There were two persons of this surname [Skidmore], John and Peter, father and son, who carried on business as ironmongers and stove grate manufacturers, in London. The father was originally in business alone, but the firm subsequently became Skidmore and Son. They dealt in coins, and in this way might be considered commercially as forming the company interested in that venture and referred to by the cipher [PSC]. Peter appears to have generally superintended the production of the pieces, and his name, as well as that of his father, who issued the token No. 192 [D&H: Middx. no. 480] (Fig. 1) . . . and many other pieces, is notorious in connection with those made for sale in the metropolis, at the time when collectors were eager to secure specimens of all kinds. It is only justice to Skidmore to say that some of his buildings pieces, such as those of the London churches, should, perhaps, be placed to his credit against the heavy debit which most writers, not undeservedly, place to his account, in connection with the manufacture of the spurious tokens of the eighteenth century.

R.T. Samuel's confident description of the Skidmores, the Clerkenwell iron founders, furnishing ironmongers and token manufacturers, appeared in The Bazaar, The Exchange and Mart for 19 March 1884 (p. 300) and, by repetition, has so stamped 'Peter' Skidmore's persona on posterity that his name has become embedded in the historical dogma of the eighteenth-century token. Yet, while John Skidmore (d. 1823) is a reasonably well-attested historical figure, 'Peter' Skidmore is known only from secondary numismatic sources and, try as one might to authenticate his existence, it seems to be as flimsy as gossamer. As Samuel himself recognised, no token inscribed 'Skidmore' carried any distinguishing forename, the designation appearing simply as SKIDMORE or P. SKIDMORE or reduced to the monograms PS or PSC. So what justification is there for Samuel's assurance that the 'P' of 'P. Skidmore' represented the Christian name 'Peter' and for his assertion that 'Peter' Skidmore was John Skidmore's son?

Contemporary commentators, without exception, referred to the token maker purely as 'Skidmore', and the earliest that the Christian name 'Peter' seems to have entered the numismatic frame is in Anthony Durand's book published in Geneva some seventy years after the
tokens he describes. Durand does not speculate on 'Peter' Skidmore's relationship to John Skidmore - indeed he does not mention the latter - and appears to confuse the two since he refers to 'Peter' Skidmore as primarily an ironmonger or hardware dealer ('marchand quincaillier'). Nevertheless, he was presumably the source that Samuel drew upon and then elaborated by reference to contemporary London trade directories.

John Skidmore himself is certainly an individual not unknown to the historical record. Although his origins are obscure, they apparently lay in the Black Country around Dudley, straddling the border between south Staffordshire and north Worcestershire, where, today, Skidmore is still a not uncommon name. It is, though, incredibly difficult to decipher the intricacies of the family relationships of what even in the eighteenth century was a comparatively large clan centred in the adjacent parishes of Old Swinford (Worcestershire) and Kingswinford (Staffordshire). In the present state of our knowledge, Skidmore's parentage and birth date are irresolvable. When he was buried in Camberwell in March 1823 his age was recorded as 64 years, but this was patently impossible since it would have meant that he would have been only twelve years' old when we know he married in 1771. It is reasonable to assume, contrariwise, that he was born sometime during the 1730s or 1740s, but since several 'John Skidmores' were born in the area in these decades no dependable identification is possible.

We can, however, be much more positive about his marriage. This was to a Nancy Jones on 25 March 1771 in Kingswinford, a marriage that was to be commemorated twenty-six years later in the fictitious armorial bearings of Scudamore impaling Jones adopted as the reverse type (Fig. 2) of the 'Clerkenwell' series of 'penny' medalets (D&H: Middx. nos 147-65) and some Skidmore 'halfpennies' (D&H: Middx. nos 517-19 and 566).

Fig. 2. The reverse of a 'Clerkenwell' penny (D&H: Middx. no. 161) depicting Skidmore's fictitious arms, the three stirrups of Scudamore of Kentchurch, Herefordshire, impaling the lion rampant attributed to Bleddyn ap Cynfyn, an eleventh-century prince of North Wales and Powys, from whom a number of old landed families named Jones claim descent.

3 Durand 1865, 185: 'SKIDMORE, Peter. Il était marchand quincaillier et faisait aussi le commerce des médailles à Londres à la fin du dernier siècle. Ces tokens ont été frappés dans un but de spéculation et en même temps pour faire connaître son double commerce. Il y en a plus de cent variétés qui représentent à l'Obv. différents bâtiments publics et des églises, et au Rév. ses initiales avec son adresse ou une dédicace avec quelques variantes. Il serait trop fastidieux de les décrire tous, je me contenterai donc d'en reproduire un de chaque grandeur comme specimen'. I am grateful to Robert Thompson for alerting me to this reference.

4 The Dudley and Bridgnorth BT Phone Book (522) for 2005/2006, covering the immediate area of interest, contains seventy-eight residential entries for individuals named Skidmore.

5 St Giles, Camberwell Burial Register, 6 March 1823 (Southwark Local Studies Library). If the unit figure recorded at his burial is correct, and there is no reason to believe that it is, he might be the John Skidmore baptised at Old Swinford on 2 September 1748 (Old Swinford Baptismal Register, Worcestershire Record Office). Otherwise, he could be one of a number of candidates. The complexities of the Black Country Skidmore family relationships are skilfully brought out by Moffatt 2004 in her encyclopaedic genealogical survey.

6 Kingswinford Marriage Register (Staffordshire Record Office, PSH 6).
Most of the Skidmores of the time seem to have been employed in the Black Country's rapidly developing iron industry or in the coal mining that was coming to underpin it, and John Skidmore's family was doubtless no different from others of that name. But he had ambitions and by 1772 had migrated the few miles to Dudley, a town long known for its 'great manufacture for nails and other iron wares'. Nevertheless, he sought a wider stage than the west Midlands could provide and within four years had moved on to the metropolis and to Clerkenwell, an area already noted for its congeries of skilled craftsmen, watch and clock makers, metal workers, jewellers, japanners and printers, and where he may already have had relations active in the metal trade. Regrettably we know nothing of his time in London until, by the early part of the following decade, he had gathered together sufficient capital to set himself up as an iron founder in Coppice Row, Cold Bath Fields. With an eye to the rapid changes taking place in the technology of domestic living and the boom in speculative London house building, he was quickly specialising in the manufacture of domestic stoves, fire-grates and household equipment.

The broad thrust of Skidmore's business career in London is sketched in the trade directories of the time. While such directories obviously have their limitations and have to be treated with some caution, they at least give us a framework for an outline history of his firm. We do not know exactly when John Skidmore set up his own business in Clerkenwell, but that he had done so by the early part of 1784, and probably somewhat before this, is demonstrated by his listing in Bailey's British Directory for that year. This was at 15 Coppice Row — on its western side and on a site somewhere near the Guardian building in Farringdon Road today. The foundry in Coppice Row was still listed as Skidmore's only trading address in the 1789 edition of Lowndes's London Directory, but by the November of that year he had acquired shop premises or, as he described them on his token, a 'repository' or showroom, in which to display his products and promote 'off the floor' sales, at 123 High Holborn. One can be quite precise about the date Skidmore's new 'extensive warehouse' opened (23 November) for it was puffed in The Times (Fig. 3). Skidmore took care, at the same time, to publicize his appointment as 'Stove Grate Maker to His Majesty's Honourable Board of Ordnance', a contract that provided Skidmore not only with an income from the supply of domestic ironmongery to the military but with a stamp of official approval that afforded him a useful sales cachet.

