

DESIGNS ON AN AUSTRALIAN FLAG - A MELBOURNE WORKSHOP

conducted by Tony Burton/notes by Ralph Kelly



This workshop was designed to be an interactive response to the design issues highlighted by Tony Burton's ICV paper **A Gestalt Approach to the Design of an Australian Flag**, adapted for **Crux Australis** in September 1991. The Workshop, held at St Anne's College, Melbourne University on 28 September 1989, was attended by:

Jose Bragues	(Spain - Sociedad de Vexilologia Espanola)
Grace Cooper	(USA)
William Crampton	(UK Flag Institute)
Peter Edwards	(Canada - Heraldry Society)
Ralph Kelly	(FSA)
Bruce Nicolls	(UK - The Flag Man)
Peter Orenski	(USA)
Alain Raulett	(Breizhe/Brittany)
Stewart Shannon	(FSA)
Dr Whitney Smith	(Flag Research Center Massachussetts)
Ron Strachan	(Chairman FSA)
John Vaughan	(FSA/Australiana Flags)
Tony Burton	(FSA/Workshop leader)

What follows is a digest of the ebb and flow, over some three hours, of ideas, discussion, argument and concession to respective opinions. As the preceding paper had proposed, the workshop was a design seminar only, predicated on the assumption (but not presumption) that there could be changes in the Australian flag at the turn of the century or shortly after. It was not the scope of the workshop to contend the opinions and political views that might lead to or impede such change.

In that context it was agreed that it was important that any design change be for the better. Account should therefore be taken of the broadest spectrum of symbols that might achieve that end - drawing on appropriate traditions, myths, history, images (both objective and allusive representations of animals, plants and geography) and past flag designs. Regard should also be had to the laws and conventions of geometry and chromatics, as these had been tried and found true in centuries of flagcraft.

FLAGS WITHOUT THE UNION CANTON

Various of the alternative proposals so far, both recent (the Lavett competition in 1972, the **Daily Telegraph** in late 1982, AUSFLAG in 1985-86) and even some contributions to the 1901 national competition started by eliminating the Union Jack - sometimes reluctantly, sometimes with relish.



Fig. 1:
 Southern Cross Flag
 1:2 B/W/R stars W
 PMS 281 Navy Blue
 PMS Super Warm Red
 White
 Design: 1984
 AC Burton,
 Kirribilli NSW

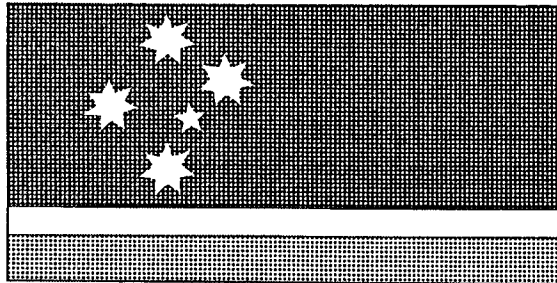


Fig. 2:
 AUSFLAG 1986
 1:2,
 B/W/R stars W
 PMS Reflex Blue
 PMS 032 Red
 White
 Design: Wayne Stokes
 Greystanes NSW, 1985

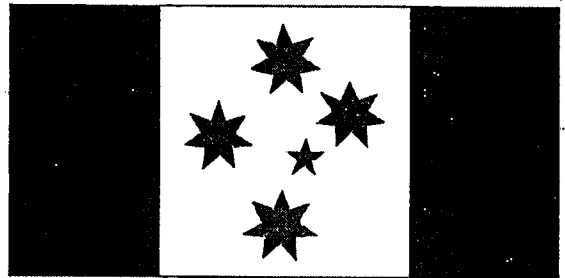
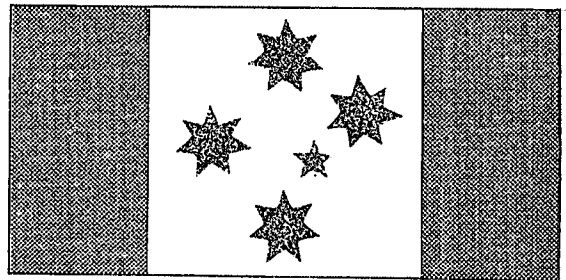


Fig. 3:
 1:2,
 B/W/B stars B
 PMS 072 Deep Blue
 White;

variant with
 PMS Reflex Blue,
 Design: AC Burton
 Kirribilli NSW 1987



Tony Burton's design comprising Southern Cross stars and bars (Fig 1) could be seen as perhaps steering a middle course, an adaptation of the Union Flag, as well as an attempt to devise a distinctively Australian flag. Older than the AUSFLAG design chosen in 1986, (Fig. 2), the differences between the two were noteworthy.

Both designs had confronted the issues that would have to be resolved in any change to the Australian flag - what to do with the Union canton, the significance of the Southern Cross, evolution as opposed to revolution, symbolism, colours, proportion and adaptability to various uses.

Dispensing with the Union canton, and assuming that proportions of 1:2 would be retained, also raised the question of how to compose the resulting wide field. For example, if an alternative flag were to retain the Southern Cross, what role and place should it have in that field?

