

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.freeseewe.co.uk. Please note that the old LTTeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Picture Gallery

Following a talk by Robert Thompson at the last Token Corresponding Society congress about the appearance of turnpikes on main series 17th cent tokens, it was natural enough to go looking for similar lead equivalents. Barred gates appear sometimes on both lead and main series tokens, and that is the form we think of tollgates as having; however, here we are talking rotating gates, as indicated by the “turn” or “turnpike”. Figs 1,2 were the nearest I could come up with, although the latter after further consideration we dismissed as a halberd {axe}, which is known on tokens elsewhere. Fig.1 looks a more likely candidate, if indeed it is not a windmill; however, either would be an attractive design to have. From the Guildford area and uniface, it is a mere 13mm across; clearly no later than the early 17th cent and possibly, from the design of the curved E on the right, maybe earlier. There is maybe another letter, illegible, to the left.



The similarly sized Fig.3 depicts a mediaeval monarch on one side and what may be a church building on the other; if not, it may be intended to represent the occasionally occurring three towers which Forgeais associates with tax pieces. There is a grenetis of small pellets or short stubby bars on one side, and the style suggests that a date in the early Tudor period is likely. The piece is a Kentish find.

Of similar or very slightly later date, depending perhaps on whether the design is intended to be an ornate cross or a “T”, is Fig.4; I favour the former interpretation. Regrettably the provenance is unknown but, looking at the way it looks to been cut to shape with shears, I wonder whether it is contemporary with the pieces {Fig.5} with the occasionally-seen crudely cut eight-petalled flowers. These also tend to be light coloured, and I would somewhat favour a provincial origin.



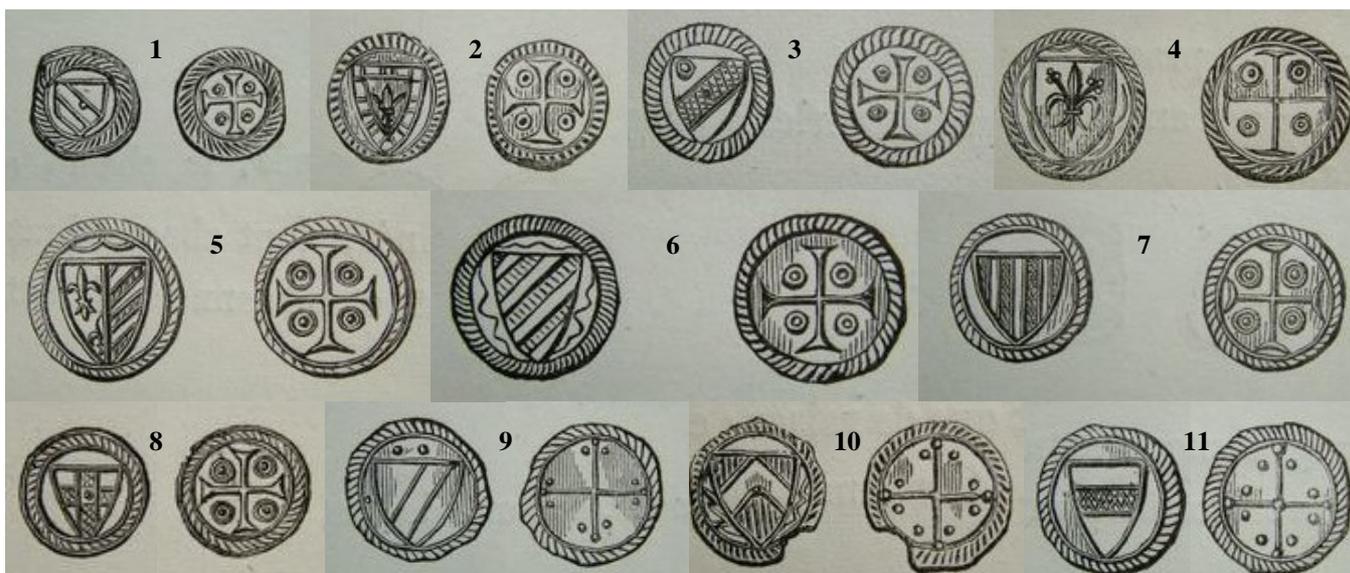
A mixed selection of colours and alloys in the pieces above, which I show merely to illustrate that tin was occasionally mixed with lead in some quantity, indeed it would appear to its near exclusion in one or two cases {Figs.6,7,18}. In other words, lead was not the sole medium for making base metal unofficial tokens outside the main-series 17th cent period, although it was obviously the main one. Particular points to note amongst the subject matter are the various anchors, including the Crown and Anchor {Fig.10} and the Crossed Anchors {Fig.18}; the late Lombardic “C” of Fig.14, and the chunky weight-like piece of Fig.17.