7 St James, Clerkenwell Baptismal Register (London Metropolitan Archives). The evidence that Skidmore may already have had relations in Clerkenwell is inconclusive.
8 The reliability of any directory as an up-to-date source of information is inevitably conditioned by the readiness of potential entrants to provide information, by the time lag between the collection and publication of data (often some months), and, not infrequently, by the unverified repetition of an entry from an earlier edition or its lifting from a rival publication. The listing of Charles Parker, from whose executors John Skidmore acquired 123 High Holborn in the autumn of 1789, is, for example, continued from the 1790 to the 1791 edition of the Universal British Directory although he had died in June 1789 and Skidmore is also shown at that address. For a discussion of the problems of trade directories as a source, see Norton 1950, 16–24.
9 Bailey's surveys were normally undertaken after Christmas, with publication in the following March (Norton 1950, 22). Skidmore's absence from earlier directories does not necessarily mean that he had not embarked on his own business prior to 1784 but, bearing in mind his predilection for self-advertisement, it is unlikely that this happened much before this date.
10 The Skidmore's iron-founding side of their business was to remain at Coppice Row until 1811–12. A reference to the firm being at Corporation Row, Clerkenwell in the Post Office New Annual Directory for 1800 must be a misprint. Coppice Row disappeared with the development of Farringdon Road in 1845–46.
11 The new premises, on the northern side of High Holborn and slightly to the west of today's junction with Southampton Row or what was then King Street, were acquired from the executors of Charles Parker, an upholsterer or house furnisher and warehouseman. See also Lease dated 2 December 1789 (London Metropolitan Archives, MDR/1799/2/730). Roy Hawkins erred in stating that Skidmore was originally in business at 35 High Holborn and moved to 123 High Holborn and 15 Coppice Row in 1791 (Hawkins 1989, 98).
12 'Warehouse' like 'repository' was then a fashionably genteel euphemism for a shop, especially one catering for both the retail and wholesale trade. A correspondent to the London Chronicle commented in 1765 on the affectation: 'Have we now any shops? Are they not all turned into Warehouses?'
13 The Times, 19 November 1789, 1.
Although, according to the advertisement, the domestic quarters at 123 High Holborn—suitable ‘for the immediate reception of a genteel family’—were to be offered for rent, the whole property had become the Skidmore home by the spring of 1793 and, ‘living above the shop’, Skidmores were to remain there for almost thirty years. That April the shop was the scene of the theft of a dozen ivory-handled case knives and forks by an employee, George Beardmore. At the ensuing Old Bailey proceedings, Skidmore testified he was then the sole principal of the firm but waiting for his son to complete his apprenticeship. As The Times of 25 March makes clear, however, when advertising Skidmore’s book of patterns, *The Stove Grate-maker’s Directory: or, Nobleman and Gentleman’s compleat Choice for Stove Grates, &c.* (‘price 10 s. 6 d. half bound’), he was already describing the business as ‘John Skidmore and Son’, a style to be maintained for the next fifteen or more years (Fig. 4).  

In 1795 Skidmore issued the firm’s only token to be recognised as a genuine commercial halfpenny by Charles Pye in the 1801 quarto edition of his *Provincial Coins and Tokens.* As someone who was by no means averse to publicizing his business, Skidmore’s token, though apparently produced in some quantity (Pye vaguely rates it as common (‘c’)), was probably

---

Fig. 3. Advertisement in *The Times*, 19 November 1789. (© British Library Board. All Rights Reserved.)

Fig. 4. Advertisement in *The Times*, 25 March 1793. (© British Library Board. All Rights Reserved.)

---

14 When later valued for insurance purposes, the property was described as a dwelling house with adjoining ‘ware rooms’ and offices, and insured for £2,500 (Records of the Sun Life Fire Office, 1818-1821, Guildhall Library, London, Mss 11936/472 and 480).

15 Whole Proceedings, 576–7. The stolen goods were worth £1 16s. and Beardmore (originally a clerk in the firm and latterly a bell-hanger), being found guilty, was sentenced to imprisonment for six months in the House of Correction and fined 1s.

16 Pye 1801, 14 and plate XXXIV, 6.
intended to be more of a shop ticket than a commercial halfpenny, there being no mark of promissory exchange value. The obverse, appropriately, depicts a fire-grate of the type that contemporaries labelled a ‘register’ stove, with ‘No. 123 HIGH HOLBORN LONDON’ within a circle and the legend ‘PAYABLE AT SKIDMORE’S FURNISHING REPOSITORY & IRON-FOUNDERY CLERKENWELL’ with the date ‘1795’ in the exergue (D&H: Middx. no. 480). The reverse (which quickly developed a flaw between two and four o’clock) portrays a traditional forge scene within a circle and around it the legend ‘MANUFACTORY & IRON-FOUNDERY CLERKENWELL’ with the date ‘1795’ in the exergue (D&H: Middx. no. 480). The edge is usually diagonally milled, although there are rare specimens with a plain edge, while examples of the normal issue are also known in brass, with proofs in silver.

According to Pye the token was engraved by ‘Wyon’ and manufactured by Skidmore. It had earlier appeared as one of the elegant engravings included in plate 35 of Pye’s original Provincial Copper Coins or Tokens (Pye 1795) published on 1 August 1795 (Fig. 5), but well before this it had been listed in John Hammond’s Descriptive List of the Provincial Copper Coins. Edited by the pseudonymous ‘Christopher Williams’, this, the first of the contemporary token catalogues, had certainly been published by 7 May 1795 if not earlier. The ‘halfpenny’ must therefore have been produced in the early months of that year or perhaps even late in 1794.20

Although Pye was quite clear on the point, and it is evident from their later muling that at some juncture the dies had come into Skidmore’s possession, doubts have been expressed as to whether the token was actually struck by him. R.C. Bell, for one, suggested that it was minted in Birmingham, ‘typical of the Birmingham style’ and ‘unlike any of his [Skidmore’s] other coins, or indeed any London coin’. But it is the quality of the execution of its dies that makes the piece stand apart from Skidmore’s other productions. This certainly bears out Pye’s attribution of their engraving to the Wyons’ Birmingham atelier, yet, while their workshop was largely undertaking token work for Kempson and Lutwyche at the time, there is no real reason to question Skidmore’s being the manufacturer of his own halfpenny. In the nature of

---

17 A ‘register stove’ was a domestic fire-grate with a ‘register’ or damper, a metal plate in the chimney flue used to regulate the draught and combustion of the fire. Representations of a ‘register stove’ also appear on the halfpennies issued by Clark and Harris (D&H: Middx. nos 283–4) and William Parker (D&H: Dublin nos 351–3), respectively London and Dublin furnishing ironmongers, while earlier ‘Bath Stoves’ (a type of hob grate) appear on the tokens of Schooling and Son (D&H: Middx. no. 474) and Michael Agapay of Bury St. Edmunds (D&H: Suffolk no. 28), also furnishing ironmongers.

20 The earliest catalogues prior to Pye 1795 (but including Birchall 1796) specify the forge scene as the obverse. Williams 1795, 15 no. 147. Shephard’s statement that Hammond’s catalogue was published ‘in the latter part of the year 1794’ (Shephard 1796, 213) does not accord with the title-page date imprint. The fact that Miss Sarah Sophia Banks acquired two copies on 7 May 1795 (so dated in manuscript on their title-pages) suggests publication in the spring of 1795. Miss Banks noted in her library catalogue (now in the Royal Mint Library) that ‘Christopher Williams’ was ‘a fictitious name’. Shephard had heard that Samuel Birchall had had a hand in the compilation of the catalogue, but admitted that he had no ‘accurate information’ of this.

