THE FIRST ISSUE OF DAVID II

By H. J. DAKERS

(See frontispiece)

Of the coinage of David II there are two distinct issues, the first consisting of sterlings, halfpennies, and farthings only, the second, like that of Edward III, his English contemporary, of groats, half-groats, and pennies, all with the name of the mint of origin on the reverse, and probably of half-pennies and farthings also, though none of these with the mint name are now known. His reign is notable in the history of the Scottish coinage not only for the increase in the number of denominations in the currency, which should have brought it into line with the English, but also for the beginning of the progressive deterioration in the standard of the Scottish coins which resulted in the loss of parity between the two national currencies. So that we find in the reign of James VI two coins almost indistinguishable from one another, one being an English penny, the other a Scottish shilling.

David Bruce succeeded his father in 1329 and was crowned at Scone in 1331, being then seven years of age: in accordance with the treaty of 1328 recognizing the independence of Scotland, he had been married to Joanna, sister of Edward III. In 1332 Edward Baliol invaded the country supported by a number of the disinherited Scottish Barons, and the young king was sent to France for safety. He remained there for ten years and the struggle against Baliol on his behalf was carried on by regents appointed by the Scottish Parliament. Such success as Baliol achieved rested mainly upon English support, which he secured by handing over Berwick to Edward III together with a large part of the country between Tweed and Forth. When Edward began in 1337 to concentrate his efforts upon the war with France, this support failed him, and ultimately he had to leave Scotland. In 1341 David was recalled to the throne, which he occupied for five years, but in 1346, having invaded England as an ally of France, he was defeated and captured at the Battle of Neville's Cross. He was a prisoner in England for eleven years, and although he was prepared to buy his release by
paying the same price that Baliol had paid for English support, this arrangement was declined by the Scottish people and vetoed by the French, the government by a regency continued, and it was not until 1357 that he was allowed to return to Scotland, his ransom being fixed at 100,000 marks (£66,666. 13s. 4d. = modern £165,001. 9s. 4d.).

The period during which Edward Baliol was in Scotland has left no visible trace upon the coinage unless, as Burns suggests, some of the numerous sterlings with the name of John were issued by him.

With regard to the second or groat issue of David II, there is no doubt that it took place in or after 1357 on his return from captivity. The first or sterling issue with the name of David therefore is all that we have to cover periods of the the first regency, the short reign (1341–6), and the captivity in England: there is, however, reason to believe that it cannot have been issued much before 1351.

Of the sterling currency there are two very distinct issues apart from a number of minor variations. The first of these shows on the obverse a larger head, better executed than on any of the others, larger lettering on both sides, SCOTO-RVM with one T and the Roman M (Frontispiece, fig. 1): specimens of this variety are not common. The second is represented by the large majority of the coins which show on the obverse heads which are more or less grotesque, and have smaller lettering with a double T in Scottorum and the Lombardic m (Frontispiece, figs. 5, 6). Both issues read Rex Scot(t)orum on the reverse and have mullets of six points in the quarters. Mules combining the two issues are found (Frontispiece, figs. 2, 3).

Burns, describing the two varieties, says that the lettering on the second is smaller and not so well executed. It is difficult to agree with the latter part of this description. A close examination of the legends shows that on the first issue some, at least, of the letters were still being built up by the use of simple punches, wedges, bars, and crescents: this is obvious, especially in the letter π of which in one specimen shown the components are very ill adjusted, whereas the π on the second issue is a neat slightly peak-topped letter obviously from a single punch. This change to the use of punches representing complete letters, which Mr. Lawrence notes as appearing on the English sterlings from 1351 on-
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wards, is an additional point separating the two varieties of David *Rex Scot(t)orum* sterlings.

There is a letter from Edward III addressed to the sheriff of Northumberland dealing with this sterling issue of David II, 12 March 1355–6, of which I give the following translation: "Although the ancient money of Scotland used to be of the same weight and alloy as was our sterling money of England and therefore had currency in our realm of England, now nevertheless a certain coinage, said to conform to the standard of the old coins, which is of less weight and inferior alloy, has recently been struck (de novo est cussa) in the said realm of Scotland and passes current in our realm . . . ". He goes on to say that any one in whose hands it is found is to be arrested and the money forfeited; but it may be treated as bullion, bought as such, melted down and recoined. This is the only documentary evidence for the date of David's *Rex Scot(t)orum* issue, but it does help us to fix that date. The standard weight of the English penny during the period of David's captivity, though it had been reduced from 22 1/2 gr., was still 20 gr. up to 1351 when the penny of 18 gr. was introduced, and it is reasonable to suppose that, if the David sterlings of an average weight of about 16 1/2 gr. had been current before that date, they would have been condemned long before 1355. The first variety of the David *Rex Scot(t)orum* sterlings with larger lettering and the Roman M shows a better weight than the second variety, and it is possible that these represent an issue between 1341 and 1346, after David had returned from France. For the period 1329–41 there can have been no issue with David's name. Burns's suggestion is that certain of the numerous sterlings with the name of John may have been issued by his son Edward during this period.

