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MEDALLIC PORTRAITS OF
MATTHEW BOULTON
AND
JAMES WATT
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BY
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Much information given in the notes and elsewhere has been obtained by the present writer from Herbert A. Grueber's articles in the "Numismatic Circular," and from Dr. R. W. Cochran-Patrick's "Catalogue of the Medals of Scotland." As always, Dr. George F. Hill, Keeper of Coins, and Mr. J. Allan, of the British Museum, have been most helpful not only in furnishing casts of specimens from that institution, but with information generally.

An effort has been made to arrange the medals in chronological order, but this may not have been entirely successful, as a number of them are undated. It is also possible that there is some duplication, as the descriptions of the medals in many of the references are inadequate for definite identification.
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MEDALLIC PORTRAITS OF
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AND
JAMES WATT
BIографИчЕСКИЙ СКЕТч

Маттэв Бултон ван рождён 3 сентября 1728 года, в Бирмингеме, Англия, где его отец, Маттэв Бултон, навел небольшое процветание в качестве специалиста по металлу. Уже изучившийся отлично, молодой Бултон после короткого бригадного срока был принят в мастерскую. Его первый вклад состоял в изобретении новой технологии инкрустации стали, в результате которой бизнес быстро приобрёл известность. Инструменты, инструменты, монеты, и керамика изготавливались в мастерской Бултона в Сохо, недалеко от Бирмингема, но процесс производства был в то время чересчур сложен. Если бы не была необходимостью, это была бы проблема в мастерской Сого в начале 70-х годов 18 века.

После смерти отца, молодой Бултон стал главой мастерской, и при его руководстве бизнес стремительно развивался. Большое уважение заслужил им за то, что вместе с постоянным ростом производства шло улучшение качества продукции, не только в технологическом, но и в художественном аспекте. Необходимость последнего была остро ощущена, так как уровень работ в Бирмингеме был так низким, что в английском языке появился слово Brummagen, означающее хитрый, притязательный, непривлекательный. Узнав о том состоянии, Бултон писал в одном из своих писем: "Продолжительность, которую Бирмингему пришлось заработать, делает каждое недостаток заметным." После чего он быстро приступил к устранению этих недостатков.

Однажды, вернувшись из поездки по дороге, он прошёл через множество ворот, обнаружив в своём владении больше подделок, чем настоящих монет; на следующий за это день он нашёл у Пита, с тем результатом, что он был в конечном итоге снабжён правом печатания монет для правительства. Качество работы и математическая точность предотвратили подделку; даже утверждали, что монеты были использованы в течение многих лет для стандарта веса, вместо того, чтобы использовать монеты, изготовленные мануфактурами.

19 января 1738 года, за десять лет до рождения Бултона, в городе Гринок, Шотландия, родился Джеймс Уатт младший, сын Джеймса Уата и правнуком Томаса Уата, учителя математики и навигации в школе для моряков, которую он сам установил в районе Гринока. Факт успеха в школе, несмотря на то, что он был обвинён в "недисциплинированном учителе" из-за отказа от принятия клятвы в пользу предлата, указывает на его характер и способности.
The father of James Watt began his career as a shipwright and contractor, but his real interest lay in making instruments of precision, and it was with joy that he devoted the later years of his life to this work, combined with the execution of his duties as chief magistrate of Greenock. Young Watt was a delicate child, considered too frail to attend school regularly; when he went at all, he seems to have been judged dull and spiritless by masters and boys alike. He showed no interest in any subject until his fourteenth year, when he began to study geometry; from that time on he was transformed by his enthusiasm for mathematics and the allied subjects.

When about eighteen years old he went to London to serve an apprenticeship in the making of mathematical instruments, but the climate proving unsuitable, he returned to Scotland within a year and tried to establish an instrument shop. This he was forbidden to do by the Corporation of Hammermen, because he had not served the usual seven years' apprenticeship. Young Watt now found himself in financial straits, but a friend brought about his appointment as instrument-maker to the University of Glasgow, with the unprecedented privilege of opening a shop on the grounds. At Glasgow he made the acquaintance of many eminent men, whom he impressed by his scientific knowledge and skill. His first official undertaking was to improve a fire-engine belonging to the University. This engine had never functioned properly until it passed through the hands of Watt, whose thoughts were thus directed to the problem of generating motive-power by steam. Prior to the use of steam-engines, power had been derived from water-wheels and windmills, or from wheels driven around by horses. Watt it was who decided that horse-power should be the basis of measurement of power for steam-driven machinery. Little did he foresee how soon the day would come when a new unit of measurement would be required for an even greater power than that of steam, or that this unit of electricity would be called a watt in his honor.

