

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 LFEditor@aol.com or dmpowell@waitrose.com

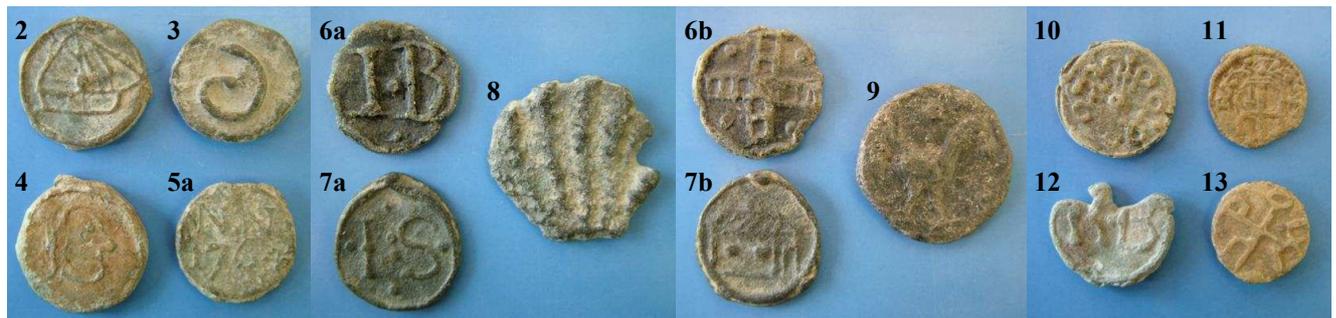
A Sussex Selection, Part 1



A fine collection of pieces this month, courtesy of Worthing local historian Ron Kerridge, mostly found within a few miles of his home town. Before we start, however, a rarity: a crude lead die! There are very few of these, and this one {Fig.1a} apparently comes from somewhere near Bath, rather off the normal lead token track.



Turn it over, and it is but a normal stone {Fig.1b}; the finder, not Ron, said that he just happened to be looking down, and that if it had happened to be the other way up, he would not have looked at it twice. Note that there are five dies, of four different designs: a geometric, a cross-and-pellets, a pair of initials and a couple of lis. So, is that somebody striking for four different people, or one person not caring how many of what design he made?



This month's pieces come from the Shoreham area in West Sussex; next month's are for the most part less provenanced, albeit for the most part probably still Sussex. A fine type 6 sailing vessel, to start with {Fig 2}, followed by a retrograde 6 on what looks as if it ought to be a hop token {Fig.3}. Shoreham is far further west in Sussex than is normally associated with hops, but not to worry. Fig.4 is a rather faint rendering of the occasional "comic face" type, no doubt the work of some local artist with more enthusiasm than skill. Fig.5 is ordinary enough, initials NN plus date 1764, except that there were five identical pieces. Fig 6 is another multiply-occurring piece, and two reverses for each, slightly enlarged and showing die-linked pieces in slightly different conditions, appear below.



Buildings {Fig.7} always make good subject matter, and this one, like the first Fig.6, is backed by a particularly pleasing patination. Fig.8 is a shell-shaped depiction of a shell, I think, rather than a group of corn ears with some edge damage, although I stand to be corrected. If so, it goes in type 19 with other marine life, but why would anyone want to make a piece that shape? Did shells have some particular commercial significance for which tokens were required? Perhaps you got a shell token for collecting a bag of shells. Fig.9 is rather worn, but at first glance looks like being a walking bird ; a man walking an animal is another possibility, but I cannot see four legs.

..... continued overleaf

Fig.10 is cryptic, hinting at an inscription but possible just doodles; it hovers on the boundary between a type 29 and a type 24, but is in pleasant enough condition to be attractive. Fig.11 is a shield depicting a cross, with an upright sword in one quarter, surrounded by enough ornamentation to make it a type 28.16; worn at the bottom, but enough present to be pleasing. However, one of the stars of the show must be Fig.12, which looks quite deliberately apple-shaped, complete with stem! a typical type 2 in style, with enough of the letters still present to be identifiable {or almost; is it RB or KB??} after the shaping. This one also looks a bit hoppish, apart from the shape. Fig.13 is a typical crossed keys, not uncommon, and variously interpretable as a pun, a tradesman's symbol or a pass.



