

Volume 54 Number 1

February 2022

# Perth Numismatic Journal



*Official publication of the  
Perth Numismatic Society Inc*  
[www.pns.org.au](http://www.pns.org.au)

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Printed by Uniprint

First Floor, Commercial Building, Guild Village (Hackett Drive entrance 2),  
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Registered Australia Post, Publ. PP 634775/0045, Cat B

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# AUSTRALIA'S 1916 SPECIMEN COIN SET – THE NATION ADAPTS TO THE RAVAGES OF WAR

Andrew Crellin

The 1916 specimen coin set is a truly exclusive representation of the first Australian coins struck on Australian soil. It embodies a major milestone in Australia's economic security, one that was brought forward by the ravages of WWI. Just 60 of these sets were produced, only 41 were ever distributed, and only a fraction of that number survive intact today.

## From 1873 to 1916: The Genesis of Australia's National Coinage

David Charteris McArthur was Superintendent at the Bank of Australasia in 1873 - he had “...started the first bank and floated the first loan in Victoria...”<sup>[1]</sup>, so was regarded as a very senior figure in Australian banking in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On behalf of the Victorian banking community, McArthur lobbied the Victorian colonial Treasurer regarding the need for silver coinage. Specifically, McArthur requested “...that the Mint already established in Melbourne for the purpose of coining gold be also employed for coining of silver.”<sup>[2]</sup>

For two years, this initial push for Australian self-sufficiency in silver coinage was explored through several streams of correspondence between representatives of the Victorian banking community; the Victorian colonial government; the Colonial Office in London, and the Melbourne Mint.

These discussions came to an abrupt halt in 1875, when Edward Langton, the Victorian Colonial Treasurer, announced “*It has not been deemed necessary to proceed further with this matter at present.*”<sup>[3]</sup>

## From 1890 to 1898: Preliminary Discussions and Agreements Laid Down

The subject of domestic coinage in silver and copper was next briefly probed by Duncan Gillies, who was the Premier of Victoria in 1890. The Deputy Master of the Melbourne Mint advised Gillies that several logistical challenges would need to be addressed if silver coins were to be produced by a mint on Australian soil.

The trail went cold again shortly after that until it was very briefly discussed at the Conference of Premiers, held in Melbourne in 1898. The minutes showed that the Conference “... *consents to the Governments of these colonies, which nowhere or may hereafter have a branch of the Royal Mint in their territory, making application to the Imperial authorities for the necessary authority for the coinage of silver at the respective branch mints, on conditions similar to those on which silver is coined in England.*” [4]

That decision was presumably aimed at ensuring the authorities in London were clear there was an agreement between each of Australia’s colonial governments on the need for an Australian coinage.

### **From 1901 to 1910: Discussions Begin in Earnest**

The subject of Australia’s national coinage was explored in earnest from 6<sup>th</sup> June 1901, when the “Select Committee on Coinage” sat for the first time, with the aim of “...*inquiring into and report upon the desirableness and expediency of the Commonwealth coining silver and copper coins, and adopting a decimal system of coinage...*” [5]

The Committee delivered their report on April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1902 and advised “*That the silver and bronze or other coins (exclusive of gold) required for the initiation and continuance of the new system be obtained from the Royal Mint, under arrangement by which the seigniorage will be received by the Commonwealth, until such time as it may be considered desirable to alter the arrangement, by the establishment of a Commonwealth Mint, or otherwise.*” [6]

It is important to note here that the Report did not recommend that a “Commonwealth” (national) mint be established for Australia, nor specifically that the branch mints be directed to strike silver and copper coinage for Australia.

The Commonwealth government’s bureaucratic wheels continued to drive the nation towards a uniform coinage in the years that followed. In 1904, the Deakin Commonwealth government announced it had “...*made arrangements with the British government for the coinage of silver for Australia...*” [7].

In 1908, the Commonwealth Treasurer “...announced his intention of initiating the coinage of silver in the near future...”<sup>[8]</sup>. This action took place just before the Commonwealth House of Representatives passed “*An Act relating to Currency, Coinage, and Legal Tender*” in September 1909.