For several years, beginning with 1767, Watt devoted much of his time to investigation concerning waterways. One of his journeys took him to Birmingham, and he went armed with a letter of introduction to Matthew Boulton, the manager and owner of the Soho factory. Boulton, a capable engineer and a successful man of business, had already realized that his works had reached the limit of expansion unless a new motive power could be set to work. The Soho factory had excellent machinery, the best of its kind, but it was run by water-power from streams whose force varied according to season and weather, without ever being wholly adequate.

Boulton had already conducted experiments along the line of a possible power to be generated through the use of steam, but with no satisfactory results. Now in face of an urgent practical necessity, he directed his thoughts to this problem, discussing the matter with his numerous scientific friends, including several professors at the University of Glasgow. It was one of these who wrote the letter of introduction for young Watt when he was starting for Birmingham. On the occasion of their first meeting, Watt gave Boulton some extremely valuable ideas but
the latter felt that he could not use them without permission, and wrote to a friend: "I would avail myself of what I have learned from Mr. Watt's conversation, . . . but this would not be right without his consent."

About this time Watt married his cousin, a lady to whom he had been attached for many years. Sympathetic, calm, and strong, her devotion to Watt and her faith in his success had already done much to carry him through the attacks of depression to which he was subject. Now at last he had a home, and this he greatly enjoyed, though for a few years only, as his wife died suddenly during one of his tours of investigation.

For fully seven years Watt gave most of his time to the work of his position as maker of instruments to the University and as consulting expert on waterways. In the meantime his reputation had begun to spread. One day Professor Black asked him to build a small organ. Watt had had no experience whatever in this line, but the result was so successful that he at once received an order to construct a larger organ for a lodge hall in Glasgow.

His interest in science was not confined to physics; he was enthusiastic about chemistry and continued this study all his life. In fact, it was his steady pursuit of this subject which led to the brilliant discovery of the composition of water, announced by him in 1782. Two years previously he had taken out a patent on his invention for copying letters by means of specially prepared ink, damp paper, and pressure. This was for many years the generally used method for preserving copies of correspondence; and yet, few who have made use of it thought of associating it with the name of Watt.

As has already been stated, Boulton and Watt met in 1768, although the partnership was not effected until some years later.

The first work which they undertook in collaboration was the reconstruction of an engine sent from Kinneil to Birmingham for repairs. The work was experimental, yet on the first trial the engine ran better than when new, indicating the superior grade of work to be found at the Soho factory.

From the outset, Boulton and Watt were convinced that their principles, as applied to the invention of their own engine, were scientifically sound, needing only proper construction to give satisfactory results. As their engine was approaching completion, Watt grew impatient to test its powers, but Boulton insisted that no trial be made until every detail of preparation had been completed. This being done, upon the first test the engine worked to the admiration of all.

In 1774 Watt wrote to his father: "The fire-engine is now going, and answers much better than any other that has yet been made." Much interest was aroused in this early success and many demands came in for engines adapted to use in mines; incidentally, numerous attempts were made to profit by Watt's discoveries while circumventing his patent-rights.

Orders came in rapidly; sixty-five engines the first year, an unheard-of total for those days. But though success was in sight, the struggle was not over. There
followed a long period marked by disappointments due to unskilled workmen or to the lack of accurate tools. At that time, success or failure often depended upon the eye or hand of the individual mechanic. To counteract this, specialization was tried, resulting in great improvement but causing a new difficulty: other firms tried to induce the Soho workmen to leave. It is even stated that French and German agents attempted to bribe Soho men to go to Paris and Berlin, to build engines for the water-supply of those cities. Certain it is that the eyes of all the world were directed to Boulton and Watt, and their phenomenal engine. The imperial family of Russia showed its interest to such an extent that the Empress herself went to Birmingham as Boulton’s guest.

