

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 dmpowell@waitrose.com or david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk. Please note that w.e.f. 19 April 2008 the old LJEditor@aol.com address is no longer active.

Picture Gallery: A Kentish Collection, part 2 of 2



A continuation here of Jim Furner's material from last month; I'll recommence the numbering from where I left off. Fig.18, with typical Thames patina, is of a very interesting type which we have not seen before, but which was known to Forgeais; a type 23 depicting a hearth in the centre and a brickwork fireplace around. He lists Fig.19 under "Batiments du Roi", i.e. buildings of the king.

Fig.20 depicts a man standing, type 32, with arm outstretched; everyday on tesserae, but rare on English lead. The other side is interesting, but regrettably unphotogenic; indeed, I am not sure which way up it is meant to be. There are four uncertain characters across the middle, and what looks like IRIN retrograde below; above, but turned upside down as we look at it, is a date which is probably in the 1680s.

Fig.21, somewhat pewtery, is an unusual type which contains simply several half-completed lines surrounding a central pellet, in such a manner as to form something half way between a hexagon and a Star of David; the result is somewhat reminiscent of a Moroccan falus of the 19th cent {usually bearing Mohammedan dates in the 1200s}, except that this specimen is uniface. Is it derived from a local Cantian potin of the 1st cent BC, the last of which are quite degenerate? Fig.22, probably another Thames find, is ugly; it depicts something which it is probably meant to be either a lis or a candlestick {we will call it a type 4}, except that the right-hand tine is neither at the right angle nor the right height compared with the other two.

Fig.23, very dark pewter and almost certainly of London origin, depicts a rather thin shield; the back, even less inspiring, depicts a thin wiry cross and pellets.



Fig.24, chunky lead and of seal-type manufacture, depicts something which is meant to be either a plant or a lis but not obviously either; i.e. it is a type 4/17 hybrid. The cartwheel reverse is more interesting than some; slightly off-centre, possibly by design, and with pellets in the angles only on one side. Similarly robust and chunky, despite its small diameter, is Fig.25, a type 1 6-petal with all components solid, and with a symmetric distribution which, whilst not absolutely even, shows a slightly wider angle between one trio of leaves and the other {the angles at 2 and 8 o'clock are larger}.

Fig.26 show what may well be a weaver or hurdle-maker at work; there is barely a hint of the person himself, but the rounded upper beam and what appears to be an arrow or some flailing material beyond it all create the sense that we are looking at something more interesting than just another line of would-be candles. Would an engraver have really put an arrow into his picture, the same way as we do in diagrams today? Whether or not, it is most effective. The reverse shows some robust initials, and on both sides the edge shows a certain amount of wedged beading. Fig.27 looks related, but may not be; it is of a type which we have seen before {LTT_16, Jul 2006, page 4, fig.3}, but is not quite such a good specimen. It is

less obviously a Roman temple or a bucket, by virtue of the upper handle being less in evidence; it might still be a hurdle, a gate or a line of candles, but another possibility suggests itself: could it be a hearth, with some utensils on top?

I have magnified the final pieces in this article by a factor of approx 1.8 because of their size. Fig.28, of penny size, is reminiscent of Henry II's "Tealby" cross and crosslets type, although in this case the internal crosses are not seriffed as is the case with Tealbys. The reverse, whilst obscure, is clearly meant to be either a man or an animal {a horse has been suggested}, and on both sides it looks as if there is an edge inscription rather than mere grenetis-filler. However, suggestions as to what it actually says are very welcome!



Fig.29 depicts a cross on one side and three tiny fine lis within a shield on the other, each within a very faint grenetis. A tiny piece, only 11mm, and at the very bottom end of the range; date perhaps c.1500. Fig.30 {uniface, thin, pewtery and dark} is altogether later; still only 15mm across, it has a finely executed bust, most unusual on crude leads. George I immediately comes to mind, if it is English; however, it may not be, and I invite suggestions as to other, particularly, French, candidates. Those more familiar with the dress of the time may be able to throw some light on it; George I definitely feels too late for a piece this slender.

Finally, Fig.31. This seems very much a reduced version of Fig.15 shown last month, and I would strongly suggest that they may be a pair, notwithstanding that one shows much more mud-patination than the other. I show the more complex {i.e. heraldic} sides of both pieces alongside, for comparison. The cross and pellet reverses are similar, except that the small cross in the centre of the larger piece reduces to a pellet, and the trios of pellets in the angles to one pellet each.



