

Editor: David Powell

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 LTJEditor@aol.com. See page 4 for information on back issues, etc.

The Passing of the Years... and welcome to a new one!

In celebration of the start of 2007, the second half of our sequence of date-ordered communion tokens commenced last month.

Pieces are uniface unless indicated by a cross-reference to the row number of one of the reverse illustrations on the right. The a/b/c subscript after such references illustrates the position on that row; as the pictures are tightly packed, it is not feasible to number them individually. Note that there is an overlap with last month, and that rows 5 and 6 of the reverse sequence may be found on the front of last month's edition.

- 1771. Dunscore, Dumfriesshire
- 1775. North Shields, North'land {5c}
- 1777. Kirkoswald, Ayrshire {6a}
- 1777. Kirkmahoe, Dumfriesshire
- 1777. Stitchill, Roxburghshire {6b}
- 1777. Carmunnock, Lanarkshire
- 1778. Balquhider, Perthshire
- 1779. Tain, Ross & Cromarty
- 1779. Dennino, Fifeshire {7a}
- 1779. Callander, Perthshire
- 1781. Laggan, Inverness-shire {7b}
- 1782. Kilmeny, Fifeshire {7c}
- 1782. Newcastle, North'land {8a}
- 1782. Inverkeithing, Fifeshire {8b}
- 1787. Tinwald & Trailflatt, Dumf{8c}
- 1788. Musselburgh. Lothian {9a}
- 1788. Salton, Lothian
- 1791. Calder, Nairn {9b}
- 1797. Cromarty, Ross & Cromarty
- 1798. Coldingham, Berwickshire {9c}
- 1799. Ceres, Fifeshire {10a}
- 1801. Elgin, Morayshire {10b}
- 1803. Ratho, Lothian {11a}
- 1806. Lismoer & Appin, Argyllshire
- 1810. Nigg, Ross & Cromarty
- 1813. Glasgow, Lanarkshire {11b}
- 1817. Auchinleck, Ayrshire {12a}
- 1817. Echt, Aberdeenshire

Happy New Year!

