

# Two Pilgrim Badges

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## Background

Pilgrim badges were objects sold at and around sites of religious interest, which were generally pinned or sewn to hats, pouches, or other clothing to indicate that one had visited their place of origin. Various centers of pilgrimage had badges which would have been readily recognizable—e.g., Beckett heads for Canterbury, shells for Santiago de Compostela. In this respect, pilgrim badges are the ancestors of modern tourist knickknacks. In addition to indicating that one had made a pilgrimage, pilgrim badges were thought by some to share the beneficial properties of the saints' relics held in their respective places of pilgrimage.

Pilgrim badges were produced by casting pewter in stone moulds. Because the badges were small (e.g., the site token, which is a typical size, is only 10 grams) and made from inexpensive materials, and because the moulds are limitlessly reusable, the cost of production was low—hence anyone able to afford making a pilgrimage was likely able to afford a badge to show they had done so. Surviving records show that even small shrines sold startling numbers of badges (e.g, Spencer [2010, p. 14] notes that a shrine in the Bavarian town of Altötting sold around 130.000 (!) of its badges in 1492).

## St. Fiacre's Shovel

Figure 1 is a detail from the *Hours of Philip of Burgundy* (KB 76 F 2, fol. 272r), c. 1450–1460, held by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in Den Haag, The Netherlands, showing St. Fiacre of Meaux holding a book and a spade. At least one extant pilgrim badge contains a shovel; Figure 2 depicts a badge from Saint-Maur-des-Fosses in France, held by the Museum of London (ID number 75.1/12).

In commemoration of the miraculous discovery of a hidden drain during a downpour at Ffair Rhaglen in 2012, I carved and cast a St. Fiacre's Shovel to be presented to those pilgrims returning to the site of the miracle one year later. The soapstone mould and the initial run of shovels appear in Figure 3.

## The Site Token

Figure 4 shows the design I was given for the Turnier des Herzwaldes IV site token, along with a model of similar style. Before carving the surface detail, I made several test casts to check that the mould would fill properly and that the resulting piece was of even thickness. Figure 5 shows three such casts, with casting sprue still attached. Each test cast was made after the ones to its left; it can be seen that the rings fill better as the mould heats up. Figure 6 shows the mould. In the backplate are two pewter pins which sit in the corresponding divots on the mould's front, used to align the back to the front when casting. The pouring channel is cut mostly into the face of the back, in order to make the resulting casting sprue easy to remove from the badge. The crosshatching on the back serves to break the surface tension of the molten pewter, which helps the mould fill completely.

# 1 Process and Materials

The shovels depicted in Figure 3 and all of the site tokens were cast using pewter composed of 92% tin, 7.75% antimony, and 0.25% copper; the example shovels accompanying this documentaion were cast with pewter which is 98% tin, 1.5% bismuth, and 0.5% copper. Quality medieval pewter was typically 60% tin and 40% lead. Due to the toxicity of lead and as I am melting my pewter in a 10cm steel saucepan on my kitchen stove, I have chosen to use modern, lead-free pewter. The moulds are carved from soapstone, as was done historically. All work on the moulds was done with hand tools, with the exception of drilling the holes for the alignment pins, which was done with a Dremmel.

## References

Hours of Philip of Burgundy, c. 1450–1460. KB 76 F 2, fol. 272r. Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Den Haag, The Netherlands.

Pilgrim badge of St. Maur, 15th century. ID 75.1/12. Museum of London.

Brian Spencer. *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*, volume 7 of *Medieval Finds from Excavations in London*. Museum of London, 2010.



