

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 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.

A Tale of Two Digits

Alex Kussendrager has kindly sent in this piece on the right, Fig.1, from the Dutch city of Gouda; it depicts, simply, the unaccompanied numeral 73. It is only 14mm across. We have had some discussion in these pages recently {LTT_123, page 2} about numbers like 24, and whether they represent 24 units, one-twenty-fourth of a unit, or a truncated date; but a large prime number like 73? Surely, surely, that has to be a date.



The size and style are such that it could easily be contemporary with the dated English pieces of 1579 and 1581 shown in LTT_124, page 2 {reminder, left}; so, 1573 as an issue date is a possibility. Numerals of this style were not in use a century earlier, so a date of 1573 could be thus rendered in two-digit form without fear of ambiguity. However, Alex has kindly pointed out other examples where the two-digit date form was in use, up to quite recent times, and not only in the first century of dating. In other words, the piece may have been issued in 1573, but maybe not.

The series to which he particularly refers are those relating to Dutch beacon leads, on which he has written before {see the back page of LTT_100}; pieces used for the payments of tolls, to finance the lighthouses which facilitate the navigation of Holland's many waterways. Haarlem, for example, issued pieces with two-digit dates up to about 1700 and four-digit ones thereafter, as per the row below, which could conceivably have a "first-century" explanation; however, Enkhuizen used two-digit dating



way into modern times, on a group of beacon leads which were in use until 1921. As with the Haarlem pieces they are recognised by the city symbol on the obverse, in this case three fish rather than a sword and stars. The actual dates of issue for the group shown were 1889-1905, with only the century-end date getting four digits, but I am told that in 1800 the date was actually rendered "00".



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True, these examples are continental, rather than English, and I can think of no English equivalents later than the 17th cent, but they are worth bearing in mind; lead tokens used for maritime purposes may well be lost in this country by visiting seaman, and the two-digit phenomenon may well be one means by which we can identify them for what they are. If you have not yet done so, please visit the lead section of Alex's website, <http://www.loodjes.nl/> - another site, like LTT, dedicated exclusively to lead tokens. You don't come across those very often, so make the most of it!

There is an absolute feast of material on Alex's site to enjoy, and plentifully illustrated, even if much of it is only occasionally encountered in Britain; and, if the Dutch text puts you off, remember that Google Translate is capable of handling much greater volumes of data these days than it used to.

A few of the most useful top-level options, to get you started, are:

- ⇒ Bakenloodjes: Overview of the major types of Dutch tokens associated with shipping.
- ⇒ Bakenloodjes data: Database {spreadsheet} giving a list of pieces encountered, by place and type, with details of dates, sizes, counterstamps etc.
- ⇒ Plaatsnaam: Breakdown of material by location; select a town and take it from there.

Another feature is "Artikelen", i.e. articles; hyperlinks to magazine and websites from all over, including LTT. Back to our Haarlem pieces, the article dated 2016-09, in addition to giving an account of the way the pieces and their associated tax system evolved over the years, enabled me to appreciate the counterstamps "P" and "15" on this piece shown on the right: P is the initial of the boat's skipper, and he was the fifteenth person of that initial to have skippered a boat, or registered to do so, in the year 1790. By personally lettering or numbering in this way, nobody could deny his activity, duck his responsibilities or fiddle his tax.



Finally, "Determinatie" is Alex's "unknowns" section, inviting help with identification. Sub-options "Vraag?" and "Opgelost", mean "still outstanding" and "solved" respectively; look in there, and there may even be some British pieces. You will certainly see one or two Scottish communion tokens. Anyone who thinks they can help Alex with any of the unknowns, please email him on allex@loodjes.nl

Readers' Correspondence

My thanks to Hendrik van Caelenberghe for sending in this piece found near Koksijde, Belgium. Axes do occur on English tokens although they are fairly scarce; Williamson listed 13 examples for the main 17th cent series {1648-72} when he published in 1889, out of about as many thousand items. I would favour this piece being from about the same period, rather than medieval. The weight, diameter & style would all argue for that if the piece were English.



