

Lyme Regis Tokens

Compiled by Graham Davies, revised 2021

<https://www.lymeregismuseumresearchteam.co.uk>

No copper coins were produced by the Government between 1648 and 1672, so there was a shortage of small change. Many towns and traders produced copper tokens to fill the gap. From Lyme Regis, the Museum has examples of copper farthing tokens produced by Amyell Hart, 1655, and Abraham Pitts, 1657, but the most common are Lyme Regis Borough farthings, 1669.

[LRM Trade & shipping gallery case]

*The corporation of Lyme ordered a barrel of town farthings in 1669, fifteen years after the first tradesman of the borough, Amyell Hart, had issued his token, and a second barrel six months later. Both barrels of farthings cost 45*l*.8*s*.3*d*. A profit of 8*l* is acknowledged to have been realised, or 17½ per cent in the mayor's account.*

[George Roberts, *The Social History of the People of the Southern Counties of England*, pub 1856]

The Museum's small collection of 1669 tokens is made up from donations, and purchase at a sale.

The following have recently been added in the collection of coins and tokens in the Museum:-

Two halfpenny tokens, end of 18th century. Found at Lyme Regis. Presented by Mrs W J Emmett and Mrs La Mottee. Farthing token of Amiel Hart, of Lyme Regis 1665. Found in the garden of Victoria House, Lyme Regis. Presented by Mrs C Langford.

[W J Emmett newspaper cuttings, LRM Research Team's Digital Archive, November 1939]

A London auction where we were more successful was of a magnificent collection of Dorset coins and trade tokens. Its equal will never be seen again, and every Dorset museum and private collector was present. We acquired a good mixed lot of 17th century Lyme farthings, many in fine condition. But the prize lot for us was of our rarest coin, the lead 'rose' farthing of 1653, of which the obverse is blank. Only two specimens are known to exist, and the Spink's sale example was one. I am happy to say that, thanks to the Friends, it is now back in its native town, and will be on display in 1983.

I suspect the rose emblem may be a pun on the name Rose or Roze, the Jersey family who attained considerable position and wealth in early 17th century Lyme - and owned the Tudor House Hotel building, next to Ames Short's vicarage in Church Street. They bought the manor of Wootton Fitzpaine during the Commonwealth and eventually moved out of Lyme to become country gentry. Such punning emblems occur elsewhere in our coins.

The two Hart farthings both show a heart; the Uplyme Liddon farthing shows (what else) an iron lid. John Liddon was a rich blacksmith there. Only the Abraham Pitts farthing remains obscure, with its fine little ship emblem. But even there a mysterious flower springs between the initials AP on the reverse, and may conceal some lost allusion.

[John Fowles, LRM Curator's Report 1982]

Photos of the Museum's Abraham Pitts farthing token of 1657.



The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich describes the 'mysterious flower' as an anchor.

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-39143>

The British Museum believes it is a plant or flower.

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_T-7529