Figure 1: St. Fiacre of Meaux holding a book and a spade



Figure 2: Badge of St. Maur with shovel



Figure 3: St. Fiacre's Shovels and their mould

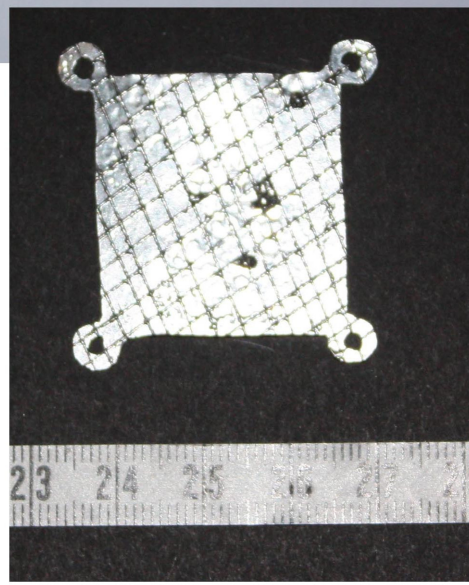
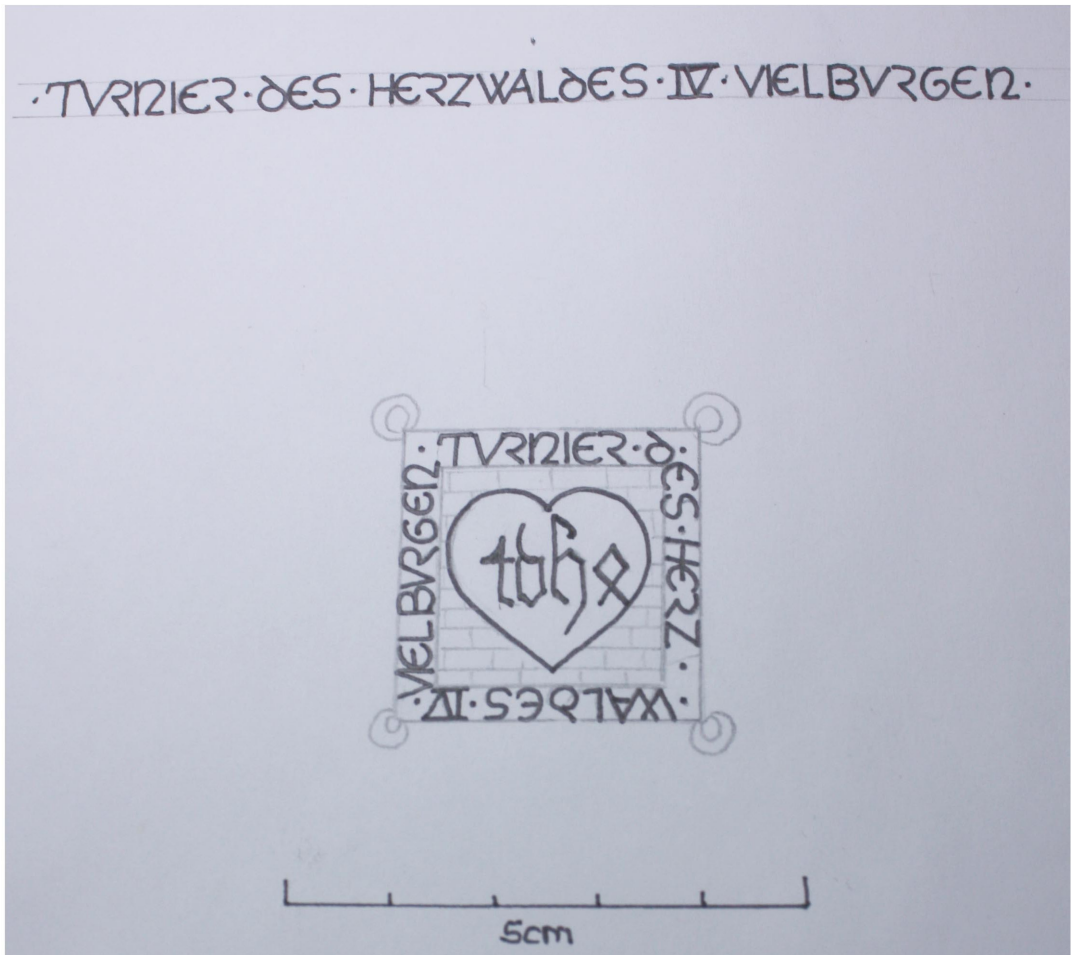


