A HUNDRED years after its publication in 1887, *The Coinage of Scotland* by Edward Burns remains one of the most regularly used works on British numismatics. Some of the reasons for this are self-evident. It contains photographic illustrations – it was one of the first numismatic works to do so – of over 1100 coins and descriptions of more than twice as many. It is therefore an indispensable source of material. But it is much more than that. The author's observations of letter forms and features of design, of the use, deterioration and replacement of individual punches, of dies and die-links, make the whole book a classic work of pioneering scholarship. No matter how much has since been written, the student today is unwise to ignore what Burns had to say about the style or details of inscription and design of particular coins or about their relationship to each other.

Recognising the achievement of one who possessed 'the taste, the leisure, the insight, and the determination of character needful for such a Herculean task', and 'the industry, ability, and fervid devotion of the author to his specialty', the *Scotsman*’s reviewer (30 January 1888), who counted himself as one of those ‘who knew him best’, proceeded to explain why Burns was rightly judged by his contemporaries to have set new standards in numismatic technique:

His methods of observation and description were laboriously painstaking and minute; and his practised eye could detect at a glance differences of execution which, to the uninitiated, were quite invisible until the necessary demonstration and comparison convinced the reason, rather than the eye, that they did exist. He acquired the habit of writing the legends of the coins in a conventionalised fac-simile of the different forms of lettering in use at different periods; and by thus studying the types of the legends, and their lettering and the various devices employed to separate the words, he was enabled to group the mintage into classes corresponding with each other's peculiarities, and to rectify their attributions accordingly. This method, of what may be regarded as a classification on palaeographic principles, has been for the first time systematically applied to the Scottish coinage in the present work. It has the merit of resting on a sound, scientific basis; and, though it may not have been successfully applied in every instance, there can be no doubt that very many of Mr Burns' rectifications - and they are exceedingly numerous - will stand the test of time. Before his death he had the satisfaction of knowing that some of the most important were freely admitted and adopted by the best numismatists. The present work is, therefore, what may quite fairly be called an epoch-making work in Scottish numismatics.

Even today it is only in the use of hoard evidence and metal analyses that current techniques of mediaeval numismatics have advanced far beyond the point to which Burns had brought them a century ago. And we may be sure from pointers in his work that, had...
non-destructive means of analysis or a sufficiency of well-documented hoards been available to him, he would have been among the first to exploit their evidence. As it was, his method amounted to a new approach not only to Scottish coinage, but to the coinage of the later middle ages as a whole. It was applied during the first half of the present century to English coinage by numismatists such as Lawrence, Fox, Brooke and R. Carlyon-Britton, but not even yet to many continental coinages, a hundred years after Burns demonstrated what could be achieved by his new ‘palaeographic’ method.

Available published information about Burns himself is relatively sparse. Some meagre details about him are contained in a postscript to The Coinage of Scotland. Here we are told that ‘he possessed a cheerful, self-reliant, and eminently genial nature, and was never happier than when among friends or coins’. He intended to enter the Church, but deafness prevented this and he engaged for a time in business. The minute study of mediaeval coins requires intense powers of concentration, and after his retirement Burns devoted himself wholeheartedly to numismatics, a pursuit in which L. A. Lawrence was also to find consolation for deafness.

Burns had at one time formed a distinguished coin collection, which he sold at Sotheby’s in December 1869. This comprised a very good selection of Romano-British, English and other coins, Jacobite medals, some Roman and Greek coins, and a strong Scottish element of 354 coins (24 in gold, 212 in silver and 118 in billon and copper). From certain comments in the catalogue it is apparent that Burns had done his own cataloguing. While his Scottish coins included many that would have appealed to general collectors, such as most of the commoner types of gold and an extremely fine half-testoon of 1562, his mediaeval silver clearly reflects a student’s knowledge of variety and rarity, with a good range of fifteenth-century groats, and some outstandingly difficult items to obtain, such as the Alexander III Rex Scotorum sterling with twenty-seven point reverse, or the Roxburgh groat of James II. After this sale he continued from time to time to make purchases of coins, usually of a minor nature, which he used for study and subsequent resale. He advised collectors about their purchases, sometimes bidding at sales on their behalf, and through his activities he earned small commissions here and there. He was also on occasions invited by vendors or auctioneers to prepare the catalogues for important sales, such as the Antiquaries duplicates sold by Dowell in April 1873, and the Kermack Ford collection sold by Sotheby in June 1884.

