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REVIEWS

Biographical dictionary of British and Irish numismatics, by Harrington E. Manville (London: Spink & Son, 2009), xii, 358 pp.

SOME researchers may give a greater welcome to Volume I of Manville's *Encyclopædia of British Numismatics* on auction catalogues (1986), to Volume II on periodicals (1993–7), or to Volume III on printed books (2005); but for this reviewer all have seemed a preparation for this wonderful Volume IV, on those who have collected, published, or engaged in British numismatics, or in coin and medal production, since about 1600. A prologue, indeed, extends back to the Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries, on the dating of which one might add C.E. Wright's chapter in *The English Library before 1700* (1958). Appendices list Keepers of the British Museum Department of Coins and Medals, and Deputy Masters of the Royal Mint since 1870.

One alights with joy on well-respected authors whose life history one hardly knew, such as Anthony Durand, *numismate anglais*, Kenneth Rogers MD, and W.H. Waddington, Prime Minister of France. Dr Michael Dolley receives the biography which so far he has not achieved in *ODNB*. It has been fascinating to find so many other people one remembers, such as Roy Hawkins, Kenneth Jacob, Horace King, C. Wilson Peck, and Wilfrid Slayter, though not the Belfast jeweller and coin dealer Leonard Kaitcer (*k.* 1980). The entry for Richard Arundell, Surveyor of the King's Roads (1731–37) before becoming Master of the Mint, might have mentioned the tickets which bear his initials (Davis & Waters 320/5). It can be added that before she joined Seaby's Monica Bussell worked on the *CenyPRES Trading Register*; that the Ashmolean Museum's acquisition of a manuscript catalogue by Thomas Russell D.D. (the one in the Tyssen and Miles sales?) was reported by Ambrose Heal; that Dr T.D. Whittet (b.1915) died on 15 April 1987. Foreign scholars might not have been expected, yet here are Filippo Ferrari de la Renotière (who needs more research), Georg Galster, Andrzej Mikołajczyk, and many others. James Robertson, of the London and Constantinople mints, is better known as a photographer of Jerusalem and of the Indian Mutiny. The work is so up-to-date as to include Ernest Danson and Stella Greenall, who died in 2008, though not Aubrey Wilson's *The Search for Ernest Bramah*, published in 2007.

The problems of selection are admitted, yet the lack of a colonial expert on the panel of advisors surely led to the omission of Robert Chalmers (1858–1938), author of *A History of Currency in the British Colonies* (1893), but afterwards Baron Chalmers and FBA, with a distinguished career recounted in *ODNB*. However, the inclusion on the panel of Hugh Pagan has resulted in new observations on Ernest Ellman (b.1855), the forger Edward Emery, and James Henry [Dormer?] whom Roy Hawkins long sought in vain. Amid what

might seem a compilation from sources winnowed by Manville himself there are original contributions. This reviewer has learned that Thomas Snelling could be hoodwinked by John White, hatter and counterfeiter, and that Browne Willis was actively collecting tokens as early as 1723. William Rawle (d. 1790?) has a good claim to be the medallist 'G(uillaume?) Rawle', since Brown reports that the attribution comes from Durand. Perhaps the most striking suggestion is that the 'sliver of silver from Maine', the Norwegian fragment which so intrigued Peter Seaby (Kleeberg no.1), reached North America not in a Viking ship but in a sea-bird's gut.

One finds other curious nuggets of information, such as that Abraham van der Doort committed suicide on losing one of the King's miniatures; Dean Dawson had a living at Castlecomer but without any connection with the dollars countermarked for that colliery; the 'Dundee' collector was S.P. Fay; Edmund Halley was affected at the Chester mint by bad weather possibly caused by volcanoes in Iceland; a coiner was known as 'Castle' Jacobs for his operations (and death by fire) in Dudley Castle; and Stephen Martin Leake was the subject of an astonishing critique in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Few errors have been noticed. Philip Whitting has been misplaced under the spelling 'Whiting'. There seems to be no explanation here of the abbreviations *k.* = killed and NSL = Numismatic Society of London, although the latter was in earlier volumes. In 1795 Sir George Chetwynd (1783–1850) was not knighted, but the baronetcy was created for his father of the same name. More seriously, there is no access via text or index to Lord Aldenham (Gibbs) or to the Earl of Lauderdale (Maitland); whereas the Dowager Duchess of Portland, and two earls of Arundel, regrettably are entered both under peerage title, and under family name. Note that McClean, McCormick-Goodhart, and McCulloch follow the entry for Macro.

