

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 [LTJEditor@aol.com](mailto:LTJEditor@aol.com). See page 4 for information on back issues, etc.

## The Concept of Stock Tokens by David Powell

One of the questions I am most frequently asked about crude lead concerns what meaning we should ascribe to the most common designs such as petals, cartwheels, lis, anchors, crosses and the like; is there or is there not any meaning to be read into them and, if they were as common as they obviously are, how did people distinguish one person's tokens from another of the same design? Figs 1-4 depict some old friends concerning whom we have already aired a number of theories; most of them plausible, but without certainty as to which one, or combination of them, may be right.



Mitchiner and Skinner in their 1984 article on early lead and pewter use the phrase "stock-design" tokens for these pieces; however, this idea is not unique to lead, and it may be helpful to compare stock token deployment in some other series.

The advantages of a specifically attributable token is that everyone local knows who issued it, where it comes from and who will redeem it. The disadvantages are that the issuer has to find and pay someone to design and manufacture it, and in some cases that he loses advertising potential for his goods and services. Now, suppose you don't care about advertising or whether the piece looks personal, but just want to minimise cost; you can go to someone who churns out standard tokens in bulk, and buy off the shelf. Whether this is satisfactory or not depends on whether the geographic scope of your business influence is wide enough to bring you within range of someone else who is using the same source of supply. Also, should the nature of your business change, the stock token is more versatile; you don't have to buy another batch because the details are no longer correct.

There are plenty of numismatic precedents. In the communion token series, the Free Church of Scotland evolved out of a breakaway in 1843 and suddenly needed to provide new tokens with their name on for a large number of churches. Makers such as Crawford or Cunningham of Glasgow received a huge surge of orders, whilst the churches' main concern was to be up and running quickly. Some consignments bore the names of their parishes, and those orders perhaps took extra time. However, if you accepted the two standard designs of church building and burning bush, one on each side (figs. 5, 6) you cut the delivery time down considerably. After all, the area of circulation was meant to be a solitary church; was anyone likely to trade communion tokens with other churches in practice? Some adopted the half-way solution of using one standard side and one named.



In the American Civil War, small change went out of circulation very quickly and there was a necessity to innovate. The result was a mixture of stock sides {Patriotics} which contained various political sentiments (figs.7,8) and specific sides {Storecards} which detailed names and businesses as per our own 19th cent unofficials this side of the water. Some



pieces have two Patriotic sides, some two Storecard sides, some a mule of each; with some 30-odd estimated makers, there was considerable variety. Again, the political situation was dire, and speed was of the essence.

There were many brass pub checks in the 19th century, most of them bearing the name of the pub and its issuer; they are mainly good quality pieces, usually minted in such places as Birmingham, Leeds or Sheffield. But what if you wanted to cut the corners on cost? In the 1880s there appeared a rash of thinner, smaller, nastier brass tokens with the head of Queen Victoria or a double-headed eagle on one side, and nothing on the other; the later specifically left blank for counterstriking (figs.9,10), which was a considerably cheaper way of personalising than having someone engrave you a die specifically.



# David Powell On His Classification System

## Type 15: Ecclesiastical

Type 15 is my one solitary regret in this classification system, since by hindsight almost everything can be allocated elsewhere; however, we had to get going with using it at some point rather than trying to refine it indefinitely. However, if there is nothing worse than that wrong with it, not to worry! Ted has found in his researches, discussed in earlier issues of LTT that several of the commoner lead types had an ecclesiastical significance not immediately obvious; e.g. petals {type 1}, the anchor of hope {type 5}, the ship of faith {type 6}. Boy Bishops go into type 10, bishops waving their arms in the air on mediaeval pewter go into type 32; the sacramental wineglass could be difficult to distinguish from the tavern utensils of type 11, crosses go into type 14, and any other bits of ecclesiastical hardware such as the crozier on the left could justifiably slip into type 27! Therefore, type 15 is virtually dormant. In the piece shown, was DB a minister or a bishop, perhaps? Some bishops struck ordinary coins, and signed them by turning one of the arms of the cross into a crozier; e.g. Antony Bek of Durham, during the reigns of Edward I and II.



