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*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](mailto:mail@leadtokens.org.uk). Please note that the old [david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk](mailto:david@powell8041.freewe.co.uk) address advertised on earlier versions of LTT is no longer active.*

## Colliery & Lime Tokens



Man has been digging things out of the ground for hundreds of years, so it would not be unreasonable to think that some proportion of our lead token population is connected with the practice; especially as lead is one of the commodities concerned, and because modern brass issues of the 19th and 20th cent confirm that collieries have used metal pay and tool checks in very recent times. We have also previously discussed truck shop tokens associated with such industries. Here, however, it is tokens connected with payment for work done, whether extraction or transport, in which I am interested.

The mining industry has clearly been alive to the use of metal tokens as a means of administration for a good while, but for exactly how long? Certainly back to the late 17th or early 18th cent, but it seems very feasible that it could easily be beyond that by quite some way, well into the days of lead.

One area to issue an extensive set of copper and brass mining tokens in the 18th and early 19th cents was Cumbria, excellently written up, with copious background information, by Michael Finlay in 2006. For the fine detail I can go no further than recommend you to read Michael's most interesting account; here, I am merely interested in observing what essential features predominate in a cross-section of the pieces described, in the hope that it might help us to identify similar traits which we can look out for on lead.



A number of themes very quickly emerge from the twenty pieces shown on this page and overleaf, as featuring commonly in some combination:

- ⇒ The name of the mine, and/or its landowner {most examples}.
- ⇒ The landowner's heraldic arms {Figs.1-6}.
- ⇒ The pit machinery, in the case of coal, {Figs.8,12,14} or the kiln in the case of lime {Figs.9,11,17}.
- ⇒ The wagons, sometimes with the hauling pit ponies, used for underground transport from the coal face or for taking material from the colliery to the docks {Figs.8,10,14-16}.
- ⇒ The ships used for the onward transport of material from the harbour, e.g. Whitehaven, to customer locations {Figs.8,10,12,13,16,18}.
- ⇒ A number, in the range 4-7 {Figs.9,11,17,19}, explained by Fig.19 as relating to a container size in bushels.

*{Article continued on page 3, after pictures on page 2}*



Following our hypothesis that lead might have been used for similar purposes, we have to look out for tokens which share one or more of these features, whether perfectly or imperfectly drawn. OK, there is possible ambiguity, in that tokens issued for other purposes might reasonably have cause to use some of the same phenomena, e.g.. depiction of arms or shipping, but, and especially if there is a known mining area near the findspot, let us consider that possibility.

On the first two pages of LTT\_149 is a large display of tokens depicting heraldic devices, mostly shields. These fall into several different categories on coins and tokens, not that we can necessarily distinguish them in some cases:

- 1) Royal or imperial arms, generally not very common on tokens unless making a statement of political allegiance, such as was done by some Royalist issuers during the Civil War period..
- 2) Municipal arms, indicating the officially authorised issues of a town or city.
- 3) Professional guild arms, often used by traders to state the nature of their business.
- 4) Personal arms, usually used by the gentrified owners of large country estates.

Armorial pieces issued by the owners of 18th cent collieries fall into the last-mentioned category, so that any of the LTT\_149 pieces which cannot be definitely assigned to one of the other three is, in theory, a potential candidate; having said which, there are a variety of other reasons why a large landowner might wish to issue tokens, so don't go jumping to conclusions too quickly. When shortlisting the possibles, I guess that the thing is to look for pieces which also have something mining-relevant on their reverse.



Fig.21 shows another known Cumbrian piece from the Finlay book. Around the edge it has the name of the mine and its owner, Broughton and {Lord} Egremont, one on each side, accompanied by the date 1752. In the middle it happens to have five pellets; do these indicate the size of the wagon filled, or are they just ornamentation? Alongside, Fig.22 is a lead token of fairly similar date from an unknown source, with a reverse of four very large pellets.... which might, or might not, have the exact same meaning. True, the Cumbrian magnates tended to show monograms and heraldic shields rather than heads, and because of their wealth and status to issue in copper rather than lead, but there is no reason why one area, or one landowner, shouldn't do it differently.

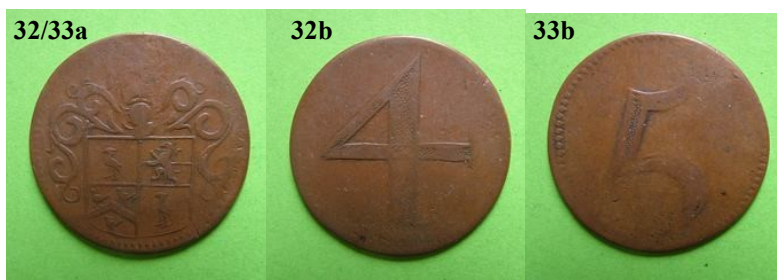
The same questions can be asked about pieces depicting ships and monograms. The odds are that PTF, if that is what Fig.23 reads, are the initials of a publican and his wife, running some modest little inn called "The Ship"; we assume that on balance of probability. We can eliminate small ferry boats, but some of Figs.23-28 indicate shipping of reasonable size, and those that don't possibly only do so because the flan wasn't large enough to allow a larger boat to be depicted.. Modern day thinking might suggest that one or two of those shown are leisure yachts, but there weren't too many of those around in the 17th and 18th cents. Unfortunately Figs.24-28 are all uniface, which argues against mining and in favour of the shop/pub; but nevertheless, be on the lookout for when the mining features, as listed on page 1, are present; not forgetting that a few of lead's mysterious "irregular geometrics" may be wagons, pit machinery, ships or the like..





