



THE DECIMAL REVOLUTION

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF DECIMAL CURRENCY IN AUSTRALIA



RESERVE BANK OF AUSTRALIA



Cover and inside front cover: Study for harmonograph representation of flight on the Sir Charles Kingsford Smith side of the \$20 banknote. NP-002552

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are respectfully advised that this exhibition booklet includes the names and images of people who are now deceased.



THE DECIMAL REVOLUTION

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In the late 1950s, under the guidance of the Decimal Currency Committee, the Australian Government began to give practical consideration to replacing the imperial system of pounds, shillings and pence with decimal currency – an innovation that had been contemplated since the beginning of the 20th century. Decimal currency would simplify calculations, increasing financial efficiency. However, it represented a radical change to the customary transactions made daily by the nation. In 1963, the government announced that it would introduce decimal currency in 1966, and established the Decimal Currency Board to oversee the conversion.

A ROYAL BEGINNING



NP-002819

Preliminary design of the Australian 10 Royals banknote, showing Captain James Cook. Giori of Milan, concept designer, with F. Masino, engraver, circa 1963.

Plans for Australia's new decimal currency developed under the Liberal-Country Party Coalition Government of Prime Minister, Robert Menzies. A public competition was held for the name of the new currency unit; it elicited suggestions including the 'Kwid', the 'Digger' and the 'Roo'. In June 1963, Menzies announced that Australia's new decimal currency would be known as the 'Royal' in order to maintain a link with England. The choice of the 'Royal' proved to be unpopular and in September 1963, the decision was reached to call the new unit the 'Dollar'.

Preliminary design of the Australian 1 Royal banknote, showing Queen Elizabeth II and the Commonwealth Coat of Arms. Note Printing Branch, Australia, concept designer, circa 1963.



NP-002806

A new series of coins and banknotes was designed as part of the introduction of decimal currency, with imagery that enhanced a sense of the country's distinctive identity. The decimal coins were designed by Stuart Devlin and minted by the Royal Australian Mint, Canberra, which opened in 1965. The Reserve Bank of Australia oversaw the design and production of the new banknotes for the \$1, \$2, \$10 and \$20 denominations.



NP-002811

Preliminary design for the back of the Australian 1 Royal banknote, showing a stylised image of a woman, boomerangs, buildings, sheaths of wheat and a wheel, circa 1963.

PLAYING WITH MONEY

OUR NEW MONEY



Bob and Jane are buying fruit at the greengrocer's shop. Bob buys 4 apples at 4 cents each and Jane buys 5 oranges for 12 cents. This comes to 28 cents.

They have a 50 cent piece which they give to the greengrocer.

He gives them these coins in change—



\$1



Bob and Jane were given a coin each to spend.

Here are some things they could buy—

- an ice cream at 5c
- a packet of sweets at 10c
- a ball at 20c

If they bought one of these articles what coins would they get in change?



One dollar will buy us—

- a pound of butter at 51 cents
- half a dozen eggs at 29 cents
- a quarter of a pound of cheese at 20 cents

15/4617

A prominent educational campaign familiarised the public with the new currency before it was introduced on Monday, 14 February 1966, known as 'C-Day' (Conversion Day). In order to increase the public's awareness of the new values of decimal currency, a number of educational strategies were employed. These included television advertisements, posters, brochures, comics, crossword puzzles and play money, which stated the relationship between decimal currency and the previous values of pounds, shillings and pence.

'Our New Money' and 'Australia's Decimal Currency' posters, produced to explain decimal currency to children, 1965. 40 000 copies of each poster were distributed to Australian schools.

DESIGN COMPETITION

'We believe that the climate of visual opinion in Australia has changed profoundly during the past few years ... to a nation which likes to think of itself as progressive and as having a point of view which is internationally recognised as both original and contemporary.'

Alistair Morrison, Chairman of the Design Committee, to AC McPherson,
Secretary of the Reserve Bank of Australia, 6 April 1964.

