

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Please note that the old david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.

Readers' Correspondence



First up this month, a couple of later pieces which buck the trend by incorporating features from an earlier age, and which serve to illustrate the longevity of some of crude lead's design features.

Fig.1, found at a farm in Pagham, W.Sussex by Steven Wilding, shows a typical 17th cent triad but in a style hinting at the 18th; and if one doubted that it could really be that late, there is the date on the back to prove it, amidst a nice little grenetis of pseudo-inscription filler which is also reminiscent of earlier days. S = issuer surname, I+W = his and his wife's forename respectively, is the usual interpretation, although as W is a fairly rare initial for a female at that date, the idea of S = location, IW = issuer's forename+ surname cannot perhaps be ruled out. However, the odds are on the traditional meaning.

Mark Northfield's Cambridgeshire find {Fig.2} is the latest type 14 cross which I have seen. The JL is in a style typical of an early 19th cent farm token, which is what it is, and yet there on the back is one of the oldest English lead token stock designs known. There are quite a number of cross-pieces which use the quarters to hold various other things, usually letters; odd in a way that one doesn't see more dates, because the year being four digits it is such an obvious thing to do. 1841 is quite late for lead; I presume that is how you are meant to read it, but just possible it is 1814 and that you are supposed to read it clockwise.

Sam Webb's Fig.3, provenance unknown, also looks like a farm token; possibly a Kent/East Sussex hop token, although it is not in Alan Henderson's book. No surprise there, new ones are turning up all the time. IB {maybe for JB} is the issuer, S/1 probably stands for the value, one shilling. Its particularly unusual feature is that the value is wedged between the issuer's initials, rather than separately stated on the reverse. It is probably late 18th cent or early 19th; if you can find the names of the local farmers of the time relative to the findspot you might just be able to trace the issuer, although with most initial pairs it is a tough ask, and without any provenance no hope. Definitely pushing it with a common combination like JB. Alan Henderson only traced as many as he did because the finders before him carefully preserved their provenances.

Also from Sam, Fig.4. It is a common enough design of its time, probably early 18th cent, when designers were starting to superimpose standard stock designs on top of each other for extra interest, but what exactly is the diagonal component? A banded cross, or four petals which have straightened themselves out into rectangles? perhaps the maker drew his inspiration from the four shields of early milled silver. An argument could also be made for wind-mill sails.





Heads and busts always make for an attractive feature on lead, and usually represent landowners or monarchs; herewith a nice photogenic example, Fig.5, from Simon Weller, which is clearly modelled on the two-guinea piece issued by George IV in 1823. Not too many lead token issuers will have seen genuine two-guinea coins, but they were extensively copied in brass as gaming tokens. The copies were clearly made in quantity, as they are frequently found today, but this is the first lead I have seen which is based on them.

Fig.6, found on Surrey farmland by Tom Main, shows the sort of degenerate artwork often found on the pieces of the late 18th cent and early 19th. It is halfway to the sort of abstraction that the ancient Celts indulged in on their coinage, which often keeps one guessing, but none the worse for all that. Tilt the thing round 30 degrees anti-clockwise, so that the base is at 6 o'clock rather than 5 o'clock, and my first choice is a bird standing facing left; in which case, use in connection with vermin control is one likely possibility {see LTT_36, pages 1-2 and LTT_99, page 3}. A long shot second choice is a fish swimming right, in which case maybe something to do with fishing rights, but I somewhat favour the bird. I think you can just pick out the webbing on one of his feet.

Tom also sent in two pictures of what I think is the first lead serratus I have seen {Fig.7}; a Thames foreshore find, sadly too dark to be able to make out much, featuring retro-GP initials on one side and a typical type 4 feathers/trident type on the other. The shape, however, can be determined from the silhouette, and it will be seen that the serrations run round about the third of the rim. Was it personal idiosyncrasy, one wonders, or did it have meaning? The only other example I can think of serrated coinage offhand is the "denarius serratus" of the Roman Republican period, mainly but not exclusively dating from the period 83-64 BC. Ordinary denarii were issued alongside them, so either they had a special purpose or, if some of the other websites are to be believed, it was an anti-fraud measure to combat plating. Not that the latter was likely to be relevant to Fig.7!



