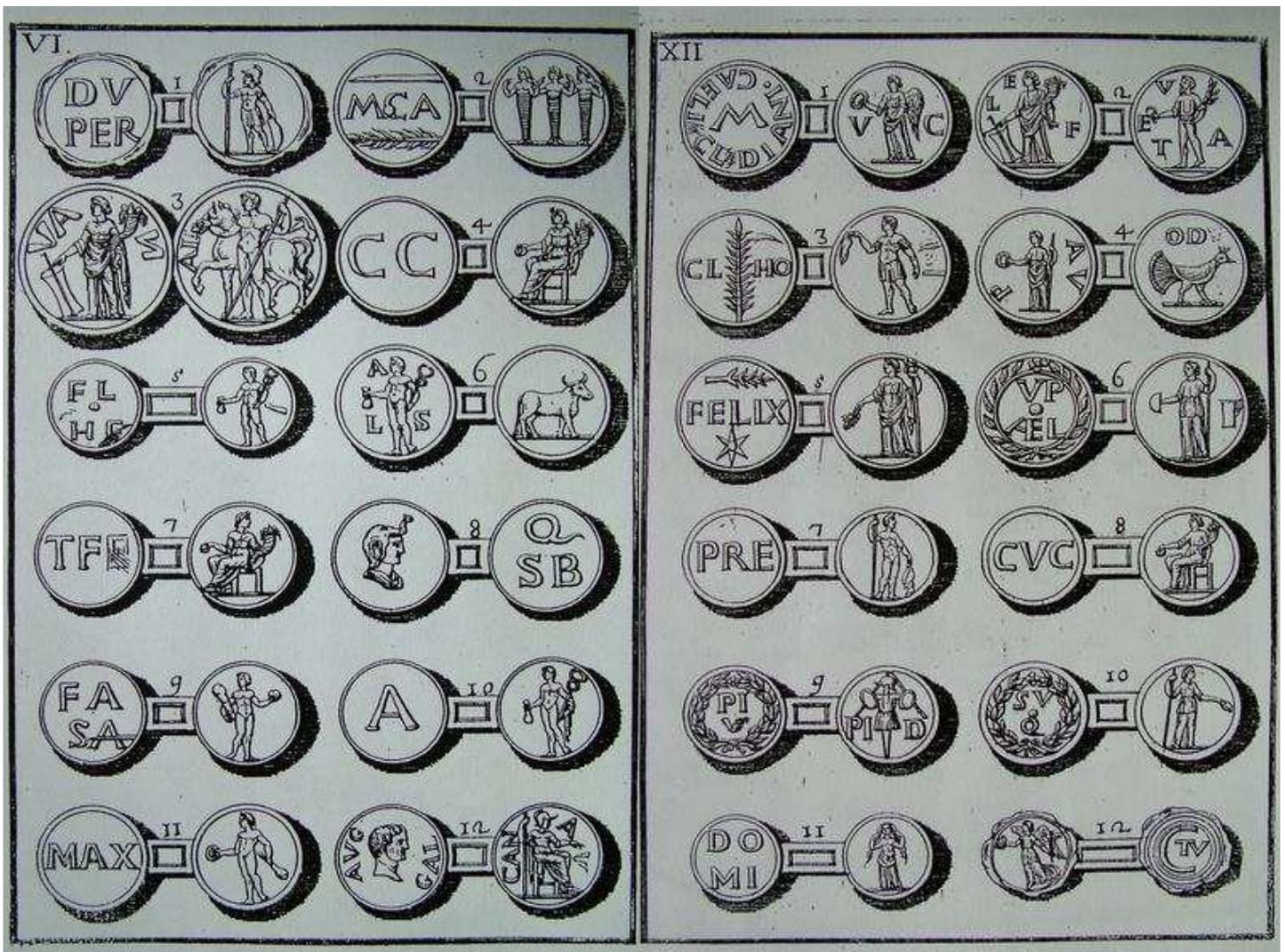


Editor: David Powell

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 LTJEditor@aol.com. See page 4 for information on back issues, etc.

A Taste of Tesserae: Introducing you to Francisco Ficorini

We are now near the end of our trip through my classification system; only types 28 and 32 remain, both of which will appear in the next couple of months. Type 32, full people as opposed to heads, busts or other individual body parts, is quite scarce in the English series; however, on Roman tesserae, it is one of the most common types of all. I have previously announced that the next few editions will contain quite a bit on tesserae, as the leads of the ancient period are commonly known, and thus it seems fitting to prefix the next issue's type 32 article with two of Francisco Ficorini's many pages of excellent line drawings. All bar one have at least one side which is type 32.



Never heard of Mr.Ficorini? Not surprising, for “De Plumbeis Antiquorum Numismatibus” was published in Rome in 1750 in, wait for it, Latin. There are 35 pages of these Roman lead pictures, plus another 25 of mixed ancients, mainly Byzantine. If such pieces were used in the Roman heartland, perhaps they were also used when the Romans came over here.....

.....Just to whet your appetite, more next month!

