

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 dmpowell@waitrose.com or david@powell18041.freemove.co.uk. Please note that the old LTTeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Picture Gallery

{Note: Being small, Figs 1-8,10,11 have all been magnified 3:2}. A chance this month to catch up on a few of the various contributions which readers have sent in; thanks to you all, and my apologies to those of you who have waited a while to see your pieces in print. First up a couple sent in by John Gough, found by his clubmates at Ashfield Metals Detectors' Club. Fig.1, with a rather flat uniface reverse, was found by David Rhodes at Old Clipstone, Notts, near to King John's Palace. It is a bit along the lines of a mediaeval groat, i.e. cross superimposed on two circles, but without any inscription; instead, some very well pronounced pellets, in high relief, sitting rather irregularly astride the rings. It is 22.8mm in diameter, which is near groat size, but 3.25mm thick, which is decidedly chunky. Its weight, not surprisingly, is up around 8gm. With those dimensions, and being uniface, I will conjecture that it may not be as mediaeval as it looks; however, I could be wrong!



The other Nottinghamshire piece {Fig.2}, found by David Budding at Cotgrave, is of a type in which I am getting increasingly interested; the large flan pieces which defy Pilson's Law and which seem to have been popular in certain parts in the 1620s and 1630s. They quite often have a date; in some cases reduced to its last two digits, the century being assumed. Smaller pieces with this feature are also known, e.g. the (16)24 piece shown in LTT_24, page 1, Fig.10, and may conjecturally be fractional values. This one is 19.5mm across, 2.35mm thick, and weighs 4.5gm. In other words, like most of its counterparts of this type, which are probably provincial, it is a decidedly more robust piece than the many London ones which we have seen of similar date.



Another Jewish plumma to follow, {Fig.3} as previously discussed in LTT_50 and 82; this one comes from somewhere east of Ashford, Kent, and helps to demonstrate their variety of geographic distribution. Next, a lead seal {Fig.4} from Dutch reader Ton Wolf; just look and enjoy, as we ponder the stick-insect human figures with amusement!



Fig.5, from near Colchester, was sent in by Peter Richards, who thinks it is probably Masonic. The reverse is almost identical.; it is 23mm across and 5gm in weight. I am inclined to go along with Peter's suggestion, for reasons as follows:



If it was monetary, the size would suggest mid-late 17th cent, sometime after the second phase of main series 17th cent tokens kicked in in 1663. However, the style looks rather more 18th cent to me, and in any case I am inclined to think that it was probably a pass rather than a pseudo-coin. If it was a private pass, then there would be no standards to conform to at all, and the makers could decide on any size they wanted; whereas,

with pseudo-money, there was at least often some attempt to relate to the current coin of the realm. I don't know much about freemasonry, although I get the impression that whilst there was a little in England by the mid-17th cent, it didn't really get underway much until about 1710-20. I'll guess early-mid 18th cent for the token, although I could be wrong.



Our most frequent Dutch detecting correspondent, Alex Kussendrager, has reported seeing several pieces recently of the type shown in Figs.6-8; size range 15-19mm, weight range 1.55 to 2.05gm. To our eyes they look like truncated & prematurely-abandoned attempts at groat-like designs, but Alex says that the

mark looks very much like an imperial orb; a mark common, for example, in the old ecclesiastical district of Utrecht. The reverses, however, mostly seem to be very standard British stock types, such as cartwheels and grids; which makes him ask the question: do we encounter such types over here? Anyone who has seen one in Britain, please let us know; or, alternatively, perhaps continental token makers just used the same common stock types that we did. My proofreader kindly informs me that such orbs also occur frequently on 16th cent Nuremburg jetons.

Alex has also written in with a possible identification of the piece which I showed in LTT_91, page 3, Fig.7 {shown again here, as Fig.9, to the right}. I described this as a probable gentry piece with two crossed keys, but Alex suggests it may be Dutch, possibly from Leiden. He says that the crossed keys are a very common armorial device on the continent, and cites a number of examples in Holland, Germany and the Baltics, plus possibly some in Belgium as well. I personally have seen German coppers depicting it. So, notwithstanding the fact that the device does appear on 17th cent tokens in this country, and on leads found here, we need to remember when assessing that we do not have a monopoly of it!



Belgian correspondent Hendrik has found Fig.10 east-north-east of Ghent, near Lokeren. Neither of us have any idea what it is, except that it has similarities to the ecclesiastical piece {Fig.11} shown back in 2006, in LTT_12, when we were first discussing the use of type 15 for ecclesiastical subject matter. That piece



similarly was of unknown provenance, but from their likeness, both of lettering and in the use of ecclesiastical imagery, it appears that they could well be from the same source. So, keep sending your observations in; there is no knowing when they will be of use for locating or dating something else! Fig.11 is 4.78gm, Fig.10 a mere 2gm, although probably 3gm or more with an unbroken flan.

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New Edition of Classification System & Index now available

Please note that the document describing the latest {second} revision to my classification system, along the lines discussed and illustrated in a variety of articles between LTT_65 and 73, is now online. I wanted to produce it in 2011, but its late appearance is due to pressure of circumstances. There is also a new updated version of the LTT index.

**The Tokens, Metallic Tickets, Checks and Passes of West Sussex,
by Ron Kerridge and Rob de Ruiter**

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Iron Age Potins, part 1 of 2

Potin is an alloy, one component of which may be guessed at from its final syllable; the other two are copper and, would you guess, lead. In modern terms it translates approximately as pewter. So, what did you use the stuff for, 2000 years ago? To paraphrase Wikipedia's neat explanation: "widely used by the Gauls to make their currencies, mainly in the north. These pewter coins were most often cast, rather than struck".