21 The date on a token should not necessarily be taken as its actual year of manufacture. The Swansea halfpenny of John Voss (D&H: Glam. no. 4), for instance, credited by Pye to Wyon and Kempson, although dated ‘1796’ was likely to have been produced the previous year. Miss Banks, unless she nodded when subsequently (post 1801) entering up her catalogue, recorded the acquisition of her specimen as 14 October 1795 (Banks, Ms Catalogue, 124 no. 17 (SSB 195–17)).
his business he would have had stamping presses to hand for the production of small domestic wares and brass work that could easily have been adapted for the striking of coin. Visual examination of the halfpenny, moreover, suggests that its metal fabric is little different from many of Skidmore's other pieces, especially those one might judge as being roughly contemporary in manufacture. Unfortunately, one knows next to nothing about Skidmore's sources of copper, but it was not until later, in 1796 and especially in 1797, that (with the escalation in the price of the metal) he had to depend on inferior copper and also on recycled Birmingham flans and tokens bought in from other manufacturers such as Kempson. It must be remembered, too, that the token was very much a personal advertising tool, which would explain why its initial standard of manufacture is generally superior to so much of Skidmore's later slipshod production.

One can be fairly positive that the Skidmore coinery was actually operating at the time of the production of the 'commercial halfpenny' or at least very soon afterwards. Indeed, if one accepted the dates inscribed on a number of specious tokens attributable to Skidmore at their face value – Horsham (D&H: Sussex no. 27), Kidderminster (D&H: Worcs. no. 23) and Salisbury (D&H: Wilts. no. 12) dated 1791 or Bedale (D&H: Yorks. no. 9) and Birmingham ('General Elliot') (D&H: War. no. 224) dated 1792, for instance – one could put the coinery back by some three or four years. The truth is, however, that all these tokens were probably struck not earlier than the winter of 1794–95 and the Horsham and 'General Elliot' pieces are demonstrably later.

Unhappily, in trying to date Skidmore's earliest tokens more precisely one is handicapped by the absence of any published catalogue prior to the spring of 1795. We do know that in March of that year, however, Miss Banks bought a specimen of Salter's shop ticket (D&H: Middx. no. 473), a token that Pye (1801) credited to the Skidmore coinery. If Pye was correct, a clear terminus ante quem is thus set for the beginnings of Skidmore's minting activity and at least the available catalogues show that by May it was well established. Hammond's 'Christopher Williams' list (Williams 1795) was quickly followed, 'eclipsed' is Charles Shephard's word, by Thomas Spence's Coin Collector's Companion, a copy of which Miss Banks acquired on 16 May. Though to Shephard these two lists were composed 'upon a very confined scale', between them they constitute a not unreasonable guide to Skidmore's production up to that time. As the following Table indicates, Hammond's catalogue (W) described at least sixteen tokens that can be plausibly attributed to Skidmore's manufacture in addition to his 'commercial halfpenny', while Spence's list (S) added a further seven – five in the list proper and two in the 'Addenda' (A). In compiling the Table below account has been taken of the attributions of Pye (1795, 1801 and 1916), Sharp (1834), engravings in Denton and Prattent (1795–97) and the goulash of mules that Skidmore concocted from dies originally engraved for Spence and other 'proprietors' as well as for his own specious pieces and perhaps one of the engraver Thomas Prattent. In Hamer's words, they 'are known by the company they keep', and it has been assumed from Skidmore's muling that neither Spence, his engraver Charles James, nor Prattent were likely to have had any manufacturing capacity of their own and relied on Skidmore's manufacture for the pieces listed. James's halfpenny for Sims (D&H: Middx. no. 478), which was listed in the catalogues, has, however, been excluded from the table because its dies are known only in this one combination, as have certain other pieces – 'End of Pain' for example – since they cannot be positively identified from the descriptions given. Questionable attributions that have been admitted are shown in italics and commercial halfpennies or shop tickets in bold.

22 [Banks] Ms Catalogue, 95 no. 75 (SSB 192–75). On 17 March 1795 she also acquired a Spence 'Pitt & Fox' halfpenny (D&H: Middx. no. 804), a token that can plausibly be attributed to Skidmore's coinery ([Banks], Ms 'List of coins ...').

23 Spence's catalogue (including the 'Addenda') listed 361 tokens arranged alphabetically compared to Hammond's 341 'arranged promiscuously' (Spence 1795).

24 Hammond (W) and Spence (S) also 'announced', but did not describe, a number of putative Skidmore productions of which they had had notice but which had not yet been manufactured or consigned to them.

25 Cf. Thompson 1969, 102. Prattent seems to have relied on William Williams as the manufacturer of most of his productions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Halfpenny (unless specified)</th>
<th>( D&amp;H ) No.</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Die-Sinker</th>
<th>Earliest References to Die-sinkers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bedale</strong> ('Bedal' [sic])</td>
<td>Yorks. 9</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 101 no. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dudley</strong></td>
<td>Worce. 7</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 100 no. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dunmow</strong></td>
<td>Essex 11</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skidmore</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 43 no. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>France</strong> ('King &amp; Queen')</td>
<td>Middx. 995</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guildford</strong></td>
<td>Surrey 9</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>Denton/Prattett</td>
<td>Pye 1801, pl. 21.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hendon</strong> (Price)</td>
<td>Middx. 324</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacobs</td>
<td>Pye 1795, pl. 36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>London</strong> (Filtering Stone Warehouse – Henderson)</td>
<td>Middx. 292/3</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacobs</td>
<td>Pye 1801, pl. 29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>London</strong> (Salter)</td>
<td>Middx. 473</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacobs</td>
<td>Pye 1801, pl. 34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>London</strong> (Skidmore)</td>
<td>Middx. 480</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wyon</td>
<td>Pye 1795, pl. 55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salisbury</strong></td>
<td>Wilts. 12</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skidmore</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 100 no. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> ('Pitt &amp; Fox'/'Hand')</td>
<td>Middx. 804</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 182 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> ('Pig'/'Advocates')</td>
<td>Middx. 842</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 182 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> ('Pig'/'Advocates') Farthing</td>
<td>Middx. 1117</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 182 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> ('Pig'/'Adam &amp; Eve') Farthing</td>
<td>Middx. 1083</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 182 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> ('Pig'/'Bull-Ass') Farthing</td>
<td>Middx. -</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 182 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> ('Slave'/'Head') Farthing</td>
<td>Middx. 1082</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 186 no. 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> ('Slave'/'Advocates') Farthing</td>
<td>Middx. 1118</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>[James]</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 186 no. 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>London</strong> (Blackfriars – Spittle)</td>
<td>Middx. 257</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacobs</td>
<td>Pye 1801, pl. 28. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> ('Cat'/'Hand &amp; Book') Farthing</td>
<td>Middx. 1091</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 182 no. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> 'Bull-Ass'/'Advocates') Farthing</td>
<td>Middx. 1078</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 182 no. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> 'Bull-Ass'/'Adam &amp; Eve') Farthing</td>
<td>Middx. 1085</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>[James]</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 184 no. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> 'Slave'/'Adam &amp; Eve') Farthing</td>
<td>Middx. 1089</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>[James]</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 186 no. 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spence</strong> ('Head'/'Hand') Farthing</td>
<td>Middx. 682</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 144 no. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>'Brighton' (Deverell)</strong></td>
<td>Sussex 6</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Sharp 1834, 90 no. 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

