

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 Please note that the old david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

One Issuer, Several Issues: A Chronological Challenge

The following group, magnified approx. 3:2, clearly emanate from the same issuer; as two of them inform us, one Robert Kingsland of St.Saviour's Dock, Southwark. Fig.2 is Williamson's Southwark.379, whilst Fig.1, a variant not known to Williamson, or at least not distinguished by him, is what Michael Dickinson has since designated Southwark.379a. One has the dove on top, one does not, but both are in copper. The style of the vessel suggests Noah's Ark, and the presence of the dove reinforces that. So, either Robert Kingsland was the landlord of some dockside premises known as the Noah's Ark, or else he was the proprietor of a local ferry boat which plied its trade across the Thames.



So far, so good. Fig.3, little known, is a lead token which shows the same initial triad on one side and the same subject matter as Fig.1 on the other. There seems little doubt therefore that Robert Kingsland placed orders for tokens on at least three separate occasions, and the natural conclusion is to assume that the lead one, which has the earliest style was probably the first. It most likely was, but: the issue is worth some further thought:

Suppose, first, that Kingsland was a ferry proprietor. For the lead token to have been the earliest, Kingsland would have had to downgrade his ferry at some stage from covered to open, which some might regard as a retrograde step {in which case, token order = 3,1,2}; or else, maybe he acquired a second ferry, an open one, and used separate tokens for each {order = 3,1 with 2 probably simultaneous with 1}. If, however, Kingsland was a publican or tradesman with an ark as his shop sign, there would have presumably been little need to change his design; unless he had his shop sign repainted, and wanted a new set of tokens to match.

A further theoretical possibility, which we can reasonably dismiss because tokens of Fig.3's style cease c.1665, is that Kingsland started with a simple uncovered boat {Fig.2} and then upgraded to a closed one for whatever reason {Fig.1} before being ordered by edict to cease issuing copper tokens in 1672; then, finding this not practical for his business, ordered another consignment in lead sometime in the few years following, giving an order 2,1,3. However, had Fig.3 been slightly cruder, and in late rather than mid-17th cent style, such an argument might appear viable. It was not that unusual for issuers to place orders for second or subsequent token consignments because their supply ran low, or their business increased, and, whilst "lead early, copper later" might be the norm, the prospect of occasional reversion to lead cannot be universally ruled out; either because of the 1672 edict as discussed, or because the manufacturers of the main copper/brass series were, in some eyes, charging too much for their wares. Not that there is any confirmed evidence for the latter, that I know of, but economic reasons might also have provoked the occasional issuer into going back to his old ways.

Lead Miners' Salesman's Samplers

My thanks to Bob Hodgson for a very unusual contribution. He and a detecting friend keep finding pieces of this unusual type, so far several dozen, over an area of South Yorkshire, roughly 4 miles x 15 miles along a valley with four villages in it. Each no doubt would have had its own blacksmith.

As to findspots within the valley, the pieces are spread around, some on the tops, some in the valley bottom, some along the sides. There seems to be absolutely no pattern to it.



Bob's initial thought was that a blacksmith who made branding irons for sheep and cattle made these as an advert for his wares, saying "Show this when you go to market far away and tell others what a good branding iron I make." He reasoned that they couldn't be moulds for commodities like wax or butter because, most of them having sides which slightly curve inwards, the soft material would stick in them.

One of the pieces bears a date, 1776, whilst another shows a J is written in the old style, like an I with a bar across half way up. Bob felt that the latter, alongside the patina, was consistent with such a mid-late 18th cent date; and indeed, I feel inclined to agree.

Another of Bob's early ideas was that, when miners weighed in their lead they left one of these pieces beside the pile to identify their find. At the end of the day they would get the piece back. If so, why are the finds so scattered about; are they lost, or intentionally discarded? If used as suggested, Bob thought that the miners would take more care of their pieces and not want to lose them.

{continued overleaf}



However, a couple of months' further research, Bob has finally found the answer! From John Farey in "A General View of the Agriculture and Minerals of Derbyshire" (1811-1817):

⇒ "... the miner will oftentimes draw off a small portion to demonstrate the richness and freedom from waste in his lead, a matter much considered at the sales."

