

Stamping a Nation's Image

Currency & Stamps - Australia's Centenary of Federation

Ralph G.C. Bartlett FFIAV

Secretary-General Emeritus, FIAV
& President, The Flag Society of Australia

As we are all aware 2001 is a very significant year for vexillology. It is the one hundredth anniversary of the Commonwealth of Australia and its national flag, and coincidentally the two hundredth anniversary of the United Kingdom's current Union Flag – Australia's colonial and constitutional parent.

Upon the proclamation of the Commonwealth of Australia on the 1st. January 1901, we had no official distinctive national symbols, currency, postage stamps or even an effective capital city. Sydney was the venue to launch the new federal Commonwealth, but its Parliament was to commence sitting in Melbourne in May 1901. Even worse, Australia's government took 9 months to approve a preferred national flag. As an interim measure Australians flew a variety of locally designed "national" flags. The most predominant of these were the Federation Movement Flag (Fig.1) and the Herald Federal Flag (Fig. 2). Following an international competition, on the 3rd September 1901, the Federal Government announced the winning design for the new national flag for Australia (Fig. 3).



1. 1893-1901 Federation Flag



2. 1900-01 Herald Federal Flag



3. 1901-03 Australian Nat. Flag

The purpose of this lecture is to share with you all how Australia has vexillologically presented itself on its postage stamps and currency. The first postage stamps to commemorate the birth of the Commonwealth of Australia did not appear on "Australian" stamps, but on stamps issued by the then existing official postal serv-

ices of New South Wales and Queensland who issued identical stamps in 1903 (Fig. 4). This stamp depicts a "Commonwealth" arch with each State's initials and founding years on the columns, inside of which is a seated Britannia holding a "Federation" Shield.



4. (1903) State "Commonwealth" Stamps



5. (1910) Australian Threepence Coin



6. (1913) 1d (Penny) Stamp

These stamps were originally to be the first Australian postage stamps, but the six States and the Federal Government could not agree on the financial re-structuring of the existing six postal services into a single national postal service. Hence the two year delay in issuing the Stamp, and then only in two States.

The first Australian coins were minted in 1910. In that year Threepence, Sixpence, 1/- (Shilling) and One Florin coins were issued showing King Edward VII on one side and the then Commonwealth Coat-of-Arms on the other side (Fig. 5). On the 1st January 1913, the Federal Postmaster-General's Department officially issued the first postage stamp to represent the Commonwealth of Australia (Fig. 6). This was the 1d. (Penny) Red, with a Kangaroo in the centre of the Australian continent. Also during 1913, the first distinctive Commonwealth of Australia paper monetary notes were issued in the denominations of 10/- (Shillings) and £1, £5 & £10 (Pounds). Each of these notes contained an unofficial rendition of the recently changed Australian Coat-of-Arms (Fig. 7).



7. Australian 10/- Shillings – 1913

In 1938, the rendition of the Australian Coat-of-Arms on the 1 Florin coin was updated to show the correct shield and supporters but with a Tudor Crown above the shield instead of the Commonwealth Star and striped bar (Fig. 8).



8a.



8b.



8c.

Australian 1 Florin (2/- Shillings) Coins
1910, 1926 and 1938

Vexillologically related designs on Australian postage stamps did not start until the 18th February 1946, with the issuing of a 3½d (Penny) blue “Peace” stamp, showing a Dove flying across a waving Australian national flag (Fig. 9). It should be noted that this Stamp and its two accompanying stamps are generally recorded in various stamp catalogues as having been issued exactly one year later in 1947, but this is incorrect. This was the first of 48 postage stamps to have designs related to flags or coats-of-arms. On the whole these postage stamps have been issued either to commemorate or promote different aspects of Australia’s history and life style. Listed below are all the flag and arms stamps issued divided into various theme groups;

History

18th Feb. 1946	“Peace” Series – Commemorating World War II ending. (Fig. 9)
1st May 1951	Golden Jubilee (50th Anniv.) of the Cwlth. of Australia.
26th Sep. 1956	Centenary of Self-Gov. in N.S.W., Victoria & Tasmania. (Fig. 28)
20th Apr. 1970	Captain Cook Bi-Centenary Miniature Sheet (5 Stamps)
5th Jan. 1976	75th Anniversary of the Cwlth. of Australia (Fig. 11)
6th Jun. 1979	150th Anniversary of Western Australia (Flag Logo)
14th Jan. 1999	50th Anniversary of Australian Citizenship. (Fig. 13)

1st Jan. 2001 Centenary of the Commonwealth of Australia. (Fig. 26)

