

THE DESIGN OF THE AUSTRALIAN FLAG: A GESTALT APPROACH

Tony Burton

Our Aboriginal Heritage

Fig. 1:
Australia's National Flag

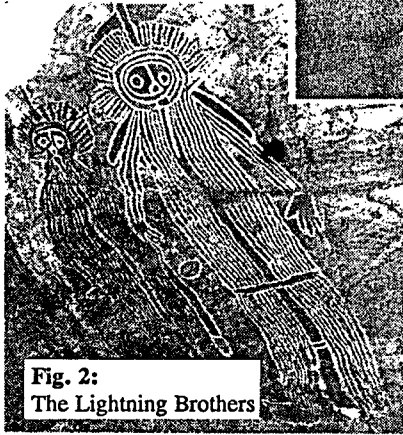
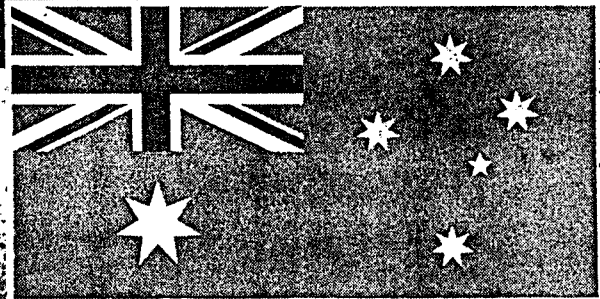


Fig. 2:
The Lightning Brothers

SYNOPSIS

The design of an appropriate Australian flag should be based on an accurate sense of all the realities of Australia - physical, spiritual, historical, traditional, as expressed through its many cultures - the Gestalt of Citizenship.

Various symbols relating to the Australian experience are examined for their vexillological potential.

The present Australian flag is assessed against these criteria, and found wanting. (Congress participants were invited to contribute alternative design ideas at a following workshop - the Gestalt of Design).

There are many local cultural allusions. For the sake of readers outside Australia, these are elucidated in the supplementary notes.

INTRODUCTION

Gestalt, Design and the Australian flag: what do these three have in common? Adventure, if nothing else: it can be a brave thing indeed, depending on the venue and the audience, to dare question the design veracity and relevance of the present Australian flag. The erroneous assumption is often made that critics are somehow unpatriotic. They run the risk of receiving a salute, fist to jaw. Funny how coloured cloth can arouse such passions.

Many Australians do however ask these questions. Not all are associated with AUSFLAG (1) nor are they by any means quirky eccentrics.

GESTALT AND THE PROCESS OF DESIGN

For the purposes of this paper, I take Gestalt to imply an experience, (and a collective one at that), through which new entities, new ideas, new art can emerge. It involves the deliberate pooling of ideas, the unconscious mixing of human archetypal artistic responses. It does not necessarily entail technical "skill". It is a process as old as Altamira, from long ago as Lascaux - or in Australian terms, a worshipful response to the watchful Wandjina (2).

My aim is to stimulate further thought about the symbolism, the iconic quality of the Australian flag, and to suggest some ideas as to what an authentic, appropriate Australian flag might be.

THE MEANING OF AUSTRALIA AND ITS FLAG

Understanding the symbols and icons of Australia and their chief national expression, the flag, supposes a notion of what Australia is all about. Australians themselves seem to have merely the vaguest perceptions. This may be a national trait: as a people, Australians are not overly given to philosophy. "she'll be right!" - complacency is more comfortable.

To start with the physically evident. The Land of Oz is the mythical Great South Land of antiquity (3). It is a large island between the South Pole and Kamchatka. More specifically, it is the largest of the off-shore islands of Asia: it is part of Austronesia (4). It is about the size of the United States, of Europe west of the Urals, more or less. Smaller than China, yet larger than Kazakhstan. Probably the site of the Garden of Eden, although it would appear to have been more exploited than cultivated (5).

Socially, Australia is a continental expression, to paraphrase Metternich (6). It is a relatively new nation State but not yet a state of Nation, although that process, self-conscious for only 200 years, seems well under way. Before that, for some 50,000 years, the locals had other things on their mind, managing their patch of Eden, managed by presences felt and imagined at sacred sites of ochre rock (7).

Real or imagined, myths are the foundation of a sense of identity, as much for national as for individual development. Do other Australians have any myths? And which can find sympathetic expression in national symbols, in graphic forms suited to an authentic, indigenous, Australian vexillonomy? What are our relevant icons? What is Australia?