The last-mentioned, from the Medway area, is 4mm thick and weighs 17.35gm. Fig.10 looks at first glance like a seal, but is probably a token of defective manufacture.



To conclude, a few more inhabitants of the LTT aviary. Fig.20 looks a little plump, and is perhaps a quail (?); however Fig.21 is the pick, being decidedly spirited!

Forgeais' grenetis pieces, continued: Type 16 shields

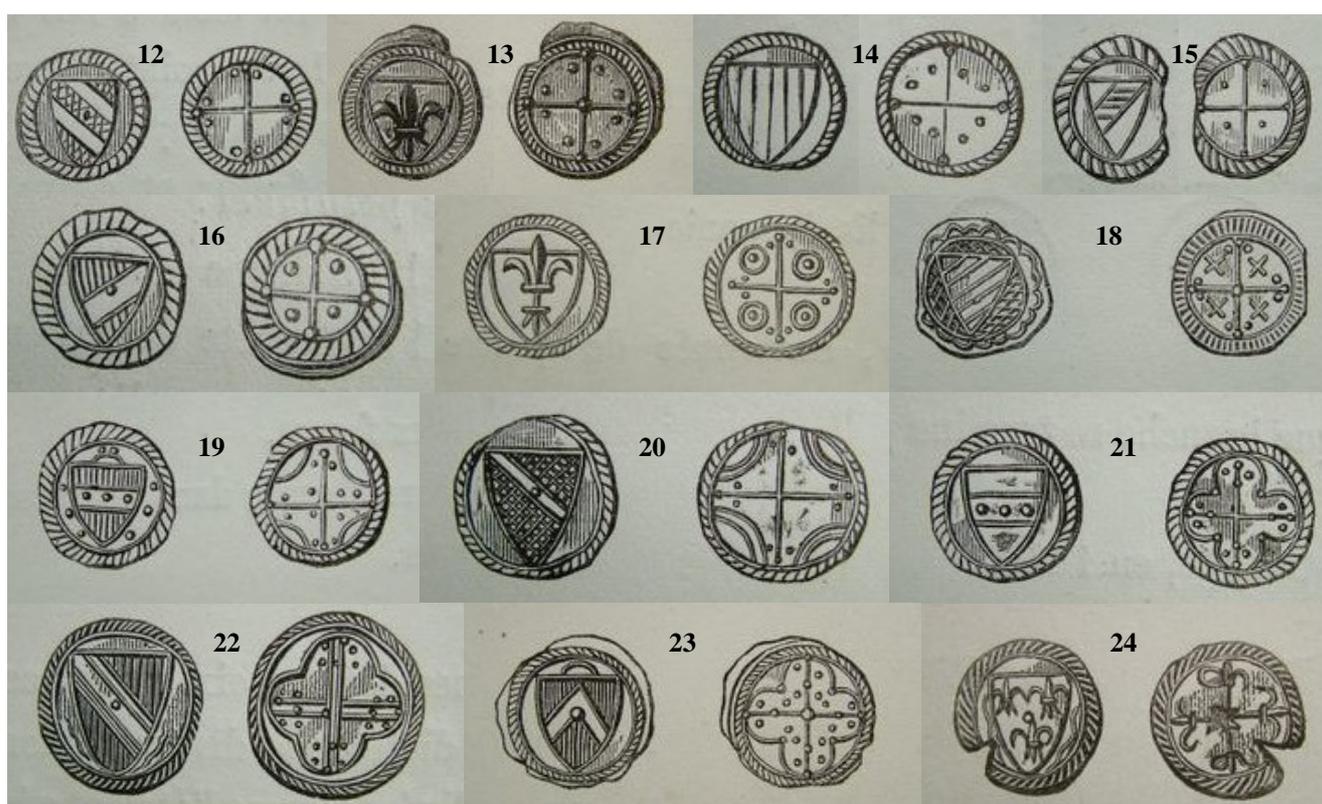


For those of you haven't turned over to page 3 yet, there's a whole load of text coming your way with not many new pictures, following last month's article on BNJ54 Class M; so for those who prefer the pictorial, here are some more of Forgeais' grenetis pieces to follow those mentioned in that article.

- Figs.1-8: Style of the cross fairly much as the British series, but with French armorial subject matter and gradually getting larger.
- Figs.9-17: Similar, but with the French *croix bourdonnée*, a style of cross frequently noted by Forgeais; usually with two pellets near the end of the arms, although with occasional variety in their number and placement. The ringed pellets on Fig.17 seem to be staring you in the face.
- Fig.18: Variation of the above cross with a small cross in each angle, a feature not unknown on later English type 14s. Note the unusual grenetis on the obverse.
- Figs.19-23: Ornate enhancement of the *croix bourdonnée* above, with inverted curves or lobes.
- Fig.24:and to finish with, an even more decorative cross.