Actually they were made in Kent as well. Traditions had a habit of crossing the Channel and coinage was one of them; the Cantii, from whom Kent is named, were the first tribe in England to strike coins, probably by virtue of being geographically nearest to continental influence, and in considering how to do it they took their cue from their near neighbours across the water. Coinage as a cultural practice had been spreading North-West from the Marseilles area c.350 BC which had the head of Apollo on one side and a butting bull on the others. By the time such pieces reached Britain everybody had long forgotten whose head it was; if indeed they had ever heard of Apollo, for the Ancient Brits were probably not very well up on Greek gods.

So, we once had an area of Britain which used a lead-based alloy for its primary official coinage, even if it was just a solitary tribe way back in the mists of numismatic time. True, there was silver as well, both in Britain and in other parts of Gaul; but for several decades of the 1st cent BC, there were some areas where potin held sway.

Cantian moneymakers of the 1st cent BC were very much in the same position as many of our crude lead manufacturers more recently; keen, but lacking in skill, experience and technique. They inherited a rule of coinage which said that a round pewter piece with a head on one side and a bull on the other meant money, and hence worth; unquestioningly, they copied the design, without dreaming that a coin could have any other. Moreover, said head and bull had become progressively modified by the time they reached England, or shall we say simplified; so that the artwork, particularly that on the reverse, was no longer of the same calibre as its Mediterranean predecessors 250 years earlier.

The first Cantian potins, c.100 BC, were as per Fig.1; some guy, be he whoever, and the bull still recognisable. However, another two or three decades on and Apollo might be less than flattered by his rendering on Fig.2, which can face to right or left. We seem now to have fallen to rustic amateur craftsman level, rather than skilled artisan; to the standard of engraving and execution which might have been practised by those who, 1500-1800 years later, made the more familiar crude English lead which we know and love.

If you thought the head was bad, look now at the bull! In Fig.2, c.90-75 BC, the line of the bull's back is still there, as is the ground; only one leg survives, and the head is represented by a curve running up and back, as if the bull was looking over his shoulder. By the time we get to Fig.3, c.60-50 BC, the bird in the sky, if that it be, has to be used to orientate the piece so you that know which way up to look at it. The bull has been reduced to a square box, with one pellet which might be the eye.

Such degeneration over so few years seems ridiculous, but now translate it into the 18th and other modern centuries; look at such of your pieces which have the crudest, most unintelligible designs and, reminding yourself of that box in Fig.3, contemplate what earlier subject they might be seeking to imitate!



A Chronological Miscellany, Part 4

To conclude our recent four-part meander through the centuries, a visual display of some relatively unremarkable pieces which nevertheless have their various points. They are all of unknown provenance except where stated. They are scattered throughout the 18th cent, and probably mostly fairly late; a couple might be strays from the 17th or 19th.



Some variants on the cross, to start with; some filler in the angles always adds interest. Fig.1 seems to depict dumb-bells; if this was mediaeval, it could be a ticket for entry to the monastery gym. Any better ideas? Fig.2 is probably a plant rather than a cross, but neither way is it very convincing. Fig.3, a four-legged starfish? pleasingly the superimposed object, whatever it is, is not quite linear. It does at least have a maritime object on the other side to go with it. Figs.4,5 by contrast are just a bit too symmetrical for comfort; the four-wedged Fig.5, a little too clinical, could just be a 19th cent intruder.

Figs.6-8 are what passes for heraldry in the later years; respectively, the good {Fig.6}, the bad {Fig.7} and not so much the indifferent as the might-or-might-not-be {Fig.8}.



The size and texture of Fig.9 suggest that it should belong here, but crossed swords; is it that an 18th cent type? Non-typical large diameters are not unknown in the 15th and 16th century. There is also a hint of "Durham" ring around the outside, a circular band of blank space, and that is an 18th, even 19th cent, feature. Finally, is it really crossed swords? One has a different handle, and may be some other implement; what, I invite you to suggest.



Fig.10 is another of those pieces which reminds you how well edge beading when evolved into radial dashes doubles up as hair, whilst the longevity of the reverse chevron design {Fig.11}, dating originally from the 16th cent, is probably due to its simplicity; one of the easiest to draw or carve, if you don't happen to be any good at drawing or carving. Fig.12 is one of the page's better pieces, a bright and cheery sun; again, all straight lines from the novice engraver.

Figs.13-14, both uniface, are part of a small East Anglian group, the first showing the rather unusual design of two mirror-imaged combs with a line between. Possibly Fig.13 is an elaboration of the double exergue idea which became popular in the 18th cent; certainly, it is of the right period. Fig.14 is intriguing; six clear arms of a regularly-distributed cartwheel, with one opposite pair quite deliberately missing. Note the central hub; is it design, or introduced for convenience when picking up or spinning? From the same batch, Fig.15 looks at first as if it might depict clasped hands, a design known from both Roman and Williamson days; but no, it is just a moulding flaw!

It looks as if there might be a date or serial number, 1577, below; which hardly fits; it is chunky, and very much late 18th/early 19th cent. Its reverse is an elaborate cartwheel, shown at LTT_92, page 2, Fig.10. Could be looking at a numeric counterstrike?