### **Australia’s First National Coins Were Struck in the United Kingdom**

Most Australian politicians at the time thought the production of Australia’s silver coins could easily be taken on by either one of the Royal Mint branches already operating on our shores or a new Mint established solely for that purpose, but either move was far from realistic.<sup>[9]</sup>

The volume of coins required was a fraction of what would be necessary to justify the establishment of a standalone “Commonwealth” mint, and the existing branch mints did not have the equipment required to efficiently and effectively strike large quantities of coins larger than a sovereign.

Clear heads within the government and the Mint bureaucracy had clearly been planning appropriately, as no less than 14 days after the Coinage Act was passed in Canberra, the first coins (shillings) were dispatched by the Royal Mint to Australia.<sup>[10]</sup> Those shillings arrived in Australia on February 24<sup>th</sup> 1910,<sup>[11]</sup> each of the other denominations were in circulation by June 1910.<sup>[12]</sup>

The Royal Mint also struck Australia’s first pennies and halfpennies in 1911, those coins were in circulation by the middle of the year.<sup>[13]</sup> Over the next three years, the Royal Mint outsourced portions of the production of Australia’s silver and copper coinage to the Heaton Mint in Birmingham.

Following the outbreak of the First World War, the production of Australia’s silver and copper coinage was pushed even further afield, to the Calcutta Mint in India. Both of these tactical moves lessened the Royal Mint’s burden but did little to reduce the risk that Australia’s daily economic activity could be significantly disrupted if inbound shipments of coinage were delayed or lost.

The threat posed by Germany’s infamous submarines to Allied maritime trade was so great that the transport of all shipments out of England was seriously reconsidered.

## Melbourne Mint 1915 - "Prepare for Silver Coinage"

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1915, the Melbourne Mint was instructed by London “...to prepare for silver coinage.” <sup>[14]</sup> Dies for each denomination were sent from the Royal Mint in London <sup>[15]</sup> later the same month. The dies for Australian shillings were received on 24 December 1915 <sup>[16]</sup>.

Problems with several of the dies meant each denomination was struck in different stages across 1916. The shillings were the first to be produced, the very first was struck in an official ceremony by the Governor of Victoria, Sir Arthur Stanley on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1916 <sup>[17]</sup>.

*“At the stamping machines Sir Arthur Stanley struck the first shilling produced in Australia for circulation, but the coin is not likely to go into actual currency. The Governor was allowed to have it and he will doubtless keep it as a memento of a notable event.”* <sup>[18]</sup>

Although the exact dates on which the other denominations were struck across 1916 are not yet known, the Annual Report for the Melbourne Mint for 1915 (written in April 1916) included the note that “...it is expected that the florins will be available for issue shortly.” <sup>[19]</sup>

In his seminal 1921 book on the history of Australia’s coinage, Dr Arthur Andrews wrote that sixpences were struck “...by the middle of the year...” <sup>[20]</sup>, and further that the threepences were struck “...in December.” <sup>[21]</sup> Dr Andrews did not cite any primary references for those dates, so they may not be as accurate as we’d like them to be.

Vince Verheyen identified a note in the Melbourne Mint Museum records that “*Specimen pieces 1916 coinage*” were set aside for the Melbourne Mint Museum <sup>[22]</sup> on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1916. That note, therefore, indicates that the threepences were most likely put into circulation around October 1916.

## 1916 Specimens - Struck Before Each Production Run and Set Aside

Collectors rightly expect modern coins housed in the same set to have a uniform appearance, yet that expectation is a high bar for Melbourne’s silver coinage of 1916. These were literally the very first coins of their type struck in this country.

Melbourne Mint staff did not have the luxury of experimenting with and testing the dies and machinery until they were satisfied with the outcome, they needed to meet the Royal Mint's high standard from the very first strike. Their machinery had been installed more than four decades earlier, they had never worked with silver before, and in the case of the florin, had never struck a coin that size before. That these coins look as good as they do is a solid testimonial to the diligence and skill of the Melbourne Mint staff.

In his publication covering the history of the Melbourne Mint, Bill Mullett noted that *"In January 1916 specimen shillings of the first striking of silver coin were sent to London."* <sup>[23]</sup> No further official records account for the specimens of the other denominations until the Melbourne Mint Museum note of November 1916.