W = Williams 1795.
S = Spence 1795a.
A = 'Appendix' printed with S.
• = First Listing.
o = Repetition.
a = Issued by J. Henderson (Waters 1906, 17).
b = This farthing is unknown and is probably confused by Hammond with \( D\&H \): Middx. no. 1078. It does not appear in S or A.
c = Issued by James Spittle, Cheesemonger, Broadway, Blackfriars, London (co-issuer of \( D\&H \): Middx. nos 902-3) ([Banks], Ms Catalogue, 98 no. 99 (SSB 192-99)).
d = Issued by Benjamin Deverell, Orange Merchant, Fleet Market, London ([Banks], Ms Catalogue, 30 no. 167 (SSB 186-167)).
Of the putative Skidmore productions put out by May 1795 only six – Guildford; Hendon (Price); London (Filtering Stone Warehouse – Henderson); London (Salter); London (Skidmore); and London (Blackfriars – Spittle) – have reasonable claim to being commercial halfpennies or shop tickets. And, while there may be some doubt about the Guildford piece, all are listed in Pye 1801. The rest are spurious tokens made for sale, for general circulation or, in the case of those put out by Spence, mainly to disseminate the latter’s radical beliefs. As Pye (1795) noted in his ‘Advertisement’, the Brighton and Dudley halfpennies were not known to be in existence in those towns. Both were intended for sale to collectors, the former, according to Miss Banks, put out by Benjamin Deverell, an orange merchant in Fleet Market, and the latter by the engraver Charles James. It is probable that the Bedale token (not included in Pye 1801) falls into the same category, although the name of the supposed issuer was a not uncommon one in Wensleydale.

The lists make it clear that Skidmore was well entrenched in the manufacture of tokens by May 1795. They also suggest that, while he had embarked on the striking of spurious pieces, he had not yet adopted his ‘reprehensible’ practice of intermixing his own dies. Spence, on the other hand, had already taken his first tentative steps towards what was to become an increasing preoccupation by the summer of 1795 when he put out a Supplement to his catalogue. Even then it seems that Skidmore had not yet imitated Spence, although he was presumably striking the latter’s mules. None of his own was published in the Supplement or in Hammond’s retaliatory Virtuoso’s Guide (1795) that followed hot on its heels, although it has to be stressed that Hammond made a point of excluding most mules or ‘bastards’, as he called them, from his list. If Denton and Prattent’s Virtuoso’s Companion (1795–97) is any gauge, Skidmore does not seem to have started to mimic Spence’s technique until much before the latter part of 1795. On 14 December, however, a whole plate was devoted to the ‘Brighton’ halfpenny and its mules, including the Spence ‘Heart in Hand’ reverse (D&H: Sussex nos 6–9). And by early 1796, judging from Birchall 1796, Skidmore was interchanging dies extensively and was now also using two other Spence dies (‘Slop-Seller’ and ‘Odd Fellows’ [George III and Ass]) as well as the ‘Heart in Hand’ type (D&H: Northd. no. 17; Middx. no. 332; and Middx. no. 498). Clearly these dies were already in his hands, presumably as Spence’s manufacturer, although he is not supposed to have acquired formal ownership of the bulk of the latter’s dies until the turn of the year. But, while he might embrace and expand Spence’s methods, none of Skidmore’s mules exhibited the purpose or wry wit of the radical’s bizarre extravaganzas; they were simply a ‘jobbing’ enterprise to gull collectors through the creation of freak, and costly, varieties.

For all the activity of his mint, Skidmore’s manufacture of tokens remained a subsidiary undertaking. While the ‘Register Stove’ obverse of his ‘commercial’ halfpenny gives some clue to the main thrust of Skidmore’s primary business, its naturally constricted compass does less than justice to the wide variety of products and services he marketed in his 1789 advertisement. Some of these products were displayed even more vividly in an engraved trade card that he put out at the turn of the century (Fig. 6).
Embellished with the Royal Arms and stressing again Skidmore's appointment to the Board of Ordnance, the paper card was designed to persuade middling- and upper-class customers anxious to avail themselves of the most modern domestic durables that the firm was one of reliability and of a status worthy of the patronage of the 'Nobility, Gentry, and others' of his advertisement. No doubt Skidmore hoped that the 'others' would have been seduced by the impression that they would be buying goods sought after by their betters.

A whole emporium of tempting merchandise was illustrated: an 'improved' register stove 'on Count Rumford's plan'; a hall lantern; a box of 'warranted' cutlery (no doubt of the type that Beardmore stole); a patent bell-hanging system; a range 'with or without ovens and boilers &c'; a smoke jack ('greatly improved') for powering a spit; and, for the carriage trade, an 'everlasting metallic nave' or wheel hub for which Skidmore had obtained a patent in September 1799, though whether it would have endured 'to the end of time' as he claimed, bearing in mind the brittleness of the cast iron of its components, must be doubted. Most of these articles would have been produced in the Clerkenwell foundry, but some, the 'warranted' cutlery, for instance, would have been drawn down from a specialist cutler in Sheffield and other stock from Black Country and Birmingham connections.

The 'Rumford Stove', an improvement on the 'register stove' type of domestic fire-grate, had by now become Skidmore's key product. A recent invention of Sir Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford, the new form of grate with its narrow throat, smokeshelf and inclined sides helped considerably to reduce downdraughts and to increase the radiant heat of the fire. It was widely promoted by Rumford, much taken up by London society, including Sir Joseph Banks at 32 Soho Square, and became something of a fad and even a target of the caricaturists (Fig. 7). The invention was not patented, however, and was extensively copied, forcing Rumford to issue a disclaimer that he was 'not the inventor of those stoves that have been offered to the public for sale under my name'. The guarded nature of Skidmore's description suggests that his 'Rumford Stoves' were just such a plagiarised version and is perhaps an indicator of the sharp practice evident in the firm's token business.

---

31 The engraving of the 'Patent Everlasting Nave' and the inclusion of the fleurs-de-lis of France in the second quarter of the Royal Arms would date the card to these years.

32 The engraving shows a range with two trivets and compartments for an oven (left) and a boiler (right) that could be installed to order.

33 Patent Specification 2337, granted jointly to John Skidmore and George Dodson, cabinetmaker of Blackfriars Road. 7 September 1799; the invented nave was promoted as something that 'must endure for many generations, nay, it may be supposed, to the end of time'.

34 Southey 1807, Vol. I, Letter XIV, 158, accounted Rumford a 'philosopher, the first person who has applied scientific discoveries to the ordinary purposes of life'.