Four Australian designers were selected to prepare preliminary designs for the decimal currency banknotes: Gordon Andrews; Richard Beck; Max Forbes; and George Hamori. They were advised by the eminent artist, Russell Drysdale. The designers were required to include Queen Elizabeth II on the \$1 banknote, but they were free otherwise to choose historical figures and themes in consultation with the Bank.

Max Forbes' design for the \$1 banknote shows Queen Elizabeth II with Australian flora, a cockatoo and a kookaburra. His design for the \$2 banknote depicts Captain James Cook's voyage to the east coast of Australia in 1770 with examples of native fauna.



NP-004202



NP-004202



Max Forbes (Australia, 1923–90) preliminary design concepts for the \$1 and \$2 dollar banknotes, ink and wash with pencil on paper, 1964.



NP-004201



While Max Forbes' designs were commended as being 'quite beautiful' and 'romantic', the vibrancy of Gordon Andrews' banknotes was considered better suited to the new currency and, in April 1964, he was announced as the winning designer. His proposed banknotes were described as conveying 'the qualities of freshness, originality, elegance and technical competence'.

(Alistair Morrison, Chairman of the Design Committee, to AC McPherson, Secretary of the Reserve Bank of Australia, 6 April 1964.)

Max Forbes, preliminary design concepts for the \$10 and \$20 banknotes, ink and wash with pencil on paper, 1964.

Max Forbes' design for the \$10 banknote relates to the theme of flight and aviation, featuring a portrait of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith with Australian birds on the back. His design of the \$20 banknote shows the soprano Dame Nellie Melba with a lyre bird. On the back are scenes from the goldrush era, including the Eureka Stockade, Ballarat.



NP-004201

'We commend, in particular, the designs submitted by Max Forbes ... They are, without doubt, excellent and quite beautiful. They are romantic in conception and treatment; consequently they have an obvious charm. We believe, however, that this immediacy of appeal is a fault; the designs, excellent though they are, are not of the present day.'

Alistair Morrison, Chairman of the Design Committee, to AC McPherson, Secretary of the Reserve Bank of Australia, 6 April 1964.



A NEW KIND OF MONEY

'... I had envisaged a bold, colourful note. My rationale was that we are a strong vigorous nation and our currency should reflect this characteristic.'

Gordon Andrews, *A Designer's Life*, 1993.

'When an ink is formulated it is normally checked for colour and density by taking a small amount on the edge of a flat palette knife and drawing it down on to white paper with a quick stroke and slight pressure. This will indicate the colour equal to the printing ink film. The process can be misleading because the eye sees a mass of colour rather than a fine line.'

Gordon Andrews, *A Designer's Life*, 1993.

Gordon Andrews, (Australia, 1914–2001), colour samples for the \$1 banknote: light orange, rainbow orange, brown, khaki, ink on card.



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NP-002013

The new decimal currency banknotes by the designer Gordon Andrews exhibited colours and designs that were bolder and more vivid than the subdued tones of the previous banknotes. When the initial design of decimal currency was launched in 1966, architect and author Robin Boyd considered that it was 'most unusual to find a Government department in any country of the world going forward with such advanced designs', *The Age*, 11 January 1966.

