NOTES ON THE VICIT LEO TESTOONS OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

JOAN E. L. MURRAY AND J. K. R. MURRAY

Testoons and half-testoons with the reverse legend *Vicit Leo de Tribu Iuda* were struck in 1560 and 1561. A major division within the 1560 pieces is provided by the form of contraction for *-que* at the end of the obverse inscription, which is an abbreviated version of *Franciscus et Maria Dei Gratia Rex et Regina Francorum Scotorumque*. Initially, this contraction took the form which in this context is usually described as *B*, but which in manuscripts can be seen to be based on the small letter *q*; later in 1560, and on all the 1561 pieces of this type, a capital *Q* was used (with a stroke through the tail, as contraction mark). At the same time there was a change in the form of crown over the shield on the obverse. One of us (J. K. R. M.) has already published an article on this coinage and drawn attention to other changes in the puncheons used for some major features, which do not exactly coincide with the change from *scotor b* to *scotor q*.

The other (J. E. L. M.), in a paper read to the Society in 1976, has argued against dating the introduction of this type to before the death of Mary of Guise, the regent: the treatment of this question below makes some new points as well as recording the previous arguments. In the other parts of this article, two anomalous varieties are discussed, and their approximate positions in the sequence of varieties is determined.

*What Authority Introduced this Type?*

The Scottish Reformation became effective in 1560, as one result of a revolution against French domination. It would not be surprising for these momentous events to be reflected in the coinage, and indeed it is clear that the end of the issues of base billon lions (better known as hardheads) in 1560 was a consequence of the end of the war. For the testoons, however, the documentary evidence is inadequate to determine the date of the change of type and thus the authority responsible for this. Burns implicitly assumed that the change was made during the regency of Mary of Guise, who died on 11 June 1560, but presumably he did not consider the arguments which follow. An important consideration is the isolated and almost powerless position of the regent during 1560, i.e. from 25 March until her death.

A brief survey of the history is necessary to put in context the known events directly affecting the Scottish mint in 1559 to 1560. By May 1559 Perth and Dundee had publicly adhered to the reformed faith. There was increasing militancy, both by the regent’s government, which outlawed the protestant preachers, and by the ‘congregation’, which was joined by further prominent lords when the government garrisoned Perth. In June the insurgents had considerable success, and at the end of the month

---


2. Individual references are given only for details not available in G. Donaldson, *Scotland: James V to James VII* (vol. iii of The Edinburgh History of Scotland), in Chapter 6, 'The Revolution against France and Rome'.
they entered Edinburgh, while the regent retreated to Dunbar. Before 1 July they 'stayed the irons' of the mint, an action which they claimed to be 'for most just causes', because of the quantity and baseness of the hardheads then being struck. The Hopetoun manuscript entitled 'Anent Cunyie ane ample discourss' enables us to assign to 21 July a change of warden and counterwarden (although the gifts of office to the new men were dated in October and November): it seems safe to assume that Walter Mosman and John Gilbert, the two who demitted office, did so out of sympathy with the insurgents. Shortly afterwards a truce was concluded, the agreement to return the coining irons being dated 23 July. John Knox had been appointed minister of Edinburgh, and one of the conditions of the truce was that the capital might choose its own religion.

Although the lords of the congregation withdrew from Edinburgh, they arranged to reassemble their forces in September. Meanwhile the government fortified Leith, and large reinforcements of French troops arrived in August and September. In mid October the insurgents occupied Edinburgh again, now with the duke of Chatellerault (former regent, and next of blood to the queen) as their nominal leader. They declared Mary of Guise (who this time went to Leith for safety) to be suspended from the regency. Their assault on Leith failed and their forces diminished, some being mutinous for lack of pay. They left Edinburgh on 6 November, but previously made preparations for coining their plate, to pay their troops; 'and therethrough David Forrest, John Hart, and others who before had charge of the Cunyie-house, did promise their faithful labours'. These others did not include a willing die-sinker, and James Cokky began that work for fear of his life, according to his own testimony. The types were a cross and crown of thorns on one face and a tablet bearing the words Verbum Dei on the other. Forrest, who was general of the mint, is named by Knox as an adherent as early as 1555: he went to England on 12 November 1559, because of the troubles.

