

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 dmpowell@waitrose.com or david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk. Please note that the old LTTeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Picture Gallery

Just catching up on readers' contributions this month, and my thanks to all of you who have sent pieces in for LTT to illustrate. As you see, they come with a variety of different backgrounds; I shall leave them in, so you can decide for yourself on the relative merits of each.



Figs.1-2 are two more of John Gough and friends' Nottinghamshire pieces; from different villages, but of a pleasingly similar size and patination which suggests that they may have come from the same source. At around 22mm, they look typically 18th cent. Fig.3, submitted by Clive Seldon, is an Essex piece, from somewhere outside Orsett; the four "ban-the-bomb" symbols in the angles, for lack of any better description, turn a conventional type 14 cross into a more interesting type 12 quartered geometric. The date, which appears to be 1817, is quite late; but if intended as small change, quite reasonable, given that the regal farthings did not recommence regularly until 1821. On the other hand, perhaps it is a picker's token; the initials are in a style typical of the period, such as might be found on the Kentish hop series.



Mark Jennings' Fig.4 is a Thames foreshore piece; an ordinary design but unusually finely engraved, with the parallel reverse right-angles in two quarters, made more interesting by the presence of two floral designs, possibly rosettes, in the others. Uniface and 20mm in diameter, I will guess at late 17th cent.

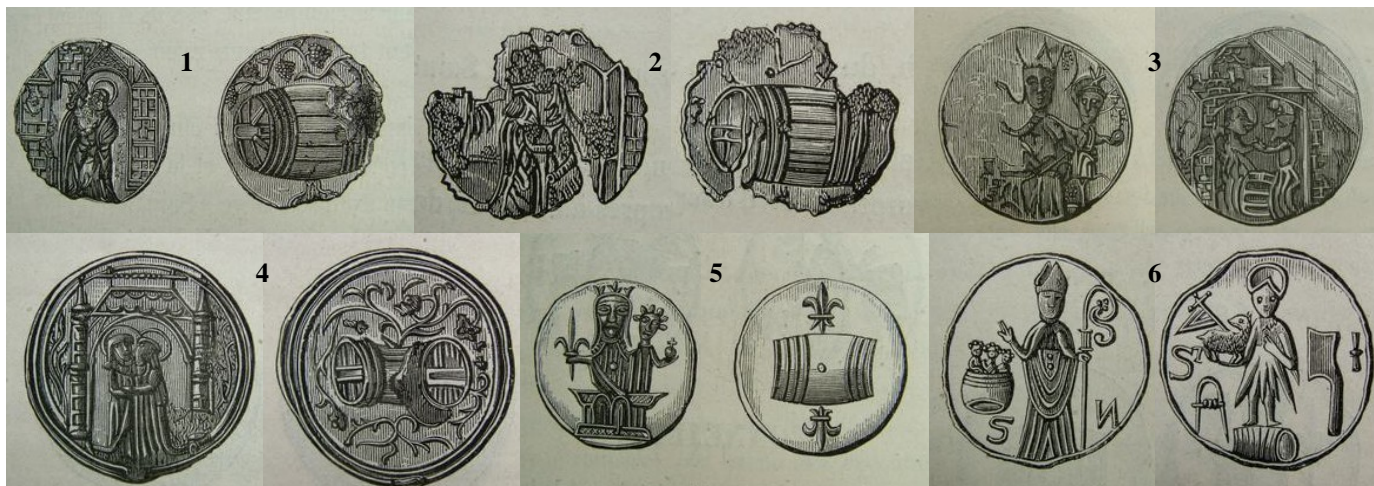


Gordon Steel's rather brownly-tinged Fig.5, actually found by his hunting partner, shows the two shields of the Commonwealth, 1649-60, and comes from the Northants/Bucks border; its most interesting feature is its symmetry, which could be coincidental but may not be. It could well be a seal. These Commonwealth shield pieces, sometimes surrounded by a wreath, crop up commonly enough to wonder whether they had any semi-official status, or whether they were just issued by supporters of that movement in the same way that many main series 17th cent tokens depict the king's head. However, there is not likely to be the same ambiguity as with the Royalist pieces for, whilst many pubs are called "The Kings Head", I can't imagine that the dour Cromwellians will have encouraged too many people to name hostelrys after them! I have seen another Commonwealth double-shield piece recently which appeared to have lettering around, although unhappily the flan was too small to read and the condition too poor to illustrate.

