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## MAKING ANCIENT COIN DIES

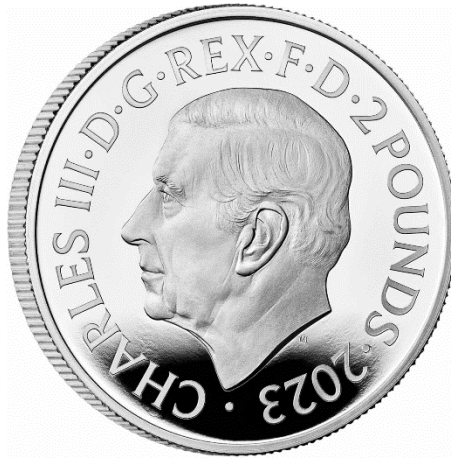
**John Melville-Jones**

In 1963 I was allowed to start teaching a unit in the Faculty of Arts at The University of Western Australia that had the title ‘Classical Art and Archaeology’. In this I focused mainly on art, rather than archaeology, because this short course had two objectives. One was to provide a little background material for students who were studying Ancient Greek and Roman history. The other was to prepare students who might later be travelling to Greece or Italy as tourists, so that they would have a better understanding of what they would be likely to see.

Coinage was the subject of only two lectures, but in talking about this, as well as about other subjects, I often spoke of my admiration of the skills that ancient artists had developed in painting, carving stone sculptures and architectural decorations and modelling works that could be cast in metals. And this is what I want to emphasise in this short article – the amazing skill that the Greeks and Romans developed in making dies with which coins could be struck.

This is not as difficult now as it would have been then, when only simple tools such as a burin and a drill were available. If you take a tour of the Perth Mint, there is in one showcase an item that gives you an idea of how a modern die is produced. First, the artist who is designing it has a sketch of the design to work on, and very carefully creates an enlarged version of what is required. This requires very sensitive modelling, because modern coins normally have very small edged rims around them, to protect their obverse and reverse types from being worn away too quickly, and allow the coins to be stacked, or wrapped together tightly in paper rolls, something which would be unusual with ancient coins. Then the enlarged version is reduced by a computer to the size required for the coin die.

This illustration shows how carefully the shape of a head can be modelled with only slightly raised elements, so that a coin is protected from wearing away too quickly. The skill of the modelling has produced a portrait that is recognisably one of Charles III (although the ears have been flattened a little, and the hair is a little thicker).



Although creating dies which can be used to produce modern coins requires a high degree of skill, the artistic skills that ancient artists developed in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. are even more amazing, when you consider the simple tools that they used. But here we come to another question, which has recently made me ask myself some questions.

In the past, I had never given much thought to considering how ancient die engravers worked, but recently I was involved in trying to arrange for a coin to be purchased for the collection of the Australian Centre for Numismatic Studies at Macquarie University. The total of money raised was \$A 5,000, but unfortunately the coin, when it was sold by Nomos Auctions in Switzerland in May 2022, was sold for an unexpectedly high amount, 26,000 Swiss francs. If you look at the enlarged photo of it below, you can see why it is so unusual (remember that it is very small, not quite as wide as an Australian five cent piece at its maximum diameter of 1.44 centimetres). It was a diobol (one-third of a drachma) issued by the Greek mint of Corinth about 430 B.C., with three Greek letters on the reverse Δ, Ι and Ο, the beginning of the Greek word *diobolos* (the shortest part of the first letter, the Greek 'd', is almost completely missing, but that is what it must be). The reverse type, the winged stallion Pegasus, which is regularly associated with Corinth in Greek mythology, does not show him from the side, the normal way of representing him, but, as an artistic *tour de force*, leaping out slightly leftward, so that the shape of his head can be more clearly seen, from the coin.



This is the only example that I have found of such a daring attempt to create such a coin type, and I assume that it was the work of a die engraver who wanted to show off his skills.

While looking at this tiny coin, I began to wonder how a die engraver in the fifth century B.C. could create the dies for a coin like this, because carving the shape of the leaping horse into a die in reverse with the tools available at the time seemed to me to be impossibly difficult. This is where I began to wonder whether these dies might have been produced by a hubbing process.

‘Hubbing’ is a word used by numismatists to describe a preliminary process in which a positive version of a coin die is created, and then hammered into a die, which has perhaps been heated enough to soften it a little.