French troops soon took the offensive, but late in January an English fleet in the Forth cut off their communications, and they had to retreat from Fife. Full English help for the insurgents was secured by a treaty concluded at Berwick on 22 February, by which England would intervene for the defence of the liberties of Scotland, i.e. against domination by France but not against the lawful sovereigns of Scotland. On the same grounds, many Scots who were not against the old forms of religion joined the rebellion. Lord Erskine, the keeper of Edinburgh castle, was an important neutral, apparently willing to use his guns against either party if provoked. He agreed, however, to receive the regent, and she moved from Holyrood to the castle on 1 April, after English troops had entered Scotland. Minting operations were presumably transferred to the castle at about the same time, since payments were made for building

---

3 John Knox, History of the Reformation in Scotland (ed. W. C. Dickinson, 1949), i. 193–4. (Hereafter cited as Knox.) From 1558 the hardheads were only 1/24 fine.
4 This manuscript, now in the British Library, is printed in R. W. Cochran-Patrick, Records of the Coinage of Scotland, i. The only relevant pages for the Vicit Leo testoons are 100–1. Footnotes will not be given for subsequent references to these pages of this Hopetoun manuscript.
5 Registrum secreti sigilli regum Scotorum: the Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland, v, nos. 697, 713. (Hereafter cited as RSS.)
6 Cochran-Patrick, op. cit. i. 89.
7 Knox, i. 257.
9 Calendar of State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, i. 265. (Hereafter cited as Cal. SP Scot.)
10 Ibid. 262 and 714.
NOTES ON THE VICIT LEO TESTOONS OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

The English forces besieging Leith met stubborn resistance, but French envoys were already negotiating with the English before the death of Mary of Guise 'removed an obstacle to the conclusion of hostilities'. The treaty of Edinburgh, concluded on 6 July, was between France and England, but at the same time concessions to the Scots were made in the name of Francis and Mary. These gave some legal status to the Protestant-dominated party: a parliament was to be called and a council nominated to govern Scotland. Nearly all the French troops, and the English ones, were to withdraw.

The available bullion records, for the periods which must include the *Vicit Leo* testoons, should be reconsidered in the light of the above events. In round figures, those given in the Hopetoun manuscript, by the mintmaster, are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Bullion (stone)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Acheson</td>
<td>21 July 1559 to 7 June 1560</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hart</td>
<td>'fra the vij of Junij 1561'</td>
<td>741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is obviously some omission in the manuscript, in giving Hart’s dates. They should perhaps be from 7 July 1560 to 1 June 1561, since Acheson’s reinstatement was apparently effective from 1 June (or July) 1561.\(^\text{12}\) Figures are also given for testoons struck by Acheson in 1561 and 1562, but one can be confident that all these were of the portrait type. (For this coinage, puncheons and dies were to be made by Anthoine Brucher, in Paris: Mary’s letter to the Cour des Monnaies, requesting permission for this, is dated 24 February 1561, from Fontainebleau.)\(^\text{13}\) *Vicit Leo* testoons, like the preceding ones known as lorraines, maintained the standards of weight and fineness of those introduced in 1556. Thus one cannot be certain that the writer of the Hopetoun manuscript would distinguish between the types when giving the mintage figures, if the change of type did not coincide with a change of master or other relevant mint official, like the warden. The treasurer’s accounts, however, are also available, for the later part only of Acheson’s period from July 1559 to June 1560. Between 1 December 1559 and 11 June 1560, he (or the thesaurar clerk) received £1580 and £15,083 odd, from silver coined in testoons and lions respectively; in both cases he supplied the silver, so that these figures represent not the seignorage but the entire proceeds after deduction of expenses.\(^\text{14}\) £1580 means 6320 testoons, or nearly 5 stone of silver, since they were struck at five to the ounce, 1280 to the stone, and were current at five shillings. Unfortunately, although the treasurer’s accounts would normally record the royal profit from the coinage of bullion from other sources, or the receipt of fixed sums when the mint was farmed, we cannot be certain that this account gives the entire mintage for the period. Other considerations, however, make it probable that this was the case. The Hopetoun manuscript names three sources of bullion for the period:

\(^{11}\) Cochran-Patrick, op. cit. i. 84, from *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer*, ii. 4. (Hereafter cited as Treas. Accts.)