It is not known when Burns began to interest himself in the Scottish coinage, but he was elected a member of the Numismatic Society in June 1863 and at that time was living in George Street, Edinburgh, later moving to Bank Street. In 1869 or 1870 he went to London, where he spent a year or two, and it was probably during this period that he became closely associated with W. S. Lincoln and Son, of 462 New Oxford Street, the well-known dealers. When he returned to Edinburgh he was at first at 25 Charlotte Street and then at 33 Dublin Street. In 1875 he finally settled down at 3 London Street, where he remained until his death.

Burns was a prolific letter writer and corresponded frequently with curators and leading collectors of his day. The information which follows is mostly drawn from a number of his letters written to R. W. Cochran-Patrick during the years 1871–79. Together with hundreds

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1 E. Burns, The Coinage of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1887), II, 113–4, records a destructive analysis of a James III groat which he commissioned. His appreciation of the value of hoard evidence is frequently apparent: e.g. his regret that no details were provided of two William the Lion sterlings found with English short-cross coins in ‘Notes on the Hoard of Coins Discovered in Banffshire, Supplementary to the Notice by Rev Dr Gordon’, PSAS 16 (1881–2), 433–6.

2 See H. E. Manville and T. J. Robertson, British Numismatic Auction Catalogues (1986), p. 126, no. 7 (20 Feb. 1869) and p. 156, no. 6 (5–7 April 1887) for sales containing other coins said to have belonged to Burns. If this is correct, the latter presumably included coins submitted during his lifetime, since he only died a few days before the sale.
of other letters from Cochran-Patrick’s numismatic acquaintances during those years, these have been mounted in nine large albums which remain in the possession of the family. Unfortunately, many letters have been lost. A single one from Burns survives from 1884, with nothing for the years 1880–83. The most interesting group is a series of thirty-four letters written by Burns to Cochran-Patrick in 1875, which show that the two were in almost continuous communication with each other at that time.

The post between Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1875 must have been at least as rapid as it is today since on more than one occasion Burns wrote at an interval of two days, having received a reply from Cochran-Patrick to his earlier letter in the meantime. But the difficulties of communication in the days before the telephone are well illustrated by the failure of his efforts to see John Evans on a visit to Scotland, when he wanted to consult him about some Ancient British coins in the collection of Thomas Coats. On 23 June Burns asked ‘if I miss seeing Mr Evans in Edinburgh, have I a chance of seeing him in Glasgow?’ But on 7 July he added ‘I could not call on Mr Evans while he was in Glasgow not knowing where he resided; and if I could have managed to see him at the station when leaving (altho’ I knew neither by what station or by what train he was leaving) there would not have been sufficient opportunity to discuss matters there.’

The years from the 1840s to the 1880s were a golden age for Scottish numismatics, with strong competition among a number of enthusiastic collectors for the rarer items, and an active scholarly interest in the subject led by Lindsay, Cochran-Patrick and Burns, but with participation also from several other student-collectors such as J. W. Martin, James Wingate, Robert Carfrae, Sheriff Thomas Mackenzie and J. H. Pollexfen.3 In the 1870s the scene was also much influenced by the growing interest as a collector of Thomas Coats of Ferguslie, who like his brother, Sir Peter, was a liberal benefactor of the town of Paisley where their cotton business had brought the family a substantial fortune. Much of the correspondence between Burns and Cochran-Patrick in 1875 was concerned with a projected paper by Burns on the earliest Scottish coinage, with arrangements for Burns to visit Ferguslie and catalogue the Coats collection, and with the disposal of Wingate’s collection towards the end of the year. In 1875 Burns himself was aged 52. Of the other principal figures on the scene, Coats was 66, Pollexfen 62 and Carfrae 56, while Wingate (47), Mackenzie (44) and Cochran-Patrick (33) were all younger than Burns. Though Cochran-Patrick was much the youngest of the group, he was already recognised as a significant scholar and it is clear from the correspondence that Burns had a high regard for him.