There have been quite a few numismatic publications which have discussed this technique, and it is obviously important for those who are interested in using die studies to calculate how many issues of particular ancient coins may have been struck. A very useful point was made by Davis Sellwood in the article ‘*Experiments in Greek minting technique*’, published on pp. 217–231 and Plates XXIII–XXV of the 1963 edition of *The Numismatic Chronicle*. On pp. 221–222 he made an important comment with regard to the possibility of hubbing which he had been discussing, because it was clear that a hub could be used many times:

*‘Lest it be thought that acceptance of this theory will invalidate all work based on die- linkages, I must make a very important further proviso. Details such as hair and lettering are much more difficult to produce in relief than, let us say, the smooth bowl of a helmet or the carapace of a turtle. In consequence, I believe that the particular differences between dies – the*

*disposition of the legend, the laurel wreath, &c. – are still valuable as distinguishing features, since they would not have been part of the hub design, but were added by a graving tool or a drill after the hubbing process.’*

Hubbing is also used to produce modern coins, but that is another story.

I am grateful to the reader who not only made one or two useful suggestions, but provided a better photograph of the coin of King Charles III than I had found.



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## WA ENGRAVER W. S. BALL, REMINGTON TYPEWRITERS AND THE GREAT EMBARGO

**Walter R Bloom**

William Sawier Ball (W S Ball) was an engraver in Perth from his arrival in 1911 up until his death in 1934. Remington was a company that manufactured arms, munitions and typewriters. And Billy Hughes was an Australian WWI Prime Minister who inexplicably decided to place an embargo on the importation of Remington Typewriters in December 1915, and then quietly reversed the embargo a year later. These all come together via the following substantial brass plate.



**Brass plate, 687 x 270 mm (nominally 27" x 10½")**

The tiny maker's signature on the right-hand side of the bottom edge below the last 'E' reads W S BALL LTD PERTH. (difficult to see on the plate)



### **William Sawier Ball and family**

The first local mention of W S Ball as engraver appeared in an advertisement in *The West Australian*, 14 October 1912.

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article26523660>



*'ENGRAVING, Brass; Plates, Stencils. Apply direct to maker, save middle man's profits, cheapest and best work in city. Orders promptly executed. - W. S. BALL, 91, Lindsay-st, off Newcastle-st.'*

This appeared a year after William Sawier Ball (27), Elizabeth Jane Ball (32) and John Cardwell Ball (2½) arrived in Albany from Cape Town on 12 May 1911 on *Runic*, headed for Perth.

Western Australia's Birth Registry shows the birth of Eileen Cardwell Ball in 1912, and that of Frederick Caldwell Ball in 1920. (Note that Cardwell was the birth name of Elizabeth and was used as a middle name for all three children).

William Sawier Ball died on 31 August 1934, Elizabeth Jane Ball (née Caldwell) on 4 August 1936 in Cottesloe aged 58, John Cardwell Ball on 31 March 1989 in Myaree aged 80, and Frederick Cardwell Ball on 18 August 1999 in Shenton Park aged 79.

[www.ancestry.com.au](http://www.ancestry.com.au) lists William Sawier Ball's birth as July 1883 in West Derby, Lancashire, and that he married, at the age of 23, Elizabeth Jane Cardwell age 28 on 17 September 1906 at the St Mary the Virgin Church, West Derby Parish, Lancashire, England.

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1906 Marriage solemnized at the parish church in the parish of West Derby in the County of Lancaster

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
99	Sept 10	John Sawier Lansdowne	23	Bachelor	Assistant	44 Bourne St.	John Lansdowne	Manager
	1906	Ellice Green	22	Spinster	-	42 Fullic St.	Edward Green	Team man

Married in the afforeid church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by Thomas Alfred Lindell after Banns by me  
 This Marriage was solemnized between John Sawier Lansdowne in the presence of Ellice Green Blige Agnes Green Percy J. A. Francis Assistant Vicar

---

1906 Marriage solemnized at the parish church in the parish of West Derby in the County of Lancaster

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
100	Sept 17	William Sawier Ball	23	Bachelor	Engraver	2 Ballin Lancaster	John Ball	Engraver
	1906	Elizabeth Jane Cardwell	28	Spinster	-	2 Park View Lancaster	John Cardwell	Metall merchant

Married in the afforeid church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by Thomas Cardwell after Banns by me  
 This Marriage was solemnized between William Sawier Ball in the presence of Elizabeth Jane Cardwell Edith Holt Percy J. A. Francis Assistant Vicar

(1114)

The Ball family had a variety of residences evidenced by various items in the local newspapers, Ancestry and Wisers' WA Post Office Directories.

