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SIR BERTRAM MACKENNAL

Raymond Palermo

Sir Bertram Mackennal was Australia's first sculptor of note and designed the famous portrait of George V that graced the coinage during his reign (1910 – 1936).



Bertram Mackennal's portrait of George V on an Australian florin

Edgar Bertram Mackennal was born in Fitzroy, Melbourne in June 1863. He was educated at the Melbourne Model School and King's College. His artistic training included attendance at the National Gallery School of Design with two other young men who would be destined to become famous Australian artists, Frederick McCubbin and Tom Roberts, and time with his father's architectural sculpture business.

Mackennal arrived in London in 1882 where a revolution in the contemporary sculpture movement was taking place. At this juncture, the New Sculpture movement, led by the young sculptors, Alfred Gilbert and Hamo Thornycroft, were rebelling against Neoclassicism, which had been established in Europe for much of the nineteenth century. Members of their movement advocated immediacy and naturalism in their works. Gilbert's interest in celebrating the individualism and uniqueness of each of his sculptural subjects also influenced Mackennal.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, Mackennal produced many beautiful sculptures incorporating Symbolist themes. The most important example of this type was his bronze "Circe", executed in Paris in 1893.



sorceress from Homer's "Odyssey", turned her victims into animals with her potions. Mackennal, however, presented her as a normal woman, nude except for her headdress, which was made from serpents. The grace and beauty of her 240cm tall figure makes a bold statement about female sexuality. She stands straight and looking forward, with her arms extended, as if casting a spell over her next victim. When it was exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1893, it created a sensation and gained Mackennal a "Mention Honourable" for his efforts. However, Circe created a storm of controversy when it was displayed at the Royal Academy in London the following year. There, the Academy draped the base of statue to conceal its design of several intertwining naked human figures.

The style of Mackennal's Circe was clearly influenced by the contemporary

French interest in Florentine Renaissance sculpture, with its erotic idiom. This sculpture established Mackennal's reputation as an artist of bold and sensuous female nudes. Circe was followed by much smaller, but equally alluring figures such as Truth (1894), Salome (1895) and Daphne (1897). Works, such as these, did much to promote the New Sculpture movement's idea that such pieces were suitable for installation in the home.

The prominence of Mackennal continued to grow through the many important commissions that he carried out. These included Britain's national memorial to Thomas Gainsborough in Sudbury, Suffolk (Gainsborough's birthplace) as well as projects for Lord Curzon (Viceroy of India) and the Duke of Norfolk. Sculptures by Mackennal can also be found at York Minster, Westminster Abbey, Winchester Cathedral, the Palace of Westminster and St Paul's Cathedral.

In addition to these projects, Mackennal also produced touching, feminine and beautiful portraits of prominent Edwardian period ladies, including the French actress Sarah Bernhardt and the Australian singer Nellie Melba.

In 1907, Mackennal's marble group "The Earth and the Elements" was purchased for the National Gallery of British Art. The following year, his "Diana Wounded" was also bought for the nation. This was the first time that the work of an Australian artist had been purchased by the British Government. His reputation was assured when he was elected an associate of the Royal Academy in 1909, the first Australian to be so honoured. Back in Australia, Mackennal had become a cultural hero and a spokesman for Australian values at the "centre of the Empire".

Edward VII died in 1910. Mackennal was subsequently commissioned to sculpt the late King's effigy for his (and later, his wife, Alexandra's) tomb at Windsor. He also produced Edward VII's national memorial at Waterloo. Other public works sculpted by Mackennal included the pediment for the new Government offices at Whitehall (1904-05) and the massive Phoebus Driving the Horses of the Sun (1912-24), located at Australia House in the Strand.

Following the death of Edward VII, a portrait of the new King, George V, was required for the coinage and postage stamps. After a fierce competition, the King chose Mackennal's dignified bust, the first time that an artist from the Empire's lands abroad had been so honoured.



