

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 Please note that the old david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

The Rogers Lead Collection: Auction Part 2, a Preview

In the last snippet overleaf, and at the back of LTT_174, I mentioned the Rogers Collection, a large and unusual accumulation of lead tokens being auctioned this year by Noonans of Mayfair Ltd. Phase 1, in April, mostly covered the post-Reformation material; whilst phase 2, on 30 September 2026, will comprise some 960+ pieces dating largely from the early 13th cent to the mid-16th. This edition of LTT is dedicated to giving a preview of some of the material on offer in part 2. On this page we will show some of the later pieces, c.1500, which do not need to be magnified; then, from page 2, follow with a selection of the earlier items, from the early 13th cent, in approximately chronological order.



Most of the material can be described in terms of our usual reference works, the articles by Mitchiner & Skinner in the British Numismatic Journal {BNJ}, vols.53/54; however the above group, found together in Canterbury in 1987 {Figs.1-6}, are a step beyond. They don't seem to fit any known pattern. Below, a selection of early 16th cent material, some of which are starting to show features of the



NOTES:

1. Hardly any of the pieces discussed in the edition are uniface, other than the type A spangles. I have shown only very few of the reverses, compared to usual, but that is not because they do not exist; rather, because the purpose is to illustrate the wide variety of interesting material, and space is limited, I have eliminated many of the reverses which are more ordinary.
2. With the exception of Fig.7-9 following, the remaining images below are magnified 3:2
3. I acknowledge with thanks Noonans of Mayfair Ltd for allowing me to display their material.

The Rogers Lead Collection: Auction Part 2, a Preview {cont}



First in the chronological sequence are the early 13th cent spangles, BNJ53 type A, with their two-holed connectors for sewing to garment; Figs.1-3 indicate the size range quite nicely, with Fig.1 being about the largest you are likely to encounter. The smallest, as you will see, are tiny. Frequently the connectors break off, as in Fig.4, but all are finely executed.



Never before seen in these pages, because of their extreme rarity, are Figs.5-6; example of BNJ53 type B, a small group of prototypes which date from about the same period when token manufacture was just trying to get going and still feeling its way. Each has an inscription around a crowned bust on the obverse, and the same rather late Anglo-Saxon or Norman-looking cross reverse. Whether the inscription {retrograde in one case} is rubbish is a matter of conjecture, but the presence of the name "GILEVBER" {Gilbert} on one case is a hint that maybe it is not.



Also amongst the prototypes of type B are a small number of pieces {Figs.7-9, shown nearer lifesize} which are readily distinguished by their diameter, 20-22mm, far larger than anything else of this early period. Their choice of obverse subject matter is far nearer that of the spangles and of the later tokens of type C which followed them, whilst the reverses are geometric. Finally, to round off the oddballs, Rogers has a couple of pieces with the obverse inscription AMOR VINCIT OMNIA around a crowned bust, paired with different reverses {Figs.10-11}; BNJ53 classifies these as type E, a subsidiary type of the late 13th cent.



Back to the main series now, BNJ53 type C: the beaded border pictorial tokens, with diameter fairly consistently around the 18mm mark; high quality depictions, which feel contemporary with the type A spangles and were probably produced by the same manufacturer. The obverses of Figs.12-13 are fairly typical of type C, but Figs.13b,15 and 16 {the latter with a simple letter “A” reverse, not shown} are some of the more unusual depictions. Figs 14a and 15a are thought to be a monk and pilgrim respectively, despite the fact that the latter looks reminiscent of a Roman soldier.



BNJ53 type D is more of the same, except a little bit smaller, around 15-16mm; similar subject matter for the most part, and with the quality retained. Like type C they are double-sided, although in the selection below I have for the most part omitted the reverses, which feature mainly crosses and other geometric designs. All the old regulars are present: kings, bishops, pilgrims and a variety of symbolic wildlife, plus a burgeoning array of heraldic shields. I particularly like the pilgrim in Fig.23 sitting by the roadside having lunch; other depictions show him en route, with swagbag over his shoulder.



Next we get to type F, and the transitional stages beyond, which is where, provided you are not too much of a purist or perfectionist, the fun begins. For reasons unknown the quality of artwork and execution declines. I do not know how the various Reverends and Royal Highnesses would have taken to seeing themselves portrayed as Mr. Men, but the later stages of this subseries are definitely ones to tickle the sense of humour.

Fig.28, which depicts a king carrying a sceptre in his mouth like a dog carrying a bone, sets the tone; nevertheless, it is nearer in style to its predecessors than many of those which follow. For those of you who are wondering, Figs.29-31 are travelling pilgrims whilst Figs.34-37 are thought to be monks and Fig.38 an angel, The degeneracy of numismatic wildlife is represented by Figs.32-33, whilst Fig.39 depicts a piece of the human anatomy which makes occasional appearances between now and BNJ54 type M.. I will leave you to conjecture which, and no, I haven't yet found one with a picture of a bishop on the other side.



Shields continue in profusion, and continue later into the more orderly small-flan BNJ54 type L, but meanwhile Fig.40-44 illustrate a variety of differently executed shield designs from types F and G.



At the back end of the pictorial period are some pieces so degenerate that one cannot identify them. The only near-certainty is that such designs are a mutation of one of the traditional ones used previously and, these being of fairly finite number, the challenge is to guess which. Try your hand at Figs.45-48. Is Fig 45 a geometric design, a head/face, or someone's attempt to turn one into the other? Is that central squiggle on Fig.46 a merchant mark, or do we conclude that the object at the side



is so crozier-like as to make him a bishop? I favour the latter; merchant marks had not really got going yet. In the case of Figs.47-48, I have shown the primary side twice, rotated at different angles; does it help? I have no idea which, if either, is right. Note also that Fig.47 is pure lead, rather than pewter, so maybe it is later. Some of the late-mediaeval transitional material is very difficult to date.



Also to be seen are a number of new pictorial subjects, or adaptions of old ones {Figs.49-51}. Fig.50 shows a harp, which one wouldn't expect until maybe c.1500 . So, maybe this, and some of the others, are not quite as early as they look..... Well, possibly.



We will skip the purely geometric designs of type H and move on to BNJ54 type L {Figs.52-65}, the first of the really small 11-12mm types; distinguished by its numerous shields and higher percentage of lead content, which tends to make it easier on the eye. These are probably early commercial issues.



BNJ54 type M is the ecclesiastical equivalent of type L, and approximately running alongside c.1460-90. It is thought to be largely connected with administration of the many large estates owned by the Church, some aspects of which were secular and some religious. This is reflected in the subject matter chosen; letters indicate the initials of services, bells indicate ringing to notify them, whilst others show a wide range of utensils used when performing household and agricultural tasks.

The neatest and most orderly of all the early series, the largest and probably first subissue is as per Fig.66, with fine anti-clockwise diagonal shading and ringed-pellets in the quarters of the crosses on the reverse; thereafter, there is an evolution involving a slow move to clockwise shading, simple pellets rather than ringed ones {Fig.75b} and, finally, a widening of the shading and a coarsening of the design as a whole. Figs.75a and 76a show earlier and later renderings of the giving of alms. Further degenerates continue, probably into the start of the 16th cent; Figs.77-78 are two of the better ones.



For further details, and their own pictures, see <https://www.noonans.co.uk/auctions/calendar/875/>
The Rogers Collection is lots 1-75.