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A free newsletter to all who share our interest in these fascinating and often enigmatic pieces. Please send the editor at least one 300 dpi JPEG scan, or a sharply focused photo print, of any interesting leaden token or tally in your collection. Send images as email attachments to mail@leadtokens.org.uk Please note that the old david@powell8041.freeserve.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT will not be active after 31 May 2017.

Token or Amulet?

Every now and again one comes across a piece which, even if you expect that it ought to be a non-token item, like a badge, button or amulet, nevertheless challenges you to accept it as a token, by virtue of it having the characteristics of one; like, for example, being more or less perfectly round, and without any lumps out of its side or protruding from its back. Fig.1 is one such. OK, it obviously has a religious provenance, but so did most lead tokens in mediaeval times.



Yet, this one is different. The figure in clerical garb is not so different from some of the angels which adorn 17th cent tokens both in copper and lead, but the figure of Christ with arms outstretched, is not a usual one for a token, or even a coin. The coinage of the Byzantine empire is the nearest one gets to such subject matter, but that series emphasises Christ as king, sitting on a throne. To show him crucified, with presumably the two malefactors who suffered with him on each side, is too delicate a topic for a monetary item. The piece is lead, however, and the quality of execution has to be admired.

One can be a little more light-hearted about the figure on the reverse, even if one is probably not intended to be; she looks like a lady who has just come off a tennis court, more than somewhat displeased with herself for not playing very well. Presumably, she isn't, from the length of dress she is wearing; she is, however, female. St. Margaret of Antioch, to be precise; who had a particular following in two places in Norfolk, Ketsby and Kings Lynn, where such pieces are usually found. In the late 15th or early 16th cent, which is when the piece dates from, saints had fan clubs in much the same way that football teams do now. Margaret had quite a local following; how she got from Antioch to Norfolk in those days I don't know, but no doubt the church's top brass had their own way of working out January transfer windows. Anyway, more about her to be had by consulting my good friend Google, who suggests that the usage of the piece was for giving {or maybe selling} to pregnant women, who hoped that by carrying them the following nine months would go to their liking.

Fig.2, contributed by Tony Williams, looks to be more of the same, although I cannot work out what is happening on the reverse. The hint of fine graining is slightly reminiscent of type M, with which both pieces are contemporary. Like Fig.1, it has two fully pictorial sides and is almost perfectly round, hence not meant to be fixed on anything; so, one has to presume that it was intended to be carried in a pocket or purse.

Fig.3, also from Tony looks much more badge/seal like and quite possibly, from the degenerate style, later; however, much later and it will be out of the mediaeval period. The central figure looks to be standing, rather than seated or crucified, but there are again the two flanking companions and one can only presume that he is intended to be Christ. There is, this time, some hint of the Byzantine about it. The style of the cross on the reverse is more typically mediaeval, however, and the piece is probably contemporary with the later pewter tokens of BNJ53 types F-G, i.e. late 14th or early 15th cent.

Early English Lead & Pewter Tokens, continued

Types G and H {Pictorial}

{NOTE: All photos magnified 3:2}

BNJ53 type G, referred to collectively in BNJ53 as transitional tokens, are a rather unsatisfactory type in some ways, in that they are exactly what it says on the box; i.e. midway between the late pictorials of type F and the early geometrics of type H. Indeed, it is not always easy to determine the exact boundaries, probably because there aren't any, and I must ask you to forgive me if here and there a token of one type creeps in with the others. The only way round it is to provide plenty of pictures so that you get the general gist!



The start date for type G is somewhere around 1350-60, with size H following on and running up to about 1425. The size throughout remains around the 14-16mm mark, occasionally dipping below, and there are small numbers of miscellaneous oddball pieces which are larger and don't fit into the general pattern. Pure lead as opposed to pewter grows in quantity and the lead pieces of this date seem, for some reason, to be mostly of very light colour. The best of the lead is very pleasant {Fig.3}, although because of the fineness of the engraving of the time, any significant build-up of encrustation or dirt quickly renders them unphotogenic.



Type G and the poorest of the preceding type Fs, i.e. the pieces of the middle third of the 14th cent, are wonderful for those of us who like to play guessing games as to what is depicted, and are the earliest forerunners of the irregular geometrics of later centuries. For the first time we have some semblance of genuinely crude lead and pewter, of a {lack of} quality not matched again on any scale until the 18th cent. Hint: when trying to resolve, think back to the earlier designs of types C and D which they are trying to emulate.

Amongst the less obvious from the selection above:, Fig.2a is probably a pelican, whilst Figs.4a and 10a could be pilgrims. Fig.7 could be either a bird or a pilgrim; a pity about the large hole which was stamped through it to mark the end of its use. The holes in Figs.7,8,10 are all deliberate, for purpose of invalidation; and possibly the damage to Fig.1 also, although that may be metal weakness. The obverse of Fig.10 is surprisingly modern, and worth looking at closely; the outline is shapely, and the eye, eye socket, nose, lips and chin of the bird are all discernible. Whoever made it was ahead of his time; Fig.4 is much more what one would expect.

