

## IV.

## DIE INTERCHANGES BETWEEN SCOTTISH MINTS.

BY C. H. DAKERS, F.S.A.SCOT.

Mediaeval Scotland was not rich and consequently there was no great demand for a metallic medium of exchange. What demand there was, was met to a great extent by importing foreign money, largely that of England. This may be clearly seen in such hoards as the Montrave, in which the English outnumbered the Scottish coins in the proportion of about 20 to 1.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the Scottish portion of this hoard, moreover, dates from the end of Alexander III.'s reign when the long-single-cross coinage was struck; which coinage is the commonest of all the Scottish series. In the circumstances it is not surprising that the output of the Scottish mint should have been scanty, and that the specimens which have survived to our times should serve to show how few dies there were actually in use. Even the extensive series of the Alexander III. long-single-cross pennies, which mark the most prosperous period of Scottish mediæval history, can frequently be identified as being from the same dies as those illustrated in Burns. Scottish numismatists are peculiarly fortunate in that Burns published his invaluable work at a time when illustrations could be properly and exactly produced, and in that he had a patron who could afford to have them so done. As a result, the student is able to make a study of die impressions with comparative ease. Often he can establish the exact identity of his own coins with those in Burns's plates.

The subject of the transfer of dies from mint to mint is an interesting one. There are a number of possible explanations for these transfers: (a) The movements of the King and Court; (b) a tour of the various mints made by the chief moneyer; (c) the opening or reopening of a mint and the supply from another mint of dies already used there; (d) the closing of a mint and the return of useable dies to the issuing office.

I have not thought it worth while considering the suggestion that coins with the names of different mints were struck at the capital, or elsewhere than at the towns whose names they bear. As there were so many issues which were confined wholly or in part to Edinburgh, it is

<sup>1</sup> So far is this from being exceptional that the proportion is often nearer 30 to 1.

extremely unlikely that dies with the names of the provincial mints would be sunk if they were not actually to be used at the places indicated. Nor have I attempted the impossible task of tracing the transfer of reverse dies, though some altered or partially altered reverse dies are known. What I have done is to note cases of the transfer of obverse dies from one mint to another, and I now submit a number of such instances which have come to my notice.

The first example of a transfer of an obverse die given by Burns is that of an Alexander III. long-double-cross penny. The die in question is that of the obverse of figs. 89 and 89A,<sup>1</sup> the reverses of which he reads as **WĀ(LTĒR) BĒRWIH**<sup>2</sup> and **RĀINĀLD DĒ PĒR**, respectively.<sup>3</sup> This transfer would seem to be most easily accounted for by (c), as the mint of Perth, active under William the Lion, did not (so far as we know) strike during the reign of Alexander II., under which we must include the coins of small module with the name of William.<sup>4</sup> The transferred die is Style I. of Burns, so that a die appears to have been sent to Perth on the reopening of that mint, which continued to strike all three styles of head. Berwick being the principal mint would be best able to spare the necessary machinery to give Perth a start.

There follow two curious series, namely, the obverse of fig. 119, which is associated with reverses of **DVN**, **MVN**, and **FRĒS**, and the obverse of fig. 127, which is associated with the same three reverses, and in addition with a reverse of **GLA**.<sup>5</sup> In each case the moneyer is Walter. All these mints, with the exception of **MVN** (Montrose), which had the smallest output, are represented also in the earlier issues, so that we cannot accept the view that a moneyer was sent on tour to open new mints. The only explanation which seems reasonable is that Walter was the King's moneyer, and that either on a royal progress through the principal towns of the kingdom (a), or when sent on a special visitation to inspect the mints (b), he struck the coins of these mints with his own obverse die.

With Class V. of the long-double-cross series the naming of mint towns comes temporarily to an end, except for a revival in the reign of John Baliol, and then only in the case of St Andrews.

All the money of Robert I. is without mint-names, and there is only one type of reverse—that is, mullets of five points—which is probably from the mint of Edinburgh.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper the abbreviation "fig." refers to the plates in Burns.

<sup>2</sup> I have a fuller specimen which shows that the name is **WĀRTĒR**.

<sup>3</sup> *Coinage of Scotland*, vol. i. pp. 126 f.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, figs. 66B ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 146 ff.

Aberdeen begins to strike again in the reign of David II., but not with the groats of his first type, which are ornamented with rosettes in the legend, or with pellets or rosettes in the angles of the tressure. Burns illustrates (fig. 255) an Aberdeen groat with the plain tressure, and states that two Edinburgh groats with the same obverse die were found in the Montrave hoard. I have also a specimen with the obverse of fig. 262B (Edinburgh) and the reverse of fig. 276 (Aberdeen). This suggests that, after being used in Edinburgh, the dies were sent to Aberdeen on the reopening of the mint there. Aberdeen ceased to strike after the second variety of the intermediate head, when the dies may have been returned to Edinburgh, as I have a mule with the obverse of fig. 275 (Aberdeen) and an Edinburgh reverse. This would be an instance of the fourth of my possible explanations (*d*).

