

THE DIPPLE AND BALGONY FINDS OF FOURTEENTH-CENTURY SCOTTISH COINS

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IN February 1968, through the kind offices of Mr. Peter Mitchell, I was able to acquire three fourteenth-century Scottish coins together with various papers relating to the small hoard, found a century previously, to which they belonged. The coins are all groats, two of David II and one of Robert II. The papers consist of a letter, two envelopes, and two pieces of paper used for wrapping the coins.

One of the envelopes, which is off-white, measures about $4\frac{3}{4}$ by $3\frac{3}{4}$ in., and is torn at the top right corner without affecting the writing on it. The other, blue and measuring about $4\frac{3}{4}$ by $2\frac{3}{4}$ in., has lost its left-hand edge. The inscriptions on them are:

Off-white envelope

Old Coins
from
Dipple
James Cushny.

Blue envelope

2 Sent to Duke of Richmond
3 Kept by myself (within)
[5 given to Elgin Museum
] Coins Silver
] found at Dipple
[?in] excavating foundation
[?of] Old Kirk Sept 1868

Both wrapping papers, which are about 4 by 3 in. in size, show impressions of the groats which were inside them. They are inscribed:

Two of David
"Villa Edinburgh"

3 of Robert
"Villa de Perth"

Presumably two of
these were given to
The Duke of Richmond.

The letter is on the first two sides of a folded piece of writing paper, with the address embossed in black Gothic lettering:

The Manse, Birnie

ELGIN 10 October

My dear Sir

Of the ten coins found at
Dipple I have returned five,
viz 2 of David and
3 of Robert. — and
have retained

1 of Robert "Villa *Dunde*"
1 — D° "Villa *ED* Perth"
1 — D° "Villa *DE* Perth"
1 — D° "Villa Edinburgh"
1 — David "Villa Edinburgh"

They would form a good
addition to the coins in the

Elgin Museum; but if you
desire to have any of them
let me know —

Ever yours faithfully
George Gordon

Rev J Cushny

The inscriptions on the David wrapping paper and above the line on the Robert paper are apparently in the same hand and written with the same thin nib as Gordon's letter, and the coins were presumably wrapped and enclosed with it. The words below the line on the Robert wrapping are in a different hand. The three lines at the top of the blue envelope are smaller, and written more thickly, than the rest of the inscriptions on the envelopes, which may have been written by Cushny himself; they could be by the same hand, however, and the text itself suggests so.

George Gordon was Minister of Birnie from 1832 to 1889 and was a distinguished naturalist and geologist. He was also something of a numismatist, as is evidenced by his report of the Cauldhame hoard of 1881 in the *Proceedings* of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland for the following year.

The parishes of Dipple and Essil were united in 1731 to form Speymouth parish, of which John (*sic*) Cushny was Minister from 1848 to 1871; in the latter year he was presented to Huntly by the Duke of Richmond and continued as Minister there until 1875. I am indebted to Mr. Robert B. K. Stevenson for this information, which is found in the volumes of *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*; the *Fasti* seem to be in error as regards Cushny's Christian name.

Dipple lies on the left bank of the Spey, opposite Fochabers. Mr. Ian Keillar, Hon. Secretary of the Elgin Society, has been kind enough to visit Dipple for me and reports that the kirkyard is a neat, round, walled enclosure (NJ 329580) set in a field just to the left of the unclassified road which runs to Fochabers. The church was demolished in 1868, although there was no excavation as such. According to Groome's *Gazetteer of Scotland*, 1885, 'at the lychgate of the church of Dipple stood a small building known as the House of the Holy Ghost. Round this building funeral parties would always bear the corpse following the course of the sun; nor could they be driven from that practice till the house was demolished.' The Ordnance Survey 6-in. sheet shows the enclosure of the churchyard, with 'Church of Dipple (site of)' and 'Holy Ghost House (site of)' beside it, and above 'Silver coins of the Reign of/Robert II found A.D. 1868'.

