

Volume 50 Number 1

March 2018

Perth Numismatic Journal



*Official publication of the
Perth Numismatic Society Inc*

PATRON

Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AC
Governor of Western Australia

VICE-PATRON

Dr John Melville-Jones

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: 2017-2018

PRESIDENT	Dr Walter Bloom
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT	Ben Selentin
SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT	Jim Hidden
TREASURER	Alan Peel
SECRETARY	Dr Walter Bloom
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	Sandra Vowles
MINUTES SECRETARY	Joe Brizzi
FELLOWSHIP OFFICER	Jim Selby
EVENTS COORDINATOR	Mike McAndrew
ORDINARY MEMBERS	John Godfrey
	Miles Goldingham
	Ray Peel
	Tom Kemeny
JOURNAL EDITOR	John McDonald
JOURNAL SUB-EDITOR	Mike Beech-Jones

OFFICERS

AUDITOR	Rowley Butters, CPA
CATERING	Lucie Pot
PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER	Rob Vaisey
WEBMASTER	Dr Walter Bloom

WAnumismatica website
designer & sponsor
www.wanumismatica.org.au

Mark Nemtsas,
The Purple Penny



CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PERTH NUMISMATIC JOURNAL

Contributions on any aspect of numismatics are welcomed but will be subject to editing. All rights are held by the author(s), and views expressed in the contributions are not necessarily those of the Society or the Editor.

Please address all contributions to the journal, comments and general correspondence to:

PERTH NUMISMATIC SOCIETY Inc
PO BOX 259, FREMANTLE WA 6959

www.pns.org.au

Registered Australia Post, Publ. PP 634775/0045, Cat B

WAnumismatica website:
Designer & sponsor:

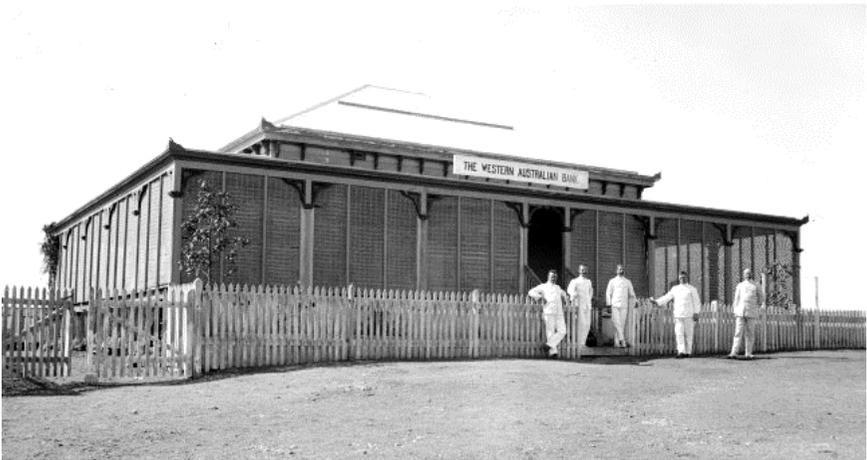
www.wanumismatica.org.au
Mark Nemtsas, The Purple Penny

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BANK (1841 - 1927) UNDERWRITTEN BY PAROCHIALISM

Andrew Crellin

It is difficult to hold a banknote from the Western Australian Bank and not be taken back to the era it was issued in. These large notes, with their intricate designs, calligraphed signatures and firm but undoubtedly fragile paper quality are objects of wealth unique to this part of the world and evoke a long-distant era of formality and discipline.

At its peak the Western Australian Bank was widely regarded as the most important commercial enterprise in Western Australia, one that “...*had done more to assist in the development of mining in this state than nearly the whole of the other financial institutions combined*”.¹



Western Australian Bank, Marble Bar, 1911

Image source: State Library of WA, http://purl.slwa.wa.gov.au/slwa_b2948315_3

The very small number of notes issued by the Western Australian Bank are regarded as among the finest Australian banknotes issued prior to Federation. They embody the drive to capture the abundant natural wealth in Australia's western third and are a reminder of a time when the leading financial institution in this part of our nation was founded, run and patronised by the people that lived and worked here.

The success of the Western Australian Bank was clearly underwritten by the parochialism for which many West Australians are renowned. Although it is hardly news that many residents of Australia's most isolated state have long chosen to do business with their own over outsiders, the formative events that led to the dominance of the Western Australian Bank have not yet been widely discussed.

1832 - The Agricultural Society Requests £5,000

The first indication that a financial institution might be beneficial to the Swan River Colony was in 1832, when the Agricultural Society formally submitted a prospectus to Governor James Stirling for "... *an advance of £5,000 from the Treasury on the security of twenty-five responsible persons*".²

Stirling denied the request, and stated "... *that the colonists should raise the money by private subscription.*"

1833 - Colonial Secretary Peter Brown Issues £1 Notes



One author has stated that the result of Stirling's urge for self-sufficiency was that the "Swan River Society" was formed out of the Agricultural Society in 1833 - each member was allocated fifty £1 promissory notes, and agreed to accept them in lieu of cash.³

For a period of time, these promissory £1 notes of the Swan River Society are believed to have performed their role as a medium of exchange well. Surviving examples of these notes have no mention of the "Swan River Society" on them. Several contemporary newspaper reports suggest that the notes were issued personally by the Colonial Secretary, Peter Brown.⁴

A notice advising that the £1 notes were being recalled was advertised in November 1836.