Another opening suggestion by Tony Burton, Fig. 3, attempted to address these issues, and might have been inspired by the Canadian approach, (both as to its central device and the balance achieved by a bicolour design, and symbolism suggesting Australia's span from sea to sea.)

TRADITION AND ABORIGINAL SYMBOLOGY

This aspect also seemed obvious and important. While the Jack had presided over the last 200 years of the most climactic change in Australia's social history, it was recognized that a culture thousands of years in prepossession had some claim to acknowledgement in national symbols. Given their experience of dispossession under the British flag, it was unfortunate, though understandable, that any Australian flag bearing the Union Jack remains especially offensive, or at least irrelevant to Aboriginal Australians.

The process of national acknowledgement of the iconography of Aboriginality was already evident in recently minted coinage and banknotes, and in various stamp issues. How could Aboriginality be represented on the supreme national symbol, the flag? Should this take the form of:

- [] a specifically Aboriginal symbol, drawing (say) from traditions of Aboriginal art such as the chevron markings or Wandjina figures in Figs. 4 and 5, or
- [] some more abstract and vexillonomic reference, such as the ochre colour of the land and corroboree paint, or the Southern Cross. The latter did not appear in known pre-European Aboriginal graphic art, but it does feature in many Aboriginal legends dealing with creation and survival of the land.

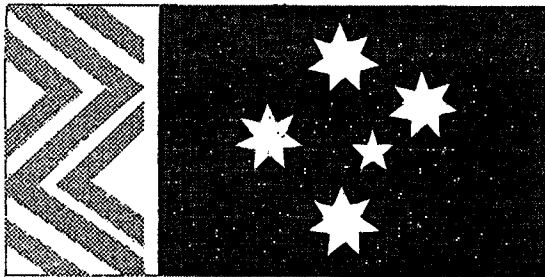


Fig. 5:
Rock painting, near Katherine
Wandjina stylization by
AC Burton, 1988

Fig. 6:
1:2, N/R/Y/Blue,
stars W
Black, Red PMS 032
Yellow PMS 109
Reflex Blue



Fig. 4:
1: 2, Ochre/W/B stars W
PMS 072 Blue, PMS 138 ochre, White
Design: AC Burton Kirribilli NSW 1985

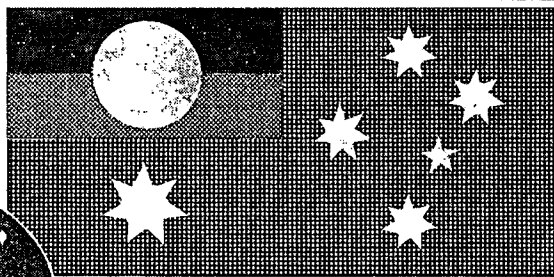


Fig. 7:
Productivity
symbol 1950-60s

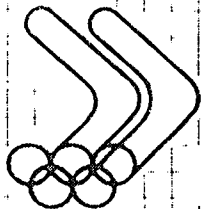


Fig. 8:
Australian Olympic Team

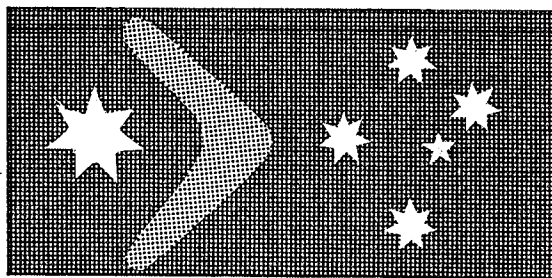


Fig. 9:
1:2, B, ochre, stars white
PMS 072, PMS 116
Design: 1989 Ralph Kelly
Beecroft NSW 1989

Another alternative, replacing the Union canton with the Aboriginal flag (Fig. 6) was considered vexillologically gauche. Apart from the gaudy clash of colours (and the impractical expense in making such a flag), it seemed no more than a condescension both to Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginals.

For their part, Aboriginal Australians see the black, red and gold flag as their own. They do not want it "hijacked" for other purposes. As far as most Aboriginals saw it, their flag was an authentic banner for the whole continent, and no more need be said.

The non-Aboriginal perspective appeared to be that while the development of Australia over the last 200 years had been detrimental to Aboriginal people and their culture, that development has still been won largely by the effort of new settlers. Most non-Aboriginal Australians felt that Narrinyeri (1) culture (as they understood it at all) should be given its due importance in national affairs, but not predominate. Australia's further social development would reveal how far this attitude might be short-sighted.

In one respect at least, the two perspectives seemed to coincide - the Aboriginal flag should stand alone, without other embellishment: it should not be a mere appendage or decal on a non-Aboriginal device. Indeed, most Narrinyeri would see the "borrowing" of their flag by the non-Aboriginal majority as tokenism of the most patronising kind.

This attitude almost suggests that the element of cultural impasse might be overcome by adopting some other, neutral, symbol - ie, one with some link to both cultures but essentially transcending both. In a sense, the stars of the Southern Cross, shining on blacks and whites alike, are remote from the misunderstandings and injustices of the past.