1913 - 1914	91 Lindsay St, North Perth, Engraver
1915	747 Hay St, East Perth
1917	56 Ruby St, North Perth
1919 - 1925	58 or 59 John St, Cottesloe, Engraver
1925	97 St George's Tce, Perth, Engraver
1926	234 Newcastle St, North Perth, Engraver
1928 - 1929	17 Bulwer Ave, North Perth, Engraver
1934- 1936	58 John St, Cottesloe, Engraver

All of these were rentals except for the return to John St in Cottesloe which was then purchased. WS Ball died in 1934 and five years later the residence was up for auction.

(Advertising (1939, September 19). *The West Australian*)

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article46425422>

*'THIS DAY (TUESDAY. SEPTEMBER 19.*

*At Three o'Clock.*

*BRICK RESIDENCE. 58 JOHN-ST., COTTESLOE.*

*CLOSE TO STATION AND BEACH.*

*LEARMONTH, DUFFY and CO. have been favoured with instructions from The West Australian Trustee. Executor and Agency Company. Ltd., as Executor of the Will of William Sawier Ball (d.) to OFFER by PUBLIC AUCTION in their rooms. 87 St George's-ter. Perth*

*Portion of Cottesloe Suburban Lot 46. and being Lot 122. with 75 links to John-street by 204.9 links depth to a R.O.W. at rear.*

*The Residence is a tiled root brick one of 5 rooms and kitchen and usual conveniences. and is only 3 minutes' walk from Cottesloe Railway Station. and about 5 minutes from the ocean.*

*Terms. Cash within 28 days unless previously arranged with the Auctioneers.'*

William Ball had previously tried to buy a pony.

(Advertising (1917, December 24). *The West Australian*)

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27464317>

*'WANTED, good, quiet Pony, suit buggy Lady to drive, trial. W. S. Ball, 56 Ruby-st., North Perth.'*

He later wanted to sell an automobile.  
 (Advertising (1929, October 9). *The West Australian*)  
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32320555>



*'CLYNO, Single Seater, English body, dickey seat, perfect order. W. S. Ball, 127 St. George's-ter. <https://www.prewarcar.de/how-many-clyno-cars-exactly-came-to-australia-during-the-1920s>*

### **Clyno Colonial two-seater (Dickey) 1926**

Ball's work premises went from Hay St to St George's Tce in 1921.  
 (Advertising (1921, February 3). *The West Australian*)  
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27955544>

*'W. S. BALL, Engraver and Stencil Cutter, etc. begs to notify his customers that he has Removed from 747 Hay-st. to 121 St. George's-ter. (opposite Foy-and Gibson), and all orders will be promptly executed as before. 'Phone A2845.'*

He must have been successful.  
 (Mainly About People. (1923, August 21). *The Daily News*)  
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article78066906>

*'Mr. W. S. Ball, of Cottesloe, leaves by the s.s. Katoomba on Saturday next on an extended business and pleasure trip to the Eastern States and Tasmania.'*

Ball then took advantage of the State Government's requirement for stencilled identification of grain bags.  
 (Advertising (1929, September 15). *Sunday Times*)  
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article58385114>

*'STENCIL PLATES For BRANDING WHEAT BAGS, Etc. IS NOW COMPULSORY. Apply Direct to Maker - W. S. BALL, 127 St. George's-ter, Perth. Phone B2845.'*

A couple of years later Ball appeared in a newspaper listing of parking fines. (POLICE COURTS. (1932, May 7). *The West Australian*)  
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article32644591>

*'Parking Offences: James Francis Morrissey, Bernard Walkemeyer, Percy Crisp, Roy de Pedro, Roy William Sydney Grace, Nathan Golinger, Allan K. Wilson, Albert F. Shelton, William S. Ball, Albert C. Klein, Frederick Woodcock, Neilson Handcock, and Leo Grodrick, 10/ each;'*

The fines for speeding and driving past a stationary tram were respectively £8 and £3! It is interesting that during the Great Depression, parking offences were both very expensive and publicised in the local press.

One of Ball's latest advertisements:  
 (Advertising (1933, October 11). *The West Australian*)  
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article33322852>



William Sawier Ball died less than a year later.

## **W S Ball Orchestra**

It is remarkable that throughout his working life, Ball was active in popular music, first as a pianist, and then forming a dance orchestra.

(Advertising (1917, October 8). *The West Australian*)  
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27456744>

*'W S. BALL'S ORCHESTRA. Dancing 8 pm. to 12. Refreshments. Ladies, 1s. Gents, 1s 6d'*

(Advertising (1918, September 12). *The West Australian*)

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article27489601>

*'DRUMMER, good, for dances. At once, W. S. Ball, 747 Hay-St., over Ezywalkins, Hay-st.'*

We have the W S Ball Orchestra, with Edson Richard Banks who organised River Cruise dances between 1921 and 1922 (see Walter R Bloom, Dance-Hall figure dies, *Perth Numismatic Journal* 52(4) November 2020, pp 2-5). Ball was similar to his contemporary medal and badge makers Charles Sheridan and Richard Stanley Cumpston who also had their own orchestras.