Shown on the left is an English lead example of a woodman chopping a log; a delightful scenic depiction, using the axe, rather than just showing its head. It is one of the high quality leads of the mid-17th cent, of a type which one normally suspects of being monetary farthings. Carpenters and woodmen do not feature very high up the list of issuing tradesmen, but apart from their implements Williamson does quote nine examples and five, respectively, of their trade arms.

If commercial, the piece could be:

- ⇒ a monetary token, of the type just mentioned.
- ⇒ a token given for a unit of work done, to be traded later for real money, in the same manner frequently employed by farmers and their crop pickers.
- ⇒ a pass, i.e. permission, given by a landowner to someone to chop wood on their estate.
- ⇒ a tool check, acting as a receipt, in the case of an employee borrowing an axe for the duration of his working day.

If military, only the last two would probably be relevant options; if ecclesiastic, any of the first three.

Common Stock Designs and their Origins: Significant Symbolism, or a Convenient Doodle?

Just how much, or little, should we read into the commonest and simplest tokens designs? My thanks to Richard Pincott for an email a while back in which he commented that “it has always been difficult to present and explain the functionality and date of lead tokens featuring cross and pellet designs and similar”. He went on to state that, from his knowledge of certain ancient religions of the Middle East, some of the symbolic imagery which they used coincides to a certain extent with the depictions on British lead tokens, and/or features in ancient church graffiti; in consequence of which, he wondered whether there was some connection between the two. Maybe some element of usage and design, preserved through time and transported across Europe, which found and left its mark on our own culture here? The following is the gist of my reply.



Numismatically, "lead tokens" are not a single series; they are a number of subseries, made over a long period of time and for a variety of different purposes. The boundaries are sometimes not clear, and there will be overlaps issue and usage of which we are not clearly aware. Some of the commonest of the many likely uses are:

- Small change for trade
 - (a) Personally issued
 - (b) Centrally issued by local authorities
- Administration of the Poor Law
- Administration of the Vermin Acts
- Inns and lodging houses
- Transportation of merchandise
- Passes, i.e. permission to go in certain places or attend certain events
- Farming tallies

Pre-Reformation, some of these essential civil everyday functions might fall under the auspices of the church to some degree, and it could be expected that the ecclesiastical authorities would depict traditional Christian subject matter on any associated tokens merely to indicate that they were the issuing authority; in the same way that a monarch's head appears on regal coins to this day to indicate that it is money sanctioned by the state.

This apart, I do also appreciate that religions both Christian and pre-Christian may have had separate needs for tokens or their equivalent for purposes specifically associated with worship, e.g. votive offerings and the like. In very recent times Hindu temples have been issuing Ramatanka {plenty of examples on Ebay}, and may still do. Two things I would remark about this, however:

The proportion of tokens issued for specifically religious use is likely to be very much smaller than those issued for everyday purposes.

If the tokens issued for religious and everyday use came from the same authorities, who used the same symbols as their identification mark on both, it would be very difficult to distinguish them; at least, without some additional contextual information.



Two 18th cent petal pseudo-groats trying to look mystic {see LTT_106}



Moving now to the symbols themselves, a few observations:

The number of symbols which can be made out of a few simple lines is finite, so that, given that many societies and individuals have been trying to design themselves symbols over a very long period of time, some coincidental repetition is inevitable; for example, I believe I have seen cases of the swastika appearing in antiquity, long before anyone thought of Nazism. The Manx triquetra is another example.

