ANNAND, SMITH & Co.

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N. A. V. No. 409

In the history of coinage in Australia certain names and events stand out; one such name and event is the issue of the first copper token. It was in finding out about this particular firm that I was stimulated to research all the other token issuers of Victoria as well as a few from the other States. Much has been written about the tokens themselves but little about the issuers, and yet, surely people are more interesting than things.

There is no doubt about the date of issue of this particular token, for we read in "The Argus" newspaper of October 20th, 1849, the following item:

"To obviate the extreme inconvenience occasioned by the scarcity of copper, particularly by grocers, who have not infrequently to pay a premium of from sixpence to a shilling a pound for their Saturday night's supply, Mr. Councillor Annand has had coined at Birmingham a large supply of penny pieces, having on one side the figure of Britannia, and on the obverse the inscription, "Annand, Smith & Co., family grocers, Melbourne". This expedient will have the effect of not only increasing the coinage in circulation in the province, but it will also operate as a most active standing advertisement of the house".

This news item of long ago does three essential things; not only does it fix the time of issue, but it also tells us where the tokens were made and finally the reason for the issue.

The issue of private tokens did not go unnoticed. People who hadn't thought of the idea themselves were quick to knock it - particularly other newspapers. The "Melbourne Daily News" on 30th October accused Annand, Smith & Co. of "imitating the coin of the realm". One of several articles read:

"In a recent number of this journal we alluded to the cheap method of advertising adopted by a certain grocery firm, which, although they bear the name of the firm on one side, were clearly intended to resemble the copperpenny pieces of the realm, for which, indeed, they were passed by the importer. We clearly showed the illegality of this step, which drew from Councillor Annand (for he was the importer and utterer) an advertisement denying that they could be construed into an imitation of current coin of the realm, any risk of this description having been guarded against by the name of the firm, of which he is a partner, having been placed on one side".

The "Melbourne Daily News" went on to say:

"A lame excuse is better than none, and although we look on this as a very lame one ideed, the old gentleman will have the opportunity of testing its validity, we being in a position to state that proceedings have already been commenced against him for uttering and putting off the coinage alluded to, under the section of the Act we previously quoted, which declares the offence a high Misdemeanor".

When I read other issues of this paper I found quite a number of other attacks on Councillor Annand and I can only assume that this particular one was just one of many for a variety of reasons. "The Argus" continued to support the issue of private tokens. On the 14th January, 1850, they wrote:

"COPPER TOKENS. These useful articles continue exceedingly scarce. The supply imported by Annand, Smith & Co. has all been exhausted. These gentlemen inform us that so highly was the accommodation, afforded by these, appreciated that they had application from all quarters of Melbourne, and also from Geelong and other distant places". (1)

One odd thing about these tokens is that some early cataloguers leave out the comma between "Annand" and "Smith" so that it is listed under "S" instead of "A". One reason for this might be because the firm was originally founded by Smith and Annand joined him later, becoming the senior partner. (2)

Robert Smith had come out from Scotland and opened a store off Bourke Lane (now Little Bourke Street) in 1847. He was joined a little later by George Annand and the firm moved to new premises in Little Collins Street. From here they moved to the corner of Collins and Queen Streets.

Smith was a man who could never keep a partner. Before opening his grocery business he had been in a brief partnership with Robert Fulton, Ironfounders, in Flinders Street, between King and Spencer Streets; this business was known as the "Fulton Foundry". They repaired the treadmill in the old Melbourne Gaol. (3). I have also come across advertisements in the daily papers for "Smith, Adamson & Co., successors to Annand, Smith & Co." (4) The grocery business with Adamson did not last very long either for advertisements in the newspapers of 1852 refer to "Smith, Roche and Co., wholesale grocers of Flinders Street". (5) Smith finally found a partner who absorbed his name and business - "Jasper McKenzie & Co." Robert Smith stayed with this firm for some years until he left Victoria to live in New Zealand. He died near Wellington on November 18th, 1855.