### **W S Ball Pty Ltd**

What happened to the company after Ball's death?

(REGISTERED COMPANIES. (1936, July 25). *The West Australian*)

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article40737131>

*'W. S. Ball, Ltd.; capital of £500 in £1 shares; registered office, 167 St. George's-terrace, Perth.'*

It was shown as such in 1947. In 1953, the company was listed as W S Ball Pty Ltd.

(MAN ADDS TO HIS 40 CONVICTIONS (1953, April 21). *The West Australian*)

Another jury convicted Faddy of having on February 24 broken and entered the office of W. S. Ball Pty. Ltd. in St. George's-terrace, Perth, and stolen £60 in money.

It looks like the company was being run by John Cardwell Ball, his brother Frederick wasn't even living in Perth.

(Passenger Has Narrow Escape In A Car Crash (1954, April 2). *The West Australian*)

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article49626563>

*'Mrs. Richardson was a passenger in a car being driven north in William-street by her husband; John William Richardson, when it collided with a*

*car being driven east in Bulwer-street by Frederick Cardwell Ball (34) of Brunswick Junction.'*

## Remington Typewriter Company

E. Remington and Sons (1816–1896) was a manufacturer of firearms and typewriters. Founded in 1816 by Eliphalet Remington in Ilion, New York on 1 March 1873, it became known for manufacturing the first commercial typewriter. The company was deeply involved in the war effort in WWI. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E.\\_Remington\\_and\\_Sons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._Remington_and_Sons))

A local agent for Remington Typewriters was appointed in 1908.

**R**EMINGTON STANDARD  
TYPEWRITER.

—

The **BEST** and **CHEAPEST**  
TYPEWRITER  
On the Market.

—

We beg to notify our clients and the public generally that we have been appointed by the Remington Typewriter Company, of New York, **SOLE IMPORTERS** for **WESTERN AUSTRALIA** of their famous Typewriter and Supplies, and we are not in any way connected with the importation of any other make of Typewriter.

The Representatives of the Remington Typewriter in the Eastern States are:— Sydney and Brisbane, Messrs. Stott and Hears; Melbourne, Chartres Proprietary, Ltd.; Adelaide, Remington Typewriter Agency (Miss Leeworthy).

Owing to rumours afloat that we have given up the agency for the Remington in favour of another machine, we give the statement **UNQUALIFIED DENIAL**.

We invite inquiries, and shall be pleased to give all particulars in regard to the new model Remington shortly to arrive.

—

Our Only Address:

E. C. STOTT and CO.,  
Royal Arcade, Perth. Tel. 1231.

They remained so for 30 years:

**The REMINGTON**  
 is the Best Portable Typewriter Obtainable !

Strong. Durable. Easy to Operate.

To anyone who has writing to do IT IS INVALUABLE.

CASH OR TERMS.

Full particulars from  
**E. C. STOTT & CO.** Sole Agents in Western Australia for  
 the Remington Typewriter Company  
 PERPETUAL TRUSTEE BUILDING, HOWARD STREET, PERTH



An advertisement in *The West Australian* in March 1940 gave the address as *Remington Typewriters Ltd, St George's Tce*, with no mention of E C Stott & Co, and only appeared during that year, so perhaps the brass plate can be dated to 1940?

In 1915, the Federal Government placed an embargo on the importing of Remington Typewriters, and in 1916 the embargo was lifted. There is a detailed discussion of this extraordinary action at:

[oz.Typewriter: Why Did the Australian Government Put Remington Typewriters on the 'Enemy List'? \(oztypewriter.blogspot.com\)](http://oztypewriter.blogspot.com)

No light has been shed on the specific reason for this decision, although there are suggestions that it was to do with the Remington Company manufacturing arms and munitions near the German border, or alternatively correcting the balance-of-trade between Australia and the United States at the time.

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*Brass plates (plaques) form an interesting part of numismatics. In Europe, small brass plaques (plaquettes <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plaquette>) appeared extensively in the Italian Renaissance through to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these were made by well-known medallists and exhibited very fine detail, as did some corresponding pieces in Australia. Note that unlike medallions, plaquettes are uniface. Western Australian brass plates were mostly for signage and usually not ornate. The above article is the first on a series of articles on the local manufacturers of these fascinating objects.*



## SCOTS COINAGE

### Jonathon de Hadleigh

When Scots coinage first diverged from English sterling a road was taken towards creating unique Scots symbols and names for their coinage. It also led to an ever-diverging exchange rate with England until finally, when King James VI of Scotland came to sit upon both thrones as James I, it was about 12:1 Scots to English. To arrive at that point in time the Scots coinage had to undergo many changes, with many monarchs creating new denominations while trying to maintain stability in their money, faced with an ever-deteriorating exchange rate.