\(^{12}\) The Hopetoun manuscript, which gives 1 July, certainly has June and July confused in quoting the date of the regent’s death. Acheson accounted to the treasurer for 1 June 1561 to 20 Feb. 1562.

\(^{13}\) F. Mazerolle, *Les Médailleurs Français . . .* (Paris, 1902), i. 55.

\(^{14}\) Cochran-Patrick, op. cit. 89. The preceding item in Treas. Accts. ii. 3 records the receipt of £2646 from the sale of nearly 9 stone of silver vessels belonging to the late queen regent, but this is not under the heading *Cona*. Presumably this plate was sold after her death, to meet various obligations, since the price was 23s. per ounce, whereas the Hopetoun manuscript states that it was only when John Hart was master that the price of pure silver was raised from 22s. to 24s.
December 1558 to June 1560—foreign gold and silver brought home by merchants; that supplied by the French treasurer to pay the French soldiers in Scotland; and 'some old country money'. The last can be discounted as a source for testoons, although the overvalued base billon issues could profitably be made from old coin of silver or of better billon: indeed the 1559 propaganda against the regent's rule made the point that her ministers 'spare not plainly to break down and convert the good and stark money, cunyeit in our sovereign's lessage, into this their corrupted scruff and baggage of Hard-heads and Non Sunts'.\(^\text{15}\) In normal times the supply of bullion to the mint by the merchants doubtless showed the same seasonal variation at this period as in the better-documented parts of the next century: for example, in 1623 no silver was coined until May, and in 1622, none between 3 February and May.\(^\text{16}\) This reflected the yearly pattern of foreign trade, with arrivals and departures of ships concentrated in May to December. But in this revolutionary year, with Leith beset by English forces and Edinburgh strongly Protestant, it would be surprising if the merchants delivered any appreciable amount of silver to the mint in late March to early June (although the castle was not besieged). Likewise it is very doubtful whether there were any French supplies of bullion then, not only because of the English fleet but also because of political and religious opposition to the Guise ascendency in France itself, which made it impossible to continue the military effort in Scotland: the first of the French envoys reached London in April, to discuss terms.\(^\text{17}\) French supplies of silver were, however, presumably important in the second half of the previous year, when additional troops arrived. Thus it is unlikely that more than a very minor part, if any, of the 196 stone of testoons coined by Acheson in July 1559 to June 1560 could belong to the ten and a half weeks for which 1560 would have been the correct date. If any testoons were struck in those weeks, old dies might have been used.

Burns considered that the change from SCOTOR B to SCOTOR Q on the testoons marked the change of mint-master, from Acheson to Hart, in the summer of 1560.\(^\text{18}\) Even a cursory consideration of the bullion figures in the Hopetoun manuscript is enough to cast doubt on this theory,\(^\text{19}\) although the earlier type of testoon is the scarcer, but the attractive aspect of Burns's theory is that it seemed to provide an explanation of what must be considered an intentional change. As the change occurred on testoons and half-testoons alike, and also involved the crowns, it was clearly not just due to puncheons breaking. It is known from the Hopetoun manuscript that Acheson was deprived of his office after the regent's death, presumably because his loyalty to her made him unacceptable to the lords who came to power. He was not, in fact, the only mint official so treated, as other sources show. After Forrest had absented himself, Herbert Maxwell was appointed as general, and was in office from 20 January until the regent's death, after which Mary twice renewed his gift of office, 'discharging David Forrest and all utheris pretending ony interes before the day of the dait heirof', on

\(^{15}\) Knox, i. 222. The editor gives 'a thin covering' as one meaning of 'scruff' (scruff, scurf). The familiar sense of scurf is as acceptable as 'baggage' as a metaphorical pejorative description, but it is possible that Knox was referring to the thin layer of surface enrichment which was normal for billon coins.