When the coins were found in September 1868 they appear to have been sent to Gordon who, as set out in his letter, retained five for the Elgin Museum, returning the others to Cushny. Probably soon after, Cushny gave two of those returned to him to his patron, the (sixth) Duke of Richmond (a prominent Conservative politician and land-owner who was born in 1818, succeeded in 1860, and died in 1903). Mr. Keillar says that the Elgin Museum, which is a private one and voluntarily run, has been in some disorder and only one Scottish hammered groat survives. This is recorded as having been found on the supposed site of St. Ninian's Chapel, near Temple Pier, Drumnadrochit, in January 1932, and was presented by the finder, Mr. J. S. Lime, Gordon Street, Elgin. It is a Perth groat of Robert II, reading *Villa ed*, and if its provenance had been unrecorded it might easily have been assumed to be the one so described in Gordon's letter—a warning to those who reconstruct long-dispersed hoards.

Cushny's three remaining groats ought to have been two of David and one of Robert, but those which reached me are one of David and two of Robert. It would in fact have been more logical to have given the duke one of each variety returned, rather than two Perth groats of Robert. If the duke did receive an Edinburgh groat of David and a Perth groat of Robert, the three left could be equated with those which are now to hand, but the note on the wrapper, which is not in Gordon's or Cushny's hand, would have been in error.

On this assumption, the actual disposition of the coins may therefore have been :

	<i>Elgin Museum</i>	<i>Duke of Richmond</i>	<i>Rev. James Cushny</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>David II</i>				
Edinburgh	1	1	1	3
<i>Robert II</i>				
Dundee	1	1
Edinburgh	1	1
Perth (<i>de</i>)	1	1	2	4
„ (<i>ed</i>)	1	1
	—	—	—	—
Total	5	2	3	10

The contents of the Dipple hoard may be listed as follows, E.M. denoting coins retained for Elgin Museum, now lost; D.R. coins given to the Duke of Richmond; and J.C. those retained by Cushny:

1. David II, Edinburgh groat; heavy coinage, third head (Stewart C); tressure of six and a half arcs; stops on obverse double crosses; ornamental A's; J.C. (Pl. VI, no. 17). Wt. 4.242 g.
2. —, —, issue and details unrecorded; E.M.
3. As no. 2; D.R. (?)
4. Robert II, Dundee groat; E.M.
5. —, Edinburgh groat; E.M.
6. —, Perth groat; *Villa ed Perth*; E.M.
- 7, 8. —, —; *Villa de Perth*; six arcs, obverse stops double crosses, *Scottorum* (cf. Burns fig. 317); both (?) J.C. (Pl. VI, nos. 18 and 19). Wts. 3.811 g. and 3.688 g.
- 9, 10. —, —, —; details unrecorded; E.M. and D.R.

The three surviving coins, nos. 1, 7, and 8, are relatively little worn, with a dark tone. They all have small green specks of corrosion. They have not been cleaned so that a comparison of appearance could be made if any possible representatives of the missing seven should be traced.

The proportion of Robert to David groats (7:3) suggests a burial date well into the reign of Robert II (1371–90), much later, for example, than that of the recent hoard from Balleny in Co. Down,¹ which had five heavy and fourteen light groats of David to eleven of Robert II. The number of five Perth groats of Robert II in relation to one of Edinburgh is remarkable, since hoards of the period² tend to have a predominance of Edinburgh coins of this denomination; but the total number of coins found at Dipple is so small that it would be unwise to draw any very firm conclusions from the proportions. There is, however, some support for the lateness of the date of loss within Robert's reign in the presence of a coin of Dundee. This mint was only active for a very short time, probably on a single occasion. Such few chronological indicators as there are within the Robert profile coinage suggest that Dundee's issues belong towards the end of the series. They are die-linked with those of Edinburgh and Perth, in one case with both by means of a single obverse die. It seems possible that the occasion for the opening of the Dundee mint in close relationship with the other two may have been the aftermath of the invasion by Richard II in 1385 when all three places were burnt by the English;

¹ *BNJ* xxxiii (1964), pp. 94–106.

xix; Thompson 148) and Craigie (*ibid.*, no. xxii;

² e.g. Balleny, Neville's Cross (*ibid.*, p. 104, no. Thompson 104).

an entry in the Chamberlain's account for 1386, recording receipt of £21. 1s. 10*d.* from the Keeper of the Mint of Dundee, is in accord with this.¹

