

A free newsletter to all who contribute illustrations for use in the forthcoming book, *Leaden Tokens & Tallies*. To receive Issue Three of this newsletter you must send the editor at least one 300 dpi JPEG scan, or a sharply focused photo print, of any interesting leaden token in your collection. Send images as email attachments to LTTeditor@aol.com

Catch Up On Usage Research Here



fig. 1



Not a lead token.
A grinding wheel
from an old mill.



fig. 2

Thanks largely to the sterling efforts of my colleague, David Powell, a dramatic change occurred in the readership profile of this newsletter during the four-week life of Issue One. As a result I find myself addressing far more paranumismatists than I ever thought would read these pages. I've also enjoyed hearing from archaeologists and museums staff expressing interest in the contents. Detectorists - still the largest group of readers - know the newsletter began as a feature on tokens and tallies appearing occasionally in *Treasure Hunting* magazine. But I cannot reasonably expect non-detectorists to seek out TH's back issues, so I must recap with a few paragraphs and a dozen images to bring other readers up-to-date on one of the most important unanswered questions about our subject: *what were the many uses served by leaden tokens and tallies?*

I posed that question about a group of tokens similar to those seen in fig.1 above. They depict what I think are windmill sails and the grinding surfaces of millwheels. (A late entry here shows an entire windmill.) I asked the magazine's readers to tell me of any finds made close to windmill and watermill sites. I also asked members of the Mills Research Group, and any archaeologists who read TH, to let me hear of finds of what I called "mill tokens" in datable contexts. I also mentioned that I had recently stumbled upon a fact-filled French work titled *Une Histoire Economique E Populaire Du Moyen Age: Les Jetons Et Les Méreaux*. Its author, Jacques Labrot, cites ecclesiastical records when describing the use of "méreaux de mouture", which I translate as *milling tokens*. They were leaden and they frequently depicted a mill wheel on one or both faces.

Sounds familiar? Monsieur Lebrout goes on to remind us that abbots and lords of the manor usually controlled village watermills and had the right to appoint the miller and instruct him to collect milling dues. He cites the example of a watermill in Catalonia, Spain, where surviving records tell of milling dues collected in the 14th and 16th centuries.

(I learned later from pages posted by the Society For The Protection Of Ancient Buildings that Suffolk once boasted almost 500 windmills, and that "windmill sails were originally like four wooden ladders onto which the miller could clamber to thread the desired amount of canvas according to the wind speed." Can you see something similar on a couple of the tokens in Fig 1?

Fig 2 shows photos I used to illustrate a short feature on the ancient game of hopscotch. A court for such a game was discovered engraved on a white marble flagstone of the 4th century Gallo-Roman sanctuary of Valentine in Haute-Garonne. And Lebrout mentions a treatise on hopscotch (*merelles*) played on a table with leaden pieces and dating from the 14th century. Furthermore he depicts leaden pieces very much like our Types 7 and 9, dating them to the 14th century and captioning the illustrations with: "Piece probably used as pawn/checker in the game of hopscotch, [with the court] depicted [on the piece]. Lead, 14th century; 12 mm." ... and ... "Piece used in the game of draughts [or chequers]. In its centre we see the chequerboard and its pieces. Lead, 14th century; 12 mm." Labrot also cites a 12th century regulation forbidding the friars of a certain religious order from playing games, including hopscotch. *Were English friars just as playful?*

Not much room for anything new on usage this month, so I shall home-in on a single piece, shown here actual size. It has Roman numerals - VIII - and 8 pellets on one face... with 8 segments on the other divided by 8 prominent raised lines. The issuer seemed eager to ensure any recipient got the message: This is worth EIGHT ????. Now consider this, written by paranumismatist J H Burn in 1853: *The impossibility of coining [...] farthings in silver [...] in a size to be held or manually felt by the rough hand of the hard-working labourer ... [induced projects for copper coins] ... but the Queen's [Eliz I] predilections stultified the appearance of any such coinage.*



Well, any rough-handed labourer knew what he held when this rough leaden piece crossed his palm - even in the dark. Comments please.

David Powell On His Classification System

We cannot always say in this series which is the obverse and which the reverse; but let us say that issuers' initials stake the first claim for consideration as an obverse, and that a definite design has higher claim than an indefinite one. In many cases the matter is decided by the fact that the piece is uniface, or nearly so. A small number of pieces are genuine hybrids of two types with neither predominating. We must accept this, and I shall discuss examples of some of these more difficult cases as we move along. So, here we go!

