

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 LSJEditor@aol.com or dmpowell@waitrose.com

Picture Gallery



A tessera to start with this month {Fig.1}, slightly if possibly unintentionally oval in shape, depicting what may be either a rider on a horse or a mythological creature. The reverse is not good enough to illustrate, is an equally enigmatic bust facing right which is best summed up by saying that it is either female or helmeted.



Fig.2 is a small type 2, of typical mid-17th cent farthing size. The first initial, R, is fair enough for that period, but the second is uncertain. It could be a B, except that the bottom curve is open; it could be an S, except that the top curve is closed; and it leans. A number, 6 or 9, is another possibility, but none of the options are obvious. Finally, there is a pair of very small crossed swords over the top.

Fig.3 is of another category which we have not seen much for a bit; seals. The piece declares its origin and date loud and clear; Essex, 1611; which means almost certainly, Colchester, whose initial appears dead centre. Similarly coloured, but not in the same condition, is a very vague crowned shield with the barest hint of some wording {Fig.4}, indeed perhaps only shading, round the outside. It has an attachment at the centre of its otherwise plain reverse, and may even be a button rather than a seal.

An uninspiring 99p purchase on eBay turned out under the influence of a good brushing to be the very pleasant little piece shown at Fig.5, with a very attractive, perhaps even royal, rose. These are one of those pieces which sit poised on the edges of type 1, 17 and 25; it isn't the simple n-pointed petal array, it isn't a full plant, and it may or not have regal significance. Compound flower heads usually go in 17, but this one is convincing enough to tip into type 25. 15mm diam again, like Fig.2; let us conjecture that RA was a 17th cent supporter of the Royalist cause.

A common enough type 4 lis {Fig.6}, and with the usual London colouring, except that this one, for a change, has a date. The first two digits are clear enough, 16, but the critical third one is exceedingly difficult to determine; a crude 4, followed by a retrograde 2, being the first two of a number of possible guesses. The final figure is a retrograde 7. It is 18mm in diameter and of uncertain provenance.



My thanks to James McKenzie for sending in Fig.7, which he found on the Isle of Sheppey; still in Kent, but a little off the beaten track from the usual hop field locations.. Any more reports of tokens from that area, please? We think without being certain that it depicts a duck, but

I show it both ways up so that readers can decide whether 2R or retrograde-S,R is a more likely interpretation. A rather less attractive contribution from Tim Symonds of Burwash, E.Sussex, who has found one or two such pieces along the lines of Fig.8 and advances the theory that such strips may have some local token/coinage use. Being pretty never was a qualification for appearance in these pages, and provided they have some potential numismatic relevance they belong here. Personally I think that this one is just agricultural engineering waste, but I invite opinion. To finish with and to compensate, a delightful late mediaeval pewter, 13mm only, with a cross on one side and a puppy on the other {Fig.9}. There is a hint of initials at the base of the cross.



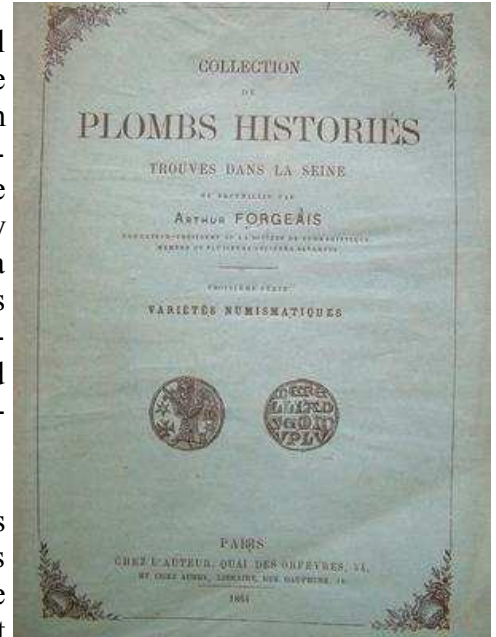
Introducing Arthur Forgeais, a 19th Century French Mudlark

Mudlarking, that is, scavenging river banks for discarded objects of interest, is not exclusively a modern phenomenon. There have been men of earlier centuries, and countries other than Britain, whom, if they had been alive today, would have bought themselves a metal detector as soon as they were able, and revelled in the history it was able to bring to their door. Foremost amongst them, I imagine, a young Frenchman called Arthur Forgeais.

