

The Coins of the Staple Hoard (2015)

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Hoard Deposited: c. 1351 +
Staple, France (Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Dunkirk district, Hazebrouck quarter).
Current location: private collection
Research viewing: June, 2015 (Dengis' photographs)

In March 2015, a small coin hoard was discovered in Staple, France. An article describing the find was published in the June 2015 bulletin of the Cercle Numismatique de Val de Salm entitled: "Trouvaille de Staple", authored by J. L. Dengis ^[1].

The hoard was comprised of 6 silver *gros compagnons* that had been found in a farm field. All 6 of the coins were struck in Flanders for Count Louis II of Mâle (1346-1384), and were presumably the contents of a purse, which has since disintegrated. The coins had fused together into a solid mass, and with the aid of a cleaning with an ammonia solution they were separated ^[1]. The weights of the coins were not recorded. The coins are now with the current owner (presumably the original finder). ^[6]

DESCRIPTION OF THE COINS ^[4]

The obverse of the *leeuwengroot* shows a rampant lion left, surrounded by a clockwise legend that begins with an initial cross, followed by the word MONETA, which is in turn followed by a leaf mark and then FLAND'. Around this legend is a border of 1 small lion and 11 leaves, each itself enclosed in a partial circle. Between the legend and the outer border is a ring of oblong pellets.

The reverse has an outer and an inner legend. The central type is a cross (a "medium" cross), the arms of which break into the inner legend. The legends are separated by a ring of oblong pellets. There is another ring of oblong pellets beneath the inner legend. (There are rings of pellets along the outer edges of both faces as well, but these are very often not visible on the coins themselves.)

Note that some numismatists (e.g. Dengis) prefer to view the lion side as the reverse and the cross side as the obverse. The approximate diameter of a *leeuwengroot* is 27-28 mm.

All six of the *leeuwengroten* present in the hoard were struck for Count Louis II of Mâle (1346-1384). Because of existing records from medieval Flanders, we know that there were eight separate issues of the *leeuwengroot* during the reign of Louis II of Flanders (Louis of Mâle) (Gaillard Type 219; Vanhoudt Type 2582), the first issue actually beginning under his father, Louis of Nevers (1322-1346), who was killed at the Battle of Crécy in August, 1346.

Each successive issue of *leeuwengroot* was struck from either silver of a fineness reduced from that of the previous issue, or with a reduction in the weight of the coins, or both. Such debasement of the currency was common practice in the Middle Ages.

We know that these issues of *leeuwengroten* were marked by the mint through the use of special characters on the coins, for example an **L** with a pellet over the ‘foot’, the direction of the stem of the leaf between MONETA and FLAND, or the change from a long **O** to a round **O**, among others. But since these were “secret” characters for the authorities and not for the general public, the records do not indicate which mint signs went with which issues, and numismatists are left to try and piece together the chronology from the information gathered from researching coin hoards ^[4].

The following legends appear on the *leeuwengroten* of Louis of Mâle:

**MONETA FLANDrie
LVDOVICvs COMES**

*Coin of Flanders
Louis, Count*

The reverse, outer legend is exactly the same for all 6 *leeuwengroten* in the find:

✠ BNDICTV : SIT : NOME : DNI : NRI : IHS : XPI

BeNeDICTVm SIT NOMEn DomiNI NostRI IHSV CHRIsTi

Blessed be the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

5 of the 6 the *leeuwengroten* from the Staple Find have a round **O** in COMES on the reverse, and a pellet to the right of the initial cross on the obverse. The remaining 1 coin has a long **O** and no pellet left or right of the obverse cross. The **A** of MONETA has no crossbar on the obverse of all six coins, and all of the leaf-stems are straight.

CATALOG of COINS:

(S-00 numbers refer to the photographs in Dengis' 2015 article ^[1].)

County of Flanders

Louis II of Mâle (26 August, 1346 - 30 January 1384)

Issue I : {20 Jan. 1346 – 20 Nov. 1346}

Type 4

1 example: S-03

OBV	✠ MONETA + FLAND'
REV	IIVD OVI CD DO MES



S-03

Unlike the other 5 *leeuwengroten* present in the hoard, this type has an obverse, outer border with 3-lobed leaves: ✠ instead of 5-lobed. The stem of the leaf mark after MONETA is not altogether clear, but does seem to be straight. Note the absence of an A crossbar in MONETA.

Issue II : {24 Nov. 1346 – 27 May 1351}
Type 6B

5 examples: S-01, S-02, S-04, S-05, S-06

OBV **✠ • MONETA + FLAND'**
REV **IVD OVI DꝰCO MES**



S-01

OBV **✠ • MONETA [+ FLAND'**
REV **IVD OVI DꝰCO MES**



S-02

OBV ✠ [·] MONET + F[ΛΛ]ND'
 REV II VD OVI DꝛDO MES



S-04

There is in fact no trace of a pellet visible right of the initial cross.

OBV ✠ • MONET + FΛΛND'
 REV II VD OVI DꝛDO MES



S-05

OBV	✠ [•] MONET[ΥΛ +] FLAND'
REV	IIVD OVI [C✠]CO M[ES]



S-06

The pellet right of the initial cross is illegible on this coin.

This type of coin (Issue II, Type 6B) has the more common obverse, outer border of 5-lobed leaves: ✠. The stem of the leaf mark after MONETA on all 5 coins seems to be straight.

Furthermore, they are the typical leaves of Issue II, with a very short stem: ✠. Admittedly, coin S-02 is double-struck, so that the leaf-stem is not clear. Coin S-05 is a well-struck and nice looking coin despite the chipping around the edge. Note once again the absence of an A crossbar in MONETA.

CONCLUSION

The Staple Hoard (2015) is divided as follows:

6				Total Coins in Hoard
	6			Flanders : Louis of Mâle (1346-1384) <i>leeuwengroten</i>
		1		Issue I, Type 4 (long O)
		5		Issue II, Type 6b (round O)

Flanders

Except for the single coin from Issue I, all of the *leeuwengroten* present are from Issue II. (For those readers interested in percentages, that comes to about 17 % Issue I / 83 % Issue II.)

Issue I 20 Jan. 1346 – 20 Nov. 1346 719,994 coins

Issue II 24 Nov. 1346 – 27 May 1351 13,870,824 coins

The absence of any later issues would seem to indicate that this hoard was most likely deposited (or lost) no later than early 1351, when striking of Issue III began (May). This hypothesis would seem to be further borne out by the fact that for the most part, the coins do not show much sign of wear due to circulation.

NOTES

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We are greatly indebted to Jean-Luc Dengis for his kind permission to use his photographs.
We also wish to thank Aimé Haeck for his assistance.

Conclusions as to which mintmarks correspond to which issues for Flemish coins have been drawn based on Aimé Haeck's *De leeuwengroten met het kruisje van Lodewijk van Male – Een proeve van (her)classificatie*^[3].

LITERATURE:

[1]

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