In the reign of Robert II., when Perth and Dundee <sup>1</sup> reappear as mints, Burns notes two interchanges of dies, namely, a half-groat with an obverse as fig. 326 (Edinburgh) and a reverse as fig. 326A (Dundee), and a penny with an obverse as Burns's No. 6 (Edinburgh) and a reverse as his No. 13 (Perth). Since Perth and Edinburgh seem to have had a more or less equal output in this—and the earlier part of the next—reign, it is difficult to decide which was the principal mint, but the muled Dundee-Edinburgh half-groat cited above would point to Edinburgh as the place from which the dies were supplied. I have recently been fortunate enough to secure three half-groats which form an interesting combination. The obverse is in each case from the same die as fig. 330A with a small B behind the head. The first of these half-groats is of Edinburgh, the second of Perth, and the third of Dundee. This must, I think, afford an example of my second explanation (*b*), as it seems clear that the King's moneyer Bonachio, Bonagius, or Bonage took his die in person from mint to mint in process of re-starting them.

It is more difficult to theorise on the die-transfers during the reign of Robert III. The sequence of the types here is not regular; while Edinburgh struck all the coins of the plain and pellet-pointed tressure types, the earlier issues of the trefoil-pointed tressure groats are exclusively of the Perth mint. The first example given by Burns of the interchange of dies is that of the groats fig. 373C (Edinburgh) and fig. 373D (Perth), which have a common "round-faced" obverse. This obverse belongs to the earliest type of trefoil-pointed tressure groats struck by Edinburgh. It may, therefore, have been sent from Perth as a model for the Edinburgh mint, when the latter changed its type after discontinuing the pellet-pointed issue—probably on the death of Bonagius,

<sup>1</sup> That is, if DVN on the coins of Alexander III. is taken to be Dundee.

whose particular type (the Bonage groat) had the pellet-pointed tressure.<sup>1</sup> In the case of Aberdeen and Edinburgh there seems to have been some confusion in the issuing of dies, for the Edinburgh groats Burns's 41i and 41j (fig. 401B) both have an obverse with the characteristic crescent-stops of Aberdeen. The confusion seems to have been rectified later, as this obverse die appears again with its correct reverse at Aberdeen (fig. 401). Another groat (fig. 401D), however, has an obverse which was originally made for its correct reverse (with : stops) of Edinburgh and later was transferred to Aberdeen, where the points were changed to crescents in such a slipshod manner as to obliterate the initial cross and at the same time leave the last group of pellets before **SCOTTOR** untouched (fig. 401E). This carelessness in the mint reflects the chaotic state into which the currency was falling. The reign opened with a series of well-struck groats with their halves, pennies, and halfpence, and closed with barbarously executed groats of light weight. Very few of these light groats have survived, and Burns gives no example of the transfer of dies such as we might have expected on the closing of the Perth mint and the opening of a new one at Dumbarton.

A further series of interchanges appears in the groats of James I. The first example is that of an obverse die used at Linlithgow (fig. 464) which belongs to the first variety of the fleur-de-lis groats. It would appear to have been returned to Edinburgh on the change to the second variety and to have been found too good to be discarded, since it has been used for an Edinburgh groat (fig. 473) which is a mule, having a reverse of the newly issued second variety. The same thing has occurred in the case of fig. 475, an Edinburgh groat of the second variety, the obverse die of which seems to have been returned from Perth (fig. 490A). This was the last Perth groat with the usual type of lis-and-saltire stops.

We come next to a more complicated transfer. Burns says: "In the introduction of crescents into the ornamentation the Stirling and the related Perth fleur-de-lis groats of the second variety resemble the Robert III. groats of Aberdeen . . . strongly suggesting that during what appears to have been a suspension of the Aberdeen mint under James I. the moneyers from Aberdeen may have been placed in charge of the Stirling and Perth mints."<sup>2</sup> I agree with this theory, but consider that these mints were taken over successively. Subsequent to the return to Edinburgh of the die of fig. 490A the Perth mint was taken over by the Aberdeen die-sinkers. But after the striking of the groats fig. 490B,

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the above I have acquired a groat with the obverse of fig. 370D but with its correct reverse of Perth; that is saltire and pellet stops. The Edinburgh groat 370D has a curious reverse with large lis stops which does not belong to this obverse.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 24.

it was closed and the dies transferred to Stirling, where groats (fig. 491) were struck from the same obverse die and the issue of crescent-stopped groats continued. Perth, as far as we know, suspended work at that period. It is not represented in the third and fourth issues of the fleur-de-lis groats nor in the first issue of the crown-and-pellet groats.

During the reign of James II., while the third variety of the fleur-de-lis groats was being struck, the mints of Stirling and Linlithgow were both closed. We have an example of my fourth explanation of interchange (*d*) in the re-use of the obverse die of a Linlithgow groat (fig. 502) at Edinburgh (fig. 501). I have also in my collection a groat of this issue struck at Edinburgh, which has on the obverse the large lis stops (fig. 503) and on the reverse the crown initial-mark, which appears only on the Stirling groats. This suggests that a pair of Stirling dies was returned to Edinburgh and furbished up for continued use there.