Scotland always looked toward Europe for friends and allies. Her architecture was more influenced by France than anywhere else. So too with the coinage.

Our story begins in the reign of David II (1329-1371) who was contemporary with Edward III (1327-1377) of England. The gold noble of England struck in 1351 weighed 120 grains (7.78 gm) and David produced his Scots noble of 120 grains in 1357. David had three issues of coinage, the first being in the early 1330's of a silver halfpenny and farthing. His second issue in 1351 to 1357 added a gold noble, silver groat (4 pence), half groat and penny, all weighing the same as their English counterparts. His third issue in 1367 to 1371 was when the story of divergence began. The weight of the groat was reduced from 72 grains (4.67 gm) to 61 ½ grains (3.99 gm) of silver. Those 11 ½ grains were valued at more than a halfpenny, but not quite 3 farthings, in English money. So, a merchant in England might take a Scots groat at 3 ½ pence at best. His silver differed from the English full-face design by offering a profile portrait, albeit a poor representation of the king.



**Scotland, David II, half groat, 1357-1367**

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))



Robert II (1371-1390) issued only silver with no changes in design or weight.

Robert III (1390-1406) is where the story continued. He was contemporary with Richard II (1377-1399) of England and Charles V and Charles VI of France. The French gold *écu a la couronne* struck in 1385 had an obverse displaying a crowned shield with three *fleur de lis* of France on it and a reverse with a cross *fleury*. This must have influenced Robert's gold coinage of 1390-1403 which had an obverse of a crowned shield with the lion of Scotland on it and a reverse of St Andrew crucified on a long saltire cross with *fleur de lis* at the sides, a very Scots design known as a 'lion'. Its weight was almost the same as an English half noble valued at 3 shillings and 4 pence sterling, while the lion was 5 shillings in Scotland.



### Scotland, Robert III, lion, c. 1390-1403

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

The silver groat of 1390 to 1403 weighed only about 2/3 of an English groat. The Scots groat also lost its profile portrait and adopted a full-face one so that it closely resembled the English design. Then, in 1403 to 1406, Robert further reduced the weight of his coins, creating more divergence as the English coinage had not changed. The groat of four pence Scots was then about 1 ½ pence sterling and the lion valued at 5 shillings Scots was only about 2 shillings in England.

Robert also debased the penny, halfpenny and farthing, reducing the silver to 800 fine (80% silver) compared with sterling at 925 fine (92.5% silver). Although the weight of the penny was still about the same as the English coin, it is no wonder that those debased coins were considered counterfeit in England. They could have passed fraudulently when mixed with English pennies and perhaps weighed in a five shilling lot of 60 pennies.

In 1406, James I of Scotland (1306-1437) was a prisoner in England. He was ransomed for £40,000, so it will not surprise you to learn that his gold coins were only made of 22 carat gold compared with English and previous Scottish coins of 23 ½ carats. It was at this time, due to bullion shortages throughout Europe, that the English mint had to reduce the weight of its coinage as bullion prices rose. The English noble went from 120 grains (7.78 gm) to 108 grains (7.00 gm) in 1412. The silver groat also lost weight from 72 grains (4.67 gm) to 60 grains (3.89 gm).

A Scots gold coin known as a ‘demy’ then weighed the same as an English half noble, just as the first lion had done in circa 1400. A demy was valued at 9 shillings Scots while the equivalent half noble was still 3 shillings and 4 pence sterling. Silver groats of James I weighed more than previous issues but were revalued upwards at 6 pence Scots rather than 4 pence.

James II of Scotland (1437-1460) at first issued a demy, but in 1451 to 1460 reintroduced the lion at the same weight as before, but revalued to 10 shillings Scots. His silver groats were unchanged until 1451-1460 when they, looking almost the same as English groats, became valued at 12 pence Scots. A billon penny suffered as well, losing about a third of its weight. The English penny remained stable in weight and fineness and was worth 3 pence Scots.

James III (1460-1488) was only nine years old when he came to the throne. The first changes under him came to the silver coinage in 1467. The groat was lowered in weight but still valued at 12 pence Scots, although only 4 pence English. Things got worse in 1471 to 1483. A groat of 6 pence value was struck but in only 770 fineness and not much more than half the previous weight. This and the half groat are very rare coins. A new, light issue of facing bust groats was made from 1475. These were valued at 12 Scots pence.