Bertram Mackennal's portrait of George V on an English florin

Mackennal's profile portrait, based on his regal effigy, was so popular that it graced the coinage, with modifications, from 1911 until the King's death in January 1936. The King's famous portrait faces left. On British coins, the obverse field is taken up by the bare head and neck of the King. Coins from other countries of the Empire, such as Australia, India and New Zealand also show the King facing left but in addition, he is crowned and robed.

By the end of 1918, Mackennal was flooded with commissions following delays in work due to World War I and war memorial works. As a result, Mackennal, aided by a team of assistants, worked from two large studios. The results of this post war period included memorials for the London Caledonian Club, Eton College and both Houses of Parliament as well as realistically sculpted recumbent figures. Works completed for his native Australia included the figures of the soldier and the sailor for the cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney and the bronze statue of King George V at Old Parliament House, Canberra.

Bertram Mackennal was knighted in 1921, once again a first for an Australian artist. The following year, he was elected as a member of the Royal Academy. Sir Bertram Mackennal died, the result of the rupture of an abdominal aneurysm, at his house, Watcombe Hall, near Torquay, Devon in October 1931. He was survived by his wife, Lady Mackennal and a daughter. His final resting place is at Torquay Cemetery.

Additional material for this article was researched from www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in Coin News of May 2008, published by Token Publishing. Republished with their kind permission.



AN INCORRECTLY DATED GREEK 2-EURO COIN

John Melville-Jones

In 2020, I acquired a very nicely produced proof cased specimen of a 2-euro coin minted at Athens (the date appears just before the warrior's helmet on the obverse). It announced that it was being issued to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of the battle of Thermopylae in which a small Greek army, mostly Spartans, were able to delay a much larger Persian army in a narrow defile from coming further south into Greece, until a Greek traitor showed them a way around this narrow pass.



Modern Greeks have always been proud of the bravery of their ancestors, so it is not surprising that this coin was issued. But what amused me was that 2020 was not the 2500th anniversary of the battle, but only the 2499th. This is because, as many people who are calculating periods of time between BC and AD do not realise, there is no year zero.

There is also a similar question relating to the modern Olympic games. The traditional date for the beginning of these games is 776 BC, and they were held every four years (or every fifth year, according to the ancient Greek way of counting these things). Competitors came from the many individual Greek city-states and islands, and the number of events was much smaller than in the modern games (foot races, long jumps, discus and javelin throwing, wrestling, and the pentathlon, a combination of the previous five events).

Also, the only contestant to get a prize was the one who came first, and he was awarded a wreath that could be worn on his head, shaped in the form of olive leaves. The games also provided a very convenient way of dating years, since the ancient Greeks had no general system of dating; a year could then be described as 'the second year of the nineteenth Olympiad'.

In the earliest Olympic Games athletes competed almost in the nude, just wearing loincloths, but after a while one of them decided that he could run faster without the loincloth (perhaps his male appendage was small enough not to flap inconveniently), so he did, and others followed. The Greeks do not seem to have been embarrassed by male nudity on such occasions.

By general agreement, if a war was being waged between different groups of Greeks, an 'Olympic truce' of at least a month was announced, so that competitors could travel safely to Olympia (the only place where the games were celebrated).

It is not completely certain when the ancient Olympic Games came to an end. The Roman emperor Theodosius I, ruling from Constantinople, seems to have banned them in AD 393, perhaps being influenced by Christians who felt that athletic nudity was improper, although there are indications that the Games continued to be held for a few years after that.

I have often wondered whether Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who was primarily responsible for founding the modern Olympic Games, realised this, because 1896, the year of the first revived Olympic Games, was not an Olympic year – the correct year would have been 1897. Perhaps he did not realise that all the Olympic Games celebrated in the early centuries AD took place with an odd, not an even number.



THE 1916 MULE HALFPENNY

Andrew Crellin

The 1916 mule halfpenny is the rarest Commonwealth coin issued for circulation in Australia, and is certainly among the rarest of all Australian coins.

When it first began to gain publicity in the numismatic press in the middle of 1965, it was described as "the biggest find in coin history, and one of the most valuable". That this overwhelming international recognition came at the time when collectors were first becoming aware of the coin's existence and importance has set an atmosphere of intrigue, wonder and awe each time an example of this truly rare coin has become available to the collectors' market.

