



Like These Drawings Of Lead Tokens From My Collection?

It's a display that ranges from fairly common types to hard-to-find and desirable pictorials including birds, lions, a crown, human faces and an interesting crescent-and-star design ... Sorry, we should be discussing whether I've drawn a Type 4, three Type 10's, a combinations of Types 4/18, or a -

But wait. I'm writing this piece on April 1st, and yes, I'm trying to fool you. The top row depicts designs seen on hammered silver penny reverses in the reigns of Ethelred II, Cnut, Harthacnut, Edward the Confessor, Stephen, Henry I and Edward VII. The second row has designs found on Continental *black money* - low grade coins made from alloys of tin, copper, lead and as little silver as their makers could get away with. They circulated—illegally or on a turn-a-blind-eye basis - alongside English silver pennies (in some reigns with groats) in markets, at fairs, in cities, towns, villages throughout England in early , perhaps later, medieval times.

Put yourself in the boots of a market trader in the England of Edward the Confessor in a year between 1042 and 1066 when the most recently minted penny had a reverse similar to the one I've drawn on the extreme right of row one above. You have a desperate need for halfpence and farthings to give as change, but they cannot be had for love nor money. You might easily cut some pennies along the guidelines provided by the cross. But recall how Gurthilda, your sharp-tongued wife, lashed you with cutting words when you got home from market last week to discover that two cut-quarters had slipped through a tiny hole in the bottom of your purse? Besides, are you comfortable about cutting the Holy Cross in your sinful quest for profit? Why not instead cast a few simple lead tokens and tell your customers they represent farthings, and that you will happily redeem them for a full penny when brought back to your stall four at a time?

Which mark or design might you cut in the chalk mould used to make your simple farthing tokens? What better than a copy of one of those four birds on the tails side of the penny? You might make another mould for halfpence and put two birds on it. And why not brand the other side of your tokens with your mark, or that strange letter the priest told you was the one your own name begins with?

Fanciful? Then please give me a less fanciful explanation for finds of crude lead tokens depicting birds in a field that has also yielded late Anglo-Saxon coins and artefacts, but NO coins of Georgian or Victorian vintage.

Research Pays Off

My successes during the past month have included a bird token (Type 18) and an ornate anchor (Type 5); but I derived almost as much pleasure from two interesting research successes. The first was the clear illustration of a Marl Pit Token, as shown in This Month's Gallery. It demonstrates the use of tallies to record labourers' wages.

The second was a find made in Southwark's Cuming Museum: a slip of paper dated 1846 recording the word **dump** as a term used for lead tokens in times past.

On Other Pages:

David Powell illustrates his 32 TYPES

How The Monks Of Paris Used Leaden Tokens

Initial Letters On Your Tokens

Small Ads: Swaps, Contacts, Miscellaneous, etc.

..... AND MORE



This Month's Gallery



A selection of recent leaden finds. Have you done as well .. or better? If you want to read next month's issue of the LTT just make sure you send me a 300 dpi scan of your best recent find or finds. Send scans as JPEG email attachments to LTTeditor@aol.com

David Powell On His Classification System

My name is David Powell. I'm a paranumismatist, that is, I am interested in fringe coinages which haven't been researched to death by the experts, and which therefore leave me space to do my own thing. I'm also an amateur genealogist, which helps with some series, although lead tokens usually have too little detail for that to be much use. Why do I like such a crude series? Well, I find the contrasting styles interesting, even just the different forms of the letters; I like their range and variety; I like the idea of leads being very much a "people's coinage", of local and personal interest, going down very much to the grass roots; and I like them because, despite their fascination, nobody ever seems to have bothered with them very much before. So, I decided that I would try to put together a classification system, despite the fact that leads obey few rules, see how it stood up, and take it from there. I finished up with 32 basic types, which I illustrate for starters below and hope to discuss in more detail in later issues; most pieces fit pretty well, just a few are awkward. Most of these pictured here are 18th century, which is what the majority of commonly found leads are, but not all. As for how the leads of earlier periods differ from those of the 1700s, well, keep reading!

EDITOR'S NOTE: I hope David Powell's contributions will feature regularly in forthcoming LTT issues. He has already booked a spot for next month and I can't wait to learn more. Make sure you benefit from his knowledge. Send me photos/images to qualify for your FREE May issue. No photos/images ... no May issue for you to enjoy.