It is: an immensity;

a red rock hard, tawny ochred sunswept burnt baked brick land, in parts lush and lavishly green, snowstruck, coral-cayed, majestic tropical forests mantling mountains of shimmering blue;
yet a land of ineffably ancient Dreaming - a place of cosmic corroboree, time barely measured, click-clicking, to the sonorous drone of the didgeridu, (8) or the chorus of cicadas by drowsy noon, a place of immense emptiness and loud silences.

The basic ideon (9) of ancient Australia is time, or rather that present and past no-time known as Altjeringa, misnamed by Europeans as the Dreaming (10).

Do we find this fundamental philosophical and religious idea expressed in that most succinct icon of national identity, that glad rag, our flag? (Fig. 1)

Not quite. Analysing the Australian flag for more than the British blue ensign that was its design parent, the expanse of its blueness might also stand for the sky, abode of the spirits. Mythically, at least, that's a good start.

Then there's the straggle of stars, and what a star-struck canopy is the night sky down here under! There they are - the stars on the flag! In the sky there are two Pointers (11): on the flag there is only one, suggesting perhaps that we have finally arrived as a nation - or have we lost our way?

The largest star does stand for the nation, at its establishment in 1901 one of the brightest shining in the firmament of British Dominions. With the Union Jack above, it is a super-symbol of a kind, like some medallion or award on its ribbon of silk, pointing directly to the heart of Empire and its emblem (12) - as if the flag itself could not stand for the nation without the bludgeon of imperial badges.

Consider, though, what is conveyed in the seven points: six states, assorted Territories. Australia is something more than just an associated dominion. It is also a constellation of States, a concept of some popularity in our times. Indeed, this idea of a cluster, a galaxy, a sovyet of the South, is reflected not only in a flag strewn with stars, but also in Australia's formal political status as a federative council - or compact, or to use its official name - a Commonwealth.

Is there in fact a common wealth of other cultural symbols that might have made this flag more meaningful, more exciting, more inspiring than it is? Does this flag express the vital energy we like to think we have? What of the cultural insights, suppressed and devalued, of those original people, who in spite of all, still link to the Dreamtime signs and symbols left and living yet beneath their rock ledge havens? (Fig 2.)

What also of the myths of the balanda, the wadjela, the whiteman's Dreaming (13)? What images do they suggest? The history of Europeans in Australia has been short, and so can be condensed. A few words, of course, cannot do justice to the immense labour entailed, but even in allegory, as below, they do give the general flavour of the settlers' occupation and preoccupations.

The sails, see, came out of the sunrise. As the eighteenth century waned, the Eastern Sky Pillars swayed and the spirit world vault finally fell in homage to Cook and King George, Cockney convicts (erstwhile Americans), Governors and Whitehall's way (14).

Initial truculence and outright resentment (of Aborigines, convicts and masters alike), were followed by colonial carpetbaggers, out to exploit with landlust or drawn by the lure of gold, under the patronage of Cabbage-tree hats and royal amusement, in 1901 assenting to Westminster Australis Downunder (15).

In 1915 boyish bravado and brash nationalism combined to make ANZACs ardent for King, God and Empire (in that order). What an adventure, in the turning of an era! (16) God is an Englishman, especially when the Irish get in the way (17). And God Help us (in Whom we Trust), the Americans, Baby, (18) starting with Californians, gold diggers all, ending with Uncle Sam.

It's been said that California is tomorrow's dream or disaster in rehearsal. Californians (19) were among the first in the rush for gold, and first in the rush towards our ultimate multicultural reality.

Not to leave our heart in San Francisco, let's jump a few years, looking at Australia's development since, still in allegory, and certainly with satire.

It's 1947: Mr Wong, Mr Wong, don't get me wrong, but "two Wongs don't make a white", right, mate? (20). Right, (but after Singapore, she won't be right, mate - two Wongs, and two wogs even, do make it right mate, right?) Orrright. This is the future, Con, and that's no con. And never mind the fruits. Hawaii 3-0, latitude 30 south.

Coca colonisation, part of Pax Americana - and let's go all the way, as you say, Mr President. War in Korea and boomtime at home, working for the Yankee dollar, then a yen for yen - saddle seventy samurai coaches to view Uluru (make that Urulu) and sigh, ah! subarashi! at the sunset (21).

Never mind Silicon Valley and sunrise industries, simply see Surfers, the sybarites on the sand. To see, they say, is to believe, but can this really be the Tropic of Paradise? Only costs an Ozdollar, (the Pacific peso, you know, not worth an austral). No Godot-waiting here, all expecting instead the second coming of Dame Edna, the return of the Doug Anthony Allstars and others worse in the wings. Meanwhile, wogs are out of work. And the future is all up in the air - or still on the ground. O, for a four-X, and let's salute the flag, True Blue (22)

So there is a capsule of Oztime in the land that Time forgot.

