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A BIRMINGHAM MISCELLANY (2)

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THIS paper presents a second selection of Birmingham-related pieces with an eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century focus.

1. Thomas Birch, Surgeon and Man-Midwife of Birmingham

While examining some eighteenth-century medals in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery collection some time ago, I ran across a rather worn specimen of this medal and my curiosity was piqued. A check on the main published works on medical numismatics soon revealed that nothing seemed to be known of Thomas Birch, and even the date of the medal was uncertain.¹ Only Eimer offered a possible date (*c.*1745, presumably on the basis of the clothing worn by the figures depicted) and suggested that the medal might have functioned as either an advertising piece or an entrance pass (although he did not suggest to what).² Intrigued, I decided to see if it might be possible to find out a little more.

Fortunately there is a much better-preserved example of the medal in the British Museum (registration no. M.6744), which was acquired in 1860 as part of the Edward Hawkins collection. It is illustrated here as Fig. 1.³ It shows:

Obv. THOMAS · BIRCH · SURGEON

An amputation scene, with the patient apparently sat in a sloping-backed chair as the surgeon (presumably representing Birch) uses a saw to remove his right leg a little below the knee. While the surgeon works, one assistant kneels on one knee and grasps the patient's ankle, while another holds his knee still.

Rev. AND · MAN · MIDWIFE · BIRMINGHAM

A man (again presumably intended to represent Birch) reclines against a table at the left of the scene, resting his right hand on a skull and using a pointer in his left to gesture towards a figure standing on a low, circular plinth. This figure is naked and bald, and appears to be an *ecorché*, an anatomical model of a skinless human body, used to show the structure of the musculature below. The figure's right foot rests on a globe or orb, its right arm is raised, and its left hand rests on the top of a club (or possibly a rudder).⁴ In the foreground, just in front of the plinth, is a naked baby, with umbilical cord and placenta still attached, laying on what at first sight seems to be a cushion with a placenta-like tassel at one corner. However, closer examination suggests that it actually represents a model of a foetus in a uterus, presumably used for teaching or lecturing in the same way as the large figure seems to be.

Of lower status than university-trained doctors,⁵ surgeons were apprenticed to learn their trade, and we duly find that on 5 September 1729 Thomas, son of Thomas Birch of King's

Acknowledgements. I have noted below in each of the following sections the help that I have received on that particular aspect. However, I must record here my grateful thanks to the staff of Birmingham Archives and Heritage for their generous help and advice, which have been essential to the whole of this paper.

¹ Holzmaier 1937, 367 no. 5493, and Storer 1931, 89 no. 376, give only very brief descriptions of the medal and offer no background information at all.

² Eimer 1987, 87 no. 603, pl. 18.

³ The medal is reproduced by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum; I am grateful to Philip Attwood for information on the medal and for help in obtaining the image. The Birmingham specimen is accession no. 1954 N 617. There is a third example of this medal in the Wellcome Collection at the Science Museum, London, accession no. A677207. I would also like to thank Chris Ash of the Science Library, Birmingham Libraries; Stephen Price; Dr Robert Arnott and Dr Jonathan Reinartz of the University of Birmingham; Donal Bateson; and Robert Thompson for help during my research on the Thomas Birch medal.

⁴ If it is holding a club, is the figure intended to represent Hercules, or is the resemblance purely coincidental?

⁵ 'The physicians differed in every respect from the surgeon-apothecaries: as university men, entitled to be called 'Doctor', untainted by the 'manual' aspects of surgery, midwifery, or pharmacy, they provided professional advice for fees to patients who were usually the more prosperous members of their communities.' (Lane 1984, 354).



Fig. 1. Medal of Thomas Birch, surgeon and man-midwife (diameter 38 mm). © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Norton, was apprenticed for five years to Joseph Higgs of Birmingham, surgeon, at a premium of £100. (Higgs paid the required tax on the premium on 4 March 1730.)⁶ Birch was probably a member of a well-known and prosperous King's Norton family which at this time owned parts of the Saracen's Head, a magnificent late-medieval building complex made famous by winning the second series of BBC2's *Restoration* programme in 2004.⁷

Birch's master, Joseph Higgs, was the son of John Higgs, Gent., of Evesham, and had himself been apprenticed (for seven years in 1716) to John Baglis, apothecary, of Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, meaning that he can only have been in practice on his own account for about six years when he took Birch on as his first apprentice.⁸ Higgs's entry in *Eighteenth Century Medics* suggests that he was born in 1702, which means that he would have entered on his apprenticeship at about the age of fourteen.⁹ If this is typical, then this would place Thomas Birch's birth somewhere around 1715, and make him around nineteen when he probably set himself up as a surgeon on his own account, after he completed his apprenticeship.

The newly-qualified surgeon established himself in the Digbeth area, a distinctly less fashionable part of the town, where he appears assessed at 4*d.* in the first surviving Poor Levy of 1736.¹⁰ His former master, Joseph Higgs, and another fellow-surgeon, Edmund Hector (Dr Johnson's friend and later Matthew Boulton's surgeon), both appear in the more up-market Bull Street Quarter, assessed for 1*s.* and 6*d.* respectively. Interestingly both are listed as 'Dr', a title to which neither was entitled, but which presumably says something about the improving status of surgeons at this time, as their anatomical and scientific knowledge increased.¹¹ 'Dr' Hector was also assessed for 1*s.* 2*d.* for property in the New Street Quarter.¹²

⁶ Smith 1975, 15 no. 226. The agreement is also noted in Wallis and Wallis 1988, 53, although the dates there differ slightly from those in Smith, giving the date of the indenture as 29 September 1729 and for the payment of the duty as 10 March 1730. King's Norton, now a suburb of Birmingham, was in the eighteenth century a prosperous village in Worcestershire (not Warwickshire as in Wallis and Wallis). A premium was a one-off payment made by the apprentice's family to the master for providing the agreed training.

⁷ The property was bought by Revd John Birch, vicar of King's Norton, in 1708. The family sold it on in 1764 (Demidowicz and Price 2009, 179–80).

⁸ Wallis and Wallis 1988, 287. Higgs took on three other apprentices – William Waldren, in 1731 for three years, at a premium of £84; John Hodgette, in 1742 for seven years, at £105; and John Barker, in 1745 for four years, at £50 (Wallis and Wallis 1988, 287). The variation in lengths of indenture and premiums paid is typical of such agreements at this period.

⁹ Wallis and Wallis 1988, 287.

¹⁰ Birmingham Archives and Heritage, *Parish of Birmingham Levy Book, Vol. I, 1736–45*, 1r [hereafter, *Levy Book I*]. The identification is certain since this is the only Thomas Birch recorded in the town. It was the responsibility of each parish to support those residents who were too old or infirm to support themselves. Each ratepayer was therefore assessed at a specific amount and the Overseers of the Poor would levy this amount whenever funds were required for the running of the relief system. In a town like Birmingham, there were regularly several levies during the course of each year.