Another mildly unorthodox version of a common type is Fig.8, found at Southwell, Notts, by Simon Brady. It is fairly standard type 4 token of the lis/trident/feathers family, albeit a nice crisp one; however, there are some flanking characters, unusual on this type, which are probably the issuer's initials. I can't quite make them out., but I will guess at "ME", even if the E does look more like a sideways W.



Steve Bartrick's Fig.9, found near Gloucester, is of a type which more regularly occurs with flanking initials; in this case probably TG, with TC and TO also possible. It is 19mm across and weighs 3.47gm; so, probably late 17th cent or thereabouts. Steve asked: "Maybe it relates to a Bell Inn, or a bell founder?" Either possible, the shop/inn sign being the more likely. Worth also remembering that, pre-1764, shops as well as inns often had pictorial signs.

Finally, this month, a huge hybrid piece found in the area between Bere Regis and Dorchester by Phil Thompson. 35mm diameter and 7mm thick; that is a biggie. In terms of design, is a hybrid of three common stock types, the cross, the petal and the lis, but it is well done and it looks good. If it was a token, one would suggest a date c.1800 on the basis of its near cartwheel-penny diameter; however, 7mm is thick even for one of those, which makes me think that it is more likely to be an estate pass or even a beggar's badge. There seems to be some hint of a plugged hole at the top, which adds to that argument. I certainly wouldn't want to be carrying too many of those around, and beggars' badges at least were deliberately made to be uncomfortable and unpopular!



Thank you, everybody, for a fascinating selection this month. Happy hunting, & keep them flowing.

Mexican Lead Tokens

My grateful thanks to Junior Rosales, who lives in Sombrerete, a major mining town in the Mexican state of Zacatecas, for sending in these extensive displays of lead tokens found locally. It is always a pleasure to see a sizeable hoard which is statistically large enough to be able to study the themes running through it; plus, we often know all too little about tokens outside our own countries, especially those lead pieces which inhabit the lowest levels of the numismatic hierarchy. It is refreshing, therefore, to observe that countries so far away have tokens which are similar in concept and, if not exactly like our own in appearance, sufficiently near that we can identify with them. Three main designs can be discerned, but they all fit into our own classification system: the star, the pellet in the midst of concentric circles, and the cartwheels with thick-ended spokes and a central ring. Same idea as English tokens, but with their own pleasing local personality. Any other overseas readers who have such displays, do please send them in; regardless of their size, we would be delighted to see them.



{See overleaf for magnified sample}



The Issuers of Scottish Lead Tokens: Midlothian, other than Edinburgh and Leith, Part 1

This continues our exploration of Scottish lead tokens of {predominantly} the 1805-15 period, following our earlier series of articles in LTT_125/26/27/28/29. The primary purpose is to tease out a little bit more information about the issuers and their history, adding where possible to the information on the token; gleaned the name behind the initial, learning which trade they practised, and a more precise idea of when and where they operated.

Unlike the tokens discussed in LTT_125/26/27/28/29, which came from Edinburgh and its near neighbour Leith, these other pieces all derive from outside the big city areas which have regular directories at the date concerned. It has not therefore been possible very often to deduce the whole period of trading at any given location, nor even always the full address itself; indeed, in some cases, all that could be achieved was to identify the precise individual and his forename. Information has been gathered from a variety of non-commercial sources, and sometimes these are themselves defective; for example, because of the churches' constant feuding, many parish records are missing, even in some cases right up until the advent of civil registration in 1855.

List of abbreviations used, to avoid frequent repetition:

- SP = Scotland's People
- SPWT = Scotland's People wills & testaments
- SPB = Scotland's People births and baptisms {which, not specified unless stated}
- STD = Scotland's People deaths and burials {which, not specified unless stated}

All events in the parish of issue except where stated.

-:-:-:-

We start with Musselburgh, for which Dalton & Hamer {the standard catalogue} recorded the items below:



DH.Loathian.225

The 1841 census records that William Begg, aged 54, was trading as a baker in High St, Fisherrow. He was bapt 17.11.1786, the son of William senior and Elizabeth Easter. The 1851/61 censuses show him still trading in the latter case into his mid-seventies, and he died in 1865. William senior may have been a baker as well, but I can find no record either of his profession or his date of death. The issuer will have been one or other of them.

