
This short but informative book is one of several published recently to coincide with the opening of the new Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh. It is not, as its primary title would imply, an account of Scottish coins and currency as a whole, but concentrates on the small change which provided an increasing proportion of the money in circulation from the fifteenth century onwards.

The minor coins of Scotland, often in poor condition from heavy wear and liable because of their base metal to deteriorate when buried in the soil, have not always received the attention which their interest would justify. In the post-war years, however, many of the series have been accorded more systematic treatment, as by Mrs Murray on the copper coinages of James III, by R.B.K. Stevenson on James V and Mary bawbees and the Stirling turners of Charles I, and by Colonel Murray on the other issues from James VI onwards. Mr Nicholas Holmes, curator of the Scottish national collection and author of the present work, has himself already made a valuable contribution through his study of the billon pence of James II and III from the Leith hoard of 1980. Now he has done a further service by providing us with a general survey of the subject, with many apt quotations from contemporary documents, and discussing the coins less from a technical numismatic viewpoint than in their role as currency. In this connection the author brings together in conveniently accessible form a considerable amount of information about hoards and single finds that could only otherwise be found by consulting numerous accounts in scattered publications.

After two preliminary chapters, covering the Roman to Saxon period and the first two and half centuries of Scottish coinage before debasement began in the reign of Robert III (1390–1406), the body of the book consists of seven chapters which treat the base metal coins of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and an epilogue of Scottish currency in the post-Union period. There then follows a long and fascinating discussion of the prices of everyday commodities, much of it based on Gemill and Mayhew’s Changing Values in Medieval Scotland and Gibson and Smout’s Prices, Food and Wages in Scotland 1550–1780.

A final chapter on coin names also includes much information of interest. The author notes that Robert Burns used the spelling boddle (as indeed did Walter Scott), suggesting that the alternative name for a twopenny piece or turner was pronounced with a short o, making its derivation from the name Bothwell more plausible. Another observation is that the name bawbee, surviving into the twentieth century, has been used until recent times to mean either sixpence or halfpenny, the former being its pre-1707 value in Scottish coin and the latter its post-union English equivalent.

One of the most useful features of the book is that Mr Holmes relates the documentary evidence about currency to surviving Scottish coins, particularly as they are found in increasing numbers today, as a result of the growing activity of metal-detectorists. The book also discusses, on the basis of coin finds, the circulation of foreign coins in Scotland, especially French from the sixteenth century and Dutch in the seventeenth century. These coins are frequently mentioned in documents of the period and Mr Holmes connects the French coins in the middle of the sixteenth century with the presence of French troops in Scotland from 1548. Forgery made a less acceptable contribution to the currency. There are many counterfeits, especially from the reigns of James III and James IV onwards. Many of these were evidently made in the Low Countries and there are a number of references to the grisly punishments suffered by those who manufactured or imported counterfeit coin.

This book contains a number of original comments of value to numismatists. For example, Mr Holmes notes that billon pence of James I are now found more frequently than those of James II, although the number of known coins of each (presumably deriving mainly from hoards) would previously have suggested that their relative rarity was the other way round. He also describes and illustrates a third type of Scottish copper farthing of James III, combining the obverse of type II with the reverse of type I, but evidently not a mule in the ordinary sense of the word since several examples are known.

Except for some of the illustrations that are too dark to show detail, this little book is well produced and easy to read or consult. Mr Holmes is to be commended for producing a work which should be of value to students as well as serving a less specialist readership.

LORD STEWARTBY


As the title indicates this is the third volume of a series. Volume I (1988) was titled ‘The Medieval Period and Nuremburg’. Volume 2 (1991) covered The Low Countries and France. This latest volume follows the format of the previous ones and its pagination runs in sequence to its predecessors (pages 1569 to 2159). It is printed with a mixture of a 10-point typeface for
historical matters and 8-point for item descriptions. Although this seems small the justified text and large page format makes it reasonably easy on the eyes. Every item in the collection is illustrated actual size and sometimes again X2. This means more than 2000 good quality illustrations. As previously these are within, or to the side of, the text with numbers that allow one to find the relevant description easily. The subject covered is very wide and only very sketchily covered in works such as Medallic Illustrations of British History (M.I.) and Laurence Brown's British Historical Medals. The author attempts to cover all aspects of this huge subject, but a purchaser will immediately find the same reasons for criticism as with the previous volumes. This is again primarily a catalogue of an individual's collection and hence what appears, at first glance, to be comprehensive coverage of a subject can turn out to be very eclectic, for instance the only examples included of the Dublin issues of James II's gun money are three silver restrikes, and Dassier's medals depicting English sovereigns are illustrated by one uniface lead trial piece.

In spite of these eccentricities there is a lot of interest and value here. The late Elizabethan pewter token series is covered in great detail. They have been found in large numbers but their mixture of English and French devices has always confused. Prior publication was primarily M.I. or some detailed listings by the late Dr David Rogers (writing as Sola) in Paul Withers' (Galata) Sacra Moneta, valuable but possibly not widely known. Similarly many of the seventeenth-century 'engraved' counters attributed to Simon van der Passe are shown. These are fairly common but not often illustrated. Examples of the rarer biblical series are included and mention is made of other even rarer series published by Helen Farquhar and L.A. Lawrence. (NC and BNJ).