¹¹ *Levy Book I*, 8r and 11r.

¹² *Levy Book I*, 11v.

The assessment on Birch's property in Digbeth rose to 5*d.* in 1737 and apparently remained at this figure until 1746.¹³ There are indications from the Poor Levy that his business must have been prospering since by 1742 'Dr' Birch was also being assessed at 10*d.* for property in the New Street Quarter.¹⁴ However, 3 June 1746 is Birch's final appearance in the Poor Levy. Had something happened to him? Had he left town? Sadly the answer can be found in the burial register of St Martin's church, where, on 16 December 1746, a single line entry records the burial of 'Thomas, son of Thomas Birch.'¹⁵ If our estimate of his possible date of birth is correct, then he will have died at about the age of thirty-one, after practising as a surgeon for some twelve years. We can now, however, put a date on his medal, which must have been produced sometime between the end of his apprenticeship in September 1734 and his death in December 1746.

Why did Birch issue his medal? Although it is difficult to give exact figures from Wallis and Wallis due to the nature of the entries, it is clear that at least seven other surgeons were active in Birmingham at one time or another during the period 1730–50, and it is likely that this number understates the actual situation.¹⁶ The field may have seemed crowded and Birch may have issued the medal for advertising purposes.¹⁷ If so, it seems to have been an original idea, as I know of no precedents for it. Alternatively, and the image on the reverse of the medal does suggest this, Birch may have engaged, or planned to engage, in some sort of teaching or public lecturing, which is presumably why Eimer suggested that it might be an entrance pass of some sort. However, I have not yet found any positive evidence in support of this.

It is apparent from the prominence that Birch gave on his medal to his role as a man-midwife that he attached considerable importance to this aspect of his work, but what exactly was the function of the man-midwife in his day? In fact Birch lived at a time when the part played by men in the process of childbirth was going through a rapid change. In the seventeenth century and earlier, male surgeons included attendance at childbirth among their other routine tasks such as letting blood, setting bones, treating wounds and pulling teeth. However, midwifery was a female role and the vast majority of children were delivered by a midwife without the help of a surgeon. Surgeons were usually only called to attend difficult births, which the midwife could not deal with. Often the labour had already lasted for several days and the child had already died, in which case the surgeon's role was to save the mother. (Even if the child had not died, the surgeon was sometimes forced to kill it so that it could be removed from the uterus, since the instruments available to him allowed for no other course.) So, the long-established pattern was that midwives dealt with live births, while the surgeon dealt with death.¹⁸

A change came with the spread in knowledge about medical forceps, which gave a much greater chance of delivering the child alive in difficult births. Forceps had been invented in the early seventeenth century by the Chamberlen family, Huguenot refugees who had settled in London, but they kept them a secret throughout the century. Awareness of forceps gradually spread in the early years of the eighteenth century, but it was not until 1733 that information

¹³ *Levy Book I, passim; Parish of Birmingham Levy Book, Vol. II, 1745–51*, assessments for 1745 and June 1746 [hereafter *Levy Book II*]. (The space for the figure is blank in the 1738 assessment, while the start of the 1745 assessment, which included the pages for the Digbeth Quarter, is missing.)

¹⁴ *Levy Book I*, assessment of 20 June 1742 (pages in the book are not numbered from the 1741 assessment onwards). It seems that Birch had taken the property over by 1740, as 'Mr Birch' pays 10*d.* for what appears to be the same property in the assessment of 26 May 1740, but he does not acquire the title 'Dr' until the 1742 assessment.

¹⁵ Birmingham Archives and Heritage, *St Martin's Register of Christenings, Marriages and Burials, 1735 onwards*. Although this might look like the burial record of a child, most of the entries in the St Martin's register for the period are in this format.

¹⁶ Wallis and Wallis 1988: the certain examples are – p. 280, Edmund Hector; p. 287, Joseph Higgs (Birch's master); p. 296, Henry Hollier; p. 325, John Jennings; p. 335, Edward Jordan; p. 376, Humphrey Lowe; and p. 439, Thomas Nuttall.

¹⁷ The population of Birmingham in the first half of the eighteenth century is subject to some debate. William Westley's 1731 plan of Birmingham gives the population in 1700 as 15,032 and claims that it had risen by 8,254 by 1731, making a total of 23,286 (Westley's plan is reproduced in Mason 2009, 123). However, Samuel Bradford's plan of Birmingham (published on 29 April 1751) records a total population for the town of 23,688, an increase of only 402, which is an unbelievably low figure, since Birmingham was growing rapidly at this period (the figures from Bradford's plan are conveniently given in Bunce 1878, 39–41). Recent work suggests more credible figures of c.7–8,000 in 1700, c.15,000 in 1731, and 23,000 in 1751 (Jones 2009, 20).

¹⁸ Wilson 1995, 47–53. For examples of the activity of the seventeenth-century surgeon in the childbirth room, see Dunn 1997.

on their use and design first appeared in print. This was followed by a surge of new publications about midwifery in the mid-1730s.¹⁹ All this was happening, of course, at just the time when Birch was completing his apprenticeship (September 1734) and setting up in practice in Birmingham.

The increasing availability of forceps, to some extent in the 1720s, but especially from the mid-1730s, meant that surgeons like Thomas Birch could now attend difficult births and safely deliver children who would previously have died. As their newfound ability became more widely known, they were summoned earlier and not just as a last resort. An earlier summons meant that they were still more likely to save the child, so a virtuous circle developed and it soon became expected that the surgeon would save both mother and child. By the mid-1740s practitioners like Birch were playing a much greater role in childbirth and were being called man-midwives.²⁰ However, female midwives still dominated the process of ‘normal’ childbirth and it is likely that Birch would still only have been summoned if complications developed. His medal was probably intended to be read in this context, advertising his ability to deliver a live baby when problems arose, in a way that his predecessors had been unable to do. Birch was dead before the really dramatic shift in roles began around 1750, when the man-midwife started to attend childbirth *instead of* the midwife, a change which accelerated over the next two decades, and led to a dramatic decline in the role and importance of the midwife.²¹

2. The 1774 ‘Birmingham Theatre’ pass revisited

In volume 76 of this journal I published an article discussing two specimens of the 1774 pass for the New Street Theatre, Birmingham, each engraved with the name of one of the original twenty-eight shareholders (‘Proprietors’) who invested in the construction and operation of the theatre.²² Since then I have been actively looking for further examples in the hope that they might shed some light on why this pass was produced in both silver and copper, and whether there might be any significance in the fact that on the silver pass the engraved user’s name was followed by an apostrophe ‘s’, while on the copper pass it was not. (In my original article I tentatively floated the possibility that silver passes might have belonged to and been used by the Proprietors named on them, while they may have handed out the copper ones as free passes to their friends.)²³ Unfortunately, enquiries at a number of United Kingdom museums produced only two specimens in the British Museum (one of them unnamed),²⁴ while an appeal for further specimens through the pages of the *Numismatic Circular* produced no results at all.²⁵ However, another two named and one unnamed examples have been brought to my attention separately and it seems worth considering all these new specimens here to see if they can cast any light on these questions. The new pieces are:

1. Silver, named for ‘M^r. Aris’. Collection of Richard Doty, Washington DC, USA; bought in 1993 from David Miller, Hemel Hempstead (Fig. 2).²⁶
2. Copper, named for Mrs Baskerville (the exact form of the name as it appears on the pass has not been confirmed). Museum Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.²⁷

¹⁹ Wilson 1995, 3, 53–7, and 109–10. The first description was in Edmund Chapman’s *Essay towards the Improvement of Midwifery*. Two more publications had appeared by early 1734.

²⁰ Wilson 1995, 96–7 and 161.

²¹ Wilson 1995, 161 and 164–5.

²² Symons 2006. The passes described there were named for two Birmingham merchants, Thomas Faulconbridge and Joseph Green.

²³ Symons 2006, 321. The silver pass on which the Proprietor’s name was given an apostrophe ‘s’ belonged to Joseph Green.

²⁴ I am grateful to colleagues in the Ashmolean, Fitzwilliam, and Hunterian Museums, the National Museums of Scotland and Wales, the Theatre Collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Royal Shakespeare Company collection for checking their holdings on my behalf.

²⁵ Symons 2008.

²⁶ I am grateful to Dr Doty for providing information on his medal and for generously supplying the images reproduced here.

²⁷ I am grateful to John Sharples, curator emeritus, for bringing the pass to my attention and supplying details.

3. Copper, named for 'M^r. Gaunt'. British Museum, registration number SSB, 213.160; acquired by the British Museum from the Sarah Sophia Banks collection in 1818; given to Miss Banks by Mrs Gaunt on 10 May 1799.²⁸
4. Copper, unnamed. British Museum, registration number J.3043; from the collection of Edward Hawkins, 1860.
5. Copper, unnamed. Dix Noonan Webb auction, 7 October 2009, lot 606 (first item).²⁹

The three individuals named on these new medals can all be identified and are each of some interest. 'M^r. Aris' is Samuel Aris, one of the Proprietors of the theatre and co-owner of the local newspaper, *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, a weekly that appeared each Monday. This had been founded by his uncle, Thomas Aris, a London stationer and printer, who moved to Birmingham and issued the first edition of the paper on 16 November 1741.³⁰ Thomas retired from the business at the end of 1760, only to die shortly after.³¹ He was succeeded by a partnership of Samuel Aris, his nephew, and Richard Pearson, his brother-in-law, which lasted until Richard's death in 1768, when his share of the business was inherited by his widow Ann, Thomas's sister.³² Samuel died in his turn in January 1775,³³ whereupon Ann Pearson went into partnership with James Rollason, publishing as Pearson and Rollason.³⁴



Fig. 2. 'Birmingham Theatre' pass, 1774, struck in silver (diameter 32 mm).

Samuel Aris's connection with the New Street Theatre was quite short-lived, and can be quickly told. He was one of the original Proprietors of the theatre, holding one of the thirty shares. He attended the meeting held at the Swan Inn on 16 August 1773 when the decision to build the playhouse was taken,³⁵ and continued to attend meetings of the Proprietors quite

²⁸ I am grateful to Catherine Eagleton, who kindly supplied information on this and the following specimen. The details on provenance derive from her ongoing research on the collection of Sarah Sophia Banks. For the distribution of Sarah Sophia Banks's collection after her death, see Eaglen 2008, 207–8.

²⁹ Peter Preston-Morley kindly brought this piece to my attention.

³⁰ The paper originally appeared as *The Birmingham Gazette; or, The General Correspondent* with a cover price of 1½d. (Nichols 1815, 572 *sub* p. 714). The *Gazette* was not Birmingham's first newspaper. It had been preceded by Thomas Warren's *Birmingham Journal*, first issued in 1732, for which Dr Johnson used to write during his residence in Birmingham in 1733–4. It is not known when the *Journal* ceased publication, but it was certainly before 1741 (Stephens 1964, 210).

³¹ *ABG*, 6 July 1761: 'On Saturday Night died, at his House at Holloway Head, where he had retired from Business but a short Time, Mr. Thomas Aris, the late Printer of this Paper.'

³² The family relationships are confirmed by the obituary of Thomas's nephew, Dr Richard Pearson (*The Gentleman's Magazine* 159 (1836), 358–61 at p. 358).

³³ *ABG*, 9 January 1775: 'Early Yesterday Morning died in a Apoplectic Fit; Mr. Samuel Aris, Printer of this Paper.'

³⁴ Horden 1993, 15.

³⁵ *List of Proprietors for Building a Playhouse in New Street, Birmingham with Minutes of their Meetings*, Birmingham Archives and Heritage, Lee Crowder collection 387, 3r [hereafter *Minute Book*].

regularly until 1 June 1774, which is the last time his presence is recorded.³⁶ There is then a lacuna in the record of meetings from 1 July 1774 until 13 June 1776, by which time he was of course dead (see above). The Minute Book contains a list of the Proprietors which must reflect the situation in May 1774, with amendments up to 1 February 1777, and this includes the entry 'S. Aris, now Pearson',³⁷ and indeed we duly find Ann Pearson (represented by a proxy) as one of the Proprietors at the 1 February meeting, held in the Green Room at the theatre.³⁸

In addition to publishing the newspaper, Samuel Aris was active in various aspects of Birmingham life. He was a member of the Bean Club, a long-established dining club with Tory leanings, which provided a channel for Birmingham manufacturers and merchants to associate with local landowners. In 1773 he joined the Board of Commission charged with improving Birmingham's streets (often popularly referred to as the Street Commission or the Lamp Act Commission). He was also an investor in the Birmingham Canal, which first connected Birmingham to the growing canal network.³⁹

'Mrs Baskerville' is Sarah Baskerville, the wife (but soon to be widow) of John Baskerville, the famous Birmingham printer. Baskerville was born near Kidderminster, Worcestershire, in late 1706 or January 1707 and came to Birmingham in the 1720s. Initially he set up a writing school, but in 1738, using money inherited from his father, he established a japanning business, before branching out into the printing and type-casting for which he became best known. A man of strong views, he refused to bow to convention and was a convinced atheist, when such opinions were not common or popular.⁴⁰

Sarah was born Sarah Ruston, a member of a family resident in the Deritend area of Birmingham.⁴¹ On 17 August 1724, at the age of 16, she married one Richard Eaves, but, despite the birth of five children, the marriage was not a success and Eaves deserted her. They were legally separated in 1745.⁴² Three years later, she (and her children) moved in with Baskerville and, defying convention, the two lived together as husband and wife for sixteen years, until they were finally able to marry in 1764, after Richard Eaves died.⁴³ Baskerville himself died on 16 January 1775, some seven months after the New Street Theatre opened.⁴⁴ Sarah outlived him by thirteen years, dying on 21 March 1788.⁴⁵ John and Sarah had no children of their own, so the pass cannot have belonged to a daughter-in-law and must therefore be attributed to Sarah herself. So far as I have been able to ascertain, neither John nor Sarah Baskerville ever owned one of the shares in the New Street Theatre.