Culture

Oct.1949- Jan. 1950	Commonwealth Coat-of-Arms Definitive Series. (Fig. 10)
31st Mar. 1970	Royal Visit of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II. (Fig. 17)
24th Sep. 1979	Christmas “Flag” Parcels. (Fig. 29)
21st Apr. 1981	Queen’s Birthday - Personal Flag for Australia (Fig. 30)
22nd Apr. 1985	Queen’s Birthday - Sovereign’s Order of Aust. Badge. (Fig. 29)
26th Sep. 1986	America’s Cup “Triumph ‘83” - Boxing Kangaroo Flag. (Fig. 29)
9th May 1988	Opening of the new national Parliament House.
21st Jun. 1988	Bicentenary Joint Aust./ UK “Flag & Culture” Issue. (Fig. 22)
1988	Living Together “Parliament” (17 Feb.), “Tourism” (Arms)(28 Sept.) & “Telecommunications” (16 Mar.) (Fig. 12)
11th May 2000	Nature and Nation “Flag & Kangaroo”. (Fig. 32)

Australia Day

26th Jan 1978	Australian National Flag “Waving”. (Fig. 18)
26th Jan.1979	Flag raising at Sydney Cove in 1788.
21st Jan. 1981	Raised Australian Flag map. (Fig. 19)
23rd Jan.1987	Australian flag on a circuit board. (Fig. 20)
10th Jan.1991	Aust. Nat., Naval, Air Force & Merchant Flags. (Fig. 21)

International

23rd Feb. 1955	50th Anniversary of Rotary International.
2nd Oct. 1968	Mexico City Olympic Games.
8th April 1994	Friendship Bridge – Thailand-Laos (Aust. Aid).
11th May 1995	50th Anniversary of the United Nations.
10th Aug. 1995	50th Anniversary of World War II Peace. (Fig. 9b)
15th Sep. 2000	Sydney Olympic Games

Out of all these postage stamps there are a few which I believe have greater significance on how Australia has portrayed itself to the world.



9a. WWII
Peace Stamp 1947



9b. WWII
50th Anniv. 1995

The first flag stamp, the 1946 blue “Dove & Flag Peace” stamp (Fig. 9) which commemorated the end of World War II one year earlier, shows a Blue Ensign version of the Australian flag. This stamp was issued just when Australians and their government were trying to work out which flag, the blue or red national ensigns, should be used as the “peoples” national flag. While there is no direct evidence, I believe that the portrayal of only the blue national ensign finally convinced the government that this was the only national ensign that should be flown by the citizens of Australia and not just for official use. The full series of three “Peace” postage stamps were re-issued in 1995 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the ending of World War II (Fig. 33). The only difference was the updating of each stamp’s denomination and the inclusion of the year “1995” in the lower right corner of each stamp.



10. Commonwealth Coat-of-Arms
Definitive Series 1949-50.

Australia’s national Coat-of-Arms have featured on 5 issues of postage stamps. Of this five issues the Coats-of-Arms are best portrayed on postage stamps issued in 1947 and 1999 (Figs. 10 & 13). They have also appeared in a comical cartoon form in 1988 (Fig. 13) as part of larger “Living Together” series for Australia’s bicentenary. It should also be noted that on the 9th November 1983, a series of 9 pre-stamped envelopes were issued featuring the National, six States, Northern Territory and City of Canberra Coat-of-Arms (Fig. 14) in full colour.



11. 75th Anniversary of the
Commowalth of Australia 1976



12. “Living Together”
Series-Tourism 1988



13. 50th Anniversary of Australian
Citizenship Act 1999



14. Pre-stamped Envelopes Showing
National and State Arms

All of Australia’s paper (bank notes) money contained a rendition of the national Coat-of-Arms (Fig.15) up until the introduction of decimalisation, with Dollars and Cents, on the 14th February 1966. Only the new \$1.00 paper note showed the Coat-of-Arms (Fig. 16), a combined Aboriginal /Heraldic rendition. This note remained in circulation until 14th May 1984 when it was replaced with a copper/gold coloured \$1.00 coin.



15. Australia's pre-decimal notes
£ (10/-), £1 & £5 (1959-66)



16. Decimalised \$1.00 notes (1966-84)

On the 11th June 1974 the title on all notes, "Commonwealth of Australia" was changed to just "Australia".

Turning back to postage stamps. The first stamp to show the Australian national flag in colour was the commemorative 1970 "Royal Visit" 30¢. (cents) (Fig. 17). Since then the national flag has always been shown in colour. The next stamp to show the flag was the first "Australia Day" stamp in 1978 (Fig. 18). It is interesting to note that this rendition of the national flag was used as part of the logo of the Australian Labor Party between early 1980-April 1994.



