

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 LJFeditor@aol.com or dmpowell@waitrose.com

Picture Gallery

A South Oxfordshire selection this month, with a brief incursion into neighbouring Gloucestershire.

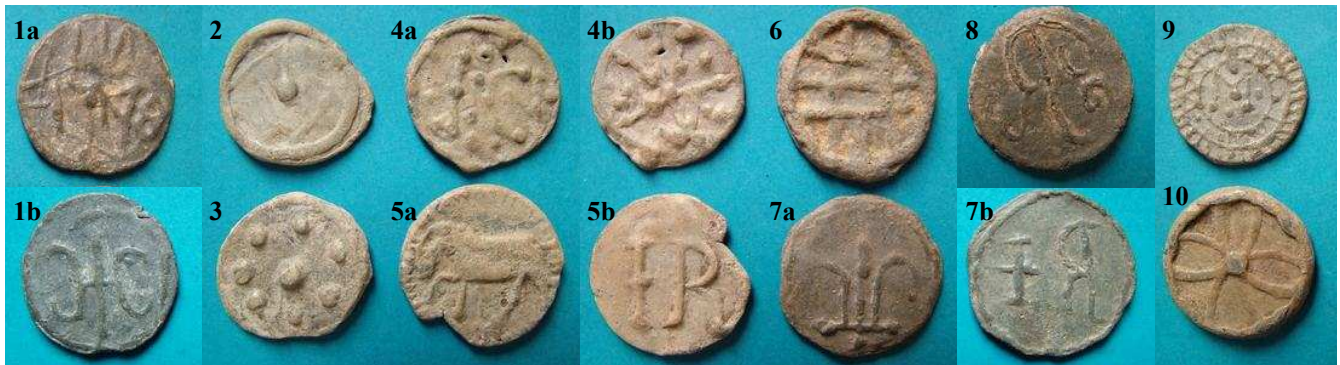


Fig.1 shows retrograde initials IN {probably = JN} over a rather vague date, 1778; there is a hint of a third letter to the left of the I, although this is uncertain. The reverse is one of those type 4s in which the side prongs of the lis have so far separated out and bent round as to form two mirrored Cs, and in this case sufficiently distant from the central prong that they appear mounted as if on a pole.

Fig.2 has a solitary pellet, type 31, although with some hint of joining along a radius to a strong external rim; the line rather peters out as it reaches the edge, leaving an overall impression of a clock dial with a single hand. Fig.3 depicts a group of pellets, by contrast; again type 31, which allows a single design either singly or multiply. Figs.2-3 are both uniface.

Fig.4 depicts the issuers initials, IC, on one side and a crude, rather irregularly-spoked cartwheel on the other; all features on both sides both studded and interspersed with plentiful pellets, of which upwards of twenty can be counted. Fig.5, a delightful horse, with its head slightly down; its back and underbelly perhaps rather too horizontal, but an attractive enough piece nevertheless. IR was the issuer.

Fig.6 depicts a rather irregular grid, in which not all lines run across the full width; there is some argument for calling it a type 7/9 hybrid, in that there is an element of irregular geometric. Fig.7, a more conventional lis than type 1, but with a notably prominent point on the central prong, possibly formed by two pellets if not intended as such, plus another pellet dead centre beneath. The left-hand prong is deficient, probably due to striking rather than design cutting, and the IR, this time retrograde, denotes the issuer. It is not from the same hand as Fig.6, although it may possibly have been made for the same owner.

Fig.8 shows a single letter, R, in curly script; common enough on mainstream series, and on the later white metal hop tokens of Kent, but generally quite scarce on other lead. Fig.9 is a type 28 with a double rather than single rim, both being filled with radial dashes; the centre containing the pellet-clad letter M, which may stand for "Mass" if the piece is ecclesiastical, although such an attribution cannot be made with certainty. On the reverse, a design which may be a lis, flanked by what appear to be two initials; unfortunately, the quality does not permit illustration.

One side of Fig.10, unillustrated, has six short but conventionally-spaced petals with quite rounded ends; on the other, shown, there are four only, with scarcely any tapering. This side is worth further investigation; those petals have hardly any ends at all, and in three cases it can be argued that the outside rim sup-

plies the deficit; however, in the fourth case, the strands not only curve the same way but are actually diverging. Is this meant to represent a clover, perhaps even a lucky clover? or are we looking at four shields rather than petals, based on an idea gained from the early milled silver of 1662+? Perhaps, alternatively, it is just a badly executed petal; but I do not think so. I favour a clover.



Fig.11 depicts, on both sides, pellet-clad foliage. One side is clearly a tree, and if they had such things in those days one might talk oneself into believing that the pellets were Christmas decorations.