Beyond all the fascinating information this is a research tool which will save enormously on time in searching for periods of activity, contemporaries, likely influences, possible provenances, and reputations.

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Matthew Boulton: Selling what all the world desires, edited by Shena Mason (Birmingham City Council in association with Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2009), xiv + 258 pp., col. ill., maps, plans, portraits.

Matthew Boulton and the Art of Making Money, edited by Richard Clay and Sue Tungate (Brewin Books, Studley, 2009), xiv + 89 pp., col. ill.

Matthew Boulton: A Revolutionary Player, edited by Malcolm Dick (Brewin Books, Studley, 2009), x + 230 pp., ill., col. plates.

Two thousand and nine, the two hundredth anniversary of his death (17 August 1809), was Matthew Boulton's year. Nationally commemorated on a First Class stamp, and now appearing on a £50 note with his partner James Watt, he was celebrated in Birmingham, the home town that he did so much to help transform into one of Britain's greatest manufacturing centres, by a series of events that included two major exhibitions at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG) and the Barber Institute of Fine Arts. The exhibitions were accompanied by splendid catalogues that were complemented by a third volume, each of which will stand in its own way as an invaluable survey of Boulton's achievements and legacy.

The first of the catalogues, for the Museum and Art Gallery exhibition, *Matthew Boulton: Selling what all the world desires*, is a sumptuous work which in its scholarship, presentation and the quality of its illustrations leaves little to be desired. Edited by Shena Mason, the introduction and the thirteen subsequent chapters of the first half of the book explore Boulton's often fraught rise from a small-scale toy maker to a manufacturer and entrepreneur of international renown and examine the remarkably wide-ranging interests of an Enlightenment man who so impressively combined an enthusiasm for science with an acute sense of design, a passion for technical innovation and never-ceasing business enterprise. His centrality to the activities of the Lunar Society, his lively engagement with a network of contemporary intellectuals and industrialists, his ventures into the manufacture of decorative silver ware, silver plate and ormolu, into steam power and coining are all discussed in a series of eminently readable essays by scholars, mostly established authorities in their subjects. Artists' impressions of the manufactory (a 'temple of useful & elegant Vulcanian arts' as James Keir described it¹) and a descriptive reconstruction of Soho in 1805 provide fascinating insights into the physical aspects of the complex that became one of the sights of the Midlands, attracting scores of eminent visitors who were allowed largely unfettered access until such freedom was curtailed because of a fear of industrial espionage. Numismatists will find two chapters of particular interest. Sue Tungate's overview of Boulton's sources of metal supply, the markets for his finished coin and aspects of his technical processes and design methods is an all too brief foretaste of a doctoral thesis that one awaits with anticipation; and David Symons's succinct yet all-embracing account of Soho's substantive coins,

tokens and medals with its first class images brings home the fact that despite the huge quantities minted Boulton's high standards of artistry and production were never compromised. Symons's admirable survey with its details of mintage figures is all the more useful from his being able to take account of David Vice's researches into the Soho archives that one hopes will be published by the Society as a Special Publication before too long.² The second half of the book is devoted to an extensive catalogue raisonné, scrupulously annotated and as beautifully illustrated as the earlier chapters; it is an exemplary record of a superb exhibition.