Born in 1822, Forgeais was a university student, and also a keen amateur archaeologist, in Paris at a time when, in 1848, an extensive program was begun for repairing the dilapidated bridges and dredging the clogged shipping channels of the Seine. This ran on until well into the early 1860s, during which time Forgeais, who had cultivated good relationships with the various dredgers and other workmen, extracted three of four thousand filth-covered lead objects in which no-one else at the time was interested.

In 1858 Forgeais went into print for the first time, publishing a small volume to whet peoples' appetite with a sample of his finds, to see what the reaction would be. As to the latter, you may read about it on the Internet, but the exercise led to the publication in the years 1862-66 {one each year} of his major five-volume work "Collection de Plombs Historiés trouvés dans la Seine", followed in 1874 by "Numismatiques des Corporations Parisiennes", again on lead from a similar source. Translated, that comes out approximately as "Historic Lead Tokens found in the Seine" and "Tokens of the Parisian Trade Guilds" respectively. Read "Thames" for "Seine" and that doesn't sound too far from our familiar crude lead and 17th century British.

Some of Forgeais' material consists of badges and religious artefacts which are outside the scope of LTT's interest, but Vols.1,3,5 of his main work, plus the late 1874 volume, {which I will call Vol.6} are all either full of tokens or contain significant numbers of them. Most of the material is 13th-16th cent, and there are significant similarities with English pieces of the same period; did the two cities draw on each other by way of design, or was it that the same pieces actually crossed the water and were used in both? Given the state of war which often existed between the two countries, the latter would be surprising; but perhaps the churchmen, from whom a lot of early tokens originated, were able to be more communicative than their secular counterparts.



Early lead/pewter has been somewhat neglected in these pages of late, a situation which I was proposing to amend; now, I hope not only to be able to talk a little about the British series, but also use M. Forgeais' French material to put some of our own in context. It is also most interesting to compare his categorisation with our own classification system; indeed, most of the chapters in Vol.5 have titles which directly or indirectly correspond with one or more of our 32 types.

Forgeais has tried, where possible, to give theories or explain the backgrounds of his attributions. Whether right or wrong, there have not been many people prepared to write six books on lead and lead-based tokens; let us enjoy his work, and see how much light the paranumismatic life of Paris and other cities sheds on the life of our own. He died in 1878, and we have cause to be grateful to him.

