

Medieval Coin Die and Coins

Period: Medieval

Material: silver

Complete items

These pewter coins are copies of silver coins minted in Inverness during the reign of Alexander III (1249-1286).

Coins were first minted in Scotland in around 1140 AD. English coins were also often used, both before and after Scottish currency was established. Coins were made by Anglo-Saxon kings in England

hundreds of years before they were minted in Scotland. David I (reigned 1124 to 1153) spent many years in England before taking the Scottish throne on the death of his brother. He brought back the idea, and perhaps people with expertise, to mint coins in Scotland.

In the Medieval period most coins were silver pennies with occasional high value gold coins. Debasement of coins (using alloys with base metals as well as silver) began in the reign of Robert III (1390-1406). In the 15th century low value coins of base metal began to be minted, a practice which continued into the post-medieval period. Low value coins called bawbees, placks, turners and hardheads circulated along with pennies of debased metal, and forgery was a constant issue.

The value of coins was originally based upon the metal they were made from, but this system had its flaws. When silver became difficult to source other materials could be added to reduce the silver content of minted coins. Small pieces of coin could also be snipped off, so that you steadily accumulated enough pieces to make extra

coins (this is why modern coins often have patterned edges). Exploits like these sometimes undermined confidence in the currency.

It is not known where the coin mint was located within Inverness, but it is likely to have been within the castle as this would have been a secure location. The only other Scottish monarch to mint coins in Inverness was James I (1406-1437).

What inherent value do modern coins have?



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