

I.

REMARKS ON THE COINAGES OF ALEXANDER II. BY R. W. COCHRAN-PATRICK, B.A., LL.B., F.S.A. SCOT.

There are three classes of the sterlings or silver pennies which bear the name of Alexander, King of Scots. These are distinguished from one another by the type of the reverse, and are commonly known among numismatists as the short double cross type (fig. 1), the long double cross type (fig. 2), and the long single cross type (fig. 3). The short single cross

Fig. 1.

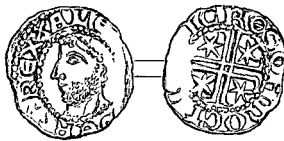


Fig. 2.

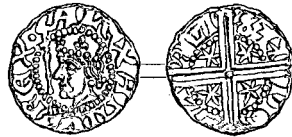


Fig. 1.—Short double cross type of Silver Penny of Alexander.

Fig. 2.—Long double cross type.

type (fig. 4) does not occur on the coins of the Alexanders, though it is found on the first coinage of William the Lion.

Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



Fig. 3.—Long single cross type of Silver Penny of Alexander.

Fig. 4.—Short single cross type of Silver Penny of William the Lion.

With regard to two of these classes of coins, viz., the short double cross coins and the long single cross coins, there is now no difference of opinion.

At one time some of the older writers on the coinage of Scotland considered that the short double cross coins belonged to Alexander I.,¹ but this opinion cannot be maintained; and it is universally agreed that the short double cross type belongs to Alexander II. and the long single cross type to Alexander III. The same unanimity of opinion does not prevail with regard to the intermediate type, viz., the long double cross coins; for some maintain that none of these were struck till after the year 1250,² while others believe that some of them were in circulation before the death of Alexander II.³

The object of the present paper is to examine the grounds on which these opinions are based, and to show that good and sufficient reasons exist for believing that the long double cross coins were really introduced at some period prior to 1247, though, without doubt, the same type was used during the reign of Alexander III.⁴

In every question relating to the appropriation of coins of this early period, the available evidence may be classed under three heads:—

- I. That derived from history, or documentary evidence;
- II. That derived from a study of the coins themselves, or numismatic evidence; and
- III. That derived from a consideration of contemporary seals; which, in the absence of medals, were almost the only other works on which the art of the die sinker was then exercised.

I. The historical facts are briefly as follows. The reverses of the coins of William the Lion present two varieties of type: (*a*) the short single cross, and (*β*) the short double cross.⁵ The "Chronicle of Melrose" says that in

¹ Anderson's *Dip. et Numis. Thes.* plate clvii.; Wise, table xxii.; Snelling, plate i. 1, 2; Jamieson, fig. 3.

² Haigh, *Numis. Chron.*, vol. iv. p. 67; Lindsay, *View of Coin. of Scot.*, p. 12.

³ *Records of Coinage of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 107.

⁴ It was a common practice, at almost every period, to use the coining irons of one reign in the succeeding one. Thus the dies of the Unicorn of James III. and his successors were used on one occasion in the reign of James V. (*Records of the Coinage of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 62, xxix. xxx.) The first coinage of Charles I. bore his father's head (*Records of the Coinage of Scotland*, vol. i. Plate xii. figs. 5-11.)

⁵ *Records of Coinage of Scotland*, plate i. figs. 2-4.

1195 "Willelmus Rex Scottorum innovavit monetam suam;"¹ and Wyntoun says that in the same year,

"Off Scotland than the Kyng Willame,²
Renewyd his monée than at hame."

Laying aside the later authors, whose facts are derived from the early annalists, the statements above quoted have always been held to indicate the exact period when the change of type on William's coins took place. Alexander II. succeeded in 1214, and in 1247 the Chronicler of Melrose³ again records a "mutatio monete." The short double cross type, which was introduced in the reign of William the Lion, was continued, beyond a doubt, by his successor, and was familiar to all who had monetary transactions. No one supposes that the long single cross type was known before the reign of Alexander III. The numerous changes which took place on the obverse of the coins of William the Lion and Alexander II. do not appear to have attracted any attention. We know from other authorities that no alteration took place either in the weight or the standard of purity. The question then arises, what was the change on the money referred to by the Monk of Melrose, if it was not the alteration of the type on the reverse from the short to the long double cross?

And in answering this question, it is important to note the difference between an official document authorising a new coinage and an historical notice recording that such had taken place. It often happened in the later history of the Scottish Mint that the official authority to issue new money was not acted on for one, or even more, years after the date of the warrant; but this is not the case with the chronicle before us. Whatever the alteration was, it *had* taken place at some period *prior* to the date of the entry in 1247, and enough time had elapsed to permit the new money to come into such general circulation, that it attracted the attention of the Chronicler, and was deemed worthy of the same notice which had formerly been given to an equally remarkable change of type on the reverse of the coins of William the Lion. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the only alteration of type which could be referred to in the Chronicle of Melrose in 1247 was the change from the short to the long double cross.

