

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 mail@leadtokens.org.uk Please note that the old david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Readers' Correspondence

A bumper crop this month, and a thank you to all contributors for sharing some most interesting pieces. We will consider them in chronological order, with the first five enlarged 3:2 because of their small flans. First up Fig.1, from Nathalie Buttimore, with an obverse showing one of those fine detailed shields which are a predominant feature of BNJ54 type L, dating it to c.1425-90. However, the reverse, which looks as if it probably depicts a kings head, has the more degenerative artwork of the immediately preceding BNJ53 type H. So, probably sitting on the border of the two types c.1425.



Fig.2, found by Helen Frankish, is part of a small variant subseries which sits at the end of BNJ54 type M, both in the book and chronologically, as such it must be dated c.1490. The reverse, with its border of fine diagonal lines, is very much as the standard type M, but the usual cross and pellets are replaced by a stemmed trefoil; as per BNJ54's no.M.72, which depicts a fox, except that the animal is clearly something different. I'll guess at a talbot, or hunting dog; but like the fox on BNJ54 page 146, it occupies the whole flan. No shading here; this is pictorial depiction trying to free itself from the formal shackles of type M, a foretaste of the 16th and 17th cents to come.

Fig.3, from Giovanni Forlino, is another piece whose two sides do not immediately look to fit in terms of date. The monogram, which will represent the issuer's initials and those of his wife, looks typically late 16th or early 17th cent; however, the ship on the reverse is of the stylised design used originally on late mediaeval gold coin and then redeployed on other things like weights and jetons. It was widely used, and would have lingered for a long time in the public memory. Normally this design is associated with a period somewhat earlier than the date spoken of above, maybe 15th or early 16th cents, but I would be inclined to go along with the later date and assume that the issuer, having decided to use a ship as his shop sign, just chose a style which was familiar to him. Possibly he deliberately showed an older ship rather than a newer one to give the impression that his business was long-established! As is still done with advertising today.

A nice light-coloured piece, Fig.4; of pure lead, and a welcome contrast to the dark pewter of the late mediaeval era. A typical farthing of the early 17th cent, its 14mm diameter is going to favour a date c.1630-50, for once the main Williamson series copper got going, 15mm was about the minimum; against which should be set the fact that it does display the floral décor between the initials which is fairly frequent on both lead and copper, and quite probably indicates that both were the work of a common London manufacturer. The triad of users' initials may be interpreted in the usual way, but the identity of the object(s) on the back is not obvious. The finder, Sean Clarke, thought maybe a beehive or a stack of bread; I somewhat favour bundles of cloth. Bakers and drapers certainly abounded at the time, as now, but the use of the beehive as a symbol of a hive of industry, although common on tokens in the 19th cent, was largely a symbol of the Industrial Revolution. Williamson mentions a few examples of the hive, one of which is a play on the user's surname. The latter's forename begins with "J", not "R", but Sean is just hoping that "R" and "M" were his parents!



Fig.5, again from Giovanni, depicts an example of the date arranged with its four digits in 2x2 array format, a feature which appears regularly on the work of one of the lead farthing manufacturers from 1647-1665; every date in that range is known. The first two pictures show the piece in uncleaned format, from which it will be seen that the obverse

{Fig 5b} is almost undecipherable; however, thanks to Giovanni having done a superb cleaning job {Fig.5c}, the issuer's triad of initials are revealed: C/RA, the R being a little dubious due to the invalidation hole.

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To the 18th cent now, and a return to showing pieces lifesize, rather than magnified. The one which most borrows from an earlier age is Fig.6, also from Giovanni, one of those faces which invites the traditional ring of radial-shading-cum-pseudo-inscription to double up as hair and beard. Such pieces are reasonably common but they are often very cleverly done. There are some other examples on the front page of LTT_115.

By the 17th cent there was an occasional habit of placing the features of the human face on pictures of the sun and moon; so, it is possible that that is what is intended here, and that the issuer's premises have a shop/inn sign something like "The Sun", or similar. The radial dashes thus not only double up as hair but triple up as the sun's rays. As regards date, both the coarseness of the shading and the diameter give the game away. The piece is probably 18th cent, late 17th at least.