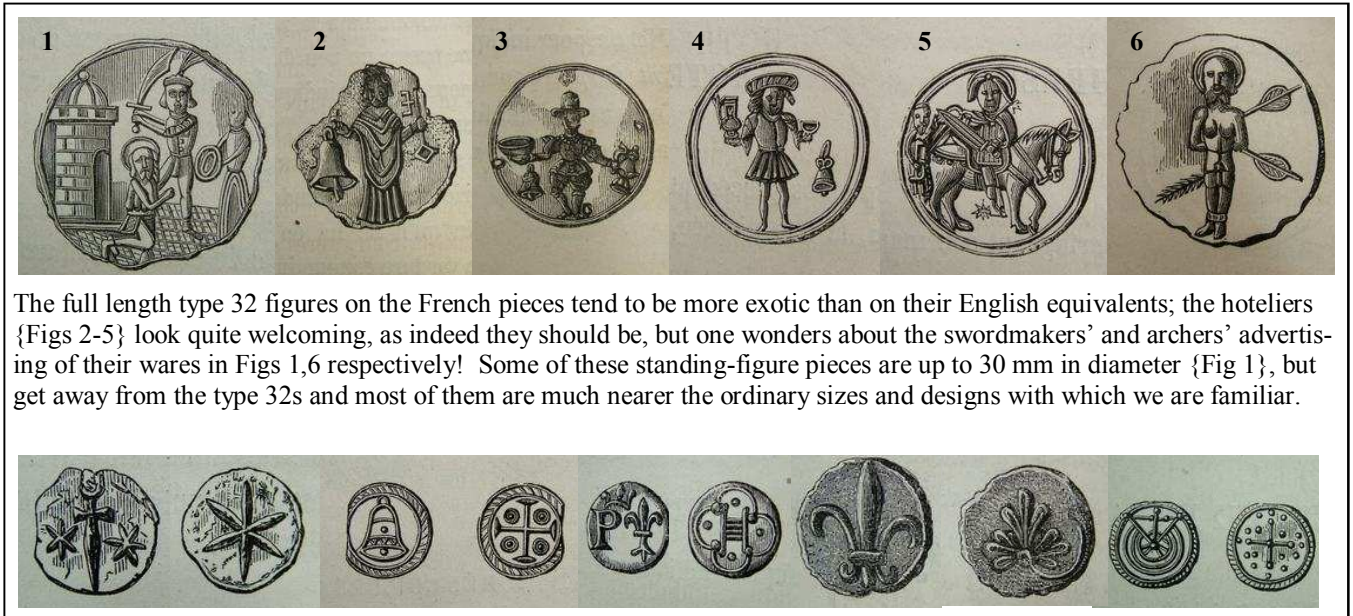


In this sequence of four pieces from the Vol.5 chapter on "other types", the rabbits all seem to be enjoying life; however, no one else seems too happy....

Forgeais' Tokens: an Overview

I propose, over the coming months, to discuss and illustrate Forgeais' material from Vols.3,5 and 6 in two parallel series of articles: one, describing his use of the different types with which we are familiar, and two, discussing certain of his categories of subject matter. Pictures of other contemporary pieces will be thrown in, from time or time, for comparison.

The pieces are from the 13th-18th centuries, with an overwhelming emphasis on the 14th-16th, particularly the 15th. The average date, over several hundred pieces, works out at about 1430.

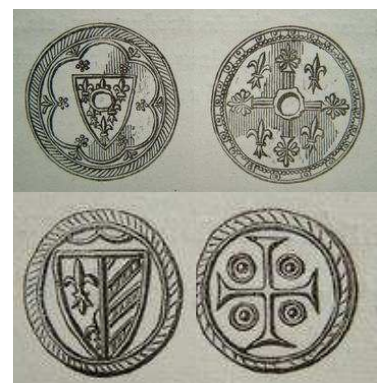


The full length type 32 figures on the French pieces tend to be more exotic than on their English equivalents; the hoteliers {Figs 2-5} look quite welcoming, as indeed they should be, but one wonders about the swordmakers' and archers' advertising of their wares in Figs 1,6 respectively! Some of these standing-figure pieces are up to 30 mm in diameter {Fig 1}, but get away from the type 32s and most of them are much nearer the ordinary sizes and designs with which we are familiar.

Before we get under way, an overview of the different volumes:

- Vol.1 is believed to be dedicated to trade pieces, concerning which see Vol.6 below; however, I have not yet been able to get regular access to one to comment.
- Vols.2,4 are concerned with pilgrim badges and religious imagery respectively, and contain little of token interest. {Note: Vol.2 is available in full on Google Books at the time of writing}
- The first part of Vol.3 is taken up with a discussion of church tokens; not communion pieces, rather a local coinage for paying priests and monks for taking certain services. An interesting tale, and one which will be the subject of its own separate article. These pieces are followed by some rather similar pieces of religious brotherhoods, plus a rather larger section on the royal households. The latter pieces will feel more familiar
- Vol.5 contains the pieces which are nearest to our own familiar lead and pewter, and many of its chapters can be conveniently mapped on to our classification types:

- Chap.I Armorial {type 16}
- Chap.II. Monetary types, copying the money of the day
- Chap.III. Fleur-de-Lis {type 4}
- Chap.IV Human heads {type 10}
- Chap.V Tax tokens {links with some type 6,23...!!}
- Chap.VI Tools of trade {type 21}
- Chap.VII Letters {type 2}
- Chap.VIII Animals {type 19}
- Chap.IX Petals {type 1}
- Chap.X Crosses {type 14}
- Chap.XII Various {again, some more surprise links here!}



- Vol.6 is to some extent a sweeping up of the residue, some years later after the previous volumes; it covers some of the categories of materials as its predecessors, but showing different examples. It is predominantly taken up with trade pieces, the equivalent of the British 17th cent token; however, these pieces average a couple of centuries earlier, when the church was much more in the forefront of life, and in the 15th cent depictions of each trade's patronal saint tend to replace the heraldry of the 17th. Sometimes these depictions occupy both sides, although for the most part implements of trade {our type 21} are present on one. There are sections at the back showing further examples of tax tokens, and tokens of the royal households, already introduced earlier.