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# This Month's Gallery



First of all, Fig.1 from Berkshire detectorist Roger Black, although the piece was actually found in Hampshire. A mammoth of a piece, 40mm across at the largest diameter and about 3-4 mm thick, 37gm in weight, with the cross stamped deeply into the face, so much so that it has gone through at one point. This feels early {13-14 cent}, but why the bore holes? an old way of indicating table numbers on communion tokens, or something similar? perhaps there were specimens with 1,3, or 4 holes around. Probably a pass rather than money; you certainly wouldn't want to carry too many of those around. Roger's alternative theories are that it could have been a badge, votive offering or even a seal; we would welcome any opinions that anyone has to offer. He adds the following observation regarding the design: "The cross itself is particular in that the arms are clearly fluted rather than straight as on the normal Greek cross. I

believe this design is known as Cross Formée and was used by the Order of St John from the 12th Century, as an early adaptation which ultimately lead to the development of the eight-pointed Maltese style cross we know today. This form of cross is also used on the Pallium worn around the neck by the Pope and conferred by him on his metropolitan archbishops, although I have not yet researched how early this was adopted by the Catholic church."

Next, a nice couple from East Sussex; I'm conjecturing that the object superimposed on the centre of Fig.2 might be a bell, but opinions invited. Now, Fig.3! Has anybody ever seen a slug chosen as the subject for a token, coin, stamp or similar object before? Again, anybody who thinks it isn't a slug, please let me know. The owner thinks it might be a hunting horn, which would itself be interesting; I haven't seen one of those before. A pass allowing one to participate in the hunt, perhaps, or to identify those engaged in running it? Or perhaps just to qualify one for the refreshments afterwards!



A mixed bag on the left. Fig.4. looks as if it can't quite make up its mind whether it wants to be an Edwardian penny or a bush, and finishes up looking like an inverted ban-the-bomb sign; Fig.5 looks like a piece of cast iron railing such as one might find round the perimeter of the local park; Fig.6 is a W with some sprigs of plant life in the angles, and Fig.7 is a .....? Mail in your guesses, I'm opting for a pitchfork. Fig.8 looks as if it could be a small bird poised atop another fence, although that might be fanciful; perhaps a tool is indicated. It isn't quite straight enough for a comb of candles. Fig.9 is simple enough; a large, prominent date in good strong numerals, but surprisingly scarce in this series. Finally, Fig.10, a more than average interesting quartered geometric.



Reader John Bromley would welcome comment about the dating of 'cross and pellet' tokens. He wonders whether it might be possible to date pieces by sharpness of design, by size, or by amount of oxidisation, and has sent four pictures in for discussion. He suggests that Fig.11 (24mm) might be Tudor and the smaller Fig.12 (17mm) from early-mid 15<sup>th</sup> cent, but would like confirmation. Fig.13 (25mm) looks crude, yet it also has a 'long cross' look to it which would place it fairly early. It was found resting on a plain leaden disc (Fig.14, 32mm) which could well have been 'stock' for future castings, except the oxidisation is totally different. Both were incredibly deeply buried in the clay subsoil. John wonders whether the quality and material of the mould used for casting would have an impact of the rate of oxidisation of a token due to the pieces emanating from some moulds having a more porous finish than others? Chemists amongst you, please reply!



<p><b>AT THREE CRANES</b> If you have any lead tokens with the above inscription please contact <b>Phil Mernick</b> who is researching them. Email: phil@mernicks.com Phone:020-8980-5672</p>	<p><b>WANT BACK ISSUES ?</b> You can view ALL back issues at <a href="http://www.leadtokens.org.uk">www.leadtokens.org.uk</a></p>
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