

## 1802 - 1820 Tokens of 'Gibralter' and 'Gibraltar' by Neville Chipulina

Keeling, Catton and Spittle - Eliza, Robert and Catharine

Much of the currency in circulation during the 18th and very early 19th century was in the form of copper coins, since the low value of silver coins relative to silver bullion meant that most of these found their way into Spain where they were worth more.

In the early 1800s three Gibraltar merchants thought it profitable to issue their own copper tokens which they denominated in quarts. These curious coins were only minted from 1802 to 1820 and were presumably only in use up to 1825 when the relative value of the various Gibraltar coins was standardised by being pegged to the British pound.

Robert Keeling was the first merchant to issue these tokens. According to several numismatic authorities Keeling was the owner of a wine house probably in the 'Cooperage district' - wherever that might have been - with a personal address in Governors Lane. The tokens are assumed to have been associated with his wine house. However, a certain Robert Keeling appears on the 1791 Gibraltar census listed as an ironmonger. His wife's name is given as Eliza and his two children were a newly born Robert and a three year old Catharine.

If this is indeed the merchant in question then Robert arrived in Gibraltar in 1777 from 'N. Britain' as a young man of 20. He is registered as a blacksmith.



A Robert Keeling's quart token with an elegantly drawn coat of arms - and a misspelt 'Gibralter'. The Rock clearly shows 'el Hacho' and O'Hara's tower - which had only just been built ( see [LINK](#) )



A two quart token. Keeling has corrected his misspelling and transferred the 'key' of the coat of arms to the head of the coin. His son Robert was now part of the business. He was 19.

The two other merchants who also issued tokens in Gibraltar were Richard Catton, a goldsmith, and James Spittle.



Two quart 1813 Richard Catton token



### Two quart 1820 James Spittal token

It is not known where these coins were minted but it is curious that the 'head' of all the tokens - after the first with the Rock of Gibraltar - seems to have been standardised after 1810 to show a lion holding a key perhaps a subtle hint that the 'key' to the Mediterranean was not really Gibraltar but rather the power of the very British Royal Navy.



The first proper Gibraltar coin. The first issue was in 1841 the last in 1861. The well known Gibraltar phrase - *no vale dos quartos* - still applied even then. The castle is slightly different to the one used in the tokens and - somewhat ominously - the key is unattached.