

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.*

## *Another Foreign Piece frequently found in England.....*

I wrote last month about the copper duits from the Netherlands frequently passing as small change, alongside leaden pieces, in the eastern parts of the country. Another piece which detectorists seem to be turning up quite frequently is the Russian denga {illustrated}, of approximately similar date, size and value. Why did we employ the small coinage of some nations and not others, such as France, which are nearer? Perhaps it had to do with the fact that some countries were Protestant and others Catholic, or maybe just reflected whom we predominantly traded with.



## *They don't have to be pretty to be interesting....*

The piece illustrated, not surprisingly won on eBay for an uncontested 99p, is not the best I have; in fact the picture flatters it a little, and you could ask why I bothered. However, it is all part of the history of the series. What happened if you were a villager or shopkeeper who needed lead tokens, but didn't have a manufacturer to hand? You presumably had to set to and make them yourself.

There is nothing in the world of crude lead to say that you have to be a skilled artist or metal worker for your work to qualify. The maker of this piece clearly had some knowledge of what lead tokens looked like, even if he didn't have the aptitude to make a very good specimen himself; the reverse is quite a passable attempt at a type 28.12 {filled rim with interior quartered design}, whilst the obverse is best described as an irregular geometric {again with filled rim} of type 28.9.



Leading on from here, one might ask how many of those sides which we immediately discard as uniface are, in fact, ones like those shown here but which have in fact acquired greater wear? Perhaps the engraving or scratching of blanks was rather more common than the survival of low-grade artwork suggests.

## *This Month's Gallery*

Fig.1 looks as if it ought to be manorial. Fig.2 is a type 2, but frames its initials in a square; moreover, there is a second set below. What was the relationship of the two parties? landlord & tenant, father & son, two brothers, or perhaps two unrelated business partners with the same initials? Figs.3,4 are two nice bold pieces with a late mediaeval feel. Fig.5 must be ecclesiastical; cross on one side, perhaps M for matins on the other. Fig.6 is large, incuse and crude; a little better than the piece in the article above, but of the same ilk. However, being crude may not necessarily indicate an early date.



# David Powell On His Classification System

## Type 17: Trees and Plants, and their Produce

This type covers anything botanical except national symbols, e.g. the rose covered by type 25, and the common petal array of type 1. The three natural history types were popular with the ancients, although the examples shown here are mostly British and probably mostly 18<sup>th</sup> cent. There is not such a degree of realism as there is with the birds, and the most common rendering seen is one akin to a childish rendering of a Christmas tree {Figs.1,3,5}; Fig.10 is a more stylistic rendering of the same thing, from Co. Durham. Rarely does a tree have any significant sign of a trunk, as in Fig.4, and indeed it can be very difficult to tell, in the confined space of 20mm or so, whether pieces such as Figs.8,9 are a tree or a flower. Fig.7 looks shrubby, and is the better for it; it has a little more personality, especially with the initials above. The same can also be said of Fig.13, which is quite definitely a flower.



Following on from Fig.13 come those pieces which depict the flower head alone; those of types 1 and 25, of course, being excepted. Fig.6 shows a petal arrangement superficially similar to a type 1 except that the petals are shorter, proportionately wider and do not reach to the edge; also, there is a central core. It feels that the maker was trying to describe something specific, rather than just trying to reproduce standard form.

Next follow the pieces which, whilst not being wholly floral, have a strongly floral element in their design. Fig.2 is a known to be very specific to the Isle of Oxney, on Romney Marsh; a dozen or so have been found, with {for lead} an unusually realistic George II halfpenny head on the obverse. Their usage is not known, but the design is detailed and more than usual care appears to have been taken with it. Fig.12 is an even more exotic example, specifically 5-petalled, from Thailand. Fig.14 is also five-petalled, but British, incuse and probably early {my thanks to John Gough for this one}, whilst Fig.15 illustrates a taller tree which at closer glance looks as if might be compounded with a type 4 lis.



34.83mm x 6.5mm. 40g. From Blidworth, Notts.  
Reverse blank

Fruit also comes under type 17, but I have no examples to show. Fig.11 shows a piece, which I have seen several examples of and which is probably quite modern {19<sup>th</sup> or even 20<sup>th</sup> cent}, depicting a single leaf. It has an almost oriental look, an affinity with certain modern coins of China and Japan, but I suspect that that is coincidence. Any clues as to the origin of this one, please?



All three natural life types are attractive, after the doodles, designs and symbols of many of the earlier series; please share with us, by mailing in your pictures to the usual address, your own experience of their many and varied depictions.

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## *Type 19: Animals, including Fish and Insects*

Type 19 covers all animals other than those which are obviously recognised national symbols, e.g. lions and unicorns, which come under type 25. Fish and insects are both exceedingly rare on British lead, but less so on Roman tesserae.

The type is, like type 10 {heads and busts}, one which offers much for those with a sense of humour since, the ancient series apart, most of the depictions are the work of fairly amateur artists. Figs.1,3 are fairly typical examples; Fig.3 an ordinary token, Fig.1 a medallion which has an almost papal-like bust on the back and may well not be British. Little more can be said about the animals than that they are generic quadrupeds. At the opposite end of the scale is the dog in Fig.4, a beautifully rendered creature whose breed is probably recognisable to those in the know: I am told that it is a talbot. The obverses of Figs 2,4 are Figs 6,5 respectively from the type 10 article in January, and from the style of the latter bust the date of the dog can be guessed as being, perhaps, late Stuart or early Georgian.



