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MASTER DIE TYPES OF AUSTRALIAN HALFPENNIES

by Paul M. Holland

Australian predecimal bronze coinage offers the collector a fascinating area for numismatic study. Among the more interesting features of these coins are their many variations in master die type. While Australian halfpennies are less complex than the pennies in this regard, they repay careful study and examination. The purpose of this article is to describe the die type variations observed in the halfpennies, correlate them with records on the production of master dies and other tools at the Royal Mint (London), and provide a detailed listing of the different die pairings that are observed by date. Results of research into correspondence between the Commonwealth of Australia's Official Secretary at Australia House (in London) and the Royal Mint are also presented in this article, and provide new insight on reasons for the delay in the introduction of the "Roo" halfpenny reverse until late 1939.

Understanding die type variations in Australian halfpennies begins with understanding modern methods of die production. These methods were perfected during the 19th century and allow the preparation of a very large number of identical working dies from a single master (or "matrix") die. The process begins with the preparation of a reduction punch (or "hub") from a large relief model of the design by the use of a special reducing machine which traces over the shape of the relief model and transfers the design (at the actual size to

be used on the coin) to the reduction punch with a cutting tool. In the case of small coins like the halfpenny, a two stage process involving the preparation of a "intermediate model" may be required if the original relief model is too large.

The reduction punch itself shows a positive image of the design for the coin, and once hardened is used to transfer the design to a master die (negative image). Border beading and other features can then be added to the design, a process important to the numismatist, since the number of beads added and their position relative to the design and legend provide useful markers for identifying a particular master die. Since producing a master die is a time consuming and expensive process, it is too valuable to be used for striking coins. However, once the master die has been hardened it can be used to make punches (carrying a complete copy of the design as a positive image), which in turn can be used to produce copies of the master die, including dies with specific dates and mintmarks added. These derivative master dies can then be used to make dated (and mintmarked) working punches for routine production of working dies for striking coins. This cascade of tool production, all derived from the same master die and carrying the same design, allows a nearly unlimited number of coins of identical design to be produced over many years of production.

Surviving information on the production of master dies and other tools at the Royal Mint (London) kindly

provided by Mr. G. P. Dyer¹ now makes it possible to correlate and confirm earlier analysis of halfpenny master die types which was primarily based on observations of coins in my reference collection of Australian halfpennies.² Also during the course of the present work a careful re-examination of the coins themselves was undertaken, and this now clearly shows that despite close resemblance, the reverse die used for most halfpennies minted in Bombay in 1942 is *not* identical to the die type used at Australian mints, even though it exhibits the same number and relative position of border beads. This oversight is corrected in the listings presented here.

As in my earlier article on Australian pennies,³ emphasis is on different halfpenny master die types and the die pairings used in striking these coins, although features such as the presence or absence of "dot" mintmarks are included. This approach ignores many other halfpenny varieties and die flaws catalogued during the 1960s⁴⁻⁶ which are considered to be beyond the scope of the present article. Because of the carryover of reverse designs between reigns and the smaller number of master die types used on Australian halfpennies compared to pennies, these are arranged in continuous chronological order with obverse die types designated by a number and reverse die types by a letter. Detailed descriptions of each die type and distinguishing features are presented in the text, along with a summary identification key and photographs at the end of the article. Where given, the listings provide the date on the coin, an indication of mintmark or other feature, the pairing of die types used, the mint(s), and a relative rarity rating. Here, Common (C) is used to indicate the most

common variety (or varieties) of most years; Scarce (S) to indicate less common varieties of a given year; and Rare (R) to indicate varieties estimated to occur in a few percent or less of the coins of a given year. It should be emphasized that these ratings are based on a combination of personal experience regarding the difficulty of locating specimens and literature information, and are not intended to suggest market values.

HALFPENNIES OF GEORGE V 1911-1936

Unlike the pennies,⁷ George V halfpennies are all from the same obverse and reverse master die types, excepting only the extremely rare 1916-1 mule halfpenny mistakenly struck using an obverse die for the Indian 1/4 anna. As a result, a formal listing of the die pairings for these coins has been omitted in this article, as these would all be of the obverse 1 and reverse A die type (described below). It should be pointed out that halfpennies were the only Australian coin officially struck in quantity during each year of the reign of George V.