'M^r. Gaunt' is the Reverend Dr John Gaunt. Born in Rowley Regis, Staffordshire, he was educated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, receiving his BA in 1760, his MA in 1762 and his DD in 1792.⁴⁶ On 22 March 1771 he was appointed by the Governors of the King Edward School, Birmingham to the post of Usher at the school (also often called the Free Grammar School), which was situated in New Street in a building constructed in 1731–4:

³⁶ *Minute Book*, 5r.

³⁷ *Minute Book*, 1r.

³⁸ *Minute Book*, 6v.

³⁹ Tungate 2003, 11 and Tables 1, 3 and 4; Symons 2006, 315. Matthew Boulton was also an investor in the Birmingham Canal. The canals made a vital contribution to Birmingham's development by enabling much larger and heavier goods to be made and shipped to customers, allowing the town's manufacturers to branch out from the traditional 'toys' and other comparatively small-size, lightweight goods. Without the canals to move its 370 lb barrels of coins, the Soho Mint would have been inconceivable.

⁴⁰ Pardoe 1975, 1–2; Uglow 2002, 22–3.

⁴¹ Bennett 1937, 49. In time Sarah's three brothers all ran businesses in Deritend – the eldest, Jonathan Ruston, sold saddletrees, Joseph was an innkeeper, and Josiah, the youngest, was a merchant (Bennett 1937, 62).

⁴² Richard Eaves appears to have been a particularly dubious character. Among other things it was proved that he forged a new will in the name of his dead brother, Robert, cutting out a number of legacies that were in the genuine will and leaving everything to himself. He also took out fraudulent mortgages. Eaves in his turn accused Sarah of adultery with one John Southam (Bennett 1937, 58–9).

⁴³ Pardoe 1975, 12, 14; Bennett 1937, 62–3. *ABG*, 4 June 1764: 'On Friday last Mr. Baskerville, of this Town, was married to Mrs. Eaves, Widow of the late Richard Eaves, Esq; deceased.'

⁴⁴ *ABG*, 23 January 1775: 'DIED.] On Monday last, at Easy Hill in this Town, Mr. John Baskerville; whose Memory will be perpetuated, by the Beauty and Elegance of his Printing, which he carried to a very great Perfection.'

⁴⁵ *ABG*, 24 March 1788: 'DIED.] On Friday, at her house on Easy Hill, near this town, Mrs. Baskerville, relict of the late Mr. John Baskerville, so justly celebrated for his beautiful types, and other elegant improvements in the art of printing.'

⁴⁶ Chatwin 1963, 12 n.1.

the Reverend M^r John Gaunt of Birmingham ... to be Usher of the same School in the Room of and to succeed the Reverend M^r Thomas Wearden lately deceased for which place or Office the said M^r John Gaunt is to receive yearly from Ladyday next the said Asher's [*sic*] salary as settled and confirmed by one or more Decree or Decrees of the Court of Chancery ...⁴⁷

Also known as the Second Master, the Usher oversaw the daily routine while the Chief Master taught and ran the school. Gaunt's salary for the post was £60 *per annum*.⁴⁸ At their meeting on 3 January 1772 the Governors agreed that Gaunt could continue to hold a Lectureship (an assistant curateship) at St Martin's church in tandem with his post at the school:

the Reverend M^r Gaunt second Master of the said School have Leave to hold on the Lectureship of Saint Martin's in Birmingham aforesaid on Condition that he procures a person to do the Week of Duty of reading Prayers of the said parish of Saint Martin's as he has this Day proposed to us.⁴⁹

Gaunt resigned as the King Edward School Usher in 1787 to become Rector of Higham-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, a post he retained until he died in London in March 1797.⁵⁰ (Given this later connection with the parish, it is tempting to suggest that he might have been the John Gaunt who married one Elizabeth Dyer at Higham on 29 December 1774, and that his bride may have come from the parish, or had family links to it, although this needs further investigation.)⁵¹

Like Samuel Aris, John Gaunt was one of the original Proprietors of the theatre, also holding one share, and he too was present at the meeting on 16 August 1773 when construction of the playhouse was agreed.⁵² Gaunt was a rather less diligent attendee at meetings over the following year than Aris, but he was present at the meeting on 1 February 1777, when he ('Mr. John Gaunt') was elected a member of the five-man Management Committee for the theatre, along with Matthew Boulton and Thomas Faulconbridge and two others.⁵³ However, something unforeseen must have intervened because, at the next meeting, on 25 February 1777, it was recorded that 'Rev. & Mrs Gaunt' had sold their share to James Rollason and that there was therefore a vacancy on the Management Committee (which was filled by Richard Goolden).⁵⁴

As Table 1 makes clear, there still seems to be no obvious pattern behind the existence of silver and copper versions of the pass. Also, the fact that we now have silver specimens both with and without an apostrophe 's', and have a copper specimen named for someone who was never a Proprietor, clearly renders untenable the hypothesis that silver passes belonged to the Proprietors themselves, while they had copper ones engraved with their names to give out as free tickets. Further specimens are clearly needed.⁵⁵

TABLE 1. Known 'Birmingham Theatre 1774' passes, with the names shown as engraved (where known)

	<i>Silver</i>	<i>Copper</i>
<i>Named for Proprietors</i>	Jos. ^h Green's M ^r . Aris	M ^r . Faulconbridge M ^r . Gaunt
<i>Named for Non-Proprietors</i>	–	'Mrs Baskerville'

⁴⁷ Chatwin 1963, 12.

⁴⁸ Trott 1992, 39; Chatwin 1963, 14. The Chief Master received £88 15s. and the other teachers between £20 and £40 a year. During Gaunt's time as Usher, the Chief Masters were John Brailsford, former headmaster of the grammar school in Sutton Coldfield, (1766-75) and Thomas Price, formerly headmaster at Lichfield (1776-97) (Hutton 1952, 74-5).

⁴⁹ Chatwin 1963, 15.