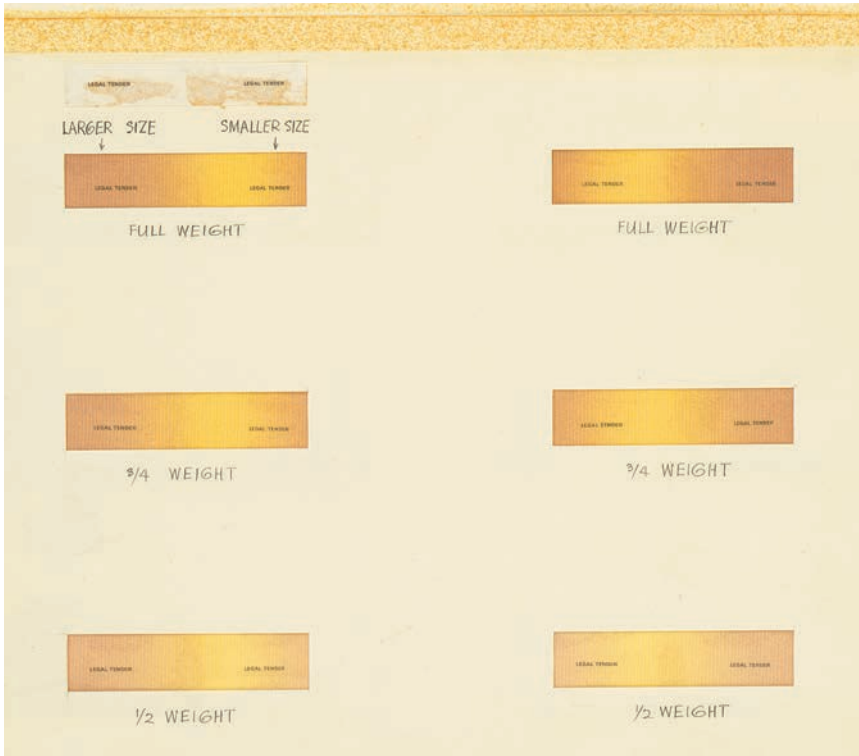


Chart of six alternative colour intensities for the background of the \$1 banknote.

'It was my intention that the notes should look strong and virile. To achieve this the portraits should be rich in tone, vigorous in line treatment with lots of strong blacks and sparkling white.'

Gordon Andrews, February 1966.

Front of the \$1 banknote showing Queen Elizabeth II, with watermark of Captain James Cook; concept design by Gordon Andrews. First issued in 1966.



NP-003835

The portraits depicted on the new decimal currency banknotes presented a broader range of national figures, industries and enterprises than the earlier banknotes, which had stressed the country's economic development. The new designs reduced this emphasis, but continued to represent the country's agricultural industries, with wool and wheat symbolised on the \$2 banknote – the 'pastoral design' as Andrews termed it.



NP-002567

Douglas Glass (New Zealand, England, 1901–78), photograph of Queen Elizabeth II, 1964. The photograph was intended to portray the Queen as regal and majestic, with rich tonal details suitable for engraving on the banknote.

Gordon Andrews' design for the \$1 banknote portrayed the Queen in the regalia of the Order of the Garter. Andrews explained the circumstances of the new photograph, which became the basis for the portrait:

'The portrait of Her Majesty was commissioned to Mr. Douglas Glass during the competition period with a careful brief from the designers concerned — indicating the position of the head — no tiara or coronet — the kind of lighting and regalia. Her Majesty graciously consented to all this. We did not want a "pretty" portrait, but one which had the dignified appearance of a monarch.'

Gordon Andrews, February, 1966



P13/8/15

Designs based on a bark painting by David Malangi Daymiringu and Aboriginal rock carvings appeared on the \$1 banknote, representing a more prominent expression of Aboriginal culture than shown on Australia's previous currency. David Malangi Daymiringu's bark painting describes the 'mortuary feast' of Gunmirringu, one of his creation ancestors.

Back of the \$1 banknote showing designs based on a bark painting by David Malangi Daymiringu and Aboriginal rock carvings to the right, with watermark of Captain James Cook; concept design by Gordon Andrews. First issued in 1966.



NP-002015

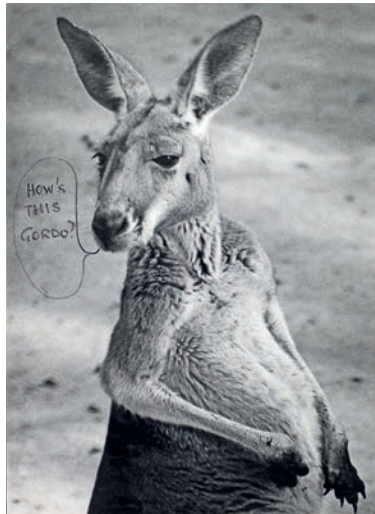
Gordon Andrews,
reproduction of ink
drawing for the design
of the \$1 banknote.