Obverse 1 1911-1936

Portrait by Bertram MacKenna depicting George V facing left with the legend "GEORGIUS V D.G. BRITT: OMN: REX F.D. IND: IMP:". This was the standard obverse die type for all George V halfpennies, and was used at the London, Heaton, Calcutta, Melbourne and Sydney mints. There are 156 border beads.

Reverse A 1911-1939

Simple lettered reverse design by W.H.J. Blakemore, dominated by a legend which reads "COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA" with the denomination "ONE HALF PENNY" appearing inside a circle of round beads. This was the standard reverse die type for all George V halfpennies and halfpennies of George VI into 1939. There are 148 border beads, and this reverse saw use at the London, Heaton, Calcutta, Melbourne and Sydney mints.

Engraving Department records¹ from the Royal Mint (London) show that the original reverse master die for Australian halfpennies was produced in 1910 with tool date of 17 September 1910, followed by a punch of November 21st. This was used in preparing derivative master dies at the Royal Mint for both "H" mintmarked halfpennies of Heaton & Sons (Birmingham), and for "I" mintmarked halfpennies of Calcutta. These derivative master dies had the date and mintmark on them. In the case of Heaton's, derivative reverse master dies and punches were produced with the H mintmark for each of the years 1912, 1914 and 1915. For Calcutta, a derivative master die with the I mintmark was only prepared for the year 1916. This reinforces the previous consensus that missing mintmarks observed on a few of the 1916 Calcutta coins are almost certainly due to filled dies.

In the earliest years of bronze coinage at Australian mints, all working dies were directly supplied by the Royal Mint in London. However by the early 1920s, transition to the preparation of working dies at the Melbourne mint was complete. Detailed discussion of this interesting era in Australian Commonwealth coinage is

provided by John Sharples in an earlier article in this journal.⁸ It should be noted that Engraving Department records from the Royal Mint show that various derivative reverse master dies and punches for Australian halfpennies were prepared from 1921 to 1923, and again in 1930.

Unlike 1919-1920 pennies which exhibit a variety of interesting experimental dot "mintmarks", none of the George V halfpennies struck in Australia have mintmarks. This includes the halfpennies of 1919-1922 and 1926 struck at Sydney, and 1924-1936 struck at Melbourne. The relatively large reported mintage of halfpennies from Sydney during 1923 are now known to have been struck from dies dated 1922, with 1923 dated coins (which are very rare) struck only at Melbourne.⁸

PREPARATIONS FOR EDWARD VIII COINAGE IN 1936

Based on a design by T. H. Paget, master dies and other tools were prepared at the Royal Mint (London) for the anticipated Australian coinage of Edward VIII as shown in Table 1. However, with the King's abdication on Dec. 10, 1936, preparations for Australian coinage ceased, and no Edward VIII Australian patterns are known to have been struck. It is interesting to note that the King's insistence on a portrait facing left (his "good" side) went against the coinage tradition of successive monarchs facing in opposite directions, a tradition restored on the coinage of his brother George VI whose portrait faces left, the same as that of George V.

Table I. Tools for Edward VIII Australian halfpennies prepared at Royal Mint, London during 1936.

Date of Tool	Notes
2 Nov 1936	Edward VIII obverse reduction punch made from Imperial bronze intermediate model.
26 Nov 1936	Edward VIII obverse master die from reduction punch of 2 Nov 1936 with letters gone over and strengthened, and mastoid muscle on neck deepened a little.
3 Dec 1936	Edward VIII obverse punch A from master die of 26 November. Punch cracked in hardening.
4 Dec 1936	Edward VIII obverse punch B from master die of 26 November.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE KANGAROO REVERSE DESIGN

Distinctive new reverse designs were planned for Australian coinage in 1937, and these appeared on the penny, three pence, shilling, and florin of George VI coinage beginning in 1938, all preceded by various Royal Mint patterns dated 1937. The reverse design of the sixpence did not change, and the change on the halfpenny reverse only appeared in late 1939. The cause for this long delay for the design change on the halfpenny had been a mystery to me until a recent visit to the Public Records Office in London. Here, in a series of letters⁹ from the Commonwealth of Australia's Official Secretary at Australia House to the Royal Mint (London) the story of the delay is revealed as follows.