Whatever the case, an authentic Australian flag should inspire the affection of the whole community, not just those empowered through vested interest. Australian society had evolved since 1788 toward a diversity unimagined both by Aboriginal custom and the insularity of Anglocentric expectations of conformity. It was a myth to suggest that Australia had ever been a predominantly British or even Anglo-Saxon nation (the Irish certainly do not count themselves as British). Many of Australia's fundamental institutions are indeed derived from a British heritage, but the actual population from 1788 has been marvellously diverse. This cultural variety and social transformation had gained pace in our own century, especially since 1937.

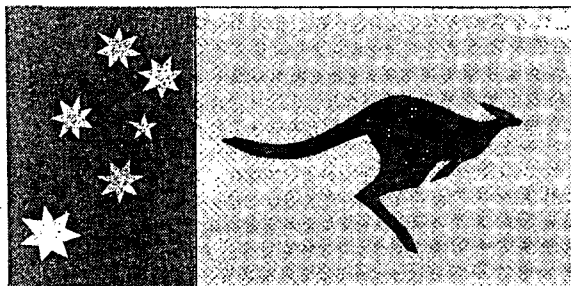
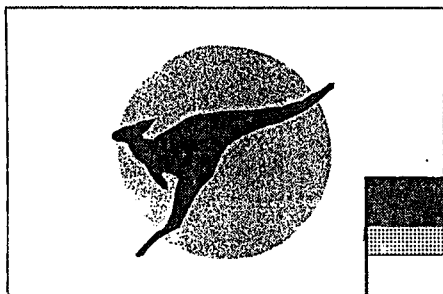


Fig. 10:
 1:2, V/Y counterchanged
 PMS 342 Deep Green
 PMS Yellow
 Design: Athol Kelly 1979



Figs. 11-12:
 2:3, W,V, ochre
 AUSFLAG 1987
 PMS 322, Smoke Green
 PMS 130, orange ochre, White
 Design: Lunn Dyer Assoc
 Neutral Bay NSW

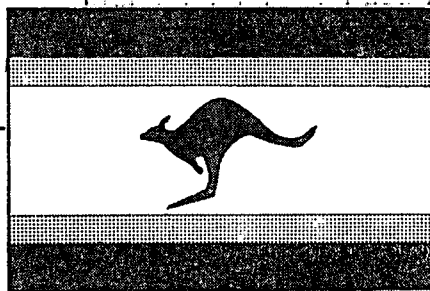


Fig. 13
 Australian
 Airlines, B,V,ochre
 fimbriated white
 kangaroo B
 PMS 072 Blue
 PMS 349 Green
 PMS 116 Gold

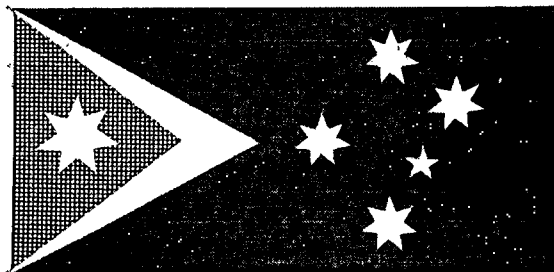
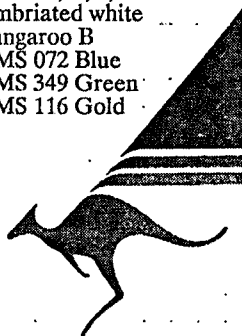


Fig. 14:
 1: 2, Y/V, W, B stars white
 PMS 072 Deep Blue, PMS 349 Green
 PMS 109 Yellow, White

Design: Dr Whitney Smith
 Flag Research Center, Massachusetts 1989

It was true that immigrants of non-British background tended to accept not only the freedoms, benefits and institutions inherited from the British, but also their symbolic trappings, including the flag. There appeared to be genuine affection for the (British) Royal Family, and strong loyalty remained for a constitutional monarchy. By the third generation, however, there appeared to be equally strong support for indigenous Australian symbols. This appeared to reflect the degree of local integration that had taken place in that time, and mirror the experience of the first generation of Australian-born, or "currency kids" of the early 1800's.

The Aboriginal people were and are nevertheless the first Australians in time. Whether this extends yet to that other, wider, sense of Australian nationalism, or commitment to institutions of the nation-state, remains to be seen.

Some recognition, superficial though it may be, of Australia's Aboriginality is reflected in the boomerang emblems already tried in commercial and sporting arenas - see Figs. 7-8 - and reflected in Ralph Kelly's boomerang designs, exemplified in Fig. 9.

COLOURS

By no means settled. The present national (flag) colours are red, white and blue, but this combination had not assisted acceptance of AUSFLAG's 1986 choice - although that may have had as much to do with the design's lack of dramatic symbol: the small stars seemed feebly set in a great empty expanse of blue (See Fig. 2)

Subsequently AUSFLAG had gone to green and gold, the official national livery since 1984. For some time various media campaigns pitched at the lowest common denominator of public analysis have insinuated the uncritical appraisal that any new national flag must be green and "gold". An example of this approach is Athol Kelly's flag (with the kangaroo in retreat) at Fig 10.

Jose Bruges interposed an international opinion that green and gold were already well associated with Australia overseas, especially through the medium of sport. There is more to Australia and Australians than their sporting prowess, however. There also seemed to be important chromatic problems with this combination: as the colours faded in the sun, the result appeared insipid. "Gold" (whether the yellow or orange variety) was not a stable colour at a distance: a flag by definition was a device that needed clearly to be described from a distance. Moreover, only one national flag (Mauritania's) featured these colours alone. Perhaps realising that a green/yellow bicolour combination might suggest the Treasurer's promise of a banana republic, AUSFLAG had after 1986 experimented with green, white and gold suggestions (Figs. 11-12.)