There are a couple of other merchants in evidence in Musselburgh, including a wine and spirit dealer, and the re-use of forenames is such as to suggest that they are almost certainly cousins or brothers of one of the Williams above; however, neither have either a "W" initial or an immediate descent from anybody with a "W" forename.

-:-:-:-

DH.Loathian.226

From Scotland's People Wills and Testaments:

Brooks	William	10/1/1852	Merchant in Musselburgh	Inventory	Edinburgh Sheriff Court Inventories	SC70/1/74
Brooks	William	10/1/1852	Merchant in Musselburgh		Edinburgh Sheriff Court Wills	SC70/4/19

The 1851 census shows Joan Brooks, spirit dealer, at 118 High St, Musselburgh; she has four children, of whom the eldest, William, is a journeyman baker. The 1845/46 directory shows William Brooks senr as a grocer & spirit retailer at 19 High St and William jnr as a tailor, also in the High St but number unstated.

The 1841 census shows that William senr, merchant & spirit dealer, was b.c.1766-71 and married to Agnes, that William jnr, tailor and spirit dealer, was b.c.1796-97 and married to Jean, and that there was another William Brooks even more jnr., b.c.1820-21, also a tailor, and living at home with his widowed mother and siblings. It is presumably the older of the William juniors who died just before the 1851 census.

The token issuer would appear to be William senr, b.c.1766-71. The Perth Advertiser of 5 February 1846 says that William senr, merchant, died on 21 January 1846, aged 75, which puts his date of birth at around 1770.

-:-:-:-

DH.Loathian.227/228

The only reference to a likely token-issuing trade in Scotland's People Wills and Testaments is:

Cowan	Jean	23/3/1827	in Musselburgh, widow of James Cowan, candlemaker in Musselburgh	TT	Edinburgh Commissary Court	CC8/8/151
-------	------	-----------	---	----	----------------------------------	-----------

She looks like being Jean Cochran, who married James on 12.1.1787.

According to the list overleaf, derived from <https://www.ancestor.abel.co.uk/inv/burg.html>, the following Cowans from Inveresk, with which parish Musselburgh is joined, were admitted burgesses (B) and gildbrethren (G) of Edinburgh between 1406 and 1841. None of the other Musselburgh issuers appear on this list, so it would appear that the Cowans must have had some sort of privilege or status.

Of the professions listed, candlemakers are frequent token issuers and fleshers/butchers are not, so with the help of this very useful table and its statement of the links between the various parties, it is possible to ascertain from the parish records that James Cowan senr. was born in 1751 and James jnr. in 1783. Uncle and nephew, they are likely to have worked together in the same business.

Cowan, James	candlemaker	B.	fr. John C., butcher in Musselburgh, B.	30 May1777
Cowan, James	candlemaker, Musselburgh	B.	fr. Thomas C., flesher	2 Mar. 1829
Cowan, John	flesher in Musselburgh	B.		13 Aug. 1760
Cowan, John	butcher in Musselburgh	B.	fr. John C., flesher there, B.	10 Oct. 1782
Cowan, Thomas	flesher in Musselburgh	B. & G.		11 Aug. 1749
Cowan, Thomas	s. to Thomas C., flesher in Musselburgh	B. & G.	said fr. Thomas C., B. & G.	24 June 1767
Cowan, Thomas	flesher	B.	fr. John C., flesher in Musselburgh, B.	18 Aug. 1773

--:--:--:--

DH.Loathian.229

The only early directory covering Dalkeith is the Edinburgh one for 1794/95; after that, Dalkeith was not included until 1833/34.

The 1794/95 include the following tradesmen for Dalkeith:

- ⇒ Gray, Andrew, baker {south west quarter}
- ⇒ Gray, Alexander, grocer & smith {north east quarter}
- ⇒ Gray, John, grocer {north east quarter}

William could well be the son of one of them who had taken over the business. William, son of Alexander b.21.3.1754 {bapt 29} seems to be the only candidate on Ancestry. However, there is nothing conclusive whatsoever.

Michael Dickinson has found William Gray, meal dealer, 37 Nicolson Street, in the 1805 Edinburgh Directory, and thinks he is a likely issuer. He sounds as strong a candidate as any.

--:--:--:--

DH.Loathian.230

Michael Dickinson has suggested that M & S -might well stand for McQueen & Steel, the issuers of copper token DH.Loathian.99. This also feels very likely; there are no known rival candidates.