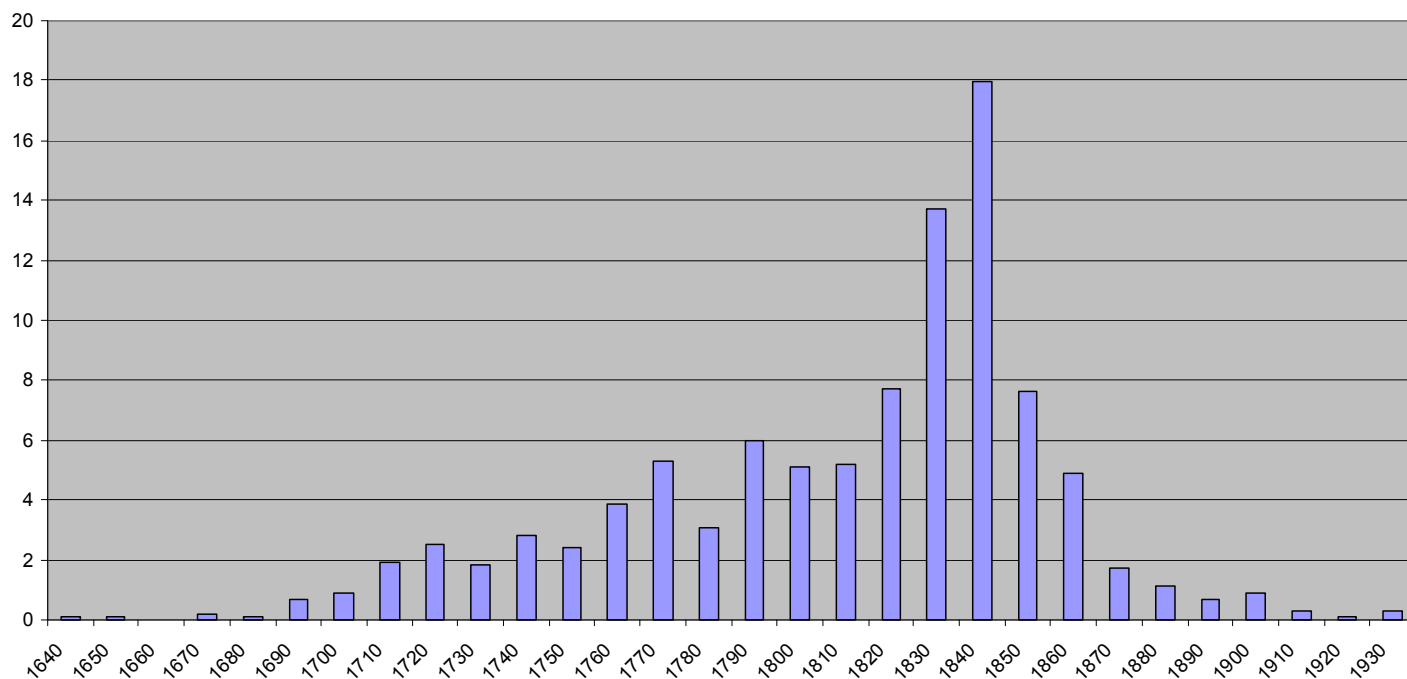


Reverses:



Date Distribution of Communion Tokens

{percentage of pieces in each decade}



The above is derived from a sample of about a quarter of the dated pieces in Bursinski's standard reference work, i.e. about 1800-1900 tokens, which is easily large enough to be taken as representative. It should be remembered that about 42% of types are undated, and that whilst there is considerable overlap these will tend on average to be earlier than the dated ones. The earlier pieces are predominantly pure lead and the later almost exclusively white metal, with a number of pewter alloys in between.

Tesserae: How well do they fit into the Classification System?

I originally designed the 32 type classification system with the more modern English lead in mind but, as time developed, it seemed natural to see how it fitted to first mediaeval and, later, ancient issues. I was pleasantly surprised to find that it did so very well, and that most differences were merely reflections of the individual characteristics of the series in the relative distribution. I know little about foreign crude lead, for pieces at the lower end of the numismatic caste system are little understood and collected in their own country, let alone others, but I would fancy the chances that it might be appropriate to other countries also.

Christianity had but little place in ancient Rome, and therefore the designs of the English stock tokens, believed to be based on mediaeval Christian imagery, are almost wholly missing from tesserae; only here and there does the occasional design approximate to them. An anchor was a ship's anchor, not an anchor of salvation; a ship was taking you on a physical trip, not a spiritual one. Nor, in Roman times, did people doodle; instead of the type 9 and 12 geometrics, tesserae approximated to coins both in their subject matter and in their quality of manufacture. Surely this must mean that they were backed by rather greater authority than was the case with British crude lead? Also supporting this theory is the much more extensive use of names, usually abbreviated, and initials; in Rome, you probably had much chance of knowing who the issuer of your piece was. Perhaps like in London with a 17th century farthing.

If the tesserae lack representation in certain types, they more than make up for it in others. The Romans loved the natural world, and a wealth of attractive 17s, 18s and 19s make up nearly a fifth of their total tesserae output. Perhaps this to some extent reflects the trades their issuers were involved in. It is, however, their depictions of people which predominate, whether humble or imperial, whether mythical or real. Type 32 makes up nearly a third of the whole, whilst heads and busts further drive the combined figure up to over 43%.

There are very few hybrids, and the few rules of precedence which seem to be required in the allocation of types are that:

- a. Design takes precedence over letters and letters over numbers.
- b. People {type 32} take precedence over the animals which they ride {type 19}.

There are a few complexities from which the British series does not suffer:

- a. Roman pieces tend to have rather more lettering on them than British, although rarely full words, and these are probably for the most part a mixture of initials {type 2} and abbreviations {type 29} in some proportion which cannot necessarily be determined. The practice will be to classify all lettering as type 2 unless clear words or abbreviations can be identified, in which case the piece is type 29.
- b. The use of Roman numerals leads to possible of confusion between numbers {type 8} and letters {type 2}; again, type 2 will take preference unless a number appears to be obviously indicated.
- c. Some of the objects which we might be tempted to regard as type 27 are in fact priestly implements, and hence type 15, although we might fail to appreciate them as such.

One of the most noticeable observations to arise concerning these lead tesserae is that only about 7½% of faces are type 0 {blank}, as opposed to an estimated 28½% for the English 18th century equivalent; or, put another way, that 15% as opposed to 57% are uniface.

The Roman statistics in the chart below are derived from Ficorini, who displays both sides of all pieces unless one of them is blank.