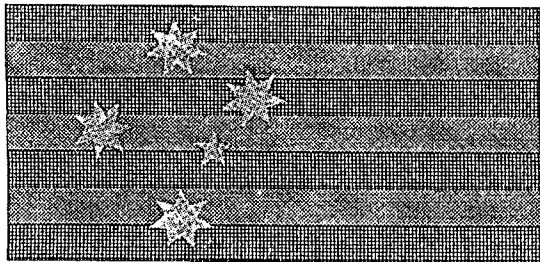


Fig. 15:
AUSFLAG 1986
 1:2, B/V/B/V/B/V/B
 stars Y, 1:2
 PMS 072 Deep Blue
 PMS 249 Green
 PMS 109 Yellow
 Design: Harry Greene
 Warrawee NSW 1985

Fig. 16:
 2:3, B/V stars Y
 PMS 281 Navy Blue
 PMS 249 Green
 PMS 109 Yellow
 Design: AC Burton
 Kirirbilli NSW 1989

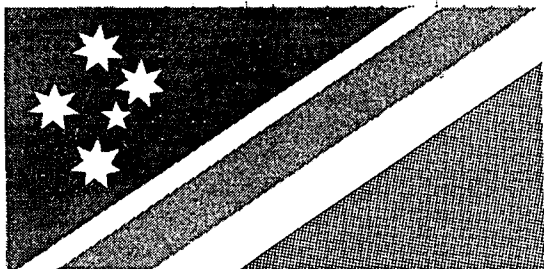
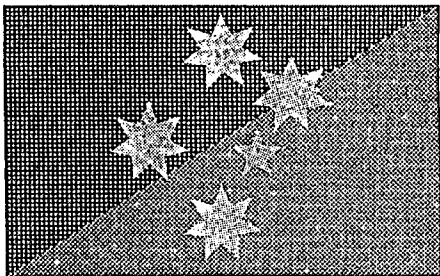
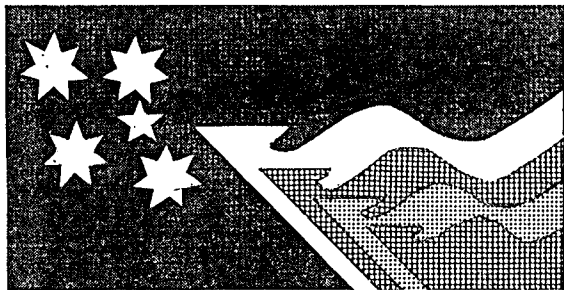


Fig. 17:
 1: 2, B/ochre/V
 stars, fimbriations W
 PMS 281 Navy Blue
 PMS 249 Green
 PMS 130 Orange/ochre
 White
 Design: AC Burton 1989

Fig. 18:
 5:8, B/W/V/Y/V
 stars, leading kangaroo W.
 PMS 281 Navy Blue
 PMS 249 Green,
 PMS 109 Yellow
 Design: AC Burton 1989



Given that the predominant colours of the present national flag and many of its predecessors were blue and white, the question arose as to whether Australia's flag should be unique in combining that blue and white tradition with the newcomers green and gold, and in fact, Australian Airlines recently adopted such a livery, wrapping itself almost in the colours and symbols of an aspirant flag - Fig 13. This approach is also reflected in Dr Whitney Smith's suggestion at Fig. 14.

While blue and green indeed might be seen (as in the flags of Djibuti, Sierra Leone and Solomon Islands), the poor contrast of these harmonic colours would be useful only if Australia wanted a peacock, or chameleon, flag, ambiguous enough to reflect its present national diversity, insecurity or both. Harry Greene's AUSFLAG contribution (Fig. 15) and the workshop suggestion (Fig. 16) are examples of this kind of lateral thinking. Again, such lack of clarity defeats the ordinary purpose and definition of a flag. Some other colour, a "metal" in the heraldic tradition, would provide a foil, as indeed is the case with Solomon Islands and Sierra Leone, and in Tony Burton's suggestions in Australian colours at Figs. 17-18.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE UNION JACK: ESSENTIAL/NON-ESSENTIAL?

It seemed not enough merely to jettison the Union Flag, for it is not without its symbolism, even for Australia. The Union Flag was an integral part of the present national flag. Its inclusion was virtually a condition of the flag quest of 1901 (the flag had to indicate membership of the British Empire, and be acceptable to the British Admiralty.)

One school of thought insisted that the Union canton unchanged was essential to evoke 200 years of history and European development. That much experience couldn't and shouldn't just be designed away. There is still in the nation a strong, well organised, and potentially even forcefully organised, body of supporters to "keep this our flag forever".

Another school of thought - equally patriotic - was of the conviction that, dramatic as it is as a design, the Union Jack really belonged to Britain, and should be respected by returning it to her. In today's interdependent world, it was pointless to talk of real independence, but the continued use of the Union Flag on Australia's spoke of another and possibly shortlived phase of Australian history. As a symbol, it did not call to mind or inspire a local and indigenous national identity.