Burns's comment upon the proclamation of Edward III is as follows: "They [i.e. the sterlings of David II] are of defective weight though not, in all cases at least, of defective quality, as shown by the assay made for the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland of a specimen from the Montrave find, the quality of which was represented as 11 oz. 2 dwt. fine—exactly the English standard." Burns weighed 19 coins from this hoard which gave the average weight of 16 1/16 gr.

1 Ruding (under date 1355), Cochran-Patrick, *Records of the Coinage of Scotland*, vol. i, p. 6.
against an average of $17\frac{99}{104}$ gr. for the English pennies in
the same hoard. I have weighed 29 specimens which give
an average of $16\frac{1}{2}$ gr.: these, however, include 3 of the first
variety which weigh 18, 17, 19\frac{1}{2} gr.

There was therefore justification for Edward’s attack as
there was a deficiency, comparatively trifling in this case,
but the beginning of a disastrous process of deterioration
leading in the end to a penny which contained a mere trace
of silver. The groats also were reduced in weight, but not
debased in quality to anything like the same extent.

The following Act of James III, 1467, fixing the rates at
which the various coins current in Scotland were to be
valued, shows the resulting change in the relation between
the groat and the penny: “The old English groat (60 gr.)
shall pass for 10d., the new English groat of Edward IV,
(48 gr.) 12d., the ‘spurrit’ groat (David II and Robert II) 16d.,
the ‘BORAGE’ (probable corruption of Bonage, Robert III)
12d., the old English penny 3d., the groat of the crown
(James II, c. 55 gr.) 14d., the groat of the fleur-de-lis (James I,
c. 33 gr.) 8d.” In 1358 David II is said to have gone to
London in person and petitioned Edward III that the coins
of England and Scotland might be interchangeably current
in both kingdoms on equal terms. The historian (Knyghton)
who makes this statement says that “in consideration of
the great humility of the King of Scotland his request was
granted”. 1 This parity, if it was ever realized, did not last
long. The ban on Scottish money was renewed in 1367 and
1372, and in 1373, owing to the collection by the Scots of
English money for recoining into their own currency, 3d.
English was declared equal to 4d. Scots. In 1390 the Com­
mons demanded that all Scottish money be utterly removed
from England and the king compromised by reducing Scottish
money to half its nominal value.

With the groat coinage of David II, which began in 1357
on his return from England, this paper is not immediately
concerned: it does not appear that the first or sterling coinage
can have been issued before 1341. For the period 1329-47
Burns puts forward the suggestion that coins may have
been issued by Edward Baliol in his father’s name, and any
suggestion of his is worth examining.

There are two distinct varieties of the Baliol sterlings which

1 Ruding under Edward III, 1358.
Burns defines as those of “rough” (Frontispiece, figs. 9, 10) and those of “smooth” (Frontispiece, fig. 11) surface. The difference between them goes farther than this: the head on the “rough” coins is much less well executed than on the “smooth” and the “smooth” coins have always, so far as I have observed, mullets of five points on the reverse, while the “rough” have mullets of six or a combination of six and five. Moreover, the “rough” issue undoubtedly precedes the “smooth”, as it is closely linked with the last issues of Alexander III (Frontispiece, fig. 8), from which, as Burns remarks, it differs only in the legend. The “rough” issues therefore belong certainly to John Baliol and there are a sufficient number surviving to represent the issues of his short reign. The first issue of the long single cross coins of Alexander III (Frontispiece, fig. 7) was produced with the aid of skilled moneyers, probably from the English mint, and the correspondence between their lettering and that on contemporary English pennies has been indicated by Burns.

The deterioration observable in the last issues of these coins is what one would expect to find when the skilled assistance was withdrawn. That the coins of John Baliol should suddenly improve in style and show affinity with the English coins towards the end of his short reign is very unlikely. Burns’s suggestion is that these “smooth” coins with the name of John were issued by Edward Baliol in his father’s name. Why should he do this? There is certainly one consideration which may explain his action. To issue coins with the legend “Edward Rex Scotorum” at a time when Edward III was obviously renewing the policy of Edward I in interfering with Scottish independence and encroaching upon Scottish territory would have been ambiguous and most impolitic.

It is possible that, during the earlier stages of the national struggle against Edward III and his puppet king, no new coins were issued at all. There must have been a large number of the sterlings of Alexander III still current, not to mention those of John and Robert: and in addition to this it is clear from the evidence of hoards found in Scotland that the number of English sterlings current in the country was very large. In these hoards the English coins outnumber the Scottish by anything from 30 to 80 per cent. It is probable, therefore, that there was sufficient currency for the needs of the country
without any new issue, especially as its commerce must have been greatly reduced by the loss of Berwick.