⁵⁰ Chatwin 1963, 64: Gaunt's resignation was reported to the Governors at their meeting of 26 January 1787, to take effect from the following Lady Day (25 March). His death is noted in *ABG*, 3 April 1797: 'In London, after a long illness, the Rev. Dr. Gaunt, of Higham, Leicestershire, and formerly second master of King Edward's grammar school in this town.'

⁵¹ IGI index.

⁵² *Minute Book*, 3r.

⁵³ *Minute Book*, 6v-7r.

⁵⁴ *Minute Book*, 7r. The purchaser, James Rollason, was of course, Ann Pearson's new partner in *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* and the printing business.

⁵⁵ The unnamed passes presumably represent either stock supplied to the theatre, but not used, or extra pieces struck and retained by the manufacturer.

(Since I wrote my original article on these passes some more details have come to light on the career of Thomas Faulconbridge, the primary subject of that paper. These are summarised below, in Appendix 1.)

3. Some approaches made to Matthew Boulton to produce counterfeit coins

This section is an abbreviated version of part of a paper that appeared in the catalogue-with-essays produced by the Barber Institute, University of Birmingham to accompany its exhibition *Matthew Boulton and the Art of Making Money* (May 2009–May 2010).⁵⁶ Despite this earlier publication, it seems appropriate to include this section here in order to place the documents discussed more firmly in the numismatic record and to illustrate some that it was not possible to illustrate in the Barber Institute catalogue. The documents all deal with requests made to Matthew Boulton to supply counterfeit coins or tokens, which is particularly ironic given his long-standing and frequently-expressed opposition to counterfeiting.

The first request was passed on in a letter written to Boulton on 1 November 1794 by his agent in Copenhagen, Andrew Collins (PI. 22):

Sir,

I have got here acquainted with M^r Constantine Brun, a Merchant of respectability, who informs me that some time ago he wrote to you concerning some Portuguese Coins wishing to be inform'd whether you would undertake to make for him gold Johannes's, (I believe they are generally called Joes) whole as well as half Pieces: the whole ones to weigh 7½dwt Penny Weight and he requested your Advice at what rate you would deliver them in London.

M^r Brun has receiv'd no Answer to his Letter, and being in Company with me at a Gent^l. House, & understanding that I am your Agent: he desired me to write to you Sir, on the Subject. I will not pretend to give an Opinion as to the propriety or Impropriety of such an Undertaking: you are certainly best Judge of it. But in either case you will be pleased to give him a Line in answer to his Question, whether or not you can supply him? He talks of wanting from £5 to £10,000 Sterl^l worth pr Annum from inquiries I have made here, I learn that he is a Gentleman of Property – a Merchant who trades chiefly to the West Indies (where, apparently he wishes to diffuse these Joe's; as they are almost the only Currency there) he is known here for a Man of Probity and Character.⁵⁷

There is no trace in the Soho Archives of either Brun's original letter or of a reply from Boulton to Collins, but there is certainly no indication that Soho ever struck such illicit coins.

Brun wanted copies of the Portuguese gold half dobra of 6,400 reis (and its half). Originally struck by John V (1706–50), 'Johannes' on the coins, these were popularly known as 'Joes' in Britain and its American and West Indian colonies, a nickname that became even more appropriate when John V was succeeded by Joseph I (1750–77). Large quantities of these coins were struck using gold from the rich mines at Minas Gerais in Brazil, and they circulated widely in Britain, and came to dominate the gold currency of the Caribbean. Large numbers of light-weight and debased forgeries were struck in Europe and shipped to the West Indies by merchants like Brun.⁵⁸ They became such a nuisance that drastic steps had to be taken. In 1798 the authorities on St Vincent regulated what coins could be used on the island, established minimum weights for them, and decreed the death penalty for anyone guilty of importing or uttering base or lightweight coin in the future. Interestingly the minimum weight specified for a 'single Joe' was 7½ pennyweights (dwt), precisely what Brun had specified for his copies, which was only about 80% of the official weight of a genuine coin (9 dwt 5 grains).⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Symons 2009.

⁵⁷ Letter, Andrew Collins (Copenhagen) to Matthew Boulton, 1 November 1794 (MBP, MS 3782/12/39/298).

⁵⁸ Pridmore 1965, 8–9, and then *passim* for references to lightweight Joes on various islands.

⁵⁹ Pridmore 1965, 319–21. For some further context on this episode, see Vice 1988.

The next request for counterfeits came from much nearer home:

Sir

I have taken the liberty to Inclose you a Medal for w^h I believe 50.000 will be wanted I will thank you first to say if it Convenient to do them for us and then the price they will cost – I am S^t for [illegible] & Co

y^r Most Ob^t Serv^t
James Braithwaite

Kendal 5th Nov^r 1801.⁶⁰

I can find no trace of Boulton's reply to Braithwaite, but its tenor is clear from an undated memorandum in Boulton's hand (**Pl. 23**). Attached to the top of the sheet are four wax impressions (two obverse, two reverse) of the 'medal' that Braithwaite had sent as a sample. These show that it was actually a Danish billon 12 skilling coin, struck in Copenhagen in 1767 for use in the Danish Virgin Islands. Boulton's memorandum reads

These are Impressions from a piece of base silver Danish Money sent to me by M^r James Braithwaite of Kendal Nov^r 5th 1801 with an order for 50000 pieces which I returned to him & advised him to decline it as it is contrary to y^e Laws of this Kingdom & of Nations.⁶¹

Britain occupied the Danish Virgin Islands in March 1801, following Danish involvement in the Russian-inspired League of Armed Neutrality, which Britain saw as a pro-French movement. They were returned to Denmark in March 1802.⁶² The request for 50,000 counterfeits, made on 5 November 1801, falls squarely within this period of British occupation and gives every impression of having been made by a trading company intent on unscrupulously exploiting the commercial opportunities that had become available. Given the lack of detail in Braithwaite's letter, we cannot say for sure whether the coins ordered would have been lightweight copies, like those wanted by Brun, but this seems likely.

The third approach arrived in 1796 from Dr J. Solomon of Liverpool, who did not want counterfeit foreign coins, but copies of the Druid's head tokens produced by Thomas Williams's Parys Mines Company (**Pl. 24**). Boulton himself had actually struck Parys halfpennies and pennies for Williams over the period 1789-92. Solomon's initial enquiry was as follows:

Sir

I can take 1 Ton per week of the Anglesea penny pieces 18½ or 19 to the lb.

Please to acquaint me with the lowest price for ready money –

I am Sir, very respectfully
Your Obed^t. Serv^t.

