

Foreign Delights



Lest Brit readers are feeling a little left out, I've just heard that a nice medieval pewter piece has recently come to light in Lancashire. There's hope for you northerners yet!

Type 5 & 6: Anchors and Ships

Type 5: Anchors

Again the old dilemma; are we talking of the spiritual anchor of life, or a symbol of the nautical community, or the name of the dockside pub in which they drank? Possibly all three, at different times.

There are different styles of anchor both in real life and on the tokens, but whether the differences in one are reflected on the other is uncertain; those nautically-minded may care to trawl the web and enlighten us. A few features to look out for on this plentiful type:

Most of the token anchors have pointed ends, some distinctly over-emphasised, as in **fig 1**; others have no



points at all, as in **Fig 2**. Most anchor blades are curved, but some are straight, set almost at 45 degrees. (see **figs 3, 4, 5**)

The handle may be a flat crossbar, or have a ring on it. From the ring, if present, a rope is sometimes attached. (**figs 6,7**) Some anchors are slender, others are short and stubby. (**figs 8,9,10**)

Fig.4 has a crown on it, which presumably has a special symbolic meaning, perhaps that it refers to a ship of the realm rather than a merchant vessel. I endeavoured to analyse a piece of engraved 18th century copper with such a crown which appeared on eBay recently, and via the Public Record Office wills indices managed to get it down with reasonable probability to a naval carpenter working on one of His Majesty's ships. It is just possible, but unlikely, that a supposed anchor with plain crossbar, rounded blade and no points could be confused with a cheese cutter, which appears on several tokens of the main 17th cent. series.



The anchor is also seen on a number of other paranumismatic series, which readers may care to look out for. Williamson mentions over a hundred in the 17th cent, and others occur in the 18th and 19th cents series, both official and unofficial. I have even seen one recently on a Co-op token!

Anchors exist both in the dark-metal London series (**figs 3, 6**) and the lighter provincial ones; amongst those which I find particularly interesting are those of Co. Durham, typically along the coast south of Shields, about which I would welcome knowing more. Amongst these are two dated 1845 and 1848 (**figs 7, 11**) , by three or four decades the latest dated pieces of crude lead that I have seen (outside hops and communion tokens) ; they are also the only two anchor pieces on which I have seen any date. From the same area, too, comes the vastly over-stylized. (**fig 5**)



Not a lot to say here beyond what you can see, although if anyone can bring any nautical knowledge to bear it will be very welcome; the style of the ship might just help dating. The very dark London piece (**fig 1**) has a 1760-odd date on the reverse. No provenance for any of the others. **Figs 1,2** seem to be the largest vessels; **fig 3** looks a bit more yacht like, smaller and built for a speed, whilst **fig 4** hits at the old fashioned galleys. **Fig 5** might be a sail, which is why it is illustrated here, but equally it might be an arrowhead or a merchant mark; the countersunk design, which one tends to think of in connection with early Greek coins, is unusual. Type 6 is very much a look and enjoy type, so please send us some more so we can do so!



Celtic Good Luck Tokens?

Most Brit detectorists would assume they had found a lead spindle whorl if one of these items came out of the ground. Closer inspection soon reveals that the central holes are much larger than we see on similar finds in this country. Also note that the piece at

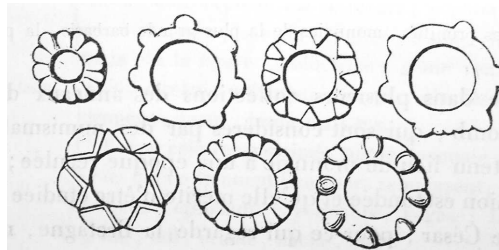


bottom right is made from pewter or potin. In fact they were all found in France on a Celtic votive site where priests may have sold them to worshippers who then threw them into a boggy shrine as votive good luck charms.

Numerous examples have come to light - even a few silver and gold pieces, though the majority seem to have been made from lead and bronze. The average diameter was 5 cm, and researchers have confirmed that each Celtic tribal territory had its own favoured decorative style for its votive offerings. French collectors refer to the pieces as *rouelles*.



Rouelle styles



... with Celtic potin pieces from similar sites.

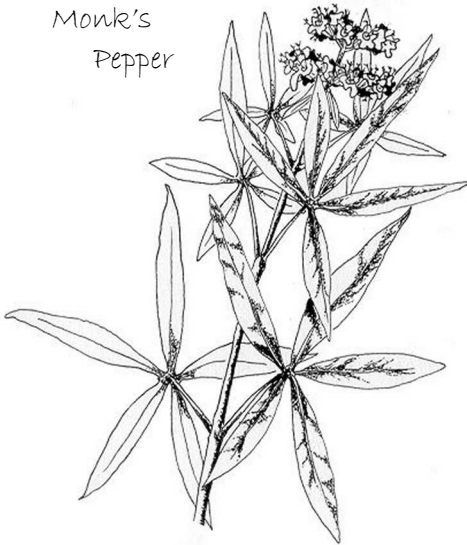
The Birds

Two readers have recently sent me images of lead pieces depicting birds. Nothing surprising in that, since bird motifs are highly prized by most leaden enthusiasts. But neither of the illustrations submitted were of tokens; they showed lead *money* which was used until quite recent times in one or two regions of South East Asia, including Burma. David Powell has examples in his collection (see photo right)

This unusual coinage attracts interest from collectors from many parts of the world, and the Burmese series is thoroughly dealt with in a book titled *The Lead Coins of Pegu and Tenasserim* by M Robinson. Like the coins it is rather pricey - £45 for 88 pages, though it is said to be lavishly illustrated.



Monk's
Pepper



The Petals Puzzle : Other Contenders

We have so far failed to come up with a fully satisfactory answer to the question: is there a deep symbolic meaning behind the petals depicted on so many leaden tokens found across England and parts of France? But readers have highlighted some very interesting possibilities, so I blush not when thrusting the following Google-captured gem into the suggestions box.

Throughout medieval Europe a medicinal herb - *agnus castus* - also had the common names *monk's pepper* and *lilac chaste herb* . It was believed to possess anaphrodisiac properties powerful enough to eliminate male sexual desire, and it was widely used by monks for that very purpose. Did they remind themselves of their chastity vows by depicting on their tokens and tallies leaves similar to those on *agnus castus* ?

Reader Steve Webb probably had leaves of that shape in mind when he asked: "Do you think the religious festival, Palm Sunday, had any connection with the palm-shaped leaves we have called petals?"



Recent Finds Finally a reminder to all non-detectorists that it is almost entirely thanks to the dedication of metal detectorists that we continue to see leaden delights similar to those shown here. ASK SANTA FOR A DETECTOR THIS CHRISTMAS. Half the season still remains !

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