

Times Past

Issue No. 22, Winter 2005/6

Storrington & District Museum

Preserving Yesterday for Tomorrow

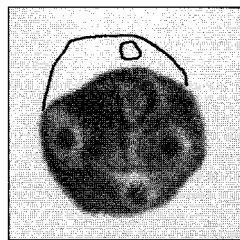
Storrington's Own Coinage

by
John Mann

During the ongoing restoration of "Little Boltens" in Church Street, Storrington, a number of medieval coins have been found. These items were, of course, dropped and lost in the course of every day activity, rather than being deliberately hidden away. One very surprising feature, however, to anyone who, like me, is not knowledgeable about coins from this period, is that nearly all those that were discovered are made from lead and carry very crude designs.

A little research revealed that the lead coins are not, in fact, coins in the true sense of our understanding of the word, but are, in fact, tokens. Tokens of this kind were minted on a very local basis throughout Britain from medieval times. During this period, apparently, there was a shortage of low denomination coinage; in other words, there was no 'small change.' It is believed that local businesses, farmers and other persons of substance, who employed labour, minted these tokens to pay those who had worked for them. It is thought that the tokens were exchanged for higher denomination coinage, when sufficient had been earned, or alternatively, they could be swapped with local traders and other businesses for goods and produce.

All sorts of questions spring to mind when you consider this system and, if you read the papers dealing with the subject, nobody has a full picture of how it worked and was regulated. The melting and casting of lead was widely understood and practised in these times, so what was to stop people making their own copies? Is



One of the "clipped" tokens.

the reason why so many of the tokens, found in the building, have been 'clipped', because some people saved up the lead clippings to make extra coins? Or, was it, merely, that small pieces of lead were a useful malleable material in an age when many every day items were maintained and manufactured in the

home? Today, in an age when monetary fraud, of all kinds, is commonplace, it seems anachronistic that such a simple system could ever have operated successfully and for so long.

What may come as something of a surprise is, that schemes that use tokens in exchange for labour operate to this day. What is interesting about these systems, in relation to lead tokens, is that exactly the same kind of questions go through your mind when you hear how they operate. You may be familiar with the babysitting circles, which use various tokens, such as old fashioned curtain rings or large metal washers as a means of regulating the pooling of peoples services; briefly, one token is earned for every half hour of 'sitting' and, in these schemes, you can only have a sitter to look after your children if you have tokens to spend, or a good friend to borrow from! You may also have heard of the increasingly popular community resource schemes that pool the skills and services offered by local people, managing this exchange with a

system of 'credit' tokens; 'you keep my hedges in trim, because I can't go up ladders any more, and I'll do peoples ironing, tax return etc.'

When I have asked people participating in these schemes how they can trust that there is no 'cheating' going on, I have always been put firmly and somewhat ashamedly in my place with the same kind of answer, 'because you don't, do you!' Or, 'you'd be cheating on everyone else,' and, 'if you were found out, everyone around here would know what you had been doing and I wouldn't want that!' Who said, in the context of political economics, 'there is no such thing as society?' Perhaps, what enabled the token system to work was that it too had a broader, community basis than is now apparent. Was it the power of the

community in conjunction with capital that lay behind, what became, the wide and popular usage of this essentially monetary system?

This illustration shows one of the 'clipped' tokens that were found; they are thought to be consistent with the design and pattern of 15th century tokens and the two coins that were found were from this period. Does the symbol denote the 'P' as in 'Pax' ? The round dots are a typical feature of many tokens made at this time; do they denote the cross, which is usually associated with the symbol? Has anyone found tokens in the Storrington area with the same pattern? I believe this type of coin is a common find for those using metal detectors. I understand the museum has a few tokens from other sources; does anyone know of any other, 'local' examples?

#####

Older members may well remember 'Children's Newspaper, a serious attempt to inform youngsters in the troubled Twenties and Thirties. Its founder was Arthur Mee, a prolific writer, mainly of children's books, who also wrote guide books which contained a measure of local history as well. His was a precocious talent, becoming Editor of 'The Nottingham Evening News' at the age of twenty. We now publish some extracts, with comments, from

Arthur Mee's 'SUSSEX' (Hodder & Stoughton)

"For millions of people, this strip of England, bordered by the Channel for nearly eighty miles, crammed with hundreds of enchanting villages and with the Downs running through, is the natural glory of our island. It cannot be called rich; it has no great masses of population and no great seats of industry; but no county is more beloved by those who live in it and those who come and go."

It is over 60 years since Mee wrote this and we know now that things are not as they were! Could he, in 1937, have foreseen Sussex as the county over which a life and death struggle for air control took place and, with it, the future of Britain and much more? Could he have guessed that Sussex, with a human population possibly less than that of sheep, should now be such a magnet for so many Britons that house prices are among the highest in the country? Of Storrington he has little to say-.