Gordon Andrews, sketch of a kangaroo for the \$1 banknote, black felt-tipped pen on tracing paper. The sketch was in preparation for the design of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, which adapted aspects of Aboriginal art – a break from previous representations of the Coat of Arms on the currency.

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David Moore (Australia, 1927–2003), photograph of a kangaroo in Taronga Park Zoo, annotated 'How's this Gordo?' David Moore's photograph was used by Andrews as part of his design process.



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PN-002895



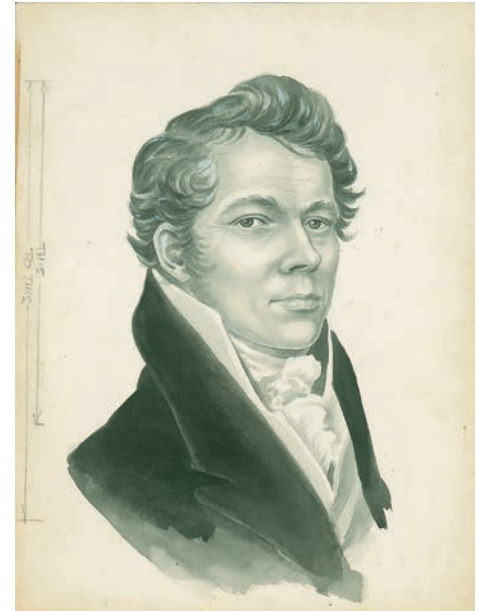
The artist Dr David Malangi Daymirringu (Manyarmgu language, Arnhem region, 1927–99) with Dr HC Coombs, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, Northern Territory, August 1967.



NP-003855

Attributed to Guy Warren (Australia, b.1921), portrait of John Macarthur as a preliminary design for the \$2 banknote, ink and wash, 1965.

One of the references for the portrait was a painting of John Macarthur held by the Dixson Galleries, State Library of New South Wales (DG 222).



NP-002827

Front of the \$2 banknote showing John Macarthur, with watermark of Captain James Cook; concept design by Gordon Andrews. First issued in 1966.

John Macarthur sailed with his wife, Elizabeth, and their infant son on the Second Fleet to New South Wales, arriving in 1790. Three years later, he established Elizabeth Farm at Parramatta, named after his wife who contributed significantly to the enterprise. In 1803 he published his *Statement of the Improvement and Progress of the Breed of Fine Woolled Sheep in New South Wales*.



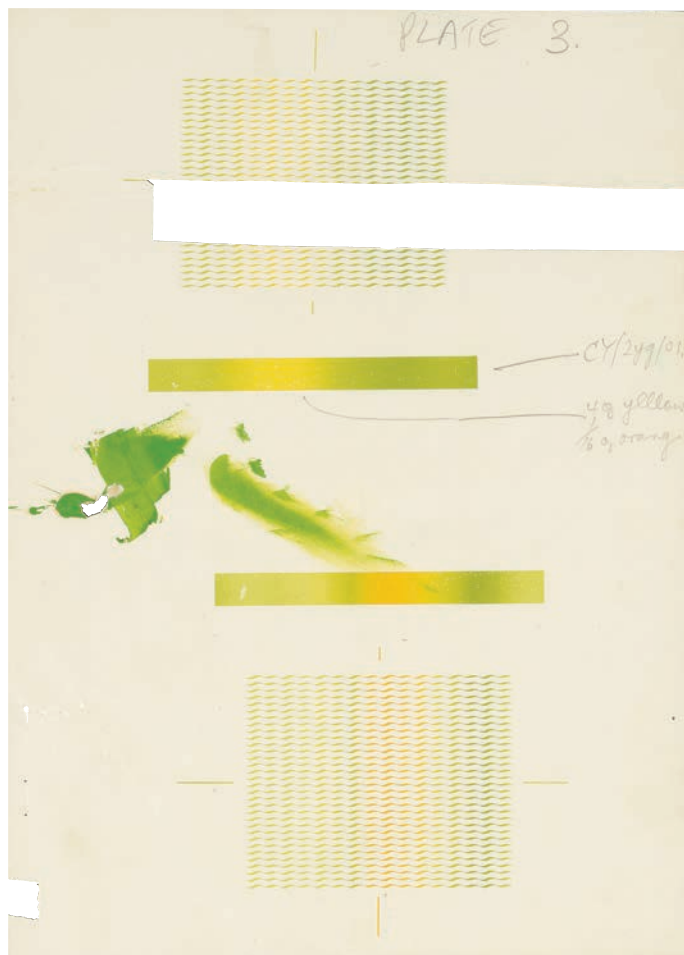
'Merino Stud Ewe at Mr A. Armstrong's St. Kilda Stud, Grenfell', from *Country Life* magazine. The photograph was one of Gordon Andrews' references for the image of the sheep on the \$2 banknote.