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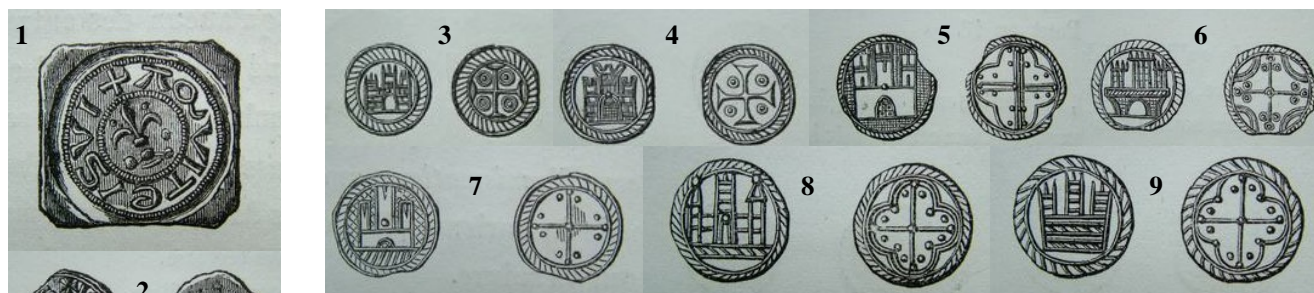
An East Anglian Selection

My thanks to Mike Bonser for this little selection, mainly mediaeval, from near where the counties of Essex, Cambs and Suffolk meet. I have magnified them by about 1.3 to aid visibility. The hand and the phallus have to be the prize pieces of the group, but notice also the short thick crosses, the castle, and the two cut rectangles with Lombardic letters on.



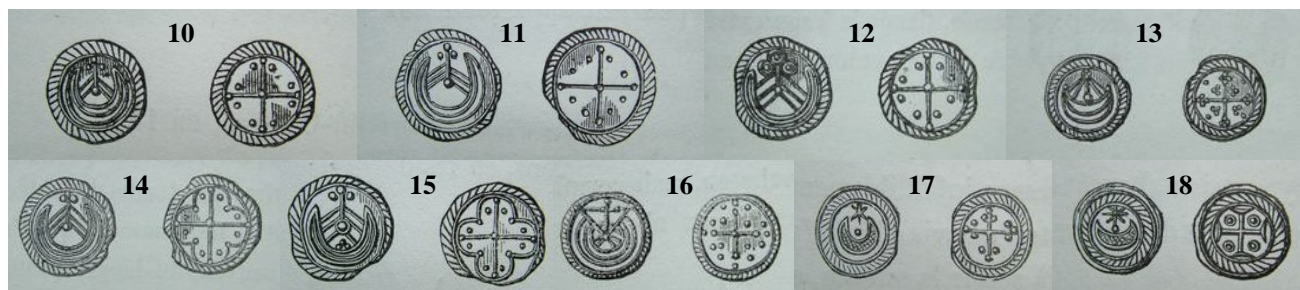
Forgeais' Tax Tokens

This month we look at what Forgeais has to say about what he calls Méreaux Fiscaux, or tax pieces. We have met one or two of them before, without being aware what they are.



The pieces in this section fall into four groups, the first two of which Forgeais feels unable to assign specifically . He states the general principle, that tokens were used by tax inspectors and receivers for giving to merchants to indicate the latter had paid their dues, and that they were also given to travellers at the roadside to indicate that the then equivalent of road tax, or tolls, had been paid. He suggests other possible uses such as official entrance fees, payments for guides, portorage, stabling etc; but ultimately, he is uncertain which of these figs.1-9 refer to.

Figs 1-2 are formal; the royal lis, accompanied by the phrase “Acquite sui”, or “I am quit of tax” . According to “Mediaeval Towns” {Schofield & Vince, 2003}, a second piece “Lesco libereres”, or “pay the tax”, has also been found in the Seine; however, the volumes of Forgeais which I have seen do not show one. The same book also suggests that tax tokens, in lead but struck with regular coin dies, were used similarly in this country from the 9th to 12th centuries, but were thereafter replaced by sealed parchment documents; unfortunately, none is illustrated. Note, this is earlier than is discussed for the earliest pieces in Mitchiner & Skinner’s articles in BNJ53-54.



To quote Schofield and Vince again, “Merchandise was taxed, often at the point of entry to the town such as a gate or a public wharf”; which might explain why tax tokens have gates {Figs.3-9} or ships {Figs.10-18} on respectively. There is relatively little to say about the various pieces, other than to note the range of minor variations in design; apart from to say that we have actually met both types before, when discussing types 6 {ships} and 23 {buildings} as part of the classification system.



Finally, Forgeais lists under the fiscal category types such as Figs.19-21, which we have discussed previously under type 32 and thought of as pilgrim’s pieces. BNJ 53, page 49, certainly voices this opinion and my gut reaction is to agree with it; however, Forgeais reinforces his argument by illustrating a piece {Fig.19} in which the full-bodied human figure is paired on the other side with the fiscal towers discussed above; in consequence of which, he suppose them to relate to a tax on strong drink., imposed on the wine merchants and left to them to pass on to their customers. Get out your would-be pilgrim pieces, folks, and let us know if they are all on the bottle, or whether some of them are only munching. Fig.22 has definitely got a wineglass, but I





thought Fig.23. was eating nothing stronger than an apple. Now, if that is a wineglass as well, M.Forgeais could be right....