Sue Tungate is joint editor with Richard Clay of the celebratory volume published by the Barber Institute. *Matthew Boulton and the Art of Making Money*, although a relatively slim book, nevertheless encapsulates a wealth of material on Boulton's role as a coin manufacturer. After a brief scene-setting introduction by Sue Tungate, David Symons addresses the problem of forgery in the eighteenth century, tracing Boulton's endeavours to perfect equipment that would defeat the counterfeiter but ultimately and inevitably failing, even with his famous 'cartwheel' coinage, to overcome a practice as old as coinage itself. Peter Jones goes on to explore Boulton's excursion in the early 1790s into the manufacture of a token currency for revolutionary France in his scramble to keep his coining presses at work as the prospect of a British regal coinage contract continued to elude him. Jones's analysis of the political and the technical problems Boulton faced in the mass-production of the hefty Monneron *médailles de confiance* makes the substance of his earlier study of the background to these pieces more accessible and is a useful adjunct to Richard Margolis's pioneering paper in *BNJ* 58.³ Finally, Richard Clay, in a chapter recalling his lecture to the Society in October 2008, argues the importance of Boulton's tokens – and those of other manufacturers – as aesthetic objects circulating among a mass audience and making 'art' accessible to all even if the imagery would not have been comprehensible to everyone. Clay's thesis is an attractive one, but while no one would dispute the artistry exhibited by many tokens or the admiration they evoked among contemporaries, it is perhaps over larding the cake to suggest that they projected Birmingham as 'the art capital of the world'. The book is again handsomely illustrated throughout and the catalogue contains a useful discussion of a number of the 'star objects' included in the Institute exhibition. It is unfortunate, though, that many of the images, which otherwise convey a vivid impression of the artistic and technical competence Boulton commanded at Soho, should be marred by digital distortion.

The third exploration of Boulton's life and work, *Matthew Boulton: A Revolutionary Player*, edited by Malcolm Dick, of necessity draws on the expertise of much the same group of scholars as the BMAG catalogue but the treatment of Boulton's interests and achievements differs sufficiently to make this a valuable complementary volume. Two chapters, once more contributed by David Symons and Sue Tungate, are particularly concerned with coinage. This time Symons concentrates on Boulton's trying relationship with a

¹ Keir 1947 [1809], 6.

² Vice forthcoming.

³ Jones 2004, 187–203; Margolis 1988, 102–9.

Royal Mint, which, while lacking his vigour and purpose, viewed his activities with suspicion and when success was assured did not scruple to try to undermine what they saw as an 'alienation of minting' to a private individual. Ultimately, Soho was contracted to supply steam-powered equipment to the new Mint on Tower Hill but, as Boulton had foreseen, it would be a pyrrhic victory because as the Mint became 'the most perfect establishment of its kind in the world'⁴ so Soho would never be involved in any future regal coinage. In her paper Sue Tungate returns to her consideration of Boulton's minting techniques, his search for able engravers, choice of design and the complexities of providing coinages across the globe.

Although in the nature of things there is a degree of overlap between the three books, each elaborates different facets of Boulton's complex character, interests and achievements. Taken together they provide an absorbing portrait of a *savant-fabricant* who was one of the leading entrepreneurs of the Industrial Revolution. But, as several of the authors stress, he was an entrepreneur with an Achilles heel: his ostentatious manufactory was a never-ending drain on his finances and few of his enterprises proved successful in the long term. As Keir put it several of his ventures 'on which so much ingenuity, taste & capital' were expended 'did not make suitable returns of profit, but were rather rewarded with the fragrant odours of Praise & admiration, than with more solid advantage'.⁵ Apart from the steam-engine business only Boulton's coining initiative achieved a significant profit and this was not until the end of the century.

Nevertheless, for all Boulton's grass-hopping enthusiasms, his failures and his financial naivety, his position at the cutting edge of Britain's early Industrial Revolution was a dominant one and no one better deserves the fulsome tribute offered by the estimable trio of books under review. Nothing would have been possible, of course, without extensive recourse to the vast Soho archive at the Birmingham Central Library. This other great legacy of Boulton's underpins all the studies, and the detailed description and exemplification of the archive that Fiona Tait, who has been so involved in its recataloguing, provides in the first and third volumes is very welcome. The numismatist could only wish that a fragment of such an archive existed to bring out of the shadows other Birmingham figures such as John Westwood, Peter Kempson and William Lutwyche.

D.W. DYKES

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- Medals of Dishonour*, by Philip Attwood and Felicity Powell, with a contribution by Rod Mengham (The British Museum Press, London, 2009) 136 pp., colour plates, bibliography, index.