Edinburgh is the only mint known to have struck the fourth (and last) variety of the fleur-de-lis and the first variety of the crown-and-pellet groats.

The second issue of the crown-and-pellet groats provides us with an example for which it is less easy to account. There is a Roxburgh specimen (fig. 548) of the second type of these groats, and the same obverse die as was used for the Roxburgh groat appears again in use at Edinburgh (fig. 549A) and Perth (fig. 549). Burns, who examined the coins carefully, was of opinion that of the three striking the Roxburgh one is the clearest and must be the earliest.<sup>1</sup> I think that we have here a case covered by the fourth of my explanations (*d*)—the moneyer following the King and Court to the siege of Roxburgh and sinking special dies. Unfortunately while the King, with characteristic Stuart interest in science, "more curious than became the majesty of ane King did stand near hand by quhair the artylliarie were dischaired his thigh bone was dung in tuo by ane peice of ane misframed gune that brak in the schutting . . . and died hastilie thereafter." The castle was, however, taken, and both it and the town were razed by the Scots. It is probable that no more dies of this type were made after the death of the King, and that, in using up those that already existed, this obverse was employed at Edinburgh and Perth, the latter mint being finally closed after this issue.

Berwick was returned to Scotland in 1461, and its series of coins under James III. begins with a groat (fig. 570A) from the same obverse die as the Tod and Levingstoun Edinburgh groat (fig. 568). It seems probable that this die, which is found in conjunction with three Edinburgh reverses, was sent down to Berwick when the coinage there was re-started. The

<sup>1</sup> *Coinage of Scotland*, p. 87.

question of the half-groat of Berwick illustrated by Burns as fig. 561A is not so easy to answer. It is curious that two of the known half-groats of the first and second series of the six-pointed mullet groats should be of Berwick and that only one Edinburgh<sup>1</sup> specimen should have come to light. Scottish half-groats are, however, so rare that it is difficult to theorise about them. Indeed in the Perth hoard,<sup>2</sup> while the English groats numbered 70 and the Scottish 336, there were 183 English half-groats as against only 18 Scottish ones. Even so, 12 half-groats of James II.'s second variety (crown and pellets) gave us two mints unknown to Burns—Aberdeen and Perth.<sup>3</sup> The explanation of the smallness of the issue of half-groats, as such, lies, I think, in the fact that the James II. crown-and-pellet groats were valued at double the amount of the fleur-de-lis series which preceded them. The latter had not been withdrawn, but kept that proportionate value when the money was cried up or down.<sup>4</sup> Thus, when we say that 336 groats were found in the Perth hoard, we are including coins struck as groats but circulating as the halves of later issues. On that hypothesis there would be 112 fleur-de-lis groats to be subtracted from the groats in the Perth hoard and added to the real halves, making a total of 130 halves. This hoard, it should be added, gave us nothing new in James III. half-groats.

In the second series of six-pointed mullet groats Berwick uses two obverse dies each of which appears also with several reverses at Edinburgh. These are fig. 588 (Edinburgh) with a crown of five fleur-de-lis, and fig. 591 (Edinburgh) with a crown of three (Berwick, figs. 588A and 593). There is, in fact, only one Berwick groat (fig. 589) which has an obverse which does not appear also for Edinburgh. The Berwick groat last mentioned is also of a distinctive style,<sup>5</sup> and is the commonest of the series. It would appear that, so far as the issue of groats was concerned, either Berwick had to depend for the most part on used dies sent down from Edinburgh, or the Edinburgh and Berwick mints were worked alternately by certain of the moneyers.

Berwick was lost again in 1483, while Aberdeen reopened to strike the three-quarter-face-left crown-and-pellet groats of James III.—IV. As might be expected, Aberdeen begins working with an obverse die that had been used at Edinburgh (fig. 637) and strikes two groats with this obverse (fig. 645).

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings*, vol. lvi. (1921–2), p. 324. The five-pointed mullet half-groats are of Edinburgh only.

<sup>2</sup> *Num. Chron.*, 1921, pp. 294 ff.

<sup>3</sup> A specimen from the Aberdeen mint has been published in 1905 (*Proceedings*, vol. xl. (1904–5), p. 14).

<sup>4</sup> Their continued use as half-groats may account for the very poor condition of the majority of specimens.

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the die was made locally.

This is, with a single exception, the last occasion on which the name of a provincial mint appears on the Scottish coinage. The exception is the use of Stirling for the striking of bawbees during the reign of Mary. It is possible that there may have been interchanges of obverse dies in the case of these bawbees, but they are an extensive issue and nothing of the kind has yet been noticed.

Here my list of die transfers ends. Although I cannot claim to have produced any fresh material, I have at least brought all the available material together; and it is interesting to note that from David II. to James IV. practically every issue in which the provincial mints have taken part has shown instances of such interchanges. The solitary exception is the Edinburgh-Aberdeen-Dumbarton issue of light groats of Robert III., the rarity of which makes their study difficult. In suggesting explanations I have broken new ground and have, I hope, thrown a little fresh light on the workings of the Scottish mint.