Utilitarian and cheaply made as the run of Skidmore’s output was, he was nevertheless always alive to the demands of the affluent end of his market and did not neglect the production of highly ornamented articles to satisfy the latest decorative fashion. An innovative character, as we have seen, he had already, in 1786, been granted a patent for a process of embellishing a considerable range of merchandise, including his stove grates, stove fronts, fenders, shovels, tongs and pokers, with ‘foil stones, Bristol stones, paste, and all sorts of pinched glass, lapped glass, and every other stone, glass, and composition used in or applicable to the jewellery trade’, translating the functional into showy luxuries for clients in easy circumstances.37

Skidmore was well placed to profit from the opportunities arising from the need to furnish and decorate the houses springing up in the Bloomsbury area in these years and, despite the temporary decrease in such building that followed the outbreak of the war with France in 1793, he is unlikely to have lacked advantage from his military connections during the spate of barrack construction that was a feature of the time. The success of Skidmore’s business is reflected in the additional property he acquired, both in Clerkenwell, where as well as his foundry he invested in land and house development in nearby Falcon Court (or Place, as it was becoming known), and apparently in Holborn too.38

36 George 1942, 635–6 no. 9565. The coffee-pot on the chimney-piece is an allusion to Rumford’s essay On the Art of making Coffee.
37 Patent Specification 1552, granted 4 September 1786, for a ‘new method of ornamenting all manner of stove grates, stove fronts, fenders, shovels, tongs, pokers, chimney pieces, chimney panels, the inside of houses and ships, all sorts of Japan wares, all kinds of cabinets and furniture, the outside of coaches and other carriages, and all sorts of china and earthenware, with foil stones, Bristol stones, paste, and all sorts of pinched glass, lapped glass, and every other stone, glass, and composition used in or applicable to the jewellery trade’. Patents, in themselves, were a form of advertisement, ‘a sign of modernity and technical ingenuity … displaying the patent holder’s place in enlightened society as a creator of novelties, as making advances based on scientific principles, as part of the world of the arts’ (Berg 2005, 179).
38 The bulk of Skidmore’s property in Falcon Court (or Place), some newly built, was sold in 1792 and 1799 (London Metropolitan Archives, MDR/1782/7/435 and MDR/1799/4/179). Other premises in Holborn, originally leased from Charles Parker’s executors, were assigned to a Sheffield table-knife cutter, William Kesteven, in June 1799 (London Metropolitan Archives, MDR/1799/2/750).
The business is listed as 'Skidmore and Son, furnishing ironmongers, 123 High Holborn' with a separate entry for 'Skidmore, jun., stove-grate manufacturer, Coppice Row, Clerkenwell' in Holden's Triennial Directory of 1808 (a reprint of his 1805 edition) which may reflect a change in the management of the firm as a younger generation took over more responsibility from its father. It is not without interest in this context that by August 1807, when the remaining Falcon Place property still in his hands was made over to his eldest son, Skidmore, like many another prosperous London tradesman, had escaped from the clamour of the metropolis to a cottage in the country, to what was still the rural tranquillity of Nun Green in Peckham.40

By now Skidmore must have been well into his sixties, if not older, and, although entries continued to appear as 'Skidmore and Son, Stove-grate-makers' at both the Holborn and Clerkenwell addresses in the Post Office Annual Directory for 1809 and Kent's Directory for London for 1810, he must, at the least, have been contemplating retirement. By 1811 the directories had caught up with the realities of the situation for Holden's Annual London and Country Directory and the Post Office Annual Directory of that year changed the style of the firm to 'M. & G. Skidmore, stove-grate makers, 123 High Holborn and 15 Coppice-row, Clerkenwell'.41 On 2 September 1811, to celebrate their new partnership, M. and G. Skidmore issued a hundred plate catalogue of designs of their 'stoves, ranges, virandas, railings, balconets, &c.: including the antique, sarcophagus, vase, oval, gothic and Egyptian' (Fig. 8).42

Within the year, however, the duality of manufactory and shop had come to an end, business activities being concentrated at the High Holborn address (Post Office Annual Directory, 1812). The iron founding operation in Clerkenwell was taken over by a James Knight, perhaps a connection of the famous family of Shropshire ironmasters. The Skidmores continued at High Holborn as stove-grate makers or furnishing ironmongers until 1817 and then as 'G. Skidmore' alone until 1822. Finally, for a further year or so, 'Susan Skidmore' ran the business until 1824, when the Skidmores eventually disappeared from the directories and the

---

40 London Metropolitan Archives (MDR/1808/4/164). Until the mid-nineteenth century the Nun[head] Green area remained a largely rural hamlet surrounded by market gardens, according to William Hone, a favoured summer resort of 'smoke-dried London artisans'.

41 It is of interest, in view of Skidmore's 1786 patent, that Holden's Triennial Directory for 1809, 1810 & 1811 lists a 'John Skidmore' as a 'gold, gilt & pearl ornament manufacturer' at 21 Clerkenwell Green. This Skidmore, probably a close relation, was earlier in partnership with a brother, Francis, as a jeweller in Clerkenwell and was thus the uncle of Francis Albert Skidmore, the notable Victorian architectural metal manufacturer.

42 Published ... by M. & G. Skidmore, High Holborn, London, 2 September 1811 (National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, General Collection 204.A.B.29).
business was taken over by a Matthew Howitt, himself a furnishing ironmonger, who had previously been in business at 252 High Holborn.43

The bare entries in the contemporary directories can be fleshed out from other sources. That M. and G. Skidmore were sons of John Skidmore is made clear by the minutes of the Founders Company.44 On 3 July 1786 Meremoth Skidmore, ‘son of John Skidmore of Coppice Row, Clerkenwell in the County of Middlesex, Stove Grate Maker’, was ‘bound Apprentice to John Rice, Citizen and Founder of London for seven years’ and on 6 October 1794 Gamaliel (the record actually says ‘Camaliel’), ‘son of John Skidmore Citizen and Founder’ was bound to Meremoth (sic) Skidmore for a similar seven year apprenticeship. Meremoth himself was admitted a freeman of the City, as a liveryman of the Founders’ Company by servitude, in July 1793. It would have been soon after this time that the style of the firm became ‘Skidmore and Son’ and there is no reason to believe that it was anyone other than Meremoth who entered into this partnership with his father.45

Meremoth would have been born in 1771-72 and Gamaliel, who testified that his age was ‘fourteen this month’ at the Beadmore trial in April 1793, in 1779. Such dates are confirmed by the baptismal register of St Thomas, Dudley for Meremoth, who was christened there on 23 February 1772, and that of St Andrew, Holborn for Gamaliel on 23 May 1779, the family then living on Osnlow Street, Clerkenwell.46 Gamaliel died in the spring of 1822 and, although his name does not disappear from the Post Office Annual Directory until 1824, it was his widow Susannah Skidmore who then ran the business for a year or two until it was taken over by Matthew Howitt.47

On the basis of these sources we can trace the style of the firm as being

John Skidmore, c.1784 – c.1793
John Skidmore and Son [John and Meremoth], c.1793 – c.1811
[Meremoth] and G [Gamaliel] Skidmore, c.1811 – c.1817
G [Gamaliel] Skidmore, c. 1817 – 1822
Susan[nah] Skidmore (Widow of Gamaliel), 1822 – c.1824

But where does all this leave us with ‘Peter’ Skidmore? Clearly no such person could have been the ‘Son’ of Samuel’s ‘Skidmore and Son’ for there can be little doubt that this was Meremoth. Even so, although one might have a more than nagging suspicion that the coiner business was but an opportunistic facet of John Skidmore’s founding activities, why should the initial ‘P’ have been adopted for its public persona? There is, in fact, a simple explanation, but it has lain hidden for some two hundred years and has nothing to do with anyone named ‘Peter’.