Another link in the chain which bound the two men together was Watt’s establishment of a home near the Soho works, which he did shortly after his second marriage; a sidelight showing the relationship between the two men is the fact that although the timid Watt did manage to propose for himself to Miss McGregor, be begged Boulton to approach her father!

The ideal relationship is based not on similarity but on unity in diversity. Such was that of Boulton and Watt. Watt: physically delicate, nervous to the point of irritability, easily discouraged, but withal a great scientist and a mechanical genius. Boulton: undaunted by difficulty, a stranger to physical fatigue, generous, sociable, his genius lying in his sympathetic understanding of people, whether employees or customers or partner. Watt hated business; Boulton enjoyed it, and won financial success for the firm in spite of some daring ventures.

With the end of the century, the original partnership papers, which had been drawn for a period of twenty-five years, expired, and Watt and Boulton after years of strenuous activity decided to retire. Boulton died at Birmingham, August 17, 1809, and Watt at Heathfield, August 25, 1819. They had turned the business over to their sons, and the original partnership was used as the basis for a new association between Matthew Robinson Boulton and James Watt, Junior. The firm of Boulton and Watt continued in business for forty years, when the partners retired with the gratification of having carried out the high traditions of the name.
MATTHEW BOULTON


**Note:** Grueber states that this medal was struck for the purpose of recording the rapidity with which Boulton's coining-machines could be operated, the numbers indicating how many pieces of that diameter could be struck per minute.

2. **Obverse.** Bust of Boulton to right, similar to No. 1. No inscription. **Reverse.** The naval battle of Trafalgar. Legend ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN WILL DO HIS DUTY. In exergue TRAFALGAR | OCT 21. 1805 49 mm. Lead. [Numismatic Chronicle 1888, p. 87, 7.] British Museum.

**Note:** This is a proof by C. H. Kiechler. It is struck on the flan of a medal commemorating the battle of Trafalgar, which is described in "A Guide to the Exhibition of English Medals in the British Museum 1891," page 122, No. 544. This medal has on its obverse the bust of Nelson, in naval uniform, and on the edge is incised TO THE HEROES OF TRAFALGAR. FROM M. BOULTON.


**Note:** The obverse is in extremely high relief, and is interesting as showing the degree of perfection to which Boulton and Watt had developed their machinery for striking medals. Meyer-Gedanensis under No. 496 states that probably only a limited number of this medal was struck, as the die shows several small cracks. Attention is directed to the illustration where these may be detected on the cheek and on the coat.
MATTHEW BOULTON

4. Medallic portrait of Boulton executed by Peter Rouw. [Numismatic Circular Vol. XXXIII, Col. 32.] Description taken from this source, which states that a specimen was exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1803.

Note: The same reference mentions a medallic portrait of "the late M. Boulton," exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1812. There is a possibility that these may bear some relation to the medal described under No. 3.


Note: This medal is by C. H. Küchler. See also No. 6.

6. Uniface. Bust of Boulton to right, same as No. 5. The scroll below is somewhat narrower than on No. 5, and is inscribed DIED AT SOHO. M : 7. 180 • AGED. 00 YS. O MS O D5. 48 mm. [Numismatic Chronicle 1888, p. 85, 3; Forrer Vol. III, p. 242.] British Museum.

Note: Küchler undoubtedly executed this as a trial piece for No. 5. The lettering on the scroll is incised.