DURING the summer of 2009, as a result of the collaboration between Philip Attwood, curator of medals, and Felicity Powell, a practising artist and teacher, the British Museum exhibited just thirty-six medals in their prints and drawing gallery: twenty-three historical medals and thirteen new commissions.¹ The exhibition and the accompanying catalogue were supported by Chora, an arts organisation based in Los Angeles, California,² and the British Art Medal Trust. The small size of these medals, normally awarded for honour and good deeds, belies their power to satirise and condemn what is perceived as unjust and evil. The title of the exhibition and associated catalogue was suggested by the American sculptor David Smith's *Medals for Dishonour*.³ During Smith's extended tour of Europe in 1933–36 he saw satirical German medals of World War I during a visit to the British Museum and was inspired to produce a series of large bronze anti-war, anti-capitalist medallions, two of which were loaned for this exhibition and are included in the catalogue.⁴

Two extended essays accompany the catalogue of exhibits. The first by British Museum curator Philip Attwood (now Keeper of Coins and Medals at the British Museum) introduces the historical satirical medal with which numismatists are familiar, spanning the period from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. The second essay on contemporary medals, written by Rod Mengham (a poet, Reader in Modern English Literature and curator of works of art at Jesus College, Cambridge), provides the background to this '*microcosm of the world of art*' (p. 37) as expounded for the exhibition by artists as diverse in technique and outlook as Steve Bell, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Ellen Gallagher, Richard Hamilton, Mona Hatoum, Yun-Fei Ji, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, William Kentridge, Michael Landy, Langlands and Bell, Cornelia Parker, Grayson Perry and Felicity Powell.

The Renaissance medal primarily conferred honour and dignity to the giver and the recipient. However, the first medal in Attwood's essay commemorates the

¹ *Medals of Dishonour*, exhibition held 25 June–27 September 2009, at the British Museum.

² According to its website Chora 'aims to support the intangibles which precede creativity' (<http://chora.info>). The sponsor's foreword, p. 7, is written by artist Lauren Bon.

³ A slight change in the wording provides a thoroughly British acronym, MoD.

⁴ No. 21, 'Private Law and Order Leagues', and no. 22, 'Co-operation of the Clergy', both 1939, pp. 80–83.

⁴ Ackermann 1809, II, 205.

⁵ Keir 1947 [1809], 6.

failure of the Pazzi family's conspiracy in 1478 to oust the Medici family from power.⁵ With the Reformation, anti-clerical and anti-papist medals appeared, and from that time forward the flood of medals continued for centuries, attacking hypocrisy, greed, cowardice and vainglory. Satire comes from every quarter, left and right, Royalist and Republican. The selection of medals for the exhibition was undoubtedly a trial as many of those mentioned in Attwood's catalogue essay never made it into the final twenty-three.⁶ Attwood gives a scholarly narrative thread to the choice of historical medals in the exhibition while broadening the scope of the enterprise. He sends the reader scurrying for Horace and Cicero. He makes links to lampoons and satires in different media: etchings, literary works, handbills and music. The interplay between graphic artists and the form of the medal, prominent in the eighteenth century, is illustrated by James Sayers' cartoon "A Coalition Medal Struck in Brass". This uses the medallic format of conjoined busts normally associated with royalty or Imperial Rome for two former adversaries, the Whig politician Charles Fox, and Lord North, the Tory Prime Minister, who formed a coalition government in 1783.⁷ A note is added by Sayers, 'The Reverse may be expected in a few days.' And surely enough, the coalition fell apart within months. Most books on medals are catalogues without narrative; for the historical medals the reverse is true here: this essay provides a narrative for catalogue listings elsewhere. The bibliography at the end of the volume and the notes accompanying the essay direct the reader to the main reference works and less frequented numismatic listings.

Attwood mentions the '*element of obscurity*' (p. 21) introduced by David Smith which sets the contemporary medals apart from their more easily accessible predecessors. In this way they have more in common with the obscurantist reverses of Renaissance medals. Attwood invites the viewer to decide how to respond to these medals. Mengham's essay is an example of what that response might be. He provides an insight from the non-numismatic world, attracted by the Janus-like reversibility of the form. Conversant with the artists' work in other media, as filmmakers, painters, cartoonists, sculptors and installation artists, he provides thoughtful analysis of the contemporary medals in a broader fine arts context. He is struck by the creativity unleashed by the traditional limitations of the form of the medal:

There can be no other medium in which the limitations placed on size, shape, volume and colour have been so consistent throughout the history of its use. It is the great paradox of the discipline imposed by those limitations that it should have liberated so many artists of radically different traditions, practices and outlooks to be so outspoken in their engagement with issues of general public concern

and with a sense of historical urgency, and all within the compass of something that can be held in the palm of the hand. (p. 37.)