{Note: All pictures magnified by 1.5, for consistency with the associated articles}

More of this material, some of which becomes increasingly exotic, may be shown in future months.



15th Century London Cross & Pellets Tokens: Obverse Designs

Last month we looked at the London cross and pellet tokens of BNJ54 Class M, c.1425-90, as a whole. This time we shall specifically consider the range of material depicted on the obverse, with a view to being able to then follow its themes down through the ages; hopefully, in time, even to the chaotic issues of the 18th cent. It is my hope that some of these earlier series will provide clues as to the evolution of some late designs which, until now, have often seemed meaningless. The reasons behind the designs we discussed slightly last month, and we will not trouble ourselves further with them here; that can wait until another day.

The one feature that the reverses of BNJ Class M have that is not shared by any other sizeable lead series of later date is that they look comparatively finite. In the 18th cent it is a near-miracle to find two pieces the same, and even back in the main mid-17th cent copper/brass series there are over 14,000 pieces out there. As we work backwards, however, the numbers get less. I will cautiously suggest that the number of different London leads manufactured c.1610-60 might be of the order of 2400, plus or minus a little {to be discussed later}, and once you get back to the 15th cent the number is even less.

Basically, there is a statistical formula for predicting, given the size of a random sample and the number of different features observed in it, how many different features are likely to exist in the series as a whole; i.e. how many types are missing from the sample, in addition to the ones present. Your sample has first of all to be large enough to be large enough for statistical process to apply; then if almost every piece is different you can expect the total number of varieties to be massive, with a huge margin of error. If however there are many repeats, you have a much more predictable coinage with a smaller number of features and a greater order of accuracy when calculating them.

Aware that most of you don't like maths, I'll quit that subject here and refer those of you who want to pursue it further to LTT's online bibliography, where I have listed references to some of the excellent work done by Warren Esty, an American maths professor and keen amateur numismatist, and by Stewart Lyon. It is normally applied to dies, but there is no reason why it should not be used on types if the same assumptions {e.g. large genuinely random samples} apply.

Translating that to BNJ54 Class M, there are a lot of repeats, hence the total number of designs out there is small; perhaps only several dozen if you include the basic types without minor varieties and letter/shield differences, something up around 120 or so if you do. Don't hold me to it, but that seems to be of the right order. BNJ quotes multiple examples for quite a lot of the pieces it lists, and the British Museum collection likewise duplicates extensively with both itself and BNJ.

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So, we look as if we have a fairly orderly issue, for once; what luxury! I list what varieties I know of overleaf, with some notes {I do not always agree with BNJ}, and invite everybody to mail in details of any further examples they know of. There will be some, but not a vast number, and it will be great to know what they are.

I have taken as my basis BNJ's three main subtypes, and omitted the peripheral material, which I believe might cloud the issue; i.e. I have considered, from their list, only pieces M.1-67. There is a problem of interpretation on some occasions, in that only 41 of these are illustrated, and I have therefore to conjecture what exactly is depicted; discussion of this I leave to the notes.

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Sorry about all that preamble! now we can get to the pieces; listed overleaf with cross-references to pictures on page 4. I subdivide these into letters, shields and other; which last mentioned I have sorted, in the table overleaf, into Powell classification type order. If anything is missing, that doesn't necessarily mean it is rare, just that I'm not aware of it yet. {Note: All pictures magnified by 1.5, as last month}

Letters: Almost invariably single, with the solitary exception of “ihc”, of ecclesiastical significance, discussed last month. Those seen appear to have a slight bias towards the early part of the alphabet, but so does a modern telephone directory!

Shields: All probably of fairly simple design, necessarily so given the space available to define them. Basic types known or thought likely to exist are:

- Shield quartered by linear cross.
- Shield with chevron {V-shaped band}
- Shield with inverted chevron
- Shield with bend {\\ shaped diagonal band, upper right to lower left}
- Shield with reversed bend {// shaped diagonal band, upper left to lower right}
- Shield with fess {straight band} - not yet seen

Superimposed on these basic designs, different parts of the field may then be void {blank} or chequy {shaded}, usually in a symmetrical manner.