J. Solomon

Address

D^r. Solomon

Liverpool

29th. July 1796⁶³

Boulton, while clearly keen to pick up any business that might be available, was uncompromising with regard to the tokens in his reply:

In reply to your fav^r of y^e 29 Ultim^o I can undertake to make any quantity of Copper pieces you can dispose of, in any time you may want them in, & I can make them of a superior quality to the provincial tokens commonly made as mine will be perfectly round & with bright edges & struck in Collers but I cannot Strike any pieces wth the name of (& saying payable by) the Anglesey Co as that would be something like forging a note of Hand, but I can make them with a drewids head & the initials of your name or any other devices you please.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Letter, James Braithwaite (Kendal) to Matthew Boulton, 5 November 1801 (MBP, MS 3782/12/46/352).

⁶¹ Undated memorandum by Matthew Boulton (MBP, MS 3782/12/46/352).

⁶² The islands (St Thomas, St John and St Croix) were sold to the United States in 1916 and are today known as the United States Virgin Islands.

⁶³ Letter, Dr Solomon (Liverpool) to Matthew Boulton, 29 July 1796 (MBP, MS 3782/12/41/231).

⁶⁴ Copy letter, Matthew Boulton to Dr Solomon (Liverpool), 1 August 1796 (MBP, MS 3782/12/41/235).

There was clearly further correspondence which does not appear to survive. It seems that Solomon tried to convince Boulton of the legality of the scheme, but Boulton refused to co-operate. This is apparent from a letter that Boulton wrote to Thomas Williams himself on 15 September 1796. The first page deals with costings for (unspecified) items which Williams had asked Boulton to price. The second page then begins

I have long wished to see you at Soho & to communicate to you sundry letters which I have received from a D^r. Soloman of Liverpool who wanted me to Coin for him exact Copys of your Anglesey pence and halfpence. He assures me he has taken Councils opinion upon the Legality of it & urged various arguments to induce me to undertake his order but my last letter has silenced him however. I hope you will contrive to dine with me or take your Bed as you go to Town & then I will show you the Correspondence.⁶⁵

Legally Solomon was quite right – counterfeiting tokens was not against the law, since tokens themselves were technically illegal. (A 1672 ban on their production and use was still in force, although it was universally ignored.)⁶⁶ It would have been up to Williams as the token issuer to pursue a case in the civil courts.

4. A silver specimen of the Matthew Boulton ‘Obsequies’ Medal, 1809

Between Matthew Boulton’s death on 17 August 1809 and his funeral on 24 August the Soho Mint produced a simple memorial medal to mark his passing.⁶⁷

Obv. MATTHEW BOULTON / DIED AUGUST 17th 1809 / AGED 81 YEARS.
In three lines across the field, horizontal lines above and below.

Rev. IN / MEMORY / OF HIS / OBSEQUIES / AUGst 24th / 1809.
In six lines, all in a wreath.

Examples struck in copper are well-known, but that specimens had also been struck in silver was unsuspected until one such came to light during the preparations for the exhibition *Matthew Boulton: Selling what all the world desires*, held at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery from May to September 2009 to mark the bicentenary of Boulton’s death. The medal (Fig. 3) was originally brought to my attention by Professor Peter Jones of the University of Birmingham, who also put me in touch with the owner, Mrs Fran Dancyger (née Harper), who kindly loaned the medal for display in the exhibition.⁶⁸ The medal had been passed down in Mrs Dancyger’s father’s family and, according to family tradition, had been given to an ancestor who was one of the Soho workmen who had carried Boulton’s coffin at the funeral (examples being given to the other coffin-bearers as well). It weighs 31.16 g; for comparison, a copper specimen in the Birmingham collection weighs 35.67 g.



Fig. 3. Matthew Boulton ‘Obsequies’ medal, 1809, struck in silver (diameter 40.5 mm).

⁶⁵ Copy letter, Matthew Boulton to Thomas Williams, 15 September 1796 (MBP, MS 3782/2/73/Item 123).

⁶⁶ Selgin 2008, 144. See Dickinson 1986, 5, for the 1672 ban.

⁶⁷ Brown 1980, 163 no. 662; Eimer 1987, 127 no. 1003.

⁶⁸ Mason 2009. The medal appears as no. 388 on p. 230, but was not illustrated in the catalogue. I am grateful to Mrs Dancyger for permission to photograph the medal and to publish it here.

Work by David Vice on the output of the Soho Mint shows that the Soho Archives only record copper medals being struck for presentation to the employees of the Soho Manufactory, Soho Mint and Soho Foundry, and to the principal invited mourners at the funeral.⁶⁹ The total number of medals recorded is as follows:

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
Presented to employees of the Plate Company	110	18	128
Presented to employees of the Foundry	135	–	135
Presented to employees of the Engine and Copying Companies	60	3	63
Presented to employees of the Mint, Button Company and Rolling Mill	50	39	89
Presented to various servants, etc.			24
Presented to invited mourners			91
Remaining in hand			2
			<hr/> 532 <hr/>

According to Mr Vice, the original dies for the medal were reserved for Boulton's grandson, Matthew Piers Watt Boulton, at the time of the Soho Mint sale in 1850. This raises the possibility that this medal might actually be a post-Soho restrike, since Mr Vice has shown that many of these restrikes can be attributed to a combination formed by M.P.W. Boulton and W.J. Taylor, the proprietor of a die-sinking business in London.⁷⁰ This does not seem to be likely in this case, however. There are no obvious physical signs that this medal might be a restrike, nor would this sit well with the family tradition that it had been presented to an ancestor in 1809. (Indeed, it is hard to see how or why this tradition should have arisen if the medal was actually a restrike, only acquired much later in the nineteenth century.)

The medals for the principal mourners were distributed at Boulton's home, Soho House, prior to the funeral and became mixed up in the rather unsavoury dispute that arose between Boulton's son, Matthew Robinson Boulton, and the undertaker, Mr Lander. Boulton Junior refused to pay part of Lander's bill, in part because he blamed Lander for the delay in the funeral, which ran about two hours late. For his part, Lander blamed the delay in large part on the distribution of the medals, which were each wrapped and sealed and marked with the recipient's name. According to Lander, presenting each medal individually to the right recipient and instructing them not to open the package until after the funeral service had taken far longer than had been anticipated.⁷¹

The distribution of medals to the Soho workforce took place after the burial, and is recorded in two letters describing the funeral sent to Boulton's old business partner, James Watt, who was in Glasgow when Boulton died.⁷² The first letter was written on 25 August, the day after the funeral, by James Watt Junior, who had represented his father at the ceremony.⁷³ Watt records about 430 men and 60 to 70 women workers forming part of the funeral procession and notes that

After the ceremony, [the workers] retired to the different public houses where refreshment had been provided for them of cold meat, and when each received from M^r. Boulton a jetton with his age & death on one side, and in memory of his obsequies, on the other. After receiving these and drinking the memory of their departed benefactor standing & in silence, they all repaired to their respective homes, and not a Soho man was to be seen upon the road for the remainder of the day.

