LEADEN TOKENS.

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WHilst the proposals and experiments which resulted in the adoption and general issue of a copper currency for Great Britain have, from a numismatic standpoint, been fully chronicled, and the token issues of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have received due attention, those earlier tokens that form the subject of this paper have been almost entirely overlooked.

Snelling figures a few which, if one can judge from the very rude figures given, do not appear to agree in character with the dates they bear. Some others are described without comment in the catalogue of the Beaufoy Cabinet, and various ecclesiastical pieces are mentioned in stray articles in the early issues of *The Numismatic Chronicle*.

Thus it may be claimed that, in regard to this series, there exists what is somewhat rare nowadays in numismatology, an almost untouched field.

The metal of which these tokens are composed is a perishable one. Their small intrinsic value did not encourage hoarding, and consequently existing specimens are fewer than would be supposed from their wide circulation, and the general absence of dates or legends upon them may have discouraged investigators.

"Nummorum famulus," which appears upon some of the patterns or the copper coinage of Charles II., aptly describes them. They are the helots of the numismatic world. The hewers of wood and the drawers of water proclaimed against in frequent proclamations, they yet supplied a want unfilled by the then existing currency, and by their very baseness hurried on the measures taken to replace them.
It is the fashion nowadays to whitewash historical reputations, and if it can be proved that these lead tokens were the parents of those better finished issues of 1648-1670, that they were an attempt to supply the legitimate wants of the community, and that they were a potent influence in forcing the Government to adopt measures towards the same end, then, at least, a case has been made out for their better study and investigation.

That they were in use in England early in the sixteenth century is evidenced by Erasmus, who alludes in his *Adagia* printed in Paris in 1500, to “plumbeos Angliae” as being in general circulation, and the scarcity of small monies among the trading community appears to have been severely felt from this period onwards.

Those engaged in the important manufacture of cloth were by statute required to affix to each piece their seal of lead, and it has been thought that these seals were the true parents of the leaden tokens, though it seems more probable that they had their origin in certain ecclesiastical and pilgrim tokens.

Against the circulation of various base metal substitutes for the regular currency many proclamations are recorded from the early part of the sixteenth century, but as no real remedial measures were adopted, and the existing farthings and halfpence in silver were too few in number and too liable to loss to meet with general acceptance, these proclamations appear to have failed in their effect.

In 1574 proposals were made to coin halfpence and farthings of base silver to remedy the abuse of lead tokens, and in these proposals the latter are spoken of as made of “lead, tin, latten, and even leather,” and their circulation was forbidden by proclamation under pain of fine and imprisonment soon after.

Budelius, in a work published in 1591, speaks of leaden money current among the English.

A license was granted by the Lords of the Privy Council on

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1 Ruding, vol. ii, p. 69.
2 Snelling, *Copper Coins*, p. 2.
4 *De Monetis et Re Numaria*, vol. ii, p. 5. Cologne, 1591.
May 12th, 1594, to the Mayor and Aldermen of Bristol to coin a farthing for general use, on condition that all previous abuses in that city were reformed, that the lead and other tokens issued by persons without authority should be called in, and the value at which they were first issued should be rendered in exchange in current money.¹

Sir Robert Cotton, in his paper entitled "The Manner how the Kings of England have supported their Estates," addressed to King James, in 1611, says:

"The benefit of the King will easily fall out, if he restrain retailers of victuals and small wares from using their own tokens; for, in and about London, there are above three thousand who, one with another, cast yearly five pounds apiece of leaden tokens, whereof the tenth remaineth not to them at the year's end, and when they renew their store that amounteth to above £15,000; and all the rest of this realme cannot be inferior to the city in proportion. For the prejudice, since London, that is not the twenty-fourth part in people of the kingdom, had in it, as found by a late enquiry by order of the late queen, above 800,000, so falleth out to be two pence each person in the entire state; it may be nothing either of loss, by the first uttering being so easy, nor burthen any with too great a mass at one time, since continual use will disperse so small a quantity into so many hands; but, on the other side, will be of necessary use and benefit to the meaner sort, except the retailers, who made as much advantage formerly of their own tokens, as the King shall now; for the buyers hereafter shall not be tied to one seller and his bad commodities, as they are still, when the tokens hereafter made current by authority, shall leave him the choice of any other chapmen; and to the poor, in this time of small charity, it will be of much relief, since many are like to give a farthing almes, who will not part with a greater sum."

This statement is a proof of how common the issue of leaden tokens had become, and the issue of what are commonly known as the "Harington" farthings appears to have done little to check them, as the "Haringtons" themselves were sadly deficient in intrinsic value, and quickly became depreciated.

Thus there is abundant evidence of a wide and general use of leaden tokens from the time of Henry VII. to that of the Common-

¹ A specimen dated 1511 occurred in the Macfadyen Sale, 1907.
wealth, and it now remains to be considered how the existing specimens fit into the period mentioned.

In treating of those commonly known as "Seventeenth Century Tokens," it has been too much the custom to suppose that this great and general issue, embracing as it did in a few years practically every town and village of any importance in Great Britain, was the result of some sudden impulse, in fact, that it was a case of spontaneous generation and not of natural evolution.