**Scotland, James III, groat (light issue), c. 1482**

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

In England, in 1464, King Edward IV (1461-1470 & 1471-1483) reduced the weight of the silver groat by about 20%. The weight of the gold Noble remained the same, but its value rose to 8 shillings and 4 pence. In 1465 a new English coin, the 'rose noble' or 'ryal' was issued, weighing the same as previous nobles but valued at 10 shillings. Another new gold coin was also produced; an 'angel', weighing  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a ryal and valued at 6 shillings and 8 pence. It was with these English coins that Scots money had to compete as the Wars of the Roses continued in England.

In 1475-1483 another new Scots coin known as a 'rider' was issued, valued at 23 shillings. It had an obverse of the king in armour with a sword, galloping right.



### Scotland, James III, rider, 1475-1483

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

This coin must have been inspired by earlier gold French francs and Dutch gold 'riders' that featured horsemen. It would have been in competition with the new English Angel. It was valued at 23 shillings Scots, but only 6 shillings and 8 pence in England.

In 1484 Scotland issued a new gold coin, the 'unicorn', weighing almost half a ryal, valued at 18 shillings Scots but only 5 English shillings.



### Scotland, James III, unicorn, 1484-1488

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

As the war of the Roses drew to its conclusion in the mid 1480's, James III of Scotland issued innovative silver groats valued at 1 shilling and 3 pence. Some, known as 'rough issue' are extremely rare. The main issue, itself rare, was valued at 1 shilling and 2 pence.



**Scotland, James III, groat (main issue), 1484-1488**

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

Billon coins were then introduced and the small change of Scotland had a new denomination added to its ranks. The 'plack', only 500 fine, was valued at 4 pence Scots but only a penny farthing (1¼ pence) in England. A half plack was also struck.



**Scotland, James III, billon plack, 1460-1488**

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

Below the plack a billon penny and a halfpenny were struck. These billon issues of so-called 'black money' are very rare.

A small, copper, penny coin was known as a 'crossraguel' or 'Bishop Kennedy penny'.



**Scotland, James III, 'Bishop Kennedy' penny, 1460-1488**

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

Farthings in copper or brass completed the range of denominations issued by James III of Scotland. Most of these are rare.



**Scotland, James III, farthing, 1460-1488**

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

The Scotland of James IV (1488-1513) continued the same denominations as previously. The silver groats were still 925 fine, and from 1489 to 1496 were valued at 1 shilling 2 pence.

In 1496-1513 a new Scots groat was struck at lower weight and conveniently valued at 12 pence, but worth only 2 ½ pence in England. The billon coins retained the same designs, but the silver content decreased until they were mostly copper. The gold content of the unicorn fell to only 21 carats, and the lion or crown possibly less.

In the first coinage of James V (1513-1542) the value of the unicorn went from 18 shillings to 20 shillings Scots, although the weight remained unchanged. The second coinage included a gold crown worth 20 shillings, which looked similar to the French ecu d'or.





### Scotland, James V, crown, 1526-1529

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

His third coinage of 1539-1542 had a ‘ducat’ or ‘bonnet’ piece valued at 40 shillings Scots and similar in weight to the English Angel worth 6 shillings and 8 pence English. All these gold coins are very rare, as are most of the silver of this period.



### Scotland, James V, bonnet, 1540

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

At this time the Scots silver groat had a profile portrait similar to that of Henry VII of England. However, the Scots coin was less fine and lighter, and was valued at 1 shilling and 6 pence Scots. These coins would have been a nightmare for cross border commerce.

The most common coin in circulation in Scotland was the plack, valued at 4 pence. In 1538 it was joined by a billon ‘bawbee’, current for 6 pence Scots.

Mary (1542-1567) issued an ‘abbey crown’ or ‘ecu’, valued at 20 shillings in 1542, rising to 22 shillings and 10 pence in 1543. It would have been valued at only about 4 English shillings.

Throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century Scots politics were complicated and so too were the issues of coinage and the denominations involved. Queen Mary issued silver coins below sterling fineness and over the same time period England underwent its Great Debasement. So, the exchange rate would have been bouncing about. It all became more stable in about 1558-1560 when Francis and Mary issued a ‘testoon’ in 916 fine silver valued at 5 shillings Scots. It was comparable in weight and fineness to a first issue shilling of Elizabeth I.

