MASONIC TOKENS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

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IN the last decade of the eighteenth century small change became very scarce, and the country was flooded with innumerable tradesmen's tokens, mostly of the halfpenny size, of which large numbers were struck at Messrs. Boulton and Watts' Soho Works at Birmingham. These halfpenny tokens were made use of to commemorate the political feelings of some of the issuers, such as the acquittal of Horne Tooke, November 24th, 1794, and T. Hardy in the same year; others represented politicians such as Pitt, or heroes such as Nelson. A series was issued of churches in London and another of Birmingham buildings; in fact, these tokens were a series of local medals. In these circumstances it would be surprising if Freemasonry had escaped being commemorated. An opportunity occurred on November 24th, 1790, when H.R.H. the Prince of Wales was elected Grand Master. Though this event happened in 1790, the tokens do not appear to have been issued till 1794; and others are dated 1795 and 1796.

Issues of 1794, all halfpennies:—

I.—Obverse: The Free Masons' arms, supporters and crest, no inner circle; legend, commencing at the left: PRINCE OF WALES ELECTED G.M. x 24 NOV. 1790. The bodies of the supporters are ribbed (Pl. No. 1). Atkins, Tokens of the Eighteenth Century, Middlesex, No. 261; Pye (Pl. XI, 4). There is a variety on which the supporters are not ribbed, and there is a comma after Nov. Atkins, 264. (Pl. No. 2.)

Reverse: Within a triangle a cupid, or, as it has been suggested, the genius of Masonry, seated on a cloud, the right arm raised with the forefinger pointing upward, and the left resting on a plumb rule; on the ground a maul and trowel. In the apex of the triangle is an eye, with rays proceeding from it and extending to the cupid's arms; below the
eye is the letter G; in the right-hand corner are the square and compasses and in the left a book; outside the triangle: WISDOM STRENGTH & BEAUTY. No inner circle. Legend, commencing on the left: SIT LVX ET LUX FUIT. Atkins, Tokens of the Eighteenth Century, Middlesex, No. 26. There are two other varieties, differing only as to the composition and length of the rays, and as to punctuation. Atkins, 262, 263. (Pl. Nos. 3 and 4.)

Edge: There is a great variety of inscriptions on the edge. Atkins gives the following, which chiefly refer to by whom or where payable:—

1. Plain, not in collar. Atkins, 264h.
2. HALFPENNY PAYABLE AT THE BLACK HORSE TOWER HILL • × • Atkins, 261, 262, 264.
3. HALFPENNY PAYABLE AT DUBLIN CORK OR DERRY- Atkins, 264d.
4. MASONIC HALFPENNY TOKEN MDCCXCIV. Atkins, 262d.
5. " " " " " " × • Atkins, 263, 264b. × •
6. MASONIC TOKEN I SKETCHLEY FECIT 1794 • + • + • + Atkins, 261a, 262a, 264a.
7. MASONIC TOKEN BROTHER SKETCHLEY BIRMINGHAM FACIT. Atkins, 263a.
8 MASONIC TOKEN J. SKETCHLEY R.A. & P.G.S. BIRMINGHAM FECIT. * Atkins, 264c.
9. PAYABLE IN LANCASTER LONDON OR BRISTOL. Atkins, 261b, 262b, 264e.
10. PAYABLE AT LONDON • + • + • + • Atkins, 261c, 262c.
11. PAYABLE AT LONDON OR DUBLIN. Atkins, 261d.
12. PAYABLE AT RICHARD LONG'S LIBRARY • • • Atkins 264f.
13. PAYABLE AT W. PARKERS OLD BIRMINGHAM WAREHOUSE. Atkins, 264g.

From edges 6, 7 and 8 it can be gathered that these tokens were issued at Birmingham by J. Sketchley, who was an auctioneer, printer and publisher in that city. No. 8 gives his Masonic career, as it states that he had taken the Royal Arch degree and had served the office of Grand Steward. The obverse of this token is found muled with other obverses, with all of which it forms the reverse.
II.—Full-faced bust of the Prince of Wales to right; no inner circle; legend, commencing on the left: GEORGE PRINCE OF WALES HALF PENNY. (Pl. No. 5.)