The chronology begins with a letter dated August 8, 1937 which states that "punches and dies for the shilling,

threepence and penny will be available for despatch by the 10th September"... but that regarding the other denominations, it is "not possible at the present time to give definitive dates for the completion since the plaster models have not yet been received from the artist, Mr. G. Kruger Gray." It soon became apparent, however, that new designs for the halfpenny and sixpence had been placed on hold. A letter of September 15th states that "with regard to the designs for the 6d. and 1/2d. it is understood from the artist, Mr. Kruger Gray, that prior to his return to Australia, Mr. Casey paid a visit to his studio and stated that he wished no further action to be taken for the present."

This is confirmed in 1938 in a letter dated January 20th "...advising that the designs for the new 6d. and 1/2d coins of the Commonwealth of Australia have not yet been settled, but that the matter is receiving attention". On April 13th

instructions for new designs for the halfpenny (and sixpence) were given to the Royal Mint. The halfpenny design to be “the same kangaroo as on the 1d. but with the kangaroo relatively slightly smaller and moved fractionally upwards and to the right in order to leave room for the words 'half penny' at the bottom.” The date on the new design was to be 1938, and plans were made to airmail photographs to Australia for final approval if necessary to enable “punches and master dies to be put in hand with the least possible delay.” But there were to be a further round of delays and a design change for the halfpenny, when a letter of July 4th transmitted a request from the Treasurer of the Commonwealth that the orientation of the design for the halfpenny, “be executed with the Kangaroo facing right instead of left.”

In response to this final decision on a reverse design for the Australian halfpenny, Royal Mint records (see Table

2 below) show that a reduction punch for the halfpenny kangaroo was begun on July 15th, using the electrotype for the penny design with the kangaroo “made to face reverse direction” at 1/2 relief, sized for the halfpenny. The reduction punch (marked 4.8.38) was completed August 23rd after removing the (reversed) lettering and other design elements except the kangaroo. Work on a matrix or master die for the new halfpenny reverse began the following day based on a sketch of the approved design.

The kangaroo reverse master die for the halfpenny was finally completed the 10th of January 1939, and dated 1939 with the addition of the inscription, designer initials, and border beading like that used on the Australian shilling reverse. Two punches (or hubs) were started the next day, with the first being finished on the 17th. A trial die was made on the 18th,

Table 2. Tools for George VI Australian halfpennies prepared at Royal Mint, London during 1937-1939.

Date of Tool	Notes	Type
13 April 1937	George VI obverse working punch made from Imperial halfpenny master die. Sent to Melbourne, April 1937.	Obv 2
4 Aug 1938	Reversed kangaroo reduction punch in 1/2 relief taken from penny electrotype. Sized for halfpenny with all lettering cut away.	
10 Jan 1939	Kangaroo reverse master die from reduction punch of 4 Aug 1938 with addition of inscription and beading, and dated 1939. Sent to Melbourne, Feb 1939.	Rev B
17 Jan 1939	Kangaroo reverse working punch from master die of 10 Jan. Sent to Melbourne, Feb 1939.	Rev B

and on February 7th the master die and punch were sent to Melbourne.

HALFPENNIES OF GEORGE VI 1938-1952

Because of delays in the new kangaroo reverse design, coinage of George VI halfpennies was begun using the older lettered reverse design of George V, a situation which continued into 1939 when the first "Roo" halfpennies were minted. This resulted in a scarce and important die pairing variety with the kangaroo reverse. While this is perhaps the best known die pairing variety of the Australian halfpennies, a number of other interesting varieties occur among George VI coins. These include 1942 Bombay mint halfpennies with the reverse type of 1943, and 1951 Perth mint coins (both with and without dot) which appear both with the older 1949 style obverse and the newer obverse die type of 1952.