Gordon Andrews, stylised sketch of merino fleece for the design of the \$2 banknote, black felt-tipped pen on tracing paper.

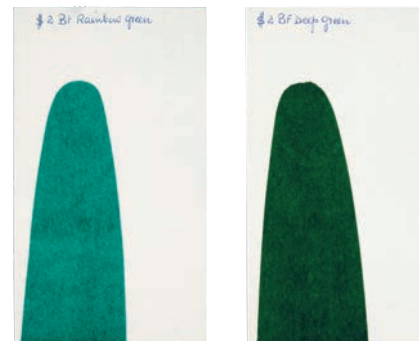


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Diverse aspects of Australian life were reflected in the designs for the \$2, \$10 and \$20 banknotes. The agricultural theme of the \$2 banknote partnered John Macarthur, a pioneer of fine wool breeding in Australia, with William Farrer, who developed species of wheat more resistant to the Australian climate. The \$10 banknote featured the architect Francis Greenway, who arrived in the colony as a convict, sentenced for forgery. The poet and short-story writer, Henry Lawson, was portrayed on the other side of the \$10 banknote. Aviation and aeronautics informed the theme of the \$20 banknote with portraits of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith and Lawrence Hargrave.



NP-002021



Gordon Andrews, colour samples for the \$2 banknote: rainbow green, deep green, rainbow yellow, light green, ink on card.

William Farrer immigrated to Australia in 1870 in the hope that the climate might improve the condition of his tuberculosis. He settled in the central tablelands of New South Wales, where he focussed on breeding wheat that was more resistant to disease and dryness. A sheath of his best known variety, 'Federation', was included in the representations of wheat on the banknote.

Sample colours for \$2 banknote.



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NP-002027



NP-003855

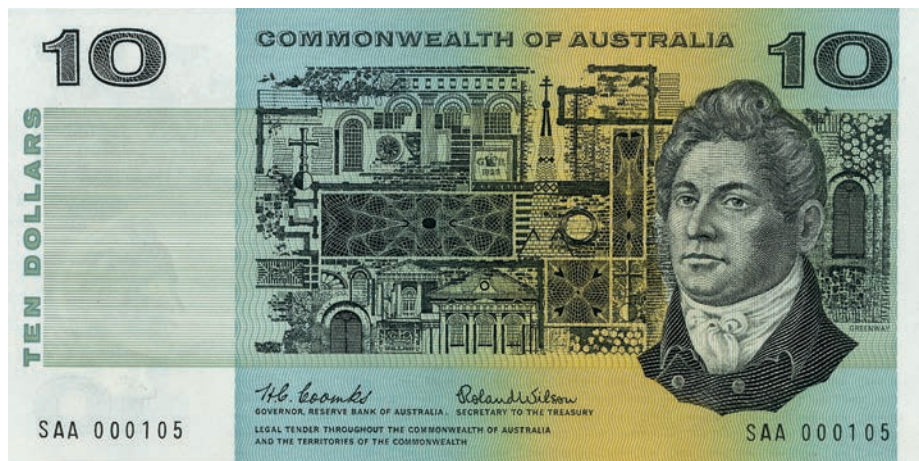
Gordon Andrews, ink keyline drawing of the wheat design used on William Farrer side of the \$2 banknote.



Back of the \$2 banknote showing William Farrer, with watermark of Captain James Cook; concept design by Gordon Andrews. First issued in 1966.

