c.1800. Even then, only the copper twopence gets anywhere near this size. We have written on paranumismatic obesity before; for earlier articles, see LTT_49 and 93.


5


6

A relief after these vagaries to see something with a bit or wording on it, in the shape of Mark McMullen's Fig.6, although, for all that it may superficially look like a token, the word WORSTED suggests a cloth seal, as has since been confirmed by a better example. It would be good if the remaining letters were a place name, but they read "REFORM"; what does that mean, on a seal?

One more last biggie {Fig.7}, before we get on to some more modestly-sized material, and this time a very attractive one, from Martin Hemings. Clearly Elizabethan, from the initials flanking the shield, well executed and in unusually good condition. However, most Elizabethan commercial lead is 12-13mm in diameter and the jetons typically 18-22mm, rarely exceeding 24mm. Fig.5, by contrast, is 38mm and weighs 18gm, which is very un-Elizabethan for a token. So what is it? The piece is some 1½-2 mm thick; the nice clean reverse eliminates a button or badge, whilst there is no sign of the clamping together on the edge which is often indicative of a seal. Note also that there is evidence also of a half-hearted attempt to turn the shape from a circle into a polygon. A little reminiscient, in a way, of a modern 50p.


7a


7b

Grey Duff's Fig.8 shows an attractive style of piece from c.1500. Issued for about 50 years or so, c.1490 to the end of the Reformation {1539} at a guess, their larger flans are a welcome relief from all the small diameter material which flanks them on each side of that date range; as also, in this case, is the light colouring amidst the age's plethora of dark pewter. This is one of the first series which includes more visibly civil, rather than ecclesiastical, pieces, and some of them even bear wording for the first time to that effect. True, there are the BNJ54 type L's before them, mid-late 15th cent small diameter pieces renowned for their profusion of shield types, which may represent personal or guild arms, but they are anonymous. What does "B" stand for here? bread is but one of a number of possibilities. What is the bird pecking at? It looks like a banana, but it won't be in 1500. Grey informs me that. over the years, a dozen or more similar pieces have been found in the same field.


8a


8b

Another bird or possibly two now to keep our above feathered friend company, both of them looking mid-18th cent from style and size. Martin Jeffrey's Fig.9 is probably not commercial, as there are no identifying initials or symbols; I guess that it has something to do with either aristocratic shooting parties or parochial vermin control, depending on the species of bird. I am not an ornithologist, but the general rule to follow is: the more exotic the bird, favour the former; the more ordinary, the latter. Ashley Hadley's Fig.10, found at St.Helens, does by contrast have initials on; this is most likely to be a parish piece, with the initials those of the churchwardens, although a jointly run business enterprise, with the creature being a shop sign, is certainly not impossible. What is he? a bit of a hybrid, like a swan with four legs? A multi-purpose vermin piece, possibly, intended to pay the parochial killers of whatever?

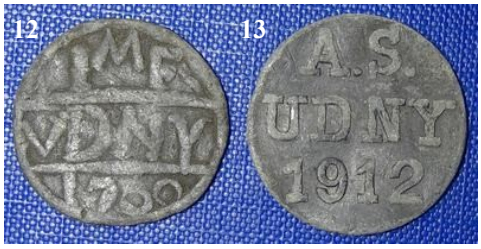

9


10a


10b

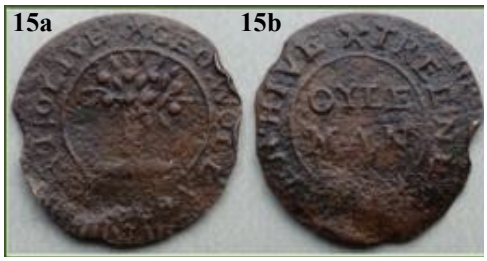
One or two more modern pieces now, and some of them rather less artistic than their elderly predecessors. Jase Allen's Fig.11 offers plenty of scope for the imagination. The depiction has a hint of the stepladder about it, but I am sure that that is just my imagination. Turn it round 90 degrees anti-clockwise and you could argue for a woodworker's plane, a small boat or a plough {none of them very convincingly}. One of the pleasures of these "irregular geometrics", is trying to guess their subject matter, but the downside is that you can't always be very confident that you are right! Usage depends on what the object is; you could be trying to pay someone for doing something, but equally it could be a receipt for an object lent or borrowed. At this size, and with this crudity of style, the piece dates c.1800, during the last phase of lead tokens when some of the artwork became very degenerate.