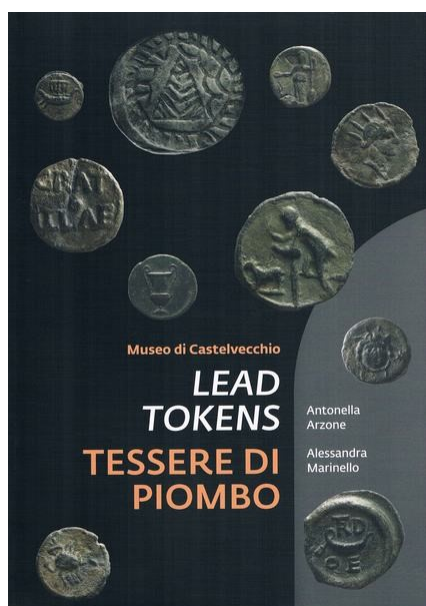
Wayne Perry's Fig.7 is a typical mid-18th cent double exergual town token, if my articles in LTT_76 and LTT_99 are correct, although that date is starting to get a little late for a chevron-barred "A". I initially read it for TTA on the reverse, which might stand for something like Town Token Alms {unusual to have three letters featuring in this way}, but Wayne thinks it might read MA. The latter, representing the initials of the authorising officer, would certainly be more usual. Opinions welcome.

Fig.8a,8b are actually two different pictures of the same uniface token, and serve to show how important lighting can sometimes be. A Thames foreshore find, owner Thomas Donellan at first thought that the central object might be a castle; but whilst Fig.8b may look more attractive, it is Fig.8a which more clearly shows the handle of a beer tankard beneath the crud. With that in mind, it is probably a pub token, most likely a farthing {depending on size}, and AW the initials of the publican. This is another example of the "left-handed" phenomenon discussed at the end of the last LTT issue.

Now to the device below the tankard, concerning which Thomas made a novel suggestion: an eel fork. I've never really thought much about eel-forks, but the idea interests me, because this design of reverse "C"s joined by a shaft has been cropping up for years as part of my classification type 4 without us ever really knowing what it stands for. Type 4, most recently discussed in LTT_145 has three subclasses defined by the lis, trident and Prince of Wales feathers; however, I have never been wholly convinced that they fitted perfectly together. All are very common stock designs. So, if that is an eel-fork, that would imply that the "trident", as I have previously described it, is a device which should relate to maritime and other riverside communities. True, a lot of our tokens do come from such places, but are eel forks really that common? It feels unlikely on the basis of probability, but nevertheless an interesting idea to ponder, and my thanks to Thomas for voicing it.

New Lead Token Books and Websites of Interest

For those of you who are interested in Roman lead, or want to know what distinguishes it from British, I am delighted to report that another excellent book has recently come out, in addition to the two titles by Mathilde Overbeck on the Munich and Milan museum collections which have been around since 1995 and 2001 respectively. The latest arrival, “Lead Tokens”, alias “Tessere di Piombi”, by Antonella Arzone and Alessandra Marinello, has the advantage, moreover, of being bilingual: the main text is in both English and Italian, and the annotations to the illustrations exclusively in English. Like the Overbeck books {see LTT bibliography for details} it is based on a major European museum collection, this time Castellvecchio; and like its predecessors it is both profusely illustrated, to the tune of several hundred pieces, and quite reasonably priced. I would illustrate a page or two, but all three titles are paperbacks and the binding will not comfortably permit full-page scanning; however, I trust that the front covers, illustrated, will give the gist. The Overbeck books are, admittedly, in German; but be not put off, pictures are pictures in anyone’s language, and the sheer number of photographs more than compensates. Plus, there is always Google Translate if you really need it!



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From books to websites now, the picture below is that which greets you when you go in on Paul Callewaert’s “Loden penningen-Méreaux” Facebook site. It is I guess a Belgian/Dutch equivalent of “All Things Lead”, but you will see from the picture that the material of interest is not all Continental: Boy Bishops, Scottish communion tokens and several English stock types are all in evidence. One of the strengths of Paul’s site is that much of the Low Countries material is identified and well annotated, which thus brings access to information which might otherwise remain secreted in obscure books. This, combined with some superb photography, is a rare luxury.