Figure 4: Design for the site token and model

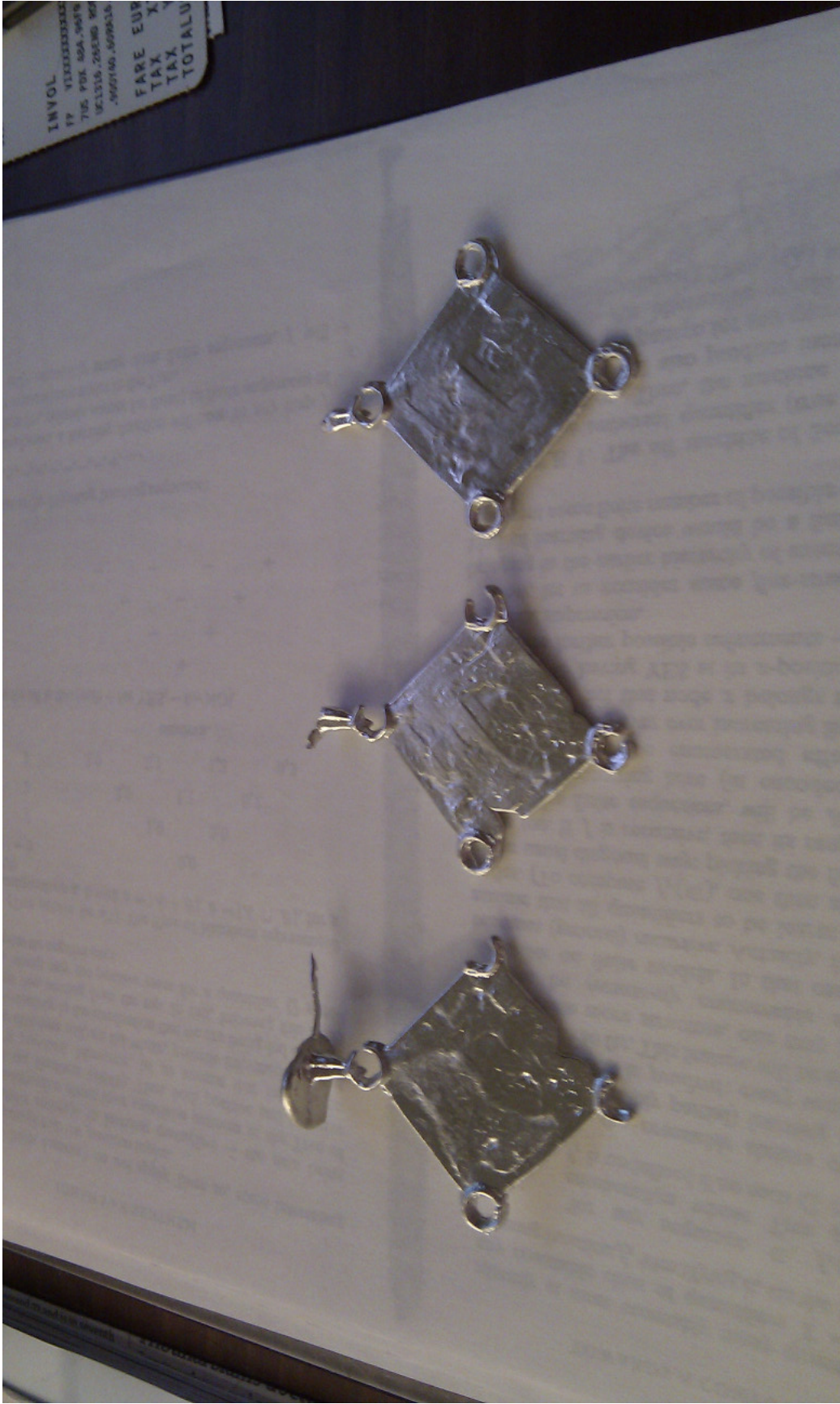


Figure 5: Test casts of the site token



