

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Please note that the old david@powell8041.freesevve.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

A Gloucestershire Selection

My thanks to Andy Frape for his photograph of the group below, all found in the same field in Gloucestershire. It may show lead tokens at their most common and most ordinary, but it is always good to see a sizeable number of pieces together, if only to appreciate their distribution and variety.



Most, bar the smallest, will be 18th cent. The stand-out piece is the one with the large G on, and one wonders what the initial indicates. It looks to be about the 19-20mm diameter, which is large enough for someone to put further initials, e.g. the issuer's, on it if they had wanted to. However, they chose not to. G for "Gallon", perhaps? which I understand is about the amount of cider agricultural labourers were given per day when working in the fields. There is a set of London brewery tokens issued in 1855 and 1869 with a large P, Q or G on, for pint, quart or gallon, so I am wondering whether this might be along the same lines. Two of them are illustrated to the right, and there are several other photographs of them, including the obverses, shown on the front page of LTT_163. However, plenty else a G could stand for, e.g. "Grain", or a placename.



A 19th Cent Scottish Lead Farthing hiding in Williamson!

Yes, we know that Williamson is meant to be about the 17th cent, not the 19th, but this is a very unusual story..... Turn to page 4 to read more!

Readers' Correspondence

It is strange how, every so often, a token turns up which reminds you of a piece or pieces from far distant series. We have two this month. First Jay's Fig.1 {b,c}, flanked by a 17th cent Beccles town farthing on the right and a Dutch duit on the left. The Beccles piece, dated 1670, is a fairly common town piece from the main Williamson series, and depicts a building {town hall, or market?} and sheep pen, the latter being no doubt the communal fold in which the animals, stray or for sale, were kept. The same design was used by Beccles on their Corporation seal in 1584; in other words, it was the armorial representation of the town. Jay informed me that the piece was a Cambridgeshire find, whereas Beccles is on the southern side of the Norfolk/Suffolk border; however, not that far away.



The style and crudity of execution suggest that Jay's piece is late-18th cent, but it is possible that the maker could have drawn on the earlier piece, specimens of which might still have been found around, for his inspiration. Also, by that time, Dutch duits such as the one shown {Fig.1d}, along with other small coppers such as the Russian denga, had been imported into East Anglia in fair numbers as makeshift coinage, i.e..tokens, to remedy the lack of small change.



It may be coincidence, but Jase Allen's Fig.2 {c,d} does have a rather early-18th cent Scandinavian look about it. The crown, although not identical, is very reminiscent of Sweden's 1715 copper daler {Fig.2e}, issued during an emergency period, whilst all three nations loved their royal monograms, a combination of king's initial and regnal numeral, sometimes symmetrically repeated, on their obverses. Once again, I show examples of relevant coins flanking. I am not sure of the findspot area, but the natural question to ask is whether, as with Fig.1, it was near the East Anglian coast.

Hugh Williams' Fig.3 appears at first to show an eye looking at you, suggesting that a face was intended, but by coincidence it has a very passable resemblance to the pewter jetons of the 1574-1614 period which depict a double-headed eagle. The upper parts of the eagle frame the eyes, with the wings being the brows, whilst the upper part of the lis/cross becomes a nose and the side parts a mouth. Whether the humorous face was intended to be a mutation of an Elizabethan eagle, is anyone's guess; perhaps the designer was, as often, just having a bit of fun. The initialled side is much more ordinary and, given that the diameter is 19mm {magnified here}, a late 17th cent date is likely. The 12 o'clock nibble hints at a broken pendant hanging, but I read the piece as a commercial token with the picture, whatever it is, representing the issuer's shop sign.





FLO Lori Rogerson has written in asking if we can tell her anything about Fig.4, discovered in South Cambridgeshire. It is not quite like any of the single-W pieces covered on the front page article of LTT_155, and the shape is somewhat curious, an approximate square with rounded sides, which may possibly be to distinguish it as belonging to some category other than a token. There must be some doubt as to whether it is English or continental, and the presence of a religious figure on the back rather argues for the latter. It is probably a charity token and, whilst it was common for continental churches to feature their patronal saint on such pieces, two people have suggested that the picture is of Christ rising from the dead. W is most likely the initial of a commodity, water or wood being the favourites; “water” is “water” in both English and Dutch, but the Dutch for wood is “hout”. Any other ideas, please write in, and I will pass them on.

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Date the Donkey

How old is this donkey, 200 or 2000? He was found near Chippenham, Wilts. My thanks for sharing it to Lemuel Lyes, who was “advised that it might be a Roman tessera, but I understand these are rare in the UK, though it can be hard to distinguish from later tokens”. So, let us examine the pros and cons of the two options.