In 1565-1567 a silver ryal was struck carrying face to face busts of Mary and Henry Darnley with a date below and a crowned shield reverse. This impressive coin of almost 1 troy ounce was valued at 30 shillings Scots but would only have fetched 5 shillings in England.

Bawbees, placks and halves continued to be struck along with pennies in billon. Added to these was a lion of 1 ½ pence, also called a ‘hardhead’. A 12 penny groat called a ‘nonsunt’, struck in 1558 and 1559, added some confusion. These billon coins were the most common at the time and are still so today, and being not so rare as all other coins they are more affordable to collect.



### Scotland, Mary, groat (nonsunt), 1558

Image courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group ([www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com))

Now we come to King James VI of Scotland (1567-1625). In his second issue of coinage he struck an extremely rare, undated, 20 pound piece of almost an ounce in weight and in 22 carat gold. The English equivalent in gold content would have been 2 sovereigns valued at 30 shillings each. So, 20 pounds Scots would have been equal to only 3 English pounds.

James VI had eight issues before he ascended to the English throne as James I, and a further two after that.

His silver coinage passed through a variety of coin names and characteristics to arrive at the ninth issue when he was on both thrones. It is little wonder that he wanted to unify the coinage. Through his eight previous issues in Scotland the exchange rate slowly passed from about 6:1 in 1567 to about 12:1 by 1603.

The billon coins that were in most peoples' pockets then consisted of:

- An 8 penny groat.
- A 2 penny plack.
- A hardhead, now valued at 2 pence.
- A 1 penny plack.
- A 4 Penny plack.
- A 2 penny 'turner'.
- A penny.

In 1613, after his ascension to the English throne, a twopence and a penny were struck. The earlier 'turners', struck in 1597, were very similar to French, copper double '*tournois*', from which the Scots name came. Many of those were imported into Scotland where they circulated at about the same value as a Scots turner.

It has been a long journey through the complicated Scots coinage to arrive at the final exchange rate of about 12:1 with English coins, before the two systems were brought back into line. Most of the coins involved are rare nowadays because the rapidly deteriorating exchange rate throughout the reign of James VI led to earlier coins being removed from circulation and melted down to be restruck as new denominations.

The English coinage is simple by comparison. It is little wonder that England had an abhorrent dislike for debasement of its coinage. But she had a favourable balance of payments which lies at the base of all currencies, and so Scotland (and France) suffered. But at least the Scots did leave us an interesting plethora of coin denominations and designs to look at and study.





According to the Western Australian Government website:

*‘With the introduction of convict transportation to Western Australia in 1850, the Colonial Secretary shifted the responsibility of Government printing to the Fremantle Prison which had set up its own print shop to provide work and training for convicts. In 1858, the prison started printing Government Gazette which was a weekly publication with the identification “Printed at Convict Establishment” appearing on official notices from then-on’.*

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/state-law-publisher-history>

### Editor’s note.

It is ironic that convicted forgers finished up printing official Western Australian Government documents. It would be even more ironic if they had printed early banknotes. Sadly, that is most unlikely to have happened. Notes of the first bank to be established here were printed in England starting in 1844 (A. Crellin, *The Western Australian Bank (1841 - 1927) Underwritten by Parochialism*, Perth Numismatic Journal, March 2018) and transportation to Western Australia did not begin until 1850. However, some promissory notes would have been locally printed, although probably not in the Government print shop at Fremantle prison.



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## COMIC COINS

A century ago, the following short article appeared in the Gnowangerup Star and Tambellup-Ongerup Gazette of Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1924.

*Not infrequently coins have been made to appear comic, usually through lack of knowledge or skill of the designer. Take, for example, the old type of sovereign whereon St. George is shown fighting the dragon with a sword about the size of an ordinary carving-knife, his feet bare, and wearing a helmet. "How brightly comic it is!" wrote Ruskin, when these coins were first put in circulation. "The horse looking abstractedly into the air, and St. George about to deliver a mortal blow at the dragon with a sword which cannot reach him by a couple of yards."*

*There is a coin, well known to collectors, called the "breeches crown," because it bears what appears to be the representation of a pair of pendant breeches. It was minted by Cromwell, and furnished much inspiration for jokers and punsters in his day. As a matter of fact, the design is supposed to represent two shields.*

*When Queen Mary was married to Phillip of Spain she had a set of coins struck on which the Spanish king is pictured face to face with his English bride as if about to kiss her, an attitude which inspired the well known couplet in "Hudibras": "Still amorous, cooing and billing, like Phillip and Mary on a shilling."*

*Perhaps the oddest instance of a coin being rendered unintentionally funny, however, is that of one of the earlier issues of the Kruger sovereigns. These bear the effigy of the old president on one side, and on the other side what is intended to represent a Boer trek-waggon (sic). The dies were engraved in Europe, and the designer put "two shafts to the waggon, instead of the single "disselboom," or pole. Worse still, he engraved his own initials, "O.S.," directly underneath the Kruger bust. Now "Os" means, in Dutch, first an ox; then, secondly, an ox-like, bovine fellow; and, thirdly, in its most vulgar sense, a fool. The coins, or as many of them as could be retrieved, were hastily withdrawn from circulation.*

The anonymous writer identified an interesting and amusing topic. Is there a member out there who would like to expand on it for a future issue of our journal?