11



Even more recent, and a very rare item in the these pages; a lead token made for use in the 20th cent. Most Scottish parishes had gradually migrated their CTs from pewter and pure lead towards silver-coloured white metal during the period prior to the Great Disruption of 1843, with only a few remote outliers commissioning new issues in the older metals. Of all of them the last to cling to pure lead was Udny, in Aberdeenshire, two of whose pieces are shown, thanks to Alan Hunt, in Figs.12-13; you will notice that Fig.13 bears the unusually late date of 1912. There is a third piece, identical to Fig.13 but dated 1825; all three are uniface. The 1760 one, whose linear arrangement of wording is somewhat reminiscent of certain 17th cent English copper trade tokens, is of fairly unusual style for a CT, and indeed, being unknown to Burzinski when he wrote his catalogue in 1999, almost certainly rare. The two later ones are both reasonably common but beware! they have a particular reputation for turning up with tinpest, so take a good look before acquiring one. The one above is a scarce example of an example of one in good nick, without any metallic deterioration, so doubtless it had a different history to the main batch.

14



To finish with, a mid-17th cent Fig.14, from Sean Clarke, which has a simple triad {C/RA} on the unshown side, depicting what he thinks is an olive tree. He found it at Queenhithe, which is precisely the same place as Fig.15, a main series copper token of George Woollaston, oilman, illustrated and discussed on page 16 of the Token Corresponding Society bulletin Vol..11, no.1 in Dec. 2013 {see https://thetokensociety.org.uk/bulletin/}. In the 17th cent, as the TCS article points out, an oilman dealt in a variety of fluids, but certainly not petroleum; think more vegetable and plant-based oils. Another of CR's pieces has been found recently which is similar apart from the additional text "Ipswich 1648", in consequence of which Sean conjectures that maybe CR was importing olives from the Dutch Republic and bringing them to London from Ipswich. It feels very likely.

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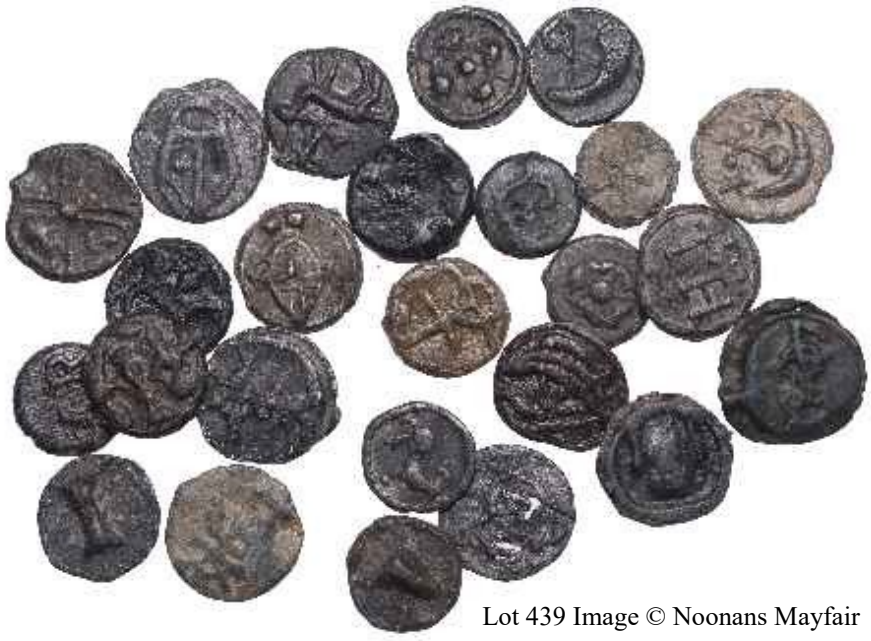
The Rogers Collection

Unusually, a large collection of lead material is on offer at auction this year at Noonans, to be sold in two parts on 22 April and 30 September; sorry, I didn't have time to advertise the first part in advance, but there are or will be pictures of each lot on their website. The original owner was someone who, like a few of our readers, browsed around, and spoke to people, in the markets and on the foreshores of London. After being killed in an accident in 1999, his collection then went into storage for quarter of a century, to resurface only this year.



Lot 439 Image © Noonans Mayfair

Part 1 is the later material {post-Reformation}, part 2 is the earlier. The website is at https://www.noonans.co.uk/auctions/, if you want to enjoy the pictures. The lot numbers for 22 April are 438-470. The first sale will be over by the time that this goes to print but, don't worry, pictures from all the old ones remain available in the archive section.