"O, there were flowers in Storrington", wrote Francis Thompson who came here to be nursed back to health after his London misadventures. He wrote some of his poems at the monastery here."

He is enthusiastic about the Abbey, as it was, and about its reproduction Indian gates, but little else. But nearby Sullington and Parham are handsomely treated. Sullington was then clearly separate from Storrington and had its own history.

"It is a lovely little place, far from world's ignoble strife, with a fine view from its lychgate of Chanctonbury Ring But we should see it in the springtime, the sexton said, with a thousand sheep coming over the hill, every lamb knowing it's mother ."

Canon Palmer intrigued him as he and his diary still do and he refers to the stone monument, in the church, of Sir William de Covert, which Mee thought was the oldest in Sussex. But he does not mention the fact that, at the rectory, A.J.Cronin (of Doctor Finlay fame) lived and wrote 'The Crusaders Tomb', clearly inspired by the effigy of Sir William. Much of the open country between old Sullington and Storrington has disappeared under many hundreds of post-1945 houses but the church., the barn, the rectory and cottages remain as they were in Cronin's and Mee's days.

By 1937,, when 'Sussex' was published. Dr.Cronin was already a world-famous writer of popular novels with several Hollywood films to his credit. But no mention in 'Sussex' !

"Parham". It has one of the magnificent houses of Sussex, in one of its richest parks, and side-by-side with the great house stands the little church, none too proud in the company of so aristocratic a neighbour. Lord Zouche's stately Tudor house (!) is set in a park of 500 acres, full of cedars and bracken and lily ponds."

Readers may begin to suspect that something is wrong with Mee's information and time table. "Sussex" had its first print in 1937 by which time Parham had been in the possession of the Pearson family for fifteen years. The only Zouches left at Parham in 1937 were in a corner of the quiet churchyard.



The Church & Churchyard at Parham where the Zouches now rest.

But let us now look at Arthur's view of Coolham.

"Coolham. It is on the map, but that is all; it lies far from anywhere, down the lanes in a hidden corner of the Sussex Weald, with one house that draws us to it. The house is called the Blue Idol, for some strange reason we do not know. "

"Strange is about right! Coolham is today, and was then, an important crossroad junction and, (but neither Mee nor his disorientated informant could have known this) a field from which the Polish airforce carried out important and costly raids in the D- Day- plus invasion of France in 1944.

Stopham comes in for very full coverage as is proper for a hamlet almost unchanged for centuries and which has been in the care of the Barttelot family since the Norman Conquest.

"(They) were once able to ride from Stopham to Horsham without leaving their own ground (There is a Barttelot road in Horsham).

Mee was also lyrical about Thakeham.

"Thakeham Street is one of those old ways we do not forget, seeming to narrow as we ride down it, with flowers and green banks. and then the hollow, with church perched on a hill. but -we must pause at the gate for the greeting of 12 men of Thakeham who, though they died for us still speak, saying.-

"We lie dead in many lands that you may live here in peace"

Since then the 12 have become 24, first on the memorial George Baker, H.M.S. Hood, the world's biggest warship, sunk with all but three of its 1,421 crew, on May 24th, 1941 when a shell from the Bismarck blew up the magazine.

Arthur Mee saw Crawley as it was before it became a New Town and was nearly swallowed up by Gatwick airport.

"It gathers itself about one of the most charming old streets in Sussex, with green ways and trees and delightful houses. "

West Chiltington, much changed since Mee's visit (if indeed he did!), comes in for special attention because of the unique paintings on the walls of its ancient church.

"A charming treasure house it has, though its walls have lost the glory of the pictures which covered them before the days of Magna Carta. Some of them we could recognise when we called, but this great range of 12th and 13th century Bible scenes was fading away. We can almost see the Entry into Jerusalem., , The Calvary, and the angels appearing to the shepherds.."

A marble tablet near the altar amused him. It tells of the Rector of Sullington's wife who died in 1744 and is fondly remembered by *"And now perjury and forgery can hurt no longer. "*

The village museum, the stocks and whipping post are noted as well as a big patchwork quilt made by a village girl three years after Waterloo.

"But the most remarkable thing about West Chiltington is the extraordinary peephole for the altar.. It is one of the longest we have seen; about ten feet, and nailed down to it at one end is the great lock of the old church door, and the key which fastened it for 600 years. One of the rectors who used this key died a few years before Shakespeare, after preaching here for 50 years and living through nearly all the Armada century. "

There is more about the ancient church.

'We come (to the frescoes) through a fine Norman doorway whith a beautiful arch.... The elegant oak pulpit of the 17th century is panelled with linenfold. There are some old beams in the roof, and the timbers of the porch have braved the weatherfor 700 years."

