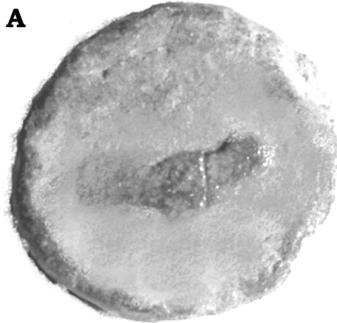


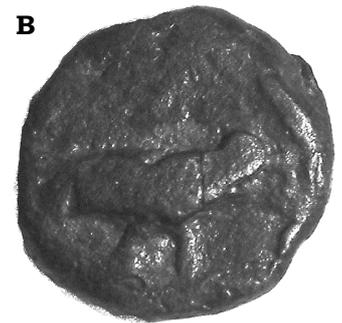
A free newsletter to all who share our interest in these fascinating and often enigmatic pieces. Please send the editor at least one 300 dpi JPEG scan, or a sharply focused photo print, of any interesting leaden token or tally in your collection. Send images as email attachments to LTFeditor@aol.com. See page 4 for information on back issues, etc.

Have YOU any tips on cleaning leaden tokens?

It may come as a surprise to some paranumismatists that metal detectorists frequently clean their finds. Treatments range from gentle dips in warm soapy water ... via robust sessions in electrolysis baths ... to harsh chemical attacks on the most severe types of corrosion. Such methods are necessary on finds that have spent hundreds - in a few cases thousands - of years buried in fertilizer-rich arable soil or polluted alluvial mud, picking up concretions of limescale, metal oxides, sulphides, carbonates and other coatings that soon turn a coin into a *crud*.



Copper, bronze and silver coins - the very metals most commonly sought and found by detectorists - are the everyday fare of these coin cleaners. They - we, because I'm a paid up member of the fraternity - know most of what's worth knowing about cleaning such finds in ways that will remove dirt and adhesions without greatly damaging the desirable patina that usually certifies a coin's genuine age and authenticity. But



leaden tokens and tallies offer fresh challenges, primarily because we have only recently begun to take greater interest in them as finds and potentially collectable items.

Please have a quick look at four pieces on David Powell's pages this month - figs. 1, 2, 3 and 8 in his Type 11 Tavern Utensils. I doubt if any detectorist or collector would attempt to "clean" the first three pieces. That lovely creamy encrustation of (probably) lead carbonate is not obscuring important details in the designs, and its very presence is a comforting confirmation that the pieces are not recently cast products from a forger's moulds. A forger *could* put a layer of calcium carbonate on a newly cast piece by leaving it exposed to evaporating hard water for about a month; but the result would be a very thin coating unlikely to fool an experienced collector.

The piece in fig. 8 seems to have rather too much corrosion, some obscuring parts of the pot; more possibly hiding important information in the area beneath the pot. However, as David Powell makes clear, this is a rare piece; any reader with a similar token in his/her collection should think very carefully before subjecting it to the electrolysis process I'm about to describe.



The piece selected for this demo (fig. A) was thought to be a Type 18 (Bird) piece when it came from the ground, but was too heavily encrusted with lead carbonate to make out the creature's complete body. I wondered, did it have a beak ... claws ... longer tail feathers? To find out I'd have to remove the encrustation, either by attacking it mechanically or with the aid of my electrolysis cleaning kit shown above. The component parts are: a plastic tray (bought at Ikea for £1) used in case of spillages; a 12v battery charger with clips bought from a Halfords store; a pair of safety goggles bought at B&Q - essential protection when working with liquid chemicals; a stiff bristle brush bought at a Poundstretcher shop (DO NOT USE BRASS BRISTLE BRUSHES ON LEAD!); bicarbonate of soda, bought at Tesco. The small round jar holds top-up water. The container for the liquid electrolyte is a ceramic butter dish that lost its lid, bought for 10p from a charity shop. A stainless steel teaspoon (out of sight in the photo) was also bought at a charity shop for 10p. I've bought several of these for use as measures, etc.)

(Continued on p6>>>)

David Powell On His Classification System

Type 10: Heads and Busts

The formal definition of type 10 is as follows:

Heads or busts {type 10}: Most of these are pseudo-coin designs which mimic the obverses of major series, e.g. Edward I pennies, although that is not invariably so. Pieces which mimic Cantian Celtic, Roman or other ancients are also occasionally seen. Whole bodies, rather than heads, are type 32, whilst other isolated body parts, e.g. hands or legs, go in type 27.

The pieces which make up type 10 are many and varied, both in style and date. They are also, like type 19 {animals}, not infrequently humorous. In other words, this is another “look and enjoy” type.



The examples shown here are a cross-section. Starting chronologically, figs. 1, 2 are Roman, both with flying birds, probably eagles, on the back; both have an East Anglian provenance, which could well mean Colchester. Next in sequence is fig. 3, a very conservative 13th/14th cent London piece depicting a typical Edwardian head; on the reverse of that, two crossed implements, probably not swords, since one has a ring handle and the other no handle at all. In other words, a decided departure from the usual cross and pellets reverse with which such heads are associated.



