

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 [dmpowell@waitrose.com](mailto:dmpowell@waitrose.com) or [david@powell18041.freerve.co.uk](mailto:david@powell18041.freerve.co.uk). Please note that the old LTTeditor@aol.com address advertised on some earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

## More from the Low Countries

Welcome to new Belgian correspondent Hendrik van Caelenberghe, not to be confused with his namesake and longstanding LTT contributor Hendrik de Backer. Fig.1 is a Sunday School token {18mm, 5.86gm} from St. Anthony's church in Antwerp; a category of material which, in this country, would normally be expected to be 19th cent and a little more decorative. In style, by British standards, it looks 18th cent or even late 17th; one can imagine a Williamson main series piece similarly designed; but the wording is there to prove its origin, so there it is. We do not know its date or exact purpose; perhaps it was a proof of attendance which, if accumulated in quantity, might win its owner a bible or some such reward.



Would that we had a few more leads of such quality as Fig.2 in England! Another church piece, with a well-known ecclesiastical monogram surrounded by a wide radial grenetis {21-23mm, 7.00gm}. Over here, IHS tends to indicate the Episcopalian church {Church of England} rather than the Presbyterian {Church of Scotland} when it occurs on a British communion token; one dominates north of the border and the other south, but they both exist in each other's territory. I don't know whether any such distinction would apply between the different Protestant denominations in Belgium.



Fig.3 is one of those pieces which begs the question as to whether it is a seal or a token. 9.83gm is quite heavy for a 19mm diameter, although not all inset designs are punched seals. There are also quite a few such recessed designs in the Scottish communion token series, where they were common in the first few decades of the 18th cent. Crossed something... axes? That to my mind swings the odds strongly in favour of the commercial rather than the ecclesiastic. Maybe it is a trade guild piece, with the axes defining the profession concerned. Issuers initials CW flank the axes; I think that we will read the central ring as ornamentation, and try not to see the word COW!

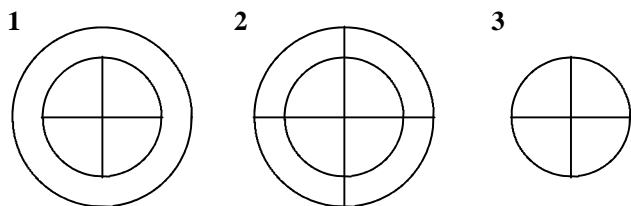
Fig.4 {25mm, 5.55gm} is more definitely a seal, with a hole for fixing; date 18n7 {n= 1 or 5} in centre, the countersunk 18 and the various initials probably some combination of the cloth type, quality, length and the checker's identity. Doubtless it was part of a mechanism somewhat analogous to the system described in John Sullivan's excellent book on Russian cloth seals, previously mentioned, but emanating from other parts. Unfortunately seals used on exported goods are more than likely to finish up in their destination country rather than that of origin, so it is not always immediately obvious, without a few more to verify, which town or country's system they belong to.

From the Netherlands, Alex Kussendrager has come up with Fig.5; reputedly only 10mm across, for which reason I have magnified it 2:1, but for that size a massive 5gm in weight. With that weight/size ratio it has surely got to be a seal, but the design is pleasingly token-like. With the crown at the top and lis below, possibly on a central staff, opinion to date is that it looks 17th cent English but with continental overtones. Anyone with a bit more heraldic knowledge to throw into the pot, we would like to hear from you.



# Imitating the Groat

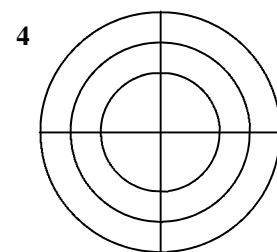
The cross & pellets is one of our commonest lead token designs, and we readily recognise it as imitating the reverse of the late mediaeval silver penny and its fractions. As issued officially by the mint, the shape comes out as per Figs.1-2: one inner circle outside which an inscription can be put, with a cross going to the inner ring {short cross, Fig.1} or outer {long cross, Fig.2} as preferred, and some filler of choice in the internal quarters. The inscription often contains some very interesting subject matter, such as the mint town, and on some early issues the name of the moneyer as well.



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The lead version of this either remains as per Fig.1, with the inscription either left blank or replaced by something less sophisticated {filler, shading, or pseudo-lettering}, which we call a grenetis; or else it discards the rim altogether and reduces to a simple cross as per Fig.3. Either way, the internal quarters are either left blank, or else filled by a pellet or three. Strangely, even though all our English lead tokens of this design are thought to derive from some time after the short-cross design gave way to the long-cross in 1278, both the grenetis and non-grenetis designs are extremely common.