Check those initial letters

These three tokens carry the initials IA ... HA ... WA. They come from a group of twelve found when clearing a possibly late-Tudor midden during building operations in Rochester, Kent. The other nine pieces - alas badly corroded - all had IA on one or both faces, but the IA in the photo was the only piece carrying an earlier style of lettering with a barred A and an I struck through by an additional crosspiece. Without documentary evidence we can only speculate that perhaps an older IA was the father or grandfather of the household, and that he used lead tokens during a time span in which his pieces were cast from more than one mould. His sons/daughters HA and WA continued the practice, but required fewer tokens. Fortunately the narrow confines of a midden kept these dozen losses or throwaways in a small area; but I'm sure similar family groups come to light on ploughed land where the significance of the initials passes unnoticed when finds are made by different people over several seasons.



Here's an interesting Scottish find - a lead token with the classic triangulation of initials seen on so many 17th century English copper tokens. A few English lead triples have recently come to light; assigned by this lettering style to the Elizabethan period. I feel sure more await discovery. Some may already languish in finds boxes, dismissed as not particularly interesting because letters arouse less enthusiasm than ornate pictorials. Please send me sharp photo prints, or 300 dpi JPEG scans to LTTeditor@aol.com ... and if you have any details linking initials to local families, farms, places, do please include them. Your illustrations will get you Issue 2 of this newsletter for free.

There's a slightly Gallic flavour to this first issue of the LTT, (see page 4) but my intention here lies in encouraging English token finders to concentrate search efforts on accessible land close to our own long-vanished or ruined ecclesiastical establishments where large numbers of unrecovered leaden pieces probably lie in the plough soil.

How The Monks Of Paris Used Leaden Tokens

The shrine of Saint James at Santiago in north-west Spain inspired pilgrims by the million to make perilous journeys along the rutted tracks that served as roads in early medieval Europe. Legend has it that in 44AD the apostle James died at the hands of Herod Agrippa in Palestine. His body was stolen by his disciples who then boarded a ship that was driven by storms to *Finis Terra* (today's Finisterre) where the corpse was laid to rest. Several centuries later a hermit discovered the grave thanks to guidance from a star. The spot became known as Campus Stella (Field Of The Star), now Campostella a place of miracles, including one that witnessed Saint James resurrected to fight alongside a Spanish king in a great victory over the Moors. The pope later declared that any Christian who made a pilgrimage to the shrine would be freed of all past sins. Hence those busy roads and tracks.

En route to Santiago the pilgrims rested at *hospitals* - lodgings run by monks and usually attached to a church or monastery. None had greater fame than the brotherhood of Saint Jacques au Pelarins in Paris where a huge hospital gave shelter to hundreds of weary pilgrims on every night of the year and over several centuries. The remains of stone buildings on the site were pulled down in the 19th century, but fortunately numerous written records kept by the monks survive to throw light on the ways in which tokens (French *mereaux*) featured in the day-to-day affairs of the establishment. They were used ...

As entry tickets to view and venerate relics of Saint James kept in the hospital.

As jettons when calculating the hospital's accounts.

As alms given to beggars who came to the hospital's door seeking the price of a meal (cf our Boy Bishop tokens)

As pieces in various games including draughts and hopscotch.

As tallies to record monks' attendance at daily church services and entitlement to monthly remunerations.

As tokens of membership of various charitable organizations that took their names from Saint James.

As receipts for dues and taxes paid by traders who set up stalls close to the hospital on market days.

As sew-on badges sold to pilgrims eager to display the saint's emblems.

What did these tokens and tallies look like? Many were manufactured within the hospital by monks skilled in the craft. They made their *mereaux* from brass, tin, pewter and lead. Some bore effigies of Saint James and one or more of his emblems - a scallop shell, a bumblebee, a pilgrim's hat. Those used in monetary transactions had Roman numerals (I, II, IV, VI recorded).

If what I've written here interests you please have a look at www.saint.jacques.info/mereauxParis where you will find an extensive bibliography; even a couple of illustrations depicting two of Saint James's lead tokens.

I acknowledge my debt to the authors of the text available at the above web page for information used when writing this piece.

**Found any
like these ...**



?

Send your photos or scans to

LTTeditor@aol.com

Parlez Vous Francais? ...

Vive la France! Vive la Difference!