### *1916 Specimen Set in Original Case*

When coupled with an exhaustive study of Melbourne's silver coinage of 1916 by Vince Verheyen, Mullett's note indicates that a very select number of specimens of each denomination were struck before each production run, while the dies were still fresh. The records then indicate that the specimens were compiled into sets and stored, ready for sale to collectors, for exchange with other public collections and for presentation to dignitaries.



The Melbourne Mint Museum cash account book shows that the first 1916 specimen set was sold on March 28<sup>th</sup> 1917, several more sales are recorded in the weeks that followed. The Melbourne Mint records studied by Verheyen show that a total of 19 sets were sold over the years, and further that 16 complete sets were discovered unsold in the archives of the Royal Australian Mint in the late 1960's. <sup>[24]</sup> It is believed that the remaining 25 sets out of the total mintage of 60 were either gifted to VIP's or exchanged with other public collections.

Once the production of Australia's silver coinage began, using Australian silver on Australian soil, it meant the lifeblood of the national economy was safe from the threat of Germany's U-boats. The quality of these coins is a testament to the diligence and skill of the Melbourne Mint staff, men who played their role under challenging conditions to ensure our nation responded and adapted to the challenges of war.

## End Notes

[1] <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/McArthur-990>

[2] Henderson; Len, "*Australian Silver Coinage 1873 To Federation*" in the Australian Coin Review, Volume 14 Number 8, February 1978, p 17.

[3] Henderson; Len, "*Australian Silver Coinage 1873 To Federation*" in the Australian Coin Review, Volume 14 Number 8, February 1978, p 23.

[4] "*The Colonial Mints.*" The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) 15 November 1898: p5.

[5] "*Report from the Select Committee on Coinage*"; Australian Commonwealth Parliament; Canberra; April 3rd, 1902.

[6] "*Report from the Select Committee on Coinage*"; Australian Commonwealth Parliament; Canberra; April 3rd, 1902; p xii.

[7] Rees; Peter, "*Inside the Vault*", UNSW Australia, Canberra, 2016, p 68.

[8] "*Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia No. 3*", Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 1910, p847.

[9] Sharples; John, "*Penny Reverse Master Dies of George V*" in The Journal of the Numismatic Association of Australia, Volume 6, 1992, p 22.

[10] Mullett; Bill, "*Melbourne Mint - The Establishment*", Self-published, Canberra, 1992, p 21.

[11] *THE NEW COINAGE* (1910, April 5). The Herald (Melbourne, Vic.: 1861 - 1954), p. 5.

[12] *IMMIGRANTS BY THE OSTERLEY*. (1910, May 26). *The Star* (Sydney, NSW : 1909 - 1910), p. 6

- [13] Mullett; Bill, "*Melbourne Mint - The Establishment*", Self-published, Canberra, 1992, p 21.
- [14] Mullett; Bill, "*Melbourne Mint - The Establishment*", Self-published, Canberra, 1992, p 21.
- [15] Verheyen; Vince, "*A Numismatic Guide to Australia's 1916 Silver Specimen Set*" in *The Australasian Coin & Banknote Magazine, Year Book*, 2009, p 64.
- [16] Mullett; Bill, "*Melbourne Mint - The Establishment*", Self-published, Canberra, 1992, p 25.
- [17] "*SILVER COINAGE.*" *The Age* (Melbourne, Vic. : 1854 - 1954) 12 January 1916: p8.
- [18] "*COINING SILVER*" *The Brisbane Courier (Qld.: 1864 - 1933)* 12 January 1916: p8.
- [19] Royal Mint Annual Report, 1915, Royal Mint, London, 46th Edition, p84.
- [20] Andrews, Arthur. "*Australasian Tokens and Coins*", Sydney, Mitchell Library, 1921, p137
- [21] Andrews, Arthur. "*Australasian Tokens and Coins*", Sydney, Mitchell Library, 1921, p137
- [22] Verheyen; Vince, "*A Numismatic Guide to Australia's 1916 Silver Specimen Set*" in *The Australasian Coin & Banknote Magazine, Year Book*, 2009, p 63.
- [23] Mullett, "*Melbourne Mint - The Establishment*", p34.
- [24] Verheyen; Vince, "*A Numismatic Guide to Australia's 1916 Silver Specimen Set*" in *The Australasian Coin & Banknote Magazine, Year Book*, 2009, p 66.