George Annand was also a very active man in both the business world and in public life. He was a member of the City Council for five years (1847-52) and was elected to the Legislative Council in 1853; this was after he had severed connections with Smith. In order to remain a City Councillor, and be elected to the Legislative Council, obviously there had been no convictions for his "issue of tokens of an illegal nature". He died at the age of 56 (or 58) at "Bon Accord Villa" in Church Street, Hawthorn. As he was still a comparatively young man at his death there seems no particular reason why the newspapers should have referred to him as "the old gentleman". He had been born at Grange, Banffshire, Scotland, possibly in 1798, and died on 9th January, 1856. He left a widow, Janet, and nine children. (6)

Although Dr. Andrews and Renniks only mention two types of tokens there were three issues all basically the same; the differences are in the number of leaves and berries on the olive branch in the right hand, and in the weights and diameters. The first token has eleven leaves while the second and third have fourteen. The issued weights varied between 247 and 260.5 grains (16.01 and 16.88 grams). (7)

In 1949 the Numismatic Association of Victoria issued a commemorative medal which had this token as its central feature. The medal was struck by Thomas Stokes. The original tokens were made by the Soho Mint and Ralph Heaton & Sons, Birmingham. (8)

Notes and references.

1. The various newspapers as quoted; photocopies of the articles were obtained from seeking through the files of the La Trobe Library.

2. Stainsfield, and others, classify it under "S" and also describe the Australasian tokens under localities rather than a straight alphabetical listing. If you didn't know the locality you were lost. Because of this fault one cataloguer listed the Hosie (Melbourne) token under: "Scotland - Miscellaneous"!

3. When Fulton and Smith were in partnership they gave a donation of 100 guineas each to "The Australian League" which was a body opposed to the settlement of convicts, and freed convicts, in Victoria. George Annand joined the League later and became a councillor of it in February, 1851. It was in 1848 that the Fulton Foundry repaired the treadmill in the gaol at a fee of £120. J. McFarlane, the token issuer of Elizabeth Street, was a carrier with them. Before opening the iron foundry Fulton and Smith had been grocers in Elizabeth Street; this is one of many examples of traders changing their occupations.

4. I think that this is the same Adamson who was briefly a partner in the firm of "Adamson, Watts, McKechnie & Co." Later Walter Adamson was a partner with Findlay who had been with the firm of "Crombie, Clapperton & Findlay" in Collins Street. This is another example of businessmen switching from one line of trade (and partnerships) to another in rapid succession.

5. The firm of Roche, in the grocery line, survived until after World War II in Elizabeth Street.

6. The Melbourne City Council records and "A Biographical Register of the Victorian Parliament - 1859-1900" by Thomson & Searle. In the records of his birth (date uncertain) his mother is listed as Janet Annand and his father is given as: "Unknown; said to have been a farmer - first name Joseph". I find it interesting that he should have married a woman with the same first name as his mother. The partnership with Smith did not last very long as in the directories of 1851 he was listed as "merchant, 74 Lonsdale Street, west, and an office in Queen Street".

7. The information about the different issues was found by Anthony Gunstone who found cardboard impressions of many

tokens in the Birmingham Public Library. He wrote about them in Spink & Sons "Numismatic Circular" in 1977 and 1978. A further article dealing with these issues was by David Price and appeared as a reprint in "The Australian Coin Review" in June 1982, where the respective sizes, weights and estimations of numbers struck, together with dates of manufacture and shipment, were all quoted. The first issue was 15,400 pieces, the second must have been about 15,040 and the third striking a little less. Apart from the advantages of free advertising of the firm there would have been a profit margin of nearly 40% over initial costs. The design of Britannia was from one made by C. H. Kuchler for the Soho Mint about forty years earlier; his name was ground off the die and replaced with the initials "H & S" for Heaton & Sons (now known as The Mint, Birmingham).

8.   For information on this medal see my article in "The Austra- lian Numismatist", the journal of the Numismatic Association of Victoria, for March 1979, which deals with the medal productions of that body.

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                     FIRST MEDALLIC PORTRAIT

        Early Australian commemorative medallions immortalised either events in colonial development, such as the cessation of transportation, or people who were born overseas - royalty, governors, Sunday School founders and the like.

        The first person born in Australia depicted on a numismatic piece was an aborigine known as "Ricketty Dick" (C.1873/1 et. seq.) He used to camp in the Rose Bay area of Sydney on what was then (up to 1863) swampland, and was apparently well known; but his real name must have been unknown or unpron- ounceable, and this landmark piece is therefore incomplete.

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