The piece is unusual both in size and shape for a British one, which argues for the tessera. The vertical size is small for a piece so detailed, and the combination of neat straight edge followed by a significant smooth curve doesn't feel very British. It could be a fragment, of course, but it would require several breaks to obtain that shape, whereas most damaged pieces show just the one; plus, any would-be damage looks as if it would have had to have been inflicted in antiquity, since none of the edges are suggestive of a recent injury.

The style, if British, looks 18th cent, possibly 17th. As to the identity of the quadruped, I agree that with Lemuel's suggestion that a donkey is the most likely. A figure standing by or sitting on a standing animal occurs occasionally on 17th/18th cent pieces but is not particularly common; two, as is the case on this piece, is decidedly rare. However, no reason why it could not be.

The reverse is decidedly less interesting. I have seen a similar design on several 18th cent British pieces, but I do not know whether it has any significance or whether it also occurs on Roman.

-:-:-:-

The other possibility, not considered above, is that the original intention was to make a round token but that the piece was so badly formed in the mould that it was discarded, i.e. that it is a spoil-heap piece. That could happen in any age, and I have seen plenty of {mainly 18th cent} British examples. In strong favour of this suggestion is that on both sides a round frame can be seen to the right, around the design, implying that the flat unused area to the left of it, in both cases, is sprue. However, the implied diameter of the piece would still only be about 14-15mm, even allowing for the lost part of the flan, which in British terms indicates a likely date in the second quarter of the 17th cent, rather on the early side for this style but maybe not wholly impossible.

Enough evidence therefore to make Roman origins a reasonable possibility, for the main depiction is the sort of subject matter which would appeal to them, and the size is similar to that of many known Roman tesserae. I don't know a lot about tesserae find locations in Britain, although Lemuel informs me that the Chippenham area remains something of a hotspot for them. So, I remain rather open-minded whether our donkey is 200 or 2000, and would welcome any further input.

A 19th Cent Scottish Lead Farthing hiding in Williamson

Williamson's standard reference work of 1889 spends over 1300 pages discussing the 17th cent copper and brass token coinage of England. What it has to say about Scotland is summed up in Fig.1 below, although admittedly there is a second piece {William Dick of Braid} lurking amongst the chapter on unknowns. Scotland is generally accepted as having been better provided in terms of small change, in consequence of which no widespread monetary token issue was deemed necessary.

Fig..1

Scotland.

Of this kingdom there is but the one token described ; and this is very surprising, as the large cities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Aberdeen, etc., must have needed small change, and there seems to have been no special law in Scotland against their issue, any more than in England and Ireland. The Black Money of the Scottish Kings, and the patent farthings of James I. and Charles I., seem, however, to have met the requirements of the trade of that period.

O. GEO . COMBES . FARTHING (in three lines across the field), ¼
R. DVNBAR . 1668 (in two lines across the field).



William Dick's piece {Unk.44} is generally considered to be an estate token. It is one of the few which have a Latin phrase on, and they are generally present because the issuer is minor gentry and that is his family motto. The piece is very rare, but it is occasionally seen. Not so, Mr.Combes', or should it be Combe's, piece above, which has barely seen the light of day since Williamson wrote his book well over a century ago. Until, that is, someone went grovelling around in the basement of a well-known and long-standing coin dealer's premises a short while ago and found Fig.2 lurking in a drawer. Which is where we think it has been since 1946.....until now, late in 2025!

The piece shown is 24mm and lead, and fully in the style and format of those Scottish lead tokens which I have previously described in LTT_125 to 129. If you are wondering why the photograph isn't very good, that is at least in part because the original isn't very good either, but I have magnified the pictures somewhat to help. The inscription is as follows:

- ⇒ Obverse: GEO: / COMBE'S / FARTHING - {apostrophe uncertain}
- ⇒ Reverse: DUNBAR / nnnn - {date at least partly unreadable}

The date is curious. I will let the following recent auction description speak for itself:

Haddingtonshire, Dunbar, Geo: Combes, 1805, in lead alloy (Williamson, Scotland, p. 953, but date corrected, metal not described), *fair, a little damaged and corroded, believed unique*. At last, after 130 years, a ghost can finally be laid to rest. George Williamson, in his *Trade Tokens issued in the Seventeenth Century* (1889-91), recorded this as the sole Scottish 17th century token, with the date 1668. It can be seen, however, that the '6' has been tooled, as has slightly the 1 before it. The third digit is clearly enough a zero. While the final figure seems highly likely to be a 5 due to its relatively wide and curved base, it is not impossible that it has been cancelled by a 6. Although it is no longer possible to gauge from what number the '6' has been formed, the style, size and fabric of the token identify it as one of early 19th century Scottish farthings, so it would have been an 8. Both 1805 and 1806 are dates known in this series of leaden tokens.