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# IMPACT OF THE COVID19 PANDEMIC ON COIN & BANKNOTE USE IN AUSTRALIA.

**John McDonald**

Over the last couple of decades there have been countless predictions that cash will disappear and that before long Australia and the world will move to an entirely digital, ‘cashless’ economy. The Covid19 pandemic that we have been living through since early 2020 might have been expected to accelerate that trend. We have all seen the proliferation of signs in shops saying things like ‘*cashless payment preferred*’.

However, at least here in Australia, the opposite seems to have happened and cash use appears to have actually increased during the pandemic if recent levels of demand for new coins and banknotes are any guide.

## Coins

In its latest Annual Report (2020-2021), the Royal Australian Mint (RAM) commented that:

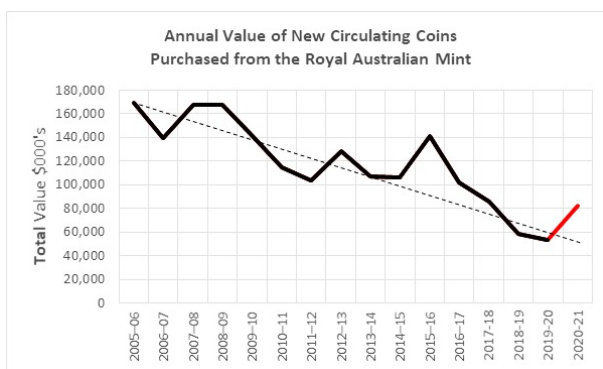
*‘.... the use of cash in the community was expected to decrease significantly. In response, the Mint expected to rationalise production of circulating coins throughout 2020–21 ...*

*Surprisingly the Mint experienced an increase in the demand for circulating coins throughout the Australian economy – and not by a small amount. Whilst cash transactions had decreased due to COVID-19, coins were being withdrawn at a rapid rate which required an increased demand for coins by the banks. This suggested hoarding by the Australian public; given the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and the impact on livelihoods. The Mint’s experience with coins was consistent with the Reserve Bank of Australia and the increased demand for banknotes.*

*Due to the unexpected demand for circulating coins, the Mint increased production of all six denominations of circulating coins – even the 5c coin was in high demand.’*

Suggesting hoarding as an explanation does not seem to be compatible with increased demand extending to even the smallest denomination, the 5c piece. The 10c and 20c coins also saw increases. It is very hard to imagine why large numbers of people would bother to hoard lots of 5c coins (or any coins lower in value than a dollar for that matter).

The total amount of coin in circulation has increased over the years, reflecting growth in the population and the size of the economy. However, in spite of the unexpected increase in 2020-2021, the annual demand for new coins in Australia is in long term decline, indicating that use of coins in everyday transactions is steadily decreasing.



Data source: RAM Annual Report 2020-2021, Appendix A

It is easy to imagine that at some point in the foreseeable future normal circulating coins will no longer be issued and the mint's activities will come to focus almost entirely on what might be called 'novelty' coins produced specifically and solely for the collector market and on bullion coins for the investment market.

Interestingly, the report also commented that:

*'In parallel with exceptional demand for circulating coins, the Mint recorded its largest (by volume) commercial revenue result in its 55 year history. This equated to the second highest commercial surplus and demonstrated that coin collecting, as well as investment in precious metal Australian coins, was very much alive and well.'*

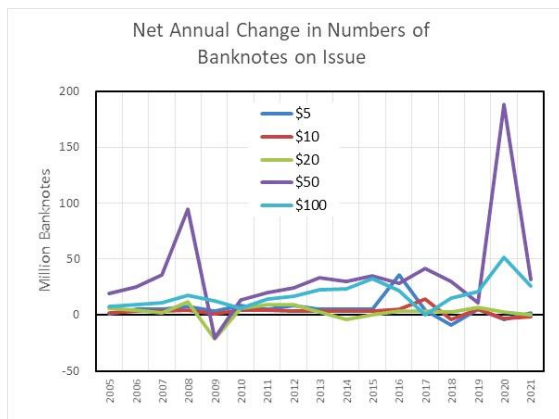
and: *‘Through its national network of official distributors, the Mint learned that many people had re-engaged with their coin collections and started to actively seek out items – both past and present – to complement their collection.’*

## Banknotes

In its 2020-2021 report the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) noted that:

*‘The COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect banknote demand throughout 2020/21. The demand for \$50 and \$100 banknotes remained strong in the second half of 2020, but abated over the first half of 2021. The demand for lower-value banknotes remained subdued, consistent with the ongoing decline in the use of cash as a means of payment.’*

RBA statistics show that total numbers of banknotes on issue have continued to increase. The two highest denomination notes (\$50 and \$100) have shown high and significantly increasing rates of growth for many years, much of it probably related to various forms of illicit financial transactions. Rates of increase for the lower value notes have been much lower, but steady.



