

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 Please note that the old LTTeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

## The Portchester Hoard of Low Quality Lead

The above title was originally intended to be just its first three words, which would have sounded all very grand; but in order to distinguish it from the better known find which beat me to the name, namely the {probably} half decent group of 12th cent silver coins which were discovered in the same village in 1995, I felt obliged to qualify it. I trust that its new title will be not found too demeaning; for, beneath their humble origins, this group of lead pieces from the Hampshire village of Portchester {maybe now a suburb of Fareham} have an interesting tale to tell.

The word hoard may perhaps be a misnomer, in that I am not sure exactly how widely the findspots of this group of 38 leads were spread; suffice it that they were found, over a period of time, by one detectorist and within a single parish. Most were very poor; I got a chance to examine a dozen and, when I asked to see photos of some more, it transpired that only one of the other twenty-six {Fig.9 below} was up to the task. Anyway, Figs.1-8 are the best of the ones which I did see:



It quickly became obvious that nine of the twelve pieces in the first sample had the initials TC or HA on them, sometimes combined with another pair or each other, and on pointing this out to the finder {which he had not previously realised}, he quickly came back with the news that many of the other pieces were similarly lettered, including the one dated example of Fig.9.

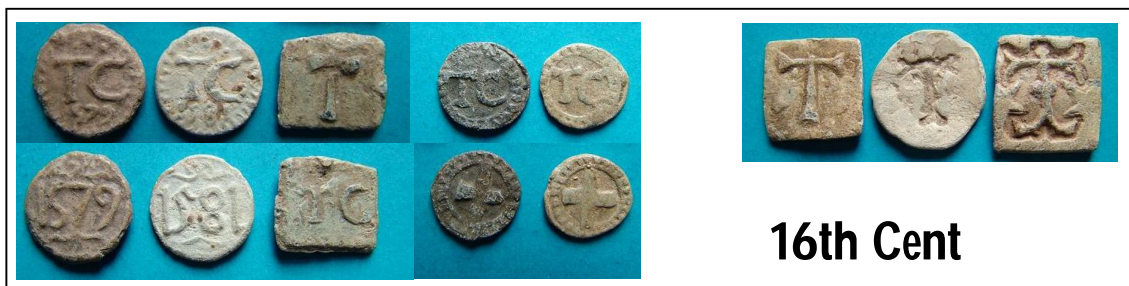
An analysis of the HA/TC examples seen, with size-based estimates based on Pilson's Law, produced the table on the right; although as some of you will have gathered from what I have said recently, and will write about again soon, I am increasingly inclined to think that some of the smaller post-1672 leads should be moved forward several decades into the 18th cent. My guess now is that all this lot are probably now 18th cent, and some of them quite late in it. The dated piece, 1774, may in fact have not been issued much later than most of the others.

obv	rev	mm	date
HA	GR	15	mid-17c
TC	AM	18	mid/late 17c
HA	GT	25	early/mid-18c
TC	IB	16	mid-17c
TC	Uniface	19	late-17c
TC	AH	17	mid-late17c
HA	TC	20	early 18c
TC	Uniface	18	late 17c
TC	Uniface	17	late 17c
TC	(H/M/N)A	18	1774

I have mentioned before the suspicion that HA and TC may stand for House of Alms and Town Coin respectively, with possibly also the hybrid combination TA for town alms occasionally. It is good ,



in the case of this Portchester group, to see a profusion of such pieces, of different designs, from one location. This enhances the possibility that these are communal pieces issued by parish officials such as churchwardens, probably for charitable purposes; and if true, the names of those officials no doubt account for the non-HA/TC initials which appear on some of them. For the record, and for comparison, I show some other pieces, of various provenance {not from Portchester} taken from different periods:



OK, a certain percentage of farmers, tradesmen etc will have had the initials HA, TC or TA; but be assured that the ratio of these initials to others on crude lead is disproportionately higher, by far, than a mere distribution of forenames and surnames could account for. I could also add, of course, further mention of the evidence provided by some of the “lettered quarter” issues, but as they have already been discussed fairly recently on the back page of LTT\_83 I will hold off from doing so.

The presence alongside an obviously parish-related group of a profusion of pieces with initials relating to specific goods donated to the poor, e.g. B for bread or W for wood, would also be interesting, were it to occur; however, single initials do not stand out so well as doubles, and I know of no groups of pieces yet identified as such. B for bread is common on Low Country tokens, so it would certainly not be unreasonable to find it in England.