So the old centre of the village remains largely as it was in 1937 - and for hundreds of years before that. Long may it be so!

The King's English series, all edited by Arthur Mee, set out to cover every county in the country. "Every place has been visited" it claims but it does not say when or by whom. None-the-less it remains a very readable and informative work for those who love Sussex.

Letters to the Editor:-

Dear Sirs

I have been very interested in the various articles about Roundabout and the Wells Estate. As a weekly boarder at Steyning Grammar School, one of my closest friends was Ralph Eames. His mother was a G.P.in Storrington, and father(Felix)was an artist;and they lived in (I think) Sunset Lane, appropriately, the house was called 'Ninety-Nine'and had all the Wells' features of thatch and wooden door latches etc., but, very advanced for those days,they had a swimming - pool which I believe they had excavated themselves.

Ralph and I used to spend a lot of time charging about the lanes on bikes (no traffic !),and on one occasion we landed up in the Wells sandpit mentioned in your article.

We were busy digging holes and so on,when a loud and threatening voice suddenly shouted "Stop that at once, get out and never come in here again".

So I can say that I actually met Mr Wells - but not in the generally accepted social sense !

Geoff Goarcher.

#####

Dear Sirs,

A few weeks ago somebody left a package of early photos in the letter box at the Old School. These photos are much appreciated. Would the anonymous donor please come forward because we would like to say thank you and obtain more information about the pics.

A Museum Steward

#####

Matchless !

Dear Sirs,

At our meeting on October 10th, we needed a match to light the gas in the kitchen. Not one of the fifty -odd people in the hall could produce one; very encouraging news for the anti- smoking lobby !

The on-duty kitchen steward.

John Major - "a nice chap" (Betty Boothroyd)- had plenty of trouble with some members of his government. In addition to the Eurosceptics there were a few who took advantage of the loose rules on behaviour by advancing their own financial interests. But such infringements were trivial in comparison with what went on in the -18th and 19th centuries when, in matters political,

HORSHAM LED THE WAY!

The background to the scandalous doings in Horsham was;

1. only about one Briton in fifty was able to vote
2. great new cities like Manchester, which had about 200,000 people, had no M.P.s while "rotten boroughs" like Old Sarum, were deserted yet could return 2 M.P.s
3. the vote was open
4. ".pocket boroughs", like Horsham, were often dominated by rich and powerful landlords; e.g. the Duke of Norfolk or the Ingram family.

Horsham town had 52 burgages in 1701 which entitled the owner or tenant to vote for up to two candidates at a parliamentary election. Where the ownership lay with a candidate or his nominee, the tenant would wisely bear in mind the fact that he would have to declare in public, at the Town Hall in the Carfax, his vote and would he unlikely to risk home or employment. As the rival families - famously, the Howards or Ingrams - acquired a burgage, so the value of others would rise far beyond their real value. Then the usual practice (illegal but still done) was to split the burgages so that, by 1715 the number had risen to 70. One "burgage" consisted of a pair of gates! A Mr Eversfield, helped solve his financial difficulties by selling 20 burgages (which he did not own) to Henry

Ingram for a trifling £6,000. Ingram then proceeded to split some more burgages so that, by 1764, the number had risen to 85.

THE NOTORIOUS ELECTION OF 1847

The Reform Act of 1832 put an end to these practices. Now any house of annual value of £10 entitled the resident to vote for Horsham's one candidate. The election in 1844 saw the return of Robert Henry Hurst of Holmbush but his tenure effectively ended when, in 1845, he left to live abroad and Horsham was without a representative for two years.

Hurst's political interest may have waned, but not his financial ones. In a letter to his agent, Henry Padwick, he said ".....our interests should go to nobody without a consideration" Just how much that "consideration" meant in hard cash is not known but one of the Hurst estates - Holbrook - was discreetly advertised and attracted the attention of William Seymour Fitzgerald who was looking for a suitable holding with parliamentary prospects. A London agent had written to a solicitor in Horsham saying that he knew of "a gentleman of great respectability" who was interested in a suitable estate from £5,000 to £50,000.

Fitzgerald set about nursing the electorate in anticipation of a pending contest; He was generous in his charity, especially to the poor. He patronised the local

traders and carefully avoided political subjects. He was "all things to all men", neither a Tory Protectionist nor a Liberal Free-trader; neither Pink nor Blue. When the 1847 Election came he had already gathered considerable support, one of his promises being that he would not expect his constituents to pay him as was sometimes the custom.