Data source: A6 Reserve Bank of Australia, Banknotes on issue by denomination. Monthly statistics (annualised December to December).

In 2020 the pandemic led to a very large increase in the number of \$50 notes on issue. There was a similar, but less dramatic spike in demand for the \$100 note. Both fell back to more normal levels in 2021. There was little change in demand either way for the lower value notes.

## Comments

The fact that the large jump in demand for banknotes early in the pandemic was overwhelmingly for high value notes clearly indicates that they were being extensively hoarded as a store of value by people who were apprehensive about the future. Concern seems to have abated in 2021.

The large increase in \$50 notes issued in 2008 reflects the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) that hit the world in that year and obviously triggered a similar spate of hoarding.

However, the reasons behind the increased demand for circulating coinage in 2020-2021 are much less obvious. Hoarding is not a convincing explanation. Perhaps the greater than usual rate of decline in demand from 2015-2016 to 2019-2020 simply created a need to top up supply. The 2020-2021 increase does not appear unusual when compared with 2007-2008, 2012-2013 or 2015-2016.

The jump in demand for RAM collectable coins coinciding with the pandemic is consistent with reports from many major international dealers of greatly increased participation in auctions and large rises in average prices in many numismatic categories over the last 2 years. So, one effect of the pandemic here in Australia and around the world has apparently been a significant revival in active coin collecting, at least in the short term.



## TO BE OR NOT BE ... AN ERROR

Scott Wren

I will be the first to admit that I love to surf my way through the endless coin listings on eBay, mostly on the hunt for ‘errors’ or ‘varieties’. It entertains me, and at the same time I might find something that is worth bidding on and that, in itself, adds an extra element of entertainment as I follow the progress of my bid. The joy of eBay is that, unlike the established numismatic auction houses, every now and then you may stumble on a bargain—a coin that has been inaccurately described as a one kind of ‘error’ or ‘variety’ but which is in effect, an entirely different and far more collectable and desirable example.

As a result of this favoured pastime of mine, I began to notice some years ago that I was surfing my way through seemingly endless listings for error British £2 coins – and even £1 – described as ‘edge inscription errors’ where the writing on the edge is allegedly ‘upside down’ or the ‘wrong way up’. This description, or *attribution*, as it’s better known in the game, got me thinking. As I was well aware of the mechanics of the mint, and how a coin is struck, I did some research on the validity of these ‘edge errors’ as I wasn’t aware that there was a standard orientation of the letters/words/symbols on the edge in regards to either the Obverse or the Reverse.

I googled the correct orientation of the edge inscription, and it took me all of five seconds to find numerous detailed explanations, the most telling of which came ‘straight from the horse’s mouth’- the Royal Mint website. In the Coinage FAQ’S section there was; ‘*Why does the edge inscription on the £2 and £1 coins sometimes appear ‘upside down’?*’. The Royal Mint proffered the following answer:

*‘Sometimes the top of the edge inscription will be pointing towards the obverse of the coin and at other times it will be pointing to the reverse of the coin. There is no right or wrong way. The reason for this is because the edge inscription is rolled onto the coin blank before the blank is struck between two dies to impart the ‘heads’ and ‘tails’. Depending how the blank falls into the coin press determines the way in which the design is struck in relation to the edge inscription. With ordinary circulation coins being struck at over 700 coins per minute it is simply not possible to ensure that each coin is struck with the edge inscription pointing in the same direction.’*

<https://www.royalmint.com/help/coinage-faqs/edge-inscription-upside-down/>

So, it's an even bet as to which way the edge inscription ends up on the edge of a coin, and yet these wrongly attributed 'errors' keep showing up in droves and, worst of all, are selling for more than the £2 face value, which is all they are worth in light of the aforementioned information! With this readily accessible web-based information in mind, it beggared belief that anyone would list a coin as an 'error' with such an obviously mistaken, or misleading attribution, as the case may be, and certainly not purchase such an 'error' coin without first doing their homework.