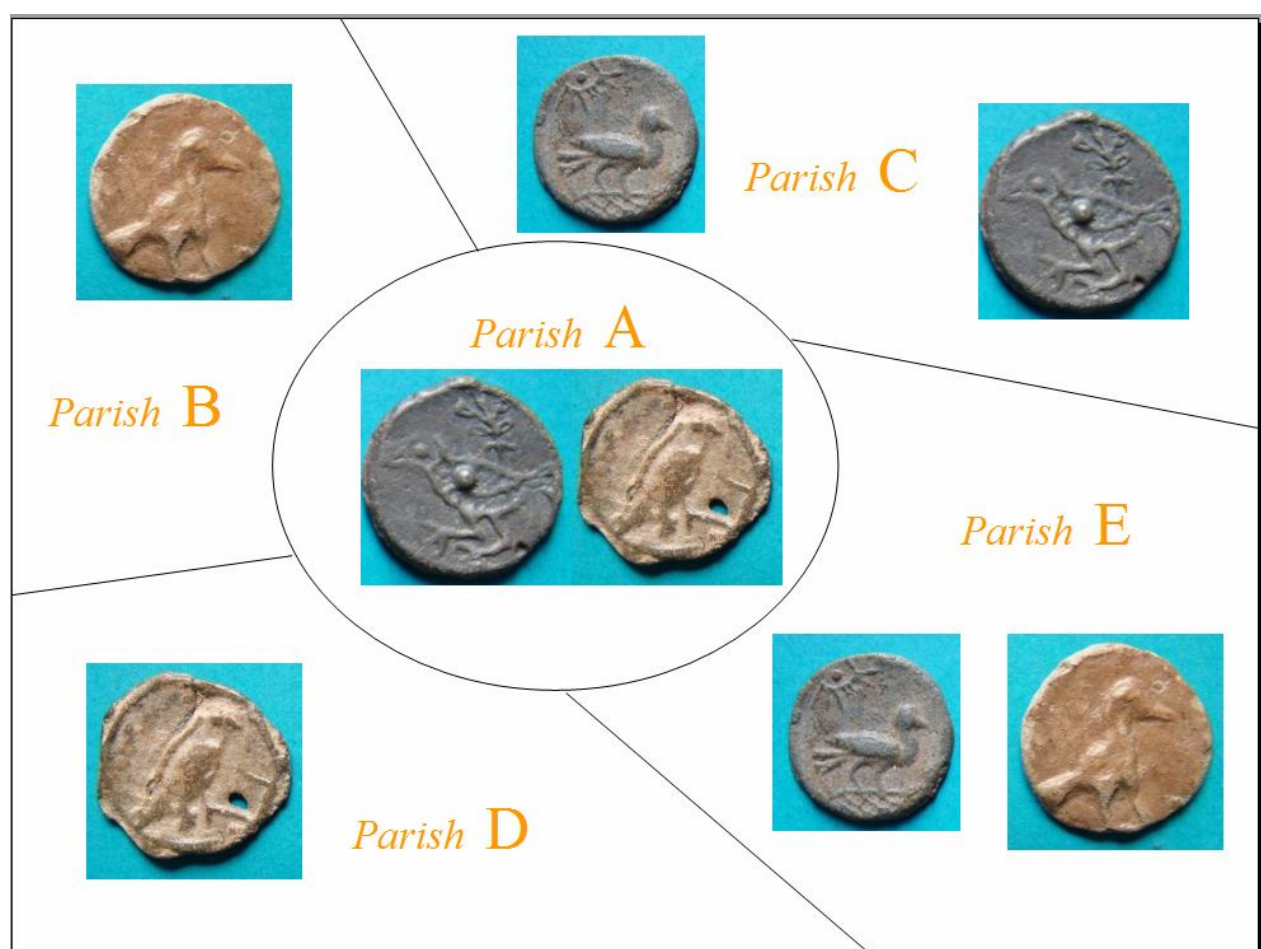


The same need for use of these initials does not arise with the main 17th cent series because, although a significant number of them were undoubtedly issued for the poor as these were, the greater scope for fine granularity description on copper and brass enabled them to say so. A good number of the town pieces do, and quite explicitly. It comes down to the workability of the various metals; lead was more limited.

-:-:-:-:-

Back to Portchester. Notice Fig.8 again, back on page one; a nice head of a bird nestling between all the HAs and TCs. He also was one of the sample dozen, and may be no less rich in meaning. Some of you may recall, back in LTT\_36, that I wrote on the likely use of lead tokens in connection with the Vermin Act; and what more likely to appear on any tokens connected with it than a picture of the species concerned? The appearance of HA/TC tokens alongside those depicting birds and small animals which {rightly or wrongly} might be regarded as vermin is encouraging, and if repeated frequently would support both theories, since both charitable distribution and vermin control would fall under the auspices of the same body, i.e. the parish officials. It is likely also that, if new tokens were required for both purposes simultaneously, one individual's initials might be found on the back of both.

As mentioned in the article just spoken of above, parishes not only changed their assessments of what constituted vermin on a regular basis, but also failed to consult with their neighbours, who were often of a totally different mind; so that, the list of proscribed species often mapped out along the lines illustrated below. It is amusing to contemplate that any of the supposed avian offenders might need to migrate only a very short way, and possibly even return the following year; but laugh not, for the law operated that way once in respect of human beings and counties!



