

VOLUME 12



JOURNAL OF THE
NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA INC.

<http://naa-online.com/>

SORTING OUT THE SERIALS ON CAPTAIN COOK'S £1 NOTES

Michael P. Vort-Ronald

THE DESIGNS

From 1923 to 1933, Australian £1 notes circulated with the Coat-of-Arms of Australia on the left and a profile of King George V on the right on the front, and an engraving on the back of Captain Cook's landing at Botany Bay in 1770, from a painting by E. Phillips Fox. Following on from the Treasury issues of 1913 to 1923, they continued to "promise to pay the bearer in gold..."

The new note was designed by Thomas Samuel Harrison, the Australian Note (and Stamp) Printer. He reportedly took three months to engrave Captain Cook for the back of the note and claimed that the detail in the note engraving had never been bettered in the history of the art. Nevertheless, it was not his first choice of design.

His initial designs for new notes he described in the newspaper *Smith's Weekly* of 29 December, 1923, as

a set of the most wonderful designs ever seen – triumphs of geometric white line-work, with bold lettering an inch and a half deep in relief that a blind man could read - designs which the Notes Board admired but put aside for the jam labels that the people have learned to know - King George on the right and the Commonwealth Arms on the left, and the rest of the stunts that would drive any printer with an artistic soul to despair...

The newspaper article went on to report – *Half the crimes in the world are caused by unnatural repression of instincts. How much would be forgiven an outburst consequent upon the repression of artistic impulse! But this designer puts away the work of months without a word.*

*His not to make replies,
His but to do the dies.*

Despite Harrison's obvious disappointment in the rejection of his first designs, the "Captain Cook" £1 notes were to circulate for over ten years and become known as "Harrison issues".

SERIAL NUMBERING OF THE "HARRISON" ISSUE £1 NOTES

From June 5, 1923, to August 1933, "promise to pay in gold" one-pound notes designed by the Australian Note Printer Thomas Samuel Harrison, were issued and circulated in Australia.

Australian (Treasury issue) £1 notes from 1913 to 1923 did not have a watermark. The "Harrison" design from 1923 incorporated a light basket weave or brick watermark around the outside of the note. "Commonwealth of Australia" in dark watermark, and the denomination twice in light watermark are in the centre of the note, but it is nearly impossible to see those watermarks on printed notes. The first notes issued in 1923 had a very pronounced "Commonwealth of

Australia” watermark, which was modified from April, 1924.

The first notes bore the facsimile signatures in green of Denison Miller as Chairman of Directors, Note Issue Dept., Commonwealth Bank, and Jas. R. Collins, Secretary to the Treasury.

Serial numbering commenced at H 000001 and proceeded to K 1000000 with the prefix letter being the same size as the serial numbers. The letter “I” was not used.

Notes of Miller-Collins with the imprint “T.S.HARRISON, AUSTRALIAN NOTE PRINTER” at bottom centre on the front were first issued. Later the imprint was omitted, leaving a space. From the next signature combination (Kell-Collins) onwards, the space was filled with a green pattern.

A total of 3,000,000 large prefix notes were printed, but surviving notes are scarce. Only 17 different notes with the Harrison imprint have appeared in auctions up to mid-2001. Surviving large prefix notes omitting the Harrison imprint are rare. Only four have appeared in auctions, their serial numbers being J 215667, J 446262,

J 894822 and K 568671. The best conditioned note (J 446262) in about uncirculated condition was offered in auction in July 1998 from the estate of Denison Miller, but was not sold, and was later offered for sale by a dealer in November 1998 at \$45,000.

The method of serial numbering then changed to accommodate the ever-increasing volume of production. The numbering reverted to a small H over small numeral/s prefix. Single digit numbers in the prefixes were thicker than double prefix numbers and this originally led to separate cataloguing of “thick” and “thin” prefixes. The separate “variety” status was later discontinued

in catalogues.

There are two varieties in the Miller-Collins notes – with imprint, and without. The first notes had the imprint, but a change in Notes Board policy later omitted it. Old printing plates with the imprint continued to be used until they needed to be replaced, thus creating the two varieties. Notes without the Harrison imprint were first circulated on 17 July, 1923.

The serial number range for Miller-Collins small prefix notes is recorded as H over 0, 000001 to H over 60, 965400. Notes with the Harrison imprint have been observed in auctions with prefixes ranging from H over 0 to H over 56 while notes without the imprint have ranged from H over 0 to H over 60. A further note (H over 67 838498) also appeared in the Noble Numismatic auction in November 1996, at lot 3375. If recorded correctly, then it is out of sequence. From hereon, a confusing picture emerges with regards to serial numbering.