Important master die variants appear on the halfpennies struck in Bombay during World War II. These arose from the use of two new "Bombay" reverse die types prepared at the Bombay mint. Why new master dies for the Australian halfpenny reverse should have been prepared at the Bombay mint is unknown, since standard dies and tools for both pennies and halfpennies were apparently supplied from Melbourne¹⁰ and the standard die type was used for the halfpenny obverses. However, it should be pointed out that the situation with halfpennies was not an isolated case, since the Bombay mint also prepared and used three new Australian penny die types, one obverse and two reverses, during this same period.³ Of these, the reverse dies are perhaps the most puzzling since the Bombay

halfpenny reverse of 1942 (reverse C), very closely resembles the standard Australian halfpenny reverse, including virtually identical border beading. The Bombay penny reverse of 1942 on the other hand is quite different from the standard Australian penny reverse, with much elongated border beads that can be distinguished "at a glance". By contrast, the newer 1943 Bombay halfpenny reverse D has much elongated border beading similar to that of the 1942 penny reverse, whereas the beading on the 1943 penny reverse closely resembles that of the standard Australian penny reverse. Since some rare 1942 Bombay halfpennies have the 1943 style reverse, and some scarce 1943 pennies have the earlier 1942 style reverse, it can be speculated that the Bombay halfpenny reverse was modified first, perhaps to make it more closely resemble the style of the penny, then the Bombay penny reverse design was later modified to make it more closely resemble the standard Australian issue. Unfortunately, records which might help resolve this point have proven to be elusive. The Annual Report of the Royal Mint¹¹ covering the wartime era is a shortened version covering the years 1939-1944 in a single volume with much detail omitted. In particular, the usual separate reports from the branch mints (contained in the Annual Report) which summarize production of master dies and tools by denomination are absent. A search at the Public Records Office in London did not reveal any other unpublished reports or correspondence on this subject. Whether other records exist in either India or Australia which might address questions on master die production for Australian halfpennies and pennies at the Bombay mint in 1942-1943 is an open question.

In any case, observations of the Bombay mint coins themselves can be made and these show a number of stylistic differences in the kangaroo especially about the eye, and that the kangaroo has a generally lower relief than that of comparable Australian reverses. This suggests that separate models and reduction punches were probably prepared for these new master dies at the Bombay mint. Also, the position of the "I" mintmark under the bust on the obverse of Bombay mint halfpennies (and pennies) varies indicating that mintmarks were punched onto the obverse dies individually. Such observations indicate that a least two obverse working dies were employed in striking the rare reverse D halfpennies of 1942.

From 1945, the Perth mint assumed most of the responsibility for the production of Australian halfpennies, striking more than 90% of the total. Features of these coins from Perth include the use, and occasional absence, of raised dots as mint marks. Here, a dot after the Y of "HALF PENNY." came to stand for Perth, beginning in 1942. In 1945 and 1951, coins both with and without the dot were struck at Perth, apparently due to the omission of a dot mintmark from some of the working dies. This included dies used to strike the extremely rare 1951 Perth mint proofs which are without dot.

Obverse 2 1938-1948

Obverse design by T. H. Paget depicting George VI facing left with the legend "GEORGIUS VI D:G:BR:OMN:REX F:D:IND:IMP." This obverse was used for all Australian halfpennies struck from

1938-1948, and has 147 border beads.

Reverse B 1939-1962

Reverse design by George Kruger Gray with leaping kangaroo facing right and legend "AUSTRALIA HALF PENNY". Border consists of alternating large beads and narrow line denticles, and there are 106 of each. The uprights of the letter "H" in HALF are aligned between border beads. This reverse was used for striking halfpennies at the Melbourne, Perth, Bombay, London and Heaton mints.

1938	2+A	Melbourne	C
1939	2+A	Melbourne	C
	2+B	Melbourne	S
1940	2+B	Melbourne	C
1941	2+B	Melbourne	C

Reverse C 1942

"Bombay" kangaroo reverse type very similar in design to Reverse B, including virtually identical border beading with 106 of the large border beads. However, there are minor differences in the kangaroo especially about the eye and in the overall lower relief of the kangaroo. Also, there are minor differences in the lettering of the legend, with "RA" joined at the base, and enhanced serifs on the "I" of AUSTRALIA and at the bottom of the "Y" of half penny. This reverse was used only at the Bombay mint and is marked with dots before and after ".HALF PENNY."