We have come a long way from the original finds at Portchester, but the fact of it presents an intriguing possibility that theoretically one might, one day, given a large enough find of tokens {preferably some dated} and a suitably preserved set of minor parish records, be able to correlate the two. However, on both counts, practically.....dream on!

## Charity Notices

In addition to money raised for charitable purposes by a parish's local rates and levies, some benevolent donors also left money to help augment this. Some gifts were used to build and maintain almshouses, and for their inmates; others were used for the provision of food and other essential supplies. Some of this distribution, who knows, may also have been administered on occasion by means of tokens. References to such bequests are often squirrelled away in wills and parish archives, but it not uncommon to see them remembered with gratitude on the walls of churches, almshouses or other buildings. Readers may like to look out for examples; these two come from a Cambridge city church, but they may be found in rural areas as well.



-----

## Picture Gallery

My thanks to Neville Dowson, who some years ago found Fig.1 about four feet down whilst digging footings for a new building on the site of an old cinema in St. Anne's Well Road, Nottingham. The occasional degeneration of the type 4 lis/trident design into a trio of backward-C/vertical/C, has been commented on before in LTT articles; ultimately, they can all merge together as on this piece. On the obverse, we are probably just looking at W over T, those being the initials of the issuer, although it is interesting to question why they do not appear alongside each other as is more usual. There must be some possibility that the names are of two different people, e.g. if W and T was a business partnership. Also worth considering is the possibility that we are looking not at two initials but at a torch, the W being the flame and the T the handle. Beacons were lit in certain times of crisis and celebration, e.g. to warn the rural public of possible invasion, and it is possible that tokens might have been used as permissions of authority to light or carry these. The piece weighs 4.4gm, is 21.6mm across and about 2.3mm thick.







A couple more continental pieces next, the first from Dutch correspondent Alex Kussendrager; Fig.2, is a chunky seal or badge with a crowned N on one side and a beautiful merchant mark on the other. I've seen the N before; I think it is a town initial, but can't remember which. The piece weighs 45.36 gm and was found in Amsterdam. With that weight and the ring fixing at the top it has all the look of a beggar's badge, but surely you would not have a merchant mark

on one of those? Perhaps the would-be mark is a monogram associated with municipal or parochial administration, the letters standing for some phrase which describes its purpose or function.



Fig.3, from Belgian detectorist Hendrik, is 30mm in diameter, weighs 11.75gm, has a distinctively Byzantine look. An unsightly blob on the reverse, however, reveals that it is definitely is a seal. The latter is probably also true of Fig.4, another of Alex's Dutch finds, and again uniface; however, it is clearly neither Byzantine or Dutch in origin. There is only one Rochdale, in Lancashire, and a fine looking piece it is too, although one feels that it ought to have a diameter greater than 20mm. One which definitely has is Fig.5; going from a piece from Britain found on the continent to vice versa, this 40mm uniface of piece of Mark Jennings is a Thames-side find. He conjectures that it may be of Hanseatic origin, since it comes not too far from the wharves which the ships of those countries would have used. Depicting a double crown and with a well-formed inscription around which states precisely that, I cannot quite make out its last few letters. If "double crown" were a value, I would expect it to be made in something better than lead. It has the look of a 17th cent seal, but neither Figs.4 or 5 have any giveaway protrusions like Fig.3 to support that. Comments welcome, please.



Next up, one of those is-it-a-token, is-it-a-badge pieces {Fig.6} from Lara Maiklem, who invites us to browse her Facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/LondonMudlark> ; as you may deduce from the name, predominantly concerned with Thames foreshore finds. Unfortunately I do not yet have feedback on the size, so I have had to take a guess. The conjoined script form of the letters argues for a latish date, maybe very late 18th cent or early 19th; as also does the presence of a J, which would be I in earlier years. Interestingly the piece is regularly symmetric, with its central object so placed to match that symmetry, which further suggests a badge. What the object actually is, is uncertain; Lara thinks a dolphin, whereas I was thinking in terms of two forearms and crossed hands, but I am not absolutely convinced that either is correct.



Whilst on the subject of Thames finds, herewith this nice little group of 17th cent pieces from Mark Smith which may be {Figs.7-9, magnified 3:2}; provenance not absolutely confirmed, but certainly very typical of what is found there. Fig.7, with lion rampant facing right, is probably c.1630-50, whereas Fig.8 is one of the "quartet of numerals" subseries, known from 1647-1660 and possibly a year or two later, which considerably gives the date exactly. The initial pairs and triad are typical of the better pieces of that period, although the first signs of degeneracy in the reverse of Fig.9 suggests that it is probably just a little later than the other two, maybe c.1665-80.



Fig.7, with lion rampant facing right, is probably c.1630-50, whereas Fig.8 is one of the "quartet of numerals" subseries, known from 1647-1660 and possibly a year or two later, which considerably gives the date exactly. The initial pairs and triad are typical of the better pieces of that period, although the first signs of degeneracy in the reverse of Fig.9 suggests that it is probably just a little later than the other two, maybe c.1665-80.