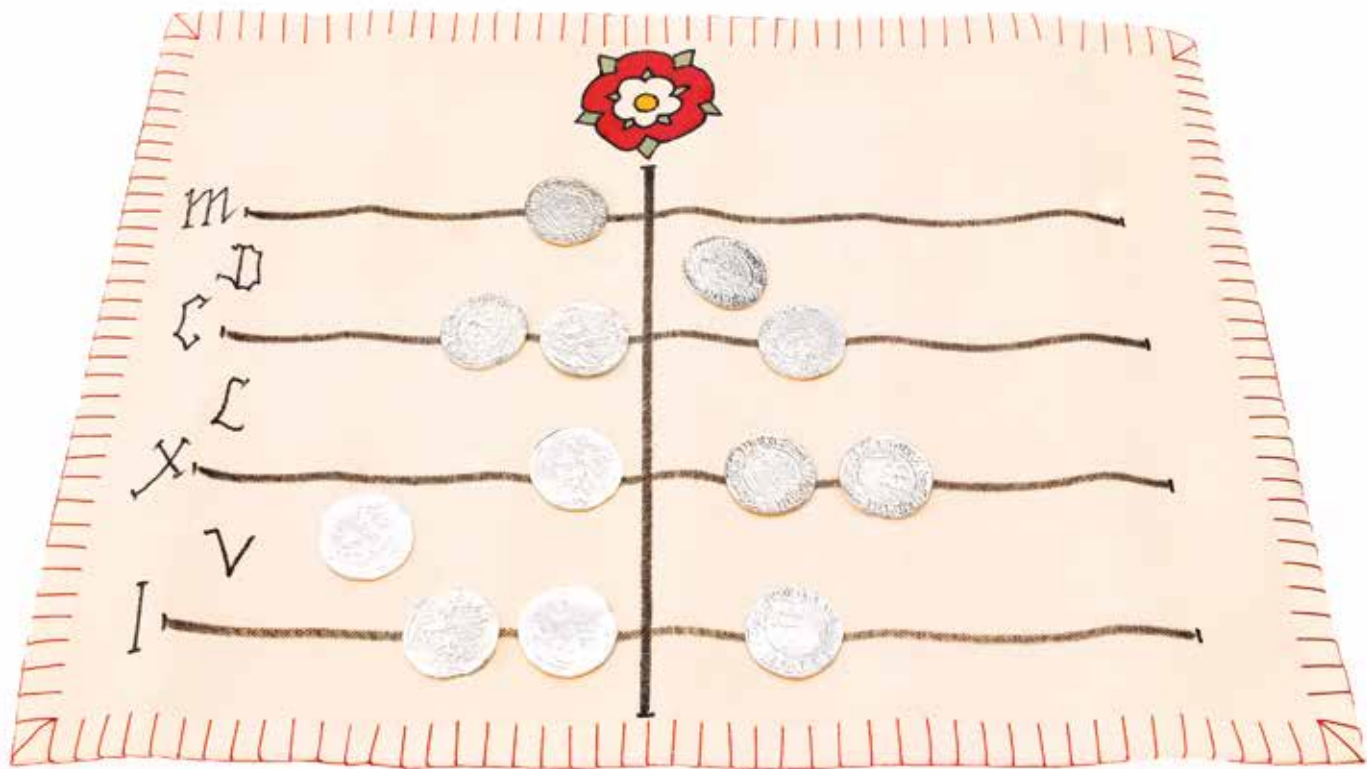


Games





Games

Jettons and counting cloth

These decorative metal counters were used as game pieces, gambling tokens, and to calculate sums on counting cloths, boards, or tables.

At the start of the Tudor period, almost everybody used Roman numerals. Only rich boys were taught maths, as all government officials, county sheriffs and household stewards were men from rich families. They used counting boards and jettons for calculations, as although you can add, subtract, multiply and divide low Roman numerals in your head, it's very hard to do that with higher numbers.

Arabic numbers arrived in Britain around 1400AD, but weren't commonly used until the mid-1500s. 'Pen reckoning' with Arabic numerals was quicker and easier than 'counter casting' using counting boards and jettons, so Arabic numerals eventually replaced Roman numerals, and people stopped using counting cloths and jettons.



How do we know about jettons and counting cloths?

Illustrations and descriptions in Tudor documents and books, and finds of jettons made during archaeological excavations. There are examples of jetton finds on the Portable Antiquities scheme website.



Games

Teetotum (put'n'take)

This is a wooden dice with four faces marked with 1, 2, 3, or 4 'spots', mounted onto a spindle. It was used to play games, the most common of which was a game of chance for 2-4 players, called 'Put'n'Take'.

To play the game, players need a teetotum and a level surface or pot to put the gambling token or coins in. To start the game, each player puts one token into the middle of the playing surface or pot.

Players then take turns to spin the teetotum, which it lands with one side of the dice uppermost. If the 1 is uppermost, the player puts one token into the pot, if the 2 is uppermost, the player does nothing. If the 3 is uppermost, the player takes one token from the pot. If the 4 is uppermost, the player wins the whole pot. Once the pot has been won, the game starts again.



How do we know about Put'n'Take?

Descriptions and illustrations in manuscripts, and objects found during archaeological excavations.



Games

3 Men's Morris board

This wooden board, with 9 'points' and grooves between them, is used to play a simple game for 2 players. Each player has 3 counters, and uses one per turn. The aim of the game is for a player to make a straight line of 3 in any direction on the board, while the other player tries to stop them by placing counters in their way.

People played the game using a variety of boards and counters. The boards could be as simple as a piece of sacking with charcoal marks for the very poorest people, tooled leather for travelling, carved wood, or even wood with tooled and gilded leather for the very rich. The counters could be pebbles, or wooden counters, simple cast metal tokens, or more elaborate cast metal pieces made to look like animals or people. The counters were kept in small leather or fabric drawstring bags.

Today we play this game with pencil and paper and call it 'noughts and crosses'.



How do we know about 3 Men's Morris?

Descriptions and illustrations in manuscripts, and objects found during archaeological excavations.



Games

Cup with dice, and bag with dice

These leather containers and pewter and wood dice are typical Tudor dice and containers.

Dice were made from metal, bone, ivory, wood, or semi-precious stone (such as jet) with drilled, carved or inlaid spots.

Dice cups & shakers were made from metal, horn or leather, and bags were made from leather or fabric.

People at all levels of society played dice, and Passe Dix is a simple Tudor 2-player game, using 3 dice.

Both players throw the dice; the one with the highest score becomes the 'Caster', the other is the 'Fader'.

The players place their bets. The Caster throws three dice – if a pair or 'doublet' is thrown, and the sum of the three dice is ten or less, they lose.

If the Caster throws a doublet, and the combined dice score is more than ten, they win.

If the Caster doesn't roll a doublet, the Fader becomes Caster, and the game begins again.

Bets can be increased at any time, by agreement, but not withdrawn or decreased.



How do we know about Dice and their containers?

Descriptions and illustrations in manuscripts, and objects found during archaeological excavations.