¹ Chron. de Mailros, Ban. Cl. ed., p. 102.

² Wyntoun, vol. ii. p. 220 (ed. 1872).

³ Chron. M deailros, p. 177.

Very shortly after his accession, Alexander III. made another alteration in the coinage, and introduced, for the first time in the Scottish series,¹ a long single cross passing through the legendary circle to the extreme edge of the coins, which had not been the case when the single cross was in use during the reign of William the Lion.

This alteration is not noticed either by Fordun or Wyntoun, but the continuator of Fordun records that it took place in 1250.

Such is a brief outline of the evidence afforded by history.

Let us now examine the opinions of the various authors who have treated of the coins of Scotland.

Anderson² appropriates all the long and short double cross coins to Alexander I. and II., and only the long single cross type to Alexander III. The attributions to Alexander I. are now known to be erroneous; but it is very important to observe that neither Anderson nor Ruddiman, the author of the preface to the "*Diplomatum et Numismatum Thesaurus*," who were both intimately acquainted with the history of their country, and familiar with all the early chroniclers, considered that any of the long double cross pennies belonged to Alexander III.

Wise, in his "*Catalogue of the Bodleian Coins*"³ (1750), doubts the appropriations of Anderson to Alexander I., but confirms those to Alexander III. Snelling was the first who suggested that the long double cross type might have been struck between 1249 and 1270, the date at which he fixed the introduction of the long single cross type.⁴ It will be necessary to examine the reasons which induced him to adopt this opinion. He says, "the improvement in the long single cross coins of Alexander III. followed that made in England by Edward I. in 1270." No authority is assigned for this statement beyond a general assumption that the Scottish coinage must have followed the example of the English mint, because it was always supposed to do so. If this was the case, it would no doubt be an important point for our consideration. But Dr Jamieson, in an article read before the Royal Society of Literature in March 1832, showed that this supposition of Snelling's was entirely erroneous. In the first place, Edward I. did not begin to reign till 1272, and his new coinage was not struck

¹ *Scotichronicon*, ed. Goodall, x. 3.

² *Dip. et Numis. Thes.*, plate clvii.

³ P. 243.

⁴ Snelling, *Silver Coins of Scotland*, p. 5.

till 1279, six years only before the death of Alexander III. In the next place, he shows that there is not the slightest ground for supposing that the Scottish Mint followed the English one, in the coinages at this period. The head of the king on the Scottish coins was in profile; on the English coins, full face. The type of the reverse on the Scottish coins was stars and mullets; on the English pellets. The mint was named in full on the English coins; on the Scottish it was indicated by a secret system of points somewhat akin to that used for the same purpose on the coins of France. The portrait on the English coins was entirely conventional, which was not the case in Scotland, where an attempt was made in some cases at portraiture, as may be seen by comparing pennies of Robert I. with those of Alexander III. And lastly, the legend was not the same, for DEI GRATIA appears on the coins of Scotland long before it is found on those of England.¹ Dr Jamieson concludes his paper by quoting the continuator of Fordun's notice of the change of type in 1250 as a proof that the long single cross was adopted in that year. The authority of this eminent antiquarian and scholar is thus added to the view already expressed by Bishop Nicolson, Anderson, and Ruddiman, that the alteration of type mentioned in the "Scotichronicon" in 1250 was the first introduction of the *long single cross* into the Scottish series.

Adam de Cardonnel published his "Numismata Scotiæ" in 1786, and closely followed the work of Snelling; but it is important to observe that he does not endorse Snelling's views about the long single cross coinage being introduced after the coinage of Edward I. in 1279. In 1841 the Rev. D. Haigh published a paper in the "Numismatic Chronicle"² on the early Scottish pennies. He went a step beyond Snelling (whose conjecture that *some* of the long double cross coins were struck in the early part of the reign of Alexander III., has just been noticed), and maintained that *all* the long cross coins, double and single, belonged to Alexander III. His only authority for this opinion was the above-noticed entry in the "Scotichronicon," which he quotes from Sir J. Balfour; and the assumption, already referred to, that the Scottish coins always followed the English in their changes of type.

Mr Haigh's opinion was adopted by Lindsay in his "View of the

¹ Numis. Chron., N. S., vol. xi. p. 281.

² Numis. Chron., vol. iv. p. 67.