This series, with its careful statement of name, address, occupation, date and sometimes value, lends itself naturally to the patient cataloguer, but we find that it was only the more general adoption of customs long in use, which the spirit of independence to rule that followed the Civil War may well have fostered.

So in dealing with the specimens hereafter noticed, it is proposed to deal first of all with those bearing most resemblance to "The Seventeenth Century" tokens.

One great and unfortunate feature of the leaden tokens is the scanty information they convey, as hundreds of them give you little more information of their origin than this, and consequently it is only possible to classify them broadly into classes, and to then try and place those classes in some order of date.

First of all there are a few nearly corresponding with, and probably almost contemporary with the seventeenth century tokens, inasmuch as they bear more or less of the names and addresses of their issuers.

As these may be more nearly identified in the future, it may be of interest to record fully eight specimens of this class which have come under the notice of the writers of this paper.

1. Octagonal.
   
   Obverse.—WILL | IAM | BAILY in three lines.
   
   Reverse.—OF | RICH | MOND | 165(? ) in four lines. Plate, Fig. 9.
   
   Probably of Richmond in Surrey.

2. Obverse.—M
   
   Reverse.—T B
   
   Savoy in script letters. Fig. 10.
Late and Dated Specimens.

3. Obverse.—Shield of arms of the Weavers' Company.
   (KID?) DERMINSTER.
   Reverse.—Blank.
   As this does not bear the arms of the town, it is probably
   issued by some local weaver or clothworkers' guild there.
4. Obverse.—JOHN ROWTHE round seeded rose.
   Reverse.—IN FOSTER LANE IR in centre.
   This is of Cheapside, London, and there is a token issued by
   Lancelott Ayres with the same sign. Williamson, p. 607, No. 1114.
5. Obverse.—DAVID IAMESON DK in centre.
   Reverse.—Checkered lozenge.
   This is probably a Scotch token.
6. Obverse.—RN with King's bust (? James I.) half length with sceptre in
   right hand between.
   Reverse.—IN ST. | MARTINS | LANE in three lines. Fig. 11.
7. Obverse.—CHRISTOPHER. FLOWER Fleur-de-lis in centre.
   Reverse.—Arms of the Bakers' Company. Fig. 12.
8. Obverse.—RICH(?D) ALLON in two lines.
   Reverse.—? | ? LANE in three lines.

All these are probably contemporary with the earlier seventeenth
century tokens, and represent a period of transition between the more
usual leaden pieces with their meagre inscriptions and those of brass
and copper that succeeded them.

The next to be dealt with are some bearing dates, as these
definitely prove that many of the leaden tokens preceded those of brass
and copper, and of this class there are the following which may serve
as general types:—

1. Obverse.—G.
   Reverse.—1624. Fig. 1.
2. Obverse.—Blank.
   Reverse.—1629. Fig. 2.
3. Obverse.—I ♦ H or H ♦ I within serrated border.
   Reverse.—M (1640).
   X ♦ L Fig. 3.
4. Obverse.—Portcullis.
   Reverse.—1641.
5. Obverse.—$GC
   Reverse.—I

6. Obverse.—F
   Reverse.—1644. Fig. 4.

7. Obverse.—16 $44
   Reverse.—Eagle with outstretched wings.

8. Obverse.—I S.
   Reverse.—Bell between 16-46. Fig. 5.

9. Obverse.—IB
   Reverse.—16 48 Fig. 6.

10. Obverse.—E B
    Reverse.—16 50 G

11. Obverse.—CM
    Reverse.—Dog seated between 16-51.

12. Obverse.—FA
    Reverse.—16 56 P

13. Obverse.—WS
    Reverse.—16 59

14. Obverse.—FB with wheatsheaf between and 59 below.
    Reverse.—Blank.

15. Obverse.—BA
    Reverse.—16-62 with sugarloaf dividing the date. Fig. 7.

16. Obverse.—I I.
    Reverse.—WR 1662 Fig. 8.

The initials on this reverse are probably those of a place.

The proportion of these bearing dates or names to the general mass is very small and precludes the minute cataloguing to which the succeeding seventeenth century tokens have been subjected, whilst those having on them initials and either the trade sign of the
Arms of City Companies and Signs.

issuer, or else a trade emblem or the arms of his trade guild are more commonly met with.

Of tokens bearing the arms of the London Livery Companies, those having on one side the arms respectively of the Grocers', Merchant Taylors', Drapers', Clothworkers' and Weavers' Companies have been met with, and doubtless further search will reveal many more of the trade guilds. (Plate, Figs. 13 to 16.)

Most of these have on the other side that well-known triangular arrangement of the initials of husband and wife surmounted by that of their common surname, and in reference to this it must strike one that such a practice reveals a much closer business connection between husband and wife than usually prevails in the present day (more nearly such as now exists among our bourgeois friends across the Channel); but whether this equality dated from the accession of the Virgin Queen must be left to some student of the rise of feminine influence to determine.

There is also a large class with the trade sign of the house from which they were issued. Of these, specimens with the following animal signs are shown: elephant, lion rampant, bear and dog, hart (whether white or red is not heraldically shown), and leopard rampant.

