

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 LJFeditor@aol.com or dmpowell@waitrose.com

Picture Gallery: A Kentish Collection, part 1 of 2

A big thank you to Jim Furner for the photographs which make up this month's Picture Gallery and next's.

A dated type 28, none too common, to start with {Fig.1}: EB over 1693 on the obverse, within a rim of radial dashes, and a clear picture of a sheep within a similar radial rim on the reverse. There is an additional letter or symbol below the date, possibly a W, which may either be ornamentation or the wife's forename initial. A parting thought; is that thing at the back a shepherd's crook or a sheep's tail?



Fig.2 was probably a conventional type 12 quartered geometric when it started life, except that somebody has cut it, quite proficiently and with a fair degree of symmetry, to the shape of a leaf. It would be interesting to know the reason why. I suppose it might have been moulded as such, rather than cut. If cut, the edges have long since weathered smooth.

Fig.3 appears to be fairly standard, initials on one side and cartwheel on the other, both enhanced by a strong rim; until one looks at the letters, which appear to be IK with one bar missing. The piece is not weakly struck, and there is no hint of the missing line; it is in good condition, and such detail as is there is very clear. It hints of the runic, except that the date is far too late {runes in Britain were predominantly a 7th-9th cent handwriting, with a couple of letter forms surviving until the 12th}. Is it a number? so many for the uprights, plus something else for the notch? Given their occasional use of tally sticks, one can perhaps imagine the hop farmers resorting to such a device.

Fig.4. uniface and with a broken clasp at the top, depicts a barred gate; that indicates perhaps a pass for said gate, possibly in connection with road tolls or the permission to take carts on someone's land.

Fig.5 looks at first like the fragments of an extremely coarse grid, but on examining the edge a rim just becomes evident at the bottom edge, defining the boundary of a shield. Even so, the line up the centre of the shield and extending beyond the top is confusing. The piece is uniface, as also is Fig.6, a rather chunky little 15mm piece in Thames river-find colour which bears an attractive monogram/merchant mark, possibly retrograde. One may read any of D,P,R or Y into it, but none with any confidence.

Fig.7 is a beautifully neat example of the very ordinary type 3 cartwheel theme, with a little more care taken over its finish than most; one may note that the various diameters which form the spokes overlay each other carefully, rather than merging into the usual crude mass. Fig.8 is also a cartwheel; rather worn but with the unusual feature of two pellets, only, in opposite segments. Usually all the segments would be pelleted, or none. The two pellets may have been a mark of value, or just somebody's individual signature.



Fig.9 is a further type 3, except that all the arms stop short of the diameter and have something, perhaps a pellet, on the ends. Could they be arrows, with points and feathers? Or else some sort of club? The reverse is IH {or HI, or H1} and, as with Fig.4 above, the seal style of manufacture is evident.

Fig.10 is of a type which Forgeais mentions frequently as relating to the royal household, and which I discuss in the article on pages 3-4; R stands for “Rex” or “Roi”, i.e. king, and the object next to it probably depicts one of the commodities which passed through the royal kitchens. Forgeais lists these in abundance, but this is the first time I have seen or handled one. Whether it is specifically French is uncertain; it looks like a Thames water find.



Fig.11 looks at first glance looks to be an unremarkable type 2, until one magnifies its 16mm to show a counterstruck 4-petal; whereupon, it suddenly becomes rather rare. However, the hop farmers of Kent are known in comparatively recent times to have counterstruck issues of tokens which they have taken over with farms; so, why not in older times? Not that I am saying this is a hop token, although it might be.

Fig.12 is a type 24, unidentified characters; in evidence are an off-centre X, an exergue line, and another, upright, dash to the right of the X. It might just be a mill piece, but don't bet on it. For those of you who haven't heard of exergues, they are the segments at the base of a design below a line which defines the ground-line for the scenery above; the best-known example being the date segment below Britannia, on a pre-decimal penny.

Fig.13 is another Thameside piece; probably an M, possibly a W, in Lombardic script. It is chunky lead, not fragile pewter; date probably 15th cent or early 16th.