17. 1970



18. 1978



19. 1981



20. 1987

Since then the national flag has been shown on a further three "Australia Day" issues, in 1981, 1987 and 1991 (Figs. 19, 20 & 21). The 1991 "Australia Day" issue also included additional stamps for Australia's Naval, Air Force and Merchant flags. In 1988 the Australian Flag formed the background of a joint Aust./UK issue commemorating the Bicentenary and our cultural & constitutional links (Fig. 22).



21. 1991



22. Joint Australia / United Kingdom 1988

The Australian Fifty Cent (50¢) coin has hosted the national coat-of-arms and flag on the technically called "reverse" side of the coin (Fig. 23). In the year 2000 the Royal Australian Mint issued two 50¢ coins (Fig. 24), commemorating the "Millennium Year" (showing the Australian flag) and "Royal Visit" (showing the national parliamentary flag pole & flag, plus the St. Edward's

Crown). I should also point out that the parliamentary flag pole and national flag appear on the reverse side of our new \$5 polymer (plastic) note as part of a drawing which shows the old and new national Parliament Houses with the large flag pole and Australian national flag flying at the top.



23. Fifty (50¢.) Cent Coins 1966 (Round) & 1975 (12 sides since 1969)



24. Year 2000 Double 50¢ Coins

Millennium and Centenary of Federation commemorations also resulted in two proof "Colour" 50¢ Coins being released, one each in the years 2000 and 2001. The first shows the Australian National Flag and the next the Australian Coat-of-Arms (Fig. 25). Not only do they look great but they are also a great advance in coin production.



25. Colour "Millennium" 50¢ Coin (2000) & Colour "Aust. Coat-of-Arms" 50¢ Coin (2001)

On the 1st January 2001, the exact centenary of the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia, four commemorative postage stamps (Fig. 26) and a commemorative polymer (plastic) \$5 note (Fig. 27) were issued, which show various images from 1901.



26. Centenary of Australian Federation Stamps 2001



27. "Centenary of Federation" \$5.00 Note 2001

Thank you for your attention, and thank you United Kingdom for agreeing to grant us the *Commonwealth of Australia*.



28. Centenary of Self-Government



29. Christmas 1979



30. America's Cup 1983



31. Queen's Birthday 1985



32. Queen's Australian Flag 1981



33. State Shields on the \$5.00 note – 2001



34. Nature and Nation Series - 2000

No. 195, June 1988, P. 2-4;
 No. 197, Oct.-Dec. 1988, P. 4;
 No. 208, Jan.- Feb. 1991, P. 2-3;
 No. 224, Mar.- May 1994, P.12
 No. 229, Mar.-May 1995, P.14-15;
 No. 231, Aug.-Sep. 1995, P.6-7
 No. 248, Jan.-Feb. 1999, P.3;
 No. 254, Mar.- May 2000, P.12-13;
 No. 256, Aug.-Sep. 2000, P.12-13;
 No.258, Jan.- Feb. 2001, P. 3-6.

Coinage of Australia Poster - Woolworths Ltd (1986)
Banknotes of Australia Poster - Woolworths Ltd (1988)
Australian Encyclopaedia - Australian Geographic Society (Vol.3, Page 891 – 1988)
NAVA News - North American Vexillological Association (Vol. XXVII, No. 4, July-Aug. 1994, P.3)

Acknowledgements

Ms. Georgia Cribb

Exhibitions Section, Philatelic Group, Australia Post.

Mr. Dave Renalds

Note Print Australia, Reserve Bank of Australia.

Public Relations Dept.

Royal Australian Mint, Canberra, A.C.T.

Figures 1, 2 & 3 - Original artwork prepared by Hart and Boyd Design (1992) for the National Australia Bank Ltd. Reproduced with permission.

References

Australian Postage Stamps - The Early Commonwealth Period, P. 9 (Aust. Post Office 1973)

Australian Postage Stamps - Aust. Commemorative & Air Mail 1927-51, P. 26 (Aust. Post)

The Colour Catalogue of Australian Stamps - David Mortimer (1st Edition, 1976)

The Australasian Stamp Catalogue - Seven Seas Stamps Pty. Ltd. (20th Edition, 1983)

Crux Australis - Flag Society of Australia (Vol. 1, No. 4, December 1984 – Pages 6-8)

Australian Stamp Bulletins - Australia Post,

No. 169, Nov.- Dec. 1983, P. 4-5;

No. 178, Apr.-Jun. 1985, P. 8;

No. 186, Sep.- 1986, P. 2-3;

No. 188, Jan. 1987, P. 10;

No. 193, Jan. 1988, P. 6-9;

No. 194, Apr. 1988, P. 6-7;