Of other signs are: crowned rose (Fig. 24), ship (Fig. 25), pear (of remarkable proportions), double-headed eagle, three arrows in saltire, dolphin, St. George and dragon. (Fig. 26.)

Of those with genuine trade signs are: a blacksmith at his forge, two wheatsheaves (baker), cloth shears (tailor), glove (glover). (Figs. 17, 18, 19 and 20.) In common with the previous ones, all these have upon the obverse either three or two initials, as the marriage age of the period was a very early one, it might be suggested that the latter are those of old and crusted bachelors or widows.

These initials have with them either (a) a knob or floral design connecting them; (b) quatrefoils or cinquefoils between them; (c) are with or without plain dots, of which probably (a) is the latest and (c) the earliest form.

Some with two initials only are probably somewhat earlier, as evidenced by the form of the letters, and of these are found specimens
Leaden Tokens.

bearing the signs of the crown (Fig. 27), stick of candles over crescent (Fig. 21), radiated sun, wyvern (Fig. 28), horseshoe (Fig. 22), halbert. These last are of a harder alloy than those previously mentioned, which is a good general proof of greater age, and whilst some of these contemporary with the seventeenth century tokens are struck from dies, all the others (until we get back probably to A.D. 1500) are, generally speaking, cast.

Up to this point all were probably issued (judging by their similarity to the dated specimens) between 1600 and 1670, but the next class was probably issued before the former of these dates, as they bear on them what are known as merchants' marks.

These marks are found carved over the doorways of the old merchants' houses, stamped upon their tokens and cut upon the brasses on their tombs, and in days when the visitations of the heralds were a reality, and the misuse of armorial bearings a heavy offence, they served alike as a substitute for arms and as trade marks.

Of the specimens found the majority bear upon one side the merchants' mark and on the other the trade sign, and of these latter there have been noticed specimens bearing on them the horse, king's head (Edward IV.) (Fig. 31),\(^1\) fleur-de-lis, mermaid, and radiated sun (Fig. 30), are shown, whilst in others these signs are replaced by a monogram (Figs. 32 and 33), and it is worth consideration whether the use of monograms has not largely sprung from these merchants' marks, which usually had initials incorporated into their design.

Lastly, so far as this paper is concerned, are those bearing initials (Figs. 34, 35 and 36), which from their form are certainly not later than 1550 and some probably nearer 1500.

All these mentioned are lead or of some alloy of lead and tin, with an increasing hardness of alloy as we get farther back, and generally they are of very similar size, which leads one to suppose that they passed for one common value, probably that of a farthing.

Nothing except the last class has been described that does not in some way or other bear upon it evidence that it was issued for

\(^1\) Though this head is probably proof of an issue previous to 1550, no contemporary origin is claimed for this token.
purposes of trade, and the writers have been careful not to attribute to any of them undue antiquity. Any attempt to date particular specimens can only be done in a general way, and one class would probably overlap the other. For instance, we find by dated specimens that lead tokens persisted up to the end of the issue of those in brass and copper in 1672, probably on behalf of some crusted Tories of the period who held that what was good enough for their parents was good enough for them.

Amongst those for which no claim is made as having passed as money are the lead pledges bearing references to Elizabeth, and Mary Queen of Scots, which are probably rightly classed as medals, and as such are described in *Medallic Illustrations*.

There are also numerous thin pieces (Figs. 37 to 40), bearing sacred emblems or pilgrim figures, which were probably given away at many of the numerous shrines visited by pilgrims, and also smaller ones with initials or sacred emblems, which most likely were *jetons de présence* at masses. Many of these date certainly before 1400, but being mainly ecclesiastical, if dealt with at all, it must be in a future paper.

Cloth marks, too, those signs of origin placed upon each piece of cloth by the makers, are often confused with lead tokens; but these are readily distinguished by anyone acquainted with the series, and none are described here. There are also certain thin pieces bearing a general superficial resemblance to the silver coins (*cf.* Figs. 39 and 40), that may well have passed as small change in the same way as the Nuremberg pieces are supposed to have done, but they bear no signs of being more than general counters.

The heavy clumpy lead pieces often met with were mostly used after 1700, at a time when they had degenerated into mere alehouse checks, though a selection of the less badly designed of these may be worth dealing with at some future date.

Sketchy and incomplete as this short survey is, it is hoped that the publication of this paper may cause collectors to examine their cabinets and to bring forth from them, what is after all the most satisfactory evidence, further specimens to widen our knowledge and to fill in the
gaps that must exist in any gathering collected by one person and from one area.

The specimens mentioned have mostly come from excavations in the city of London, from the River Thames and from the pulling down of houses in London or the home counties, and are all in the collection of Mr. J. B. Caldecott. They probably circulated within a much more limited area than the seventeenth century tokens, in fact the only other district beyond those just mentioned in which they are usually found seems to be the eastern counties, in which they are perhaps more common than anywhere else. This is most likely due to the great cloth manufacture carried on in this district, and the use of lead in the form of cloth marks may have paved the way here for its use as tokens.