7. Obverse. Bust of Boulton to right, similar to No. 3. Above, MATTHEW BOULTON F. R. S. Below, two genii, one holding a torch, the other placing a laurel branch on the model of the mint at SOHO. Reverse. BY THE SKILFUL EXERTION OF A MIND TURNED TO PHILOSOPHY & MECHANICS, THE APPLICATION OF A TASTE CORRECT & REFINED, & AN ARDENT SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE, HE IMPROVED, EMBELLISHED, & EXTENDED THE ARTS & MANUFACTURES OF HIS COUNTRY; LEAVING HIS ESTABLISHMENT OF SOHO A NOBLE MONUMENT OF HIS GENIUS, INDUSTRY & SUCCESS; THE CHARACTER HIS TALENTS HAD RAISED, HIS VIRTUES ADORNED & EXALTÉD, ACTIVE TO DISCOVER MERIT, & PROMPT TO RELIEVE DISTRESS, HIS ENCOURAGEMENT WAS LIBERAL, HIS BENEVOLENCE UNWEARIED, HONOURED & ADMIREDE AT HOME & ABROAD, HE CLOSED A LIFE EMINENTLY USEFUL, THE 17TH AUGUST 1809 AGED 81. ESTEEMED, LOVED, & LAMENTED. 45 mm. Bronze. [Numismatic Chronicle 1888, p. 85, 4.] R.J.E. Collection.

Note: Grueber is of the opinion that this medal is by Rouw. He further states that the inscription is taken from the mural monument erected to Boulton's memory in the side aisle of Handsworth Church, in the composition of which his partner, James Watt, assisted.
MATTHEW BOULTON


Note: Grueber states that this medal is probably the work of C. H. Küchler.


Note: Forrer Vol. III, p. 242, states that this medal was commenced by Küchler. After he left Soho, it was finished by Pidgeon, who afterwards received £300 therefor.
The catalogue of the Meyer-Gedanensis collection under No. 10487 mentions a trial piece of this medal, the legend on the obverse and the wreath of laurel on the reverse being omitted. This specimen is of white metal and is given as 52 mm. in diameter.


12. Uniface. Bust of Boulton to right, same as No. 3; a circle of beads within the rim. Legend MATTHEW BOULTON. Signed GALLE F. 59 mm. Galvano shell. [Numismatic Chronicle 1888, p. 87, 8.] R.J.E. Collection.

Note: No reverse appears to have been executed for this medal. It is conceivable that in view of the relationship of the two men, this portrait of Boulton and the one of Watt described under No. 25 may have been intended for the obverse and reverse of a single medal. Forrer Vol. II, p. 197, states that both of these medallions were exhibited at the Paris Salon, 1839.


Note: The letters on the reverse of the bronze specimen are slightly softer in outline than those on the brass.
JAMES WATT

14. Medallic portrait of Watt executed by Peter Rouw. [Numismatic Circular Vol. XXXIII, Col. 32.] Description taken from this source, which states that a specimen was exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1803.


PLATE 5


PLATE 4

19. Large portrait-medallion of Watt, executed by George Mills at Soho. [Forrer Vol. IV, p. 82.] Description taken from this source.

Note: The Numismatic Circular Vol. XXXI, Col. 51, states that in 1821 Mills executed a medallic portrait of James Watt and that an impression was made from the medal die. This may possibly refer to No. 18 or to No. 19.


PLATE 4
21. **Obverse.** Bust of Watt to left, draped. Legend **JAMES WATT ESQ. I.L.D. F.R.S. L.N & ED.** Signed T. & J. (Thomason & Jones) and I.M. **Reverse.** In a wreath of roses, thistles, and shamrock **IN TESTIMONY OF NATIONAL ESTEEM** 54 mm. Bronze. [Cochran-Patrick, p. 118, 54.] British Museum.

22. **Obverse.** Head of Watt to left. **I WATT** Below, F. L. **CHANTREY R.A.D** Signed on truncation **A J STOTHARD F.** Rim ornamented. **Reverse.** A female figure leaning against a truncated column and holding a scroll inscribed **TO GREAT MEN** In exergue on a panel **PUB BY S PARKER LONDON** Below **MDCCCXXVII** At left **T STOTHARD R.A.D.** At right **A J STOTHARD F.** 64 mm. Bronze. [Cochran-Patrick, p. 117, 50.] R.J.E. Collection.

Note: The same reverse is found on medals of John Flaxman (1755-1826) sculptor, and of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) novelist and poet.

23. **Obverse.** Bust to left, draped. At right **JAMES WATT** Signed in exergue **W. WYON A.R.A. MINT** **Reverse.** In a wreath of palm and laurel **ROYAL CORNWALL POLYTECHNIC SOCIETY INSTITUTED 1833 — FIRST CLASS 45 mm.** Bronze. [Cochran-Patrick, p. 118, 56.] R.J.E. Collection.