After the previous page's shell, a fish {Fig.14} to remind us that we are near the coast, even if we know not exactly where. Fish are decidedly scarce on English lead, even if the Romans liked them. Date with digits split two and two {Fig.15}; a

pleasant variation of presentation, feeling a little 17th cent in design if not size, but quite clearly 1762 for all to see. Another nice strong date, 1743, on Fig.16; it may be retrograde, but it is not tentative. Did engravers produce work retrograde because they were dyslexic, or because it was easier to cut the die normally and they did not care about the inversion on the finished product? Guess the latter, in many cases.

Fig.17 is a regular enough geometric to have symmetric quarters without actually having any lines along which those quarters can be divided; which poses the question: is it a type 9 or a type 12? I'll go for the type 12, although this is the type of example I will need to have in mind when I update the formal definition of the types in the light of the last 18-24 months' experience. Figs.18-19 pose a similar problem, with the latter's eight petals putting the piece in type 1, despite the line down the centre of each.



Figs.20-21 pose a rather different question; are they irregular geometrics or initials? Each looks as if they are meant to represent series of letters, but that their engraver thought them too uninteresting and tried to elaborate. In the case of Fig.20, despite the rendering of the first initial to appear like the end of a box-horse in the school gym, AP; but Fig.21 is more enigmatic. Three of the four components might well be letters, but the fourth is dubious and their arrangement is obscure. Proper merchant marks are usually neat and tidy, so it is not one of those. The choice here is between the irregular geometric {type 9} and the obscure characters, with the former just perhaps shading it.

Before we leave this debate on hybrids, another couple of similarly patinated pieces of compound design {Figs.22-23}; both quartered and hence type 12, although in the latter case the standard of execution is almost bad enough to render it irregular. A couple of simple type 31s to follow {Figs.24-25}, with eight pellets apiece, although in the case of Fig.24 rather interestingly arranged; it would be good to know if this had significance.



Simplicity again in Fig.26, but with some interest; do the radial line at 12 o'clock, or the two pellets on the left, have meaning? Again, pleasingly patinated. Fig.27 is fairly poor, but looks to be a standing figure, i.e. type 32; is it Roman? I favour so. Finally, a type 28.1 petals within rim to finish {Fig.28}. A good haul, and more to follow next month.

*Coming later in the year: Can we date from size?.....
Hop Tokens, an approximate chronology of style.....
Usage of Communion Tokens KEEP READING!*

*NOTE: LTF
Website Index up-
dated 31 Dec 2006*

Talking Tesserae

Values

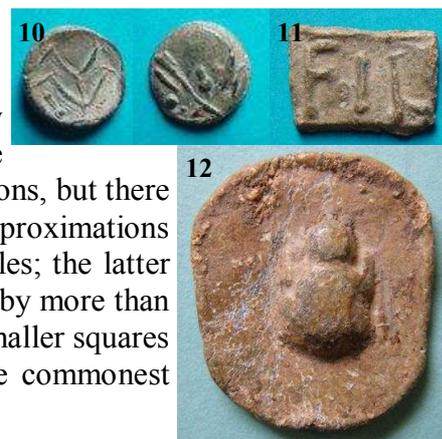
As with the British lead token series, it is to be expected that many different series are mixed up in what are collectively named "tesserae", and that their uses will be similarly diverse; amongst them will be many which are, for example, passes of admittance, or which have an implied value in goods rather than actual monetary value. From the sources quoted by Ficorini, Rostovtsev and others, it would appear that where such pieces are referred to in ancient Roman texts, albeit rarely, the word "quadrans" almost invariably appears; like the farthing, the lowest of the low in conventional currency. Not surprisingly, one of the commonest sizes of tesserae corresponds almost exactly with the 13-14mm diameter of the official quadrans. Figs.1-3



show some official copper quadrans, accompanied by a few of their contemporary Jewish equivalent, the pruta {Figs.4-9}; the latter better known from their biblical associations as "the widows mite". All the prutah shown are 1st century BC or AD, with Figs. 8-9 being issued under Pontius Pilate and Festus {one of the procurators mentioned by Paul in Acts} respectively. Like most small pieces, they aren't renowned for their condition! Fig.10, by comparison, is a genuine Jewish lead token; diameter, only 10-11mm. {NOTE: Figs.1-10 all deliberately enlarged}.