\(^{16}\) From figures for journeys, in Scottish Record Office manuscript E 102/8. These are probably reasonably typical years for the bullion brought in by merchants, since they did not involve recoinage and were after the period when the silver mine near Linlithgow made an important contribution.

\(^{17}\) His commission from Francis and Mary was dated 7 April. *Cal. SP Scot.*, i, 344.

\(^{18}\) E. Burns, *The Coinage of Scotland* (Edinburgh 1887), ii, 325.

\(^{19}\) Murray, op. cit.
6 December 1560. It is highly probable that Andrew Henderson and Mr John Balfour, who had taken over as warden and counterwarden in July 1559, would also be deprived. The same might apply to the die-sinker, James Gray, but it is not so obvious that a replacement for him would be available. If any one of these three was indeed replaced at the same time as Acheson, but restored to office later in 1560, this might well account for the change to scotor and change of crown, and also for the reappearance (at about the same time) of puncheons which had been used on the lorraines. Certainly the warden and counterwarden were keepers of the coining irons—a term which need not have been confined to the dies—and might have retained some of them if deprived; and their other responsibilities were perhaps important enough to justify making a distinction on the coins, when one of these offices changed hands. Inevitably, in the absence of documentary evidence, this is speculative. We do know that Henderson, Balfour, and Gray all held the same positions in 1565 as in the autumn of 1559, but so did Forrest and Acheson, for whom we happen to know that their tenure was interrupted.

The question of why a new type of testoon was introduced in 1560 deserves further consideration. The assumption that the reason was Francis’s accession to the French throne, although natural, does not appear to be justified. In France, in fact, the coinage continued to be in the name of his father, Henry, throughout Francis’s reign, from 10 July 1559 to 5 December 1560 (and also at the beginning of his brother’s reign). It is more relevant, however, to instance the only other Scottish coins dated 1560, namely hardheads: on these, the French part of the royal titles continued to read D. D. VIEN for dauphin and dauphiness of Vienne. Alteration to update this would have been much simpler than the change to the testoons, which involved the royal arms and devices as well as the inscriptions, and it is hard to believe that this change would not have been ordered too, if the regent had considered it important to mark Francis’s elevation, on the Scottish coinage. In August and September of 1559, at least, there was a more favourable time to consider this than after the treaty of Berwick: November to January was another period when the government was in the ascendant, but the regent was already seriously ill by the end of November. The previous change, acknowledging Francis as king of Scotland on the testoons, had indeed been implemented with very little delay after 29 November 1558, the date when the Scottish parliament ratified the provisions of the marriage treaty, by which Francis was to receive the crown matrimonial—it would have been impolitic to anticipate the ratification—but that was a matter of much greater importance to Scotland than his accession to the French throne.

If the new type of testoon was introduced for other reasons, then of course it was only to be expected that the royal titles and arms would be updated. The new government, after the conclusion of the war, clearly had more reasons and more opportunity for a change than had the regent’s government in 1560. It was, in fact, consideration of the legend Vicit Leo de Tribu Iuda which first led us to doubt Burns’s theory that this
issue was partly struck by Acheson, before he was deprived of his position as mint-master. (This was induced by a letter from Mr Ian Stewart, inquiring what we made of this legend. He was careful not to direct our thinking, although the inquiry inevitably suggested doubt about the previously accepted dating. He afterwards disclosed that he considered the legend to refer to the success of the revolution.) At no time in 1560 could this legend be appropriate to the situation of the pro-French Catholic government, although this did not prevent the continuation of the use of the legend *Vicit Veritas* on the hardheads, which began in 1555. But the protestants, who believed their cause alone to be the true godly one, had prevailed (with English help). Moreover, the continuation of the quotation, which in the Authorised Version reads ‘the lion of the tribe of Juda ... hath prevailed to open the book’, was particularly relevant, in view of the reformers’ emphasis on the availability of the Bible in the vernacular and the use of the vulgar tongue in church services. The type of the *Vicit Leo* testoons is, of course, traditional, unlike that of the intended coinage of the lords of the congregation in November 1559, but an innovation like that might have been offensive to those of a more conservative stance, who had joined the insurgents later. The new government could hardly do other than acknowledge the sovereigns’ titles on the coinage, since the Scots had declared in the treaty of Berwick that they did not intend ‘to withdrawe any due obedience from their Soverane Ladye the Queyn, nor in any lefull thing to withstand the French king, being her husband’.