Clockwise:- "Shelley Arms", "The Crown", "Dog & Bacon", "Hen & Chicken"

One feature of this election was that both candidates were "foreigners"; he from Ireland and the Radical - John Jervis - from Chester, a town represented by his father. Jervis was just 21 and was adopted as the Blue candidate.

William Albery, in his "A Parliamentary History of Horsham" gives a graphic and sometimes hilarious account of the 1847 contest, sometimes thought to be the model for Dickens' Eatonswill election. Local dignitaries lined up behind one or the other and vowed undying loyalty, one - William Lintott - pledging his "last shilling" for Fitzgerald, though this was hardly taking a risk! His enthusiasm for the "Pink" Irishman was shared by many others including Henry Michell, a local brewer. It was "the trade" - brewers and publicans - who probably prospered most from the election as each candidate provided a bottomless well of good cheer for anyone who wore the particular ribbon. Some of Horsham's most dedicated inebriates spent several weeks floating from a pub which welcomed Blues to another favouring Pinks. All they needed to do was keep both ribbons handy - concealed carefully, of course, if they valued their health!

Pink pubs included "The King's Head", "The Dog and Bacon" and "The Hen and Chickens". The Blue hostelrys included "The Queen's Head", "The Shelley Arms" and "The Anchor". Even the modest beer-only establishments joined in the fun, including one known as "The Cold and Dirty". Processions followed bands and sometimes demonstrated outside rival pubs. At the "Shelley Arms", then a small wayside inn, the bar was so crowded that thirsty visitors fetched ladders and entered by windows and then descended the stairs to the bar. Horsham's one constable was twice assaulted while trying to restore order.

Since candidates were not required to submit expenditure statements in those days, the cost of the drunken "goes" is not known but individual pubs did well; John Aldrett of "The Kings Head" was owed £800, and Frederick Blackiston at 'The Crown', £790. It wasn't only beer for the mobs; brandy and cigars were freely available as well as suitable gifts for the ladies.

Came polling day and the excitement reached fever pitch as the candidates were running neck- and -neck. As the closure loomed so frantic efforts were made to

rush late voters in but were harassed by rival supporters in the packed Carfax. One local character, Charles Feist, 'a big man, with a redface, loud voice, hard heart, determined manner and unscrupulous character' pledged himself to the Pink party but, at the hustings, undid his coat to reveal a Blue favour. How much each bribe cost depended on how late the hour, and how close the contest but £40 is the most known. But there were other kinds of payment like that to Mr. Rich, an upholsterer, who bravely held out until his landlord renounced the mortgage owed to him.

Who won? The question is easier than the answer.

Certainly Jervis scored 164 votes to Fitzgerald's 155 but the loser immediately complained to the Commons Committee of bribery, corruption and other illegal and immoral practices by the Radical "blues". Fitzgerald was then declared the winner but this led to more protests and another election at which the blue candidate was Lord Edward Howard, second son of the Duke. Howard ran an impeccable campaign, rightly guessing that Fitzgerald would not. Howard won on appeal but Fitzgerald won the next three elections and went on to high offices in Conservative governments.

E. P. Beaumont

THE COMMITTEE OF THE STORRINGTON & DISTRICT MUSEUM SOCIETY WISH ALL OUR MEMBERS A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A HEALTHY NEW YEAR

Editorial

Museum Society Committee:-

Chairman: Ron Ham

Vice Chairman: Philip Beaumont

(Contact No. 01903 744388)

Secretary: Kate Wise

Treasurer: John Wharmby

Programme Secretary: Gina Wilmshurst

Membership Secretary: Jean MacWhirter

Publicity Officer: Joan Ham

Education Officer: Sue Chiswell

Members:

Pauline Archibald, Trish Colebrook, Meg Everitt,
Gena Grenney, Barbara Lansdown, Isabel Stone,
Michael Taylor

Future Lectures:-

Monday, December 12:- "Do you speak Sussex ?"
by David Tait

Monday, October 10:- "The Inn Thing" by Cyril Selby

Monday, January 9:- "Images of Rural Life, 1920 - 1950" by Alison McCann (West Sussex Record Office)

Monday, February 13th :- "The Crop Circle Mystery"
by Andy Thomas

Monday, March 13th :- AGM - followed by a talk by
Curator Helen Whittle and a glass of wine / fruit juice.

December/ January Exhibition:-
"The Flower Fairies"

February / March Exhibition:-
"Local Paintings"

Museum Supper:-
Monday, December 19th.
Tickets from Gina (01903 892210)

**Finally - A reminder that we still need helpers to act
as Stewards at the Museum, once a month. If you
can help please ring 01903 744388.**

Editorial Team

Copy Editor :- E.P. Beaumont

Production Editor:- J.S. Wharmby

Printer:- Kenads Printers,

Tel. 01903 506444 email: print@kenads.co.uk