1835 - John Wood's Counterfeit Rupees

The popularity of the Swan River Society £1 notes apparently further eased once a number of Indian silver coins began to circulate throughout the colony. Within months however, it became apparent that some of these popular silver coins were in fact counterfeits, struck by a colonist (not a convict).⁵

The restrictions inherent in the Swan River Society notes, coupled with the threat to economic stability that the counterfeit rupees posed, as well as a perceived disinterest on the part of the colonial authorities in London, set the stage for the foundation of Western Australia's first bank.

1837 - Bank of Western Australia

The Bank of Western Australia (1837 - 1841) was founded by George Leake, a leading merchant in the Swan River Colony at the time. The establishment of this bank was warmly welcomed in the colony's newspaper: "*It has been our ambition, for some few years, to obtain assistance from abroad, and many efforts were made; but we were not sufficiently advanced to effect it. At length from our own resources, it is accomplished. We heartily congratulate our brother colonists upon this bright feature in the annals of our colonial history*".⁶

The article in the Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal reflected that, since 1835, the Swan River Colony had become self-sufficient in "*nearly all the articles of immediate necessity*". It commented that although a surplus of funds had been steadily accumulating in the two years since; "*A large portion of these accumulations lie scattered and in a great degree, ineffective, in private hands. The operations of a well digested Banking System will consist in the collecting these scattered sums into one mass, and applying in, with concentrated force, to objects of private and public benefit.*

It will promote punctuality and confidence in our commercial transactions, domestic as well as foreign; at the same time that, by the circulation of the notes, and the assistance of its credits, it will give a more permanent standard of value to our possessions, in lands, houses, improvements, and every other description of property".⁷

The civic nature of the new bank was emphasised several times, that the bank was; “...founded on the broad basis of the whole community, the support which it claims is as universal as the benefits which it will bestow”.⁸

“...this long-desired object has been attained; and it must be a subject of congratulation to every one to know that it springs, not from foreign capital ingrafted in our native stock, or from artificial and premature schemes, but, naturally, from the gradual advancement of the Colony in prosperity, and the accumulation of capital”.⁹

“Here we have recorded the establishment of one of the most important institutions connected with our future prospects, and we are happy to say it exhibits a striking and faithful picture of our rapid progress, inasmuch as we find our accumulating capital, distributed in different hands, employed to the advancement of the general body”.¹⁰

The Swan River Colony and the Bank prospered in the years that followed, however this convivial existence was interrupted when the Bank of Australasia (founded in London) announced that it would open a branch. Following this news, Governor James Stirling arranged for a merger between the Bank of Australasia and the Bank of Western Australia.

As the Bank of Western Australia had been founded via a collective contribution of locally earned capital, for the benefit of the local community, the suggestion that foreign capital might be “*ingrafted in our native stock*” was not universally welcomed. Stirling asserted that the merger was to be “*of much importance to the colony... for by its means settlers were calculated to obtain cheaper money*”.¹¹

Shareholders subsequently voted in agreement with this merger by the reasonably close margin of 57 to 51. Western Australia’s first bank had survived as a sovereign entity for just 4 years.

1841 - Western Australian Bank

Shortly after the merger of the Bank of Western Australia and the Bank of Australasia, George Frederick Stone led a number of the fifty one former shareholders of the Bank of Western Australia who had voted against the merger in establishing another bank, named the Western Australian Bank.

P R O S P E C T U S
FOR THE FORMATION OF A
BANKING COMPANY IN PERTH,
 TO BE CALLED
"THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
JOINT-STOCK BANK."
 CAPITAL £30,000,
 IN 3,000 SHARES, AT £10 EACH.

THE late Western Australian Banking Company having resolved (by a majority of six votes only) to commit an act of unnecessary and gratuitous suicide, and having thereby left open the ground which they occupied so profitably to themselves, and usefully to the public, it is proposed to occupy that ground by forming a Banking Company upon principles as liberal as prudence and the safety of the Association will admit.

Stone and others are said to have been "disgusted" with the decision to merge the Bank of Western Australia with the Bank of Australasia. His prospectus denigrated the Bank of Australasia, and he exhorted local support because the new bank was local, with all the implications this carried.

The prospectus also carried some sting with the statement that it would be backed "by

more influential and prosperous settlers..."¹² The list of the people involved does indeed include at least a good portion of; "...*the leading business, professional and colonial government section of the community*":¹³ George Frederick Stone, William Tanner, Richard Hinds, Edward Hammersley, Samuel Moore, Thomas Richard Carey Walters and W.J. Lawrence.



George Frederick Stone

A number of the personalities associated with the establishment of the new bank also figure prominently in the government of Western Australia, showing that "*the development of the Bank and the colony are connected*".¹⁵

1845 - Bank of Australasia Closes its Western Australian Branch

As soon as the Western Australian bank was established, it set about winning business from the Bank of Australasia by discounting its rates. It received such strong support from local depositors that it forced the Bank of Australasia to shut

down its branch in Western Australia after just 4 years of competition, indicating that the appeal of parochialism was a powerful one.

In contrast with Governor Stirling's emphasis on the cost of money, the decision to establish the Western Australian Bank demonstrates that members of the Swan River Colony business community were more concerned about the local availability of money. Lending policies and the retention of surplus funds within the colony were more important to them than interest rates alone.