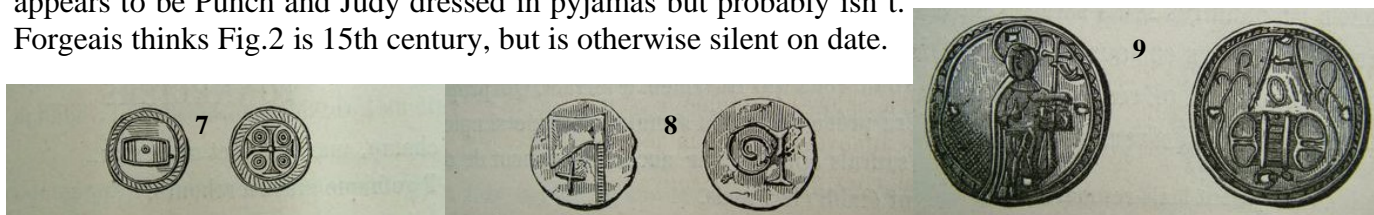
The pick of this month's pieces, however, is decidedly Fig.6; how often do you get a full placename and issuer and date on a lead token? My thanks to Simon Ashford and Gary Oddie for this little beauty.... Well, I perhaps I should say big beauty, as it is actually 45mm across. The town mentioned is actually just east of Huntingdon; no, it's not short for "God-awful Manchester"..... Simon is involved with the local museum, and Gary is hoping to produce a book on Huntingdonshire tokens, so if any of you can come up with any clues as to what the Godmanchester club actually is they will be very grateful; any info, please send to me, and I will make sure it gets passed it on. Our feeling is that it is probably the pass of a gentlemen's club, constituted of prominent local landowners; these were quite common at the time, although they rarely had cause to leave much in the way of records.



Forgeais' Guild Pieces, part 7



We start this month with the tonneliers, or coopers. The barrel is naturally the common theme, but appears in different guises. Figs.1,2,4 are all similar in concept; Saints Joachim and Anne are lingering over a fond evening farewell, on one of their doorsteps no doubt, whilst a well ornamented barrel occupies the whole of the other side. Fig.3 catches the said lady and gent earlier rather earlier in the evening, in party mode, on the obverse; whilst on the others side, the next barrel is being rolled out from under the stairs. Obviously a good evening; they do not look particularly sober. Fig.5, middle size for the series, shows what appears to be Punch and Judy dressed in pyjamas but probably isn't. Forgeais thinks Fig.2 is 15th century, but is otherwise silent on date.



Perhaps Joachim and Anne got sacked for not taking life seriously enough, for Fig.6 depicts two newcomers: St.Nicholas, who looks sedate enough with his crozier, and St.John the Baptist who, surrounded by his tools, is celebrating completion of a barrel by trying to balance on it.

The sizes of the tonneliers' pieces are very variable, and a couple of small flan pieces intervene. For those familiar with Mitchiner and Skinner's work in BNJ53/54, on the English series, Fig.7 looks particularly like their type M. It is not the only small flan piece to appear in both Forgeais and BNJ53/54, i.e. to be found in both the Seine and the Thames, and it begs the question as to what extent lead crossed the channel. Fig.8.shows a hatchet, one of the cooper's tools; a cross, no doubt to give the work blessing; and a retrograde gothic P, the purpose of which is totally unknown.

Fig.9 is a joint piece by the tonneleiers, the jaugers {quality controllers} and the déchargeurs; the last-mentioned probably being those who released the wine for sale. One of the same saints as in Fig.6 here, but in more sombre mode; the reverse, somewhat reminiscent of Fig.4. Forgeais says 15th cent.



A traiteur is not what he sounds like, otherwise one might expect a gallows or guillotine depicted. So, if it equates to "treater", what is treated? one might expect a tanner, or the like. No, a traiteur is a caterer; in consequence of which all manner of edible goodies in various stages in their preparation are depicted.. Figs.10-12 concentrate on the chicken, very much alive but with some ominous knives and spits awaiting; although why two ladies are shown in Fig.12, one in a doorway and the other up in a gallery, watching two children having a bath is uncertain. Forgeais suggests that they are related in some way to joints of meat,

and indeed it will be seen that at least a couple of figures are partial; no doubt some allegorical significance or artistic style of the times which I, 500 years on, do not appreciate.



One piece only from the vergettiers, or orchard keepers {Fig.13}, typical 15th cent in style, depicting a mounted St.Martin casting his cloak back behind him by way of donation to a pauper; what that has to do with orchard tending, I am not sure. On the other side, a chap coming out of his house with what looks like a large plank of wood; Forgeais informs me that his name is St.Barbe. Perhaps my translation is wrong, and a vergettier is something to do with the building trade, rather than husbandry.

Not far from the orchard keeper, however, is the Vigneron, or vine tender; specifically, according to Forgeais, the cutters and pickers. Two attractive pieces here {Figs.14,15}, depicting St.Vincent holding a jug, several of the vines whose produce went to fill it, and the knife with which he pruned them. Forgeais says that Figs.14,15 are 17th and 18th cent respectively, although they do not look greatly different from some of the earlier pieces. Late indeed by Forgeais standards.