And now, at the end of the Federal century, what other myths are in the making? National pride? By jingo, yes, just as at the start. The place is awash with it. Consider the slogans: C'mon Aussie, c'mon. True Blue. Buy Oz. Corked hats, moleskins, drizabones, akubras (23) and all the other exploitables. After the Bicentennial bash, wait for the Federation Fiesta, as the century goes out with a bang. Wave the flag, our mates died for it (or RSL types think they did). "Keep this our flag for ever" (24).

Love of home, of national brothers and sisters is no bad thing. It is the foundation of society and of a happy life. Apart from the still unresolved issue of Aboriginality, Australia has a reasonably fair record in these matters.

It is important however to distinguish between maudlin outpourings of schmaltz, passing for patriotic sentiment, and deeper currents of national belonging that this country seems to strive for, and which is what the flag is really about.

It is sad to say that what the original ANZACs in 1915 really died for was neither this sense of national belonging nor any particular flag. Their ingenuous sacrifice was part of a political syllogism, an orgasm of Empire.

The present flag is really its relic, a distillation of imperial distinction and destruction. In 1991, not to speak of 2001, when Britain has become a province of Europe, the symbols of a faded Empire speak not (like, say, the Dannebrog) of enduring tradition, but of a reality long since passed. Australia's Gloria Seritj (25) is wrapped in atavism, the present flag Miss Faversham's tablecloth (26).

A RESTATEMENT OF SYMBOLS

So what alternative symbols might be amenable to vexilligraphy?

The range is very wide, and includes:

- heraldic animals
- plants
- monuments
- geographical or astronomical features, stylized;
- other ideographs or symbolic conventions

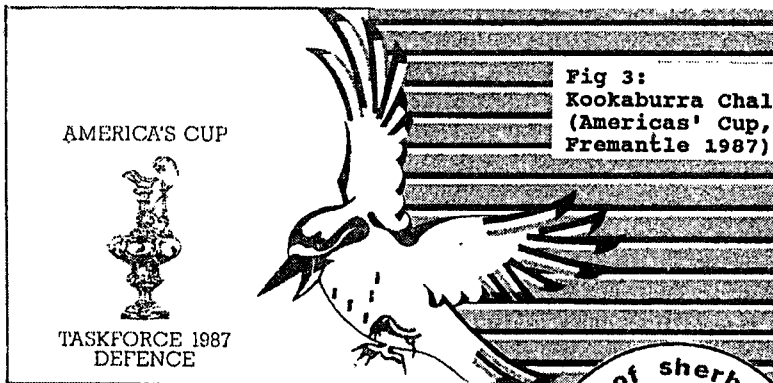


Fig 3:
Kookaburra Challenge Flag
(Americas' Cup,
Fremantle 1987)

Fig 4:
Lyrebird emblem of
Sherbrooke Shire, Victoria

Br+/W

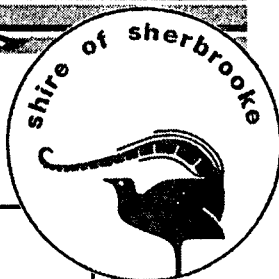
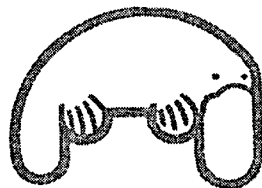


Fig 6:
Kangaroo graphics
for QANTAS and
manufacturing label



TARONGA
ZOO

SYDNEY
AUSTRALIA

Fig 5:
Platypus emblem
of Taronga Zoo,
Sydney

HERALDIC FORMS AND FLAGCRAFT

Jiri Tenora and Bruce Nicholls have elsewhere commented on the enduring and practical role of heraldry in flag design.

Suffice here to remark that in the end any effective (Australian) flag needs to respect the norms of chromatics proven in European heraldry over so long a period. The effectiveness of countercharging and the economy of Japanese graphic design should not be underestimated. The simplicity of the Canadian, the Nordic and Israeli flags demonstrate the dramatic effect of setting an evocative symbol as a device in or on a bicolour arrangement.

Devices themselves, whether ideographic, or abstracts of animals, plants, cultural objects, seem most effective on a flag when reduced to their most essential lineaments. Two of Australia's fauna - the kangaroo and the emu form the heraldic supporters of the national Arms, for the reason that neither physically can move backwards. Few others of Australia's spectacular menagerie however lend themselves to stylization that is either recognizable or exciting (see Figs. 3-6). The kangaroo alone is readily associated with Australia. Indeed, as a graphic it has almost become a cliché (Figs. 8-9).

PLANTS

Australia's (diminishing) eucalypt forests have been mentioned, and might suggest a gum leaf flag, leaves in silhouette, say, on a field of ochre red.