Convention

When writing down the classification of a piece that has a six-petal on one side and initials on the other, write 2/1. The initials are more important than the petals, but if you write 1/2 don't worry. If the initials are within a rim of shading, it is 28.2/1. (Type 28 is a law unto itself, with the second number describing the main subject, and we will get to it in due course.) If instead of a six-petal the reverse is a plant (17) in a pot (27) and you can't decide on importance, settle for 28.2/17-27.

Type 0: Uniface

Four tokens in seven have blank or nearly blank faces, so we need a number to show that. Zero seems obvious; if a token has a six petal on one side and nothing on the other, we describe it as type 1/0. Always look closely at the blank sides. Many are totally flat, but you may see one where you can't with certainty say whether it is blank or not. Using digital photography to blow up an image may decide the matter, but even that is often inconclusive.

Type 1: Petals



Marginally more interesting than uniface; and, apart possibly from initials, the commonest type. The number of petals varies between three and six, with five or six most frequent. Occasional pieces, usually larger, have the petals superimposed on a second design.

Why do we have type 1 for petals and type 17 for plants and their produce, you ask? Primarily because type 1 would dwarf type 17, and because, even if we don't know exactly what it is, those petals seem to have some deep, possibly religious, medieval significance. I won't digress into that here, but one thing is plain; several of these commonest, low-numbered types were used over a period of several centuries. You can certainly find six-petals on medieval pewter, the precursor of English lead (but also co-produced with it at some periods) back to the 15th, possibly even the 14th, century.

Occasional variants include the presence of an outer rim very near the edge, and/or a pellet or two between each component. It is not that unusual for one or two of the curves which mark the side of the petals to be missing, which looks odd, but is of no great significance, being merely one of the idiosyncrasies of crude engraving and manufacture. Pieces are also occasionally seen in which one or all of the petals are solid, i.e. filled in, which makes them reminiscent of an aircraft propeller.

As you will see from the illustrations, there are variations of theme on even a simple type; e.g. the square in the middle, or the lined background. With one of them it could even be debated whether the five supposed petals are in fact an exotic fish! I doubt it, but it serves as an example of how, sometimes, this series can tempt the imagination too far.

I mentioned outer rims. That doesn't make any piece a type 28 unless (i) there is a significant band round the edge and (ii) it is filled with something. A simple circular line, either on the edge or a little set in, does not affect the issue. I notice that they appear to like their rims well set in up on Tyneside, but that observation is not off a very large sample. Anybody care to comment? >>



>>Well, that has got a few of the preliminaries out of the way, and next time we can launch straight into some of the more interesting types.

In a forthcoming issue David Powell will respond to queries and comments about his classification system. Don't miss an issue. Send your scans and photos NOW. The Editor

Scottish Pictorials - Where Are They Hiding?

Communion Tokens excepted, I've seen precious few leaden pieces from north of the border during the twelve months in which I've appealed to detector owners and fieldwalkers for photos and images of their best leaden finds. I can think of a couple of reasons for this apparent lack of results. Numerous unadorned 19th century leaden farthings bearing little more than issuer's initials have probably turned up. They often have incised rather than moulded lettering and they don't look attractive, so don't get photographed.

But as the accompanying illustrations show, pictorial leaden farthings did indeed circulate locally in Scotland. The examples shown here (with one exception) come from the out-of-print Dalton & Hamer catalogue titled *The Provincial Token Coinage Of The 18th Century: Scotland*. (1916) Its pages included, as a sort of addenda, more than 200 "lead and tin farthings" of the 19th century.



The *fat fish* piece shown above came from a building site spoil-heap in Leith. I've placed it alongside a Musselborough farthing from the catalogue, though Dalton & Hamer don't list it. Its other face is very definitely a Type 7 grid, so the piece may have journeyed to Leith in a Sassenach's pocket.

On another building site (Edinburgh) the same man found the unusual leaden piece shown below. Hearts often occur on English leaden pieces; complete words rarely. This has *Lammas Heart* and a small heart on its other face.