Much more pewtery and jetton-like are Figs.14-15. The first of these is very plain on one side, with a type 14 cross and rings {rather than pellets}, within a type 28 grenetis of rather widely-spaced radial lines. The reverse is more ornate, but somewhat obscure, classifying as a rather unusual type 9 irregular geometric.. Fig.15 has elaborate crosses on each side, trios of pellets probably representing lis, complex heraldry on the reverse, and all in quite fine detail. The piece is clipped, despite being clearly lead; not, presumably to appropriate the metal, but rather to devalue the piece. At the end of a long life?, or after temporary one-off use, in the way that ticket collectors in the current century still invalidate on buses and trains?

Continuing with the mediaeval, Fig 16 shows what would have been a fine head had not wear and tear partially obscured it, enhanced by a wide grenetis which contains a sequence of paired arcs rather than the usual linear shading. The same grenetis appears on the reverse, but with a simple type 14 cross and pellets within; trios of pellets, in the style of the 14th and 15th centuries even if the pellets are smaller. The piece is the size of a groat.

The enigmatic Fig.17 feels similarly thin, but heavier; it has a brown, almost coppery patina and one wonders exactly what the components of the alloy are. The obverse carries more than a hint of the 4th cent Roman empress whilst the bird on the reverse, although a common enough theme on British crude tokens, feels stylistically ancient as well. There are two characters to the right, behind the bird, which might be either a pair of claws or the initials WW of an issuer, running downwards. Killers of wildlife claiming parochial payments were required to produce evidence evidence, e.g. in the case of a squirrel, the tail. Perhaps, occasionally, the claws? For which you might get a token, to be redeemed on accounting day.

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{continued next month}

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Forgeais: The Tokens of the Royal Households

It seems appropriate, having just shown you one of Jim's tokens in this series at the top of page 2, to see what else Forgeais has to say about the series. He describes them as "Méreaux des Offices de la Maison du Roi" {or "de la Reine"}; i.e. tokens of the households of the king or queen. They fall into several main groups concerned with food, supplies and equipment.



The "letter plus object", as per Jim's piece, appears in both groups; the problem is, sometimes, guessing what the letter stands for. P in Figs.1-2 stands for *pistores*, or pastrycooks, and OV for *ova*, or the eggs which they use; no problems. However, L and P each then appear with a barrel in Figs.3-4 respectively, so that one suspects the P may now stand for something else. Pastrycooks don't use barrels, or do they? Forgeais suggest that L stands for *lagenarius*, or butler, who delivers drink to the table, and considers briefly, but then dismisses, the idea that P stands for *pincerna*, or winetaster, who is the poor devil who gets poisoned if some malcontent has doctored the contents of the glass or bottle. Fish also came in barrels, salted, as is indicated by Fig.5, and Forgeais reads the P of Fig.4 as *Poissonerie*, fishmonger, or the equivalent in Latin derived from *Pisces*.

Fig.6 is another piece concerned with fish, with an elaborate type 1 petals arrangement on the back which presumably has no great meaning beyond ornamentation, if one dare make that assumption. Fig.7 is a one-off, albeit related to the preceding fish in style by the type 28 *grenetis*. Forgeais relates it to the queen's household specifically, on the basis of its reverse heraldry. Is the bird one for eating, or used for falconry?

Finally, Figs.8-9: two very similar depictions of a basic cooking pot; always pleasant to see meaning spelt out with this level of simplicity. The royal *lis* again on the reverse, but a pick? In the kitchen? What was that used for, dismantling large carcasses?

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Next we come to the pieces of the *fourrière*, or quartermaster. Have you ever looked at those pieces designated type 13, frameworks, and wondered what they represent? in particular, the ladders. Well, here is the answer in part; they are stretchers, used for carrying things. Fig.10 is the simplest and most familiar; the others have a little more ornamental than we are accustomed to. Some of them give clues as to their users, through initials or depictions, although even Forgeais is not always able to interpret them {Figs.11-13}. Who is that gent in Fig.13 who is carrying the tools of a workman in each hand and yet has a crown on his head? One way of indicating that he works for the monarch, if there is not room for a separate *lis*; presumably it is not the king himself mucking in! Fig.14 is a more ornate equivalent of the anonymous Fig.10.