Reverse D 1942-1943

"Bombay" kangaroo reverse type, very similar in design to Reverse C regarding the Kangaroo, but with much elongated border beads, and with serifs on the lettering being less pronounced. The uprights of the letter "H" in HALF are now aligned with border beads, of which there are 104. This reverse was used only at the Bombay mint and is marked with dots before and after ".HALFPENNY."

1942		2+B	Melbourne	C
	Y.	2+B	Perth	C
	I	2+C	Bombay	C
	I	2+D	Bombay	R
1943		2+B	Melbourne	C
	I	2+D	Bombay	C
1944		2+D	Melbourne	C
1945	Y.	2+B	Perth	C
	no dot	2+B	Perth	C
1946	Y.	2+B	Perth	C
1947	Y.	2+B	Perth	C
1948		2+B	Melbourne	C
	Y.	2+B	Perth	C

Following the independence of India in 1947 it became necessary to delete the words "IND:IMP:" from the obverse inscription, as the title "Emperor of India" was no longer appropriate. This required

the preparation of new master dies for the coinage of George VI. Table 3 shows the progress of this work for Australian halfpennies. The relief of the first reduction punch prepared in August 1948 was apparently too great and another in 3/4 relief was prepared. This was used to produce a new obverse 3 master die, which in turn was used to prepare the punch and derivative master die sent to Australia in January 1949. The Australian halfpenny obverse 3 is virtually identical to that used on British halfpennies, having 146 border beads. This obverse was used for all Australian halfpennies of 1949-1950, and most of 1951, including the 1951 PL halfpennies struck in London and Birmingham.

Obverse 3 1949-1951

Modified George VI obverse die with a legend omitting the words "IND:IMP:", the same as that used on British halfpennies of 1949-1952. The letters "I" of FIDEI and GEORGIVS are aligned with border beads, of which there are a total of 146. This obverse was used at the Perth, London, and Heaton mints.

1949	Y.	3 + B	Perth	C
1950	Y.	3 + B	Perth	C

In March 1951, a separate new halfpenny obverse with the same inscription was prepared for the Perth mint, as shown in Table 4. This obverse 4 master die type has 149 border beads and appears on some of the Perth mint coins of 1951, including nearly all of the 1951 Perth "without dot" coins, and the extremely rare Perth mint proof halfpennies which

Table 3. Tools for George VI Australian halfpennies prepared at Royal Mint, London in 1948.

Date of Tool	Notes	Type
12 Aug 1948	George VI obverse reduction punch in normal relief with new inscription from Imperial Bronze Intermediate Model, sized for halfpenny.	
9 Sept 1948	George VI obverse reduction punch in 3/4 relief with new inscription from Imperial Bronze Intermediate Model, sized for halfpenny.	
30 Nov 1948	George VI obverse master die for Australia from punch of 9 Sept, beaded and all letters deepened.	Obv 3
6 Dec 1948	Obverse prep punch from 30 Nov master die. Sent to Australia, Jan 1949.	Obv 3
13 Dec 1948	Obverse master die from 6 Dec prep punch. Sent to Australia, Jan 1949.	Obv 3
22 Dec 1948	Obverse prep punch from 13 Dec master die.	Obv 3

occur without dot.¹² Examination shows that all four of the possible combinations, for 1951 Perth mint halfpennies occur, i.e. both obverse die types, with and without dot. Of these combinations, obverse 3 coins without dot are rarest, and obverse 4 coins with the dot are scarce. Obverse 4 also appears on all 1952 Perth mint halfpennies examined to date. These occur with the dot mintmark at the top of the A following AUSTRALIA ("A*"). This change of dot position was intended to signify the transition to working die preparation at the Perth mint¹⁰, a significant step since all working dies for Perth were previously produced at Melbourne.