I pondered the question as to whose responsibility it is in respect to establishing the legitimacy of the attribution as an error...and in the end I arrived at the notion that it comes down to an unfortunate case of *caveat emptor* or simply stated 'buyer beware'. Do your homework! You may not be an expert on the mechanics of how the Mint produces coins and the how's and why's of 'error' coins, but if you have the time and have access to Google or another search engine, then you *have* the answers only a few keystrokes away!

I personally, find 'edge inscription errors' very intriguing and was tempted to do an article on the many varied types of 'edge inscription errors' as a follow-up to my two-part series of articles which appeared ~~here~~ in *Coin News* a few years back regarding 'Legend Errors'; however, I never got around to it. But on the back of these seemingly never-ending listings of wrongly attributed 'errors', I figured enough is enough. Time to put the cold hard facts into print, and I was spurred on after reading Part 2 of David Groom's, fascinating and enlightening two-part article on the new 12-sided British £1 entitled '*Up CLOSE. The new 12-sided £1 coin*' which appeared in the April and May 2018 editions of *Coin News*, and which dispelled some of the myths surrounding obviously faked 'errors' on the new £1.

I believe that my fascination for edge inscriptions stems from the fact that my own beloved Australian coinage doesn't have any edge inscriptions, and so there was no chance of there ever being any (bona fide) 'edge inscription errors'.



I realised that the addition of an edge inscription opened up a whole new area of ‘error’ collecting, owing to the introduction of another, separate stage in the minting process whereby should something go awry, then it stands to reason that an ‘error’ will ensue. Therefore, as we are primarily discussing the British £2 coin, it is worthwhile to discuss that other prolific ‘edge inscription error’ that pervades eBay; the faulty or ‘misspelled’ words in the edge inscription itself. Most notable of these would have to be the 2005 Gun Powder Plot £2, which exhibits apparent spelling errors in ‘REMEMBER’ and according to the [changechecker.org](http://changechecker.org) website, comes in a variety of ‘typo’ forms such as ‘PEMEMBER, PEMEMBEP, NOVEMEBEP, but ‘PEMEMBER’ being the typo form that is most commonly found for inflated values on eBay. Furthermore, the [changechecker.org](http://changechecker.org) website also cites an ‘...*explanation from The Royal Mint...*’ for these spelling variations: ‘...*the down-stroke of the R coincides with the milling around the edge, and as the coin has worn over time, the letter has become less defined.*’

<https://www.changechecker.org/2016/06/24/mis-strikes-and-myths/>

This phenomenon as referenced on the [changechecker.org](http://changechecker.org) website regarding the ‘R’ would also explain the ‘typo’ on the 1999 World Cup Reverse issue, which can read ‘WO LD’. It is worthwhile checking their website as they too mention the mistaken belief that the upside-down writing is a legitimate ‘error’, and they also have some other great info on UK coinage, so well worth a look.



Another common ‘typo’ in the edge inscription occurs on the Technology Reverse, where ‘STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS’ is found with a missing, or partly obscured ‘I’ in ‘GIANTS’. Chard cite the following explanation for this ‘typo’ on their website [24carat.co.uk](http://24carat.co.uk):

*‘The edge lettering machine rolls the coin between steel rollers bearing the inscription. As with any mechanical process, wear and breakage is possible. Because the letter ‘I’ is thin, there is little lateral support, and therefore it is more likely that the raised letter ‘I’ on the roller will get broken off than any of the other letters.’*

<https://24carat.co.uk/frame.php?url=twopoundsstandingontheshouldersofants.html>

As these are all the result of a legitimate breakdown in the mechanics of the minting process, they are therefore legitimate errors, unlike their ‘upside down’ edge inscription counterparts. However, to confuse things a little more, these aren’t ‘errors’, they are ‘varieties’ as every single coin that has an edge inscription imparted onto its edge by the edge lettering machine will exhibit this ‘typo’, and so by its very definition falls under the guise of a ‘variety’.