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So much for the penny. In 1278 Edward I introduced the fourpenny groat as an early experiment in multiple-value coinage, and although not immediately successful it, and its smaller brother the halfgroat, were ultimately established under Edward III in 1351. The design was as the penny but with one further ring added on the outside, on which was placed a religious text whose primary purpose was to dissuade the superstitious from clipping. The result of this was as per Fig.4. From one silver value in 1278 we moved in three-quarters of a century to having five, each twice the value of the next; that is, groat, halfgroat, penny, halfpenny and farthing. Examples of the three largest members of the family are shown in Figs.5-7 below; although be aware that, because inflation caused their size to decrease over time, the relevant sizes of pieces are not always what one would expect. The halfgroat of Fig.6, for example, being later than the other two, is not as large as it would be if struck at the same time as Fig.7.



5. Penny of Edward I/II, c.1302-10, Bury St.Edm.  
 6. Halfgroat of Edward IV, c.1469/70, London  
 7. Groat of Edward III, c.1351-52, London



When one thinks of how the groat and halfgroat translated to lead tokens, the Boy Bishop {Fig.8} is obviously the first design which comes to mind; they are of high quality, and the connection is obvious. There are Boy Bishop halfgroats and pennies, too, the latter in plenty. However, the link between regal silver and home-produced lead does not stop there; amongst the crude lead too, the design of the groat makes its heritage felt long after it was eliminated from the official coinage.



There are cases where two different sizes of similar lead tokens have been found together at the same site {Figs.9-10 and 11-12}, but they are not all that common. Maybe some difference of value was intended between the pieces in these cases, but by and



large I expect that there was no standard other than they fitted whatever the owner wanted at the time, which was likely to be equivalent to no more than the minimum coin of the realm, if not smaller. In other words, whilst size and design might be some determinant of the likely value, they cannot be guaranteed to do so.

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In terms of my lead token classification system, the penny and groat reverses are some combination of types 3,14, and 31; i.e. cartwheels, crosses {itself a special case of cartwheel} and circles.



One can imagine the local village manufacturers, not over bothered about fine detail, thinking something along the lines of:

1. "I want to make some coins. Not forgeries, just crude stuff for use round here which is obviously not official money and which no-one will worry about.
2. Coins have circle and lines on the back of them; therefore, if I make round disks with circles and lines on the back of them, that will make them look like coins and give them some authority.
3. One or two circles seems to be the usual, but does it matter? Any old number will probably do; I'll decide at the time, depending what takes my fancy.
4. Lines likewise; two lines across the diameter seems to be the norm, or four if you think of them starting from the centre. Could have any number I like; what the toss?
5. If they look good I could just have circle and no lines; would save a bit of work. Or lines and no circles. Let's just get going on making the mould and see what comes out."

All of which would, and did, produce a fair bit of variety. Those who forgot the circles and just went for lines would produce simple cartwheels like Fig.9-10, and as will be seen they are not all penny-sized; whatever Fig.10's value was, Fig.9 looks as if it could well be four of them. This was the easy option; whether you wanted big value or little, straight lines {plus occasionally pellets} were the easiest thing to carve into the mould.

On the other hand, there is no shortage of pieces such as Figs.13-21 which depict nothing other than concentric circles, plus usually a pellet in the middle. They come in various sizes; if judged in comparative terms Figs.13-17 might be pennies, Figs.18-20 halfgroats and Fig.21 a groat, but regardless of their value there is not a line to be seen between them. Interestingly, pieces of this type nearly always seem to be very light in colour, which suggests some geographic constraints; they are not usually found in pewter, or with the dark patina sometimes created by river mud.



Moving on to some pieces which combine lines and circles, Fig.22 is a nice, clean base-level piece; let us call it a penny by way of benchmark, even if we are not fully sure that that was what was intended. Figs.23-27 then become progressively more elaborate, until by the end certain of the engravers' enthu-

siasm for lines {Figs.25-26} and circle {Fig.27} know no bounds; regardless of realism, they are going to put on as many as they think the flan size will allow.



After those would-be pence and groats, some slightly bigger pieces. Fig.28, visibly cruder than most of the others, in penny style with a larger flan. Figs.29-32 all have the multiple rings of the groat, although two of them {Figs.29,32} are what one might term “short-cross groats”; remembering now the short-cross penny which went out in 1247, before the groat was even seriously contemplated. There seems to be in Figs.30-32 a sense that the outer ring ought to be used for something, and in the absence of any idea what to put in it the engraver has opted for a ring of radial dashes. Pieces are occasionally seen in which these may be debatedly interpreted as a clock face; Fig.31 is not that far off.