During the 18th and 19th centuries, and probably before, miners in Derbyshire and Yorkshire, and possibly other lead mining areas, who wanted to sell their lead had to convince buyers and smelters that their lead was of good quality. They made the small proving samples, or lead ingots, as assay trial items, from lead they were mining and then stamped their initials in them as proof of identity. These they would then show, or perhaps give, as samples to demonstrate their lead's quality.



Bob wonders how many such samples were made on any one occasion; so far he has found three pairs, albeit none of them with both pieces from the same findspot. One of his more recent finds has simply a number, 8, maybe that of a particular working; another has the name of a landowner. Bob says that his next task is to now find out who the miners were, to put a name to the initials. We wish him well with that!



A Fully-Dated Lead Token

My thanks to Laurent Nesly, who lives in Paris, for showing me this exactly dated, DDMMYY, lead token. The piece is 25mm in diameter and of uncertain provenance.

Lead pieces with characters, usually lettering, around a central hub, occur occasionally but are scarce. Huguenot church tokens sometimes employ that format, and I wonder whether that is what this is; see LTT_104, where this subject has been discussed before, for further examples. It is common enough for someone to put a full DDMMYY date on a commemorative piece or an engraved love token, but extremely rare for them to do so on a token intended for commercial use. Communion tokens do, however, on occasion mention the date of their church's establishment, sometimes in full and sometimes year-only, and that is what on balance I think we are looking at here.



This piece appears to depict a date; "2 APRIL" on one side and a year, 1732 or 1782, on the other. The style of the piece is consistent with such a date. Unfortunately I can't make out the characters below the year on the second side, although I think that the one at 8 o'clock, as shown, might be an upright cross in which case, I ought to rotate the piece 60 degrees anti-clockwise. Given that many of France's Huguenots fled to Protestant England to escape persecution, and naturally set up their own churches here, it is difficult to say whether this piece came originally from England or France; however, "April" would be rendered "Avril" in France, which rather indicates that it is of English origin but somehow found its way abroad..

An invitation to or ticket for a social event is an alternative possibility for the piece {again see LTT_104, this time page 5}, but in the 18th cent these are normally associated with the upper echelons of society, not the humble folk who make and use lead tokens.

English, Welsh or French?

The piece on the right is not the most attractive numismatic item I have ever seen, but as it only cost 95p on Ebay I am not complaining. It is lead, and fairly worn; diameter 16.4mm, weight 4.01gm, and about 3mm thick. Rather insignificant when viewed lifesize, one can imagine that when magnified 3:2 there is a structural hint of those nice chunky Edinburgh farthings of the early 19th cent which we discussed in LTT_125-129.



⇒ Obverse: NAPOLION PRICE & Co.

⇒ Reverse: SOCIETE HYGIENIQUE

Whilst it is not immediately obvious whether the piece is an advertising token or a bottle seal, the issuer's profession, see below, suggests the latter. Also, one would expect to see rather more in the way of location data on an advertising piece, and in the 19th cent for it to be rather larger. There is also some minor damage, where the seal has been removed. The reference to the Société Hygienne indicates that the product in the bottle has been passed as good and safe by quality control.

Rees Penry Napoleon Price {1833-1892}, but known as Napoleon, was a perfumier. The non-French components of his name mark him as being specifically of Welsh decent, rather than English, although the records says that both he and his father, also Rees and also a perfumier, were born in London. In 1853 Napoleon Price married a French wife, Marguerite, the daughter of Antoine Thenaibre, a teacher of languages {specifically French} who came over and settled in London c.1831-33. However, for his son to be named Napoleon, Rees senior presumably had some other French connection, which I cannot yet ascertain, before 1833; maybe a friendship, a family connection, or a political admiration. Napoleon's mother Elizabeth, who looks to have died in the 1840s, was reputedly born in London but unfortunately I cannot find her maiden name.

Introducing Pellofes, the Token Coinage of Catalonia

My thanks to Sean Morton for Fig.1, a piece which I was not expecting to find on a detectorist forum more normally associated with ordinary British finds. Nevertheless, a very pleasant surprise, and it is great that far-flung and like-minded enthusiasts are able to share their interests, and their own local material, in this way. The piece is a pellofa, plural pellofes, as tokens are called in the Catalan-speaking world.