Readers' Letters

Some most interesting contributions this month, and thank you all. Firstly, the latest on that piece of Nigel Tucker's which he found in Devon and which Alex Kussendrager reported {LTT_18, Sept 2006} as relating to the locks on the waterway system at Spaarndam, between Haarlem and Amsterdam. Nigel has done a bit of research regarding the findspot and come up with the following:



Apparently the land near Ebford, in the area of the parish in which the token was found, was owned by a **Robert Venn** who was a wealthy serge maker and merchant who had offices in Holland, possibly in Rotterdam, as three of the nearby fields are named "Great, middle and little Rotterdam". These fields were named in a deed of 1676, so it seems the Dutch connection was long-standing. He built Ebford manor and other fine houses in the area and he also bought into a number of ships which presumably traded from Topsham nearby. He had an uncle, also called Robert, who died in Holland. In 1711 his sister Elizabeth married Matthew Lee, another wealthy merchant, and on Robert's death he bequeathed the Woodbury land to Elizabeth and Matthew. They had a son, also called Matthew and there is a note in the son's diary of a visit he made to Holland on his father's behalf. He mentions attending the English Presbyterian church in Amsterdam in 1734."

That combination of two correspondents' efforts to resolve a most unlikely link, involving places in two different countries, must encourage us all. Alex has also kindly sent us the pictures on the right, but I will let him explain the delights of bakenloodjes later. Suffice it for the moment that they relate to a variety of taxes on shipping operating on the Netherlands' extensive waterways. Which begs the question; did anyone in Britain ever use tokens for tax purposes? It has been done in other places at comparatively recent date, e.g. the state-issued aluminium pieces of the USA, which are presumably early 20th century.



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John Bromley has kindly replied to my request for identification about the various birds depicted in the type 18 article {LTT_13, Apr 2006}. He thinks that several of them depict doves, particularly Figs.4-6, and comments:

"The dove is a common symbol of the Church being used to denote peace. Could these have links to monasteries and the like – it would be interesting to know where the majority are found in relation to ecclesiastical sites. Likewise, most large houses kept dove cotes and these were a prized building."

Fig.3 is clearly a swan, concerning which John remarks:

"Swans are owned by the Crown so have links to royalty. Could these have been used by royalty on their estates to ensure some sort of anonymity?."

The appearance of hens, geese and the like which provided either direct or indirect edible produce might possibly indicate some sort of farmer's or market token, but as to small birds and waders..! Perhaps they ate a greater variety of bird in those days; or perhaps there is no reason at all, and they are just issuers' choice of artwork. Some useful clues here, nevertheless, as to what type of establishment to go looking for in the history of your neighbourhood if you find pieces with certain birds depicted.

Classification System: Types 28 and 32 still to come shortly, but are held over this month because of the amount of correspondence received and number of new pieces reported.

CS Corner: Regional Varieties

Early Communion tokens have one advantage over much other crude lead in that we often know more about (i) where they came from and (ii) when they were minted. With this in mind, I illustrate several of the main families of Communion tokens whose features are strongly associated with certain parts of Scotland, in the hope that it may inspire some of you to watch out for similar patterns of commonality in our other crude lead series down south. There are other regional styles, which I may illustrate later.

Glaswegian

The central circle and/or the flower in the corner are the distinguishing features of this largest group, which appears frequently not only in Glasgow but most other counties to the south-west. The theme continues to evolve in the mid 19th century when white metal takes over from purer lead.



Aberdeenshire Square

Strong bold squares are the frequent style of Aberdeenshire and adjacent counties.



Leith Oval

Upright ovals and diamonds are, in Scotland, usually from Edinburgh, Leith or Perth.



Fife Small Rectangle

Usually very light-coloured.



This Month's Gallery

Thanks to Bill Swainston for reporting Fig.1 {diameter 25mm}, an interesting piece of indeterminate design found in N.Yorks, in a field which has previously yielded both Roman and medieval artefacts and coins. Not too far away, another reader has found Fig.2



{diameter 26mm} in a light, sandy river bank in York itself. Not an area which many people have previously written in from; do you have many leads up there? These two both have plenty of individual character. From elsewhere Fig.3, a rather exotic anchor with the widest claws that I have yet seen; pleasantly flanked by a couple of initials, not all that usual on an anchor piece. Fig.4, a type 14 with a difference: wedges instead of pellets. Simple, but a most pleasing variety.

Request for Information, please....

On the right you will see a couple of brass jetons, diameter 27mm, depicting someone who is either a schoolmaster or an accounts clerk working at a table; on the back in each case the alphabet, with a few letters missing {not always the same ones}, and sometimes a date below. Just wondering whether anyone has seen pieces resembling these in lead? I ask because I know of the existence of alphabetic horn-books such as the one shown to me by Ted Fletcher {below}, which seems to have a similar theme.

The date is often but not always 1553, which may be spurious; it is possible that that was the first date of issue, and was retained without update as part of the design {as has been done with some modern world coinage during the 20th century}. I am informed by reader Phil Mernick that he knew of someone now dead who had a theory that the actual date could be worked out from the number and position of the counters on the table, but unfortunately he did not write it down and bequeath it to posterity. If any one has any ideas on the subject, or would care to hazard a guess as to whether the pieces relate to business or education, or whether they are English or Continental, please mail in; photographs of any pieces, whether in lead, brass or copper, would be gratefully appreciated.



Now available on the LTT Website: Lead Token Bibliography.

Some while ago an index was added to the LTT website www.leadtokens.org.uk to facilitate the looking up of specific subjects in back numbers {note that I intend to update it shortly}; now, there is also a bibliography, bringing together the various sources mentioned in LTT, in order to guide your further reading. Any correction and additions, please mail in to the usual address: LTTeditor@aol.com

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AT THREE CRANES
If you have any lead tokens with part of their legend reading
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Phil Mernick
who is researching them. Email:
phil@mernicks.com
Phone:020-8980-5672

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