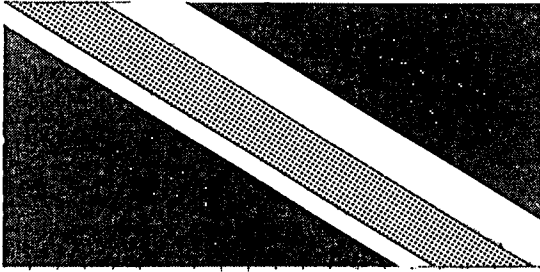
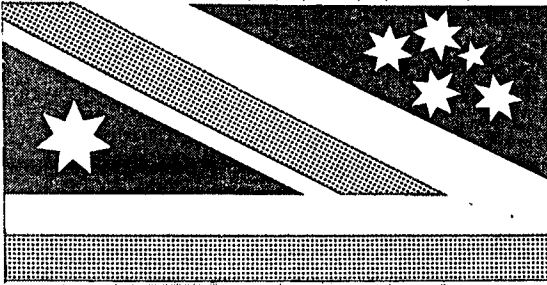


Fig. 19:
1:2, B/W/R/W/B
PMS 281 Blue
PMS 032 Red
AC Burton 1988



Figs. 20-21:
1:2, B/W/R/W/B
stars W
PMS 072 Deep Blue
PMS 032 Red, White
Design: Ralph Kelly
Beecroft NSW 1989

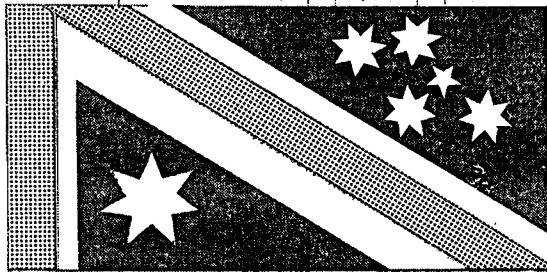
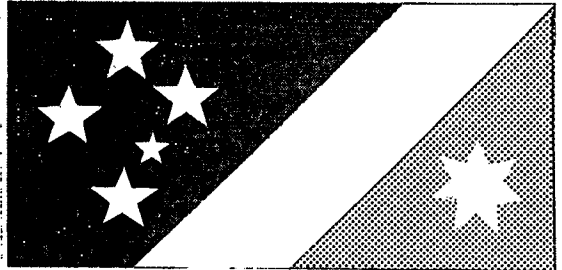


Fig. 22:
1:2, B/W/R/Y stars W.
Lavett Flagquest NSW 1972
PMS 072 Deep Blue
PMS 032 Red
PMS Yellow, White
Design: RJ Bates
Carlingford, NSW 1972



Even so, the contribution of British traditions and institutions should not be overlooked or demeaned. They were normative and formative of the nation. These fundamental social and cultural links were one reason why the red white and blue colours, *in some other design configuration*, might be-retained in any evolution toward a new Australian flag.

One of the principal problems with continued inclusion of the Union Jack was the heraldic dominance of its cantonal position. As mentioned, this had been a condition of the 1901 competition (the world's first, incidentally). One solution, used by Newfoundland, British Airways logos and the Australian Bicentennial was to stylise the Union Jack and move its position.

A radical interpretation, at Fig. 19, renders the Union flag in its barest conceptual essentials. Ralph Kelly's suggestions (Figs. 20-21) use elements of the Union Jack to form a stylized letter A. The first placegetter in the 1971 competition sponsored by John Lavett (Fig. 22) may also have wished to express this idea, while Whitney Smith offered another variation, (Fig. 23) modifying his earlier design (Fig.14) to retain the colours red white and blue. Designs at Figs. 24-26 all seem to celebrate the tradition of a British heritage. Tony Burton's designs (Figs. 17 and 1) also showed some design affinity with the Union flag.

STRELLATION: TO STAR OR NOT TO STAR

At the same time the opinion was frequently heard that the national flag should simply drop the Union Jack and become a blue and white strellation of Southern Cross and Commonwealth Star. A variation of this (Fig 27) featuring both Pointer stars (Alpha and Beta Centauri) and the Southern Cross appears in Xavier Herbert's epic 1975 novel Poor Fellow My Country, (Collins, Sydney) pp1280-81, 1315-16 and 1420 especially), and also in the more astronomically correct 1870 version of the South Australian red ensign, as reported in Ralph Kelly's Congress paper.

Much has been made of the present Australian flag being a Flag of Stars, bearing not only the five of the Southern Cross constellation, but also the larger 7-pointed Federation or Commonwealth star. The question arose as to the importance of this symbol. After all, did not the flag itself stand for the nation? A separate Federation star seemed as redundant as the Union canton.