⁶⁹ It is planned that Mr Vice's study, *A Numismatic History of the Soho Manufactory and Mint, 1772–1850* [hereafter Vice, forthcoming], will be published in due course as one of this society's Special Publications series. I am grateful to him for giving me a copy of his manuscript and for allowing me to refer to his findings here. The following paragraph draws heavily upon his work. The Boulton obsequies medal is Vice, forthcoming, No. 1809/8.

⁷⁰ Vice, forthcoming (see previous note).

⁷¹ This paragraph again follows Mr Vice. Lander eventually had to take Matthew Robinson Boulton to court for his money, Boulton finally paying up on the eve of the trial.

⁷² The text of both letters will be found in Appendix 2.

⁷³ James Watt Junior (Birmingham) to James Watt Senior (Glasgow), 25 August 1809 (James Watt papers, Birmingham Archives and Heritage, MS 3219/4/33/36).

The second letter was written on 29 August by John Furnell Tuffen, a banker and old friend of both Boulton and Watt.⁷⁴ He puts the number of workmen [*sic*] at 500 and then relates how

Cold dinners were provided for the men at all the public houses around; the memory of M^r. Boulton was drank in silence, a bronzed token struck in commemoration of the obsequies, was delivered to each, & by five o'clock every one had departed to his home.

Both letters mention the old workmen who carried Boulton's coffin from Soho House to the church. According to James Watt Junior, the coffin was 'borne by ten of the oldest men (who had been from 30 to 50 years in his [i.e. Boulton's] service), with ten others to relieve', while Tuffen says that it was 'born by 8 of the oldest workmen', with '16 of the ablest bodied workmen ... intended as relays of bearers'. Assuming that silver medals were struck for presentation to all the coffin-bearers, then these descriptions suggest a minimum of eight and a maximum of twenty-four specimens would have been produced for this purpose. It would be interesting to know if any other examples survive. It does seem peculiar that no other examples are recorded as being produced for presentation to some at least of the invited mourners, or indeed for members of the Boulton family, but there is absolutely no evidence for this happening. The lack of mention of silver medals in the Soho Mint records might be explained if these were special pieces, produced as a private commission, their cost perhaps covered directly by Matthew Robinson Boulton. There does seem to be a parallel for this in the 1802 medals struck at Soho for presentation to the members of the Birmingham volunteer units, to mark their disbandment following the Peace of Amiens. There is no trace in the Soho Mint records of this entire issue, and it seems that Matthew Boulton, who had been entrusted with 'the whole direction and Management of the medal' by his fellow-townsmen, produced it as a private commission rather than as a regular Soho order.⁷⁵

APPENDIX 1.

Additional information on the career of Thomas Faulconbridge.

1772: Faulconbridge was clearly an early investor in Birmingham's canals, being a shareholder (along with Matthew Boulton and Samuel Aris) in the Birmingham Canal. In April 1772, Dr William Small wrote a letter to Boulton describing what sounds like a particularly ill-tempered series of meetings about the canal, although the letter does not make clear precisely what was in dispute:

The meeting met again on the following friday by adjournment, & abundance of squabble again ensued. M^r. Garbet moved that advice might be taken about the legality of the deed, which he & M^r. Faulconbridge, & some others thought unlawful. It was urged that L^d Dartmouth ought to be previously consulted, and this being agreed he withdrew his motion.

(Dr William Small to Matthew Boulton, 17 April 1772 (MBP, MS 3782/12/235.)

1775: During the early stages of the confrontation with the colonists in North America, a petition was circulated in Birmingham 'signed by a large Body of the principal Inhabitants and Manufacturers of that Industrious and Intelligent Town and Neighbourhood', calling on the Government to deal firmly with the colonists. Delivered to the House of Commons on 26 January 1775, it came to be referred to as the 'Political or War Petition' in debates in the House. The third signature to the petition was Thomas Faulconbridge, immediately following Matthew Boulton, whose name appeared second. Other signatories included Boulton's business partner, John Fothergill, and Joseph Green, whose silver theatre pass has been mentioned above.

It is only fair to Birmingham's reputation with the modern inhabitants of North America to point out that the argument over what line to take with the colonists became very heated in the town, and a counter-petition was signed by 'Sundry Merchants, Factors and Manufacturers' who wanted an accommodation reached because of the danger to trade.

(The relevant documents will be found in folder MBP, MS 3782/12/87/1–10. The handwritten copy of the original petition, listing the names of the signatories, is MS 3782/12/87/1. For more on the dispute, see *ABG*, 6 February 1775.)

⁷⁴ John Furnell Tuffen (Bristol) to James Watt Senior (Glasgow), 29 August 1809 (James Watt papers, Birmingham Archives and Heritage, MS 3219/4/49/88).

⁷⁵ Vice, forthcoming, No. 1802/17 (see n.69).

1776: From its inception in 1769, Faulconbridge served as one of the members of the Board of Commission charged with improving Birmingham's streets (often popularly referred to as the Street Commission or the Lamp Act Commission. See Symons 2006, 315). On 17 December 1776 the Commissioners agreed to divide the town into twelve 'Divisions or Districts', three Commissioners taking oversight of each district. Faulconbridge, along with Richard Conquest and Edward Sawyer, was allocated the area comprising Bull Lane, Colmore Row, Livery Street, Church Street, New Hall Street, Great Charles Street (from New Hall), New Market [sic], Bread Street and Charles Street.

(Birmingham Archives and Heritage, *Street Commissioners Minute Book 1, 1776–85.*)

APPENDIX 2.

Two descriptions of Matthew Boulton's funeral, 1809.

(1) James Watt Junior (Birmingham) to his father James Watt Senior (Glasgow), 25 August 1809 (James Watt papers, Birmingham Archives and Heritage, MS 3219/4/33/36).

Dear Father

The remains of our excellent friend were yesterday committed to the Grave. The interval of weather was favourable, the procession was well conducted, and the ceremony awful & impressive. Ten Mourning Coaches with friends opened the procession and were followed by the corpse, borne by ten of the oldest men (who had been from 30 to 50 years in his service), with ten others to relieve. The Pall supported by M^r. Keir & myself as your representative, M^r. Simcox & M^r. Clark, M^r. Galton & M^r. Alston, M^r. Tuffen & M^r. Barker. M^r. Boulton came immediately after as chief mourner, and was succeeded by M^r. Mynd and M^r. Walker, M^r. Southern & M^r. Murdoch, M^r. Lawson & M^r. Woodward, M^r. Collins & M^r. Moseley, M^r. Chippendale & M^r. Bownas, M^r. Pearson & M^r. Brown and the whole of the agents & clerks of the Manufactory & Foundry walking two & two, with hatbands & scarfs, to the number of forty. The workmen followed, in number about 430, and 60 to 70 women who are, or have been, employed in the manufactory, walking two & two, both men and women, nearly all in mourning, which they had voluntarily provided. Then came M^r. Boulton's domestic servants, Mr. Mynds, Yours & Mine, in mourning with crepe hatbands. Mr. Boulton's family carriages, yours, and those of all the Gentlemen who attended, empty, closed the procession; which was conducted at a solemn pace from M^r. Boulton's house to the church.