Note: This medal was exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1836.


Note: There is a possibility that this may bear some relation to the medal described under No. 23.

25. **Uniface.** Bust of Watt to left, in coat and stock; a circle of beads within the rim. **JAMES WATT** Signed **GALLE F.** 59 mm. Galvano shell. [Cochran-Patrick, p. 118, 55.] R.J.E. Collection.

Note: No reverse appears to have been executed for this medal. It is conceivable that in view of the relationship of the two men, this portrait of Watt and the one of Boulton described under No. 12 may have been intended for the obverse and reverse of a single medal. Forrer Vol. II, p. 197, states that both of these medallion portraits were exhibited at the Paris Salon, 1839.

26. Portrait of Watt engraved on red cornelian by J. S. Phillips. [Numismatic Circular Vol. XXXII, Col. 513.] Description taken from this source, which states that this specimen was exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1842.
JAMES WATT

27. *Uniface.* Bust of Watt to left, similar to No. 23. At right WATT Signed in exergue LEONARD. 

wyon. f. | aetat. 16. | 1843. 44 mm. Tin. [Numismatic Circular Vol. XXXIV, Col. 507.]

British Museum.

Note: This is the work of Leonard C. Wyon at the age of sixteen, and was exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1843. He copied the bust of Watt on the medal described under No. 23, which was designed by his father, William Wyon.

28. *Obverse.* Head of Chantrey to right. Legend CHANTREY SCULPTOR ET ARTIUM FAUTOR. Signed w:wyon : r.a: fec: 

Reverse. The same statue of Watt as on No. 17, but taken from a different point of view. On the base WATT In exergue FRANCISCHI CHANTREY OPUSSigned w. wyon. r.a. fec. 1846. Edge ART-UNION OF LONDON 1843. 55 mm. Bronze. R.J.E. Collection.

Note: Attention is directed to a discrepancy in the dates, 1846 on the reverse, 1843 on the edge.

29. *Obverse and Reverse.* Proof of No. 28 and same in every particular except that lettering, including that of signatures, is omitted. 55 mm. Tin. British Museum.


Note: Jouin states that this medallion was executed prior to 1846.


Note: This medal was struck for the Watt Club in Greenock, Scotland, Watt's birthplace.

33. Impression from a medal die of Watt executed by Joseph S. Wyon from the bust by Chantrey. [Numismatic Circular Vol. XXXIV, Col. 18.] Description taken from this source, which states that the impression was exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1855.
34. Obverse. Same as No. 20. Reverse. Same as No. 20, except that the inscription in exergue becomes INST. OF CIVIL ENGINEERS | INCORPORATED 1828 49 mm. Gold. [Forrer, Vol. VI, p. 588.] Owned by The Institution of Civil Engineers, London.

Note: Forrer mentions the fact that this was the first important medal designed by Joseph S. Wyon, and that on Robert Stephenson’s recommendation it was adopted as the prize medal of The Institution of Civil Engineers.

The Numismatic Circular Vol. XXXIV, Col. 18 states that a specimen of the above medal was exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1858.


Note: Cochran-Patrick states that the specimen in his collection bears the name of the sculptor N. MacPhail on the obverse.

The above-named institution, which is located in Glasgow, awards three gold medals known as the “Institution Medal”; the “Marine Engineering Medal,” and the “Railway Engineering Medal”; and one in silver known as the “Graduate Section Medal.” The reverses of these bear an engraved inscription of award.

36. Full description of this medal will be found under No. 13. R.J.E. Collection.

Plate 2

1. Farewell.

2. Matthew Boulton, Esq. F.R.S.

3. Matthew Boulton, Esq. F.R.S.

4. Matthew Boulton, Esq. F.R.S.

5. Matthew Boulton, Esq. F.R.S.

6. Matthew Boulton, Esq. F.R.S.

7. Matthew Boulton, Esq. F.R.S.

8. Matthew Boulton, Esq. F.R.S.

9. Matthew Boulton, Esq. F.R.S.

10. Matthew Boulton, Esq. F.R.S.

11. Matthew Boulton, Esq. F.R.S.