1845 - 1868 The Monopoly Years

The start of transportation of convicts to Western Australia in 1850 caused a fundamental shift in the Colony's economic development.¹⁶ Estimates of economic activity in the Colony suggest that the size of Western Australia's economy in 1860 was four times that in 1850.¹⁷ With greater access to capital, the pearling and timber industries began to develop¹⁸, while public expenditure on works, buildings and roads also increased. The assets of the Western Australian Bank slowly but surely grew during this period.

The National Bank of Australasia opened a branch in Perth in 1868. Its profitability and the optimism of its staff contrast greatly with that of the Western Australian Bank. *"The NBA sent its manager at Robe Town (South Australia) with £10,000 in coin, and instructions to compete fairly with the local bank, Law sailed around the barren coast to a colony that had no telegraph, no railway, and no feature of the industrial age of iron, except the leg-iron"*.¹⁹

*"The only surviving convict colony, perhaps half of Western Australia's 20,000 people were convicts or ex-convicts in a gaol as large as India. Trade was sluggish, exports of wool and sandalwood were meagre, and the colony had only one bank, the local Western Australian Bank, which had opened in 1841 when Perth was a village. For the last twenty years the small bank had enjoyed a monopoly, simply because no bank thought the colony was worth entering"*²⁰.

Writing on the position of the National Bank of Australasia in 1871, the historian Geoffrey Blainey had this to say about the level of economic activity in Western Australia: *"Western Australia was backward, and the new notes printed by the bank made this clear. The Victorian bank notes, in an ornate cameo, showed the face and shoulders of a contemporary damsel, clasping a long-tailed lamb. The South Australian notes depicted a coy girl with grapes in her long hair and a sheaf of wheat on her shoulder."*

*The Western Australian notes showed a buxom girl, her chubby arms resting on the head of an axe, the symbol of a colony whose forests and deserts were imperfectly explored and whose commerce was more a venture in national development than in profitable banking”.*²¹

If Blainey’s searing indictment of Western Australia as a place of commerce can be taken as an indication of external attitudes towards business in Western Australia, it is hardly surprising that some Western Australians might choose to do business with a local bank. In stark contrast, archival records of the Western Australian Bank show it was able to pay consistent dividends to its shareholders of 17.5% to 20% throughout its lifetime, regardless of whether economic conditions were favourable or unfavourable. Bonuses of £1 per £10 share were regularly given throughout the 1860’s and 1870’s, the bonus paid to shareholders in 1876 alone was £5 per £10 share ²², just 5 years after the period that Blainey was commenting on.

1878 - 1890 Increased Competition and the Discovery of Gold

As the economy of colonial Western Australia expanded between the 1860’s and the 1880’s, a number of banks based either in London or the Eastern seaboard established branches in Perth.

The Union Bank of Australia opened a branch in Perth in 1878; the Bank of New South Wales opened a branch in 1883 and the Commercial Bank of Australia opened a branch in 1888. Despite this increased competition, the Western Australian Bank continued to pay strong dividends to shareholders, although arguably at the expense of market share.

The Western Australian Bank remained tightly bound to the leading families in the colony. Edward Wittenoom received an overdraft for £3,000 for the leasing of White Peaks, and other such well-known pastoralists as the Padburys, Shentons and Lefroys, all received substantial aid for the development of their North-West properties, and for their businesses.

The discovery of gold at Halls Creek in the Kimberley region in 1886 was fundamental in shaping the economic and social landscape of the colony. News of the discovery travelled internationally and brought an unprecedented rush of immigrants and a level of economic growth previously unknown in the State.

Between 1890 and 1900, Western Australia's population grew from 48,502 to 179,967.²⁴ Although the Halls Creek gold rush was short-lived, many prospectors stayed in Western Australia and explored other regions, culminating in the discovery of gold at Mt Charlotte near Kalgoorlie in 1893.

The story of the opening of the Coolgardie branch of the Western Australian Bank, as recounted in "Westralian Banker" in September 1950, places a human face on the Western Australian Bank's expansion during this period:

"Mr Steuart was appointed manager and Mr. Sherwood the teller and accountant, the two set off for the goldfields with two outsized bullion boxes containing £10,000 in assorted notes and mixed coin, without any armed escort, and only carrying between them a six shooter to protect themselves and the money.

They went by rail to Northam, and by construction train to Burracoppin.

From there they travelled to Southern Cross by Cobb and Co. coach, it having taken them three days to travel 120 miles.

They slept in the open with the bullion boxes as a pillow. It took them six days to reach Coolgardie, to find that no bank was made and that there was nowhere to place the bullion.

Their average working hours per week were sixty to seventy hours, and they had to do this for no payment for overtime.

For eighteen months they all slept in the premises provided, with hessian and rough sawn timber camps, each accommodating two members- extra supplies later included camp stretchers, a wash stand, a basin and ewer, plus one gallon of water daily, which had to serve for drinking, washing and cooking.

Showers cost 1/6 each, and all that it consisted of was a water can being upturned over a person, the water being collected in a trough below and used again for the next customer".²⁵



Gold Escort Outside Western Australian Bank, Coolgardie, c. 1890

Image source: State Library of WA, 1248b

1890 - 1910 The Banking Crisis and the Discovery of Gold

The discovery of gold in Western Australia occurred at around the same time a series of banking, currency and sovereign debt crises were unfolding around the world. Following decades of strong economic growth, the Argentinean government defaulted on its sovereign debt in 1890, which caused what is now known as the Barings Crisis. The British investment bank Barings was heavily exposed to Argentinean debt and was only saved by the intervention of several other major investment banks in London, as well as the Bank of England. The consequences of this crisis were felt right around the world, not least in Australia.

