

OBITUARY

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL J. K. R. MURRAY

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL J. K. R. Murray, who died on 8 November 1986, was the most distinguished student of the later Scottish coinage, from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth, since the foundations of the subject were laid by the classic works of R. W. Cochran-Patrick on the documents and Edward Burns on the coins published a hundred years ago. The series had been relatively neglected in the intervening period, but from 1966 to 1980 Jock Murray produced a stream of papers which greatly advanced our knowledge and understanding of the coinages of Mary, Charles I and Charles II. Although he also published four short pieces on the coinage of James VI, his main work on the gold and silver coinages of that reign remains unpublished.

John Kenneth Ronald Murray was born on 29 June 1910. After school at Wellington (1924–8) he went to Sandhurst and was commissioned in September 1930. He then went to India, and after a year's attachment to the 2nd Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment, he joined the 2nd Battalion, 4th Bombay Grenadiers (later renamed the Indian Grenadiers), serving as a regimental officer in Ahmednagar, Manzai, Wana, and Rawalpindi. His later years of service were spent in military intelligence. In 1937–8 he went to study in Estonia, after which he passed the interpretership examination in Russian. Thereafter he was in the Near East and India until 1946, when he was seconded to the War Office. He retired from the Army in October, 1948 after eighteen years service, and worked at GCHQ until ill-health forced his retirement in 1952. This coincided with his marriage and a move to the small burgh of Crail, on the Fife coast, where he and his wife began to take an interest in Scottish history, working on the local records from the sixteenth century onwards preserved in the Town Hall. After ten years in Scotland and two major operations, he was sufficiently fit to resume work at GCHQ in 1962, from which he finally retired in 1971.

Col Murray's numismatic interests date back at least to the end of his period in the army. When settled in London, he joined the Orders and Medals Research Society, forming a collection of medal ribbons and making use of contacts in India to obtain those of some of the Indian princely states. Later he began to collect coins, mainly English milled gold, but these were sold at Glendinings at the time of his retirement in 1952. Soon after returning to GCHQ, he joined the Cheltenham Numismatic Society in 1963, which he served as Secretary/Treasurer for several years in the 1960s. He had retained a small group of crowns from his earlier collection, including a Scottish 60 shilling piece of Charles I by Briot, but after adding to this collection for a little while he soon (from January 1964) began to concentrate his attention on Scottish coins. Two months later we began a correspondence on the subject which continued for the rest of his life. Because of ill-health, Col. Murray was not able to visit London frequently in his later years, but through letters and telephone calls I came to know him well and to respect him profoundly both for his exceptional qualities as a numismatist and as a delightful, generous and courageous man. Despite the discomfort and distress which he suffered from his illness he remained cheerful, hospitable and uncomplaining.

In 1965 Col Murray joined the Royal Numismatic Society, while Mrs Murray, who had also begun to take an enthusiastic interest in Scottish coins, joined the British. Together

they visited the National Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh on many occasions, and other relevant public collections in England and Scotland. Their shared interest acted as a stimulus, and experience of reading the early documents at Crail proved to be invaluable training for the work on mint papers in the Scottish Record Office, the British Library and the Lauderdale archives which Col Murray later undertook.

In 1966 Col Murray published a very important paper in Spink's *Numismatic Circular* on the Stirling bawbees of Mary, Queen of Scots, identifying for the first time the historical context and date of their issue. Two other papers on coins of Mary appeared in the *Circular* for 1966 and 1967 and another in the *Journal* for 1968. He published a note of a false countermark in the *Circular* in 1978, an important paper on the gold coinage of 1555–8 in the *Chronicle* for 1979 and (with Mrs Murray) some notes on the testoons of 1560–1 in the *Journal* for 1980. But much of what he had done on the coinage of Mary, including in particular a study of the testoons of 1556–8 did not find its way into print. The same is true of his extensive work on the coinages of James VI, although he did publish notes on the 40 shilling piece of 1582, the minor post-Union silver and the billon coinages in the *Chronicle* for 1968 and 1972, and one on the proposed half hat-piece in the *Journal* for 1969.