Obverse design {within grenetis}	Note	BNJ54	Type	Fig.
Single letters {Gothic}		various	Lower-case (a,b,d,e,h,l,k,m,y) seen; also upper-case E	2 1
Multiple letters {Gothic}		5,63	Only "ihc" known	2 2
Shield {at least 5 vars}		various	See discussion above	16 3
6-petal	1	26		1 4
7-petal	1	66		1
8-petal	1	25		1
Square within a square, the whole quartered		35		7
Chequer of nine squares {2 vars}	2	33,34		7 5
Grid, unbounded				7
Tall jug with handle {2 vars}	3	65		11
Ewer, with handle & long spout {2 vars}	3	36,67		11
Whisky still	4	37		11
Cooking pot, with handles & feet		38		11
Round-bottomed bowl, no handles or feet		39		11
Fire bellows	5	40		11 11
Tau {thick Gothic T} cross flanked by stars		52		14
Fleur-de-lis {2 vars}	6	21,22		17
Plant with 3 stalks bearing 3 leaves apiece		23		17 6
Plant with flower on single stem		24		17
Bird		19		18
Double-headed eagle		20,64		18
Merchant mark	7	48,53	Uncertain, see notes	20
Single flail {2 vars}	8	41		21 7
Crossed double-flails	8			21
Suspended hunting horn		43		21
Double-edged comb		61		21 12
Church, with central tower				23
Tent	9	42		23 8
Open crown		57		25 13
Star over crescent moon {2 vars}		27		26 14
Double-edged comb		32		27
Spear head	7	17		27
Bell, narrow {2 vars}	10	28,60	Church bell	27 9
Bell, wide	10	29	Hawking bell	27
Candleholder with wax trap {2 vars}		44		27
Pair of crossed keys		31		27 10
Crossed sword & key		47		27
Arrow, ball containing cross at top	7		May be merchant mark	27
Tied ribbon	11			27
Star of David {2 vars}	12	58		30 15
Hand {4 vars}	13	14-16	Sometimes coin in hand	33 16,17
Genital organs	14	18,51		33 18
Heart				33



Other types: Notes as follows {see table on page 4}:

1. Petals seen to date seem to be of the solid variety.
2. 3x3 square known both with all nine squares blank and with alternate ones shaded.
3. Depictions of drinking utensils can usually be found with the handles and spouts either way round.
4. I am inclined to think that this is a whisky still, as opposed to another variety of ewer as suggested by BNJ54.
5. There is a piece which depicts an object like a frying pan or magnifying glass, sometimes with a pellet in it, which I suspect is BNJ's unillustrated fire bellows {M.40}.
6. BNJ says that there are two distinct styles of lis {M.21,22} without further distinguishing or illustrating either. The BM has one, in which the lis approximates to an inverted upright cross, the upper element somewhat bulbous, with the remaining elements of the lis disjoint in each quarter.
7. BNJ describes three obverses as merchant marks {M.44,48,53} and one as a spear head {M.17} without illustrating any of them. The BM has a piece which depicts a downward pointing arrow with a ball, containing a small cross, at the top; this might be either of the two above. It also has an object which looks like a fresh carrot, complete with foliage, which might be the spearhead. Sorry, not sure whether we have 2 or 3 different types here.
8. There is a minor variety of BNJ54's flail, or cat-o'-nine-tails {M.41} which has only eight tails. In addition, the BM has a piece with crossed flails, a totally separate design.
9. What BNJ54 calls a tin worker's strake {M.42}, may be a tabernacle or tent. I notice that the BM think similarly, and I suspect that the wear on the upper part of the design, on the BNJ specimen, has caused the confusion. It looks a bit like what the Roman numismatic fraternity would call a tetrastyle temple, i.e. with four pillars.
10. There are two distinctly different bells; I have seen them both. The church bell is the normal one which we see on later pieces, and is the more artistic of the two. For any type of bell, however, there are potential varieties both in the external decoration and in the style and protrusion of the clanger.
11. There is a piece in the BM which depicts what might be a tied ribbon, or a modern-day collar. I did wonder whether the object might be a pair of shears, although the join at the centre and the slightly unequal length of the two sides persuaded me that it was not.
12. Star of David, referred to by BNJ54 {M.58} as an "outline 6-point star". One variety has six pellets in the external angles and another in the centre, all fairly strong; another has just one rather delicate pellet in the centre.
13. BNJ54 invariably uses the word "gauntlet" rather than hand, but it only illustrates one of three subtypes quoted; the author suggests that wrist protection is shown, but I am uncertain whether ordinary or protective clothing is indicated. He also suggests that both right and left hand varieties are known, and that a decorative sprig sometimes appears in the field.
14. BNJ54 quote two examples of female genital organs but illustrates neither. From other specimens I have seen, I wonder whether "male" rather than "female" is intended.



Sorry I've had to cheat by using quite a few of last time's photographs, but available material is not in plentiful supply. I've even enlisted M.Forgeais' help, where the French used similar designs, to remedy the deficit!