Like any numismatic item, the 1916 Mule halfpenny appeals to different collectors for different reasons – some are compelled to own it for its unmatched rarity, others wish to delight in the incongruous nature of the mismatched designs, others wish to become one of the very few collectors to own a truly complete Australian Commonwealth set, while still others are keen to own a tangible slice of one of the most polarizing stories in Australian numismatics.

There are so many angles to the history of this coin that many collectors take quite some time before they fully appreciate the position it has in Australian numismatics. Not only is there a whole story just in discovering how the coin came to exist, but there are the allegations of forgeries at the time the coins were discovered, coins being sent off to various points of the globe for authentication, as well as further allegations of Mint staff producing coins 40 odd years after their original issue date – under the authority and supervision of their Deputy Master! That there could be even a hint of controversy over any item officially struck at a branch of the Royal Mint is news to many collectors, however it is fair to state that the 1916 Mule halfpenny is a coin that has ignited spirited debate ever since it was first publicised in 1965.

The lack of an easily accessible "Numismatic Dictionary" or equivalent leaves us with several different definitions of what a "mule" is in numismatic terminology.

The animal the mule is regarded as being a hybrid offspring of a (female) horse and a (male) donkey, one that has an equal number of characteristics from both parents. The numismatic definition of a mule that I prefer is "a coin that has been struck with obverse and reverse dies that were not originally intended to be used together". The 1916 Mule halfpenny was struck with the reverse die of an Australian 1916 halfpenny, and the obverse die of a (British) Indian Quarter Anna.



The 1916 mule halfpenny

This enigmatic Australian error coin came about following the outbreak of WWI, once the Royal Mint in London delegated the production of a range of Australian copper and silver coins to the Calcutta Mint. This switch of location was brought about to allay concerns that the German Navy may have had the capability of sinking or intercepting maritime deliveries of coinage from Britain to Australia, the consequences of which would not only have been expensive but morale-shattering as well.

This outsourcing was certainly not without precedent, as it had been relatively common practice for the Royal Mint or British Treasury to delegate less important components of its production responsibilities to other mints such as the Soho or Heaton Mints at Birmingham. The "Cartwheel" penny of 1797 is just one such coin with which most Australian collectors will be familiar.

The Australian 1916 penny and halfpenny were however the first non-Indian coins to be produced by the Calcutta branch of the Royal Mint.

The Royal Mint branches in India (Calcutta and Bombay) had been successfully producing silver rupees and copper annas since 1862, so certainly had the resources, systems and experience to handle the task. The very existence of the 1916 Mule halfpenny indicates however that the internal controls at the Calcutta Mint were not without fault – clearly at least one Indian obverse die was somehow mixed in with the Australian obverse dies intended to produce the 1916 half pennies required.

Just how this error came about however remains open to debate. The diameter, weight, thickness and composition of the halfpenny and Quarter Anna are all remarkably similar, so Calcutta Mint staff could perhaps be forgiven for the one-off mistake of accidentally mixing in one similar-looking die with a number of others. One would presume however that there would be extremely strict controls over the movement of dies within the Mint's premises, which could indicate that the use of the Indian obverse Anna die was intentional, perhaps to cover a very minor shortfall in die capacity. One would think that such a shortfall would have been somewhat greater than the remaining population of mule halfpennies indicates, confirming that more research into this coin is required.

The true explanation will only ever come to light if Calcutta Mint staff of that era happened to record the facts surrounding the production of the coins, and further if those records have been retained in Royal Mint archives, and even further if these records remain accessible to researchers today. Sadly, for Australian numismatists, none of these latter three points can be relied upon – records at any of the branch mints are notorious for lacking even the most basic details about production, many records have since been destroyed and those that do remain are often largely inaccessible to numismatic researchers.