Edges: (1) PAYABLE IN LANCASTER LONDON OR BRISTOL. Atkins, not local, 157. (2) PAYABLE AT LONDON OR DUBLIN Atkins, 157a.

III.—Profile bust of the Prince of Wales to right; no inner circle; legend, commencing on the left: GEORGE PRINCE OF WALES. (Pl. No. 6.)

Edge: PAYABLE IN LANCASTER LONDON OR BRISTOL. Atkins, 159; Pye, VIII, 2.

IV.—The arms of the Prince of Wales, with his motto below; no inner circle; legend, commencing on the left: LONDON AND MIDDLESEX. HALF PENNY. (Pl. No. 7.)

Edge: PAYABLE IN LANCASTER LONDON OR BRISTOL. Atkins, Middlesex, 747; Pye, XXVI, 1.

The dies for the obverses of Nos. II, III and IV were engraved by Wigan (Pye, index, p. 2).

Issue of 1795; one penny and two halfpenny tokens:

Penny.—Obverse: the Free Masons' arms; supporters and crest as on the first-mentioned halfpenny of 1794, no inner circle; legend: * PRO BONO PUBLICO. * (Pl. No. 8.)

Reverse: a cupid and Masonic emblems in a triangle, as on the 1794 halfpenny; no inner circle; legend, commencing on the left: MASONIC PENNY 1795. (Pl. No. 9.)

Edge: MANUFACTURED BY W. LUTWYCHE BIRMINGHAM. Atkins, Middlesex, 71.

Halfpennies.—I. Obverse: profile bust of the Duke of York, to the right; no inner circle; legend, commencing on the left: FRED DUKE OF YORK.; in the exergue: HALFPENNY 1795. (Pl. No. 10.)

Reverse: from the same die as the first obverse of 1794. Atkins, 261.

Edges: (1) PAYABLE IN DUBLIN OR LONDON Atkins, not local, 181. (2) Milled. Atkins, 181a.
II.—Obverse: the Free Masons' arms, as on the first obverse of 1794, Atkins, 261, but with square and compass below; no inner circle; legend, commencing on the left: PRO BONO PUBLICO. (Pl. No. 11.)

Reverse: I. H. B. in script; a pair of scales above and 1795 below; no inner circle; legend, commencing on the left: EAST GRINSTEAD HALFPENNY. Pye, XXIX, 5. (Pl. No. 12.)

Edges: (1) PAYABLE AT I + H BOORMAN • X • Atkins, Sussex, 21. (2) PAYABLE IN LANCASTER LONDON OR BRISTOL. Atkins, 21a.

Issue of 1796:—

In this year there is only one token, a halfpenny, Atkins, Middlesex, 209, where it is described as follows:—

"Obverse: a man hanging, PØT, a cap of liberty on a pole, a medallion bearing an anchor, HOPE, cross, crown, etc.; on the ground, LIBERTY • AND • NOT SLAVERY •, and a monument inscribed: PEACE 1796. (Pl. No. 13.)


The obverse is clearly not Masonic, as the PØT is meant for the Rt. Hon, W. Pitt, who was the Prime Minister that year, but belongs to the political series before referred to, as it was dedicated to the London Correspondence Society.

These tokens generally show that the Free Masons of the time took a great interest in their order, and that they were proud of belonging to it. Doubtless there are other tokens referring to Free Masonry which are not enumerated in this paper.

PLATE.

I have to thank Mr. William Hammond, F.S.A., Librarian of the Grand Lodge Library, Freemasons' Hall, for the loan of Nos. 5 and 9, Mr. Lionel Fletcher for Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 10, and Messrs. Spink and Son for Nos. 7 and 11.
NAVAL MEDALS.

PLATE I.