Figs.12,13 are the Gloucestershire pieces, both from around Lechlade; standard type 12s, the stronger-rimmed piece having a W on the back and the other a star. Fig.14 is an unusual superimposition of an 8-spoked cartwheel on an array of several concentric circles, except that most, but not all, of the spokes fail to extend into the centre. The reverse is a retrograde P over a figure 1, which hints at the style occasionally used to indicate values such as a penny or a bushel in the Kentish hop farming area; except, of course, that these pieces are miles from Kent.



IL in Fig.15 is simple enough, although the three small crosses and one circle adorning are a welcome change from the usual pellets; on the reverse, date 1778 with more of the same, cross above and this time a horseshoe below. Finally Fig.16: Fig.14's theme again, but rather half-heartedly executed. On the reverse, a central cross with some lettering, which may well be gibberish, around; vaguely reminiscent of a Northumbrian styca, and certainly seen in other parts of the country, as other editions of LTT will show.

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A Manufacturing Cast-Off

My thanks to Tim Symonds for this piece, found in East Sussex. At first we thought that it might be something to do with the manufacturing process, e.g. an attempt to cut a matrix or die, but as it is of no more than normal hardness we now think not. Ted Fletcher suggests that there are two likely frequent strategies for making a lead piece:

- take two slabs of chalk, rub them flat, then carve a circle in each, making each half the desired thickness; then carve the obverse design into one circle and the reverse into the other. Line up, cut channels for the molten metal, bind the two chalk slabs together, then pour the metal in.
- take two slabs of chalk, rub them flat, then carve a circle in one only, to the full depth of the desired thickness; then carve the design into the circle. Cut channels into the same slab before binding the other, perfectly flat slab to it, then pour the metal in.



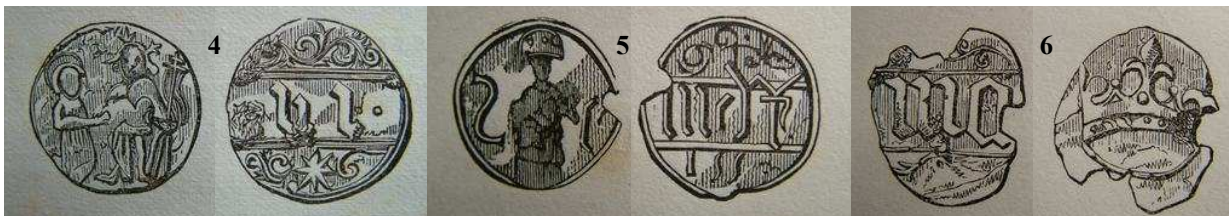
If the second method was attempted but the slabs imperfectly clamped, there might be an excessive amount of metal squeezed out of the side which, after it had solidified onto the token, would render it unacceptable. I think therefore that this is a discarded defective; max.width 34mm, weight 30.86gm.

Forgeais' Ecclesiastical Pieces, continued from last month

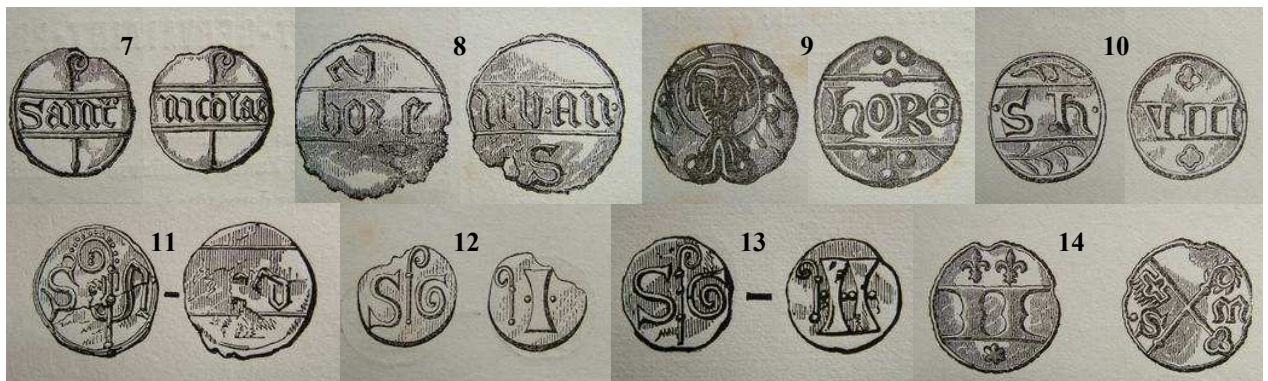
Having last month examined those of Forgeais' ecclesiastical pieces relating to particular church services, it probably makes sense to look at the rest of them now before moving on. They roughly fall into three categories: specific churches, specific posts, and the giving of alms; however, there is an overlap between the various subseries.