A strong boom in land values had been underway in Melbourne for some years by the 1890's, under-pinned by loans made by the Australian banks, who had in turn borrowed cheap funds from British banks. Following the Barings Crisis, those same British banks withdrew funds from Australia, which exposed many Australian banks to the lack of liquidity in their property loans.

By the time the 1893 banking crisis in Australia drew to a close, 11 banks across NSW, Queensland and Victoria had suspended operations and restructured. This suspension had significant consequences for the lending policies of those banks in the years that followed.

The Western Australian Bank's business was entirely based in WA, so it was not exposed to losses on property caught up in the Victorian Land Boom. It was one of the very few banks in Australia that did not suspend during the 1893 financial crisis. One historian has stated that *"One of the greatest factors in the growth in importance and in the regaining of the position of leading bank in the colony for the Western Australian Bank, was the occurrence of the Eastern banking disaster at a time when the colony of Western Australia was embarking on an era of growth and prosperity through the discovery of gold"*.²⁶

By 1903, the Western Australian Bank was represented by branches in the following locations:

Albany, Beverley, Black Arrow (Nunngarra), Boulder, Bridgetown, Cuballing, Broad Arrow, Bullfinch, Bulong, Bunbury, Burthville, Busselton, Coolgardie, Cue, Day Dawn, Dongarra, Duketown, Esperance, Fremantle, Geraldton, Greenbushes, Guildford, Kalgoorlie, Kanowna, Katanning, Kookynie, Laverton, Lennonville, Leonora, Meekatharra, Mt. Morgan, Nannine, Narrogin, Newcastle, Norseman, Northman, Pingelly, Ravensthorpe, Southern Cross, Wagin, York and Gundamindera (The Granites).



The Bullfinch Branch

One comment in the local press in this period captures the regard that many in the state had for the Western Australian Bank: *"So far, nothing has contributed more to the Western Australian gold boom than the solid notes of the Western Australian Bank, and nothing will better support the gold boom in the future than those notes, which at any time may be paid in coin across the counter ten times over. The Western Australian Bank is indeed a model bank"*.²⁷

Gold yields had declined by the early 1900s, and agriculture overtook gold as the primary driver of economic growth. Historians have also recorded that during this period, the Western Australian Bank focused on lending money to pastoral and mercantile establishments that had sure security to offer and made no attempt to assist small farmers become established.

Perhaps not without coincidence, the Forrest Government established the Agricultural Bank in 1895, which made loans to farmers up to £400 each. The Western Australian Bank became largely a trading bank for the large pastoral and mercantile concerns - they did business with the local aristocracy of the colony, the old established families of the state.²⁸

1927 - Amalgamation with the Bank of New South Wales

Amalgamation in the Australian banking industry had been taking place since the 1890's. Larger banks were better equipped to deal with the lack of liquidity inherent in long-term loans and did not have their risk geographically concentrated.

An article in the Argus newspaper in Melbourne announced on January 28th 1927 that the Western Australian Bank had been absorbed by the Bank of New South Wales for a sum of £1,900,000. At that time, the WA bank had 84 branches and sub-branches in Western Australia. Amalgamation with the Bank of New South Wales was complete by March 29th, 1927, which brought to an end a local institution "*...that had so long identified with the life and fortunes of this state*".²⁹

Historians have stated that even though the public was not notified of the merger until February 1927, "*...little public concern was shown at the time of the amalgamation*".³⁰

The primary benefit of amalgamating with a bank that had national scope was that "*...it should theoretically bring extra available capital to the state*".³¹

In the decades since 1841, Western Australia had become far less isolated from the commercial centres of Australia's Eastern seaboard than it had been, meaning that simply being parochial was not as pragmatic as it once was. "*To new immigrants, the Bank was just a bank and no patriotism could be felt for it. It certainly had done little to aid these new settlers in their attempt to farm the Eastern Wheatbelt areas, and probably they thought the Bank to be concerned only with the large pastoralists and business houses*".³²

Although several emotive pleas were published in the WA press arguing against the merger, the bank's management did not make any public comment on the proposal prior to the vote being put to shareholders.

After the decision had been made, an article in the West Australian newspaper stated *“There was the feeling that the volume of deposits requisite to enable it to cover the vast field open to it in the matter of sound advances for developmental purposes were insufficient to the local bank. Western Australia is young industrially, and has no considerable capital accumulation, and the rapid expansion of agricultural and pastoral industries and commerce has created opportunities for the profitable utilisation of capital which cannot be met unless a considerable portion of that capital is drawn from resources without the state”*.³³

“...a bank which although it figured prominently in Western Australia up to its amalgamation with the Bank of New South Wales in 1927, has completely vanished from the local scene. With it has gone many memories of its valiant efforts to help the growth of the colony with financial aid to such industries as timber, pearling, fruit and gold in their early development”.³⁴

The Banknotes of the Western Australian Bank

Type One (24/6/1841 - 24/2/1844)



The first series of notes issued by the Bank of WA were printed in black ink, on the front only, by a printer in the Swan River Colony itself. They measure 183 x 102 mm. The paper stock was extremely light, even when compared to other notes from the pre-federation period. By January 1844, 4,000 of these notes had been issued.

A small batch of several hundred unissued examples of these notes was discovered in the early 1980's, and they were marketed by the coin dealers Downies. These unissued £1 notes were presented in a coloured cardboard album that contained a range of background information on the bank and the note and was decorated by a number of contemporary watercolours of the Swan River Colony.