The Dipple hoard does not seem to have been known to modern numismatists. Another hoard containing late fourteenth-century Scottish groats which escaped notice in the list appended to the Balleny report has been brought to my attention by Mr. Hugh Pagan. The *New Monthly Magazine*, which in the 1820s contained a useful digest of archaeological news items from the daily press, had the following entry in the year 1823:

Sir David Moncreiffe, Bart. has presented the Literary and Antiquarian Society of Perth with a very handsome donation of two beautiful gold coins of Robert II; two gold (St. Andrew's) of Robert III; and six silver coins of Robert III—two of the latter struck at Perth, and all in the finest preservation. They were turned up by the plough on the farm of Balgony, in the parish of Abernethy, belonging to Sir David.²

This passage is probably to be connected with the two entries under 1822 in Lindsay's list³ of coin hoards from Scotland:

In Perthshire a number of fine gold coins were found.

In Perthshire were found a great many groats and half groats of Robert III coined at Edinburgh, Perth, Aberdeen and Dunbarton; it is said 70 varieties of the groats occurred.

The Robert crowns (or St. Andrews), the earliest regular Scottish gold coinage, are now thought to have been struck entirely, or nearly so, under Robert III since they coincide in detail with the front face Robert groats, which date from little if at all before 1390, rather than with the profile groats struck for Robert II. However, in 1822 such crowns were attributed partly to Robert II and partly to Robert III, on the basis of the arrangement adopted by Cardonnel in his *Numismata Scotiae*⁴ of 1786.

Groats were only struck at Dumbarton on one occasion in Scottish history, during the light coinage of Robert III. It may be that their issue was related to the unusual episode of 1400–2, when Walter of Danielston seized the castle and successfully bargained its surrender against his election to the see of St. Andrews.⁵ This would accord well with the numismatic evidence that a reduction in weight took place late in Robert III's reign. Groats were struck at Edinburgh throughout the heavy coinage and in the light coinage, at Perth through most of the heavy coinage but not in its latest phase nor in the light coinage, and at Aberdeen mainly at the end of the heavy coinage (perhaps this mint replaced Perth) but also in the light coinage. The silver coins in the hoard thus suit a date of deposit towards the end of Robert III's reign, in the earliest years of the fifteenth century. One of the crowns attributed by Cardonnel to Robert II is of Robert III's light coinage and this serves to confirm the likely composition of a mixed gold and silver hoard buried during (or just after the end of) the Robert light coinage.

The two hoards may be summarized thus:

DIPPLE (Old Kirk), Moray, Sept. 1868.

10 AR Scottish. Deposit 1385 × 90.

David II. Groats, Edinburgh (3): Heavy Coinage, S. gp. C (1): untraced (2).

Robert II. Groats, Dundee (1), Edinburgh (1), Perth (5).

¹ Stewart, *Scottish Mints* (in Carson, ed., *Mints, Dies and Currency*), pp. 228–9.

² Sir David Moncreiffe of that Ilk, 6th baronet, b. 1788, succeeded 1818, d. 1830.

³ *View of the Coinage of Scotland*, 1845, p. 267.

⁴ Pl. I and pp. 127–9.

⁵ *Scottish Mints*, p. 232.

Discovered in foundations when church was demolished; five coins to Elgin Museum and two to Duke of Richmond, now lost; three to the Revd. James Cushny, now in Stewart collection. Published *BNJ* xl (1971), pp. 57–61.

BALGONY Farm, Abernethy Parish, Perthshire, 1822.

AV and AR Scottish. Deposit c. 1400–6.

Robert III. Gold: crowns (of heavy and light coinage ?) at least 4. Silver (numbers unspecified but ‘70 varieties’): groats of Edinburgh (presumably heavy and light), Perth (heavy coinage, at least 2), Aberdeen (probably heavy, perhaps also light), and Dumbarton (light); half-groats of unspecified mints (only Edinburgh and Perth known).

Discovered in ploughing; four gold and six groats presented by Sir David Moncreiffe to Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society. Published *New Monthly Magazine*, ix (1823), p. 115; Lindsay, *View of the Coinage of Scotland*, Cork, 1845, p. 267; *BNJ* xl (1971), pp. 57–61.



MONT ST. MICHEL HOARD



MISCELLANEA



DIPPLE HOARD