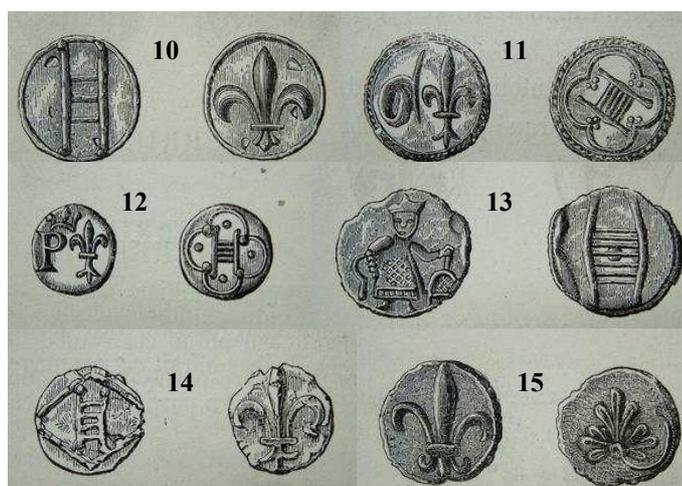


Fig.15 is a one-off. The leaf-like figure {*feuille*} is similar to that depicted on the Caudenberg piece on page 4 of LTT_35 {Feb 2008} and could relate to bakery; alternatively it may have something to do with the decorative artwork of the *pargetter*, adorning the royal buildings. Cannot be certain on this one.

Figs.16-21 depict a variety of tools; axes, picks and billhooks, all of which we can feel comfortably familiar with. In a couple of cases the trees on which they were used are depicted, considerably eradicating any possible misinterpretation.



Fig.22 indicates a change of commodity; from one that could be stretched, cut or chopped to one that could be baled. Forgeais suggest hay; i.e. connected with the provision of fodder for the royal stables, which leads us conveniently to our final section.

Forgeais actually lists Fig.23 under the quartermaster's heading, but it is certainly horse or rider-related; probably a garter for the latter. Figs.24,26 show more definite horseshoes, and the two delightful but different poses of the horse itself in Figs.25,26. Wouldn't you just love to own a decent specimen of the latter?



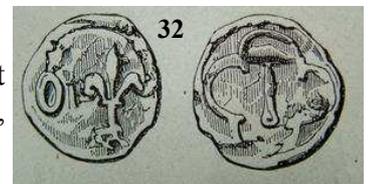
A more subtle horseshoe on fig.27, disguised as a rim; after the previous few pieces, such minimalism is disappointing, fine specimen though it be.



Finally, we move to the tools of the stables {Figs.28-32}; the hammers, the anvils, and the picks for removing the nails or the debris caught between hoof and shoe. Fig.28 combines this theme nicely with the formality of the regal symbolism; a hammer and three lis worked together in four quarters. Fig.31 may be the saddler's knife. Note also the R as per

Jim's piece on page 2, appearing in Fig.29, and P again in Fig.30. The latter will have yet another meaning, beyond those discussed on the last page for Figs.1-5, for none of those are relevant here. Forgeais alights on Palefrenier, i.e. ostler or groom, as the most likely interpretation.

Finally, note Fig.32, and compare with Fig.11; near identical obverse, different subject matter portrayed in similar style on the reverse; one manufacturer, working for different parts of the same household.



Irish Lead Tokens

Ireland has few lead tokens, so I am told, although there are a few dozen end-18th cent or possibly early 19th cent pieces illustrated in Dalton & Hamer. One correspondent says that the pebble-like lead objects below are the nearest he has seen. Some of them look almost as if they have been cut off strips, like pieces of Swiss roll, and he wonders if they had any monetary value. Difficult to get excited....



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