## CALENDAR OF PNS MEETINGS

PNS meetings are held at 7.30pm on the last Wednesday of each month, except December, at John McGrath Hall, 97 Hensman St, South Perth.

Meeting dates for 2024 are as follows:

- 31 January      Speaker: Robert Russell, *Provincial UK banknotes and the Australia connection*. Tender Sale.
- 28 February    Topic: Coin Grading. Tender Sale.
- 27 March        Topic: Singapore Numismatics. Tender Sale.
- 25 April**        Speaker: Walter Bloom, *Some Makers Plates from WA*.  
Tender Sale.  
**Please note that this is a Thursday and Anzac Day.**
- 29 May         Topic: Banknote Grading. Tender Sale.
- 26 June         Topic: Numismatic items made from unusual materials.  
Tender Sale.
- 31 July         Topic: Famous People on Numismatic items. Tender Sale.
- 28 August      **Annual General Meeting**. Topic: Numismatic errors and forgeries. Tender Sale.
- 25 September    Topic: Fiji numismatics. Tender Sale.
- 30 October     Topic: New Zealand numismatics. Donation Sale.
- 27 November    Topic: Papua New Guinea numismatics. Tender Sale.

Refer to the Perth Numismatic Society Inc. website for updates:  
(<https://www.pns.org.au/meetings/>)

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

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WA Country	\$ 20
Associate	\$ 10
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Prof Walter Bloom	2013
Joe Brizzi	2022
Rowley Butters	2022
Sandra Vowles	2022

### PAST PRESIDENTS

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Edward Rintoul †	1968-1969
Edward Gibbs †	1969-1970
Clive Stronach †	1970-1971
Karl Hawelka †	1971-1978
Haydn Powell †	1978-1988
Prof Walter Bloom	1988-1991
Jiri Just †	1991-1994
Colin Meikle	1994-1997
Haydn Powell †	1997-2005
Prof Walter Bloom	2005-



## CALENDAR OF FAIRS

Perth Numismatic Society Coin, Banknote & Stamp Fairs (South Perth Community Centre):

- Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2024
- Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August 2024
- Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2024
- Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Perth Money Expo (South Perth Community Centre):

- Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Militaria Swap Meet (Cannington Exhibition Centre & Showgrounds):

- Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2024
- Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Perth Stamp & Coin Show (South Perth Community Centre):

- Friday 8<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Cannington Collectors Fair (Cannington Exhibition Centre & Showgrounds):

- Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Broomhill Antiques & Collectables Fair (Broomhill Town Hall):

- Friday 24<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Mandurah Antique & Collectors Fair (City of Mandurah Seniors Centre):

- Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024
- Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2024
- Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2024 (Pinjarra Civic Centre)

Antique & Collectible Fair (South Perth Community Centre):

- Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2024
- Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2024
- Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Peel Region Stamp, Coin & Banknote Fair (Bortolo Pavilion):

- Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024
- Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2024

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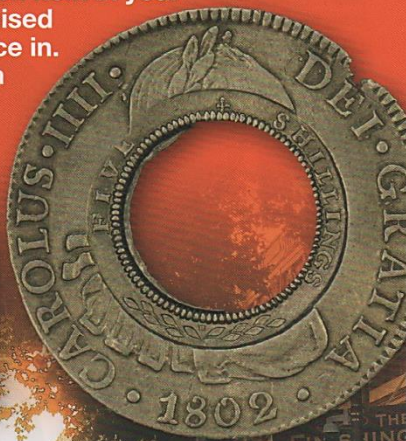
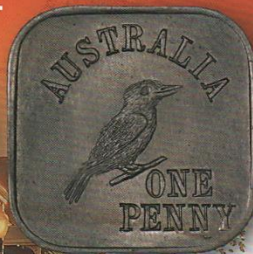
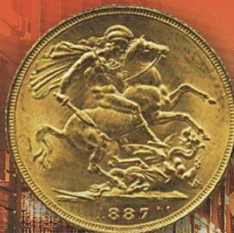


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