A Tale of Two Wives

The token shown, and kindly sent in by Sean Clarke, was issued by one Michael Parkes of Shadwell Dock in the mid 17th cent and found not too many hundred yards away over a third of a millennium later. It is very similar to the one listed by Williamson in 1889 as Middx.190, except that he quotes the initials as P/ME, whereas this one is P/MM. Was Williamson wrong, one asks? He was pretty reliable on the whole, but was not immune to the odd typo. M and E are two of the commonest female forename initials, so perhaps in the course of dealing with so many initials he got two wives mixed up.

Next stop, Norweb Vol.8 {Thompson & Dickinson, 2011}, where this possibility is quickly dismissed there are two pictures of P/ME {8438/39} followed by another token for R/IA {8444}, who was likewise a landlord/proprietor of the Noah's Ark to which the piece refers. A glance at Michael Dickinson's 1986 catalogue reveals that he did know about both P/ME and P/MM, but that Williamson knew only the first; and indeed Michael has since mentioned that the first known example of P/MM came to light in 1979. So, it would appear that Michael Parkes had two wives, raising the possibility that by finding them it might be possible to date the pieces more accurately.



There are quite a number of examples in the 17th cent of multiple issues by a single person and, in an age when a lot of people died much younger than they do now, partly due to childbirth being so precarious, it is not surprising to find publicans and tradesmen issuing in the names of two or more wives, plus possibly with some solo issues before, afterwards or in between. Before resorting to genealogy, however, a quick look at the mintmarks on the tokens is worthwhile; those little doodlings at 12 o'clock before the inscription starts {stars, flowers and the like}. They are not wholly meaningless; even if not fully fathomed in terms of which maker and time period they represent, it is known that some of them only occur on dated pieces within a certain range. From this we can tell that the Parkes pieces are pre-1662, because they bear the mullet {5-pointed star} of David Ramage, the only firmly-proven maker, whereas R/IA's pieces date to a different period, probably later in the 1660s.

Turning now to the online tools which are so helpful for this type of search nowadays:

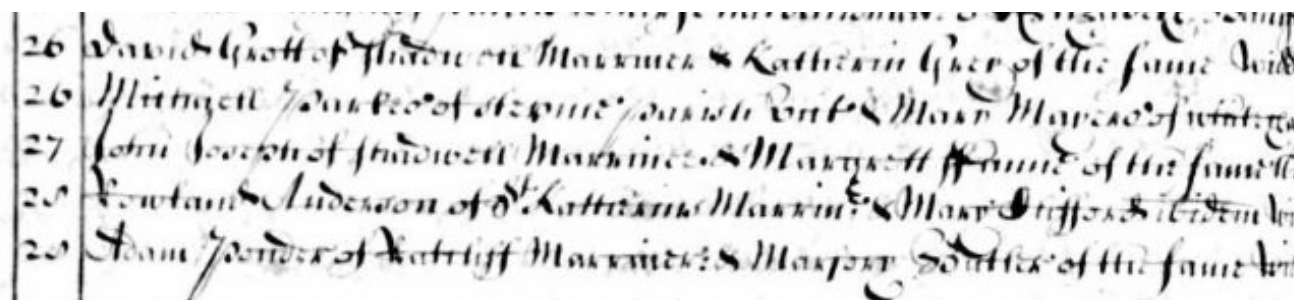
- ⇒ 21 Sept 1658: Elizabeth wife of Michael Parkes, buried at St Dunstan and All Saints, Stepney
- ⇒ 26 April 1659: Michael Parkes of Stepney = Mary Mayes of Whitechapel at St Dunstan and All Saints, Stepney
- ⇒ Michael, son of Michael and Mary, bapt 2.2.1659/60 at St.Mary Whitechapel.
- ⇒ Michael buried 23 Aug 1660 at St.Mary Whitechapel and another 12 Nov 1684 at St Dunstan and All Saints; these look likely to be father and son, but from these bare unqualified entries alone it is not obvious which way round. A third Michael, stated as being an infant son of Michael, was buried at St.Dunstan on 1.6.1683; whilst not conclusive, the father is more likely to be the younger of the two previous Michaels than the elder, implying that the token issuer was the one who died in 1660, his son in 1684 and his grandson in 1683.