So, who was George Combes, and were there any at Dunbar in either the 1660s or the first decade of the 19th cent? Ancestry quickly showed that there was a George Combe there, without the "s", in the 1841 and 1851 censuses {Figs.7,8}, after which it was a simple matter to create a family tree from Scotland's People and identify exactly two Georges, father and son, who were candidates for being the issuer.

George senior was born on 31.8.1746 and married Susan{na} Bathgate on 1.10.1769. They had eight children, the fifth of whom was George junior, born on 15.7.1778. The latter in due course married Agnes Hewat in 1801 and had five children, the youngest of whom was William, born 22.4.1810, who is shown in the 1841 and 1851 censuses working with, and gradually taking over from, his father in the family business. With the exception of George junior's marriage to Agnes in Edinburgh, all these family events occurred in Dunbar.

As the censuses show, George junior and his son were variously described as chandlers, candlemakers or merchants, a description which was reflected when George's will was proved at Haddington {as East Lothian was then known} Sherriff Court on 3.1.1855 {Fig.6}

Surname	Forename	Parents/ Other Details	Gender	Date	Parish Number	Ref	Parish
COMB	GEORGE	JAMES COMB/HELEN TAYLOR FR406 (FR406)	M	31/08/1746	706/	20 192	Dunbar
COMB	GEORGE	GEORGE COMB/SUSAN BATHGATE FR531 (FR531)	M	15/07/1778	706/	30 64	Dunbar

SCOTLAND's PEOPLE WEBSITE:

Fig.3: Baptismal entry for George Comb snr. {1746}

Fig.4: Baptismal entry for George Comb jnr. {1778}

Surname	Forename	Parents/ Other Details	Age	Gender	Date	Parish Number	Ref	Parish
COMBE	GEORGE	----	76	M	11/09/1854	706/	80 366	Dunbar
Comb	George	3/1/1855				Haddington Sheriff Court	SC40/40/10	

Fig.5: Civil death entry for George Comb jnr.

Fig.6: Probate {will & testament} entry for George Comb jnr.

Parish of Dunbar

1	2	3	4			
PLACE	HOUSES	NAME and SURNAME, SEX and AGE, of each Person who abode in each House on the Night of 6th June.	OCCUPATION			
Here insert Name of Village, Street, Square, Close, Court, &c.	Uninhabited or Building	NAME and SURNAME	AGE			
	Inhabited			Males	Female	Of what Profession, Trade, Employment, or whether of Independent Means.
<u>High Street</u>		<u>Alexander Cunningham</u>	<u>20</u>		<u>Merchant</u>	
<u>Do</u>		<u>George Comb</u>	<u>60</u>		<u>Candle m.</u>	<u>g</u>
		<u>William Jr.</u>	<u>25</u>		<u>g</u>	<u>g</u>
		<u>Janet Fortune</u>	<u>30</u>		<u>W</u>	<u>m</u>

Fig.7: George jnr & son William in the 1841 census

BELOW:

Fig 8: George jnr & son William in the 1851 census

Parish of <u>Dunbar</u>		Special Enum. District of <u>Dunbar</u>		Within the limits of the Royal Burgh of <u>Dunbar</u>		Town or Village of <u>Dunbar</u>	
No. of Inhabitants	Name of Street, Place, or Road, and Name or No. of House	Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 1851	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of Males Females	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where born
68	<u>High Street</u>	<u>Robert Dickie</u>	<u>Head</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>Rooper master</u>	<u>Edinburgh</u>
2	<u>High Street</u>	<u>George</u>	<u>Head</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>Rooper master</u>	<u>Edinburgh</u>
		<u>Robert</u>	<u>Head</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>Rooper master</u>	<u>Edinburgh</u>
		<u>George</u>	<u>Grandson</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>Scholar</u>	<u>Haddington</u>
		<u>Robert</u>	<u>Brother</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>
		<u>Beatrice</u>	<u>Grand Daughter</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>
		<u>Janet Dickie</u>	<u>Servant</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>Domestic servant</u>	<u>U</u>
		<u>Janet Houston</u>	<u>Servant</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>
		<u>William Comb</u>	<u>Grandson</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>U</u>	<u>U</u>
Total of Persons...				<u>9</u>			

As will be observed, the form of the surname seems to be Comb in earlier times, Combe later. There is never an "s", which inclines one to wonder whether either "Combe's" was intended on the token or whether the "S" is short for "Senior".

Both Georges were senior members of their community, active in local politics. In 1843 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the Poor Law in Scotland, and George senior was charged with supplying Dunbar's parish entry {Fig.9 below, courtesy of Google Books}.

Mr George Combe, Session-Clerk of the Parish of Dunbar.