At the beginning of 1875 Burns had for some time been heavily engaged on his study of the coins of David I, for which he assembled for comparison in Edinburgh as many of the existing specimens as he could trace, the actual coins if possible, but failing that casts, rubbings or other reproductions. This seems to have been the first occasion on which a numismatist made an intensive study of a group of mediaeval coins drawn from every available source, comparing them for die-identities and other similarities, and building up complete readings from several defective specimens. It is instructive to see how Burns set about such a task, before the days of easy photography; and it is also fascinating to read how he proceeded from week to week with work which in due course was to constitute the opening chapter of his book. On 4 January 1875 he was writing to Cochran-Patrick to say that two of his specimens were from the same pair of dies. On the sixth he remarked that Guthrie Lornie had a David which Cochran-Patrick might try to acquire; meanwhile George Sim, curator of the coin collection of the Society of Antiquaries, had written to

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3 I. Stewart, ‘Two Centuries of Scottish Numismatics’, *The Scottish Antiquarian Tradition*, edited by A. S. Bell (Edinburgh, 1981), pp. 227–65. Fig. 9 in this book is a portrait of Cochran-Patrick; I have not traced one of Burns.
Pollexfen asking him to send all his Davids to the Museum, ‘& then we shall try to get Mr Wingate’s. It is only by comparing one coin with another that we can put the Davids on a proper footing’. On the eighteenth Burns said ‘I shall be extremely obliged by the tracings you have kindly promised me of the Davids etc by Mr Cuff’ and four days later he told Cochran-Patrick:

It will please you to know that your kind example has been followed by the other principal collectors of the David I period. Mr Wingate has sent me all his, 16 in number. Mr Pollexfen also all his 23 in number, including the coins engraved in Lindsay pl I nos 2 and 4. Mr Ford sent me 5, all that he has, but very interesting. Mr Lornie writes me that he has found other three Davids, which he had mislaid, and is to bring them over by the first opportunity. I have not yet had any response from Mr Gray, who told me when I saw him last that he would get me a sight of the rare David I penny sold at the Lamb sale, & bought for Mr Coats or Sir Peter.

After I have thoroughly examined the coins now in my keeping, & compared them with those of our Museum, I shall make an assault on the British Museum. Even if I do not get what coins they may have in propria persona, the Museum will give me beautifully executed stucco casts showing both sides of the coin. These will be of considerable service, but the coins themselves would be better.

On 28 January Burns first talked of publishing the results of his research.

It is, of course, chiefly by the opportunity afforded me of comparing one coin with another that I shall be able to make something useful of the Davids now entrusted to me. I have supplemented the reading of some of your coins, & these in turn have contributed to supplement the readings of some of the others. I propose to write out a complete list of the whole for publication in the Num Chron. Some points as regards the full reading of the respective legends I shall be able to settle; and even where I cannot give the whole legend I shall in many cases be able to give a good deal of it, so that the publication of such a list must contribute to the better understanding of this interesting but difficult series. I shall, of course, state along with the descriptions the respective cabinets in which the coins are contained.

On 8 February Burns again asked for help in getting impressions of the British Museum’s Davids and was thinking how to illustrate his paper:

I don’t know whether the Numismatic Society allows any portion of its funds to be donated towards supplying plates for the illustration of the articles. My impression is that it does, at least on special occasions. Mr Head for instance, could hardly have been asked to bear the expense of the plates accompanying his articles on Syracusan coins. To do justice to the article on the Davids – indeed to be of any service in illustrating it – a good many of the coins would require to be autotyped. In several cases I have three or four coins from the same dies. One at least of these & in some cases more, where it was desirable to show how each contributed to bring out the legend, would need to be done. And it would be desirable to give the different types of portrait of which there are very many. We could see better about this when I have got the whole reduced under their proper head. Of the three Davids, which Lornie gave me on Thursday, I find that one is from the same identical die as your No. 8; one from the same die as one of Mr Wingates, and the other from the same die as your No. 11, of which Mr Pollexfen has two specimens, engraved Lindsay plate II, nos. 23-24. I seem therefore, in the specimens of Davids now with me, to have got most of the varieties. Still, even a poor, imperfect coin, sometimes supplies an important link in deciphering the legends, and it would be of very great importance to me to see as many more as possible. If Mr Coats will kindly let me see his David penny got at the Lamb sale, it may probably assist me in making out the legend on the reverse of Mr Wingate’s coin with the annulets enclosing pellets. I have again to repeat that there is not the slightest danger of any of the coins getting mixed, because even when they are from the same die they do not present the exact same portions of the legend. I have no doubt whatever that I shall make a satisfactory thing of this, but it is slow work, so few of the specimens showing anything like good legends. Many of the coins do not appear to have been ever intended to show intelligible legends, even where there is no difficulty in making out the letters.

4 Burns, p. 30 (fig. 28).
5 NC 1874.
Although suffering from neuralgia, Burns wrote again on 15 February to say:

Notwithstanding, I have put on a strong spurt with the Davids, throwing everything else in the meantime aside, and expect by the end of this week, or beginning of next, to have described all I now have, revising also & amending the catalogue I made of the Museum’s specimens. I have all the coins that appear to be from similar dies placed together on separate slips of paper. When I have the whole of those now in hand completed, I shall proceed to arrange them according as they seem to hang on to each other. It is of great importance that I should ascertain as soon as possible what fresh specimens are in Mr Coat’s collection & in the British Museum. I shall act upon your link to write to Mr Coats at once, & perhaps you will kindly give the B.M. a reminder.

By 18 February Burns had ‘described & arranged some sixty of the specimens in my hands’, and the thoroughness of his work is apparent a few days later (the twenty-sixth) when he observed ‘I find that I have a large portion of the pieces from which the drawings in Lindsay’s plates were taken – that is to say, the identical coins. Of the original work, I have nos. 6–7–8–9–11–12–13–15–17–18–23–24. Of the 1st sup. nos 2–4; and of the 2nd sup. I have the whole, besides corresponding pieces of several of the Nos, not mentioned’. On 6 March he was still awaiting receipt of the Coats specimens and hoping for autotypes from the British Museum, but his work was assisted in another direction, because ‘Mr Sim kindly presented me with impressions in plaster of the coins in the Bute find. I have not looked at many of them as yet, but they give most correct representations of the coins’. A week later Burns had received three Davids from Coats and seven from Thomas Gray, but casts of the British Museum coins were still awaited. On 20 April Burns announced receipt of sixteen plaster casts of David I coins and four of Earl Henry from the British Museum although ‘unfortunately, some of the casts are frayed at the rims of the legends & some not well taken’. On 10 June he enquired whether there were any Davids in the Hunterian collection (there were not), but by now his material was virtually as complete as he could make it.

Publication was now the concern. On 13 March, Burns had said ‘I am glad that the Num. Soc. will illustrate my article, for without illustrations it would be of little service. I don’t expect to be much longer about it’, and on 13 April he described some autotypes which Cochran-Patrick had shown him as ‘astonishing’, adding ‘I do not see why you should not have some David I pieces done in the same manner’. This new process involved printing from photographic reproduction, and once it had been perfected it was used to great effect in several major numismatic works and important sale catalogues of the late nineteenth century. It was first used in the Numismatic Chronicle in 1873, and was widely in use thereafter. Cochran-Patrick’s book, Records of the Coinage of Scotland, published in 1876, was illustrated in this way, and it is interesting to see how much the technique had improved by 1887 when Burns’s own book was published. On 10 June 1875 Burns wrote ‘I think that some of the Davids should be autotyped to go along with the lithograph of the legends. Many of the coins have been engraved, but in very few cases with anything like correctness, for as a rule, the character of the coin is completely ignored’, and on the seventeenth he went into more detail:

I have been going over the Davids to see which of the specimens it would be desirable to autotype. I think it would be of advantage to give the obverses, of which there are about fifty different varieties. Some of the obverses have more than one reverse (as regards legend). But as most of the reverses, so far as type is concerned, is the same, it would not be necessary to give more than a dozen or so of reverses in all. What with the one and the other three plates, of the Numismatic Chronicle size, would suffice ... If the Num. Society, & the Society of Antiquaries’ here, both published the article as in the case of the Rev Mr Pollexfen’s paper on

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6 Thomas Gray was presumably a close relation (son or brother?) of John Gray (d. 1879), Coats’s agent, since they both lived at 150 West George Street, Glasgow.