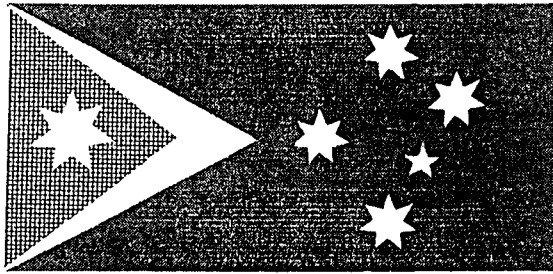


Fig. 23:
 1: 2, R/W/B stars W
 PMS 072 Deep Blue
 PMS 032 Red, White
 Design: 1989
 Dr Whitney Smith

Fig. 24:
 1:2, R/W/B stars W
 AUSFLAG 1986
 PMS Reflex Blue
 PMS 032 Red
 White
 Design: George Myer
 Ashfield NSW 1985

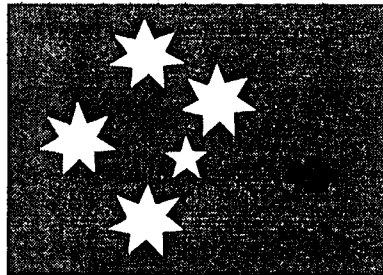
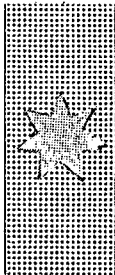
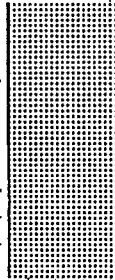


Fig. 25:
 1:2, R/Y/W/B stars B
 PMS 032 Red
 PMS 109 Yellow
 PMS Reflex Blue, White
 Design: Dr Whitney Smith
 1989

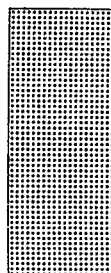


Fig. 26:
 1:2, B/W/R stars W,
 PMS Reflex Blue
 PMS 032 Red, White
 Design:
 John Vaughan 1989
 Castlecrag NSW

SOUTHERN CROSS FLAGS

Discussion turned again, and naturally, to the other symbol of the present flag - the Southern Cross - as the sole emblem on a new national flag, and perhaps as the one neutral symbol capable of expressing reconciliation between two hitherto opposing cultural traditions.

The Southern Cross and its symbolism appears in many references in Herbert's book (pp618, 713, 1280-81, 1315-16 and 1420) but it has also featured on the very earliest flags (including the "gay Australian flag" flown at the 50th anniversary of European settlement in 1838. This is believed to be the 1831 NSW Ensign described in John Vaughan's *Flags of Australia* Chart - see also Donald Horne, *Ideas for a Nation*, Pan 1989, p17.) Usually shown with five 8-pointed white stars on a blue Greek cross throughout, it had widespread pre-Federation usage, and was in fact tendered by Prime Minister Barton as an alternative to the 1901 design. The *Eureka Flag of 1854* also featured the Southern Cross, emblazoned literally on a white Cross.

Recently there had appeared a trend, particularly in advertising, toward adopting the Southern Cross in its 7-pointed configuration as on the national flag - that is to say, four bright stars and a fifth, (5-pointed) fainter and off-centre, the whole forming roughly a Latin cross, approximately as seen in the night sky.

While the Southern Cross could replace the Jack in the canton as the primary, or sole symbol, it would seem so condensed (see Fig. 28) that the empty three quarters seem to call out for some complementary national symbol. Two schools of thought contend here: the minimalist, and those others afflicted by horror vacui, who would want to see, for example, the flag adorned with the coat of arms in full filligree.

The *Flag Society of Australia* had followed this track but with more restraint, in adopting at ICV-13 a new flag (Fig. 29), placing the Southern Cross predominantly in the first quarter and in counterfoil, a kangaroo device in the fourth quarter, stylized to suggest unfurled flags. The flag on a flag is a pun in the strongest heraldic tradition, and in this case comes close to animation (a field where Australian artists excel). Given the popularity of the cartoon style *Boxing Kangaroo* (Fig. 30) and the instant recognition of the kangaroo (whether in its QANTAS form or any other) as an Australian symbol, perhaps it is not farfetched to combine the Cross and the Kangaroo on a national flag, (as in Fig. 18, for example), notwithstanding remarks below on symbols and kitsch.

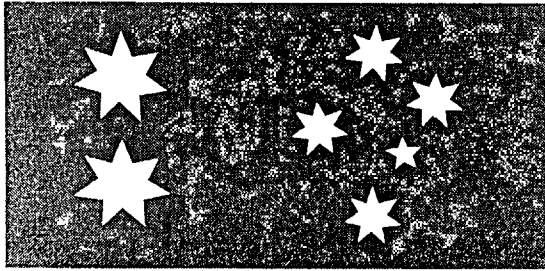


Fig. 27:
1: 2, B/W
"True Commonwealth"
PMS Reflex Blue, White
Design: Xavier Herbert
Poor Fellow My Country
Collins, Sydney 1975

