

A LEAD HORSE MOULDING FOUND IN A MINE

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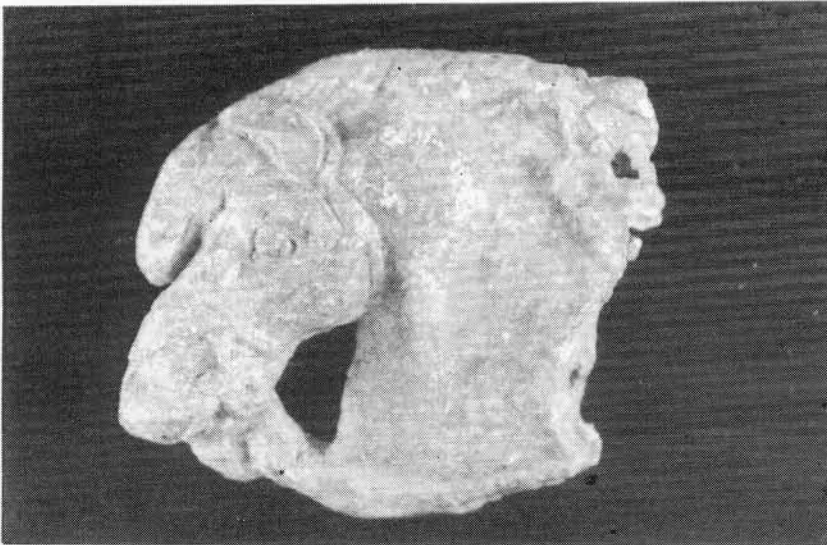
Two pieces of a moulding cast in lead were given to me years ago; they were said to have been found amongst the rubbish at the foot of one of the mine shafts around Bincliffe in the Manifold Valley of Staffordshire. Whether they have any connection with this area and how long they have been there remains unknown.

The two pieces do not fit together as one is the left side of the horse's head and the other is the right side of rump, tail, back leg and rider's leg. The oddity is that the rider's leg faces backwards; it also appears to be wearing armour. The head is 4 cm long and the rump is 5 cm long, so the complete article must have been around 12-15 cm.

I have tried various historians over the years for the explanation of what it could have been and why anyone would want a horse with backwards-facing rider in lead. One suggestion was that it was based on a scurrilous political cartoon of the Duke of Wellington, but this suggestion has been categorically denied by another historian! The consensus of opinion at present is that they

were parts of a moulding used as a model for casting a pottery figure. Expert opinion says that it may well be a flying horse with two riders seated back-to-back. It is probably early 18th century and shows some Chinese influence in the bit and mane.

If any reader has any other ideas please let me know.



(a) Horse's head showing mane, bit and bridle.



(b) Horse's rump, tail, part of back leg, and rider's leg facing backwards.