The same volume of the *Journal* included a comprehensive account of the silver coinage of Charles II, and the next volume a magisterial paper on the complex and difficult Scottish coinage of Charles I. Burns had died before the second volume of *The Coinage of Scotland* had gone through the press and his chapter on Charles I was in parts confused. Col Murray's paper brought the whole series into order, combining lucidity, balance and good judgement in presentation with great care and thoroughness in regard to detail. In my view it is one of the best papers that has appeared in this *Journal* on any subject during the last twenty years.

Col Murray was not eligible for the Society's gold medal, because of the way he and his wife had divided their membership of the two societies. But we did pay him the rare honour of making him an honorary member in 1983, and, whether consciously or not, I feel sure that the membership in awarding the Sanford Saltus medal to Mrs Murray, a few weeks after his death, for her work on the coins of James III and IV was also recognising the mutual achievement of their partnership.

By the time this notice appears in print, Jock Murray's coins will have been dispersed at auction. His collection reflected the division of labour which he and Mrs Murray adopted, containing virtually nothing of the fifteenth century but being very rich in the reigns from Mary onwards. At one time Col Murray also collected coins of the Eastern Baltic States, up to the eighteenth century, an interest no doubt deriving from his year in Estonia before the War. This collection he presented to the Ashmolean Museum in 1977.

My only complaint about Jock Murray is that he was too diffident about the value of his work to others. I hope that in due time it may be possible to publish in one form or another much of the important work he had done on the coinages of Mary and James VI, and I hope also to bring to a conclusion a paper on early collectors of Scottish coins, a subject on which he had worked extensively over the years. He was himself not only a most discerning collector but also a dedicated student and his death is a real loss to all those of us who had the privilege of knowing him.

IAN STEWART

The Published Works of J. K. R. Murray

Undated 'The Indian States and their medals' (5 mimeographed pages; pre-1962 and probably much earlier)

1966 'Two Scottish re-used dies' (Mary), *NCirc* 1966, 94.

1966, 1968 'The Stirling Bawbees of Mary, Queen of Scots', *NCirc* 1966, 306 and 1968, 265.

- 1967 'The Scottish coinage of 1560–61', *NCirc*, 1967, 95–6.
- 1968 'A further note on the forty-shilling piece of James VI of Scotland' *NC* 1968, 161–7.
'Some notes on the small silver money of James I and VI', *NC* 1968, 169–72.
'The Scottish coinage of 1553', *BNJ* 37 (1968), 98–109.
- 1969 'The Scottish silver coinage of Charles II', *BNJ* 38 (1969), 113–25.
'The gold forty-shilling piece of James VI of Scotland', *BNJ* 38 (1969), 193–4.
- 1970 'The Scottish gold and silver coinages of Charles I', *BNJ* 39 (1970), 111–44.
- 1972 'The billon coinages of James VI of Scotland', *NC* 1972, 177–82.
'The Jacobite Silver Touchpieces', *SCMB* 1972, 446–8.
- 1972, 1978 'The Scottish copper coinages, 1642–1697' (with B. H. I. H. Stewart), *BNJ* 41 (1972), 105–35; and
'—, a postscript', *BNJ* 48 (1978), 112.
- 1976 'A false Mary and Henry ryal, dated 1565', (with P. Finn) *NCirc* 1976, 317.
- 1978 'The crowned thistle countermark on Scottish coins' *NCirc* 1978, 73–4.
- 1979 'The Scottish gold coinage of 1555–8', *NC* 1979, 155–64.
Comments in correspondence on R. E. Dodd, 'The Scottish milled coinage', (*NCirc* 1979, 58–60, 118–20, 180–2, and 235–6) *NCirc* 1979, p. 247.
- 1980 'Notes on the Vicit Leo testoons of Mary Queen of Scots' (with J. E. L. Murray), *BNJ* 50 (1980), 81–90.
- 1981 'The Scottish testoons' (of 1553), *NCirc* 1981, 397.
- 1982 'Some Scottish cut halfpennies from southern England', *NCirc* 1982, 270.
- 1984 'Mary Queen of Scots', correspondence relating to the Francis and Mary ducat, pennies and halfpennies of 1547 and dies for the testoons of 1561–2, *SCMB* 1984, 45–6.