

# Tokens Galore

**M**y Interest in history began as a schoolboy, when I started to do a lot of fieldwalking and helping on excavations around the village in Lincolnshire where I lived. In all that time I never once picked up a lead token; in fact, I didn't even know they existed.

It was a different story when I moved down to Shropshire. I managed to get some land around the village to search after I bought a second-hand detector, and was soon finding tokens and hammered coins but in the main it was tokens. I put them in a box in the shed and it wasn't until I read an article in



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Fig.2. These examples show a wide variety of sizes, but all were found in the same location. Does this indicate different values or were they cast years apart?

Fig.1. Forty different designs of tokens in various sizes; this is by no means all the patterns found. Some are very crudely made indeed, while others are finely executed.



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Fig. 3. These are tokens with the initials T, WO, WL, WB, W, IB, HB, B, R, and H. As yet I have been unable to put names to these initials.



Fig.4. Some of the more unusual tokens....if indeed they are tokens and not just cast novelty pieces or children's play things.



Figs.5a & b. The two bells could possibly have been used as pub tokens, as we have a local called The Bell Inn. The crowns with the initials C.R. may have connections with King Charles who hid in the oak tree after he fled the Battle of Worcester.



**Treasure Hunting** by Edward Fletcher asking if readers would send in photographs of their lead tokens that the box came out. I counted up the number of my tokens. It came to over 700, which was quite a surprise! Having photographed several of the better ones, I sent images of them to Ted Fletcher. It was nice to find one or two illustrated in his excellent book **Tokens & Tallies**, which has gone a long way in explaining the use of tokens. But until more research is carried out and excavations produce stratified finds, the full story won't be known.

I presently have close to 1,000 tokens – hence the title of my article is “Tokens Galore”. In the early days tokens came out at several a day; now it's one a week if I'm lucky. But this is to be expected after detecting the same few fields for over 30 years!

With all these tokens being found in

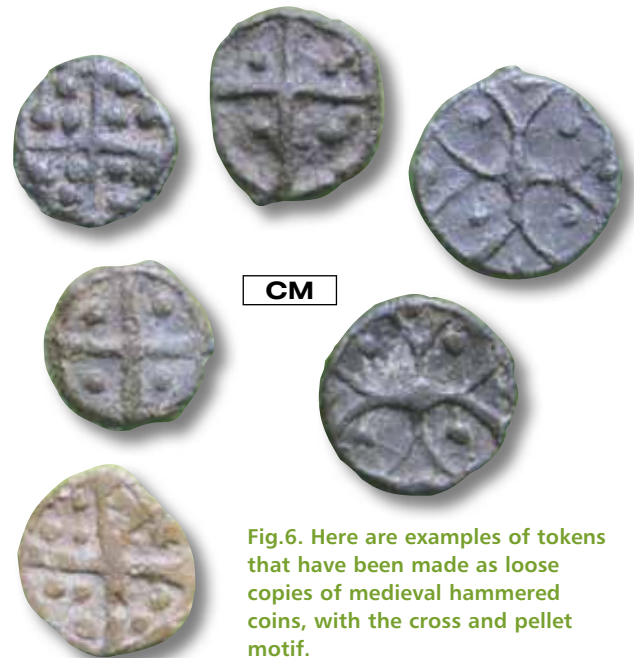


Fig.6. Here are examples of tokens that have been made as loose copies of medieval hammered coins, with the cross and pellet motif.

the fields surrounding a small village, what is going on?! The short answer is that I haven't got a clue! Maybe they were used as tallies for picking peas or potatoes, or maybe something to do with the church. I have studied church records looking for answers, but found no mention of lead tokens.

It will take a lot more work by detectorists and academics before we get answers to this puzzle. In the meantime I'll carry on digging them up and recording them. TH

**Fig.7. An indication of the varying degrees of workmanship. The bottom eight are very crudely cast, while the top eight show a far more intricate design.**



**Fig.9. Untrimmed tokens; perhaps this is an indication that they were made locally? As yet I have found no traces of moulds but several pieces of crucible have been picked up in the token fields. It is possible that these may not have anything to do with the casting of tokens, as much bronze waste and slag is also found on these fields.**



**Fig.8. These tokens look as if they were cast with the impression of an 18th century tombac button (not as shown).**