The next signature combination was that of James Kell, Governor, Commonwealth Bank of Australia, and Jas. R. Collins, Secretary to the Treasury, and the facsimile signatures were in black. Notes with those signatures were issued from 12 April, 1926, to April, 1927.

The official serial number range was given as follows:

H over 61, 000001 to H over 69, 672000.
H over 78, 000001 to H over 78, 408700.
H over 79, 000001 to H over 79, 283000.
(Total printed 9,363,700).

However, notes bearing this signature combination have also appeared in auctions with prefixes as low as H over 59 down to

H over 49, and in two instances much lower at H over 20 (097047) in the Nicholson auction of October 1997, and H over 24 (051957) offered for sale c.1978 by a coin dealer.

From H over 49 to H over 60, there appears to be alternating prefixes between notes of Miller-Collins and Kell-Collins. All H over 49 prefix notes seen in auctions have been those of Kell-Collins with numbers ranging from 081874 to 978438 (7).

The three H over 50 prefix notes observed have been those of Miller-Collins with numbers ranging from 282258 to 630194. All five H over 51 prefix notes observed have been those of Miller-Collins with numbers ranging from 022195 to 722915.

H over 52 prefix notes revert to Kell-Collins, with the three notes observed being numbered 281785, 864620 and 941689.

The only H over 53 prefix note in auctions has been that of Miller-Collins with the number 150867, and two H over 55 prefix notes have also been of the same signature combination with the numbers 124915 and 689477. All seven notes observed with H over 56 prefixes were those of Miller-Collins, and it is presumed that H over 54 (none observed) would also be of the same signature combination.

From H over 57, 32240 to H over 59, 485622 (13), all notes observed have been those of Kell-Collins, with the two H over 60 prefix notes (087723 and 280546) observed reverting back to Miller-Collins. From H over 61, 160537 to H over 66, 733707 (36), all notes observed have been those of Kell-Collins, with a single note H over 66, 743498 being reported as that of Miller-Collins.

The prefix H over 67 has been the most

commonly auctioned prefix with a total of 45, but within those was reported 158808 as Kell-Heathershaw, and 838498 that of Miller-Collins. The remainder, 239450 to 825544, and 854994 to 877928, were notes of Kell-Collins.

From H over 68 to H over 76, 78 and 80, most notes were those of Kell-Collins, but two notes of Kell-Heathershaw have also been reported within this range, H over 69, 816187 and H over 78, 411172. These are within the official range given below.

Notes with the signature combination of James Kell, Governor, Commonwealth Bank of Australia, and J. Heathershaw, Secretary to the Treasury, were issued from 7 February, 1927 to January, 1928. Official serial numbers were:

H over 69, 672001 to H over 77, 1000000.

H over 78, 408701 to H over 78, 1000000.

H over 79, 283001 to H over 99, 1000000.

J over 0, 000001 to J over 2, 025600.

(Total printed, 31,661,900).

From this signature combination onwards, large letter/number prefixes were used, the prefix numerals being the same size as the serial numbering. A letter from the Manager, Note Printing Branch to the Note Issue Department (of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia) on 25 October, 1926, explained:

Numbering of notes - £1.

I have to inform you that the following are the last numbers printed in the old style numbering. No further numbers will be delivered in any of the series mentioned.



1. Front, Miller-Collins "Harrison" £1, small prefix, no imprint.



2. Back, Harrison £1, Captain Cook's Landing, 1770.

<i>Series.</i>	<i>Last number.</i>
£1. H/69	672000
£1. H/78	408700
£1. H/79	283000

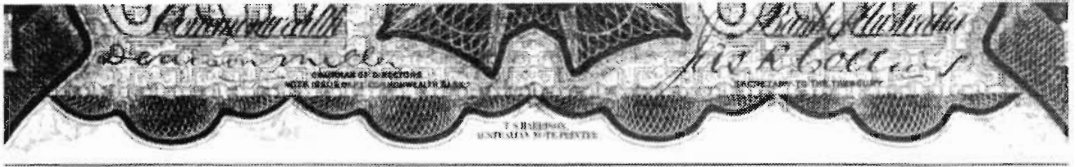
No notes were printed under series H/77.

The numbers quoted referred to Kell-Collins notes with small prefixes. Head Office preferred not to leave any serial numbers unused and it was later agreed that the three prefixes mentioned above should continue to 1000000, and they were used in the Kell-Heathershaw series.