Sometimes the name of the church appears in full {Figs.1,3,7}, although reduction to initials is more usual because of space {Figs.2,5,10-14,16-18}, in others it can only be guessed at by knowing the precise subject matter depicted {Fig.4}. In some cases, Forgeais is uncertain and just guesses, sometimes with the aid of a design link between anonymous and initialled pieces. {Figs.14,15}. Most churches are called "Saint Something", and the S of Saint accounts for the first component of many initial sets; i.e. it has a frequency on this series comparable to the K{irk} and M{inister} on Scottish communion tokens.



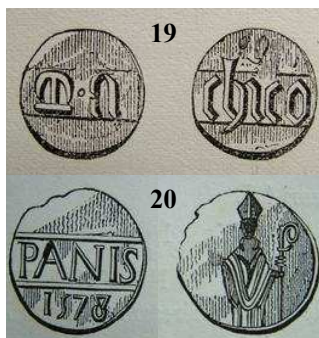
The use of Lombardic script indicates a date before about 1550-ish, from which it will be seen that most of Figs 1-14 are early. In a couple of cases they are transitional, with signs of modern numerals intruding. Dates {Figs.5,10}, service names {Figs.8,9} and denier-values {Figs.5,10-15,18}, discussed last month, are all occasionally in evidence on these church-specific pieces, as also is the style of design whereby the field is split into three by horizontal lines to accommodate date, name, initials or values. The specimens seen last time were in the range 1566-1608, but from the use of Lombardic on some pieces it looks likely that they started some while earlier. {Figs.2,4,5,7-9}.



Figs.16,17 show the three segment layout in the clear form of the 1560s and 1570s with which we became familiar last month, whereas the more decorative Fig.18 feels as if it might stylistically belong more with the decorative pieces of c.1640. Note the anchor on Fig.17; is that not the clearest evidence that some occurrences have ecclesiastical rather than maritime significance?



{continued overleaf}



The machicot {Fig.19} was a minor church official, perhaps only required in the very largest churches; Forgeais says that the Notre Dame had six, but hints, as does my dictionary, that the term was not very widely known. Why he needed his own tokens I am uncertain. Fig.20 is of the plain, clear style which we have already seen, but instead of a service or church name, the word “Panis”: which translates, “Bread”.

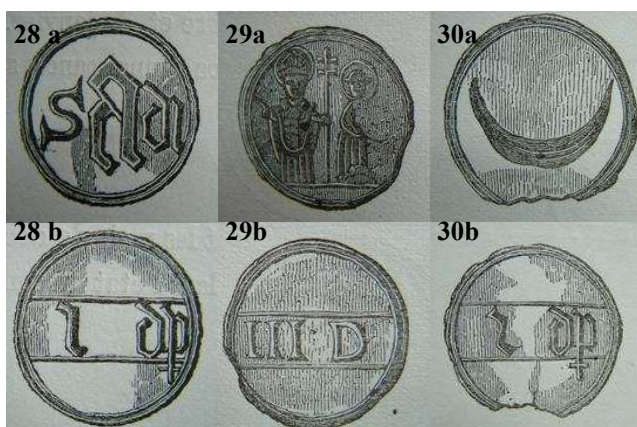
Forgeais is less certain about the more elaborate Fig.21-22, which he describes as depicting an umbrella-like object, however, when I enquired of some numismatic friends about the Belgian parish piece lower on this page, which depicts a similar object, they thought that it also had something to do with the distribution of bread. These, from the design, are earlier, although Forgeais still reckons the 16th cent.



In Fig.23, “Alma” means alms, and one wonders whether the presence of a crozier on other pieces {Figs.7,11-13,16,17} has a similar meaning; on the right, Fig.24, a British-found lead of similar style. Is DB a church or a person?



Finally, a few pieces in similar vein {Figs.25-30}, recognisable by their statement of denier paris payments, their as yet uninterpreted initials, or their croziers; all as yet unassigned in terms of either church and service.



A Belgian Parish Piece

This massive 50mm piece of 1759 is copper rather than lead, but I include it here because of LTT’s interest in local coinage and because of its similar depiction to Forgeais’s pieces {Figs.21,22} above. Paroisse = parish; Caudenberg is part of Brussels.



Reader’s Query

Danish reader Anders Bryder would welcome hearing from anyone who can comment on this lead piece, 32mm diam and 4mm thick, which he found last year.



There are very few lead tokens in Denmark and despite showing it to a number of authorities, including the national museum, nobody has yet been able to make significant comment. There’s a challenge! Mail answers to LTT in the normal way, please....

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AT THREE CRANES

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