

5. ON COINS PURCHASED FOR THE MUSEUM, 1959-60

SEVERAL of the small number of coins purchased for the Museum during the year (p. 257) deserve brief comments to bring out their significance.

1. There are now in the National Museum four or five short-cross sterlings showing a beardless Alexander. The head on the newly acquired coin, hitherto unpublished, is by far the finest (Pl. XVI:5). It is almost classically drawn and leaves no doubt that a beardless youth was intended. The reverse inscription shows the moneyers to have been William and John, apparently at Roxburgh – WILAM IOHAN ON R (weight 21 gr.). The coin compares most closely with Pl. XVI:6 (Burns fig. 75c), which has a similar head, but facing right, and is probably by the same moneyers although the first name and the mint are illegible. The normal short-cross sterling of Alexander II, which may have been first minted as late as 1247, shows a bearded head about which Burns remarked (p. 119) 'If ever there was a real portrait on early Scottish coins, it was surely that of the heavy-whiskered head . . . of Alexander II', and he added that in England the early coins of Henry III bore bearded heads even though the king acceded in his tenth year.

The few other published beardless or probably beardless Alexander heads that have been ascribed to Alexander II, on which I. H. Stewart made no comment in his *Scottish Coinage*, are Burns figs. 75B (William and John again, but without mint initial), 75A in the British Museum (WILLE at Kelso?), 76A and 76B (WALE ROB at Berwick). Of these (Pl. XVI:7; not ill., 8; 9) the last has its head from the same die as the earliest long-cross sterlings of Alexander III.¹ It can now be suggested with some confidence that, as Burns surmised for 76B, all the beardless heads on short-cross sterlings should be ascribed to an initial issue of Alexander III even if they do not obviously represent a boy of seven: he succeeded his father at that age in 1249, while the long-cross issue is recorded as starting in 1250-1. The swiftness of these changes was itself an innovation. Beards on coins did not come back till James V, with a rare exception under James IV. In England, they disappeared after Edward I's earliest coins (1272-8) still bearing the name of Henry.

Burns commented (p. 118) that because long double cross coins of William and John separately were known from Berwick mint, their earlier joint coins without mint name were more likely to belong to Berwick than Roxburgh. Two other moneyers are known from Berwick, but five single or joint moneyers are named on the Roxburgh short-cross coins of Alexander II or III.² Burns noted that all those at Roxburgh spelled the King's

¹ Baldwin Type I: *B.N.J.*, 1959, 92.

² Stewart, I. H., 'Double Moneyer's Names on Early Scottish Pennies', *B.N.J.*, 1952-4, 276-80.

name ALEXSANDER. The new coin does not have the intrusive s, and its mint initial, though at first sight clearly an R, has the lower front stroke curved. A Berwick attribution therefore seems most likely.

2. The single-cross sterling of Alexander III's second main issue acquired from the Whittonstall hoard is like Burns figs. 144-6 (obverse Stewart class B, reverse class C) but the sceptre on the obverse has been omitted.

3. Six shilling pieces Scots of the early seventeenth-century are rare, and the new purchases add considerably to those in the national collection. It now includes the following pieces of dates or varieties unknown to Burns, who only knew 5 of James VI and 4 of Charles I:

JAMES VI. 1606 ET, 1610 &, 1612 &, 1613 ET, 1615 &, 1617 &, 1618 &, 1619 ET,
1622 with obv. m.m. - neither 1609/7 now known nor 1616 known to Burns are
yet represented.

CHARLES I. 1626, 1634 - reading &, like all dates known.

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