When a religion takes over from another religion, it imposes itself on the culture of the people but does not necessarily, unless specific steps are taken by the exponents of the new regime, totally destroy it. I understand that certain of the major Christian festivals have imbibed some cultural features, or timings, from their pagan predecessors. The leaders of the new movement might want a clean sheet, but there would probably be less enthusiasm, and hence some resistance, further down the ranks. The man in the street, mud-hut or cave would not want the discomfort of being totally spiritually and socially uprooted by any new intrusion of belief or policy; his overwhelming desire for continuity would ensure that a proportion of his previous culture was preserved, if he could manage it without overtly upsetting the incoming leadership. This inheritance would include symbols, so it would not be surprising if, by popular demand, some of them were not carried forward from one culture to the next.

Finally, forget religious tradition for a minute and think about sheer practicality. A village community with a need for tokens might not be able to rustle up anybody with much manufacturing or artistic ability; hence, the need to keep it simple. Translated, that means soft metal {e.g. lead}, a soft and easily-carved mould {e.g. chalk} and a design which doesn't stretch anybody's drawing or carving skills. Forget the fancy stuff, if all you have is the old equivalent of a modern bradawl, capable primarily of scratching lines and digging divots. Three of the standard lead-token stock designs which are amongst the easiest you can make with such a device are the cross {with or without pellets}, the cartwheel and the grid. The first of these just happens to have a coincidental similarity to a Christian symbol, the last to a mediaeval merchant's accounting board. Is that relevant? Probably yes sometimes, no others.

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POSTSCRIPT: Shortly after I wrote this article I received by chance an email from Kavan Ratnatunga, a leading member of the Sri Lankan Numismatic Society, informing me that quite a few of the crude lead token designs shown in the BNJ_53 and 54 articles are interestingly close in design to a group of Far Eastern pieces with Brahmi inscriptions, dated back both archaeologically and by the style of the text, to the second century BC. For those who wish to compare, there is a well illustrated article on Kavan's website at http://coins.lakdiva.org/OBRW/lead_tokens.html

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Note to all readers: Williamson is available online

LTT makes frequent reference to G.C. Williamson's standard work on 17th cent main series tokens, struck in copper or brass. I have recently discovered that this is available online, in two parts, for those who haven't got a physical copy:

1. <https://archive.org/details/tradetokensissu02unkngoog> {Beds to London}
2. <https://archive.org/details/tradetokensissu00boyngoog> {Middx to Yorks, Wales, Ireland, indices and sundries}.

The Issuers of the Lead Tokens of Edinburgh, Part 3

Continuing with our exploration of Dalton & Hamer's lead token issuers from last time, some more of my speculations about the various issuers and their various businesses, addresses and dates. This month's contribution concludes the issues from the main part of the city. Next time we will move on to those of adjoining Leith, Edinburgh's port to the immediate north.

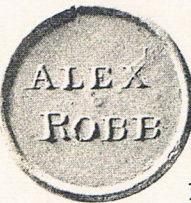
















Only a handful of the 58 tokens shown to date have proved elusive as to their origins, and it has been particularly pleasing to be able to crack, with fair certainty, the three at the end which display initials only. Don't expect me to do this with all your rustic two-initial pieces, please; most of the locations in which they were dug up don't have as extensive directories and newspapers as Edinburgh now, let alone in the 18th century!

If you were wondering why each date in the occupancy tables overleaf is dual, e.g. 1813/14, it is because the Edinburgh directories cover a period from one Whitsun to the next. Pleasing to observe, almost every token corresponds to an occupancy period which includes some portion of the period 1805-15, our original estimate for the approximate date of the series. After that the series moves into copper, without much change of style, as illustrated in the main body of Dalton & Hamer {Lothian 73 onwards}. A few lead issuers went on to issue in copper as well, but it would appear that the two series were largely consecutive rather than simultaneous. More of which later!

One constructive exercise which some of you might be interesting in attempting is to place the various D+H line drawings alongside and compare style, with the possible aim of forming an opinion as to which pieces share a common manufacturer. Several styles stand out as occurring multiply, and in addition certain of the issuers have been identified as being tinsmiths or pewterers {152, 184/5, 196}. It is likely that the latter not only produced their own tokens but also contracted to do so for some of their neighbours.