Coinage of Scotland," and he also appropriates all the long cross coins, double and single, to Alexander II. In accepting this view, Lindsay admits that it presents almost insuperable difficulties; but, on the authority of the entry in the "Scotichronicon," he arrives at the conclusion that the short double cross coins alone belong to Alexander II. One would almost be inclined to think that Lindsay looked on the notice of the change of type in 1250 as a new discovery of Mr Haigh's, the knowledge of which would have changed the views of the earlier writers had they been aware of it. But such is not the case.

Among the numismatic MSS. in my own collection, are some letters from the well-known numismatist and antiquary, the Rev. J. Martin of Keston, addressed to Mr Lindsay on this point, which merit attention, as showing that the opinion of Dr Jamieson, that the entry in 1250 referred to the single cross coinage, was shared by English numismatists also.

"I beseech you¹ place no reliance on Snelling, . . . who has shown a lamentable ignorance of chronology, which, as you have thought fit to repeat, I shall take leave to correct. 'The coins given to Alexander III. were struck in imitation of the improved English coinage of 1270.' Two falsehoods in a small compass. The Scotch coins could not be imitations of the English, neither was there any English coinage in 1270. Alexander III. came to the throne in 1249. The learned and very accurate Lord Hailes writes thus, 1250: 'In this year the form of the Scottish coin was changed, and the cross, which formerly went no further than the inner circle, was extended to the circumference.' This change, therefore, this imitation of the coinage of Edward I., must have taken place twenty years before that monarch ascended the throne." He then goes over *seriatim* the points of difference between the types of the English and Scottish coins which have been already noticed in detail, and continues—"I have no hesitation in appropriating all the coins with double crosses to . . . Alexander II."

In a later letter² he says: "I have not swerved from my opinion on any point that relates to the coinage of Alexander II. and Alexander III., neither am I disposed to change it."

In a still later letter he again returns to the subject: "Mr Haigh is quite at liberty to think as he pleases and exercise his wonderful superabundance

¹ May 27, 1840.

² Jan. 13 1843.

of fancy ; but I smiled when you mentioned the proofs he had adduced of the long (double) cross coins having been introduced in 1250. I beg leave to say that the passages in Fordun, Lord Hailes, and Sir James Balfour were well known to me long before he was born."¹

We may therefore come to the following conclusions with regard to the historical evidence :—

1. That the short double cross type adopted by William the Lion was continued for a certain portion of the reign of his successor Alexander II.

2. That at some period prior to 1247 a change of type was introduced, which was noticed in the Chronicle of Melrose in that year.

3. That the only change likely to be noticed was the change from the short to the long double cross type.

4. That the entry in the "Scotichronicon" in 1250, noticed by Messrs Haigh and Lindsay as throwing new light on the subject, was known to the early writers, and was always held by them to refer to the introduction of the *long single cross* type.²

5. That the historical evidence entirely agrees with and confirms the conclusions arrived at on independent grounds, derived from a study of the coins themselves, and from the peculiarities noticeable on the only other works of the die-sinker extant at this period, viz., the seals.

II. Coming now to the numismatic evidence, it is necessary to remember that, though the arguments derived from a study of the coins themselves are often of great value in determining approximately the period to which they are to be assigned, experience has shown that appropriations made on this ground alone have very often had to be altered when more reliable evidence has been discovered. In cases when a long, continuous period of time is occupied by a succession of monarchs, all bearing the same name and often undistinguished on their coins by numerals—as happens with the Jameses in the Scottish series—peculiarities of lettering and differences in the minute details of type are highly important as offering a guide to the

¹ Jan. 31, 1843.

² In confirmation of this view, it may be noted that the author of the Scotichronicon uses the word *cruz* to express the long single cross on the reverse of the coinage of 1250, whilst Matthew of Paris, describing the change from the short to the long double cross type, uses the words *cruz duplicata*.

particular reign to which each piece ought to be assigned. But in the case before us the question at issue involves a comparatively short period, and the sequence of the series is not denied. The short single cross comes first, then the short double cross, then the long double cross, finally the long single cross. The only point is whether the long double cross type was introduced *before* 1247 or *after* 1250. Therefore any arguments derived from mere numismatic detail need not be entered upon here at length. The other evidence derived from the coins may be briefly summed up under the following heads:—

1. The specimens of the short cross coins of Alexander II. known to exist are very few altogether. The reign of that monarch extended to about thirty-five years, and was remarkable for the increase of national wealth and prosperity. His successor reigned very nearly as long, and the country was still progressing in material resources and civilisation. The coins which are undoubtedly to be appropriated to him (*viz.*, the long single cross type) are already the most numerous in the *Scottish series*. The long double cross coins are also common. But if the latter are taken from Alexander II. and given to Alexander III., then the whole national coinage of a reign of thirty-five years is represented in modern collections by not many more than a score of specimens.