Medalets are well covered. These mass-produced items, cheaply and speedily made to commemorate or publicise events of the day, are still to be found in junk boxes, and Mitchener attempts to put these into context both in terms of the events they depict and the manufacturers who produced them. Although any specialist collector is likely to find their subject incompletely covered, it is only from a publication like this that one realises the wide range of occasions that were commemorated. Early to mid nineteenth-century card counters are also given good coverage. Details of such pieces are normally only to be found in specialist publications such as the Token Corresponding Society Bulletin.

Seventeenth-century tokens are excluded from this volume and the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tokens are included largely to illustrate topics such as private tokens, or tokens mentioning their manufacturer. I do not give this as a criticism, because detailed catalogues such as Williamson, Dalton & Hamer and Davis are readily available and always mentioned by Mitchener as appropriate sources. The social history aspect was the more interesting to this reviewer and I found the large section devoted to the Birmingham 'Toy' trades particularly interesting. There are no doubt many errors to be found, (I was particularly surprised to see the tokens of John Rice from the Manors of Minster (Kent) and Frinton (Essex) described as Kentish farming tokens!), but the sheer mass of information supplied has to be an improvement over our previous state of knowledge. The work concludes with a nineteen-page bibliography and a valuation for each item. Taking into account the comments made about the impact of condition on price these seemed to be reasonably realistic. The proposed contents for a fourth volume, to bring the series to modern times, are also included.

In conclusion I would have to describe this as a curate's egg, good in parts but ultimately disappointing, because it seeks to cover too vast a subject. I do however congratulate the author for making the attempt.

PHILIP MERNICK


HERBERT Grueber in his introduction to Medallic Illustrations of the History of Great Britain and Ireland remarked that 'the history of English medallists is in a great degree the history of the medallists of other countries'. In fulfilment of this expectation the Pingo family, the leading medal-makers in mid-eighteenth England, were endowed with an Italian provenance which stayed with them in Forrer's biographical Dictionary of Medallists and the Dictionary of National Biography.

Christopher Eimer demonstrates that this expectation was wrong. The Pings are native, probably originating in Devon and certainly present in London from the 1670s onwards. Richard Pingo signed a bracket clock made in the 1680s and his extensive family, clearly mapped by Eimer, were members of the Haberdasher and Clockmaker's companies of the city of London. Watchmaking seems to have led to engraving and interesting evidence is provided here of Thomas Pingo Sr's work as an armorial engraver of silver plate. It is, though, with the medallic work of Thomas Pingo Jr (1714–76) and his sons John *1738–1827) and Lewis (1743–1830) that this book is centrally concerned.

One of Eimer's great achievements is to locate this work within a wider picture. This includes analysis of

1 These have long been recognised as pickers' tokens but pickers of copperas, a degraded iron ore found on the seashore at both locations. A detailed description of such tokens was published by W.H. George in 1991 (Copperas and Copperas Tokens of Essex and Kent).
the growing commercial market for medals, the different and complementary strategies adopted by the intermarried Pingo and Kirk families in responding to the opportunities available, and a clear picture of the scale of production overall. Thomas Pingo Jr was launched in his career as a commercial medallist by popular demand for portraits of the Duke of Cumberland, conqueror of the Jacobites, in 1746. Such medals were sold through toymen and later through more specialised retailers like the Pinchbecks and Thomas Snelling.

Thomas Pingo took every opportunity that came his way. Celebrator of Culloden, he was also the covert creator of Bonnie Prince Charlie's medal for the Oak Society of which he struck six gold, 102 silver, 283 copper and fifty soft metal examples for the Prince's secret visit to London in 1750.

Like everyone in eighteenth-century Britain, the Pingos yearned for a 'place'. The first step towards this was Thomas Pingo Jr's appointment as engraver of punches to the Assay Office at Goldsmith's Hall in 1754. Further opportunity arose when Thomas' son Lewis, a gifted draughtsman and modeller, began to win a series of prizes for drawings (from 1756) and wax models (from 1759) from the newly constituted Society of Arts, Commerce and Manufactures. Lewis's models dramatically improved Thomas Pingo's medals: Eimer's meticulous Corpus of the family's surviving work shows that from the medal for the Prince of Wales's majority in 1759 onwards, the Pingo family put out a number of pieces of real quality. Others had a hand in this too; a close relationship with Thomas Hollis resulted in a series of austere but impressive commemorative medals for the Society of Arts, while Edward Penny's and Giovanni Cipriani's drawings for the Royal Academy resulted in two beautiful prize medals in 1770. At this time a further 'place', as third engraver at the Mint, was acquired by Thomas as an inheritance for his son Lewis, who duly succeeded him in 1776. From then on, the demands of life at the Mint, where John also acquired a position in 1780, combined with the assurance of a regular salary reduced their medallic output to a trickle. It is, as Eimer demonstrates in one of his numerous and useful appendices, precisely during this period, when the Pingos were losing interest in sales, that the centre of commercial medal-making transferred from London to Birmingham.

The Pingo Family is a more considerable achievement that its slim and elegant format might suggest. It provides a wealth of information of value to students of craft and consumption in eighteenth-century London. It fills in important links in the network of personal and familial connections, knowledge which is essential to any real understanding of the period. It greatly enlarges understanding of the production, marketing and reception of medals and it presents and documents an attractive and important body of work. One can only hope that those who make peripheral appearances here, the Kirks, Richard Yeo, Edward Burch and George Michael Moser, will soon be served so well.

MARK JONES