7 Burns had been elected a fellow in 1874.
the Bute Find, the expense of the plates divided between them would not be very deadly. But it is quite on the cards that I may have to publish the thing myself in order to get the thing published in my own way. I wish in every instance to state in what Cabinets the coins, which have passed thro' my hands are contained. Thus, where more than one specimen of a coin occurs, and this is the rule rather than the exception, and where the different specimens contribute to make out the legend which is also the rule not the exception, it is absolutely necessary that in publishing this complete legend, I should state my authorities for this legend, that is to say the different specimens of the coin, which have enabled me to make out this complete legend. From what Anderson of the Museum here said, I quite expect that this will be a difficulty with the Antiquaries, and also the publishing of coins other than those in the museum of the Antiquaries itself. Anderson said the Museum had nothing to do with other peoples' coins and it was out of the question to expect them to enhance the values of these coins by publishing them. Of course if the Council took this ground, there would be an end of the matter so far as the Antiquaries were concerned. But in order that the article should properly give to collectors the results of these very long protracted and thoroughly successful labours of mine, for I have thoroughly mastered the subject - in order that this work, now that it has been accomplished, may not require to be done again, it is necessary that the different varieties of the Davids, both as regards legend, & the coin, of which bears that legend should be autotyped. Therefore if there is to be any demur about doing the thing correctly by the Councils either of the Antiquaries here, or of the Num Society, I shall just have to publish myself. After devoting about a twelve-month, (not less), to this matter, I could not have the patience to let this be done again, it is necessary that the different varieties of the Davids, both as regards legend, & the coin, of which bears that legend should be autotyped. Therefore if there is to be any demur about doing the thing correctly by the Councils either of the Antiquaries here, or of the Num Society, I shall just have to publish myself. After devoting about a twelve-month, (not less), to this matter, I could not have the patience to let either of the worshipful councils undo, or spoil my work . . . If I have the thing done while Mr Ready is here, it will require to be done at my own risk as I have no authority from the Councils of either the S.S.A. or Num. Society to have it done. But if they publish the article, they will require to relieve me of the expense. If not, I shall re-imburse myself by publishing the paper myself. I cannot afford to present the plates to them, and I would not if I could. The S.S.A. ought to get Mr Ready while he is here to autotype the coins in their collection, with which they mean to embellish their own catalogue.

Burns became so busily engaged during the summer cataloguing the Coats collection that work on the Davids hung fire, and on 4 October he wrote 'the first draft of my paper on the Davids was written before I left for Paisley, but since then I have not had time to look at it. And it will require to stand over for a little longer because I propose spending a week or two in London as soon as I can get away'. Cochran-Patrick's book was in its final stages and Burns toyed with the idea of using this as a vehicle for publishing part of his work: 'I shall endeavour to get the paper on the Davids out of my hands as soon as I can. The main feature is the diagram of the inscriptions. What do you say about inserting this into your own work? Say, with just enough description to show what the coins are'. Nothing came of this suggestion, and it was in fact to be twelve more years before the meticulous transcriptions which Burns had made in 1875 appeared in print in The Coinage of Scotland.