One may also argue that the new government had good reason to discontinue the striking of lorraines, as being particularly associated by their common name with their late adversary, Mary of Guise, of the house of Lorraine. The disappearance of the Lorraine crosses and the reappearance of the Scottish thistle and saltire would probably please even the illiterate but the legend *Fecit Utraque Unum* on the lorraines would perhaps be the most offensive feature to those who understood it—He (God) has made both (the kingdoms) one. The Scottish parliament had granted Francis the crown matrimonial for the duration of the marriage only and had maintained the position of the duke of Chatelherault as heir presumptive, but there was a justifiable fear of Scotland being permanently incorporated in the kingdom of France. Before the marriage, the young queen had herself signed secret documents bequeathing her realm to the French king. By virtue of the marriage treaty, containing the provision of mutual naturalization, which had been ratified, it could perhaps be claimed that the kingdoms were already one, but of course this had not made any more acceptable to the Scots the regent’s use of Frenchmen in her administration, nor the growing numbers of French troops, with their wives and families, ‘comin in and sutin down in this realm to occupy it and to put furth the inhabitantis tharoff’, as was claimed.

---

24 About Easter, 1974. He mentioned the use of this legend on thalers of the abbess of Herford in Westphalia. An earlier use was on *giulios* of Pope Leo X, 1513–21, struck at Ancona. Mr Stewart has recently made the point that two German usages of this coin-motto had a heraldic lion as the type—the Bohemian lion on the thaler of Breslau, 1543–52, and the crowned lion of Limburg on the Herford coins, 1545–52, of Abbess Anna of Limburg; and that this coin-motto, recently used with reference to heraldic lions, could have been welcomed as a means of alluding to the emancipation of the Scottish lion from French rule (Spink’s *Numismatic Circular* (1981), 160). Even if the allusion primarily intended in this motto was to the religious side of the success of the Protestant cause, as here taken to be the case, the precedents adduced by Mr Stewart certainly strengthen the case for the lion to be considered as also symbolizing Scotland.

25 Revelation 5: 5.

The Hopetoun manuscript gives two special sources of bullion, which explain the unusually large mintage in Hart's year or so as master. One was refining the base English coins, for which the Scottish price may have been more attractive than that of Elizabeth's recoinage. The other was 'Jowellis of the kirk'—the gaps in the printed version can confidently be filled in, with a fragment of the word 'kirk' being visible in both places in the manuscript, and the context confirms this—'gylt challices and uther Jowellis'. In the case of Edinburgh, this disposal was by a decision of the town council, and the money from the sale or coining of silver work from St. Giles church was to be spent particularly on 'reparation and decoring of the kirk'. This was 'silver wark pertenyng to the gude toun', presumably as corporate founder and patron of the collegiate church. The quantity of 'Jowellis of the Kirk' sold to John Hart was 2 st. 6 lb. 13 oz. of silver and 5½ oz. of gold.27

An Enigmatic Testoon

A remarkable and possibly unique testoon of this issue, dated 1560, turned up in the 'Dundee' sale.28 This has the legends FRAN ET MA DEI G R R SCOTOR D D VIEN and VICIT LEO DE TRIBU IUDA (Pl. 1, 1). The obverse legend is exactly the same as that found on the testoons of 1558–9 (loraines), when Francis and Mary were King and Queen of Scotland and Dauphin and Dauphiness of Vienne (Pl. I, 2). But whereas the lorraines have the arms of the Dauphiné and of Scotland, which (like their legend) were correct at the time of issue, this testoon has the arms of France and Scotland, the obverse being essentially correct for the 1560 issue, apart from the legend. The reverse is the usual one for the testoons issued in 1560–1.