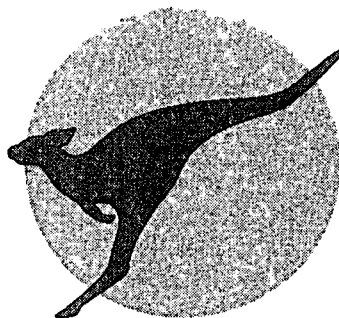
Flowers? The earliest Europeans recorded as having visited Australia's desolate western coast spoke favourably only of its dazzling array of wildflowers. The garland is one of the oldest of vexilloids, though flags with a floral emblem are few.

Australia's national flower, *Acacia Pycnantha* is the golden wattle (Fig 7) and seems to be the inspiration of sporting colours of green and gold. In 1984, these were also officially designated (by the Prime Minister) the national colours, presumably for their popular appeal and possibly from confusing the national flower with the heraldic colours of the national Arms.

Green and gold in fact do not appear on the National Arms. Neither colour appears on the national flag.



Fig 7:
Acacia Pycnantha
- Golden Wattle -
Australia's
National Flower



Figs 8-9:
AUSFLAG Proposals
March 1986-1990

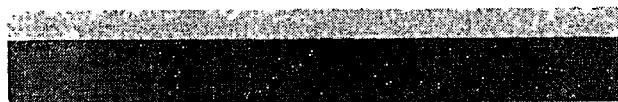
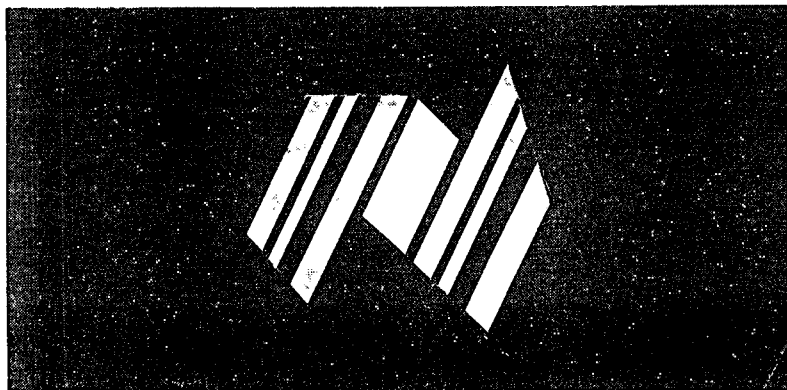


Fig 11:
Bicentennial flag,
final version 1988



If the national colours really are to be green and gold (i.e. yellow) there is either confusion at a senior level, or collusion to render one day Australia's flag in these colours. Not even AUSELAG dared so much; after the poor response to their 1985 contest results, their design consultants in 1986 urged AUSFLAG to opt for green, white and gold) and then, not the gold of the wattle, but a lurid marigold, pumpkinesque (Figs 8-9).

MONUMENTS

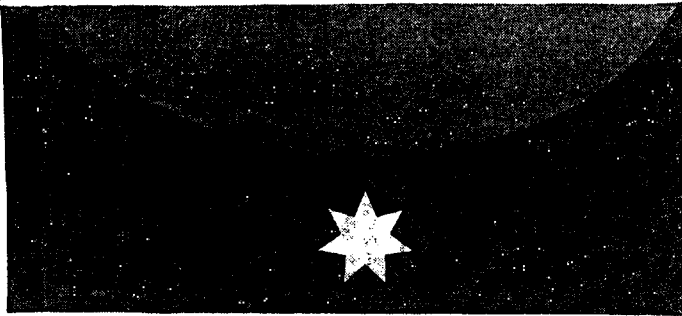
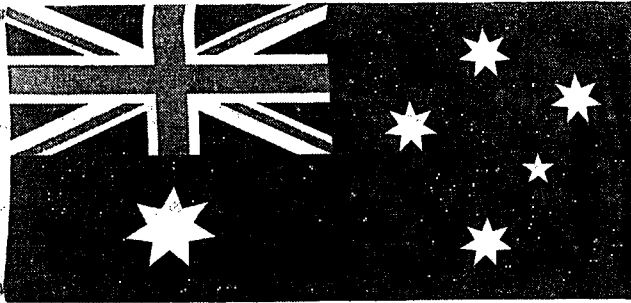
Australia has perhaps the natural monument most momentous - Uluru at the very heart of the continent, inspiring Austrian artist Hundertwasser's design of the Down Under Flag (Fig 10).