{continued on next page}

**LOTHIAN.
EDINBURGH.**

		184. O: ALEX ^R ROBB R: CANONGATE.			185
		186. O: ALEX ^R ROSS. HIGH STR ^T R: FARTHING.			187
		187. O: SHAW 17 WEST BOW EDIN ^R R: TEAS SPIRITS WINES & GROCERIES.			188
		188. O: SINTONS & CO. OILMEN. R: 37 & 327 HIGH STREET.			189
		189. O: M. SPOTSWOOD PORTER DEALER. R: 523 LAWNMARKET.			190
		190. O: M. & J. STEEL CORN CHANDLERS. R: 19 SOUTH FREDRICK STREET.			191
		191. O: G. SUTHERLAND GROCER. R: PAYABLE AT MY SHOP NO. 98 NICHOLSON STRE ^T .			192
		192. O: J. THOM CHINA MERCH ^T R: COWGATE. FARTHING.			

D. 12. A. 116

193. O: R. TORRANCE TIN & OIL SHOP.
R: 64 CROSSCAUSEWAY.

194. O: JOHN WATSON.
R: NO. 88 HIGH STREET EDIN^R. A. 133

195. O: A. WEBSTER GROCER.
R: 325 LUCKEN BOOTHS.

196. O: ROBT. WHYTE PEWTERER NO. 40 COWGATE HEAD.
R: LAMPS OILS COTTONS & C.

197. O: J. WILL.
R: COWGATE HEAD 1806. D. 11

198. O: G. WILSON HIGH STREET.
R: FARTHING.

199. O: ALEX^R WISE. F.
R: EDIN^R 1806. D. 13

200. O: A G
R: PAYABLE AT N^o 1 GRASSMARKET.

201. O: A K
R: GRASS MARKET

202. O: E. & C. W. EDIN^R
R: FARTHING.

<u>D+H</u>			<u>Nature of trade</u>	<u>Token Address</u>	<u>Earliest</u>	<u>Latest</u>
184	Alexander	Robb	Tinplate worker {pewterer}	184, Canongate	1804	1816/17
185	Alexander	Robb	Tinplate worker {pewterer}	184, Canongate	1804	1816/17
186	Alexander	Ross	Grocer	69, High Street	1811/12	1814/15
187	William	Shaw	Spirit dealer	17, West Bow	1810/11	1816/17
188	George + W.	Sinton	Oilmen	37 & 327 High Street	1811/12	1811/12
189	Maurice	Spotswood	Victual dealer	523, Lawnmarket	1811/12	1812/13
190	M+J	Steel		19, South Frederick Street		
191	George	Sutherland	Grocer & spirit dealer	98, Nicholson Street	1804	1808-09
192	John	Thom	China & stone warehouse	Cowgatehead {163 Cowgate}	1799	1813/14
193	Robert	Torrance	Tin & oil shop	64, Crosscauseway	1807-08	1821/22+
194	John	Watson	Grocer	88, High Street	1813/14	1817/18
195	Alexander	Webster	Grocer	325, Lucken Booths	1811/12	1817/18
196	Robert	Whyte	Pewterer	40, Cowgatehead	1807/08	1817/18
197	J	Will		Cowgatehead	??	??
198	George	Wilson	Meal dealer	85, High Street	1809/10	1821/22+
199	Alexander	Wise	Grocer	5 Castle Street	1797/98	1821/22+
200	Alex.{1806-09}, Archibald {1809+}	Glen	Victual dealer {probably father & son}	1, Grassmarket	1806/07	1824/25+
201	Andrew	Kitchen	Grocer	Grass Market	1805/06	1805/06
202	Ebenezer & Co.	Wardlaw	Grocer	521, Lawnmarket	1811/12	1815/16