The Rev^d. M^r. Freer, who had been very unwell and was scarcely recovered, read the service in a very impressive manner, and the effect was much increased by the choristers who attended from Birm^m. and the music of the organ. Further details you shall receive from M^r. Tuffen, who undertook jointly with M^r. Moore, the management of this part of the ceremony.

There were few persons in the church, but what were much affected by the recollections which particular passages excited, and it is impossible to conceive any thing more proper & respectful than the conduct of the workmen has been throughout. After the ceremony, they retired to the different public houses where refreshment had been provided for them of cold meat, and when each received from M^r. Boulton a jetton with his age & death on one side, and *in memory of his obsequies*, on the other. After receiving these and drinking the memory of their departed benefactor standing & in silence, they all repaired to their respective homes, and not a Soho man was to be seen upon the road for the remainder of the day.

Among the friends who attended, were M^r. Jn^o. Wedgewood, M^r. Lee, M^r. Ewart, & M^r. R. Hamilton, with most of the acquaintances of the family from Birmingham and the neighbourhood. Miss Boulton is better, but indulges her grief too much.

I hope M^{rs} Watt as [sic] written to her, as I rather think she has more influence over her than any other person. They should be advised to leave home as early as possible. With kind remembrance to friends with you, I am, D^r. Father;

your dutiful son, J Watt Jnr

(2) John Furnell Tuffen (Bristol) to James Watt senior (Glasgow), 29 August 1809 (James Watt papers, Birmingham Archives and Heritage, MS 3219/4/49/88).

Bristol 29th August 1809

My friend James, knowing I wished it, kindly promised that I should write you from Soho a particular account of our deceased friend's funeral, but my mind was too much agitated & my time too much occupied by circumstances immediately connected with the melancholy event to afford me an opportunity of doing it during my short stay there, having been with them only four days, I shall therefore now give you the best account I can from recollection never having seen the written order of the procession made out for the undertaker's guidance. I believe it commenced with the Parish Church officers, followed by Mutes [?] on horseback with black staves & scarfs, succeeded by nine or ten Mourning Coaches with four horses containing the Clergy & Faculty, then 16 of the ablest bodied workmen in Mourning Cloaks, intended as relays of bearers, afterwards the body, resting upon a frame with legs & handles, covered with black cloth, & born by 8 of the oldest workmen, the Pall supported by M^r. Ja^s. Watt, M^r. Keir, M^r. Clarke, M^r. Galton, M^r. Simcox, M^r. Alston, M^r. Barker & Myself; then followed M.R. Boulton & his cousins, M^r. Z: Walker & M^r. Mynd, after them a numerous assemblage of friends, among whom were M^r. Lee,

M^r. Euart, M^r. A: Hamilton, M^r. Jn^o. Wedgwood, M^r. Moore, M^r. Moillet, &c. &c.; after these above 500 of the Gentlemen, Agents & Clerks connected with the Manufactories, then followed about 500 of the Workmen voluntarily clothed in mourning at their own expence & 13 or 14 private carriages closed the whole. Early on Thursday morning the entrance to Soho & the road from thence to Handsworth Church was lined with spectators on foot, on horseback & in carriages, to the number it is said of at least 10,000 persons. The procession left Soho at 12 o'clock, it extended nearly the whole way, & enter'd the church about two; M^r. Freer, notwithstanding his late severe illness, from which he is not recovered, read the funeral service in a very impressive manner, assisted by the Rev^d. M^r. Pickering. On the entrance of the procession into the Church & while those who composed it were seating themselves, the following verses of the ninetieth Psalm were sung by the whole Choral Society from Birmingham accompanied by the Organ, Viz'. Verses 3.4.5.6.

[The letter then gives details of the funeral service, which have been omitted here.]

Though the church was crowded in every part & multitudes remained without who could not gain admittance, the utmost stillness & solemnity prevailed, & the effect of the Music was visible in almost every eye. In short nothing could be more appropriate or better conducted, & there never was perhaps a public funeral attended by so many real & respectful mourners. Cold dinners were provided for the men at all the public houses around; the memory of M^r. Boulton was drank in silence, a bronzed token struck in commemoration of the obsequies, was delivered to each, & by five o'clock every one had departed to his home. The morning & evening of the day were rainy, but not a drop fell either during the procession or on its return. If you read M^r. Lawrence's Birmingham Journal you will probably have seen his detail of the funeral ceremony. In some other papers the following short account has appear'd. "M^r. Boulton's funeral. Never have we witnessed a more affecting ceremony than the last sad tribute of respect paid with equal Solemnity & Sorrow to the remains of this excellent man. His body was borne to the Grave by some of his oldest workmen, attended by his Son, by a large assemblage of his relatives & friends, and by all the Individuals connected with his Manufacturing & Commercial Establishments. Many thousand persons attended on the mournful occasion, the decorum of whose conduct bore a respectful testimony to the general intimation of his virtues. The sorrow of his friends was still more impressive; And the silent sympathy of his numerous workmen, unfeignedly & affectionately demonstrated the greatness of his Value & their Loss! Magnificent in his manufacturing establishments, & noble in his reception of ingenious & celebrated men of all countries, he dignified the character of the British Manufacturer. The variety of his talents, was only equalled by his liberality, in the promotion of every useful Art, And the pure honour & integrity which marked his commercial transactions, added a lustre to his general Worth." [sic] In the emphatic words of the solemn service sung on this occasion,

His Body is buried in peace
But his name liveth evermore."

Thus my dear Sir has the grave closed on one of our oldest & dearest friends, whose like, take him for all in all, We shall not see again! It is an arrow that glances very near us; May it not fall unobserved, But when our time cometh, May We also be ready.

[The remainder of the letter then deals with Tuffen's personal matters.]

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DETAILS OF PLATES

- Pl. 22:** Recto and verso of a letter from Andrew Collins (Copenhagen) to Matthew Boulton, 1 November 1794, forwarding a request to strike counterfeit Portuguese gold coins (MBP, MS 3782/12/39/298).
- Pl. 23:** Undated memorandum written by Matthew Boulton, c. November 1801, relating to a request that he make copies of Danish billon coins for the West Indies (MBP, MS 3782/12/46/352).
- Pl. 24:** Letter from Dr Solomon (Liverpool) to Matthew Boulton, 29 July 1796, requesting the production of counterfeit Druid's head tokens (MBP, MS 3782/12/41/231).

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