There is also the Opera House, quite transcending its Sydney setting. Here indeed are splendid domes decreed. Surely something graphic can be done with all those shell shapes! Those swirling, whirling forms! Could we condone Ken Done (27) designing an Oziflag, all sunlight and sparkle, kindergarten shapes as bold as brass?!

Only one nation - Cambodia - currently portrays on its flag a monument as the embodiment of cultural tradition and identity - perhaps for the very good reason that the remains of Angkor Wat are spectacular. They are more than this. They are a true icon, a symbolic representation of the cosmic mandala, the mystic mountain Meru at its centre, tinkling songs of *apsaras* guiding pilgrims up its stairways to nirvana (28). Like Uluru, it is Dreaming Stone, a reminder of dimensions beyond the mundane.

What others? Conceivably, Egypt's flag might have made a feature of the pyramids, Zimbabwe's the walls of Monomotapa, Iraq's the ziggurat of Ur, Guatemala's the temples of Uxmal. Curiously, none have. The meaning of these relics may be too culturally bound, and thus of limited impact. Instead more modest symbols were chosen - the soapstone bird for Zimbabwe, the falcon, Salah ud'Din's favourite, and sign of Horus for the land of the Pharaohs. Iraq in Qassem's day used the Sumerian sun-symbol. Guatemala chose another bird, the quetzal, to evoke the endurance of the nation. True, Mengistu placed the pillar of Axum on Ethiopia's flag, but this too is a fallacy gone recently limp.

A flag call around the world suggests that monuments get short shrift. There's more *mana* in subtler symbols, and more to good flag design than Freudian chauvinism.



PROPOSAL FOR A SECOND FLAG FOR AUSTRALIA
WORTHY OF A CONTINENT-NATION
SYMBOLIZING ITS POSITION
IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE.
THE FLAG SHOWS UNMISTAKABLY
TERRA AUSTRALIS - THE SOUTHERN LAND.

THE FLAG HOLDS AYERS ROCK IN THE CENTRE
ULURU, THE CENTRAL SACRED SYMBOL OF AUSTRALIA
THE HERITAGE OF THIS NATION
CREATED IN THE BEGINNING OF TIME.

THE BIG CURVE FLAG - THE DOWN UNDER ENSIGN
IS A SECOND FLAG FOR AUSTRALIA
TO FLY HAPPILY TOGETHER WITH THE OFFICIAL ENSIGN.
IN NO WAY IS IT DESIGNED TO DETRACT
FROM THE COUNTRY'S BRITISH HERITAGE,
THE UNION JACK, THE SOUTHERN CROSS,
THE MONARCHY, THE COMMONWEALTH OR
AUSTRALIAN TRADITIONS.
IT RATHER SYMBOLIZES THE LOVE OF AUSTRALIANS
FOR THEIR GRAND, UNIQUE AND MAGNIFICENT NATION.

AUSTRALIA'S FLAG MUST CARRY THE MESSAGE
OF THIS HUGE CONTINENT IN A HIGHER DIMENSION
REFLECTING THE GREAT DESTINY OF AUSTRALIA,
FORESEEING THE IMPORTANCE OF AUSTRALIA
AS A WORLD POWER.

IT IS AUSTRALIA HOLDING THE EARTH FROM DOWN UNDER.

Fig 10:
The Down
Under
flag, by
Hundertwasser
Sydney 1986:
For flags
and
information,
Contact
B Eisenbeis
2 Cuthbert St
BONDI JUNCTN
NSW 2022

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

What better than the shape of the continent itself? Usually maps on flags present problems - Cyprus and the original Bangali flag are examples. Although the Ozmap has perhaps been overdone, graphically it can be presented quite well. Australia has a pleasing, symmetrical shape, or to return to Freud, the bulges are in the right places, the pointy bits are in balance. The Bicentennial flag, cute in its way, shows what stylization can do (Fig 11).

Then there are other, chromatic, features about the Australian landscape, lending themselves perhaps to the more traditional treatments found in flag design - redness, vastness, dryness, the green of its soaring eucalypts. There is the gold of our beaches, the blue of a land that's "set by sea", with its brooding interiors of smoky bluegreen mountain ranges and open, ochre spaces. Above all, the bright, white light.

IDEOGRAPHS

Which brings us to ideography. This chromatic landscape can be rendered simply, geometrically. There is however one geographical - or rather, astronomical - feature that has acquired in Australian flaglore virtually the status of an icon.

Now, an icon can be defined as any artefact or representation that calls to consciousness a sense of power of which it is merely the representation. Conversely, because it has this sacramental function, it has the ability to alter states of mind. So the image acquires power in its own right.