--:--:~:~:~

DH.Loathian.231/32

There are quite a few Thomas Thomsons, and as few of them can be ascribed a known profession it is difficult to know which is which. The following snippets may or may not be relevant:

- ⇒ In 1818 Blackwood's Magazine recorded, in its list of deaths, that Mary Richardson, spouse of Mr.Thomas Thomson, candlemaker and tobacconist, died on 3 March at Musselburgh.
- ⇒ A list of subscribers to David Loch's 1779 publication, "Essays on the Trade, Commerce, manufactures, and Fisheries of Scotland" includes both the town clerk and a second Thomas Thomson of Musselburgh. Given the nature of the book's subject, the latter may well be the token issuer.

- ⇒ A Thomas Thomson, who may or may not have been the token issuer, was appointed Town Clerk of Musselburgh in 1784; he died 30.12.1817, aged 87. His death notification appears in the Scots Magazine of 1 February 1818 but does not state his profession.
- ⇒ A family history website says that there was another Thomas Thomson, a shoemaker in Fisherrow, who married in the mid-1770s and had a string of children including another Thomas in 1788. However, this is not a usual occupation for a token issuer at this date. In the mid-19th cent, maybe....

My gut feeling favours the candlemaker and tobacconist, but nothing to prove it.

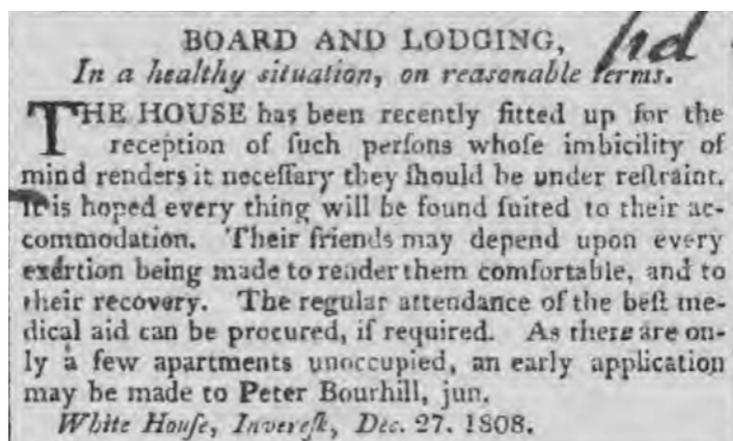
-:-:-:-

DH.Loathian.232{bis}

This piece was a late addition to Dalton & Hamer's work, hence the odd numbering. I have not been able to find an example which is good enough to illustrate, but it is 21mm in diameter and has the inscriptions "MUSSELBURGH FARTHING" round the edge on one side and "P.BOURHILL . CANTEEN" on the other. The presence of the word "CANTEEN" on it also suggests that it may have a usage different from most others in the series, despite being of an approximately similar period.

The Bourhill family is present in the parish registers of Inveresk and Musselburgh from at least the 1720s. There are numerous Peter Bourhills: one in the first generation b.1736, two in the second b.1765/68. One of the latter, and the subject of the next extract below, is most likely to be the token issuer.

Peter jnr. and his English-born wife Helen, née Watson, whom he married on 14.3.1797, ran a private lunatic asylum in Musselburgh for many years and this advert from the Caledonian Mercury of 29 December 1808 suggests that that was the year in which it started up.



Helen was still the proprietress of the lunatic asylum in the 1841 census and was buried on 18.10.1842, described as the widow of Peter Bourhill, baker, aged 74. Peter is not in the 1841 census, presumably dead. For some reason Helen's SPWT entry is several years later:

Bourhill	Helen	18/4/1848	Mrs, or Watson, relict of Peter Bourhill, baker, keeper of lunatic asylum in Musselburgh or Fisherrow	Edinburgh Sheriff Court Wills	SC70/4/5
----------	-------	-----------	---	-------------------------------------	----------

Baking appears to have been the family profession, practised not only by Peter but by several of his relatives, and the wheatsheaf on the token is synonymous with it. The word "Canteen", on the token, is unusual; so, however, is running a private mental asylum. One can but assume but that the asylum had a communal canteen, and that these tokens were associated with its operation.