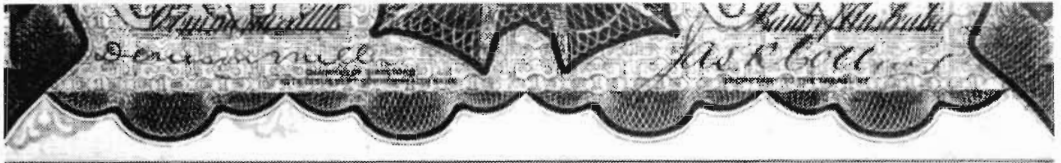
The question now arises, what of the four

Kell-Collins notes observed with prefix H over 80, (numbers 247687, 464678, 833695 and 990889). Were those numbers printed with small prefixes as with the rest of that series, or did they receive the new larger style prefixes as used on Kell-Heathershaw notes? Unfortunately, those notes in auctions were not illustrated, and only the rechecking of them will reveal whether this is so. If the H over 80 prefix Kell-Collins notes do have the larger-style prefixes, then a new variety status of that signature combination is justified.

The numbering of notes settled down to



3. Signatures, Miller-Collins with Harrison imprint.



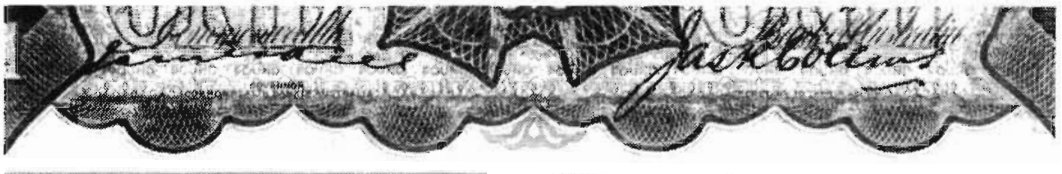
4. Signatures, Miller-Collins without imprint.



5. Serial numbers, large single-letter prefix.



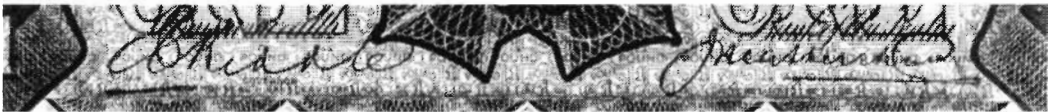
6. Serial numbers, small prefix.



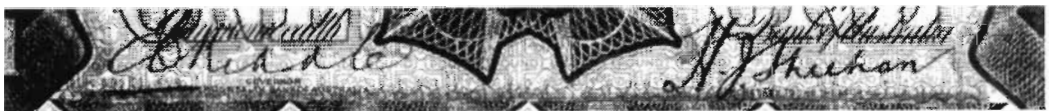
7. Signatures, Kell-Collins.



8. Front, £1 Kell-Heathershaw showing large letter over numeral/s prefix.



9. Signatures, Riddle-Heathershaw.



10. Signatures, Riddle-Sheehan. Thick signature of Sheehan.



11. Signatures, Riddle-Sheehan. Thin signature of Sheehan.

straight numerical sequence from prefix J onwards (the letter "I" having been omitted to avoid confusion with the numeral "1").

Notes with facsimile signatures of E.C. Riddle and J. Heathershaw ranged from J over 2 to K over 72, and those of E.C. Riddle and H.J. Sheehan from K over 72 to K over 98.

The "promise to pay in gold" £1 notes were replaced by the Riddle-Sheehan legal tender issues on 24 August, 1933, which commenced with the prefix L over 0.

The serial numbers of the Harrison £1 notes could therefore be recorded as follows:

Miller-Collins

Large prefixes H, J or K.

Small prefixes H over 0 to H over 48, 50, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 60, 66 and 67.

Kell-Collins

Small prefixes H over 20, 24, 49, 52, 57, 58 and 59.

H over 61, 000001 to H over 69, 672000.

H over 70, 72, 73, 74, 75 and 76.

H over 78, 000001 to H over 78, 408700.

H over 80, large prefixes?

Kell-Heathershaw

Large prefixes H over 67.

H over 69, 672001 to H over 77, 1000000.

H over 78, 408701 to H over 78, 1000000.

H over 79, 283001 to H over 99, 1000000.

J over 0, 000001 to J over 2, 025600.

Riddle-Heathershaw

J over 2, 025601 to K over 72, 897000.