The Royal Mint's annual report for 1951 shows that the Melbourne mint

produced 171 obverse and 192 reverse halfpence working dies for Perth. In the separate section for the Perth branch mint it states that "For the first time in the history of this Branch, dies were manufactured on the premises", with 24 obverse halfpenny dies made during December.¹³ These dies clearly were of the new obverse 4 type since these were the only tools available at Perth. The fact that obverse 4 is also usually observed on 1951 *without* dot halfpennies is consistent with earlier explanations that the Perth mint forgot the dot when they first started making their own dies.¹⁴ Careful examination of the date numerals on coins *with* and *without* dot shows distinguishable differences. For example, on all 1951 halfpennies examined *with*

the dot mintmark, the top of the initial and final "1" of the date extends well above the other digits, whereas on those *without* dot, the tops of the numerals are better aligned and the date appears identical to that on 1951 PL halfpennies which were derived from the same 1951 dated master die supplied to Perth by London (see Table 4). This suggests at least the possibility that 1951 dated reverse working dies *without* dot were made at Perth, possibly early in 1952, and perhaps directly from the punch supplied from London which would not have had an added mintmark dot. It is hoped that Perth mint records, which have long been in storage but may soon become available, will be able to help resolve this and other interesting numismatic issues. In any event, it seems clear that while the majority of 1951 halfpennies minted at Perth would have been produced with working dies supplied by Melbourne, some working dies made at Perth were also used.

Additional die tools were produced at the Royal Mint during 1951 in preparation for the first striking of Australian halfpennies for circulation at London and Heaton & Sons of Birmingham since 1915. These include a derivative copy of the reverse B type master die (from a spare soft punch from the master die sent to Perth) and three punches with the "PL" mintmark added. This unusual mintmark for London dates from Roman times and is believed to stand for Pecunia Londinii.¹⁵ Australian halfpennies dated 1951 bearing the PL mintmark were struck at both the London and Birmingham mints.

Obverse 4 1951-1952

New George VI obverse very similar to

Obverse 3, but with 149 border beads. It can be distinguished by the letters "1" of FIDEI and GEORGIVS which are now aligned between border beads. This obverse was used at the Perth mint for most 1951 halfpennies without the dot, some 1951 coins with the dot, and all halfpennies of 1952.

1951	Y.	3+B	Perth	C
	Y.	4+B	Perth	S
	no dot	3+B	Perth	R
	no dot	4+B	Perth	S
	PL	3+B	London & Heaton	C
1952	A*	4+B	Perth	C

HALFPENNIES OF ELIZABETH II

1953-1964

A new obverse design by Mary Gillick depicting Elizabeth II facing right was introduced in 1953, with the kangaroo reverse design continuing from George VI halfpennies. Records from the Royal mint show that separate halfpenny obverse master dies and punches were prepared for the Melbourne and Perth mints (see Table 5), as for the pennies.³ In the case of the Australian pennies, the two master dies types are readily distinguished, each having a different number of border beads.³ Since no halfpennies were produced at the Melbourne mint until 1959 by which time the obverse legend had been modified, no known usage of the Melbourne mint

Table 4. Tools for George VI Australian halfpennies prepared at Royal Mint, London in 1951.

Date of Tool	Notes	Type
21 Feb 1951	Kangaroo reverse prep punch from a spare soft punch of master die of 10 Jan 1939. Punch finished with numerals cut away to alter date to read 19--.	Rev B
13 Mar 1951	George VI Obverse master die from reduction punch, beaded and edged. Sent to Perth, April 1951	Obv 4
14 Mar 1951	Kangaroo reverse master die dated 1951 from punch of 21 Feb. Sent to Perth, April 1951.	Rev B
29 Mar 1951	George VI Obverse punch from 13 March master die. Sent to Perth, April 1951.	Obv 4
30 Mar 1951	Kangaroo reverse punch from master die of 14 March. Sent to Perth, April 1951.	Rev B
6 July 1951	Kangaroo reverse master die from spare punch from master die of March 30 dated 1951, with PL added by hand.	Rev B
16 July 1951	Kangaroo reverse prep punch "A" (PL) from master die of 6 July.	Rev B
23 July 1951	Kangaroo reverse prep punch "B" (PL) from master die of 6 July.	Rev B
14 Nov 1951	Kangaroo reverse prep punch "C" (PL) from master die of 6 July.	Rev B

halfpenny obverse die of 1953 is known, and so it is not included in the sequence of die types presented here.