Fig.29, found in his own town by Whitehaven local Billy Vaughan, is a delightful example of what we have been talking about, conjecturally showing the landowner on one side and his heraldic device on the other. It is 18th cent, and about the right size. Nothing to stop chummy on the obverse being the landlord of the “Swan with Two Necks”, of course, but he looks a bit dressed up for that. A reminder in this piece, too, that heraldry is not all about shields and chevrons, and that isolated birds and animals, both real and mythological, are some people’s choice..... which could cause ambiguity with a merchant’s shop sign, were it not for the grandiose gent on the other side.

Fig.30 is another example from the Cumbrian copper series which illustrates this usage of the natural world for one’s heraldic purposes; yet this piece, with its serial number on the back, is not typical of the others shown earlier. It is a tool check or an end-of-session {day/week} pay receipt for a given miner, rather than an interim token of payment for amount of work done. Theoretically, such serially-numbered pieces could be found in lead also. The copper series also contains quite a number of less sophisticated pieces than those shown in Figs.1-20, which could easily be replicated in lead. Fig.31 is a known example from the Cumbrian series; the initials standing for Birkbeck and Fletcher, the mine owners, with an indication of the wagon size following. Their names also appear on some of the earlier pieces, so well struck and crude pieces sometimes emanate from the same sources. Figs.32-33, more thinly struck and crudely made, relate to an unknown mine, possibly even from a different area, but still with the familiar arms on one side and one of the common wagon sizes, 4 or 5, on the others. One could very easily imagine any of Figs.31-33 in lead.



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## Reader’s Correspondence

This trio from Thomas Lynch to start off with {Fig.1}; all the same piece, and nice examples of a type 9 “irregular geometric”. This is the one category of the classification system which, more than any other, invites us to exercise our imagination, and I have included them here because they feel such an appropriate follow-on to the article before. There is a nice bustle about them, sufficiently so that I have magnified 3:2 so that we can enjoy it; a sense that, amongst the confusion of lines we could well be looking at men engaged in serious physical labour, possibly in a confined space like a pit. The degeneracy of style suggests quite late 18th cent, even early 19th, but the size suggests late 17th or early 18th.. An enigma; by the standard of most mining tokens, they are small. They, and several other similar pieces, were found near Blithbury, in the Lichfield/Rugeley area of Staffordshire.





We don't often see ancient lead in these pages but Fig.2, shown to me by Gerry Buddle and of unknown provenance, appears to depict the Three Graces, a favourite Roman reverse. It is about the size of a new penny, as also is Greg Tate's delightfully clear Fig.3, depicting a turkey and found near Selby, North Yorkshire.. The bird doesn't look too dissimilar from that on some of the Polish "payment for public work" tokens discussed in LTT\_151, but that is surely coincidental. The style of artwork seems tolerably similar to certain of the 14th cent type D pieces pictures shown on pages 71-74 of BNJ53. Fig.55, on page 72, is probably the nearest.. This one might be a tad later, but probably not too much.

Mid-18th cent hybrids of the traditional stock designs, embodying some combination of the usual petals, crosses and other standard geometric designs, embellished to make them more interesting, are always pleasant to see. There often isn't a lot to say about them, other than just to enjoy what the maker has depicted. With some of them it could be debated that the designer could have had some specific object in mind, e.g. a clock in the case of Dave Duff's Fig.4 or a games board in the case of Phil Payne's Fig.5; however, it is probably unlikely. Why, suddenly, a crescent in the bottom left-hand corner of the latter?



Pipe smoking on a token looks a bit odd at first but it features occasionally on a number of main series 17th cent tokens, indicating that tobacconist was by then an established profession and/or that the pubs of the day regarded the provision of pipes over the counter, like ale, as a feature of their daily trade. Dave Higgins' Fig.6 is probably early 18th cent.

Les Parker's Fig.7 doesn't look so much a hybrid as an example of somebody who couldn't make up his mind what he wanted. It might have started life in the engraver's mind as a cross, a cartwheel or a bloke waving his hands. Let us hope he wasn't a wheelwright by trade. More likely a wheel wrong.

Allessio Checconi's Fig.8 looks to be a very nice mid-late 18th cent rendering of the sun in splendour, a common pub and shop sign. However there is a surprise when you turn it over; it appears to be made of stone. I haven't seen the original, so I can't comment. Difficult to believe that the two pictures are of the same item but, if so, someone has made a fine job of the artwork.

Also to be admired for its quality and clarity is Julian Spyeby's Fig.9, a nice crisp, clear example of an early-mid 18th cent double-exergue token, evenly executed. The only thing which isn't quite in keeping with the rest of it is the letter (M?) at the bottom. I am just wondering whether this is a late example of an initial triad with LB as the issuer and M {one of the most common female initials} as his wife, or whether M is the initial of the place LB comes from. Either is possible.

Finally this month, thanks to Phil Mernick, another particularly pretty piece from a much earlier period, which I have deliberately magnified 2:1 so that you can enjoy it. A fine early 15th cent BNJ54 type L obverse {Fig.10}, except that the combination with cross and pellets does not feel quite typical. Type L pieces generally feel a bit more secular, so perhaps it is the issue of an abbot whose family had armorial connections. Difficult to guess, as the pieces of the time were not large enough to accommodate much detail on the shield.