A more typical 18<sup>th</sup> cent British specimen is the delightfully vibrant young calf of Fig.2. Probably of similar date are Figs 5-7, at least two of which one feels ought to be rabbits; Fig.6 however is, albeit less certainly, another calf.

The mediaeval pewter Winetavern series of London and Dublin {c.1250-1307} contains several animal references,; Fig.8. depicts the Paschal lamb with banner, although Mitchiner and Skinner {BNJ Vol.53, 1983} also mention other animals such as bears and stags which are less obviously of ecclesiastical significance.

Fig.9 is 25x22 mm and is believed to have come from Asia Minor; its heavy raised design is a feature of the very early Greek pieces of the 6<sup>th</sup> cent BC, although this is probably from some while,



possibly several centuries, later. The main body of the token is 2mm thick, but the design is a further 3mm above this at its highest point. One of the designs featured on these early coins was the turtle or tortoise, and Fig.9 may well be a reuse of it; unless you favour it being an insect, such as a beetle.

For fullness I shall reillustrate three pieces which have already appeared in LTT before: two of Dave Rayment's ex Feb.2006 {Figs 10,11}, which have an eastern feel despite being found on the edge of the Home Counties, and the piece from the front page of Apr.2006 {Fig.12}, which may or may not be a curled up cat. The lion (?) of Fig.10 looks to be whirling his tail around, as if patiently waiting to either whip or lasso something, whilst the horse of Fig.11 looks slightly overweight. Fig.13 illustrates another uncertainty; is it a malformed set of type 1 petals, or the head and ears of a cow/bull?



Some late arrivals after I had finished writing this article include my first British piece depicting a fish {Fig 14}, plus a dog {Fig 15} which looks as if might have come out of the same kennel as Fig 4. I should welcome knowing if anyone has other pieces which fit this dog series, and if anyone fancies a guess as to what sort of dog Fig 15 is, please let me know. For those awaiting some tesserae, be patient; I plan to discuss them in a later article, when this type series is finished.



## *Mill Token Finds - Further Research At Soham*

Page 75 of Ted Fletcher's book, *Leaden Tokens & Tallies* shows a line drawing of a lead token said to have been found close to a windmill site at Soham, Cambridgeshire. LTT reader, Reverend Ron Dyer, a former Soham resident, has researched the piece and suggests that the initial "F" on the dated side should be read as "P" for Peck, a local family long associated with mill ownership in the locality. Reverend Dyer also thinks the initials on the other face should be read as "D.C.W" for Downfield Corn Windmill, that being the name of the field where the



### *Readers' queries:*

Detectorist John Bromley asks why identical lead pieces are so rarely found, even within a very localized area:

"Most my pieces have come from two fields straddling a river, with a corn mill situated about 200 yards away. Of the three dozen tokens I've found so far no two are exactly the same; I have several repeated designs yet they all are of differing sizes or styles. The implication could be that many people were making such leaden pieces, or that the moulds didn't last long at all, or perhaps that moulds were changed when handed down from father to son. I would also add that most of my finds are single sided with 'flat' backs from two piece moulding. I would be interested to know to what extent other detectorists only ever find differing tokens on their sites, and to what extent they do actually locate duplicates.

If our trusty miller produced tokens I would have thought that there would be a high chance of finding twins in the immediate area, unless of course, only a tiny number of casts came from the same mould before it broke. If neither mould nor token lasted long, surely he would have produced tokens from new moulds with a similar design, to ensure continuity; so even if not die twins, the chances of finding repeats of close designs should be high. However, even this does not seem to hold true. Of the thirty odd tokens from close to one mill I have only two pairs of similar design, one 'cross and quarter pellets' {type 14} and one 'grid' {type 7}, but in each case are very different in style and possibly even from different centuries.

If the tokens broke easily, surely detectorists would be finding fragments and halves on ploughed soil where the plough hit them – I certainly haven't found pieces of damaged tokens, which implies that they are fairly tough.

Another possible reason might be that forgery was rife, causing the token designs to be changed with great frequency; however, the logistics of keeping up to date with what was a current and what was an outdated token would be difficult and would surely lead to frequent disputes.

In any one area there seems to be a huge variety of tokens with little or no continuity, so is it that these tokens were freely traded between butcher, baker and candlestick maker at a set value irrespective of design or origin? surely not; the risk of forgery must make this unworkable."

### *Editor's comment:*

One reason must certainly be that both dies and tokens were not of the same strength as those made by professional manufacturers, and broke more easily; each die would have a small mintage, and therefore an even smaller survival rate. I certainly doubt that many moulds would last long enough to pass between generations.

Tokens randomly damaged by agricultural implements are found, but they are usually the larger part of the piece. Both the durability and the size argue against the smaller segment surviving to come to notice, but as detecting equipment grows in sophistication it would be reasonable to conjecture that the chance will increase.

I have certainly come across a number of examples of leaden die twin pieces, the most I have seen in one go being about six or seven, but they are not as common as one would expect. Has anyone found any leaden hoards out there, or even a few similar pieces dug up at different times? please write in with your experiences, as this would be an interesting one to pursue.



### *Another "Eye of the Beholder" piece:*



Anyone care to conjecture whether this one is meant to be a fish {Fig 1}, or a bishop {Fig.2}?

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AT THREE CRANES  
If you have any lead tokens with part of their legend reading *ATTHREE CRANES* please contact **Phil Mernick** who is researching them. Email: [phil@mernicks.com](mailto:phil@mernicks.com) Phone:020-8980-5672