Has been session-clerk of Dunbar about twenty-two years. He is also collector of the assessment for the poor, both in the town and country part of the parish. The allowances to the poor vary from 5s. to 10s. a month. Besides the monthly allowance, there are a number of house rents paid. House rents are only paid for very old men and women who have no relations to assist them. To widows with young children the allowances are 2s. a week for each child. The allowances generally cease when the children arrive at the age of thirteen. There is one old man and his wife, who are both bed-ridden, who receive 4s. 6d. a week between them. They have an unmarried daughter, who lives with, and takes care of them. She is able to work. There is one orphan family of two children, who have an allowance of from 2s. to 4s. a week. Two others live with a sister, and they are given an allowance in provisions. They got last month provisions to the amount of 7s. 6d. Besides which they are allowed 6d. a week to supply such small articles as may be necessary, and their house rent is paid. The family is not very respectable, and the session prefer administering relief in this way. About twenty of the paupers receive a weekly allowance of provisions, in addition to their monthly aliment. This has been long the practice in the parish, and it is chiefly done when the paupers are likely to make an improper use of the money. Witness being asked to look over the roll, and point out cases of persons who, after having spent the best of their days in the country, had come into the town of Dunbar late in life, and become burdens on the parish,—mentions, first, Widow Cook: her husband was an Irishman, and came to Dunbar at the time when the factory was established there. He was between fifty and sixty when he came. He had been a soldier, and had a small pension; and continued to live in Dunbar after the factory was given up. He used to go about selling blacking. Secondly, James Preston, aged seventy. He has been seven or eight years on the roll, and was an agricultural labourer in the landward part of the parish of Dunbar. He was a native of Dunse, but had lived for many years in the parish of Dunbar. Thirdly, Thomas Yorkston, aged seventy-eight. He has been about seven years on the roll. He is a lame man, and a native of the parish of Dunbar. He had been employed in agriculture in the landward part of the parish. Fourth, Thomas Runciman, aged eighty. He has been about ten years on the roll. He was an agricultural labourer at the Brunt, in the parish of Dunbar, but did not apply for parochial relief until he came to reside in the town. Witness thinks he is a native of Dunbar; at all events, he has lived almost all his days in it. Fifth, James Ballantyne and his wife. He is aged seventy. He came from Caithness sixteen or eighteen years ago. He had been a seaman; and states that he came here on board a vessel, and remained living chiefly upon the earnings of his wife, who was employed in field labour. He must have been eight or ten years in Dunbar before he was admitted on the roll. Sixth, Widow Scott, aged sixty-nine. She has not been above three years on the roll, and she had been barely three years in Dunbar before she was put upon the roll. She belonged to the parish of Spott, and had been employed in field labour there. She was no longer fit for the work there, and came to Dunbar in hopes of getting lighter work. She must have been upwards of sixty when she left Spott. Witness, upon further recollection, thinks that she must have been six or seven years in Dunbar before she came upon the roll.

Mr George Combe.
9 Jan. 1844.

Fig.9

We do not know when George senior died but, thanks to his involvement as a burghess {councillor}, we have several references to him in the Caledonian Mercury, such as this one of 5 February 1793, which state that he was a tobacconist. He appears as the third name on the list.

George senior, tobacconist, or George junior, chandler; both have professions which appear

amongst the issuers of lead tokens in Dalton & Hamer {LTT_125 to 129 refer}. They would have been about 59-62 and 27-30 respectively at the time the token was made. I slightly favour the younger man as being more likely to innovate, but who knows? Finally, I suppose that there is the remote theoretical possibility that Williamson's George Combe(s) was the ancestor of the two whom we have been discussing, and that the token which Williamson mentions is not the one shown on page 4; however, given how nearly his description matches, is that likely? Dunbar's records do not go far enough back to either confirm or deny the possibility, but I think not.

DUNBAR, Jan. 25. 1793.
AT a Meeting of the Burghesses and other respectable inhabitants of the burgh of Dunbar, convened at the Council House there,
 S E D E R U N T,
 Robert Fall, Esq; mcr chanc
 Mess. Walter Simpson, merchant
 George Comb, tobacconist
 John Tait, writer
 William Wightman, physician
 Thomas Turnbull, surgeon
 George Campbell, comptroller
 John Kirkwood, wright
 Adam Watson, merchant

Fig.10

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1a 2a 3a 4a 5a 6a 7a 8a 9a 10a

1b 2b 3b 4b 5b 6b 7b 8b 9b 10b

11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

11a 12a 13a 14a 15a 16a 17a 18a 19a 20a
11a 12a

11b 12b 13b 14b 15b 16b 17b 18b 19b 20b
11b 12b

21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30

21a 22a 23a 24a 25a 26a 27a 28a 29a 30a

21b 22b 23b 24b 25b 26b 27b 28b 29b 30b

31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39

31a 32a 33a 34a 35a 36a 37a 38a 39a

31b 32b 33b 34b 35b 36b 37b 38b 39b

Article

A nice group