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Discovering the King’s Wall: Excavations at 144–166 Cowgate, Edinburgh

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A.2.4 Coins

N M McQ Holmes

(The coins are not illustrated.)

The earliest items were three copper coins of the ‘Crux Pellit’ issue, formerly known as ‘Bishop Kennedy pennies’, and another possible specimen. Although the exact dates of the production of these coins remain uncertain, it is clear that they belong to the period c 1450–82. It appears that they may have been devalued from threepence to a farthing by the Lords of Council at Lauder in 1482, after which their role in the circulating currency may be assumed to have declined rapidly. The other two coins comprised a plack of James V, worth four pence and dating from 1513–26, and an unidentifiable copper piece, probably of 17th-century origin. The Nuremberg jeton is of a type which has been dated to the end of the 15th or first half of the 16th century.

The concentration of numismatic evidence in the late 15th and early 16th centuries reflects the quantity of deposited material during this period, though in three cases (nos 29–31) these appear to be residual. Meanwhile a farthing trade token is clearly intrusive (possibly fallen out of a neighbouring section). It may be regarded as an unusual find for Edinburgh in belonging to one of the scarce issues of a Haddington retailer rather than to one of the numerous Edinburgh types.
Catalogue

27. James II/III copper ‘Crux Pellit’ issue, type II (?) (c 1450–82); 19.0 × 20.0mm, 1.70g, die axis 15°; much corroded, but probably only slight wear. SF610, Context [203], Area C, Ph E6.

28. James II/III copper ‘Crux Pellit’ issue, uncertain type (c 1450–82); 19.0 × 20.0mm, 0.78g, die axis uncertain; highly corroded and badly chipped; probably slight to moderate wear. SF207, Context [054], Area A, Ph E6.

29. James II/III copper ‘Crux Pellit’ issue, uncertain type (c 1450–82); 18.5 × 19.0mm, 0.73g, die axis uncertain; highly corroded; degree of wear uncertain. SF122, Context [021], Area A, Ph W7.

30. Uncertain, but possibly a ‘Crux Pellit’ issue; 20.0 × 19.0mm, 0.73g, die axis uncertain; highly corroded; degree of wear uncertain. SF124, Context [021], Area A, Ph W7.

31. James V billon plack, Stewart type IIc (1513–26); 26.0 × 25.5mm, 1.44g, die axis 150°; chipped and corroded, but only slight wear. SF76b, Context [015], Area A, Ph 9.

32. Brass jeton of Nuremberg, Germany: anonymous ‘ship penny’ type, cf Mitchiner 1988: 1128–34 (c 1490–1550); 25.0mm, 1.49g, die axis 105°; moderate wear. SF409, Context [135], Area B, Ph E6.

33. Uncertain copper, probably a turner or bodle of 17th-century date; 19.5mm, 1.36g, die axis uncertain; highly corroded; degree of wear uncertain. SF76a, Context [015], Area A, Ph 9.

34. Copper farthing trade token of George Amos, Haddington, East Lothian (Dalton & Hamer 1990), Haddingtonshire 1 (c 1790–1820); 21.0mm, 1.74g, die axis 165°; corroded, especially obverse; slight wear. SF610, Context [203], Area C, Ph E6 (intrusive).