Not unreasonably, the cataloguer described the testoon as 'probably a transitional issue', and such a description at first sight does seem to fit. Apart from the obverse legend, the punches for the monogram and crown above it are the same as those used for the lorraines, and the lion, which has a short tail curling outwards, also occurs on the lorraines. The close relationship the testoon has to the lorraine issue is thus undeniable.

Some other features should also be noted. A tiny lis has been inserted after VIEN, a detail not seen on any other testoon. On both sides of the coin the initial-mark is a cross potent instead of the normal plain cross, and there is a similar cross above each of the small crowns on either side of the monogram. The testoon has been stamped with the crowned thistle countermark which authenticated the silver coins of this period as well as raising their value, in accordance with a proclamation of July 1578.29 At 84.3 gr (5.46 g) the weight is low for an issue where the standard was 94.2 gr (6.10 g), but there is no need to condemn the coin on this account.

Reverses with crosses potent above the small crowns and as initial-marks are found, though rarely, on both SCOTOR B and SCOTOR Q testoons. These sometimes have this type of cross as initial-mark on the obverse as well. For these reasons it is believed that they should be considered as coming between the substantive issues of each variety.30

If the testoon under discussion is transitional between the issues of 1558–9 and

---

27 Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh
iii, 1557–1571 (Scottish Burgh Records Soc. 4, 1875); Edinburgh Records: The Burgh Accounts, ii (1899), 91.
29 Cochran-Patrick, op. cit. i. 146.
30 Murray, op. cit.
1560–1, it might be expected to have a closer relationship to the scotor B testoons than to the scotor Q issue which followed them. While it is true that the monogram, crown, and lion are the same as those on the lorraines and certain scotor B testoons, these identical features also occur on scotor Q testoons with crosses potent above the small crowns, the same punches again having been utilized. Furthermore, the crown above the arms and the letter L are unmistakably those found only on the later issue (Pl. I, 3). There are thus good grounds for linking our enigmatic testoon with the scotor Q issue rather than with the earlier one.

There seem to be two possibilities open to us. Either the die was made for some special and unknown purpose or else the die-sinker inadvertently punched the wrong legend on the die. When we bear in mind the low standard of die-sinking at the Scottish mint, the latter is by no means improbable. Some examples of the die-sinker's want of proper care in the preparation of dies are given in the immediately following paper. Even so, one would expect the most careless workman to notice such a major error and discard the die, except for the circumstance that the lions (hardheads), up to the end of their issue in July 1560, continued to give Francis and Mary the titles of Dauphin and Dauphiness, although Francis had become king of France in July 1559 on the death of his father. The die-sinker would thus be accustomed to inscribing a legend that had been out of date since July 1559 and might overlook the fact that he was inscribing it on the wrong coin. The insertion of a lis after VIEN can also be explained as negligence, the die-sinker having used the lis punch instead of that for a stop.

The Scottish Testoons Dated 1565

These extremely rare testoons have long puzzled numismatists (Pl. I, 4). They are identical to the testoons issued in 1560–1 which have the scotor Q legend (Pl. I, 3). Since Francis had died in December 1560, the obverse legend was wholly inappropriate for coins struck in 1565. This legend was of course equally inappropriate on the somewhat rare testoons issued in 1561, but few of them can have been struck in that year, for they were soon replaced by the much-admired testoons with a fine portrait of Mary. These have Mary's name only on the obverse. If an issue of testoons was required in 1565, why, numismatists ask, did the authorities not order a further issue of the portrait testoons?

The only specimen of the 1565 testoon available for us to study is the one listed in Richardson's Catalogue of the Scottish Coins in the National Museum, Edinburgh, no. 207. There was another specimen in the Ferguson sale at Sotheby's on 14/15 July 1851, where it formed part of lot 181. A specimen which was possibly the same coin as the last was in the catalogue of the 'Nobleman' (Lord Hastings) sale, lot 616. This sale took place at Sotheby's on 15 November 1880. The testoon was said to be from the Addison collection (Sotheby's, 3 December 1855), but no such coin is mentioned in the catalogue for that sale, so perhaps the provenance is faulty. No other specimens have been traced.