The design of the book echoes the layout of the museum exhibition,⁸ devoting a full colour plate to a detail of the medal while the opposite page shows the medal actual size with explanatory text and historical background. The first twenty-three historical medals in the exhibition are shown in chronological order, spanning some 400 years of satire, beginning with Gerard van Bijlaer's silver medal for the destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Some medals are familiar, such as Christian Wermuth's scatological medal 'Discontent with the Peace of Utrecht', and Jan Smeltzing's 'Good Fortune of William III', his luck contrasting with Monmouth's defeat. Many of the medals, such as those for the Peterloo Massacre and the Covent Garden Theatre Old Price Riots, are by unidentified artists. But there are some familiar names to numismatists such as Hancock, Spence and Halliday. Also included are those German medals of World War I by twentieth-century medallists Goetz, Zadikow, Esseo and Gies that inspired David Smith in the thirties.

These last medals in the historical section provide a link to the aesthetic aspect of medals as art and, in the case of Duchamp, a comment on the art world and its uneasy relationship with the consumer collector: Marcel Duchamp's 'Sink Stopper' of 1967 is not so much a readymade as his notorious 'Fountain' (or urinal to the uninitiated), for the lead bath plug at least was cast in silver for a special collectors' edition.

The second part of the catalogue consists of the thirteen contemporary medals, which are given in alphabetical order by artist. These new medals were commissioned by the British Art Medal Trust and produced with its support.⁹ Apart from Felicity Powell, most contributors were complete novices to the art of the medal, so they bring freshness of approach to the form, exploiting its dual aspect and capacity for telling detail while maintaining a stance as damning, subversive and shocking as any of their historical precursors. These twenty-first century medals reference the artist's work in other media more familiar to the general public, such as installations, prints, preparatory designs and models. For example, cartoonist Steve Bell's CDM (pp. 86–7) mimics the form of traditional military medals but the acronym translates as the 'Collateral Damage Medal' with the legend 'Suffer Little Children' next to the picture of a wounded Iraqi child, an image considered too horrific to be printed in *The Independent* newspaper when first photographed. War is an obvious target but other present-day issues were chosen independently by artists: racism, environmental concerns, consumerism, political mendacity, anti-social behaviour.

⁵ Fig. 1, Bertoldo di Giovanni, 'Lorenzo and Giuliano de Medici and the Pazzi Conspiracy', 1478, cast bronze, 66 mm, p. 14.

⁶ See also Attwood 2009.

⁷ Etching 251×186 mm, p. 21.

⁸ Unlike traditional medal exhibitions each medal, no matter how small, was given a vitrine to itself. However, this meant that it was not always easy to actually see the medals, and the catalogue was of great benefit, enlarging the image.

⁹ The British Art Medal Trust, a registered charity dedicated to the promotion, study and creation of art medals, presented an example of each of the newly commissioned medals to the British Museum for its permanent collection.

The last medal in the exhibition and in the catalogue is no. 36, 'Hot Air' by Felicity Powell (pp. 126–9). The designs for the medal and the original concepts were modelled in white wax on a dark ground.¹⁰ The medal imitates the familiar retractable tape measure but the numbers have been replaced by texts. A quotation by Vladimir Putin in 2003 lightly dismisses global warming: 'maybe it will be good: we'll spend less on fur coats'. The second equally unmeasured comment is from the CEO of ExxonMobil: 'In Europe you like to tell people what kind of cars they ought to use. Most Americans like to make that decision for themselves – that's why we left Europe'. Just like the traditional satirical medal she uses scatology to lambast the stinking hot air of politics and business when faced with the threat of global warming and carbon emissions.

This slim and thought-provoking volume invites us to examine the dark side of the medal and review present newly-created works in the light of the past reverses. While information on the historical medals may be found dryly elsewhere in numismatic catalogues, *Medals of Dishonour* will encourage further reading and appreciation of the subject. Paradoxically, for the new medals, this catalogue is both a primary source and critique, reflecting the inherent dualism, positive and negative, of the form.

FRANCES SIMMONS

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¹⁰ Powell much admired the 124 wax medals on slate made by the Hamerani family in Rome between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, now in the British Museum collection, and has produced other works inspired by this working method, e.g. an animation *Anima* (2005).