Riddle-Sheehan

K over 72, 897001 to K over 98, 269000.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

The Melbourne *Argus* newspaper, 24 February, 1923, page 6. The Board of Directors of the Note Issue Board were considering the new design by The Australian Note Printer, Thomas Samuel Harrison. A reduction in size from the larger Treasury issues meant six notes could be printed on a page instead of four, thus increasing production by 50%. At that time the King's head was being considered for the centre of the note, but the position was later changed.

The Melbourne *Argus* newspaper, 4 June, 1923, page 8, announcing that the new notes bearing the facsimile signatures of Sir Denison Miller and Jas. R. Collins would commence issue on June 5. Notes continued to be printed with the facsimile signatures of Miller and Collins, despite the death of Sir Denison Miller on June 6, the day after the first release of the notes.

The Melbourne *Argus* newspaper, 15 June, 1923, page 8. Two million of the new £1 notes had been issued for circulation through the Commonwealth Bank. The issue of notes was undertaken by the Note Issue Board which was controlled by the Commonwealth Bank, but still regarded as Treasury issue because of the inscription *The Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia Promises to pay the Bearer ONE POUND in gold coin ON DEMAND at the Head Office of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia*. In practice, notes were not being cashed unless some reason regarded as satisfactory was given for the request.

The Melbourne *Argus* newspaper, 18 July, 1923, page 19, *Commonwealth Note design. Variation causes alarm. Questions in parliament.*

Kell-Collins £1 notes in auctions , serial numbers up to and including mid-2001

H over

20	097047					
24	(051957)					
49	081874	245282	706274	(722331)	818914	832479
	978438					
50MC	282258	(282260)	630194			
51MC	022195	255753	330614	568401-2	722915	
52	281785	864620	941689			
53MC	150867					
54						
55MC	124915	689477				
56MC	108014	124648	283948	371726	743494	743496
	743498					
57	322240	497194	746006	818398	860126	870012
58	562374	721443	753529	907022		
59	181292	229204	485622			
60MC	087723	(280546)				
61	160537	240126	393834	426235	446336	468039
	473022	595555	717103	737071	767782	773583
	804944	820668	847516	861407	868243	884707
	887023	902026	907484	976513	976999	992802
	993269					
62	306658					
63	080666	141536	655552	799812	974473	
64	139843	722691				
65	667017					
66	207472	733707	743498MC			
67	158808KH	239450	315619	413353	443695	458789
	468572	478509	482195	487644	489149	493517
	497194	500075	504864	511919	518282	539138
	540610	541381	571348	573138	579546	581837
	583228	598380	607995	610421	613946	635954
	658928	673818	676563	686986	688773	691763
	692673	705634	817720	824177	825544	838498MC
	854994	863575	877928			
68	858837					
69	486774	633109	672000	(816187)KH		
70	325401	363227	706085	961494		
72	476550	628732	849328	870344		
73	(011222)	205684	(438860)	792116		
74	168085	302966	401531	524216	631259	685071
	(685442)	719719	734572	743237	755333	757856
	764862	(780052)	816527	836733		
75	589598	750312				
76	090547	221890	328302	619848		
78	312751	411172KH				
80	247687	464678	833695	990889		

Numbers in brackets refer to notes observed which were not in auctions.

All numbers not in bold, are Kell-Collins £1 notes

The omission of the Harrison imprint created a misconceived fear by the public that notes without the imprint were forgeries and “creating a mild panic”. The matter was raised in parliament on July 17, and replied to by the Treasurer, Dr. Page. The Notes Board had decided the imprint was no longer necessary and all new printing plates omitted the imprint. Old plates still being used continued to print notes with the imprint until they needed replacing through wear etc.

AUCTION REFERENCES

Various auction catalogues from 1975 to mid-2001 where serial numbers are recorded i.e.

Spink & Son Ltd, London, England with Max Stern & Co., Melbourne, 1975.

Max Stern & Co., Melbourne, 1976 - 1977.

Spink & Son (Australia) Pty Ltd., 1977 - 1979.

P.J. Downie, Melbourne, 1978 - 1989.

Spink Auctions, Sydney, 1980 - 1990.

Downies Auctions, 1990 - 1993.

Australian Coin Auctions, 1994 - 2001 (Downies).

Spink Noble Numismatics, Sydney, 1991 - 1994

Noble Numismatics Pty. Ltd., 1994 - 2001.

Various coin dealers' sales lists and minor catalogues.

Australian Banknotes, 1913-1966, 2nd edition, Michael P. Vort-Ronald, self published 1982, pages 138 to 149.