Relative distribution of Roman and British {1250-1850} lead

	<u>Rom</u>	<u>Eng</u>		<u>Rom</u>	<u>Eng</u>
1 Petalled flower	0.0	4.8	17 Trees and Plants	5.7	3.7
2 Initials	13.6	27.7	18 Birds	4.1	3.3
3 Segments	0.1	6.8	19 Animals, fish and insects	9.8	2.9
4 Lis	0.2	2.7	20 Merchant Marks	0.2	0.6
5 Anchors	0.1	3.5	21 Trades, other than milling	0.2	1.6
6 Ship	0.6	1.7	22 Mill-related	0.0	0.8
7 Hatching	0.0	1.9	23 Buildings	0.2	0.8
8 Numeral	1.2	4.7	24 Obscure characters	2.1	2.3
9 Irregular geometric	0.0	2.7	25 Misc objects {royal/imperial}	1.9	2.3
10 Heads and busts	11.9	3.9	26 Misc objects {celestial}	0.5	1.7
11 Tavern Utensils	0.3	0.8	27 Misc objects {other}	1.8	3.1
12 Squared Geometric	0.1	3.3	28 Outer rim series {several}	3.9	0.2
13 Framework	0.3	0.8	29 Words	9.8	1.4
14 Crosses	0.1	4.7	30 Pellets	0.1	1.2
15 Religious	0.0	0.4	31 Circular geometric	0.2	0.4
16 Arms	0.0	1.9	32 Whole people	31.4	1.6
				100.0	100.0

Some illustrated examples:

- Row 1. QTR=four, quarter or initials? favour initials.
CC, MM/D = initials or Roman numerals? favour initials; not likely to need high numbers.
- Row 2. VIII is a number, IVV is short for Iuventus, which means “young man”.
Drinking vessel, type 11? Trophy, type 27? Tough call.
Cornucopia, or horn of plenty. Horn, type 27, takes precedence over the type 17 contents.
- Row 3: Type 32 on both sides; the man takes precedence over the horse {type 19}
C/XII. C is probably but not obviously a name; nobody has the initials XII. Type 8.
- Row 4: FELIX dominates the branch {type 17} and star {type 26}, which are mere ornamentation.
DO/MI might be short for a name like Domitian, which would make it a type 29.....
.....but equally it might be two sets of initials. Favour the former.
OD/bird: The bird dominates the lettering, so that makes it a type 18.
- Row 5: Is the III in the exergue an officina {workshop} number in the spirit of the secular games pieces which celebrated the centenary of Rome in 247? The animals predominate; type 19.
LVV: LX is sixty, so these are probably initials; therefore, type 2.

Readers' Correspondence

Some interesting readers' contributions this month, for which many thanks to you all. Michael Freeman has sent in Fig.1, a uniface lead piece which seems almost certainly to be of the Commonwealth period and which, being 36mm in diameter, could be a trial striking of a crown. It has some faint marks on the reverse which, whilst appearing intentional, are not of any obvious meaning nor good enough to be photogenic. That makes the obverse type 28.16 and the reverse type 24.



Another lead piece in similar vein from Phil Mernick, this time depicting the design from the mediaeval gold ryal on one side and a variant of the familiar lis design, albeit in a rather ornate setting, on the other. Obverse type 6 {ship}, reverse type 28.4.

:-:-:-:-:-

John Bromley has posed a fascinating and very worthwhile question, on which I invite your comments:

“It is logical that tokens with something like a name or initials could only be traded locally, but were the classic designs, such as cross with quarter pellets, exchangeable across the country or a large part of it? With a large migrant workforce following the agricultural seasons across the country it would make sense that a cross and pellets token given as a farthing on a Kent hop farm could be used in Cornwall or the Midlands.

The fact that the cross & pellets is based on a real coin would help to give it national recognition, but there are other designs, such as the daisy, the grid, the lis, the anchor etc. which seem to be found nationwide; which could imply that perhaps they too had a large circulation area. This comes back to the fact that I have seen many tokens of the same design from in or around a single village, yet often no two are die twins; which could imply that they were made in different areas of the country and freely circulated at some extrinsic value. I'd have thought that if they were just issued at parish level there would be more twins, more of the same diameter and style rather than widely varying interpretations of the same basic design. Or have I just missed the plot and all tokens were issued purely for localized use?

:-:-:-:-:-

Fig.3 was found in rural Surrey, not too far from the local parish church, which may be what is depicted. Not an area normally associated with communion tokens, and perhaps it isn't, but worth a thought. Possibly it is a piece for general village use, and the church was thought to be the most obvious symbol to represent it. Any similar findings?



Finally, an unusually light pair of pieces, considering they were found on the Rotherhithe foreshore. Fig.4



does not appear to be a retrograde P, because of the shape of the structure at the top. An artificial leg? A gallows? Fig.5 could be Joseph riding to Bethlehem on a camel {i.e. a mediaeval Christmas card} or perhaps just a drover walking his stock. OK, I may sound as if I'm being facetious, but any serious guesses welcome!

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