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SCOTTISH COINS
A history of small change in Scotland

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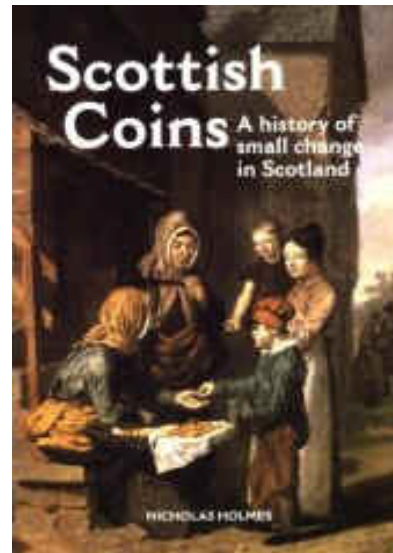
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This book sets out to tell the story of the development and production of low-value base metal coinage in Scotland and to give some account of how such money was used, abused, spent, discarded and counterfeited. The authors knowledge of recent developments in numismatic scholarship and involvement in the recording and publication of Scottish coin finds and hoards has enabled him to update previous accounts and

interpretations of some aspects of the coinage. It is hoped that the descriptions and illustrations of the coins will enable readers to identify examples which they may possess.

Examples are given of what could be purchased for small amounts of money at different periods of history. The origin and derivation of the names of different Scottish coins are discussed, and examples are given of how these names came into general use in both language and literature.

The constant availability of low-value coins for everyday use in small transactions is something to which we are all so accustomed today that it is difficult to imagine how communities could exist without them. For much of the period which we call the Middle Ages, however, relatively few people can have had access to large numbers of coins and to those who did they frequently represented no more than a convenient method of acquiring and quantifying gold and silver. It was the weight and purity of the precious metals which was of primary importance, rather than the face value of the coins in circulation.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries gold and silver coins were often impressive in terms of their size, the artistry of their designs and the skill with which they were manufactured, with the result that they have long been valued, studied and collected, but at the same time few people would have been wealthy enough to own them. The coins which ordinary people used were usually of base metal, and little care was taken over their design or minting. Most of them were artistically uninteresting, and poor striking was common. With one or two honourable exceptions, few scholars have bothered to study these coins, but the names commonly given to them by those who used them conjure up echoes of life in Scotland in the days when the country still had independent coinage. Some of these names, the 'bawbee' and perhaps, the 'bodle', are still familiar to many Scots, but others - 'plack', 'hardhead', 'turner' - are almost certainly known to few except coin-collectors and historians.

After the Union of the Parliaments in 1707 Scotland shared the coinage of Great Britain, and the increasing urbanisation which accompanied the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought about a further increase in coin use, but the inadequacy of the supply of low-value coins at certain times led to the issuing of semi-official and unofficial token coinages in towns and cities in Scotland, as in other parts of the British Isles. Many of these tokens bore representations of buildings and other scenes of local significance, as well as the heraldic arms of the towns where they were issued.

In the chapters that follow we shall look not just at the coins and tokens which were used by ordinary people in Scotland through the ages, but at the effects on people's lives of the presence or absence of these coins and tokens as a means of exchange, and at how the coins received their names then passed into the language. Many of the coins are of types which are still found frequently today, whether by chance - in gardens or amongst old household bric-a-brac - or by those who search deliberately as archaeologists or metal detectorists. The reporting and accurate recording of new finds will help to increase the knowledge of how and where the coins were used.

..... *Continued in the book*

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