Fig. 28:
1: 2, B/W
PMS 072 Deep Blue, White
Design: AC Burton
1989

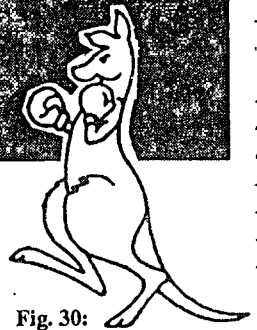


Fig. 30:
Boxing Kangaroo
Alan Bond
America's Cup
Challenges
1983, 1987

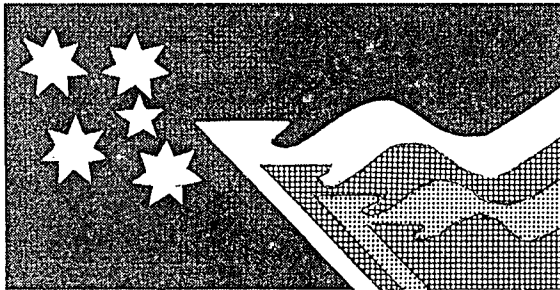
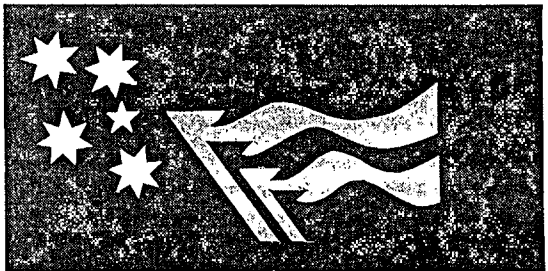


Fig. 29:
5:8, B+/W/B-/Y/B-
PMS 072 Deep Blue
PMS Process Cyan
PMS 109 Yellow
White
Design: AC Burton
FSA Flag 1989

Fig. 31:
1:2, B+/W/Y+
PMS 072 Deep Blue
PMS 116 golden ochre
Design: AC Burton
1989 FSA Quest



In this context, some of the unsuccessful contenders for the new FSA flag were discussed. One of these (Fig. 31) offers yet another colour combination for a national flag, with the Southern Cross in white, and a gold stylized kangaroo emblem on a deep blue field, reflecting the actual Commonwealth colours shown in the torse in the national arms.

The FSA symbol also reflects another facet of the Southern Cross. Although the stars appear on the present national flag as a vertical Latin Cross, rarely do they appear so in nature. Generally the constellation is seen at an angle to the horizon, (even upside down, depending on the hour of the night.) Australian Air Force and Civil Aviation adaptations of the present national flag show the Southern Cross tilted or canted in this fashion.

If the Southern Cross were to be the sole or predominant device of a new national flag, it would take up more of the field, and thus have more dramatic impact, if canted toward the hoist as shown in Fig. 32 and indeed, as in Tony Burton's stars and bars flag at Fig. 1. A further advantage is that a canted constellation is still recognizable when the flag is hung vertically, (eg on walls, dipping the colours, displayed from windows, and from horizontal street poles), and avoids the quandary posed by such flags as Liechtenstein's.

ART AND GEOMETRY IN FLAG DESIGN

The trend in public relations sigillography, (often emanating from graphic design studios), towards the simplest geometric shapes was discussed. The flag of Bangladesh is an example. There was risk however in too much simplicity giving a result so bland as to convey little except to the analytically inclined (eg, in the case of Bangladesh, only initiates might realise that the circle stood for the State, green for Islam, and geography, red for the bloodletting of independence).

On the other hand, sporting stripes or flashes had become almost a mannerism. On flags they made for confusion, not clarity, while the bald geometrics at Fig. 33 were suggestive of street decorations or a boat builder's logo, not the symbolic fusion of Aboriginal and Settlers' symbols intended.

Generally logotype flags were felt to be less satisfying than those incorporating some specific device or symbol that spoke of the country's history, traditions, or self-image - although these emblems certainly could and should be simplified in the interests of clarity and cost.

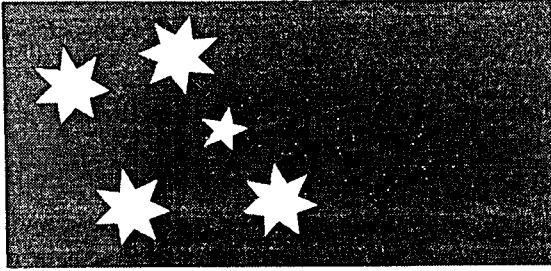


Fig. 32:
1: 2, B+/W
PMS 072 Deep Blue White
Design: AC Burton
1984

Fig. 33:
1:2,
PMS Reflex Blue
White
PMS 032 Red
PMS Yellow
Black
Design:
AC Burton 1985

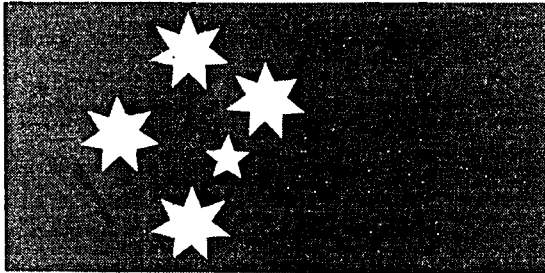
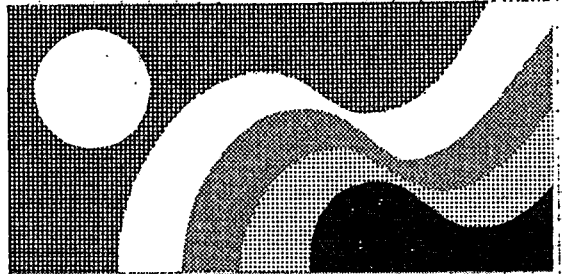
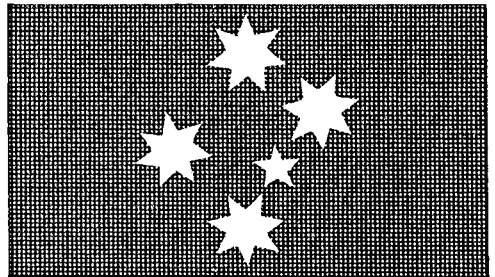