All of which, in two adjacent parishes, adds up to the following very probable scenario:

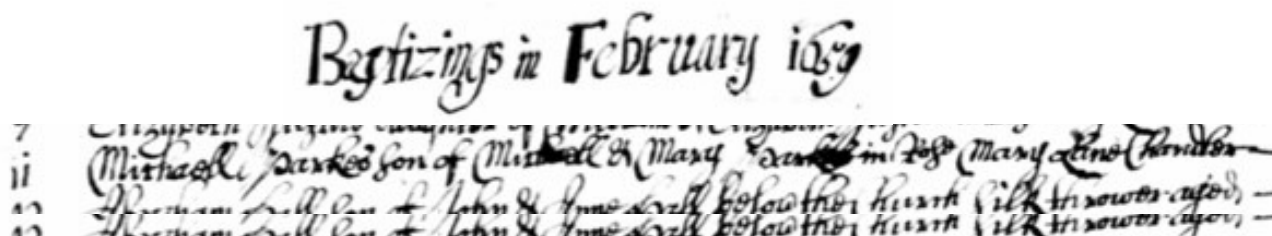
- ⇒ Michael Parkes lost his first wife Elizabeth in Sept 1658, married a second one, Mary in April 1659 and then died himself in August 1660. During that 16 months of his second marriage he had a son, who died at 24 in 1684 having himself recently married and had, and lost, a son.
- ⇒ Middx.190 {P/ME} was issued before 1658.
- ⇒ Middx.190A {P/MM} was issued in 1659, around the time of Michael's second marriage.
- ⇒ Middx.194A {R/IA, again not in Williamson} was issued by a previous or subsequent occupant of the Noah's Ark, probably the latter.

So much for the obverse; however, we are not finished yet. Turning over, we have a picture of the Noah's Ark, a reasonably popular London tavern sign, about which Bryant Lillywhite says in his book on

the subject that it probably derives from the arms of the Shipwright's Company, dating from the early 17th cent, and on which it features to the present day. With our present day mindset regarding painted signs, we instinctively think "pub", and in most parish register entries, such as this one for Michael's second marriage in 1659, there is little to tell us otherwise:



The births and deaths of the younger Michaels, when looked up in the indices alone, look at first to provide all that is necessary for finalising the dating structure, which they do, but as Sean has kindly pointed out, if you have time to look at the originals of some of these peripheral entries, you occasionally pick up the odd bonus:



"Michael, son of Michael & Mary Parkes in Rosemary Lane, Chandler". So, we now know where the Noah's Ark was in Shadwell Dock, and we also know that, contrary to expectation, it was not a pub. It was instead almost certainly a shop for the supplying and equipping of ships, with R/IA, unless he changed its purpose, following Parkes in the same line of business.