Bonjour mes bons amis. J'ai vu beaucoup de votre mereaux trouvé en France nordique. Ils sont presque aussi intéressants que notre mereaux anglais. J'ai également pour sembler certains des nombreux livres et essais d'universitaire disponibles aux lecteurs français. Ils sont des sources bien meilleures de connaissance que quelque chose nous ont en Angleterre. Veuillez partager vos découvertes avec nous. Dites-nous au sujet de votre mereaux. Dites-nous au sujet de l'histoire de leur utilisation que vous avez découverte tout en lisant. Nous savons que l'histoire sociale médiévale de l'Angleterre a eu beaucoup de similitudes avec la vie quotidienne en France en ces siècles. Je regrette que peu de nous parlent votre langue. Mais grâce aux services des services de traduction électroniques librement disponibles sur l'Internet, nous POUVONS communiquer si vous pardonnez les nombreuses erreurs que nous faisons. Écrivez en français ou anglais. Si vous nous écrivez au sujet du mereaux la volonté trouve des moyens de comprendre.



Des champs de la France nordique

From the fields of northern France

Attention Brits!

I SPEAK/WRITE FRENCH AT ABOUT THE PITCH OF AN ELEVEN-YEAR-OLD DEAD KEEN TO GET INTO THE SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM. IF YOU ARE IN THE SAME MONOGLOT BOAT I CAN RECOMMEND THE FREE TRANSLATION SERVICE AVAILABLE AT WWW.BABELFISH.COM. THE RESULTS ARE FAR FROM PERFECT, BUT YOUR FRENCH CONTACTS WILL GET THE GIST OF YOUR COMMUNICATIONS. IF YOU ARE LUCKY THEY MAY EVEN REPLY USING THE SAME SERVICE. MEANWHILE, HERE'S A TRANSLATION OF WHAT I ATTEMPTED TO SAY ABOVE::

Hello my good friends. I have seen many of your tokens found in northern France. They are almost as interesting as our English tokens. I have also seen some of the many books and academic essays available to French readers. They are much better sources of knowledge than anything we have in England. Please share your many discoveries with us. Tell us about your tokens. Tell us about the history of their use you have uncovered while reading. We know that England's medieval social history had many similarities with everyday life in France in those centuries.

I regret that few of us speak your language. But thanks to electronic translation services freely available on the internet, we CAN communicate if you forgive the many errors we make. Write in French or English. So long as you write about tokens we will finds ways to understand.

Attention Museum Curators & Archaeologists

Over the next twelve months the Leaden Tokens Telegraph will feature an astonishing variety of lead/pewter tokens and tallies found, largely by metal detectorists, in fields and open spaces across Britain. Keep copies of this newsletter on file and by this time next year you should have little difficulty in identifying many leaden pieces brought to your museum by local finders.

I ask in return that you assist me, and those who contribute to the LTT, in bringing to public attention some of the thousands of leaden tokens and tallies presently in safe storage in museums, though rarely exhibited in display cases.

During a recent trip to a London museum (The Cuming Museum in Southwark) a colleague and I received the news that nobody had asked to see their several hundred leaden pieces during the past five years. Yet I am acquainted with equal hundreds of keen leaden tokens enthusiasts across London and North Kent who were quite unaware that the Cuming had any leaden tokens in its collection.

To help overcoming such communication breakdowns I'd like these pages to provide readers with brief details of what regional and local museums across Britain have to interest leaden tokens enthusiasts. I shall be pleased to publish any information you send to LTTeditor@aol.com

Just as welcome would be a communication from any archaeologist who can tell me about leaden token finds in archaeological contexts - beneath floors, under walls, etc. Amazingly I can find no record of a find of the ubiquitous Type 1 (petal) token coming to light in a situation where its age could be reasonably estimated by the context. Many thousands of Type 1 tokens have come from ploughsoil in fields as far apart as the Loire valley and the Tyne valley. Surely some must have turned up on archaeological digs?

Whether curator or archaeologist, would you care to take up the challenge of writing BRIEFLY on any aspect of leaden tokens - history, discovery, conservation, research, recommended reading, museum collections worth seeing, etc. I can offer you half a page ... an entire page if you possess a flair for entertaining and enlightening words. Your prize: the next twelve issues of the LTT. All contribs by email to LTTeditor@aol.com

PLEASE NOTE: THE EDITOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO EDIT ALL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR LENGTH AND STYLE.

Small Ads: Swaps, Contacts, Miscellaneous, etc.

Look at this

.... virgin space on which you can reach out to your fellow enthusiasts. We have no ads this month - apart from mine. Please keep 'em brief and send 'em to LTTeditor@aol.com

M 60s, g.s.o.h.; n/s, creative, passionate about lead, seeks slim, attract. F alchemist to transmute his base metal to gold. BOX1