

Ted Fletcher is indisposed, and David Powell takes the editor's chair for this issue

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 LTFeditor@aol.com. See page 4 for information on back issues, etc.

David Powell On His Classification System

Type 7: Grids

One of the less interesting types, comprising pieces with sides which have most, if not all, of their surface covered with a single type of tessellation or grid. The only main interest here is the size and shape of the components; whether the grid is very fine or coarse, rectangular or diamond shape. Very fine grids could well be meant to represent millstones, although equally they could be simple designs by someone who wanted to avoid the piece remaining uniface. If the former they link to type 22, which I discuss further below.



Coarse or widely-spaced grids appear in both light and dark metal, as in figs **1**, **2**, **3** and **4**; both are common, although the latter, supposedly implying a London origin, are scarcer than the former. On the London pieces, the grid could well represent a counting board, or a net. Did the big city have a fishing industry in those less polluted days? Alternatively, a portcullis could be indicated, although if obviously a portcullis the piece would immediately become a type 27. Ted also has a theory, which I will leave him to expand in his own time, that some of these wide-grid pieces could also be tokens for use on hopscotch courts. I jest not! He believes he has discovered sources which suggest that soldiers, if left to their own devices, were apt to get lazy and unfit, and that getting them to play hopscotch was one of the ways of keeping them in trim. If true, the second side of the token could then be used as a personal marker, to distinguish the player.

Occasionally a diagonal grid turns up (fig **5**) or very chunky pieces of the type shown in fig **6**, with rounded edges and regular incuse grids. The latter, decidedly different from other leads, are usually dark, with a very smooth uniface reverse. Could the smoothness mean that they were used for a game, perhaps of the shove-halfpenny family? They clearly have some special purpose. The one shown is 24mm across and weighs just over 21gm.



Type 22: Milling {brought forward because of its link with the above}

The only obvious pieces associated with milling are those which depict mill buildings themselves {not yet seen, but possible} or, more commonly because they are easier to draw, those which show arrangements of mill sails. The latter typically show four arms, each consisting of a rectangular grid such as depicted in figs **7**, **8**; and where the derivation feels sufficiently obvious the piece is put in type 22 rather than type 12 or 14.



I have the following comment in my formal definition of type 12 {squared geometric}:
Pieces with four quarters containing alternate horizontal and vertical lines will remain in type 12 for the moment, notwithstanding that they may depict millstones and should correctly reside in type 22.

I must admit that I am very tempted to move them across to type 22, but that would be implying a use which I can't prove. Opinions, please! What odds that these pieces are mill-related?

Mill pieces could be receipts or IOUs for a full sack of flour; equally, they could be ways of controlling the flow of empty ones. Those of you who take the Daily Telegraph may have seen that, in the first edition facsimile distributed with its 150th anniversary edition this year {29 June}, there was a report of a case brought by the Sack Protection Society against a London trader. You wouldn't think that such a body was necessary, but the losses incurred by the thieving of empty sacks apparently amounted to £20k p.a, which in 1855 was a heck of a lot of money.

Modern sack tokens are known to have been used in Cornwall and the London markets, and may have been elsewhere; I illustrate three in fig **9**, and leave you with the thought that perhaps some of our leads were the sack tokens of an earlier generation.



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Type 9: Irregular Geometrics

My formal definition of type 9 is as follows:

Irregular or compound geometrical: This type accommodates a large number of abstract designs which do not fit into either type 3 or type 12, other than those which have an obvious circular or elliptical theme, which are type 31. It also accommodates designs which are a compound of different simple geometric types.



The designs which make up type 9 are usually quite meaningless, although a few hint at derivation from other types. Most likely the designs chosen are purely decorative or for use as personal markers, and the type serves more than any other as a nice convenient catch-all for pieces which don't fit elsewhere. Amongst the more random and anonymous ones are **figs 10** and **11**.

The type is probably predominantly rustic, fig. **12** being one of only two dark metal pieces amongst the ten shown.



The K hints at the Byzantine use of that letter for the numeral 20, but that being a 6th century usage that is almost certainly coincidental. More likely the affinity is to the "girder bridge" piece of fig **13**, in which case we should turn it round 90 degrees. The use of a very large exergue, perhaps 30%-40% of the entire face, is a common feature of rustic leads of types 2 and 8 as well as 9, and is often used to accommodate a date. For those who don't know what an exergue is, it's the bit which the date fits into in one of our old pennies, except that there it occupies a much narrower area.

The K piece of fig. **12**, however, fills the exergue up with a framework, and indeed there is a strong argument for putting both these pieces, fig **12** especially, in type 13 instead of type 9. It has also been recently suggested, at the annual Token Corresponding Society Congress, that perhaps the four legs of the "girder bridge" type correspond to an evolution of the disembodied horse and bull designs so favoured by the Celts on their coins of the first century BC. (fig **14**) Fanciful or not?

Fig **15** is an example of a piece which is reasonably symmetrical but which does not obviously sit anywhere else, whilst figs **16,17** teasingly invite us to ponder whether their designs hide initials and a standing person respectively; i.e. whether they are respectively a type 2 and 32 in disguise. Fig **18** is similarly enigmatic; it is not quite quartered {type 12}, not quite a framework {type 13}, not quite a cross {type 14} and not quite a set of mill sails {type 22}. Yet it hints at the lot.



Finally, the bizarre set of pieces best described as “alien spacecraft” (figs 19, 20) show two pieces which, despite their different size and manufacture, have very strong design features in common. They look humorous, but what were they used for?



Type 13: Frameworks

Formal definition:

This type accommodates a number of designs which border between the abstract and the real, and which may actually represent objects, the nature of which cannot be determined. The design does not cover the whole side, or at least not without significant variation; if it did, it would belong to type 9.

As type 9 seems to intrude into and overlap with type 13, it seems only natural to discuss the latter here. The most common examples of pure type 13 frameworks are the so called “cupboard” pieces (figs 21,22) which depending on size and shape could depict a number of items of furniture, a hurdle, a ladder, a tennis court, or another of Ted’s previously-discussed hopscotch courts. I am sure you can come up with plenty of other ideas; please let us know. They are not uncommon, so there must be some theme behind them. Perhaps a little more unusual is the lectern or music stand of fig 23; its supports look very much like legs, but regrettably there is no head peering over the top.



Type 31: Circular or Elliptical Geometrics

Formal definition:

Circular or elliptical geometric {type 31}: Either a set of concentric circles/ellipses, with or without a central hub, or a design consisting primarily of circles/ellipses and their fragments.

The only common design in type 31 is the “Swiss Roll” arrangement of concentric circles (fig 24); however my thanks to the donor now forgotten who sent me line drawings of several attractive and more complex pieces. (figs 25, 26)