Bill Myatt & Tom Hanley state that "about 250 of these coins are supposed to have been struck at the Calcutta Mint, where all of the Australian bronze of 1916-1918 was produced, some 60 being given away and the rest added to the general Australian issue. It is nothing short of amazing this mule was not noticed before 1965 when one turned up in Adelaide."

The fact that all the known examples of the 1916 Mule halfpenny discovered to date have been located in Australia, could lead some to presume that if the mules were caused solely by the deployment of an incorrect die or dies, the planchets of all known mules would correspond approximately with that of an Australian halfpenny of the King George V period (5.67g).

I am not familiar with the acceptable tolerance for a circulated Australian halfpenny dated between 1911 and 1936, however a preliminary appraisal of the weights of the mules known to exist (between 5.11g and 5.90g) indicates that a more complex story will explain the origin of at least some of these enigmatic coins.

The very first discovery of a 1916 Mule halfpenny was allegedly made in Grovene (South Australia) by a Mr Robert Koschade between 1930 and 1933 – the average collector would expect that the date of this discovery (if a genuine fact) would clearly indicate that this coin at least is a genuine mule. The veracity of this claim however could technically be disputed, as it was not actually "discovered" within Mr Koschade's estate until July 21st 1965.

The first public knowledge of the 1916 Mule was on July 8th 1965, when Mr Cecil Poole presented the example he found to the July meeting of the Numismatic Society of South Australia. This coin was discovered by Mr Poole while sorting through bulk halfpennies – it was the subject of an article written by Dion Skinner, and published in the Australian Numismatic Journal between July and September 1965. The story of Poole's find was published in the mainstream print media on July 14th.

On July 25th 1965, Mr C.H. Graus of Fitzroy (Victoria) "reported" his discovery, making this the third example to be made public.

The Koschade example was sold by Ian Mudde by public auction in Stow Hall (SA) on July 27th, and was bought by Dion Skinner for £80. The Victorian numismatic dealer PJ Downie sold two examples in mid December – the first to the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences in Sydney (now the Powerhouse Museum) for £240; the second to a private collector, also in Sydney, for £175.

The first of a series of articles on the 1916 Mule was published in the Australian Coin Review (ACR) in November 1965, this one written by the South Australian numismatist Dion Skinner. A war of letters over the authenticity of the 1916 Mule erupted in the Coin Review Magazine between June 1966 and March 1967, one that involved a number of the leading dealers and collectors of the day, the Controller of the Royal Australian Mint in Canberra, and expert staff at the Royal Mint in London. Comprehensive diagnostic tests were conducted by staff at the Royal Mint in London and the RAM in Canberra. These tests included x-rays and metallurgical testing.

Despite some protests over the accuracy of the tests, the controversy was largely put to rest by the ACR Editor in March 1967.

This course of events shows that 5 examples were discovered between July and December 1965 – I have sighted at least 1 other genuine example not listed here, and have been informed by other dealers that there may be at least 2 other 1916 Mules held by private collectors. With these figures, it quite easily remains Australia's rarest Commonwealth coin issued for circulation – no other circulating coin comes even close to it in terms of population rarity.

What does the future hold for the 1916 Mule halfpenny? One of the more considered forecasts in world numismatics is that the market for rare Indian coins will expand exponentially in the coming years. It is thought that the ongoing increase in the Indian population, along with the marked rise in the size of India's middle class, will feed an unprecedented number of new collectors of all types of Indian coins. If just a dozen or so wealthy Indian collectors decided that the "Australian" 1916 Mule is integral to their own collections, values for these highly prized rarities could escalate even further.

The market for error and variety coins in the United States alone is so large that there are numerous dealers who trade error coins and notes, not as a sideline, but as their sole area of specialisation. Just one valuable US coin error that I'm aware of is a 1999 Lincoln Cent planchet that has an obverse die muled with a Roosevelt dime reverse. This coin is apparently one of just 7 such mules that had been sighted prior to 2003 (a number of other double-denomination mules have been discovered since then), and made US\$138,000 when it was offered at auction in April 2006. Demand for other Australian numismatic icons such as the Holey Dollar and the Type I Adelaide Pound has been strong in recent years. It isn't too large a leap of faith to consider that the same demand could be seen for an incredibly rare mule that spans two nations, let alone two denominations.