Burns accounts for these anomalous coins by suggesting that some old dies of Francis and Mary were used, with the date altered, for a small coinage in 1565, probably while dies were being made for the issues of Mary and Henry.31 Such an

31 Burns, op. cit. ii. 324.
explanation is not really satisfactory. There is no indication on Richardson 207 that the final digit has been struck over another one, and there is no mention in the Hopetoun manuscript of any testoons being struck in 1565, although this is not conclusive evidence that none was struck. The Hopetoun manuscript does tell us, however, that from 1562 until 18 December 1565 nothing was coined, because the price of an ounce of silver had been reduced from 24s. to 22s., as a consequence of which no one would bring any bullion to the mint. When the price was later raised to 28s. plenty of silver once more became available and 'fra the said day', that is, from 18 December 1565, the minting of 30s., 20s. and 10s. pieces began, no less than 2196 stone being struck up to the end of March 1572.

How, then, are we to fit these pieces into the Scottish coinage? The most probable explanation must be that they were struck, not in 1565, but in 1560, when the diesinker, with his customary ineptitude, punched a 5 as the final digit instead of a 0.

It is of some interest that a testoon in our collection has the 0 of the date punched over an inverted 5. This example of carelessness shows that the diesinker had made the elementary mistake of failing to check that he was employing the right punch before applying it to the die. As the punch for the 0 (which he thought he was using), unlike that for the 5, could be positioned either way up, the user presumably felt no need to verify that the figure was not inverted. On this occasion the error was noticed and corrected. The final digit of the 1565 testoon appears to have been an unnoticed punching error. Another such blunder is to be found on a VICIT LEO testoon of 1560 in the British Museum, which has DD for DE on the reverse.

Examination of the reverse of the 1565 testoon confirms Burns's suggestion that the dies were made in 1560, for it has various distinctive features found on other coins of the same issue. These are:

1. On the small number of early dies for the SCOTOR Q issue on which the crowns above the lis and thistle are surmounted by a cross potent or, in very rare cases, by a plain cross, the crown's interior shows like an ellipse. The cross soon disappears, however, so the crown then resembles a in the figure. On later dies the bottom of the crown punch has broken off (b), and finally, part of the crown's arch has also broken away (c). Richardson 207 has crowns similar to a.
2. On the earliest dies the letter l has a long horizontal stroke (d). This is replaced with an l having a shorter stroke (e). On the latest dies the serif has broken off, so the letter more resembles an i than an l (f). R. 207 has the earliest type of l.

3. Early dies have a 5 that is unbroken (g). Later dies have a broken 5 (h). On R. 207 the 5 is unbroken.

The obverse of R. 207 also dates from 1560 because it is from the same die as a testoon of that year in the British Museum. While Burns’s contention that the dies are old ones is therefore fully vindicated, the same cannot be said for the claim that the testoons were struck in 1565.

Misdating errors are not unknown in the Scottish coinage. A two-thirds James VI ryal (sword dollar) exists dated 1561.\(^{32}\) Coins of this issue were minted in 1567–71, so 1561 is clearly an impossible date. Another coin of James VI is a ten shillings of 1564 instead of, presumably, 1594.\(^{33}\) In other cases the die-sinker has omitted part of the design. One such coin was described in Spink’s *Numismatic Circular* for April 1966, p. 94; this was a two-thirds Mary ryal on which the date had been accidentally left out. On a Mary testoon of 1560, of the same coinage as R. 207, the small crowns above the lis and thistle have been omitted.\(^{34}\) An exactly similar defect can be found on the obverse of a two-thirds ryal of 1571, where the small crowns above the i and R have been omitted.\(^{35}\) With examples like these it is easy to comprehend why a wrongly dated coin of 1560 was allowed to pass into circulation.

Grateful thanks are due to Mr A. Fenton, Director of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, for permission to discuss and illustrate R. 207. The enlarged photographs were kindly supplied by the museum.

\(^{32}\) R. C. Lockett sale, Glendining’s, 26 Oct. 1960, lot 927. Also in British Museum.

\(^{33}\) Scott-Plummer sale, Sotheby’s, 9 Dec. 1929, lot 379.

\(^{34}\) *Dundee* sale, op. cit. lot 193.

\(^{35}\) Murray collection.