Plans for Burns to visit Paisley had been discussed earlier in the year. On 15 February he wrote to Cochran-Patrick 'should Mr Coats wish me to make a catalogue of his coins I shall be glad to do so', and later (18 February), remarked that he had written to Coats by the same post. On 26 February Burns had heard indirectly, through his agent John Gray, that Coats wanted him to make up a catalogue of his collection, and on 4 March he told Cochran-Patrick that he 'would have pleasure in taking an early run through to Paisley to see Mr Coats coins', and hoped to be able to combine this with looking at Cochran-Patrick's collection. No progress had been made by June, and Burns felt the difficulty of communicating through Gray, of whom he did not have a high opinion. Arrangements were eventually made for Burns to go early in July, expecting to be in Paisley for a fortnight. But the task of recording the Coats coins, which were not confined to the Scottish series, was a much bigger one than Burns had anticipated, and on 7 July he was

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saying ‘I don’t see how I can get through this catalogue for three weeks or more’ and on the
twelfth ‘I do not think I can remove my headquarters from Paisley for about a month yet’. By 21 August Burns had ‘not quite finished with Mr Coats’ collection yet, and I shall still be
here for a week or so longer’; He had not been well, and wanted to be home, ‘I am
devoting more time to the work now, for I am still rather shaky, & very desirous to be in
auld Reekie again’. But he was not in fact back in Edinburgh until the end of September.

Burns had been much exercised about the terms for his work on the Coats collection. Receiving no reply for some weeks from Gray regarding dates, on 9 June Burns wrote to
Cochran-Patrick:

To write again puts me in the position of seeking to force myself upon Mr Coats, and to return his coins by
letter puts me in the equally disagreeable alternative of appearing to have taken the huff. I don’t know what’s
up. It may be something in regard to terms. Before making any statement on that subject I asked Mr Sim, Mr
Carfracs, and Mr Johnston10 of London – each and all of these paid £2-2 per day. Mr Johnston has no idea to
this hour, whose collection was in question. Mr Johnston said that the days work should consist of eight hours.
In writing to Mr Gray, in my last letter, above referred to I said that I would rather take it at four hours per day
and charge half. This would make the work more pleasant to me & be of much more benefit to Mr Coats,
because three days of cataloguing and describing of four hours each would get through quite as much work as
two days of eight hours & produce a much better result. I said to Gray also that after hours, when Mr Coats
wished I would give him as much general information on numismatic subjects as he cared to have. No charge
for this of course. My object was to introduce Mr Coats to the heart of the subject if he was so disposed, & to
render his collection to him a matter of intelligent study and pleasure. To give him the husks which is the full
extent that any mere dealer could give him, would never make his collection anything else to him than a
collection of playthings, if indeed so much, for you cannot play with a thing unless you see some fun in it, and
you cannot see any fun in a thing that you don’t understand.

Presumably Burns was a man of modest independent means, since he could hardly have
supported his household on the proceeds of a few commissions, and occasional cataloguing
and dealing. But he kept a watch on minor as well as major sales. Thus he wrote to
Cochran-Patrick on 16 March:

I looked at the coins today that are to be sold tomorrow in George St. There is nothing that either you or I
would care to buy. It very seldom happens that anything good occurs at a pawnbrokers sale, because it is
impossible that any great advance can be given up on them. At least I have never seen anything but rubbish at
such sales.

On an earlier occasion (2 November 1874) Burns explained how he dealt with the
situation when he spotted undetected rarities. Referring to a (badly catalogued) sale on
that day at Lyon and Turnbull’s Burns wrote:

There are some of the coins, the specialities of which I found out myself, that would have brought very long
prices had they been properly described. I put them all in at the prices at which they were bought; but as these
would certainly have been my own spoil, for Gray knew nothing about them, (and was not informed by me that
I was buying anything else but the Alex II penny) the better way would be to allow some little bonus over the
commission. The purchases for you amounted to £25-14-9, on which the commission would have been
£2-11-6. Say for commission and bonus £5 in all. I got nothing for myself at all except one or two common
coins.

Burns also had advice for Cochran-Patrick on buying from Lincoln (4 October 1875):

I think you should also stretch a point with Lincoln’s coins, if you want to preserve the first pick. He was rather
disappointed with the selections of the last lot. A David II Edinburgh groat with pellet behind head & in 1st

10 W. H. Johnston, FRSN 1864, d. 1875/6; Burns, II. 538
refers to his collection.
quarter of rev. was a very excellent & rare coin. Perhaps you had it. . . . (here Burns mentions some other rare and interesting items). . . . I think you should increase your selections from that lot, and ask if he has any more – not mentioning me in the matter.