Size and Shape

Like the British 17th century token series, tesserae are predominantly round, with a few variations. There are no heart shapes, but there are occasional ovals. Diamonds exist but are very rare. There are no octagons, but there are occasional lozenges; diamonds rounded or squared off to various approximations of six-sidedness. Squares are comparatively common, as are rectangles; the latter are usually not far off square, the two dimensions not usually differing by more than a millimetre or two. From the BM collection it would appear that the smaller squares and rectangles, with sides of around 13mm, may be the amongst the commonest pieces in the entire series.



Whilst a lot of the ancient lead we come across is definitely Roman, it should be forgotten that there is Greek and Byzantine lead. Fig.12 is reminiscent of the very early raised Greek "turtle" coins of the 6th century BC, but whether it is really that early is anyone's guess.

Dating

Regretably the attitude of many finders has been that the provenance of these interesting pieces has not been worth recording, or indeed the pieces themselves worth keeping. Those smaller pieces shown to date are expected to be mostly of the first century A.D. and the first half of the second. There are few clues on the pieces themselves as to their date, and if the find context is unknown the best way of dating is by comparison of the style with official coins of the period. Certain reverse designs enjoy a particular period of favour, e.g. a modius and corn ears {Fig.13} might hint at the early years of Antoninus Pius c.140 whilst the man and horse of Fig 14 suggest Caracalla, c.200-205. Such few pieces as I have heard of being recovered in England are reputed to be from Essex or East Anglia and with a fourth century context {Figs.15-16}, but they are hardly a viable statistical sample.



Interesting Websites

From time to time you may discover interesting websites which have potential value for the lead token researcher; if you do, please write in and tell us, so that we can make the readership aware. One discovered a short while back was that of the British Agricultural History Society, www.bahs.org.uk; select "Search Backnumbers", and you will find an interesting selection of items on offer, most of them online. A few examples amongst several which suggest numismatic connotations:

www.bahs.org.uk/13n1a2.pdf	Some former Hopgrowing Centres {Vol.13, 1965}
www.bahs.org.uk/20n2a2.pdf	The Bird Pests of English Agriculture {Vol.20, 1972}
www.bahs.org.uk/40n2a1.pdf	Millstones for Mediaeval Manors {Vol.40, 1992}

Readers' Correspondence

Reader Andrew MacMillan has been experimenting with blowing up pictures of tokens on the computer to see if any further detail can be found than can be managed with the naked eye, and we would like to commend this practice of using high resolution digital photography and/or modern IT software to see if the miscellaneous doodles on lead really are rubbish or whether they genuinely contain something more than meets the eye. Andrew tried it out on the piece shown on the bottom of page 4 of the Nov 2006 issue, and after expanding to 400% comments as follows:

I am not convinced that you have any numerals at all; it seems possible that there are only letters. The segment after the '6' may show the remnants of a 'Y', and the '16' could be 'IG'. I even wondered if the 'T' might be a cross.

I've tried 800% magnification and have now revised my opinion to TH161 {retro9}, but given the indifferent quality of the piece either of our guesses could be right. Most probably we are both wrong but, the important thing is, modern technology provides a valid opportunity and is well worth giving a go.

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The piece, notified by James Copley of East Devon, looks 17th cent on one side, but the plain "THREE PENCE" on the back does not quite fit in with that and the diameter is 25mm. "GEO" looked short for George, but then I couldn't make out any obvious surname following. Finally: GEORGE SOCIETY! Perhaps a sickness or burial club run by a pub of that name? probably 18/19th cent. Is that character above the obverse initials {which don't include G for George} a "3", in the same way that "½" sometimes appears in the field of a 17th cent token?



David Apps, who works in the scrap metal industry and became interested in tokens purely by the number of interesting bits and pieces he came across in the course of his work, has asked me about the presence of otherwise of antimony, used as a hardening agent, in lead pieces. Our pieces come in different colouring and textures; are such issues a factor? I'm not a metallurgist, so if there is anyone out there who is, please comment. He is also interested in why his Eddy Current Separator, a device which is meant to chuck useful metal off the end of the conveyor belt with force whilst letting the dross just drop, will not oblige with lead or stainless steel.

British Numismatic Journal, Vol 53-54 {1983-4}

References to these have appeared frequently in LTT, because the two lengthy articles by Mitchiner & Skinner on early English lead are the finest which we yet have.

For anyone wanting to get hold of a copy of these, Philip Skingley, who is in charge of the numismatic book department at Spinks, can supply at £18 per volume, plus £5 postage regardless of whether you buy one or both; i.e. £41 the pair inc p+p. Contact pskingley@spink.com or tel: 0207-563-4045.

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