John and Nancy Skidmore had at least six children, Meremoth and a daughter Sarah born before they left the west Midlands, and Gamaliel, another daughter and two more sons, born in London. The eldest of this London group was Paul Skidmore, who was born on 22 December 1775 and baptised at St James, Clerkenwell on 4 February 1776.48 In December 1789, a few days after his fourteenth birthday, he was bound apprentice for seven years ‘to learn the business of a Bricklayer, to Samuel Gray of the parish of St James

---

44 Founders’ Company Court Minute Book 1782-1797, 3 July 1786 and 6 October 1794 (Guildhall Library, London, MS 6331/5).
45 The use of the word ‘Citizen’ would imply that John Skidmore was a liveryman and a freeman of the City of London, but there is no evidence that this was so, emphasised by the fact that Gamaliel was apprenticed to his brother rather than his father.
46 City Freedoms Admissions Index and Apprenticeship Indenture (Corporation of London Records Office, CFa/1161). Interestingly, Meremoth Skidmore was also a bell-ringer and was admitted a member of the Ancient Society of College Youths in 1798.
47 Baptismal Registers, St Thomas, Dudley (Dudley Archives and Local History Service); St Andrew, Holborn (Guildhall Library, London, MS 6667/12). Nancy Skidmore’s name is wrongly given as ‘Mary’ in the St Andrew register.
48 Gamaliel Skidmore and Susannah Russell were married at St George, Holborn on 14 August 1802 (Moffatt 2004, 172).
49 Baptismal Register, St James, Clerkenwell (London Metropolitan Archives).
Clerkenwell Citizen and Tyler and Bricklayer of London’. This may not have been as surprising as it may seem, for the hint in the records that John Skidmore had branched out into property development may have suggested a career in this sphere for his son, perhaps as a surveyor or building contractor like James Burton, the developer of much of Bloomsbury and issuer of the ‘J B – Foundling Fields’ halfpenny (D&H: Middx. nos 303–5), who himself became master of the Tylers’ Company in 1801. The Freedom Register of the Company, however, contains no reference to Paul Skidmore. While he may not have taken up his freedom, it is equally likely that he never completed his period of servitude. If this was the case, he might well have left Gray to work for his father. If he did so, was he the elusive ‘P’ of the token manufactory?

The answer to this question is to be found, hardly noticeably it must be said, in Miss Banks’s register of her token collection in the British Museum. Listing an undated ‘Clerkenwell – St. Martin Ludgate’ ‘halfpenny’ medalet (D&H: Middx. no. 612) (Fig. 9) acquired on 12 April 1796 she identified the ‘P S’ of its PSC monogram as referring to Paul Skidmore. Miss Banks, who her brother, Sir Joseph Banks, once told Matthew Boulton, was ‘a great pusher’ when it came to the collection of coins and medals, knew the contemporary token scene more intimately than most collectors and was personally acquainted with the London dealers of the time, from the respectable like the Youngs and Richard Miles to the more dubious like John Hammond and Matthew Denton. We know that she had been buying tokens from the Skidmores as early as 10 April 1795 and that during that month she recorded an exchange of tokens with ‘Mr. Skidmore, Jun.’ This could have been any one of the Skidmore sons, perhaps Gamaliel whose GS monogram Miss Banks deciphered on the firm’s ‘Hyde Park’ halfpenny (D&H: Middx. no. 534) (Fig. 10). Regrettably Miss Banks was not specific but, in any event, it is hardly conceivable that she would have been mistaken or confused over P. Skidmore’s Christian name.

Fig. 9. Miss Bank’s ‘St Martin Ludgate’ medalet (D&H: Middx. no. 612). (© The British Museum).

Fig. 10. ‘Hyde Park’ halfpenny with reverse monogram of Gamaliel Skidmore (D&H: Middx. 534).

50 Tylers’ and Bricklayers’ Company, Court Minute Book, 28 December 1789 (Guildhall Library, London, MS 3043/7).
51 Miss Banks, Ms Catalogue, 72, no. 9 (SSB 191–9–1).
52 Sir Joseph Banks to Matthew Boulton, 19 December 1791 (Birmingham City Archives, Ms 3782/12/56/22).
53 [Banks], Ms ‘List of coins …’.
54 [Banks], Ms Catalogue, 58 no. 78 (SSB 188–78). Miss Banks acquired her specimen of the ‘Hyde Park’ halfpenny on 21 December 1796, again an example of a token produced earlier than its stated date. Another token, the specious Worcestershire penny (D&H: Worcs. no. 1) with its reverse monogram MS, probably relates to Meremoth Skidmore and his county of birth.
Paul Skidmore would have been quite young when the coinery business was started, little past his nineteenth birthday, and the venture into token making might well have stemmed from a youthful enthusiasm for the new medium. Most modern numismatists since Samuel have supposed that because the designations P SKIDMORE, PS or PSC° are used on so many of the tokens he [in their terms ‘Peter’] ‘was in charge of this side of the business while his father was mainly interested in the grate manufactory’. It is unrealistic, though, to believe that John Skidmore, even if influenced by his sons, did not fund the undertaking in the expectation of some economic advantage from the token collecting ‘mania’ that was reaching its peak by the beginning of 1795. What does not seem to have been appreciated, either, is that those tokens that have any inscription that can be interpreted as referring to Paul Skidmore can be shown to be comparatively late in the history of the coinery. By reference to Miss Banks’s register it is apparent that the earliest any of the undated PSC° ‘halfpenny’ medalets could have been struck was 1796 or very late in 1795. Her specimen of the ‘St Andrew’s, Holborn’ ‘halfpenny’ (D&H: Middx no. 595), a precursor of the series, was acquired by her on 19 December 1795 and her first example of the undated series proper (St Luke’s, Old Street) on 30 January 1796.

The PSC° monogram, while probably no more than a specious device intended to give a spurious standing to the coinery’s new medallic venture and unrelated to any supposed ‘company’, can best be understood as marking Paul Skidmore’s entry into a more prominent role in an already established enterprise. Contemporaries, as one has already noted, invariably referred to the coinery and dealership as ‘Skidmore’ or ‘Skidmore, an ironmonger of Holborn’, implying that for all practical purposes they saw the undertaking as one run by John Skidmore himself. In the absence of business records any account of the coinery must be conjectural, but a likely sequence of events is that John Skidmore started the coinage business in the winter of 1794–95 with the intention of manufacturing commercial tokens or shop tickets. Certainly these seem to be his earliest productions. Coming relatively late on the token-making scene, however, Skidmore was able to attract few commissions in an area that Lutwyche and Kempson had made so much their own. His descent into the manufacture of specious pieces and concoctions for the collectors’ market was, thus, a not unnatural progression for a business otherwise left with a potentially dead investment in equipment and copper. It was probably at this point, the summer of 1795, that Paul Skidmore began to come more to the fore in the firm and perhaps to turn some artistic talent to practical effect, a progression exemplified with the issue of the ‘General Elliot/PS’ ‘Birmingham Halfpenny’ and leading in the winter to the launch of the PSC° ‘Buildings’ ‘halfpennies’. Starting with the undated issues, the PSC° medalets were to continue into 1797 when penny module pieces, mainly the ‘Clerkenwell’ (defined by its inscription P. SKIDMORE. MEDAL. MAKER. COPPICE ROW. CLERKENWELL) and the ‘Globe’ series, were added to the coinery’s architectural portfolio.