Burns himself seems generally to have given first refusal of his own coins to Cochran-Patrick, as he remarked on 30 September ‘I am going to dispose of some of my coins to Mr Coats – Scotch amongst the rest, & as I have promised that you should have the refusal of the Scotch, I should like you to see them first’. One of the consequences of his visit to Ferguslie was that Burns was asked by Coats to look for coins for him. Writing from 5 Evershott St., Oakley Square, Camden Town on 5 November, 1875, Burns said ‘I had a commission from Mr Coats to pick him up anything very good I might see in London – in selecting which I have confined myself entirely to English coins with the exception of a Half Shekel’. The cataloguing had taken much of the summer, and Burns had gone south in October, taking his wife to Brighton. In a postscript to the same letter he added ‘I leave my wife here as a pledge for my return to attend the Wingate sale. I took my present trip to the South solely for her benefit, as she had had no summer jaunt, owing to my engagement at Paisley’.

When it became known in the summer of 1875 that the great Wingate collection was to be dispersed there was frantic activity among various interested parties, and Burns at first suggested that Cochran-Patrick and Coats should buy it privately between them. Everyone seems to have had great difficulty in dealing with Gray, but eventually some sort of arrangement was worked out which enabled Cochran-Patrick and Carfrae to get some of their wants, while much went to Coats and huge prices were paid by Samuel Addington for some of the outstanding rarities.

During 1875 Burns completed his first numismatic paper for the Antiquaries, in which he demolished Lindsay’s attribution of some Ethelred imitations to certain kings of the Hebrides.¹¹ The next year saw the appearance of a Catalogue of a series of Coins and Medals illustrative of Scottish numismatics and history selected from the cabinet of Thomas Coats, Esq. of Ferguslie and exhibited at the meeting of the British Association held in Glasgow, Sept. 1876. The forty-four pages of this catalogue show what a detailed and extensive knowledge of Scottish coinage Burns already possessed. According to Sim, Burns had spent the last seven years of his life almost uninterruptedly in working on the book. But he was working very seriously on the subject prior to 1879, and may already have had his book in mind, since on 5 January 1877, he wrote to Cochran-Patrick suggesting that they might visit foreign museums together to inspect their Scottish coins and saying, with reference to the museum in Edinburgh, ‘I am giving one forenoon each week to the minute study of the Scotch coins there, so as to be keeping my mind on the subject till I can give to it my undivided attention’. Especially in the age before electric lights the mornings were best for detailed work on coins, as Burns had inferred to Cochran-Patrick on an earlier occasion (6 March 1875) – ‘I can avail myself of any forenoon which may be convenient for you, & have good daylight for viewing your coins’. The visit to Paisley in the summer, his increasing business with Coats, and deferment of the publication of his work on David I all suggest the idea of a book based on the Ferguslie collection may have been put to Burns as early as 1875 or 1876.

Burns must, however, have quickly resolved that his book should also include relevant coins from other sources, notably the collection of the Antiquaries, which had recently been greatly enriched by the acquisition of the cabinet of the Faculty of Advocates. His work was certainly stimulated by the discovery in 1877 at Montrave, Fife, of a huge hoard

¹¹ ‘On Coins Attributed by Mr Lindsay to Kings of the Hebrides’, PSAS 11 (1876-7), 225-33.
ranging from Alexander III to David II, and from Edward I to Edward III, which not only provided extensive material for the Scottish coinage of the period but also enabled him to work out a classification of the Edwardian series which had defeated English scholars up to that time; and in 1880 of a hoard of Robert III groats at Fortrose, Cromarty, the publication of which shows that Burns's ideas on the series were already well developed. Much of his research had been completed by the time that Coats died in October, 1883, and the book contains a touching tribute to his patron.