Figure 6: Mould for the site token

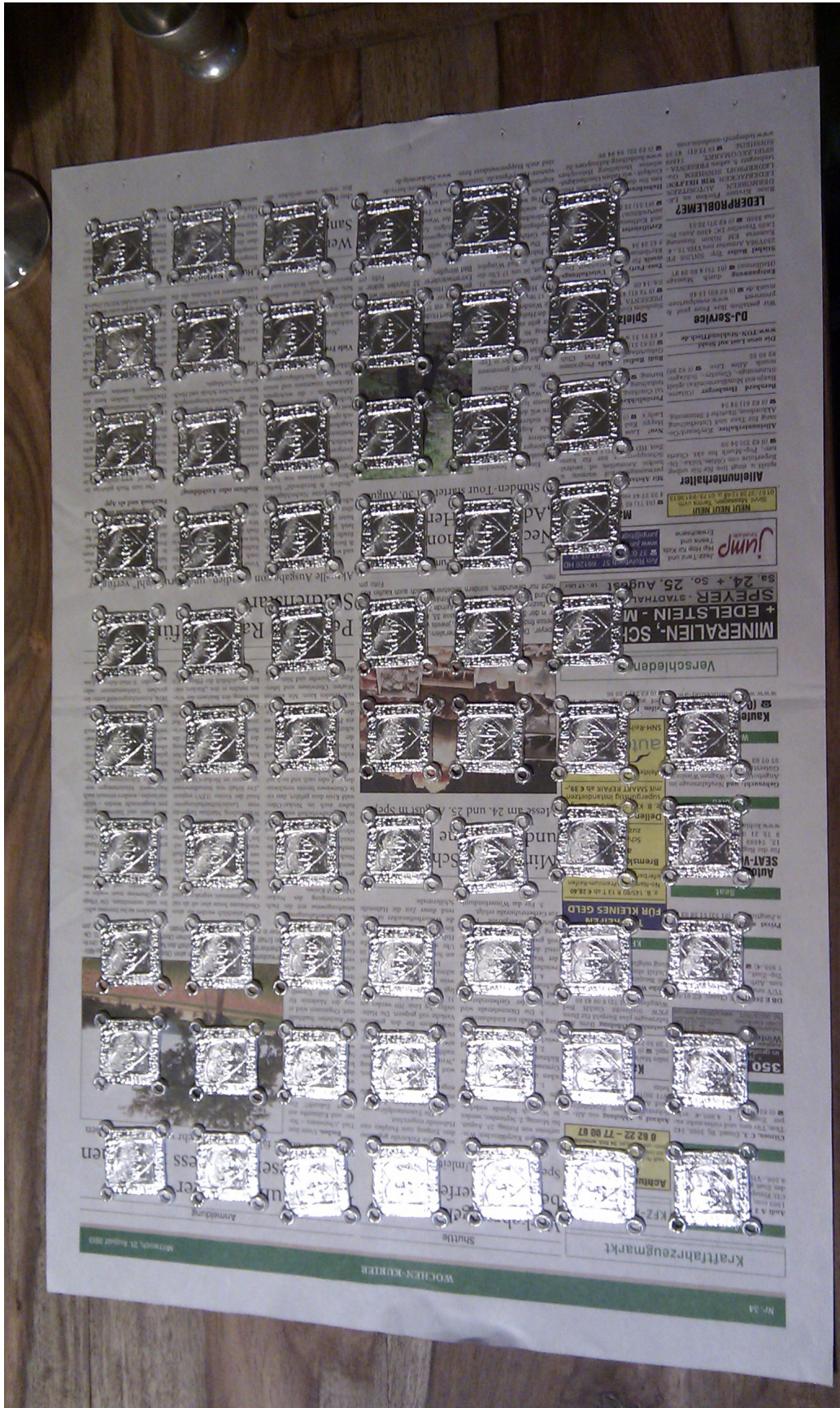


Figure 7: The complete run of site tokens