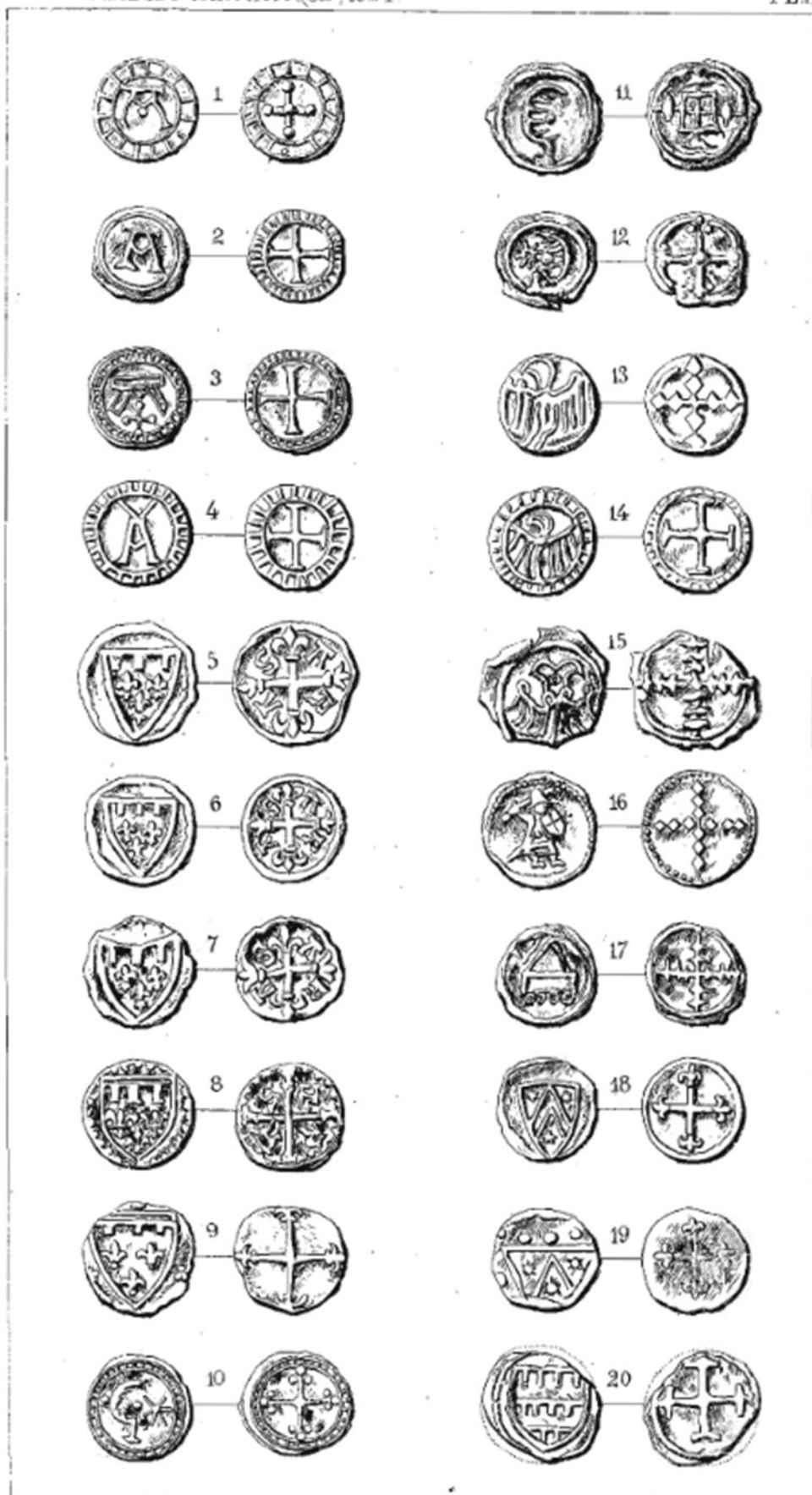
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Some Belgian Equivalent of our 14th and 15th Century Leads

The illustrations on the following two pages come from Vol.40 {1884} of *Revue Belge de Numismatique*, the journal of the main Belgian numismatic Society, and serve to show what lead tokens looked like in that country, and particularly the area around Arras, in the 14th and 15th cents. The diameters are very small, similar to those in this country, and readers may care to compare the designs with British leads of the same period, e.g. BNJ54 type L and adjacent series. The towns and cities of origin are known, and are as follows:

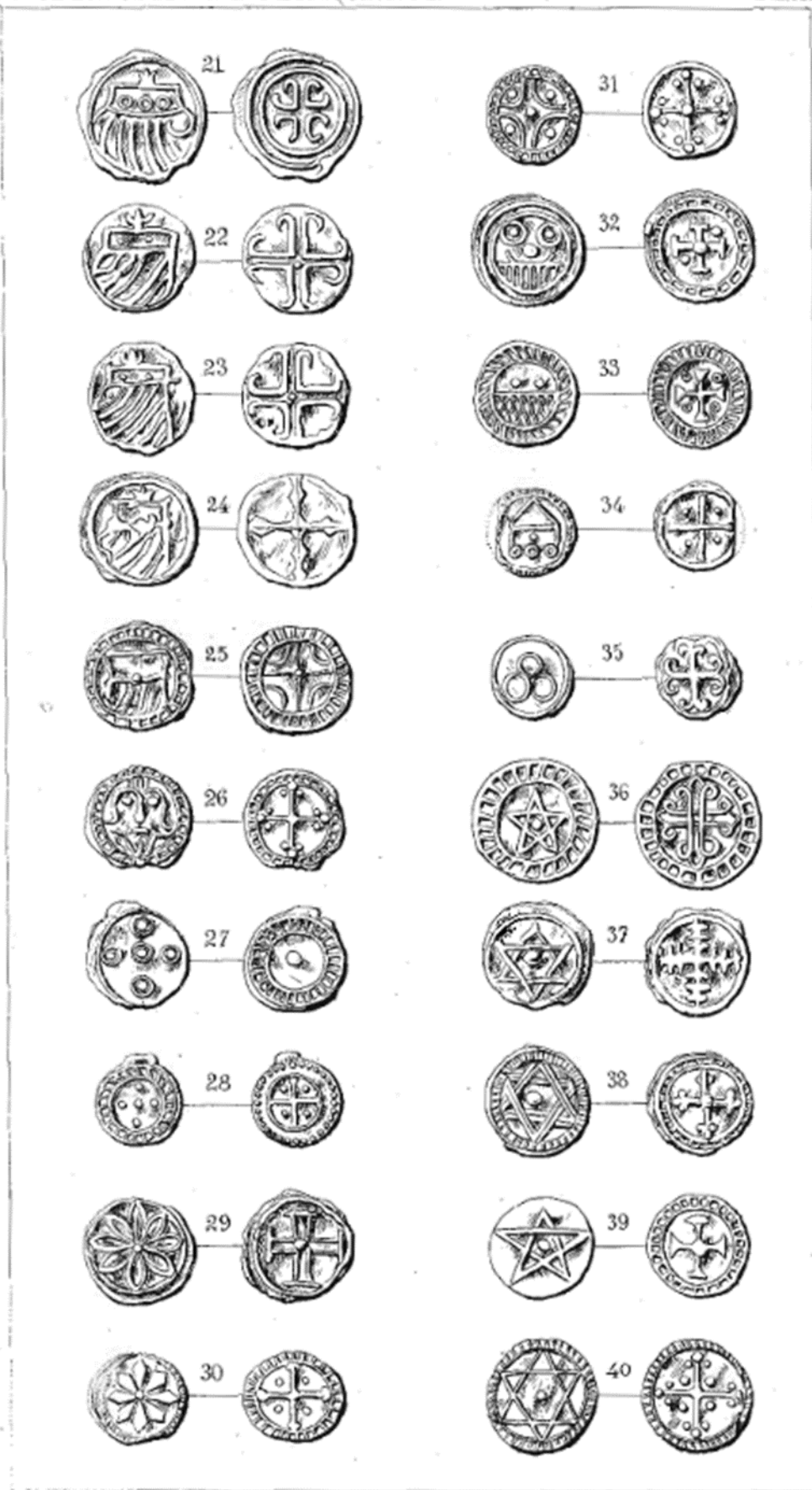
Arras:	1-9	Orchies:	26
Bourlon or Nevers:	10-12	Périgord:	27-28
Brabant:	13-15	Saint-Omer::	29-30
Bruges:	16	Saint-Venant:	31
Cassel:	17	Sens or Provins:	32-33
Courtrai:	18-19	Termonde:	34
Élincourt:	20	Tournai:	35
Gand:	21-25	Ypres and Déols:	36-40

The original version may be viewed online by consulting the society's website and paging down to the appropriate volume in the index: <http://www.numisbel.be/inhoudstafel.htm>



G. Lavolette, sculp.

MÉREAUX D'ARRAS.