Downies' marketing literature for the notes stated that "*From records, it is possible that up to 650 of these notes exist in original and uncanceled condition. However, experts believe the number surviving may well be as little as half of that number*".³⁵

Type Two (24/2/1844 - 1/11/1860)

Mick Vort-Ronald writes that: "*At the WA Bank's half-yearly meeting of January 10th, 1844, the Bank's directors announced that "A supply of new Notes, of a more durable character and from an engraved plate, is also daily expected, to supersede the neat but temporary note in type, which has hitherto been in circulation."* These "Type Two" notes were engraved outside WA, and featured an oval containing a swan on the front at top centre, the title of the bank and "Established 1841". The name of the bank is in the top and bottom borders, "Perth" is in the side borders. The back of these notes were also blank".³⁶

No notes of this type have ever been sighted, either in a public collection or in private hands.

Type Three A (1/1/1861 - 1866)

Mick Vort-Ronald's research on these notes indicates that they have the following specifications: "*Large swan at top centre on the front, surrounded by ornamental leaf design. "White line" straight border, with title of bank in top border, and "Perth" in bottom border. Denomination in a medallion either side of the swan. Front printed in black only. Serial numbers A 1 to A 20000*".³⁷

No notes of this type have ever been sighted, either in a public collection or in private hands.

Type Three B (1866 - 1/7/1878)

These notes measure 190 x 113 mm, and have the same basic design as Type 3A. They also feature “WAB” in large coloured letters in the centre of the front of the note and are known to have been engraved by Charles Skipper & East, London.

Just one issued note of this type has been sighted so far in private hands.



Type Three C (1/1/1879 - 1909)

These notes measure 185 x 114 mm, the designs are largely the same as Type 3B, they were printed by Bradbury Wilkinson & Co. in London. The large “WAB” in the middle of the front of the note has been replaced by the denomination in large sans-serif letters in blue ink.

The designs on the back of the note are in blue. It features the denomination figure in the centre, surrounded by geometric "white line" design. The serial number range for these notes is from B 00001 through to D 725000, they were last issued in 1909.



It is believed that at least 3 or 4 of these notes (the illustrated note among them) were originally held in the archives of the Western Australian Bank and were retained after the Commonwealth Government assumed authority over Australia's note issue in 1910.

The Western Australian Bank amalgamated with the Bank of New South Wales in 1927, and the archives of the Western Australian Bank were transferred to the archives of the Bank of New South Wales in the years that followed.

Today, the Westpac Museum is located at Playfair Street in the Rocks, it houses a display that "*traces the history of banking from as early as Australia's colonisation in 1788, to current day banking and finance trends*".³⁸

The Westpac Museum was established at the current site in the mid 1980's, and it is understood that a number of items were divested from the Bank's archives in order to fund acquisitions of other items required to present a comprehensive display of banking history.

Not only do these notes from the Western Australian Bank remain in incredible quality relative to nearly all the other Australian banknotes issued prior to 1910, they have an impeccable provenance.

Endnotes

1. Greenhill; C, "*The Western Australian Bank, 1841-1927: an historico-economic research of Western Australia's only private local banking institution*". University of Western Australia Thesis, 1959, p102
- 2, 3. Greenhill, p12
4. <http://www.wanowandthen.com/Peter-Brown.html>
5. Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal (WA: 1833 - 1847), Saturday 28 November 1835, page 606
- 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Perth Gazette and Western Australian Journal (WA: 1833 - 1847), Saturday 20 May 1837, page 904
11. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/History_of_West_Australia/Chapter_13
12. Greenhill, p24
13. Greenhill, p51
14. [https:// www0.landgate.wa.gov.au/maps-and-imagery/wa-geographic-names/names](https://www0.landgate.wa.gov.au/maps-and-imagery/wa-geographic-names/names)
15. Greenhill, p1
- 16, 17, 18. "*An Economic History of Western Australia Since Colonial Settlement*", WA Department of Treasury and Finance, Perth, 2004, pp 7-8.
- 19, 20, 21. Blainey & Hutton; Geoffrey & Geoffrey, "*Gold and Paper (1858 - 1982)*", Macmillan, Melbourne, 1983, pp 49-50.
22. Greenhill, p 4
23. Greenhill, p 69
24. ABS, 2004
25. Westralian Banker, 1950
26. Greenhill, p 94
27. Financial Post, 9/10/1895
28. Greenhill, p 102
- 29,30. Greenhill, pp 3-4
31. Greenhill, p 130
32. Greenhill, p 137
33. "Western Australian Newspaper", February 21st 1927, p 6.
34. Greenhill, p 3
35. Australian Coin Review
- 36, 37. Vort-Ronald; Mick, "*Banks of Issue in Australia*", Self-Published, Adelaide, 1982, p 236.
38. <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.as...>

CUMPSTON AND MASON – ENGRAVERS

Walter R Bloom

Western Australian historical medals began in 1870 with a medal commemorating the opening of the Perth Town Hall, followed by many struck for the 1881 Perth International Exhibition, medals for Victoria's Silver and Diamond Jubilees, the 1899 Coolgardie International Exhibition and the Boer War. Then there was somewhat of a gap until the opening of the Children's Hospital in 1909, but recently medals in the first decade of the 1900s have begun to appear. Of course, it would be expected that there would have been many medals struck in the first decade of the twentieth century, but these are not generally listed (for an up-to-date listing see www.wanumismatica.org.au).