The icon in question is of course the Southern Cross. After the British Union flag, it is the chief device on the national flag. It is of special significance, (as *Mirraboona*, *Kundulu*) to the Aborigines. It has fascinated every European explorer venturing into southern latitudes. It is also found in one form or another in many of its preceding colonial emblems. It was a feature in the early citizens' flags of the 19th century - and notably the flag flown at Eureka Stockade (Fig 12).

It is significant that in all the flag competitions run at various times since 1971, and especially that sponsored in 1985 by AUSFLAG, most designs included the Southern Cross, in one form or another. In a recent review of FSA's own symbols, the majority of members also insisted that the Society's emblems retain the Southern Cross.

Fig 12:
Eureka Flag
Ballarat
December 1854

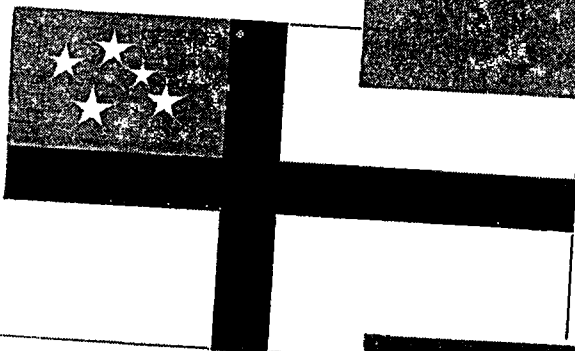
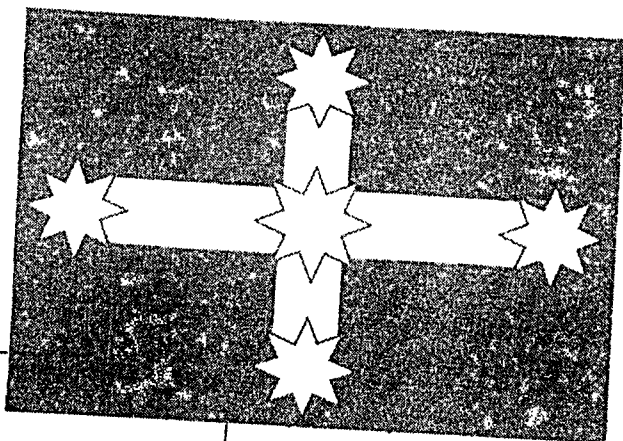


Fig 14:
Australian Aborigines:
- black for the People
- red for Land
- Gold sun for Life
and Land rights

Fig 13:
German East
Africa Company
(Tanganyika)
1914-18
Crux Australis
Vol 5/2,
April 1989

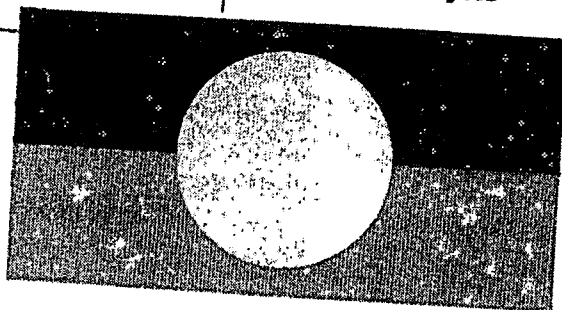


Fig 15:
Boxing Kangaroo -
Challenge Flag of
Alan Bond, America's Cup
1983, 1987

The strange thing is that the Southern Cross is not in any way a uniquely Australian symbol. It is visible to all peoples of the southern hemisphere. It appears on the flags of West Samoa, Papua New Guinea, and New Zealand. It can be found with 17 other stars in the flag of Brazil, and flew for a time in German East Africa (Fig. 13).

While Australians seem to associate the flag with its Union Jack, they relate strongly to the Southern Cross as a national symbol, even if many hardly seem to recognize that it too is on the flag. Whether this is the product of mere familiarity or lack of imagination for alternatives is hard to say. Certainly the Southern Cross seems to set stay. It may yet be capable of new and powerful graphic representation on the flag.

CONCLUSION

So where do we stand? Australia has a flag, an official flag, a national flag even. Seemingly, no more need be said.

From a design point of view, it is splendid. The colours are bold - cool blue is offset by warm red, the whole given life by streams of white light. Its two devices of the Union Flag and stars balance each other, the one evoking our recent origins, the other stating (or attempting to state) that we are a distinct nation in the southern hemisphere. It is a flag of stars and a flag of light.

It has followed us in the short history of our nation building. But it is by no means the only such flag. Various predecessors (29) have fluttered above the travail of our 19th century forebears, over the gold fields, down the inland rivers, at political rallies on Federation, in industrial disputes, and in the various badges of colonial administration.