In 1953, the dot mintmark for Perth was placed at the top of the A following AUSTRALIA as for 1952 halfpennies. The many variations in position and size of the dot on these coins have long been noted by Australian variety collectors.⁴⁻⁶ For 1954 halfpennies, the dot mintmark for Perth returned to its original position

after the Y of halfpenny, and the following year the dot mintmark on Perth halfpennies was omitted altogether, even on the proofs. These 1955 halfpennies were also the only Australian coins for which the "F:D:" had not yet been restored to the obverse legend.

Obverse 5 1953-1955

New obverse portrait of Elizabeth II

facing right with the legend "ELIZABETH II DEI GRATIA REGINA". There is a border of 112 round beads inside the rim. This obverse was used for coins struck from 1953-1955 at the Perth mint.

1953	A*	5+B	Perth	C
1954	Y.	5+B	Perth	C
1955	no dot	5+B	Perth	C

The omission of the customary "F:D:" for "Defender of the Faith" on the obverse legend of Australian coins of Elizabeth II was controversial, and led to the restoration of "F:D:" on Australian coins beginning in 1955. A new master die and punch for the halfpenny obverse with modified legend were not prepared until 1956 (see Table 6), with the change not implemented on halfpennies until 1959. This situation is partly due to the fact that die tools for the change in halfpennies were prepared later than for the other denominations, all of which had appeared with the new legend by 1955. It might be speculated that as the "humblest" coin, the halfpenny had a lower priority for the legend change. In any event, much of the several year delay until 1959 was caused by the fact that no Australian halfpennies were struck from 1956-1958, presumably due to a lack of demand.

Obverse 6 1955-64

Similar to obverse 5 but with legend modified to read "ELIZABETH II DEI GRATIA REGINA F:D:". The border now consists of 110 round beads inside

the rim. This is the die used for coins struck from 1959-1964 at the Melbourne and Perth mints.

In 1959, halfpennies were struck at Melbourne for the only time since the 1940s, as the dominant role of the Perth mint in Australian halfpenny production continued. To help support this role, the Royal Mint prepared additional tools for Perth during 1962 as shown in Table 7. The tools included a new kangaroo reverse master die and punch. This new reverse E type was used for the production of halfpennies at Perth in 1963 and 1964. While 1963 halfpennies exhibit variation in the size of the rim beading on their reverses with Dean⁴ listing large and small bead varieties, examination shows all to be of the reverse E type with beading differences apparently due to differences in the thickness of the rim. Whether any reverse B halfpennies of 1963 or 1964 might exist is an open question, but none were detected in the sample of more than 200 coins examined in the present study. Access to a larger sample of these dates or to detailed records of the Perth mint on die production might better resolve this point. Finally, it is perhaps ironic to note that in spite of substantial earlier delays in producing new master dies for Australian halfpennies, the halfpenny series ends with the use of a new master die type.

1959		6+B	Melbourne	C
1960	Y.	6+B	Perth	C
1961	Y.	6+B	Perth	C
1962	Y.	6+B	Perth	C

Table 5. Tools for Elizabeth II Australian halfpennies prepared at Royal Mint, London in 1953.

Date of Tool	Notes	Type
21 April 1953	Elizabeth II obverse reduction punch in 5/8 relief from Australian modified Int. Model of 19 March, sized for halfpenny.	
5 June 1953	Elizabeth II obverse master die (P) from punch of 21 April, beaded and letters deepened.	Obv 5
15 June 1953	Elizabeth II obverse master die (M) from punch of 21 April, beaded and letters deepened.	
18 June 1953	Obverse punch "A" (P) from master die (P). Sent to Australia.	Obv 5
23 June 1953	Obverse punch "A" (M) from master die (M)	
12 Aug 1953	Obverse punch "B" (P) from master die (P)	Obv 5
17 Aug 1953	Obverse punch "C" (P) from master die (P)	Obv 5

Table 6. Tools for Elizabeth II Australian halfpennies prepared at Royal Mint, London in 1956.