I never wish to get in the way of a free-market economy and have often said myself that *‘the value of a coin is the amount someone is prepared to part with in order to own it’*. Even though these ‘upside-down’, misrepresented ‘edge inscriptions errors’ are only being offered for somewhat trivial inflated values on the whole, I would rather any prospective ‘error’ or ‘variety’ collector enter into the game, and develop a passion for this esoteric branch



of numismatics by buying a legitimate ‘error’ or ‘variety’. In staying with the British £2 theme, there is a fantastic example out there that is being offered for sale on eBay and that is the 2010 Technology Reverse, Doubled Die Obverse (DDO) ‘variety’, which exhibits superb *hub doubling* over almost the entire details of the Royal effigy and legend on the Obverse. This is a great example, and furthermore, it is seemingly still being found in change.

*This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in Coin News in January 2019. Republished courtesy of Coin News.*

## A LION DAALDER OF 1627 FROM THE WRECK OF THE VOC CAMPEN.

Graeme Stephens

In 1627 the Campen was one of a fleet of seven Dutch East India Company (VOC) ships outward bound from Texel to Batavia with '*specie*' to trade for oriental goods. As the fleet sailed west down the English Channel they were heading into a strong gale that was forcing the fleet close inshore to the Isle of Wight. Several ships of the fleet, finding themselves unable to weather the Needles Rocks were faced with the dilemma of trying to '*thread the needle*' or sail between the tall ragged rocks into the more sheltered waters of the Solent.

The water being shallow and the gap between the rocks only some 50 metres, it is surprising that two ships sailed clear through. Another ship, the Veiglende Draeck, stove in some bottom planks and was forced to run ashore. The fourth ship, the Campen, was not so lucky and was smashed to pieces against the rocks.

The Dutch diver Jacob Johnson and his diving barrel were immediately hired in 1628 to salvage the ship's silver and he was successful in raising more than 2000 coins. The wreck was found again in 1979 when around 8000 silver coins were recovered. Most of them were Dutch "lion" daalders, rarely seen today.



*Conserved Daalder coin of 1627 from the Campen Wreck*

I purchased mine in a presentation plaque at the nearby Shipwreck and Heritage Centre of Charlestown. It clearly shows the effect of submersion in seawater for 350 years but is still in readable condition.



*A Diver with Some of the Coins from the Wreck Prior to Conservation*

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## A COIN OF M. SERGIUS SILUS, DESCENDENT OF A GREAT ROMAN HERO

John McDonald

This coin was issued in 116-115 BC by M. Sergius Silus, when he held the position of Quaestor in Rome, an elected official who supervised the state treasury. The duties of a Quaestor included overseeing the work of men appointed as Moneyers by the Roman Senate to produce the state coinage. However, on occasions the Senate granted special permission for the Quaestor himself to issue coins in his own name.

On this coin, the abbreviation EX•S•C (EX SENATVS CONSVLTO or ‘by authority of the Senate’) shows that Sergius Silus had been granted such permission by a special resolution of the Senate. The letter ‘Q’ on the reverse records that he was Quaestor.



*Denarius of M. Sergius Silus, Rome, 116-115 BC*

19 mm 3.80 gm

**Obverse:** ROMA EX•S•C, mark of value in left field (monogram of XVI). Helmeted head of Roma right.

**Reverse:** M•SERGI / (SILVS), Q in left field. Mounted warrior on rearing horse, holding sword and shield and brandishing severed, long-haired head.

Image courtesy of Andrew Wood

The bloodthirsty design on the coin probably commemorates the exploits of his famous ancestor of the same name, who was Urban Praetor of Rome in 197 BC. This position was the most senior magistrate of the city who adjudicated civil disputes, had the power to summon the Senate and to organize the defence of the city in the event of an attack. He would previously have held high rank in the Roman army.