All this provides a clue to the future. Early Australian flags all feature the notion of light and stars. In this sense the flag approved by London for us on Federation (but not ratified effectively until the passage of the National Flag Act of 1953) is an apt distillation of what had gone before. However, it remains at best a compromise, a committee flag. It is good, but does not go far enough. It's popular support has to be drummed up for it, with fife and band, and rituals of some contriving. (It has to be said that this would be no less true of the generally awful alternatives so far seen).

The reasons are not hard to find. Beautiful as it is as an artefact, the present flag does not say "this is our land, here we stand". It does speak of our European (and very recent) beginnings. While this is important, the flag lacks a basic *ideon* that might inspire our future and the commitment of newcomers both to the traditions of the past and local adaptation of them, as the many cultures blend and meld into an authentic sense of Australian nationhood. Perhaps Australians have yet to experience the one cathartic, cataclysmic event in our history that will galvanize sentiments of settlement into a sense of nationhood.

Whatever, and above all, the flag says nothing at all of and for the people who settled here more than 50000 years ago and who have felt constrained to adopt their own radically different flag (Fig 14).

For those more recent, refugees for tyrannies, it is a negative icon in that it is different from the rag of oppression gladly forsaken, and in any case, many still fly their national colours. We need more than this if both old and new Australians together are to come into their patrimony.

The flag debate bubbles along in Australia, with the occasional public outburst of private passion. The vehemence itself is disturbing, and a measure of the prejudices that make Ozicorp go, rather than the rationalism required.

(Curiously, this is what is lacking - a corporate image for the multicultural (or newcultural) family we have become, fast outgrowing the concept of the family business, the corner store, the beaut bungalow, Holden car and white picket fence out the front - 30). A multifunctional entity needs an unequivocal symbol of its identity. Australia does not have one. It is still searching for its symbols.

Whatever the case, no symbol of national importance can be imposed from the top, as may yet be attempted. This explains the indifference about the flag we do have, and the antipathy toward alternatives so far. Despite the artifice of seeking a change for the Federation Centenary in 2001, unless the quality of thought and debate improves markedly from experience so far, such an exercise will be just as farcical as the one we witnessed for the Bicentennial of European Settlement, relevant to certain segments rather than to the whole community.

In the meantime we may see further spasmodic but grassroots experimentation with Australian, in the mold of the Boxing Kangaroo (Fig. 15) and other perhaps more seriously vexillonomic attempts. But as yet, (or perversely, because of) the frost of AUSFLAG, there is no true groundswell, at least any well articulated, for change,

As an Australian flag journal, *Crux Australis* records the debate. It also has a role, I believe, in stimulating it. As members of the Flag Society, we should be prepared to voice our views either way. Good ideas deserve to be celebrated.

NOTES

- 1 - AUSFLAG is a private company established in 1983 with a charter to change the Australian flag, but without precommitment to its design. In 1985 it sponsored a national competition attracting some 30000 entries. The winning design was red white and blue and featured the Southern Cross. It has not attracted wide community support.
- 2 - In Aboriginal lore of the northwest, Wandjina are the spirit beings associated with seasonal changes and the life force they represent. Their rockface images are sites of sacred significance. This concept of guardian and providing spirits is fundamental to Aboriginal religion.
- 3 - Mapmakers of classical antiquity postulated the existence of lands to the south (possibly based on observations of Phoenician expeditions around Africa into the Indian Ocean.) Medieval cartographers lent their imaginations more rein. The southern lands became a super-continent circling the entire hemisphere.

The diminutive, Oz (for Australia) has gained wide acceptance. Association with a magical, carefree land at the end of a Yellow Brick Road, celebrated in a musical play of the 1930's Depression, may be coincidental.

- 4 - An allusion to Australia's social, cultural and economic future as an associate of the ASEAN co-prosperity sphere.
- 5 - Reference to the four Rivers of the Murray-Darling system, and the parochial notion that life in Australia is sublime.
- 6 - As Austrian Foreign Minister, Metternich presided over the division of post-Napoleonic Europe. He dismissed Italy's right or ability to exist as a genuine national entity. Italy's claim in history seems more solidly based than Australia's.
- 7 - The whole of Aboriginal society retains its integrity on the sense that the land is a gift of Spirit powers. There is no real distinction between one or several "gods" - a concept essentially the same as found in Genesis 1:26, where one God is specifically deemed a plurality.
- 8 - The didgeridu is a long piped instrument, whose peculiar pulsating sound is the result of circular breathing through nose and mouth. The corroboree or ritual dance takes both sacred and secular forms. Tempo is kept by rhythmically clicking sticks.