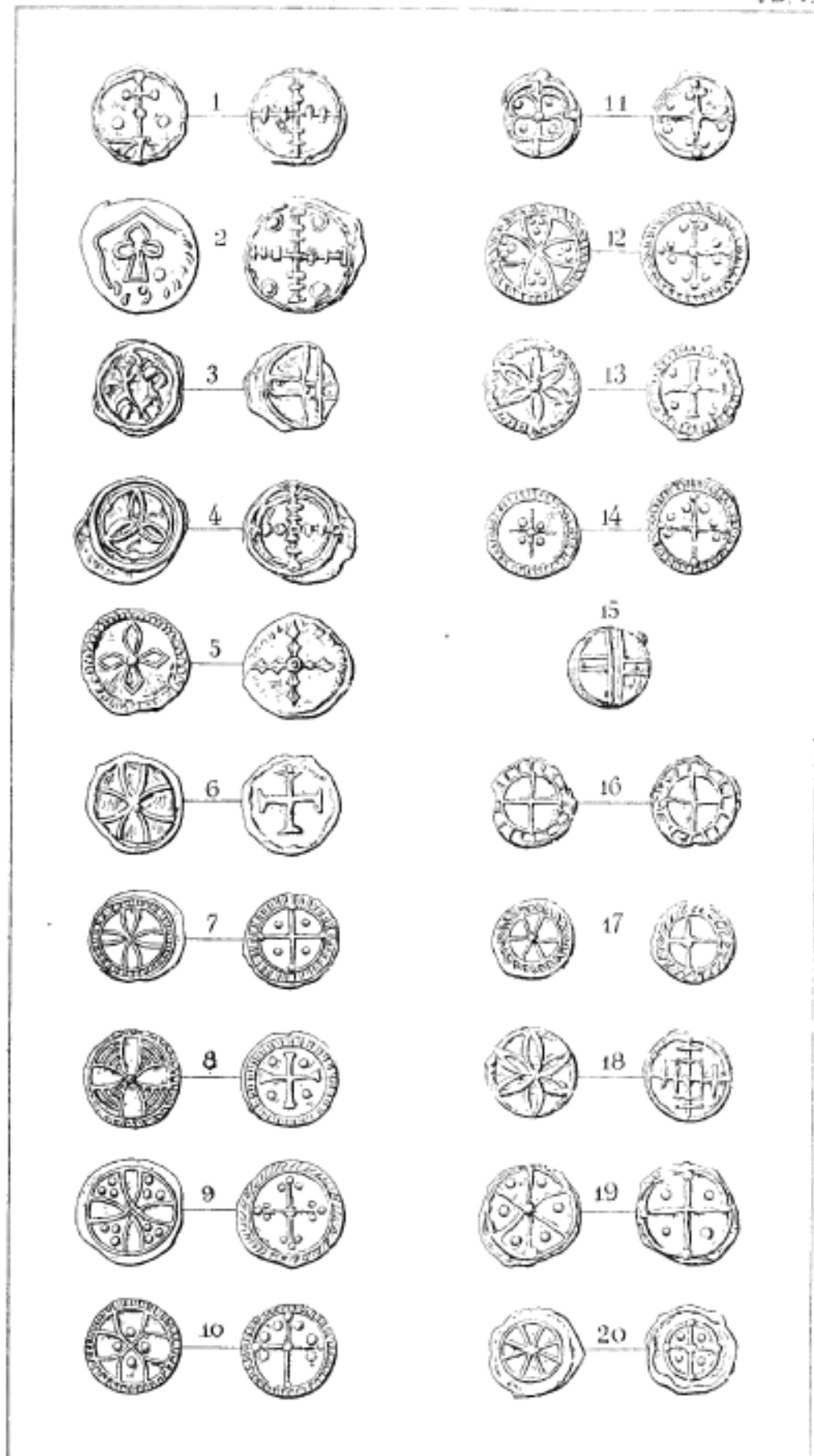


G. Lavallete, scult.

Three years later, Vol.43 of the same journal {1887} followed these forty pieces up with a further thirty-eight, as follows:

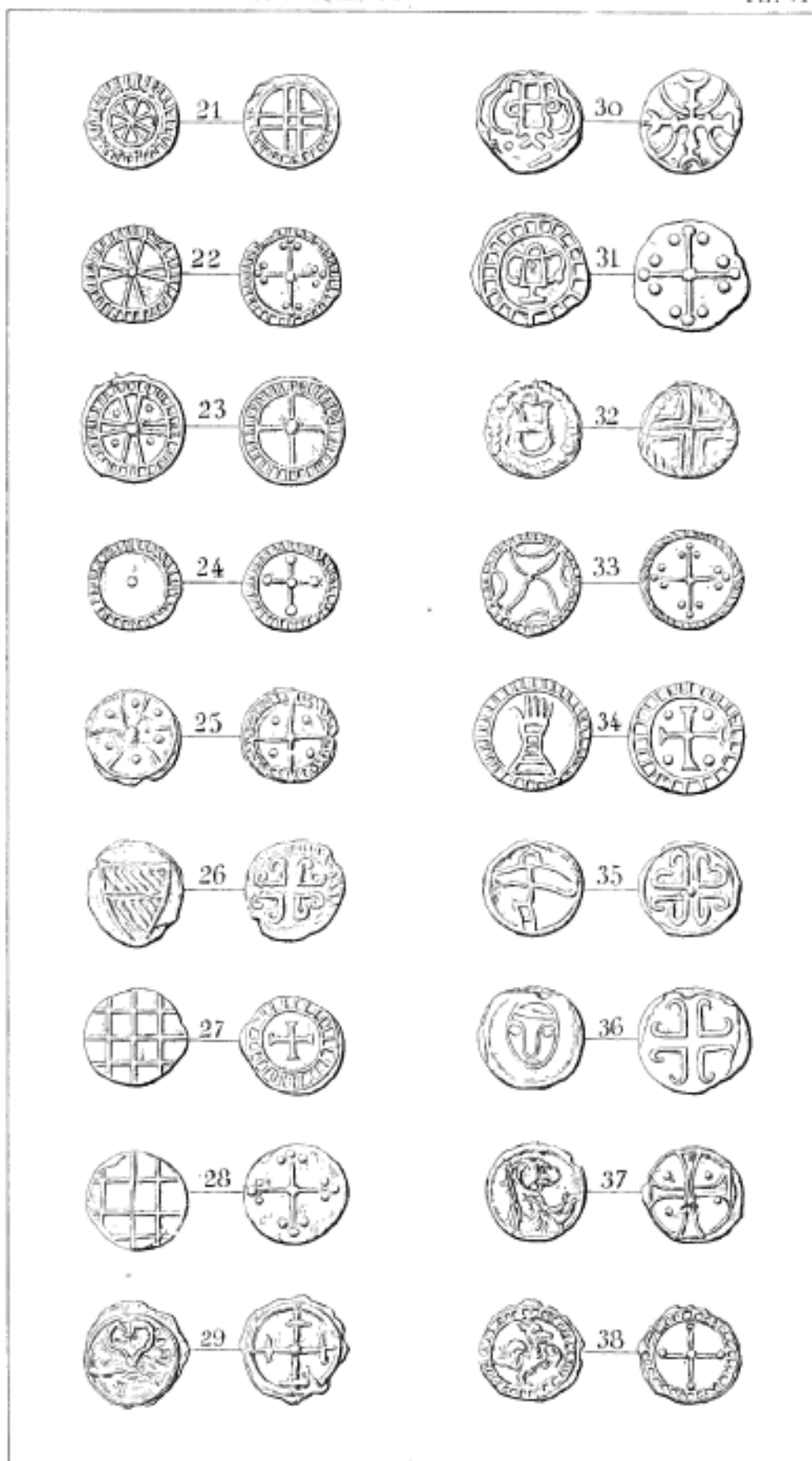
REVUE BELGE DE NUMISMATIQUE, 1887.

PL. V.



G. LAMBERT, del. & sculp.

PETITS MÉREAUX D'ARRAS.



G. Lavolette, del. a scul.

PETITS MÈREUX D'ARRAS.