

AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DOCUMENT PERTAINING TO THE EDINBURGH MINT

David Rampling

A Draft of Warrant for salaries and expenses of the Scottish mint dated 1750 and reproduced below, was found neatly folded and pasted into a copy of Lindsay's *Coinage of Scotland* (1845), the volume having been grangerized by its original owner J. H Burn¹.

The Warrant is of interest for a number of reasons. First, the records of such payments held by the Public Record Office are apparently deficient for the period 1745 to 1784²; secondly, Cochran Patrick's *Records of the Coinage of Scotland* (1876) limits its scope to pre-Union documents; thirdly, documents of this type seldom have a private repository; and finally, the signatories were notable persons, being Commissioners of the Treasury of Great Britain, including two who served as Prime Minister³. The content of the document is in other respects unremarkable as it follows a precedent set from the Union and continued up until 1819⁴ of allocating £1200 annually for salaries and expenses.

The Warrant may have escaped deposition in the Public Record Office in view of its damaged state, being torn along its right margin resulting in the loss of a small portion of text on the first page. The preservation of the document is indebted to Burn's acquisitive drive and discriminatory acumen.

The document is a single sheet measuring 18 x 14½ inches folded so as to display four pages. The text, written in a neat hand, occupies the first two pages, the third is blank, and the fourth has a descriptive title of content written at right angles to the rest of document, presumably for later filing. I have reproduced the title and text approximating as far as possible the format and lettering of the original, including the positioning of the lowercase letter 'ℓ' as pound sign above the designated sums. Words torn from the text along its right margin on the first page are indicated by square brackets enclosing the suggested missing text⁵; the second page is only

¹ Jacob Henry Burn (1793-1869) was a London bookseller and numismatist. His book, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the London Traders, Tavern, and Coffee-house Tokens current in the seventeenth century; presented to the Corporation Library by Henry Benjamin Hanbury Beaufoy*, published in 1853 with a second edition in 1855, indicates both by its comprehensive title and the fastidious documentation proffered in its contents, the author's passion for accumulating factual data, a passion that drove a collecting interest in newspapers. (see: George Berry, 'The Literature of Tokens – the 17th century', *Coin and Medal News* (1988) Vol. 25, No. 10, pp. 49-52) Not surprisingly, his grangerised copy of Lindsay's book is filled with relevant newspaper cuttings, ephemera and annotations.

² Unpublished manuscript: G. P. Dyer *A History of the Edinburgh Mint from the Union to the Act of 1817*. I am indebted to Mr. Dyer for the copy and use of his manuscript.

³ Robert Walpole, 2nd Earl of Orford (1701-1751) was the eldest son of Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole. The 'Auditor of the Receipt of the Exchequer' was an office in the English Exchequer. Henry Pelham (1694 - 1754) became Prime Minister in 1743 with the offices of First Lord of the Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons, all of which he held up until his death in 1754. John Campbell was a Commissioner of the Treasury from 1746 to 1754. George Grenville (1712 - 1770) became a Lord of the Treasury in 1747, and Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1763. (biographical notes sourced from Wikipedia)

⁴ Two years after closure of the Mint.

⁵ The wording of the Warrant draws extensively on the Act of 1738 (*vide infra*), reducing much of the guesswork in supplying the missing words.

affected by the tear in two lines of text at its left margin. I have indicated the transition from the first to the second page by a horizontal line.

Warr^d

Archibald Bothwell Esq Master

ℓ

of the Mint in Scott^d 1200 for

Salaries and Expenses for One

Year to Michas 1749

Ent^d286

Ord

Ent^d

Ent^d WCB

*After Our hearty Commendations; Whereas [by a]
Clause in An Act pafsed in the Twelfth Year of [our]
present Majesty's Reign For continuing the Du[ties and]
encouragement of the Coinage of Monies⁶ It is [with]
other things Enacted (to the end the Importers [of Gold and]
Silver into the Mints of England and Scotland [respectively]
may not be discouraged by any Deficiency of [the Revenue])
by the said Act settled for defraying the Coinage [thereof]
That the Commifsioners of the Treasury or any [three or]
more of them or the Lord High Treasurer for [Great Britain]
out of the Money ariseing by the said Act, or ou[t of any]
other Public Supplies granted or to be granted [by Parliament]]
shall and may cause so much Money to be ap[plied as]
shall be necefsary for defraying the Expenses of [the said Mints]
of England and Scotland by way of Imprest and u[p]on Account]
for that Service so as the same together with th[e Coinage]
Duties arising by the said Act, do not exceed in [any One year]
the sum of Fifteen hundred pounds; And so a[uthorise]
Monies be ifsued out of the Exchequer of Great [Britain to the]
Master of the Mint in England and to the M[aster of the Mint]
in Scotland respectively for the said purpo[ses and]
by the said Clause relation being thereunto [shown to]
fully appear. These are therefore by virtu[e of this]
recited Clause to pray and require your Lor[dship to execute]
an Order for paying unto Archibald Bot[hwell Esq]*

*Master of the Mint in Scotland or to his Afsignes the sum
of Twelve Hundred Pounds by way of Imprest and upon
Account for defraying the Expenses of the said Mint as well
in respect of the Salaries payable to the Officers thereof for
One year from Michaelmas 1748 to Michaelmas 1749 as for*

⁶ The Act of 1738 was one in a long series of very similar Acts originally introduced by Charles II for the encouragement of coinage. By the Act the coinage duties were continued for seven years from March 1, 1738-9 and to the end of the then next session of parliament.

Incidents and to encourage the Importation of Gold and Silver into the said Mint to be coined; And let the said Order be satisfied out of any Monies arisen or to arise by the Duties commonly called the Coinage Duties taking care that the sums to be issued either to the Master of the Mint in England or to the Master of the Mint in Scotland respectively do not exceed the sum of Fifteen thousand pounds according to the direction of the said Clause And for so doing this shall be your Lordship's Warrant. Whitehall Treasury Chambers 2^d: Oct^r: 1750.

*[Ver]y good Lord Robert Earl of Orford H: Pelham
The Receipt of his Maj^{ty}s Excheq^r J. Campbell
George Grenville*

ℓ

[Archibald Bothwell Esq] Mar^r: of the Mint in Scotl^d: 1200 for Sal^r. and Expences for 1 Year to Michas 1749

There is little evidence, tangible or documentary, as to whether the Mint staff were gainfully employed during the hundred or so years following the recoinage consequent on the Union. No coins were struck after 1709, but punches and dies were made shortly after this for small silver coins (fourpence, threepence, twopence and penny)⁷ but not used⁸. A few medals struck in 1753 seem to be the only other product of their industry during this long period⁹. Tasks such as maintaining mint buildings, overseeing importation of bullion and curating equipment, seem hardly sufficient to warrant the salaries drawn. It is tempting to surmise that the Mint officers' positions were largely sinecures, a conclusion perhaps supported by the stipulation that their duties were to attract no additional payments when they were taken over by the Mint at London following closure of the Scottish Mint in 1817¹⁰.



⁷ W. J. Hocking, 'Notes on a collection of coining instruments in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, (1915) XLIX, Fifth Series, Vol. I, p. 330.

⁸ Edward Burns, *The Coinage of Scotland*, Adam and Charles Black, Edinburgh, 1887, Vol. II, p. 535.

⁹ 'Scottish Mints' by Ian Stewart, in R. A. G. Carson (Ed.), *Mints, Dies and Currency*, Methuen & Co Ltd, London, 1971, p. 253.

¹⁰ *ibid.*