Lastly this month the vinaigriers whom I might have thought were picklers; but no, these are again from the wine industry, this time from the beginning of the life-cycle; i.e. the planters. Two similar pieces {Figs.16,17}, attributed by Forgeais to the 16th and 17th cents respectively; one wonders again why there is nothing earlier. On one side the Virgin Mary and infant Jesus, looking very much as if they are bored with the whole thing and have gone to sleep. The second side is considerably more interesting. In the middle, three of what a 20th cent gardener might call a dibber, for making the hole in which the vine is to be put; or, alternatively, perhaps they are the supports by which the vine is to be held. Around the edge are the clips by means of which the vines are attached to their supports. Perhaps here, as much as anywhere else in the series, do the obverse and reverse contrast the theories and practicalities of life.



We conclude our examination of Forgeais' trade pieces next time by looking at the later stages of the wine trade, i.e. quality control and marketing.

{to be concluded}

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Just to let you know that detectorists don't have the monopoly of rural finds.....!!

Extract from The Numismatic Chronicle of 1922

BOVINE NUMISMATISTS.

Mr. Hann, an Eastchurch (Kent) butcher, continues to find old coins in the stomachs of bullocks slaughtered after grazing on the Sheppey marshes. Among those obtained from different animals are a small coin dated 1795, bearing the name of Victor Amed., of Sardinia; a Charles II. farthing, dated 1674; a George III halfpenny, dated 1806, and a Hamburg shilling, dated 1727.

Irish Times, 9 May 1922.

Have you got your Ticket for this Saturday's Hanging?

The illustrated token, 20mm, pewtery, and with a very smooth uniface reverse, depicts a double hanging; other pieces depicting single ones occasionally come to light. The upper crossbar of the gallows acts as an inverse exergue; there are two indistinguishable characters above it, definitely not a date, but possibly the initials of the victims. Another possibility might be an indication of the location of the seat or vantage point for which the ticket was being sold; for that surely was its purpose. All rather like Saturday afternoon at the football.



A description of a public hanging, conducted at the frequently-chosen time of 8am on the morning of 14 June 1856, is available at "www.staffspasttrack.org.uk/exhibit/palmer/the%20hanging.htm". I quote the section relating to the general public paying to view:

"They erected the portable gallows in the street just outside the gates of the gaol at 4.00 a.m. in the morning and people took this as a sign that there was to be no last minute pardon. At least twenty platforms had been built near the prison to give good views of the execution, with people being charged up to a guinea for a good view and the area around the prison had been packed from 5 a.m. as the crowd jostled to get a good view. There were even some platforms erected on roof-tops to give people, willing to pay, a good view of the hanging."

Perhaps that two-digit number/code in the exergue indicates which of those twenty-odd platforms is yours, in the same way that your ticket today indicates which entrance you should use to go into the stadium for the big game. I imagine that simply standing at the back of the crowd to watch a public hanging is a bit like watching a Test Match bowler from 75 yards at square of the wicket; nominally you are present, but not in a position to enjoy either the intricacies of the action or the banter. No zoom lenses, big screens, pitch microphones or action replays in those days; so if you were a connoisseur of hangings, you would need to pay big bucks for a token to guarantee you a decent seat or stand.

It is good for once to have a lead piece whose purpose and usage is so obvious. It cannot surely be a pub piece; can you imagine drinking at "The Gallows" or "The Two Hanged Men"? Aside from its macabre tale, however, we have the advantage of knowing that the piece is a pass rather than an item of substitute money. It comes from the Thameside, at Wapping, where both tokens and hangings were abundant, and brings with it a question: how many others of our crude leads were issued as tickets or passes for a specific event?

A question to ponder as we contemplate some of the series' many and often somewhat enigmatic choices of design. The finder thinks that the piece is 17th cent, which from its pewtery nature feels as if it might well be right, although with public hangings continuing well into the mid-19th cent I would think that some hanging tokens I have seen are certainly 18th cent.

Whether 17th or 18th cent, how many lead pieces would have commanded a guinea from their purchasers in either? which raises another issue, namely, when did the modern idea of ticketing systems come into being? Perhaps the humble lead was at the forefront of another current practice!

A Colonial Oddity

Australian dealer Vince Macdonald has had the illustrated piece show up in a pile of oddments and was wondering whether we had ever seen anything like it. It appears to depict a North American Indian chief in war bonnet facing left, with something which looks like a wine glass out in front of him. The reverse is more understandable; five shilling value as per hop token, but countersunk, and in a very different style. Diameter is 25mm but, Vince stresses, the piece is thicker than an old English crown. Local money, I guess, but whose? Ideas welcome.