This leaves the apparent excess in the number of Baliol sterlings unexplained unless we may suppose that the coinage with John’s name was continued by Edward I, during the interval before Robert Bruce established himself as king, at one of the mint towns under English control. It is hardly conceivable that Robert after he became king would continue to issue coins in his rival’s name.

The halfpennies of David II, though more specimens are now known than were known to Burns, are still very rare. Those of them which I have been able to locate, read, with one exception, REX SCOTORVM (M) on the reverse and have DEI: ERAN: REX or DEI (DEAI) ERANAT on the obverse: with two exceptions, they have two mullets of five points on the reverse. All the coins of David’s second or groat issue have mullets of five points: all the sterlings of the first issue have mullets of six points.

There are now two halfpennies known which have the mullets of six points: one of these (Frontispiece, fig. 4) has mullets in two quarters and the letter I in the other two. The letter I appears also on the obverse behind the head. We know that the chief moneyer at the time, when the new (groat) coinage took place, was Jacobus Mulekyn of Florence (in the records “Magister Iacobus”): it is not stated that he was appointed at that time, and if he was working at the mint during the period of the first issue, this I is probably the initial of his name.

This coin has also the Roman M characteristic of the first variety of the sterling issue, and the single T in Scotorum. I think it may safely be assigned to the sterling issue as a halfpenny of the first variety. In the Scottish National Collection there is another specimen showing an obverse similar to this (but without the I) and on the reverse mullets of six points in three quarters, the fourth being plain. This halfpenny also may, I think, be assigned to the first variety.

All the pennies of the groat issue have the name of the mint on the reverse and consequently the word REX appears on the obverse without DEI ERAN or ERANAT, and Burns apparently decided to list all the halfpennies known to him with the first or sterling issue with which they agree in
the reverse legend. However, even in the reign of Robert III, when the mint name was established as the usual reverse of all silver and billon coins, some pennies were struck with the REX SCOTORVM reverse and the change from mullets of six to mullets of five points is perhaps more significant. Some at least of the known halfpennies may be assigned to the groat issue.

It will be seen from the following list of the halfpennies known to me that there are only two obverse legends, DAVID DEI GRATIA and DAVID : DEI : GRAT : REX: of these the first is the appropriate legend for the REX SCOTORVM reverse: the second seems to be muled, as this form of the legend would be more appropriate to a coin with mint name on the reverse. Lindsay mentions (p. 207) a halfpenny said to have appeared in the Martin Sale with reverse VILLA EDINBURGH. This was questioned by Burns and no such coin is now known to exist. However, it is quite probable that halfpennies with the mint name were struck and a specimen may be found at any time. The existence of St. Andrews halfpennies of John Baliol has quite recently been demonstrated by Mr. Shirley Fox and Mr. R. Carlyon-Britton.

DAVID II. HALFPENNIES

D. 1 (Rev. unpublished).  
Frontispiece 12.  
Rev. *rex scotorvm  
Obv. *DAVID : DEI : GRAT : REX

Frontispiece 4.  
Rev. *rex scotorvm  
Obv. *DAVID DEI GRATIA

B. 248.  
Rev. *rex scotorvm  
Obv. *DAVID : DEI : GRAT : REX

Lindsay, pl. 18.  
Rev. *rex scotorvm  
Obv. *DAVID : DEI : GRATIA

Lindsay, pl. 18.  
Rev. *rex scotorvm  
Obv. *DAVID : DEI : GRATIA

*B. 248 A.  
(Cochran Pat-  
rick) Lockett.  
Rev. *avid : scotor

* B. 248 A. Implies the existence of halfpenny with Obv. MONEITA.

REGIS. D.
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Not now known

Snelling, pl. 1. Obv. as Lindsay, pl. 18. 7.
31. Rev. legend as Lindsay, pl. 18. 7.

Mullets of 5, 2nd and 4th, pellets 1st and 3rd.

Snelling, pl. 1. Rev. VILLA EDINBURGH.
32.
Quoted by Rev. VILLA EDINBURGH.

Lindsay (p. 207) as from Martin Sale
but doubted by Burns.

B. = Burns, Coinage of Scotland; D. = Dakers.

Of the farthings of David II Burns describes and illustrates two, one with the usual legends on obverse and reverse (B.M.), the other the very remarkable coin now in the Scottish National Collection (from the Ferguslie Coll.) which has on the obverse MONETA: REGIS: D and on the reverse DAVID SCOTOR. Another specimen from the collection of Mr. Cochran-Patrick has the same reverse muled with the ordinary obverse DAVID DEI GRAHI. In the sale of the Cochran-Patrick Collection there appeared also a halfpenny muled in the same way. From this we may, I think, infer that a halfpenny corresponding to the MONETA REGIS D farthing was struck and may yet be found.