2. Several finds of coins have been recorded, in which the pennies of William the Lion have been found along with the long double cross coins of Alexander, and without any mixture of short double cross coins.¹

3. The undoubted short cross pennies of Alexander II. present several varieties of type on the obverse, such as the uncrowned head and the crowned head turned to right and left. The same peculiarities are found in the *long double cross series*.

4. In 1250 Alexander III. was a boy not nine years of age. If the long double cross type was then struck for the first time, it is remarkable that the king's portrait should represent a full-grown, and not unfrequently even aged, man; and that the long single cross coins, which represent a youthful countenance, should be struck when the king was of more mature years.

5. During the early years of Alexander III. French art, owing to the influence of Marie de Couci, the Queen Dowager, was in great repute

¹ Lindsay, p. 12; Sainthill's *Olla Podrida*, vol. i. p. 125.

in Scotland and can be traced in the legend ESCOSSIE REX, which occurs on the long single cross type.

6. That coins struck from the long double cross dies were in circulation during the reign of Alexander III. is certain ; that the old dies were used in some of the provincial mints is not improbable ; and it might even happen that dies of the old type were sunk after the new one was introduced. A coin of Alexander's has been described in the " Numismatic Chronicle" (N. S. vol. xii. p. 236), which may turn out to read ALEXANDER TER. If this is the case, it would be an additional proof that those without the numeral belonged to Alexander II.

III. With regard to the seals,¹ the first point to be noticed is that Alexander II. appears frequently on his seals without the crown. Sometimes the head is entirely bare, and sometimes it is covered with a sort of close cap.

I am indebted to Mr Richard Sims, of the MSS. Department in the British Museum, for going over the numerous charters of Alexander II. in that collection and sending me a note of the seals. In many cases the seals are broken or in bad condition, but the following are sufficiently good clearly to show the peculiarities noticed above :—A charter in 1231 to the abbey of Balmerinoch, with a fine seal, the monarch uncrowned ; a charter to Melrose in 1229, with a fine seal, monarch with close-fitting cap with fillet ; another charter to the same, with a very fine seal, showing the head-dress just noticed. Other examples are given in Anderson's " Dip. et Numis. Thes." (pl. xxx.) and in Laing's " Catalogue of Scottish Seals " (part i. p. 4). Concerning this peculiarity Ruddiman says, in the preface to Anderson's " Thesaurus :"² " It is to be observed that all the kings of Scotland after Duncan II. are represented (on their seals) wearing the crown on their heads except William and Alexander II." Now coins of William are found bareheaded, and also coins bearing the name of Alexander, and with the long double cross on the reverse, which strongly confirms the view that these coins belong to Alexander II.

¹ The seals have an important analogy to the coinage. Thus the great seal of James II. only differs from that of James I. by the presence of amulets (Laing, pt. i. No. 45) ; and the same peculiarity is found on the coins.

² Section 47.

But there is another peculiarity to be noticed. The sceptre borne on the seals by Alexander II. has invariably two balls, or pellets, on the stem, at equal distances between the sceptre head and the hand of the king, and the sceptre on the long double cross coins shows exactly the same peculiarity. The head of the sceptre on the seals of Alexander II. is always a cross: the head of the sceptre on the seals of Alexander III. is always an ornament like a fleur-de-lis. The head of the sceptre on the long double cross coins is always a cross: on the long single cross coins invariably a fleur-de-lis.

Again, the crown on such of the double cross coins as have it, is rude and indistinct; while that on the long single cross coins is elegantly formed, showing an entire fleur-de-lis in the centre with a half on either side, and raised points between rising from a distinct circlet placed over long flowing hair; and the same crown appears on the seals of Alexander III. I am indebted to Mr Dickson, Curator of the Historical Department of the Register House, for the information that this seal, with the elegantly formed crown, the flowing hair, the youthful countenance, and the floriated sceptre, occurs as early as 1252, and consequently must have been made before that period, and in all probability at, or immediately after, 1250, when the same peculiarities are found on the coins.

It thus appears from the seals—

1. That the uncrowned Alexander is invariably Alexander II.
2. That the floriated sceptre always belongs to Alexander III.
3. That the crown composed of strawberry leaves or fleur-de-lis, placed over a youthful countenance with regularly disposed hair, was the work of some die-sinking artist before 1252.

Combining the results given by the evidence above mentioned, I think we are justified in concluding that the long double cross coins were in circulation before the death of Alexander II., and that the long single cross type was introduced as early as 1250.