Vol.2 {alone} is on the Internet under Google Books, which will enable those of you who are interested to grasp the style of writing to which Forgeais adheres throughout the series.

The other point which needs to be made is that nearly all of the smaller pieces have that type 28 ring of outer filling. Forgeais has a single word for it, which is so convenient that I wish to borrow it: Grènetis. May I please ask you to forgive me if I dispense with the accent? "è" is a pain to type regularly on an English keyboard. Thanks.!

So much for the preliminaries, here we go...

-:-:-:-:-

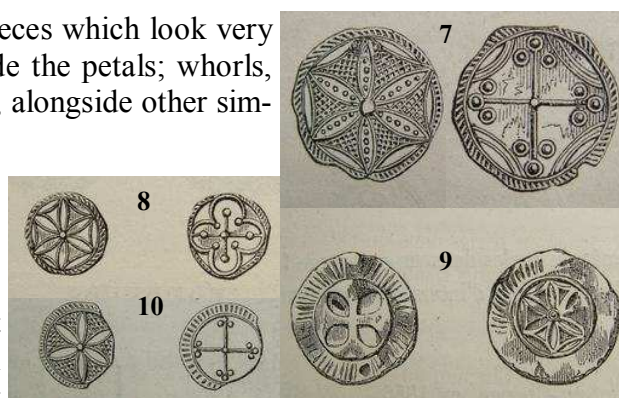
Forgeais' Type 1 pieces:



A selection above of what Forgeais calls, "Types Rosaces", each with their associated reverses. In five of the first six cases the latter is a cross, type 14, and it will be noted that the petals are often rounded. Forgeais attributes these all to the 15th and 16th cents, none to the 14th. The odd man out is the first and largest piece, which looks rather later, but which {unusually} he fails to date; one could argue that it is halfway to a cross. It also has an unusual reverse depicting a ring sufficiently off-centre that one might be tempted to call it a door-knocker. Let's settle for ring, which makes it a type 31. It is the only piece of the group not to have a grènetis.

Also in the same chapter, "Types Rosaces", are two pieces which look very unlike type 1s, yet Forgeais categorises them alongside the petals; whorls, which we would place in type 30. They will be shown, alongside other simple shapes, when we reach that type.

Figs 7-10, all 15th cent, are rather more elaborate variants, as seen before; with an outer hexagon of lines {Figs 7,8} and/or background between the petals. Figs 7-9 are trades pieces of fondeurs, whom I thought at first might be confectionary makers, but whom I think are probably manufacturers {sorry we are going to get this, trying to translate French terms, some of which may be obsolete...}; whilst Fig.10 is another trade piece, this time from an éperonnier, which I think is a chap who made spurs for horses. Perhaps that was a bit more specialised than ordinary blacksmithing, and they had their own guild.



<p>WANT BACK ISSUES ? You can view ALL back issues at www.leadtokens.org.uk</p>	<p>AT THREE CRANES If you have any lead tokens with part of their legend reading <i>ATTHREÉ CRANÈS</i> please contact Phil Mernick who is researching them. Email: phil@mernicks.com Phone:020-8980-5672</p>
---	---

Fig.9 is very interesting. On both sides it has a very wide rim, although not with enough filling to qualify as a type 28; whilst on the side opposite the obvious petals it has four indeterminate objects which could variously argue the case for more petals {type 1}, a quartered geometric {type 12} or a set of single shapes {type 30}. Classification is never easy!

<p>WANT TO READ MORE ABOUT LEADEN TOKENS AND TALLIES? Buy Treasure Hunting Magazine where you'll find articles on LT&T topics occasionally published.</p>