Moving on, an interesting piece {fig. 4} on which a head based on Charles II or William III is accompanied by a “B” mintmark in a style reminiscent of the 1st/2nd cent tetradrachms of Vologases III and IV of Parthia (fig 4b). Am I being over-imaginative, or does coin design really transcend time to that extent? It seems to happen more than one would expect. Fig. 5 hints at a similar date from its hairstyle, although the construction is more akin to the Roman pieces; however, an attractive hunting dog reverse supports the late 17th cent theory, give or take a bit. With similar flanking initials is the judge on fig 6, although the broken clasp gives away that that is more likely a medallion or pass than a unit of currency.



George II on fig 7 is the most easily dated; these pieces come from a small area on the Isle Of Oxney, on Romney Marsh, and always have a reverse as per fig 8. They are just larger than farthing size, although not much. Cruder and more dumpy is the piece modelled on George I (fig.9); it has “KB” plus a date in the 1750s on the reverse, which mean that it derives from after the end of the reign.

We now start coming to the joke pieces, although fig. 10 is probably the attempt of an honest amateur artist; the reverse is a highly conservative 6-petal type 1. Likewise fig. 11, which just has the initials "GM" on the back. But the remaining three! Next in date is fig.12. It has four holes; is it a button? An ornament? The figure is vaguely nautical, the reverse best described as an irregular type 7 grid. Certain elements of the style suggest an older date, but I am inclined to think that they may be the work of Billy and Charlie, two celebrated 19th cent forgers of antiquities whose activities you may read about on the Net {try the site of Southwark's Cuming Museum}. I have heard a rumour that B and C aged their products artificially by feeding them to a goat, and then recovering them afterwards. Yes, really; I'm not just saying that because one has come up on eBay and I want to put off rival bidders....



Of more modern appearance, possibly only because their designer didn't possess a goat, are the two knaves of hearts and clubs (figs. 13,14); perhaps diamonds and spades exist as well? These must be gaming pieces, perhaps for whist or the like. They are in white metal, so perhaps they date from around the 1830-1870 period when that metal was popular for hop and communion tokens.



Type 11: Tavern utensils

A relatively scarce type, but one of my favourites. Bottles, jugs, wine glasses etc; take it that these are the pub tokens from before the modern 19th cent brass ones came into being. They occur in both dark and light metal; the Cuming Museum has several nice London examples {ref.no 1757-62}. Most exhibit some sort of flagon and glass, although the shape of these can be quite varied (figs.1,2). In exceptional cases {Cuming 1758} it can be almost possible to mistake the drinking vessels for initials.



In similar vein, fig. 3 appears to depict a wine glass and cheese cover, since the item on the right has no base and appears not to be designed for drinking out of. Complete words are unusual on crude lead, and this piece would appear to have different origins. On the back is the issuer's name and a date, 1778, which I shall show you when we reach type 29. The piece is suspected of being a Scottish grocer's or tavern token, possibly Glasgow, and my vendor was nervous that he might have been inadvertently selling me a communion token; had he decided it was, he almost certainly wouldn't have let me have it.

Public houses and communion services being at the opposite ends of the social rainbow, you wouldn't think that the tokens of the two could get confused.... Would you? Not usually, maybe; communion tokens usually have some verbal embellishment: a text, the name of the church or the minister. In the 19th cent they were predominantly white metal (figs. 4,5), which pub checks were not, but in the 18th cent both were lead. Figs 6,7 show two examples from Dalrymple {Ayr} and Dennino {Fife}, and very attractive they are too. You wouldn't expect "Luke 22:20" on a pub check, but the second could certainly pass. I was told a nice story a while back about a piece of unknown origin which had long been considered to be a communion token..... until someone found a specimen with a picture of pipe and tobacco engraved on the back, whereupon opinion immediately changed!



Fig 8 depicts a good old pint of ale, for those of us that who prefer that to wine; which, you would think, that most lead token users, being fairly humble folk, were more accustomed to. Yet, this is the only piece I have seen so far which shows it. Was the engraver left-handed, or dyslexic? That is assuming that I shouldn't turn it round 90 degrees and see a rodent waving a long tail.



Finally, if the token depicts food and drink being consumed, rather than merely being available, that makes it a type 10 or 32 depending how much of the customer you can see. Mediaeval pilgrim's hostelries used pewter tokens, the forerunner of crude lead, and we shall see examples of their refreshment tokens when I come to type 32.

Some of the walkers amongst you may have visited Malham, a well-known beauty spot in the Yorkshire Dales. There, above the entrance to one of the pubs, is a stone dated 1723 with, below the owner's initials, a glass not dissimilar to those found on type 11. (Fig. 9) The date is probably typical of that when type 11s were being issued.

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2006
Happy New Year to ALL READERS

Ever thought of joining the Token Corresponding Society?