One such early 20th century medal did appear in Noble Numismatics Sale 87, April 2008, lot 1304, the prize medal of the Kalgoorlie Dog & Poultry Society (<http://www.noble.com.au/auctions/lot?id=217686>):



Obverse: KALGOORLIE DOG & POULTRY SOCIETY/
WON BY/190

Reverse: C & M. PERTH

Size: 38.6mm. **Metal:** Bronze. **Designer:** n/k. **Mintage:** n/k.

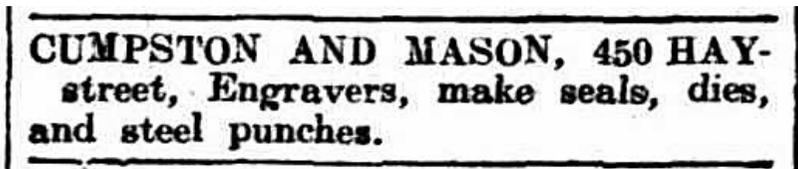
Mint: Cumpston & Mason

In the Noble Numismatics listing the maker is described simply as C&M, Perth. Searching through the Western Australian Government Gazette results in a number of entries for Cumpston & Mason, manufacturer of dog registration discs, and this is clearly the C&M shown on the medal. Further searching reveals that Richard Stanley Cumpston and John Thomas Mason operated as General Engravers at 450 Hay St, Perth, at least from 1902 to 1908. The partnership was dissolved on 12 March 1909, at which time the business address was shown as 668 Hay St, Perth.

The '190-' on the medal would refer to the first part of the year, with the last numeral to be engraved as appropriate, so the medal could have been produced at any time from 1902 to 1908, but most likely early on in this period. The Kalgoorlie Dog and Poultry Society was formed on Wednesday 11 April 1900 and ran until sometime in 1911.

(<http://www.outbackfamilyhistoryblog.com/2015/10/06/the-kalgoorlie-dog-and-poultry-society/>)

Cumpston & Mason advertised regularly throughout 1905 in the Western Australian newspapers, for example in the Sunday Times of July 16, 1905, page 7 (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article57203827>):



CUMPSTON AND MASON, 450 HAY-street, Engravers, make seals, dies, and steel punches.

They also quoted for the supply of dog discs to Collie Municipal Council in 1904, as reported in The Collie Miner, Saturday 26 November 1904, page 3. (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article232546527>).

Cumpston & Mason described themselves variously as 'General Engravers for Brass, Plate and Stencil', and as 'Engravers manufacturing Seals, Dies and Steel Punches'. Business must have been good, because in The West Australian (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article25526717>) of October 26, 1905, page 8 they advertised for a:

BOY, smart, with a taste for drawing, to learn engraving. Apply Cumpston and Mason, 450 Hay-st.

Their advertisement in the WA Post Office Directory of 1906 (page 844) was rather ornate, as befits a General Engraving company.

Cumpston & Mason, 450 Hay st.
Perth



Richard Stanley Cumpston was already well known from the beginning of the twentieth century, and will be the subject of a detailed biography. He was clearly the senior partner and continued to be listed in the WA Post Office Directories, separately as a Lithographic Artist, then in the WA Post Office Directory of 1909 as late of Cumpston and Mason. If this isn't curious enough, then even more strange is that it was reported in the Narrogin Observer and Williams District Representative of October 5, 1912, page 5 (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article209166831>) that at a meeting of the Williams Road Board it had been:

Proposed by Mr. Greig, seconded by Mr. Petchell, that same number of cart and dog discs that were needed last year, be procured from Cumpston and Mason, for the year 1913.—Carried.

Even though the partnership had been formally dissolved some four years earlier!

John Thomas Mason is somewhat an enigma. In the WA Post Office Directory of 1906 (page 467) his address is given as Douglas Avenue, South Perth. In the Australian Electoral Rolls, 1903-1980 (1910), page 68, Mason is listed as an engraver living at 50 Padbury St, North Perth and from 1912 to 1914, also as an engraver but then living at the Brisbane Hotel. In the 1914 edition of the Australian City Directories, 1845-1948, page 666, J T Mason of “Cumpston & M.” is shown as living at Douglas Avenue in South Perth.

A person of the same name living near York appears to have tried unsuccessfully to enlist for military service in 1916:

Item details for: MT1486/1, MASON/JOHN THOMAS	
Title	Mason, John Thomas; age 37; address - Green Hills WA
Contents date range	1916 - 1916
Series number	MT1486/1 Click to see which government agency or person created this item.
Control symbol	MASON/JOHN THOMAS

(<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=9720440&isAv=N>)

Series details for: MT1486/1	
Series number	MT1486/1
Title	Applications to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force
Accumulation dates	01 Jan 1915 - 31 Dec 1918

(https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/SeriesDetail.aspx?series_no=MT1486/1&singleRecord=T)

From the age given at enlistment, this John Thomas Mason would have been born around 1879. However, the name isn't unique, and indeed there is a farmer with exactly the same name listed in a similar period.

COUNTERFEITING IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

C W Fremantle, 1876

Extract from:

Sixth Annual Report of the Deputy Master of the Mint, 1875.

I may mention that from the earliest times in English history any tampering with the coin of the realm was visited with very severe punishment. In the reign of Henry V an Act was passed, which was not repealed till 1553, making the offence of clipping coin high treason; and so lately as in the reign of William III (1695) another Act to prevent the counterfeiting and clipping of coin provided that if any person should buy or sell, or knowingly have in his possession any clippings or filings of the current coin of the realm, he should forfeit the same, and also five hundred pounds, should be branded in the cheek with a hot iron with the letter "R" and suffer imprisonment until the payment of the fine.