There is little doubt in my mind that as further research is done in fleshing out the recent history of this coin, and collectors become more confident in trading them, the 1916 Mule halfpenny will continue to set an atmosphere of intrigue, wonder and awe each time an example becomes available to the collector market.

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THE GREAT AUGUSTAN ALTAR OF LUGDUNUM, A LONG-LOST MONUMENT RECORDED ON COINS

John McDonald

Over the centuries many coin designs have had an architectural theme, depicting things like buildings, monuments or bridges. Ancient coins were no exception, and now some of them give us the only surviving impression of what some long-lost structures looked like. One such vanished structure is the Great Altar of Lugdunum.

Lugdunum was the ancient Roman name for Lyon, France. With a population of about 1.7 million, Lyon is now the third largest city in France, but it began as just a small Gallic settlement until, in 43 BC, the Roman governor of central Gaul made it the new home for refugees fleeing from a violent uprising in the nearby town of Vienne. Due to its strategic location at the junction of two large, navigable rivers, the Saône and the Rhone, it quickly grew into an important administrative and commercial city. A large imperial mint was established there and it soon became the capital of Roman Gaul.

Within a couple of decades Lugdunum had become important enough for members of the imperial family to stay there when they were visiting Gaul and thanks to the ancient Roman historian Suetonius we know that in 10 BC the future emperor Claudius (ruled AD 41-53) was born there. Suetonius tells us that Claudius' birth coincided with the inauguration of an important monument; 'Claudius was born at Lugdunum in the consulship of Iullius Antonius and Fabius Africanus on the Kalends of August, the very day when the altar was first dedicated there to Augustus'.

Suetonius was referring to a large altar complex that was constructed where the two rivers met. It was dedicated to Rome and the emperor Augustus on the 1st of August 10 BC, in the name of sixty Gallic tribes who were the original inhabitants of central and southern Gaul. It was a symbol of their submission and of loyalty to their new masters.

We have a description of it from the geographer Strabo, who was probably writing sometime in the second decade AD:

'Lugdunum itself, then, (a city founded at the foot of a hill at the confluence of the River Arar and the Rhodanus), is occupied by the Romans. And it is the most populous of all the cities of Celtica except Narbo; for not only do people use it as an emporium, but the Roman governors coin their money there, both the silver and the gold. Again, the temple that was dedicated to Caesar Augustus by all the Galatae in common is situated in front of this city at the junction of the rivers. And in it is a noteworthy altar, bearing an inscription of the names of the tribes, sixty in number; and also images from these tribes, one from each tribe, and also another large altar'.

Dedication of the altar started a major issue of bronze coins from the Lugdunum mint that featured it on the reverse. These give us the only evidence we now have about its appearance, because its location is lost beneath dense urban development in central Lyon and no trace of it survives on the ground.





Copper As of Augustus, Lugdunum, 10 BC - AD 14.

Obverse: CAESAR PONT MAX, laureate head of Augustus, right.

Reverse: ROM ET AVG (Rome and Augustus), altar.

(25 mm, 11.1 gm).

The front panel (probably marble) was decorated with a central wreath of oak leaves (*corona civica*), flanked by laurel branches (symbols of victory) and then by standing figures. These may have been captured and enchained Gauls, like those shown on several surviving Roman monuments in the region, or perhaps representations of the emperor and other imperial dignitaries.

On top of the altar a large number of objects are shown, which could be small statues representing the different Gallic tribes, as described by Strabo.



Enchained Gauls on a Roman arch, Carpentras, France.

The entire altar was flanked by two large figures of winged victories holding wreaths, probably made of bronze and raised high on columns. This arrangement symbolised the dominance of Rome over the Gauls. The entire imagery of the altar would certainly have been meant to hammer home the message that the Gallic tribes had been conquered and were now subservient to Rome.