Lead tokens are just one of many forms of paranumismatica; that is, fringe coinages and coinage-like objects which many serious students of coin history feel unworthy of attention, and which many enthusiasts of the main series feel relatively unattractive. Paranumismatists, however, revel in these unloved series and find in them niches of activity for themselves; areas of virgin research which they can make their own, which the classicists have not already published to death. You will find them ferreting around on the Net and in county record offices, trying to tease the secrets out of pieces of very humble origin, and getting a lot of pleasure from doing so. There are many different disciplines within paranumismatics; some quite popular, others the province of just a handful of devotees. The following are just a few categories, and that is without either crude lead or the more-published 17th/18th/19th token series with which many of us may already be familiar.

Bonus checks ... Farming ... Pub check ... Brothel tokens ... Forgeries ... Spade guineas ... Calendar medals ... Imitation guineas ... Tea checks ... Commemorative ... Machine tokens ... Telephone tokens ... Communion tokens ... Market checks ... Toy money ... Co-op tokens ... Mining ... Transport tokens ... Entertainment ... Overstrikes ... Trial pieces ... Erasions ... Passes ... Whist counters

If you too like delving behind the origins of your pieces you may be interested to know that there is a **Token Corresponding Society**, which exists specifically to bring paranumismatists together. They have a quarterly bulletin, in which you can share your research information or invite the help of others; and, highlight of the year, an annual weekend conference which throws together some 80-100 enthusiasts in a hotel somewhere and lets the camaraderie flow; a wonderful opportunity to extend your own knowledge, pick up useful leads and perhaps even allow yourself to be drawn into new areas where you hadn't even ventured. There isn't a formal membership fee as such, just a bulletin subscription to cover the cost of production. We are a friendly bunch; anyone interested, please contact the secretary, David Young, on davidyoungco@yahoo.co.uk, for further details; not that there is a lot more to say!

Just to whet your appetite, a few pictures of the sort of junk that we get interested in....



METHOD: With the mains plug OFF, I used the BLACK clip to hold the token against the side of the container as shown. A stainless steel teaspoon was similarly held by the RED clip. I then poured warm water into the container until it almost covered the token and the spoon, whilst ensuring that neither clip touched the water. This precaution prevented the metal from which the clips are made taking part in the electrolysis process. Next, I sprinkled a level teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda into the warm water. Finally, I adjusted the liquid level using water from the small pot to ensure that as much as possible of the token was submerged. With all ready, I switched on the power supply.

Within a few seconds tiny bubbles (mainly hydrogen) began to form along the length of the stainless steel spoon. Perhaps a minute later bubbles also began to rise from the token. Because the corrosion was quite thick I allowed the current to flow for twenty minutes. Then I switched off, loosened the black clip's grip on the token and turned the piece through 90 degrees before gripping it once again and submerging the part that had previously remained dry. I then turned the power on again for a further five minutes before switching off and recovering the token.

A hard scrub under running water with the stiff-bristle brush rapidly removed all traces of corrosion from one face of the token. I then repeated the entire process, this time turning the uncleaned face towards the red clip.

The result is shown in fig.B. Hardly more aesthetically pleasing without the corrosion, you might say; but at least I've demonstrated that lead carbonate can be removed without the need to stab and poke with sharp tools. The creature now looks more canine than avian, though one viewer thought she saw a left-facing bird!



Fig. C shows a piece which, from its provenance, might be a Roman tessera. Again much of the designs was obscured by corrosion. I subjected it to the treatment described above, reducing the time to five minutes because the piece is small (12 mm) and the corrosion layer rather thin. The result (fig.D) revealed a quadruped which might be a bear or a sheep. But much more interesting are the Roman numerals now exposed above the animal's back. The first is most certainly an X, with possibly a V alongside. To fully appreciate their presence I have to turn the piece slightly while holding it up to the light. Nevertheless, the numbering adds weight to the argument that it's a tessera.

This brief demo not only introduces electrolysis cleaning to those who have yet to try it; it also throws out an invitation for more experienced readers to tell us about their cleaning and renovating methods for leaden pieces. I'm familiar with the use of sodium hydroxide (caustic soda) rather than sodium bicarbonate in the electrolyte as a means of reducing much of the corrosion back to lead. Caustic soda is sold by hardware stores as a drain cleaner, but because it can be dangerous if handled incorrectly I want to stress in bold capitals:

**ALL CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS
GIVEN ON THESE PAGES ARE
FOR USE BY RESPONSIBLE
ADULTS.**

My advice is: stick with us on a slow learning curve. Try the bicarb of soda route and PLEASE take photographs (before/after) for submission to these pages. I'd also like to include all *old wives tales* about token/coin cleaning - similar to the "feed them to a goat" mentioned by David Powell on page three. That is well documented as a method used by 18th century forgers of English coppers. I wonder if inserting a corroded token into the orifice at the other end of the beast, then awaiting its regurgitation up front, would remove lead carbonate?

Calling All eBayers

Any reader who visits eBay regularly will know that frequent auctions of UNCLEANNED ROMAN COINS take place on the Net. If you've won them and tried your hand at cleaning ancients, please look out for a forthcoming article on that very topic which I hope will appear in *Treasure Hunting* magazine shortly.