Expensive to produce and costly to buy, these medallic tokens were intended as collectors’ items even if, compared to the similar pieces of Kempson, they were indifferently struck from dies of inferior steel. Alongside this medallic output, the firm remained active in intermixing the dies of its other tokens, a practice that became more extensive with the transfer of most of Spence’s dies into Skidmore’s ownership towards the end of 1796. Over the next twelve months the coinery was at its busiest, but collectors were already reacting against the multiplicity of mules, their artificially contrived scarcity and their cost. Interest

---

55 Bell 1968, 81. See also Waters 1954, vi.
56 Shephard 1798, 120, states that the ‘enthusiasm’ for collecting tokens was the ‘most prevalent and regular in the latter part of the year 1794’, but the timing of the first catalogues would suggest that he might have been slightly premature.
57 [Banks], Ms Catalogue, 71 nos 161, 167 (SSB 190–161 and SSB 191–17). Bearing in mind Miss Banks’s avidity in collecting tokens, her dates of acquisition are a not unreasonable guide to the tokens’ dates of issue.
58 The collector, William Robert Hay, for example (Morley 1971-74. Part III. 46 and passim). See also n.2 above.
59 [Banks], Ms Catalogue, 95 no. 75 (SSB 192–75) (Salter) and 98 no. 99 (SSB 192–99) (Blackfriars), for example.
60 For the range of Skidmore ‘penny’ medalets, see D&H: Middx 105-10 and 154-64.
61 One cannot posit a precise date for Skidmore’s acquisition of the Spence dies because of the vagueness of the available evidence provided by ‘R. Y.’ 1797, 471, and Shephard 1798, 122.
in the 'Buildings' pieces was also beginning to wane and by February 1798 Shephard was noting that new tokens were becoming fewer.62 With the issue of the specious Gosport (D&H: Hants. nos 2 and 3) and Lynn (D&H: Norfolk no. 2) pennies that year Skidmore's coinery ceased production. It was never to be resumed.

Most of Skidmore's own dies, including those for the various 'Buildings' series, were the work of Jacobs, an obscure topographical engraver.63 Charles James also undertook some work for Skidmore and engraved most of the Spence dies that Skidmore struck. What seems to have escaped the attention of modern numismatists, however, is that Thomas Sharp, who, like Pye in 1795, confined himself to the names of the 'artists' but not the manufacturers of tokens in his catalogue descriptions, identified 'P. Skidmore' as a die-sinker. While the obverse dies of most of the 'Clerkenwell' medalets, for example, are signed 'Jacobs', Sharp attributed to 'P. Skidmore' three of the four that were unsigned: 'Carisbrooke Castle' (D&H: Middx. no. 148), 'Cow[e]s Castle' (D&H: Middx. no. 150) and 'Fort George' (D&H: Middx. no. 156).64 Sharp also credited him with the unsigned 'Netley Abbey/TG' penny (D&H: Hants. no. 4) and the following halfpennies and farthings:

**Halfpennies:**
- Battle (D&H: Sussex no. 1)
- Bicester (D&H: Oxon no. 4)
- Birmingham ('General Elliot/PS') (D&H: War. no. 224)
- Birmingham (William Hallan) (D&H: War. no. 131)
- Blandford (D&H: Dorset no. 1)
- Dunmow (D&H: Essex nos 11a and b)
- 'End of Pain' (D&H: Middx. no. 834)
- Hackney (D&H: Middx. no. 312a)
- Hereford (D&H: Herefordshire no. 6a)
- Hornsey (D&H: Middx. no. 337)
- Kidderminster (D&H: Worcs. no. 23)
- Poole (D&H: Dorset nos 2a, 3 and 4)
- Salisbury (D&H: Wilts. no. 12)
- Sunderland (D&H: Durham no. 10)

**Farthings:**
- Anglesey (D&H: Anglesey no. 452)

In addition, Sharp attributed a penny, two halfpennies and six farthings to 'Skidmore':

**Penny:**
- Gravesend (D&H: Kent no. 1)

**Halfpennies:**
- Amersham (D&H Bucks 2)
- Lincoln (D&H: Lincs 1)

**Farthings:**
- Anglesey (D&H: Anglesey no. 463)
- Dudley (D&H: Worcs. no. 47a)
- 'End of Pain' (D&H: Middx. no. 1075)
- 'End of Pain' (D&H: Middx. nos 1105, 1106a, 1107, 1108a and 1110)
- Newcastle (D&H: Northd. no. 35)
- 'Peace' (D&H: Middx. no. 1165 and a questionable Skidmore attribution)

'Skidmore' might have been a 'catchall' for tokens Sharp recognised as Coppice Row productions but for which he could not specify individual die-sinkers. Yet he strove to be precise

---

62 Shephard 1798, 122. Miss Banks bought her example of the Gosport penny on 26 December 1797; [Banks], Ms Catalogue, 52 no. 26 (SSB 188–26).
63 Pye 1801 listed Jacobs as 'B. Jacobs' and described him as a London die-sinker in his 'List of Die-Sinkers and Manufacturers', on p. 10. Jacobs has been identified by some with the Birmingham ironmonger and engraver Benjamin Jacob, who issued a penny token in 1798 (D&H: War. no. 31), but this seems implausible.
64 The fourth unsigned piece - 'Tower of Dudley Castle' (D&H: Middx. no. 151) - did not figure in the Chetwynd collection, but in its manifestation as the obverse to one of the 'E. Davies' Dudley pennies (D&H: Worcs. no. 5), also unsigned, Sharp attributed it to Jacobs.
in his attributions and when identification eluded him he was careful to mark an entry 'unknown'. It is thus more likely that Sharp was simply abbreviating 'P. Skidmore'. It should be noted that the Amersham halfpenny shared its reverse with the Hornsey that he attributed to 'P. Skidmore'. On the other hand, the Dudley farthing obverse was taken from the obverse punch of the Ryed halfpenny that he ascribed to Jacobs, and the Anglesey farthing reverse was similarly adapted from the reverse of the original Skidmore 'commercial halfpenny'. But these re-usages of a single die do not necessarily imply the involvement of the original engraver – which in the latter case would be far-fetched. As a contemporary collector and token issuer himself (D&H: War. no. 312) who, with Thomas Welch and George Barker, had supplied Charles Pye 'with the Tokens and procured and arranged the important mass of information' for the latter's 1801 catalogue, Sharp's appreciation of the token scene from its inception was wide ranging.65 He was, though, like Pye and his other collaborators, a Warwickshire man and, while they could all draw on the firsthand testimony of the Birmingham die-sinkers and manufacturer of the period, they could be less sure about the productions of the metropolis, especially the more egregious pieces which in any case they ignored with characteristic disdain.66 For details of such London-made tokens as they did include, they had relied on information provided by the diesinker John Milton, Miss Banks, and the dealers Richard Miles and Matthew Young. Milton had, however, died in 1805, Miss Banks in 1818 and Miles the following year. Forty years on, therefore, when Sharp was compiling the Chetwynd catalogue, he could turn to the only remaining contemporary London authority – Matthew Young – and the memories of even such a knowledgeable informant might not unnaturally have dimmed over the years. In the absence of any corroborative evidence one cannot be certain how credible Sharp's attribution of die-sinking to 'P. Skidmore' might be. That he was not altogether infallible in such matters is borne out by his misreading of the engraver's initials on Boulton's Cornish and Glasgow halfpennies, and his consequent attribution of them to Droz rather than Dumarest.

Analysis of style is not of much help since Sharp's 'P. Skidmore' pieces are eclectic to say the least. The scenic pieces – Battle, Beeston, Hereford and Hornsey – are all too reminiscent of the topographical art of James or Jacobs. Others, notably those with somewhat caricature-like obverse busts – 'General Elliot'/PS', 'William Hallan', Hereford and Salisbury – are distinctive, but Sharp himself attributed the portrait halfpennies of William Cooper (D&H: Middx. no. 1007) and William Romaine (D&H: Middx. no. 1036) to Jacobs and they betray much the same hand as the others.