The Wikipedia entry for “Pellofa” gives such an accurate and compact summary that I feel I can do little better than quote it; which I would ideally have liked to do in the delightfully quaint form in which Google Translate rendered the original Catalan, but I thought it might be better to paraphrase:

- ⇒ Pellofes were originally introduced by ecclesiastical communities who used to receive them in exchange for attendance at certain liturgical services . Their purpose was various. They constituted a control mechanism, an incentive to participation, and a payment system; at the end of a certain period, the pieces received were exchanged for ordinary cash.
- ⇒ Pellofes, first recorded in the 14th cent and most prominent in the 16th-18th, were very common throughout Catalonia and the adjacent provinces and islands, such as Valencia and Mallorca, where its language was spoken. All the main Catalan cathedrals issued them, as did numerous civic communities, and although they have suffered a slow decline in more recent times, it was not until the early 20th cent that they finally went out of use.
- ⇒ These tokens {Catalan: paramoneda}, conceived originally for exclusively internal use, in some cases permeated the local community so far as to be used as local currency, especially when there was a shortage of small change; a practice that was disliked and sometimes punished by those in charge of the said communities.



Most pellofes are bracteates, that is one-sided pieces; usually in brass, occasionally tin or copper. There are a few exceptions, but that is the normal practice....except in Mallorca, where lead was the almost invariable preference. The book on these pieces is "La Moneda Catalana Local {S.13-18}", in Catalan, which translates as "Catalan Local Money, 13th-18th centuries". The author is Miguel Crusafont i Sabater; he lists 73 Mallorcan leads, catalogue numbers 2391-2463.

Sean's Fig.1 is Cr.2426, from the church of S.Pierre i S.Bernat. {St.Peter & St.Bernard} in Palma; it is quite small, barely 15mm, so I have magnified it 3:2. The two figures on it are apparently the Virgin Mary on one side and St.Bernard on the other, not that it is even obvious on the token which sex the figures are, let alone their precise identities. S-B, for St.Bernard, flanking the figure on the reverse, is the best way of telling them apart. This formula of depicting the patronal saint with flanking initial is quite common on continental ecclesiastical pieces, and to some extent a useful method of identifying them. In this case, with two patronal saints competing for one side, I guess St.Peter lost the toss and decided that it was not the done thing to throw the Virgin Mary off the other.

{Continued overleaf}



A number of other Mallorcan pellofes are shown above and on the previous page, again magnified 3:2. Fig.3 {Cr.2414} is from the town of Monturi, and Figs.4-6 {Cr.2422/29/32} from various churches in Palma, which is Mallorca's largest city. Fig.2 has not as yet been identified but looks as if it fits into this series somewhere.

The designs of pellofes seem a bit various and the chronological spacing of the issues rather spasmodic, but that is maybe to be expected from a series of nearly 2500 pieces spread over more than 500 years. Some of them have monetary values on, some not; some look visibly ecclesiastic, some more secular. Where monograms feature, they probably relate to the name of an issuing church. A selection of the bracteates are shown below, for contrast. Figs.7-12, which are roughly the same size as the above lead, are magnified 3:2 as before; whereas Figs.13-22 are shown lifesize because, being both larger and in better condition than the lead, with a diameter of around 25-30mm, they can be appreciated without any further magnification.



The smallest of the bracteate pellofes are amongst the lightest and most fragile coins or tokens which I have seen. They may have a diameter larger than the tiny Russian silver pieces of the 17th cent but even the large flan ones tend to weigh under a gram and the smaller ones under a half. I once handled one which weighed in at a miniscule 0.09gm, which is about a fifth of the weight of the thinnest and grottiest 17th cent British main series copper token that you are likely to encounter. It was so fragile that I didn't enjoy picking it up; it felt like a miniature milktop, and I was sure that if I had been so minded I could have broken it in half between thumb and forefinger. How the Catalan public liked working with such coinage I would be interested to know. Lead tokens might not be very far up the social scale but for the most part they are at least substantial, and for practical everyday use, I think I would rather have a lead token or two in my pocket than a few flimsy bracteates.

