A Misreading of a Farthing Token of Iames Levitt

In Dickinson's major work on 17th century tokens published in 1986 he retained an entry under Kingston-on-Thames (sic) in Surrey which had been known about since Boyne's work of 1858. This is Surrey token No 152 which is listed as:

I.T.T. OF KINGSTON (Three Salmon)
I.L.M. OF KINGSTON (Unknown)

Dickinson has transcribed this as I.T.(T). and I.L.(M). indicating that these are sets of initials of the issuer and his wife placed in the centre of the flan such as those on the reverse of fig 1. This however would leave no room for the device of the three salmon. In doing research for an exhibition of tokens of Kingston, I realised that the initials I.L.(M). are those of Iames Levitt and his wife whose farthing token also features three salmon (fig 1). It then became obvious that Surrey token No 152 is indeed just a misreading of Iames Levitt's token (Surrey No 148) made by inspection of a worn coin. The I.T.T. are just the last three letters of LEVITT. This places the three initials in the legend rather than the field as Boyne, and later Williamson and Dickinson seem to imply and this could only occur if Boyne had not himself seen the token. I think this can be shown by his use of the word 'Unknown' when describing the device on the I.L.M. side of the token, rather than illegible or detrited which he would have used had he seen the coin. An error has crept in due to a misunderstanding in the correspondence between the owner of the token and Boyne. An error which has remained in the published works until now. Fig 2 shows how the worn token of Levitt would have appeared and so given rise to Surrey No 152. It would be satisfying if a token worn in this way were to come to light to help verify this theory. We shall see.

What is known about the man is as follows. During the Commonwealth period in Kingston at the time of the token issue, the parlimentarian faction retained control of the borough by using various illegal means to elect freemen favourable to their side and excluding Royalists or suspected Royalists from the Borough Government. James Levitt was one of these Parlimentary supporters although he only seems to have had a minor role. His trade is not known, but his premises where the token was used were in Gigg Hill which is now that part of Eden Street by the Apple Market. The exact location of the property is unknown.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dickinson, Michael, 1986 *Seventeenth Century Tokens of the British Isles and their Values,* B A Seaby
Williamson, George C, 1889 *Trade Tokens used in the Seventeenth century,* Elliot Stock

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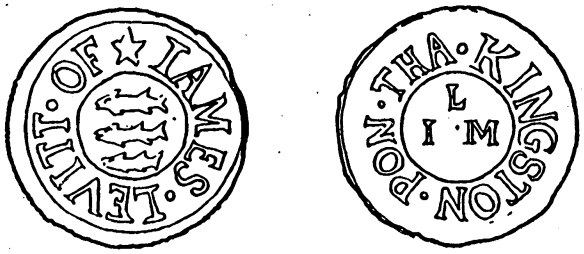

Fig 1 Farthing token of James Levitt, Scale 2:1 drawn by Paul Hill

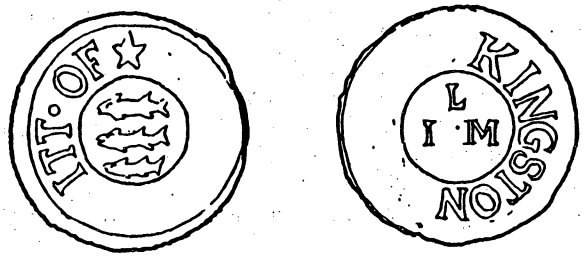

Fig 2 Surrey token 152. A worn Levitt farthing, scale 2:1 NB. These figures are merely representations and not accurate archaeological drawings.