According to local tradition, columns from the Great Altar of Lugdunum complex were scavenged from the site in the late 11th Century and re-used in the construction of the Romanesque church of St Martin d'Ainay, one of the oldest in Lyon, consecrated in 1107.



Roman columns in the nave of St Martin d'Ainay, Lyon, France.



REDUCED MINT ACTIVITY

Declining use of cash around the world is starting to have a serious impact on the operation of some national mints.

It was recently announced that the Mint of Finland will close in 2025 after it has completed current orders. In addition to the national coinage of Finland, this will impact some other countries whose circulating coins have been minted under contract in Finland, such as Guatemala, Colombia and Mozambique.

The English Royal Mint has been in operation for over 1,000 years, and has minted coins for use in other countries since 1325 when some were shipped to France for use in English territories in the south-west of that country. However, it recently announced that it will cease minting coins for overseas customers after the end of this year.

At the height of its operation the Royal Mint produced finished coins or blanks for almost 80 countries, and of course, during the heyday of the British Empire it produced coinage for all the colonies and overseas territories, until demand became so great that it necessitated the establishment of branch mints in some of those countries. The first of them was the Sydney mint in 1853 and ultimately branch mints were also established in Melbourne, Perth, Ottawa (Canada), Mumbai (previously known as Bombay) (India) and Pretoria (South Africa). Most of these eventually evolved into independent national mints.

Of course, the Royal Mint will continue to mint all the legal tender coins of the United Kingdom and it will also continue to produce novel coins for the collector market and bullion for investors in the form of coins and ingots.

Presumably, in the short term, other mints will take up the contract work shed by these mints, but the apparently irresistible move towards cashless monetary transactions will inevitably lead to less work for all mints and other partial or complete closures must eventually follow. In future, collectors will find examples of real circulating currency harder to find and we need to ask ourselves if non-circulating coins produced purely for the collector market and that play no significant role in the monetary system will be a sufficiently satisfying substitute.

CALENDAR OF PNS MEETINGS

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 2024-2025 are as follows:

27 November Topic: Shipwreck coins. Tender Sale.

29 January Speaker: Robert Russell, *Proclamation coins*. Tender Sale.

26 February Topic: Roman coins. Tender Sale.

26 March Topic: Hammered coins. Tender Sale.

30 April Topic: 19th century tokens. Tender Sale.

28 May Topic: Unusual shaped coins. Tender Sale.

25 June Topic: Favourite coin or banknote. Tender Sale.

30 July Annual General Meeting. Details to be advised.

27 August Details to be advised.

24 September Details to be advised.

29 October Details to be advised.

26 November Details to be advised.

Refer to the Perth Numismatic Society Inc. website for updates: (https://www.pns.org.au/meetings/)

Members or guests who are willing to be a speaker at one of the meetings are asked to contact the president (<u>president@pns.org.au</u>).

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES

Adult	\$ 25
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WA Country	\$ 20
Associate	\$ 10
Junior / Student	\$ 10
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Sandra Vowles	2022

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Prof Walter Bloom	1988-1991
Jiri Just †	1991-1994
Colin Meikle	1994-1997
Haydn Powell †	1997-2005
Prof Walter Bloom	2005-2024
Sandy Shailes	2024-

CALENDAR OF FAIRS

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

- Saturday 16th November 2024
- Saturday 28th December 2024
- Saturday 8th February 2025
- Saturday 10th May 2025
- Saturday 9th August 2025
- Saturday 25th October 2025
- Saturday 27th December 2025

Perth Money Expo (South Perth Community Centre):

- Saturday 21st - Sunday 22nd June 2025

JB Military Antiques auctions:

- 2025 dates to be advised.

Mandurah Antique & Collectors Fair (City of Mandurah Seniors Centre):

- Saturday 7th – Sunday 8th December 2024

Antique & Collectible Fair (South Perth Community Centre):

- Saturday 9th – Sunday 10th November 2024

Peel Region Stamp, Coin & Banknote Fair (Bortolo Pavilion):

- Sunday 10th November 2024

Refer to the Perth Numismatic Society Inc. website for updates: (https://www.pns.org.au/events/)

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