Fig.32 is an obviously pewter piece, possibly a late evolution of pewter Boy Bishops such as Fig.8, and its design is unusual too in that the central cartwheel and outer grenetis have been separated out into two distinct components separated by an airgap. The implication of this is that by this time, which is probably quite late, the original origin of the design was outside many issuer’s understanding, and that they were merely building on those of the past to create new ones, still close enough to be viable, according to their own taste.

Many of these larger pieces are probably 18th cent, long after the groat and halfgroat were replaced in the regal coinage, for everyday use at least, by the sixpence and threepence; yet, their influence remains. The late period sees some interesting developments as some crude lead designers continue try to merge existing ideas into more compound designs. The limpet, Fig.33, is one such, named because it looks like an aerial view of that sea-creature which so many of us encountered in the rockpools on our childhood holidays. If you look carefully, you will see that there is a mesh of weak lines and circles underneath as if someone has made an initial attempt at a groat, after which he felt that he needed to superimpose a strong cross or cartwheel to give it a bit of character.



Another interesting late development {18th cent} is the use of petals to replace the cross or cartwheel in these compound designs; Fig.34 shows this on a penny design, whilst Fig.35/36 how the idea pans out on a groat or halfgroat. Fig.37 shows a very large example but using this evolution of the penny rather than groat design, whilst Fig.38 show the same sort of approach but with some filler, dare I call it a pseudo-inscription, round the outside. These petal and limpet groats are almost all middle-sized if not large; it is rare to find a small one, which no doubt reflects the age in which they were made. These late superimposed types are a welcome supplement to the many simpler and less attractive pieces which were still being issued alongside; my suspicion is, that they were the attempts of some of the more skilled makers to breathe interest into design, rather than indicative of any meaning of value.

## Lead Tokens of the Crusaders

It is not the intention of this newsletter to discuss foreign series in any great depth, partly because others are more qualified to do so and partly because the main focus is intended to be on developing knowledge of, and interest in, the British crude lead. We do, however, from time to time, talk of foreign lead series which have had some influence on British ones, in terms of usage, design or evolution; and also others find their way here, usually by way of trade. By and large these are from the nearer countries of the European mainland, which is understandable.

One foreign series which has been barely mentioned, but deserves to be because of the coincidence of many of its designs with the more modern crude lead of this country, is the series used in the Middle East during the period of the Crusades; namely, end-11th cent to end-13th. The reason I speak of it now is to draw your attention to an excellent article which has appeared in the 2013 Numismatic Chronicle, and which may be used by those of you so minded as an introduction to the subject. It is entitled "Lead Token Money in the Kingdom of Jerusalem", by Robert Kool, and may be found on pages 293-339, with six plates {49-54} at the rear.

Few people, apart from the authors of the much quoted Mitchiner and Skinner articles in BNJ53/54, have written or illustrated fifty pages on crude lead. I am little placed to comment or add to this latest contribution, other than to thank the author for his efforts and to whet your appetite by describing briefly what he has put together.

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The first twenty-one pages are text: the first ten concerned with historical background and usage, followed by a couple on production methods, after which the rest is devoted to types, i.e. designs, which the author divides into seven:

- Monetary {types 3,14 + French chateau}
- Heraldic {type 16}
- Human & animal figures {type 10,17-19,32}
- Letters & monograms {types 2,20}
- Geometric & figurative {types 1,9,12,30,31}
- Builders' tools & equipment {type 13,21 - part}
- Fleur-de-lis {type 4}

Not too many surprises there! nearly everything maps on to our classification system, apart from the French chateau design, a particular very common feature of their mediaeval coinage, for which there is no equivalent in English and which should probably be given its own type. Because the design technically depicts a stylised building, I have hitherto included it in type 23; but it is not a true building, so we will henceforth designate it type 38. There is a large display of them on the second page of LTT\_53 {Sept 2009}, when their occurrence in Forgeais's work was examined.

The only other slight standout category is that of tools and equipment, which Kool believe to be associated with stonemasonry and the building trade particularly. The shields tend to be starkly pointed triangles, without the softer rounded curves which distinguish most English depictions, and the crosses include some of the more elaborate examples seen in France but not England; again, see some of LTT's Forgeais articles, e.g. page 4 of LTT\_32 {Nov 2007} for examples. There are also some grenetis pieces in evidence, some with shading, some with inscriptions.

The rest of the article is made up of a listing of 286 pieces, followed by cross-references. Some 120 of these are illustrated, as also are several moulds and a casting-tree. The latter has some eighteen tokens attached to it, all joined by sprue, and is the largest that I have seen. Many of the pieces are not much before the date of the earliest English {and French} pewter, and the extensive illustrations, in particular, do much to render this article congenial to those who wish to relate this geographically distant range of tokens to series with which they are more familiar.