- 9 - **ideon**: symbolic idea, capable of dramatic representation.
- 10 - **Altjeringa** is the desert name of this fourth dimension of space-time, mythically explained by recourse to religion. **Dreamtime** is a secular, Jungian, attempt to express the analogous idea of the meeting edge of the conscious and subconscious.
- 11 - **Alpha and Beta Centauri**.
- 12 - It was a condition of the National Flag competition run in 1901 that the flag show unmistakable allegiance to the British Empire, then at the height of its influence. It was practically inevitable from the start that the flag should feature the Union Jack.
- 13 - **Balanda**, originally a Makassarese word meaning "spirit". Some lived up to sainthood. Regrettably, too many white settlers demeaned the compliment and behaved like devils. **Wadjela** is the common equivalent in southwest Australia. Other regions have their own words.
- 14 - The English naval Captain, James Cook in 1770 discovered and claimed for the German King of England the entire east coast and hinterland of the continent under the name of New South Wales. For the Aborigines this was the beginning of the end of their world. The defeat of the British in the American War of Independence, and other British Admiralty considerations led 18 years later to transportation of British convicts and political prisoners to New South Wales, run from London, as a colony until 1856.
- 15 - As a badge of office British colonial Governors wore a hat quaintly reminiscent of the local Cabbage tree palm. Queen Victoria generally found her Empire amusing, and it was she who assented to the Act federating the Australian colonies from 1 January 1901.
- 16 - Readers may recall that this epoch coincided with Rudyard Kipling and the foundation of the Boy Scouts. It was a time of general European immaturity, as peoples of the "Third" World (notably the Congo) experienced to their cost.
- 17 - The colony of South Australia was established as a Protestant paradise in 1836, under the express condition that convicts, Catholics and Irish were to be excluded. The Fathers of Adelaide were successful in the first.
- 18 - A novel by Frank Moorehouse.
- 19 - Gold was discovered by a former California digger, while the two Chaffey brothers established Australia's stone and citrus fruit industry along the Murray.
- 20 - This charming expression is credited to Arthur Calwell, Immigration Minister at the time. The other Mr Wong appears in a television commercial, inscrutable as Australian tourists make idiots of themselves. Con the fruiterer is an Anglo comedian sending up immigrants of Mediterranean descent and Anglo prejudices towards them.
- 21 - **Uluru** is the Aboriginal name for the monolith at Australia's centre. **Uru** is Japanese for wool, **subarashi** means beautiful.

- 22 - Still more. The Australian Minister for Science and Technology (since sacked as a ratbag - ie, no-hoper) had much to say about Australia's need and potential to develop "sunrise" industries (new technologies and value-added produce for export). He even wrote a book about it: *Sleepers Awake!* No one in Australia took much notice. The book is widely read in Japan.

Mirage is, incredibly, the name of a chain of drop-dead chic tourist resorts in Queensland.

The peso was once the currency of Argentina, but replaced by the **austral** after its value had fallen through to the other side of the earth. The **austral** is not worth that much either.

Dame Edna is a transvestite act savagely critical of suburbia since the 1950s and still going strong for reasons that suggest a streak of masochism in the Australian psyche. The popularity of the other performers mentioned is in inverse ratio to their talent.

Most people in Australia do not know - or care - who Godot might be, let alone wait for him. Existentialism and angst seem too esoteric for sunny climates. In 1989 problems in the tourist industry worsened amid a six months' air pilots' dispute. It was back to beer (eg XXXX) and the other 4X product, to keep the minds of the people from real issues. True Blue is Aussie for "genuine" - but none of the hype was.

- 23 - **Moleskins** are hard-wearing trousers developed on cattle stations, and now an item of high fashion. Ditto **drizabone**, - a multifunctional greatcoat to keep you "dry as a bone". **Akubra** is the most popular of the Australian broadbrimmed felt hats.
- 24 - Slogan of the Australian National Flag Association. RSL stands for Returned Servicemens' League, generally regarded as ultra conservative.
- 25 - **Ozspeak** for "glorious heritage".
- 26 - A character in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, jilted, and waiting a lifetime by her wedding cake.
- 27 - **Ken Done**, an Australian in America, specialises in "art naif" celebrations of Australia's outdoors lifestyle.
- 28 - **apsaras**: sprites or ethereal beings in popular SE Asian Buddhist mythology, a cultural relic of the Hindu pantheon, akin to, and possibly the cultural matrix of the angels of Western mythology.
- 29 - See the special Historical section in the National Bank of Australia Flagchart, endorsed by FSA.
- 30 - In 1988 the (conservative) Liberal Party launched a re-election theme extolling such a domestic idyll. They were not successful: policies for the future require a foundation of something more than mere nostalgia. The picture painted of Australian society was last accurate 40 years ago.