Fig. 34:
1: 2, B+/W/R/Y/N
PMS 072 Deep Blue White
Design: AC Burton 1984

Fig. 35:
5: 8, B/W stars
PMS Reflex Blue
Design:
AC Burton
1985



The Canadian and Israeli flags were in consequence most effective. The Aboriginal flag, with its central sun disk imposed on colours of raw symbolism, was also a powerful and dramatic sigillograph. With the Japanese flag likewise, foreigners immediately made the association with the Land of the Rising Sun, while that same sun symbol was rich in religious and historic association for the Japanese people themselves. The same device on the Bangali and Palauan flags on the other hand was not nearly so clear or powerful. Plain geometrics, it seemed, were effective, provided some meaning was clearly associated with them, aided by careful chromatry.

With much experience in practical flag design and manufacture in the UK, Bruce Nicolls observed that Australia appeared to have two heraldic devices that did not need elucidation - the Southern Cross and the Kangaroo, although care should be taken not to overstylize either.

Flora and fauna generally however did not fare well in the discussion. If the Federal or Commonwealth Star were a redundancy, when the flag itself stood for the nation, it was perhaps redundant also to be decorating the flag with other such statements of the obvious (and cliched) as wattle blossom and gum leaves. It was noted that distinctive floral flags are few, and then generally have to be explained.

As for animals, Australians are notorious for their irreverent brand of humour, but choreographic kangaroos, cuddly but sleepy koalas (so totally amorphous anyway), garrulous galahs, goose-stepping emus and leaping lizards laid the national symbols open to derision. National pride should not be confused with national kitsch. The flag should not be reduced to a teatowel for tourists.

Still on the matter of geometry in flag design, Bruce Nicolls felt that triangles at the hoist, and their close relative, the "whitney", evoked associations with other flags - eg the Middle East, Guyana. On the other hand, the stylized boomerang designs suggested by Ralph Kelly and others was distinctive - one of the qualities of a good flag.

Also, horizontal stripes rather than diagonals (a weakness of the Lavett flag of 1972) seemed to make for a simpler, design. In this context, William Crampton observed that the distinctive style of fimbriation of a horizontal stripe near the lower edge had no name. As it was a feature of Tony Burton's Southern Cross flag, it was suggested that this vexillographic device be known as a "burton".

PROPORTIONS

The present national flag, as generally in the flag tradition received from the British Admiralty, is 1:2. As the sole device on blue, the Southern Cross in its traditional configuration tends to get lost on a field so broad (Fig 34). There is however nothing sacrosanct about proportions of 1:2. Most of the world's flags in fact are 2:3. Perhaps sizing to the "golden mean" (5:8) may offer an pleasing alternative - see Figs. 29 and 35).

CONCLUSION

Apart from the elaboration, or improvement of several pre-existing designs, and completely new suggestions as shown in the diagrams, the workshop agreed that the design priorities for any further development of the Australian flag, (with or without whitneys or burtons), should be:

- [] establishing the form and position of the Southern Cross;
- [] a decision on the Union canton, its symbolism, and alternatives;
- [] a decision on the Federation star or any other apposite national symbolism;
This would help determine colours; .
- [] setting proportions in harmony with an appropriate design

CONSENSUS

There was a feeling that possibly a design would reveal itself once other more philosophic issues had been settled in the mind of the ordinary Australian. As a microcosm of this national process, the workshop also concluded that:

- [] Notwithstanding tenacious opposition to change of any kind, and poor quality of debate, there was also widespread dissatisfaction in the nation, for a variety of reasons, with the present flag, although momentum for change seemed poorly organised so far;
- [] Any change should improve, not diminish, the present flag;
- [] Change should be effected by popular, but informed, referendum, not imposed by politicians or design houses;

In that context Australians would have to decide whether they wanted or needed a flag that

- [] primarily had meaning for them locally, or
- [] also identified Australia among the nations, acting as it were as the country's corporate logo, or
- [] both of these aims.

At the same time any change, - or rather, evolution - of the Australian flag should reflect some continuity with the past.

Quite apart from the dynamic chromastry, where cool and warm colours were bold but balanced, deep sentiment and the habit for nostalgia suggested that some combination of blue, white and red may find greater popular acceptance.

Any new flag would have to be an improvement on the present flag by its:

- [] distinctiveness at home and abroad;
- [] meaningfulness;
- [] economy in manufacture.

A pure and simple design would also be more likely to respond more effectively to the emotional aspects mentioned, and thus achieve easier promotion.

And above all, as William Crampton observed, any new Australian flag should instil not just enthusiasm but also pleasure among children, for it was they who would learn to salute it with their shining faces and thus inspire their more cynical elders.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

- (1) There is no comprehensive indigenous name for the first Australians, reflecting their manifold linguistic divisions and European bewilderment in comprehending the complexity of that culture. Regional names exist. The one chosen here, Narrinyeri, means simply "people".