According to the Roman writer Pliny the Elder the earlier Sergius Silus was still held up as a supreme example of courage more than 200 years after his exploits on the battlefield. Writing in about AD 70-80 on the subject of *'Instances of Extreme Courage'* Pliny said that:

*'No person living, in my opinion at least, ever excelled M. Sergius' (Silus).*

Pliny reports that during his military career he suffered an extraordinary string of wounds and misfortunes:

*'In his second campaign he lost his right hand; and in two campaigns he was wounded three and twenty times; so much so, that he could scarcely use either his hands or his feet; still, attended by a single slave, he afterwards served in many campaigns, though but an invalided soldier. He was twice taken prisoner by Hannibal, (for it was with no ordinary enemy that he would engage,) and twice did he escape from his captivity, after having been kept, without a single day's intermission, in chains and fetters for twenty months.'*

But apparently Sergius Silus didn't let any of this stop him:

*'On four occasions he fought with his left hand alone, two horses being slain under him. He had a right hand made of iron, and attached to the stump, after which he fought a battle, and raised the siege of Cremona, defended Placentia, and took twelve of the enemy's camps in Gaul.'*

It seems that the elder Sergius Silus must have been an extraordinarily tough man. Although famous for his military feats, it seems to have been his courage and dogged persistence in the face of misfortune that was his most admired characteristic. Pliny summed him up in this way:

*'Other persons have been conquerors of men, no doubt, but Sergius conquered even Fortune herself.'*

The reverse design on this coin seems to refer to his exploits in Cisalpine Gaul (the northernmost region of Italy where many Gauls from across the Alps had settled). The severed head that the rider is brandishing has very long, shaggy hair. This was a characteristic of ancient Gallic warriors and led to the transalpine region where they had originated being commonly known as *'long-haired Gaul'*.



It is possible that the Questor himself had fought against the Gauls, and used the coin to glorify an exploit of his own, but there is no record of this. It seems much more likely that he was boasting about his famous ancestor.

## References:

Pliny the Elder, The Natural History. John Bostock, M.D., F.R.S., H.T. Riley, Esq., B.A., Ed.. Book VII, Chapter 29. From the Perseus Digital Library:  
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%3D7%3Achapter%3D29>

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## CALENDAR OF PNS MEETINGS FOR 2022

PNS meetings are held at 7.30pm on the last Wednesday of each month, except December, at John McGrath Hall, 97 Hensman St, South Perth. Meeting dates for 2022 are as follows:

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 26 January   | Cancelled.   |
| 23 February  | Invited Speaker (Robert Russell: <i>Proclamation coins and coins used in Early Australia</i> ). Tender Sale. |
| 30 March     | No-reserve Tender Sale.  |
| 27 April     | Tender Sale.   |
| 25 May       | No-reserve Tender Sale.  |
| 29 June      | Tender Sale.   |
| 27 July      | <b>Annual General Meeting.</b> No-reserve Tender Sale.   |
| 31 August    | Tender Sale.   |
| 28 September | No-reserve Tender Sale.  |
| 26 October   | Donation Sale.   |
| 30 November  | Reserve Tender Sale.   |

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



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## CALENDAR OF FAIRS

Perth Numismatic Society Coin, Medal, Banknote & Stamp Fairs  
(South Perth Community Centre):

- Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2022
- Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2022
- Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August 2022
- Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022
- Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Perth Stamp & Coin Show (South Perth Community Centre):

- Friday 4<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2022
- Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September – Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2022
- Friday 24<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Stamp Coin & Banknote Fair (Bortolo Pavilion, Mandurah):  
To be advised.

Phoenix Auctions (Canning Town Hall, Cannington):

- Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2022
- Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022
- Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2022
- Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Militaria Swap Meet (Cannington Exhibition Centre & Showgrounds):

- Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2022
- Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Collectibles Society of WA (South Perth Community Centre):

- Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2022
- Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022

For updates and further details please refer to the Perth Numismatic Society website: <http://www.pns.org.au/events/>

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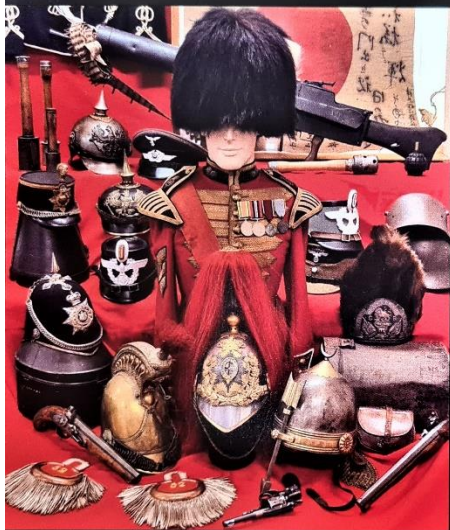
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