It was not until the year 1832 that capital punishment for offences against the coinage laws was abolished; but the severest sentence now passed scarcely ever exceeds ten years' penal servitude, the length of a sentence depending in a great degree upon the number of previous convictions recorded against the prisoner.

It is satisfactory to know that the number of these offences has of late steadily diminished, a result no doubt attributable to the absence of any real want or distress in the country, and also to the growing intelligence of the lower ranks of the population, upon whom the frauds of the utterers of counterfeit coin are most generally practised. During the year 1875 nearly half the cases of counterfeit coining and uttering, 180 in all, occurred within the jurisdiction of the Central Criminal Court, but a considerable proportion was also furnished by the towns of Birmingham, Leeds, and Manchester. Of the 182 persons convicted in 1875, 143 were men and 39 women, and in 33 cases of persons previously convicted of coin offences sentences were passed, generally of 5, but in some instances of 7 and 10 years' penal servitude.

I append a table of the number and denominations of coin uttered by or found in the possession of prisoners prosecuted by the Solicitor of the Treasury in England in recent years, which is interesting as showing the coins most frequently, and it may be assumed most successfully, counterfeited:

Year ending 1st April	Sovereign	Half-Sovereign	Crown	Half-Crown	Florin	Shilling	Sixpence	Fourpence
1870	8	6	290	671	607	1,612	242	
1871	8	34	46	408	536	541	244	
1872	16	42	199	283	369	466	37	70
1873	17	38	83	289	447	406	222	
1874	35	51	107	300	608	220	62	11
1875	15	52	109	294	642	207	55	16
1876	7	60	4	192	650	680	100	1

It will be perceived that among gold coins, half-sovereigns, and among silver coins, florins and shillings, are those most frequently counterfeited, probably because it is found by experience that coins of these denominations excite the least attention on the part of the public.

One form of counterfeit, principally met with in America, consists of the shell of a coin only, the whole of the interior having been adroitly removed and replaced by base metal; but the only counterfeits which can be considered really successful imitations are those of gilded platinum, which contain a small percentage of copper, and are sometimes provided with a rim of pure gold. These counterfeits, which have a good "ring" and are of correct weight, are not easily detected, and pass freely from hand to hand until the removal of the gold by wear discloses the platinum beneath. In most cases, however, the best test for a coin suspected to be counterfeit is to weigh it against a piece of the same denomination which is evidently genuine. The instrument commonly called a "detector" and used for bending coin, affords no proof that a piece is not genuine, and is rendered illegal by the Act 16 & 17 Viet, cap. cii., passed in 1853, "to prevent the defacing of the current coin of the Realm." I may further remark that the ordinary test of "ringing" a coin before receiving it is not more conclusive, as genuine coins may easily be rendered "dumb" by a crack, and indeed are especially liable to become so if subjected for a length of time to the practice in question.

The counterfeiters of silver coin usually employ a fusible alloy of lead and tin, which is cast in a mould of plaster of Paris; but when a press, even of rude construction, is employed, and the counterfeits are actually struck, it is evident that more successful and dangerous imitations may be produced. The difficulty, however, of imitating the "milling" or "lettering" on the edge of coins still remains, and defects in this respect afford the best means of detection.

During the past year a prosecution of some importance took place, namely, that of Raymond Joseph Lavigne, a Frenchman, living at Tottenham, for having in his possession a press and other instruments necessary for the manufacture of counterfeit coin.