Sharp followed Pye 1801 in citing the Birmingham die-sinker Spencer Perry, otherwise unknown as a token engraver, as the die-sinker of Hallen (sic)'s primitive 'inscription' type (D&H: War. no. 128 (recte 129)), but departed from the latter's attribution of the superior 'portrait' piece (D&H: War. no. 131) to Perry. Sharp was probably nearer the truth since one knows that Skidmore bought Perry's original 'inscription' dies, the reverse one of which had been spoiled and, according to Miss Banks, made up by Skidmore (D&H: War. no. 128) 'w the he sold for about 5 each'.67 But this was not without his muling of the original dies with a 'Hendon/ Garrick' reverse (D&H: War. nos 130 and 139). Although both 'inscription' halfpennies are dated '1792', all this took place in 1795 since Miss Banks did not acquire her example of the 'new' halfpenny until the August of that year. Pye makes no mention of a manufacturer of any of the Hallen pieces, but, with the doubtful exception of the original 'inscription' halfpenny, this must have been Skidmore, who freely intermixed all the dies except for the 'crockery' reverse of the portrait type that fractured at an early stage of production.68

But this takes us no further with the question of whether the 'portrait' type was engraved by Paul Skidmore. Although dated '1793' it also was patently produced in 1795, as were the

---

65 Sharp 1834, ix.
66 Pye 1801, 4.
67 W. R. Hay (Morley 1971–74, Part IX, 203), Hay added 'I beleive (sic) Hallan was tried for coinng and convicted'. [Banks] Ms Catalogue, 25 no. 122 (SSB 186-122). Pye 1801 confusingly engraved D&H: War. no. 128 as the original halfpenny (plate VII, 10) and said that it also sold for 5s (p. 6).
68 Cf. The W. J. Noble Collection of British Tokens, Noble Numismatics sale no. 58, part B, Melbourne, 7–8 July 1998, lot 977, where the developing fracture is seen between 4 and 6 o'clock.
Dunmow (‘1793’), Kidderminster (‘1791’) and ‘General Elliot/PS’ (‘1792’) halfpennies. All the rest that Sharp gave to ‘P. Skidmore’ were struck in 1796 or 1797, but again this is not very helpful knowledge since Jacobs was also active for the coinery throughout these years and into 1798. Yet, despite the lack of supporting testimony one should not dismiss Sharp’s attribution of these tokens to ‘P. Skidmore’ lightly. He is generally a reliable guide – although his attribution of the Sunderland halfpenny (D&H: Durham 10), a likely Denton/Prattent token, is probably wrong – and, sensing that he must have had access to information no longer available, one is inclined to accept his evidence.

There is one intriguing activity that Skidmore’s firm embarked on after the collapse of the token market that might give some tangential credence to Sharp’s thesis, although it can be no more than a straw in the wind. A new fashion in water-colour painting had been popularised in the closing decades of the eighteenth century with the invention of soluble water-colour cakes in 1781 by Thomas and William Reeves, distant neighbours of John Skidmore at Holborn Bridge. The Reeves brothers had been precluded from seeking a patent because of a Society of Arts award and their invention had thus attracted a flurry of imitators. Among them were John Skidmore and Son, who in 1799 were announcing in the press that they had ‘obtained the art of making superfine Colours, Liquids, &c of the very best quality’ (Fig. 11).  

![Fig. 11. Advertisement in The Morning Chronicle, 21 June 1799 (page 1). (© British Library Board. All Rights Reserved.)](image)

Perhaps it was simply their steadfast pursuit of Adam Smith’s ‘pedlar principle of turning a penny wherever a penny was to be got’ that attracted them to a new endeavour that they clearly saw as an opportunity to capitalize on their business contacts with architects and surveyors. Even so, it was as curious a diversion for furnishing ironmongers as token making had been and one must wonder whether it was not totally unconnected with any artistic frustrations Paul Skidmore must have experienced following the cessation of the latter undertaking.

But this, as with much of the foregoing, is naturally speculative, for, apart from the bare details of his baptism and apprenticeship, and Miss Banks’s note on the PSC° monogram, nothing is verifiably known about Paul. Presumably, like his London-born siblings, Ann Sophia and John, he died at a comparatively young age, for, like them, he is not mentioned in the will John Skidmore drew up in 1822. While there is manifest justification for seeing him as ‘PS’ and casting ‘Peter’ Skidmore into the lumber-room of false numismatic lore Paul Skidmore remains an enigma. Yet, despite the absence of firm evidence, one senses that he was the Skidmore responsible for the specious token making and extensive muling for which the coinery was castigated and, more positively, for the various medallic series for which it could ‘not be too much applauded’.

It is probably correct, too, to follow Sharp in identifying him as a die-sinker, perhaps trained by Jacobs, after ‘dropping out’ from his original apprenticeship with Samuel Gray.

69 Morning Chronicle, 21 June 1799.
70 John Skidmore’s will, dated 11 August 1822, was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 19 March 1823 (PRO: Prob 11/1668). He was buried at St Giles, Camberwell on 6 March 1823.
71 Shephard 1798, 13.
John Skidmore died in the spring of 1823. His will makes it clear that he had been a sick man for some time. It also presents him as a man disenchanted with his family and taking care to appoint trustees to manage his bequests to prevent his estate 'being diminished or wasted by extravagance or debts', a reflection, perhaps, of his experience of his son Gamaliel whom he referred to as 'having ad (sic) a great deal more than his fair share before his death'. Or perhaps of a costly and damaging venture into token making that had forced him to dispose of much of his Clerkenwell property in 1799.

REFERENCES

[Banks, Sarah Sophia], Ms 'List of coins &c, presents to me, & of d° that I have bought': now in the British Museum, Department of Coins and Medals. The British Museum. Arc R 19.

Bell, R.C., 1966. Tradesmen’s Tickets and Private Tokens 1785–1819 (Newcastle upon Tyne).
Bell, R.C., 1967. Specious Tokens and those struck for General Circulation 1784–1804 (Newcastle upon Tyne).

Birchall, S., 1796. A Descriptive List of the Provincial Copper Coins or Tokens issued between the Years 1786 and 1796 (Leeds).


Hammond, J., 1795. The Virtuoso’s Guide in collecting Provincial Copper Coins being a copious and perfect description of all that are now extant (London).


Pye, C., 1795. Provincial Copper Coins or Tokens, issued between the Years 1786 and 1796 (London). Provincial Coins and tokens issued from the Year 1787 to the Year 1801 (Birmingham and London).
Pye, C., 1801 [1916]. A Representation of Provincial Copper Tokens, Tokens of Trade and Cards of Address circulated between 1787 and 1801, 3rd edn, A.W. Waters (ed.) (Leamington Spa).


Spence, T., 1795a. The Coin Collector’s Companion, being a descriptive alphabetical list of the modern provincial, political, and other copper coins (London).


Waters, A.W., 1906. Notes … respecting the issuers of the Eighteenth Century Tokens struck for the County of Middlesex (Leamington Spa).


Whole Proceedings The Whole Proceedings … held at Justice Hall in the Old Bailey on Wednesday the 10th of April, 1793, and the following Days: Number IV, Part I (London, n.d.).

Williams, C., 1795. A Descriptive List of the Modern Provincial Copper Coins including those of London (London).

Gamaliel Skidmore was buried in Bunhill Fields Cemetery on 11 March 1823. Meremoth Skidmore lived on until September 1838 but, by then, he too had been enjoying a retired life in Calthorpe, near Aylsham, Norfolk for some years, having married a Mary Carr of Rackheath, near Norwich, in 1797 (GM, July 1797, 614).