Date of Tool	Notes	Type
30 May 1956	Elizabeth II revised inscription master die from U.K. obverse reduction punch of 19 Nov 1953. Beaded and finished. Sent to Australia June 1956.	Obv 6
12 Jun 1956	Obverse punch "A" from master die of 30 May. Sent to Australia June 1956.	Obv 6

Reverse E 1963-1964

Very similar to Kangaroo reverse B, but with differences in the relative placement of the 106 border beads. This reverse die was only used at the Perth mint and can be distinguished by the

uprights of the letter "H" in HALF which are no longer aligned between border beads.

1963	Y.	6+E	Perth	C
1964	Y.	6+E	Perth	C

Table 7. Tools for Elizabeth II Australian halfpennies prepared at Royal Mint, London in 1962.

Date of Tool	Notes	Type
22 Oct 1962	Kangaroo reverse master die from 23 July 1951 punch "B" with beads ground off. Dated 196-, re-beaded and finished. Sent to Australia, October 1962.	Rev E
26 Oct 1962	Kangaroo reverse working punch dated 196- from master die of 26 Oct. Sent to Australia, October 1962.	Rev E
26 Oct 1962	Obverse punch "B" from 30 May 1956 master die finished. Sent to Australia, October 1962.	Obv 6

SUMMARY

Australian halfpennies offer a number of interesting variations in master die type, and observations of these have now been correlated with records on the production of master dies and other tools at the Royal Mint, London. While results show halfpennies to be less complex than pennies in this regard, they repay careful study. Among the more interesting types observed are the two different halfpenny reverse master die types prepared at the Bombay mint during World War II, the distinctive "Perth" mint obverse of 1951-1952,

and Perth mint reverse of 1963-1964. Results of research also show that the long delay in the introduction of the kangaroo halfpenny reverse was primarily due to delays in deciding on a design. For the collector, there are only a few die pairing varieties besides the well known "Roo" halfpenny of 1939. These include the rare 1942 Bombay halfpenny with long 1943 style denticles, and the four 1951 halfpenny varieties which exist with both obverse types, with and without dot. Because mintages and types of such varieties were not officially recorded, the possibility exists that other important varieties remain to be discovered.

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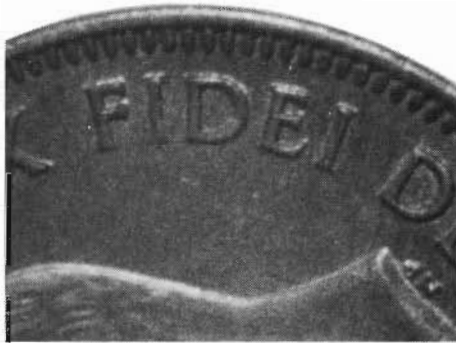
HALFPENNY DIE IDENTIFICATION KEYS- OBVERSES



Obverse 1 1911-1936
George V type



Obverse 2 1938-1948
George VI type - Legend
ends IND: IMP.



Obverse 3 1949-1951
George VI type - Legend ends DEF.
"I"s of FIDEI aligned with beads



Obverse 4 1951-1952
George VI type - Legend
ends DEF.
"I"s of FIDEI aligned with
between beads



Obverse 5 1953-1955
Elizabeth II type - Legend ends REGINA



Obverse 6 1959-1964
Elizabeth II type - Legend
ends F:D:

HALFPENNY DIE IDENTIFICATION KEYS - REVERSES



Reverse A 1911-1939
Lettered type



Reverse B 1939-1962
Kangaroo type
“H” uprights aligned between
beads



Reverse C 1942
Kangaroo type - Bombay
“RA” joined at base
“I” with enhanced serifs



Reverse D 1942-1943
Kangaroo type - Bombay
Elongated border beads
“H” uprights aligned with
beads



Reverse E 1963-1964
Kangaroo type
“H” uprights not aligned between beads