Early English Lead & Pewter Tokens, continued

Types G and H {Non-Pictorial}

{NOTE: All photos magnified 3:2}



BNJ53 type H, which contains the earliest all-geometric pieces, is not pretty. Some of them are still quite well struck, but there is a distinct absence of meaningful design, and it is here, for over half a century or more {c.1360-1425} that the precedent is set that tokens do not have to have any. Effectively, the type continues the more ordinary reverses of its predecessors without much visible retention of the obverses, establishing them as primary designs in their own right and pairing them up randomly. These designs form the nucleus of the later stock types and thus leave a legacy which extends for as long as lead tokens survive; i.e. well into the late 18th cent, if not even the early 19th.



The pure lead pieces remain thin and delicate, akin in size and structure to the pewter. For both lead and pewter, double-sidedness is still the order of the day, despite the sense of decline; the simple Fig.22 even has a repeated reverse. Difficult to place, but possibly from about this time, are the pure lead pieces with markedly raised floral design such as shown in Figs.23-24. In terms of size and subject matter they seem to fit into type H, but the fact that they have smooth blank reverses and are cut from lead sheet, klippe style, argue against. The normal date for klippe pieces is mid-15th cent to early- or mid-16th.

The size and weight of BNJ53 type H is generally fairly consistent, with a few exceptions; 14-15mm in diameter, and 1-1½ gm in weight. Those with similar diameter but a little thicker and heavier are probably slightly later, maybe 15th-16th cent, but it is difficult to draw the boundaries. BNJ53 itself says that type H is totally lead and that all pewter falls into type G, but given that

it also says that the pure geometrics start in type H, I am ill at ease; to my mind, the pieces at the top of this page are pewter as well as being mostly if not wholly geometric on both sides. By and large I am wary of over-classification in this area and find it more helpful to think of types G/H as one group showing different aspects of a deteriorating evolutionary trend.



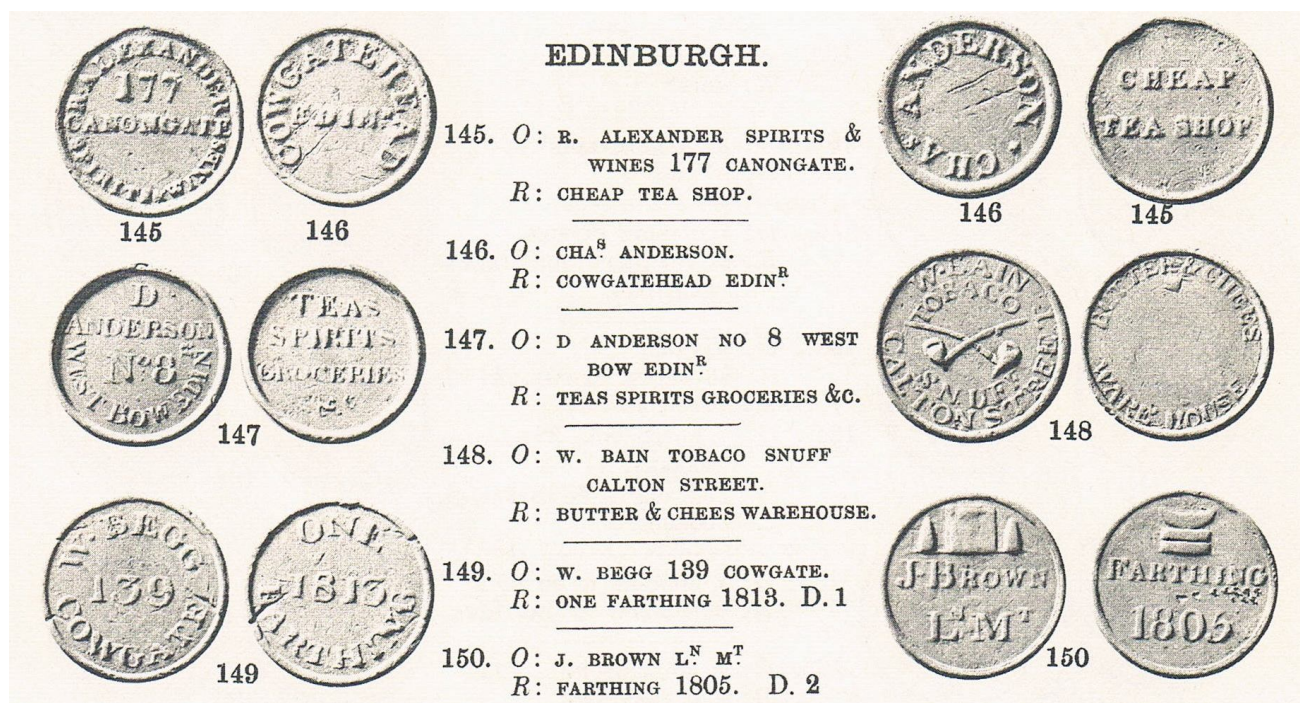
The Issuers of the Lead Tokens of Edinburgh, Part 1