On 16 April, 1884 Burns wrote to Cochran-Patrick:

I extremely regretted not seeing you when you did me the honour of calling upon me last Thursday. In order to get on the quicker with my Coinage of Scotland I find that the taking to myself of an off-day every week is of service, & Thursday as being the middle of the week is usually my off-day, which I spend in the country . . . I shall be able to send you some more proofs soon. There are a good few pages in print, but I could not send a proof as there were your coins and Mr Kermack Ford's coins to be added and the printers hope to get some more letters cut . . . Would you kindly say if you think the new French process by which your Scottish medals are being done would suit for small Scottish coins. If so it would be a very great advantage for my work as the plates would always be to the fore if wanted for any subsequent occasion.

When Burns himself died suddenly, of heart disease, in March 1886, in his sixty-fourth year, he had seen the first volume through the press. The second volume was partly in proof and partly in manuscript, and the casts for the plates had been made but not assembled. At the request of Coats's son, George Sim reluctantly agreed to complete the work, a task in which he readily acknowledged the assistance he had received from Anderson and Pollexfen. The Scotsman's reviewer paid tribute to Sim's contribution in the following words:

By his strenuous application to the uncongenial but absolutely essential labour of editing, verifying, revising, and comparing descriptions with coins and casts, the second volume was at length prepared, and the casts arranged for the plates of the third. Although he had become enfeebled in health before this was accomplished, he continued to revise the proofs, and pushed forward the work almost as long as he had the strength to do anything; and it gave him great satisfaction when at last he was able to send them finally to press.

With the death of Coats, Burns and Sim before the book was published, we may be thankful that it was nevertheless so successfully completed. Although the chapter on Charles I contains a number of errors which caused difficulty for subsequent scholars, most of the second volume is as carefully done as the first, and the book immediately received the recognition which it has held ever since as one of the outstanding achievements of numismatic scholarship. The reviewer in the Athenaeum (no. 3165, 23 June 1888) called it a 'grand sequel' to Cochran-Patrick's Records:

We call it a sequel as Mr Cochran-Patrick gives no detailed descriptions of the coins themselves, but only inserts at the end of his work a series of plates which serve as a key to the records. Mr Burns only refers to the records when he wishes to strengthen his arguments in the classification of the various series; but he describes very fully all the types of the coins, with complete notes explanatory of his arrangement. In fact, these two important treatises bear the same relation to each other as Hawkins's 'Silver Coinage' and Kenyon's 'Gold Coinage of England' bear to Ruding, but with this difference, that the general arrangement and description of the Scottish coins are much more clearly set forth than in the case of the English series.

Noting that it had 'long been known to those interested in Scottish numismatics that Mr Burns held special views respecting the classification of certain portions of the Scottish

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12 'Descriptive Notice of the Coins in the Fortrose Hoard. with Notes on the Corresponding Gold Coinage of Scot-
series’, he went on to ask, with regard to the pennies of Edward I–III, ‘what will English numismatists say when they hear that their classification of the coinages of these three kings has been entirely wrong?’

To read what Edward Burns wrote is to get the flavour of a remarkable man – meticulous, perceptive, thoughtful and thorough; strong, and even combative, in his views when occasion required; but always honourable in his dealings and courteous in manner. It is satisfying to reflect that most of the cross fleury coins of David I in our cabinets today were so carefully examined, studied and recorded by him personally in 1875. In fact many of them were not just handled by Burns, as emerges from some passages in his correspondence. On 8 February 1875 he wrote to Cochran-Patrick ‘all forenoon I have been engaged upon the Davids. My principal effort just now is to try & bring out the letters. I have four under my feet at present’, and in his next letter (15 February), referring to a penny of Stephen, he says ‘I have tramped out one or two more letters of the mint’. These curious expressions are explained in a letter he had written to Cochran-Patrick on 8 September 1874:

I should like much to have subjected the interesting Alex long cross penny, of which you have favored me with a reading, to the process by which I have made a few refractory coins give a satisfactory account of themselves – i.e. putting them (wrapped in a small bit of paper) under my heel (inside of the stocking) and walking about with them for a day or two. In this way I have brought out letters, of which not a glimpse was to be seen before.

Those who, a century later, today handle coins of David I described by Burns in The Coinage of Scotland may therefore feel a closer and more personal link than they had hitherto imagined with the author of that great and enduring work.