I would advise Scottish detectorists seeking leaden finds to concentrate on sites closer to city/town/village centres. Those leaden farthings did not wander far from home. They are likely to have become lost in gardens, allotment sites and close to busy riversides rather than in open fields. And just in case I've upset the Jocks by suggesting that their leaden pieces are not so attractive as ours, here are the twin faces of a lovely Fifeshire lead seal found by a reader:



Français D'Attention !

Veillez vérifier vos découvertes soigneusement. Avez-vous trouvé un mereaux avec des conceptions de type 1 ? Ce type est ainsi terrain communal en Angleterre qu'il doit sûrement se produire fréquemment en France. Un detectorist français nous a envoyé des photos de ses joints de sac. Nous aimons les voir parce que beaucoup de conceptions se produisent également sur le mereaux. Envoyez vos 300 balayages de JPEG de dpi à LTTeditor@aol.com



Attention Frenchmen! Please check your discoveries carefully. Have you found any mereaux with TYPE 1 designs? This type is so common in England it must surely occur frequently in France.

A French detectorist sent us photos of his bag seals. We like to see them because many designs also occur on mereaux. Send your 300 dpi JPEG scans to LTTeditor@aol.com

Help Us With These Projects!

Were tokens deliberately halved?

The best evidence in support of the argument that leaden tokens serving as local currency were halved, perhaps even quartered, to make smaller denominations comes from finds of cut pieces. However, the slicing of a lost leaden token by a farming tool must also occur from time-to-time. Please send scans or photo prints of YOUR cut finds to LTTeditor@aol.com



The piece LEFT was cut cleanly through its voided cross. The piece RIGHT seems randomly sliced.



Horn Books

These leaden artefacts rarely escape damage in the soil. But even fragmented they make fascinating finds. Please tell us about yours.



A Bird In The Hand



I have already suggested a use for leaden tokens depicting birds: they may have served as tallies to record the toils of children hired as human scarecrows on newly sown fields. We have documentary evidence that such work was done by children as young as three in past centuries. Small hands clutching heavy tokens also offered many opportunities for loss.

Now I have another suggestion: they may have served as gaming pieces to record scores in the cruel medieval game of *tossing-the-cock*. Each competitor brought his/her own bird to the pitch. Each also brought a cleft stick. The illustration above shows how the stick, gripping the bird's neck, was hurled as far as the player could throw it.

In this month's TYPES series David Powell points out that imagination can run wild when looking at the designs on tokens. Am I guilty of that sin when I say I'm sure I can see a cleft stick around the neck of the bird in the token at top right? Can YOU see it? Seen anything like it before? Please send a 300 dpi scan.

You Can Read This, But Others Can't. Give Them A Helping Hand

I experienced surprise and disappointment when I learned that so many detectorists do not have PCs capable of downloading and reading the *Leaden Tokens Telegraph*. If you are reading this page in the comfort of your own home you probably have Windows 98 or later, AND you have downloaded Acrobat 5. As you will see from the Small Ads section, I have made arrangements for back issues of the LTT to appear on a very popular metal detectorists' web site. David Powell has done something similar for our numismatic readers. But making-do with back issues and missing out on the chance to win free copies of the terrific book that will eventually come out of this exercise seems a second-rate solution.

Could YOU show a detectorist friend how to download Acrobat 5; perhaps even convince him/her that having an up-to-date PC is one of the best steps to take in any quest for good sites? Or, if you plan to up-grade your PC, why not pass on your old model to a fellow detectorist?

Some Recent Choice Finds....



Small Ads: Swaps, Contacts, Miscellaneous, etc.

NO PC AT HOME?

You can now view all back issues of the LTT at any public library or internet café. Go to: www.treasurehunting.tv then click on Articles ... then click on *Leaden Tokens*

NOTE: To get the LATEST ISSUE on your PC screen you must send us a 300 dpi JPEG scan or a sharp photo print of any leaden piece in your collection. If you send illustrations you could win a signed FREE copy of the book on publication.

NUMISMATIST?

You can view back issues at <http://www.leadtokens.org.uk>

AT THREE CRANES

If you have any lead tokens with part of legend reading AT THREE CRANES please contact Phil Mernick who is researching them. Email: phil@mernicks.com Phone: 020-8980-5672

Get Into PRINT

Edward (Ted) Fletcher, best-selling author and magazine journalist; First Class Hons English Degree; wants to hear from you if you have a good story to tell ... or a collection that includes photographable finds. You could earn fees if you get into print. Drop me an initial email line at:

fletchnews@aol.com