Herewith some real examples, Figs.24-25, as opposed to line drawings, of the tower and ship types shown earlier; but be warned, Fig.26 looks none too different and be similarly interpreted; until you turn it over, and find the familiar triad of initial on the reverse! So, I guess that means cross & pellets or lis means official tax token, initials means private merchant. As an aside, what about fig.27; could that be a tax token as well? Same size; reverse, pentagon with concave sides, which you might just be inclined on your more imaginative days to read as a crown.

Tax tokens have been used in many places over the years, and not always in distant times; they were used in the United States as recently as the 1930s and 1940s. So, if for any reason you suspect that some of your other leads might be mediaeval or early-modern tax pieces, please mail in and tell us.

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Hundreds of Tokens..... or Tokens of Hundreds?

OK, it is a main series 17th cent token, but it could just as well be a lead. The issuer, Thomas Watkins, describes himself as “of Barton Hundred”; not of a village, or a town, but a hundred. What was a hundred? We are used these days to towns, cities, villages, hamlets; of the old fashioned terms, we can adjust to “parish”, because often they correspond to villages, and their churches were there as a reminder. However, “hundred” is a term which, for the most part, has disappeared into obscurity.

Hundreds, variously called other things like rapes, sokes and wapentakes in some counties to confuse matters, were groups of parishes combined for certain administrative purposes. For example, the Poor Law: there would be one workhouse per Union, which might correspond with the hundred. Some aspects of life were handled by the parish, some by the hundred.

The size of the hundred, or whatever the division was called, varied enormously from county to county, both in terms of overall population and the number of parishes which it combined. A summary of the divisions at 1801 is given in the appendix overleaf.



You would think that the parishes selected for grouping would be contiguous; but no, there were often outliers. Go into <http://www.hpss.geog.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/occupations/hundredmapping/>, select Hertfordshire, and see how stupidly they were often grouped. Nothing like deliberately making life difficult for yourself; local authorities have been doing it all along.

Why did Mr.Watkins here describe his hundred of origin rather than his parish? he must have lived in one of the parishes. Did he have land in several parishes, and not feel that one predominated? or was he the hundred administrator, tasked with some measure of rate collection or charitable dispersal? A few 17th cent city and town pieces carry the name or initials of the mayor, so quite possibly Mr.Watkins was an official; and perhaps there were more hundreds who used tokens than meet the eye, and many of these were in lead. Conjecture, but worth a thought!

So, next time you see one of those uninteresting type 2s with just a bare pair of initials, especially if one of the letters is an H, remember that it might just be the name of a hundred or its administrator.

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Appendix: Hundreds & similar Divisions in Different Counties

Doubtless the precise division of counties into hundred-like units varied a certain amount over the years, but here by way of illustration is a summary derived from the 1801 census. It will be noticed that the number of parishes thus banded together varies enormously from one part of the country to another.

County	No. Divs.	Name of Division	Parishes in 1801	Ratio
Kent	5	Lathes	395	79.0
Sussex	6	Rapes	297	49.5
Leics	6	Hundreds	251	41.8
Warwicks	5	Hundreds	208	41.6
Worcs	5	Hundreds	197	39.4
Staffs	5	Hundreds	177	35.4
Lincoln	18	Hundreds	607	33.7
Lancs	6	Hundreds	190	31.7
Middx	6	Hundreds	190	31.7
Notts	7	Hundreds	214	30.6
Derbys	6	Hundreds	181	30.2
Cumberland	5	Wards	135	27.0
Bucks	8	Hundreds	205	25.6
Yorks W.R.	11	Wapentakes	278	25.3
Durham	4	Wards	99	24.8
Hunts	4	Hundreds	97	24.3
Yorks E.R.	10	Wapentakes	234	23.4
Norfolk	34	Hundreds	687	20.2
Herefs	11	Hundreds	222	20.2
Essex	20	Hundreds	403	20.2
Suffolk	25	Hundreds	500	20.0
Cheshire	7	Hundreds	122	17.4
Yorks N.R.	13	Wapentakes	225	17.3
Herts	8	Hundreds	131	16.4
Oxon	14	Hundreds	223	15.9
Westmorland	4	Wards	61	15.3
Northants	20	Hundreds	292	14.6
Salop	16	Hundreds	230	14.4
Cornwall	14	Hundreds	201	14.4
Devon	33	Hundreds	468	14.2
Beds	10	Hundreds	124	12.4
Gloucs	28	Hundreds	332	11.9
Somerset	43	Hundreds	476	11.1
Wilts	29	Hundreds	309	10.7
Surrey	14	Hundreds	143	10.2
Rutland	5	Hundreds	50	10.0
Cambs	20	Hundreds	172	8.6
Berks	20	Hundreds	158	7.9
North'land	12	Wards	92	7.7
Hants {exc.IOW}	47	Hundreds & Liberties	307	6.5
Dorset	56	Hundreds & Liberties	258	4.6