Following on from our article in LTT_117 about some of the local traders who were counterstriking brass blanks in late 19th cent Dundee, we commence a series this month which looks behind the scenes at the lead token issuers of Edinburgh mentioned in Dalton and Hamer's standard work. The latter is best known for its study of the copper tokens of the late 18th cent, specifically 1787-1799 {known as Conders to some, after an Ipswich issuer of that name}; but hidden away towards the back is a section on the Scottish lead, sometimes known as bakers' tokens, which we discussed in LTT_108.

One feels that both D+H and most of their readers have always probably regarded these pieces as poor relations in comparison to the copper; being both rare and, as they would see it, of inferior metal. However, for us lead enthusiasts, here at last is a series where we have some hope at least of discovering the issuers' backgrounds. There are two groups of lead which are now understood to be farthings:

- ◇ one, with moderate detail on and approaching early 19th cent copper tokens in style, which probably emanate from about 1805-1815. These hail mainly from Edinburgh, although some other nearby Scottish locations are represented. {D+H lead pieces Lothian 145-234, + others}
- ◇ another, much cruder, with barely more than initials on in most cases, representing the random gatherings and observations of a specific individual, one Dr. Thompson, who visited Edinburgh over the winter and spring of 1781/82. {D+H lead pieces Lothian 1-144}

Commercial directories do not usually go back this far, even for some of the larger cities, but Edinburgh's are particularly good. Sufficiently so that we can often add quite a lot more to what either the token itself, or Dalton and Hamer, had to say: missing forenames, professions, addresses and probable dates of issue. Whether Edinburgh's token-issuing community was similar in its cross-section to those which issued our even lesser-known lead tokens down south is conjectural, but hopefully it will provide some hints of who a few of these folk were and what their world was like.



We will start with the later batch, pieces 145-234, and discuss a group of them each month. I realise that issuer background is not a matter of interest to everyone, so I will therefore limit what I write here and summarise fairly briefly my current beliefs about the various issuers, the nature of their business, and when and where they conducted it. I have quite a few further notes so, if anyone else is interested in greater detail, please write in. Note that the dates of activity refer to the particular address specified on the token, not to those of the business as a whole; in many cases, the issuer was active before and/or after as well, at different addresses. Our concern here is to try and date the token.

EDINBURGH.

	151		151. O: WM. CALDER EDINBURGH. R: TEAS & SPIRITS 1806. D. 3		152	
	153		153. O: D. CHALMERS F. R: GEORGE STREET.		154	
	155		155. O: J ^N DICK GROCER R: 523 LAWN MARKET. A. 129		156	
	157		157. O: ALEX ^R DOUGLAS. F. R: CANDLE MAKER. A. 68		158	

<u>D+H</u>			<u>Nature of trade</u>	<u>Token Address</u>	<u>Earliest</u>	<u>Latest</u>
145	Richard	Alexander	Wine & spirit merchant	177, Canongate	1812/13	1823+
146	Charles	Anderson	Wine & spirit merchant	6, Cowgatehead	1809/10	1815/16
147	David	Anderson	Grocer	8, Westbow	1807/08	1815/16
148	William	Bain	Butter & cheese warehouse, & tobacconist	11, Calton Street	1806/07	1809/10
149	William	Begg	Merchant {unspec}	139, Cowgate	??	??
150	John	Brown	Grocer; butter & cheese merchant	330, Lawnmarket	1805/06	1821/22+
151	William	Calder	Tea & spirit dealer	{several}	1794/95-	1821/22+
152	John	Cay	Tinsmith	57, then 85 {1816/7}, High Calton	1811/12	1815/16
153	David	Chalmers	Baker	7 {1810/1}, then 15, George Street	1810/11	1818/19
154	James Peddie	Christie	Tobacconist	Royal Exchange	1805/06	1818/19
155	John	Dick	Grocer	523, Lawnmarket	??	??
156	Adam	Douglas	Tobacconist	385, Lawnmarket	1810/11	1812/13
157	Alexander	Douglas	Candle maker	461 Lawnmarket	1794/95-	1821/22+
158	James	Dunlop	Grocer	Carnegie Street	1811/12	1811/12

NOTES:

149. William Begg seems never to have been at Cowgate. He had premises at 12, West Bow until 1812/13, after which there is a short gap until he sets up a toy shop at 34, Hanover Street. There was a grocer, Mrs. Mair, at 139 Cowgate in 1811/12, after which the business passed to David Lyon. Perhaps Begg attempted to buy it from Mrs. Mair and commissioned some tokens in readiness, after which the deal fell through. Alternatively, perhaps his tenancy was of such short duration that it fell between the dates of two annual directories.