It appeared that Lavigne had ordered two dies for the obverse and reverse of an English shilling of a die-sinker in Paris, and also a collar by which the "milling" round the edge is produced, and that in October last, when the dies and collar were completed, he sent his wife to Paris to fetch them, telling her that the dies had been ordered for the manufacture of Eastern necklaces. The die-sinker had in the meanwhile given information to the French police, and the woman was arrested at the Railway Station in Paris, when about to return to England, and having in her possession the dies and collar, and a galvanic battery. The police in Paris having communicated with the police in this country, and a search-warrant having been obtained, a large press and other appliances for coining were found on the premises at Tottenham. Lavigne was tried in November last at the Central Criminal Court, and was convicted of having the press and dies in his possession for the purpose of manufacturing counterfeit coin, his only defence being that he intended to manufacture Oriental necklaces, and had selected the design of the English shilling on account of the convenient size of that coin. He was sentenced to ten years' penal servitude.

~~~~~



## Always Buying Coins & Notes

Sterling & Currency is a rare coin and note dealership in Fremantle run by Andrew Crellin. We have thousands of clients across Australia and the world that are constantly looking for new material.

We specialise in historic & rare coins & notes – we conduct detailed research on the items we handle and take pride in the way we present them.

If you have a large or complex collection that you're considering exiting, we have the expertise, resources and experience to support you.

Contact us via phone or email to discuss your collection.

Shop 22; 35 William Street  
FREMANTLE; WA; 6160

Ph: 08 6468 2467

[www.sterlingcurrency.com.au](http://www.sterlingcurrency.com.au)

## THE LAST CONNECTION TO PRE-DECIMAL COINAGE

**Jonathon de Hadleigh**

Our Australian coins are still mostly the same sizes as their pre-decimal counterparts, which were similar throughout the old British Empire. While all other countries, including Britain, have changed the size or shape of their decimal coins, Australia has generally resisted that change.

Our lowest current denomination, the five cent piece, now so humble, has a distinguished history through its precursor the sixpence. As one goes back, its purchasing power increases, until only 200 years past it was one of the most used and useful denominations.



The last Australian sixpence was issued in 1963. Our five cents was introduced in 1966 and New Zealand's in 1967. In the United Kingdom the sixpence was last issued in 1967, except for a proof issue in 1970. Several African countries also had their last sixpences in the 1960's. An extensive and interesting collection could be built up of the last issue dates for sixpences.

A collection of Australian five cents and sixpences could boast three decimal portraits and one pre-decimal portrait of our current Queen, then her father, her grandfather and finally her great grandfather on the first Australian sixpence of 1910. Or, starting with a 2017 dated Australian five cent coin one could pass back through time, including some important dates such as the first five cents in 1966 and a sixpence from the coronation year, 1953. Sixpences of previous monarchs could then be added, before passing back to the British sixpences used in Australia before 1910 and finally arriving at the first machinery made piece of the modern era dating from 1816.

Quite a legacy for the humble five cent piece, once a '*zac*' or to the English a '*tanner*'.

## CALENDAR OF PNS MEETINGS FOR 2018

PNS meetings are held at 7.30pm on the last Wednesday of each month, except December, at The Collins Street Centre, corner of Collins Street and Shaftsbury Street, South Perth.

Meeting dates for 2018 are as follows:

|              |                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| January 31   | Short talks, tender sale.                                                                                                                                       |
| February 28  | Invited speaker, no-reserve tender sale.                                                                                                                        |
| March 28     | Tender sale.                                                                                                                                                    |
| April 25     | Invited speaker, no-reserve tender sale.                                                                                                                        |
| May 30       | Short talks, tender sale.                                                                                                                                       |
| June 27      | Quiz, no-reserve tender sale.                                                                                                                                   |
| July 25      | Annual General Meeting, tender sale.                                                                                                                            |
| August 29    | No-reserve tender sale.                                                                                                                                         |
| September 26 | Invited speaker (John Wheatley, <i>The Early History of the Bank of New South Wales including the opening of the first two branches in W.A.</i> ), tender Sale. |
| October 31   | No-reserve tender sale.                                                                                                                                         |
| November 28  | Tender sale.                                                                                                                                                    |

More details of invited speakers and other matters will be provided as they become available.

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Adult                      | \$15  |
| Pensioner                  | \$10  |
| WA Country                 | \$10  |
| Associate                  | \$7   |
| Junior                     | \$7   |
| Nomination Fee             | \$5   |
| Fully Paid Life Membership | \$250 |

Subscriptions at the above rates are due and payable in advance on 1<sup>st</sup> March each year and shall be paid within three months after which time the membership will lapse.

## CALENDAR OF FAIRS

Perth Numismatic Society Coin, Medal and Banknote Fairs:

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2018

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Peel Region Numismatic Group / Mandurah Philatelic Society Fair:

To be advised

Perth Money Expo:

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Perth Stamp & Coin Show:

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Phoenix Auctions:

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2018

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> November

Cannington Antique and Collectors Fair:

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Antique and Collectors Fairs:

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> – Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2018 (Claremont)

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2018 (Midland)

Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> – Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2018 (Claremont)

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018 (Claremont)

Militaria Swapmeet (Cannington):

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2018

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2018

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Annual Militaria Fair (Cannington):

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2018

For more details see: <http://www.pns.org.au/events/>

# RAINBOW RARITIES

## Specialists in Pre-Decimal & Decimal Quality Banknotes for Collector & Investor

For a FREE listing contact D. POT  
PO Box 189 – Kelmscott 6991 WA  
Phone: 08 6306 2373 or 0407 211980



e-mail: [dirk@rainbowrarities.com](mailto:dirk@rainbowrarities.com)  
website: [www.rainbowrarities.com](http://www.rainbowrarities.com)



### HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| Frank Gare      | 1977 |
| John Wheatley   | 2004 |
| Dr Walter Bloom | 2013 |

### PAST PRESIDENTS

|                  |           |
|------------------|-----------|
| Brian Siggs †    | 1965-1968 |
| Edward Rintoul † | 1968-1969 |
| Edward Gibbs †   | 1969-1970 |
| Clive Stronach † | 1970-1971 |
| Karl Hawelka †   | 1971-1978 |
| Haydn Powell †   | 1978-1988 |
| Dr Walter Bloom  | 1988-1991 |
| Jiri Just †      | 1991-1994 |
| Colin Meikle     | 1994-1997 |
| Haydn Powell †   | 1997-2005 |
| Dr Walter Bloom  | 2005-     |

# **PHOENIX AUCTIONS W.A.**

**West Australia's Premier  
Coin Dealer & Auctioneer**

**Buying Coins, Banknotes & Medals  
or Consign to Auction**

**High Grade Roman & Early English  
Especially Required**

**Best Prices Guaranteed**

Contact Mike on **08 9455 7197** or **0439 522049**

or post to PO Box 245, Thornlie, WA 6988



**Home Visits can be Arranged**





**WA**Coins  
Quality Numismatics

**WE BUY AND SELL**

Coins and Banknotes  
Accessories  
Australian Stamps  
Gold and Silver  
Medals and ingots  
Gold Nuggets

Shop 1/250 Beaufort St  
Perth WA 6000  
**9328 1410**  
tom@wacoins.com.au

**[www.wacoins.com.au](http://www.wacoins.com.au)**