Francis Greenway's arrival in the colony coincided fortuitously with the ambitious building program of Governor Lachlan and Mrs Elizabeth Macquarie, and he was appointed Acting Civil Architect by Macquarie in 1816. In quick succession, the architect designed barracks, churches, fortifications, hospitals and houses, together with a fountain, lighthouse and obelisk, transforming the colony.

Front of the \$10 banknote showing Francis Greenway, with watermark of Captain James Cook; concept design by Gordon Andrews. First issued in 1966.

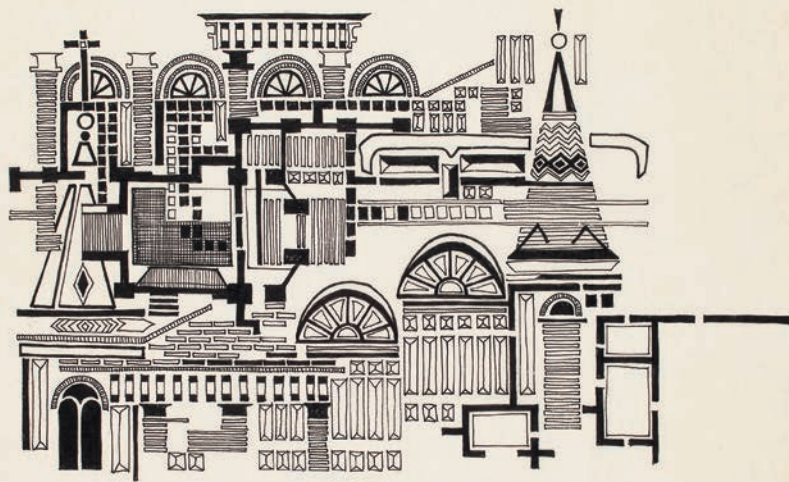


NP-006808



NP-003912

Gordon Andrews checks a transparency of the layout for the \$10 banknote, 1965.



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Gordon Andrews, composite sketch of Francis Greenway's architecture, including St James' Church, Sydney, for the \$10 banknote, black felt-tipped pen on tracing paper. David Moore's photographs of the architecture were used by Andrews in designing the banknote.

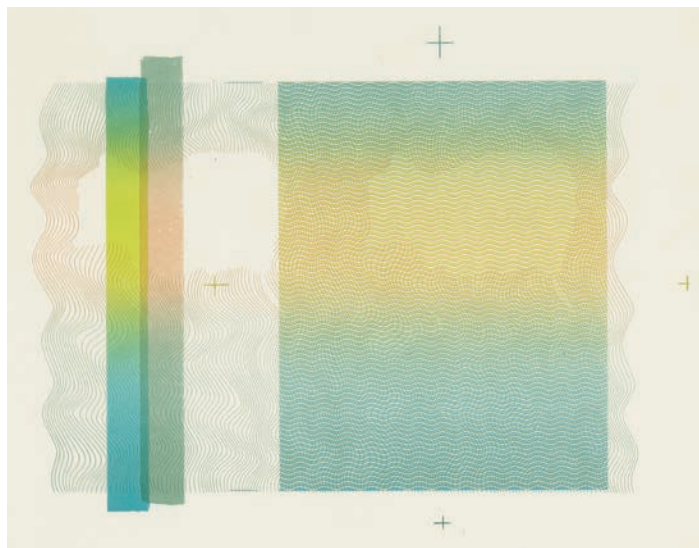
Andrews' design contrasts the Georgian architecture of Francis Greenway with the vernacular buildings of the goldfields shown on the other side of the banknote.

Gordon Andrews, drawing of the number 10 for the \$10 banknote, black felt-tipped pen on tracing paper.



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Samples of colours used on the Henry Lawson side of the \$10 banknote.



NP-002037

Gordon Andrews, colour samples for the \$10 banknote: blue, blue, green, green, ink on card.



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Back of the \$10 banknote showing Henry Lawson, with watermark of Captain James Cook; concept design by Gordon Andrews. First issued in 1966.

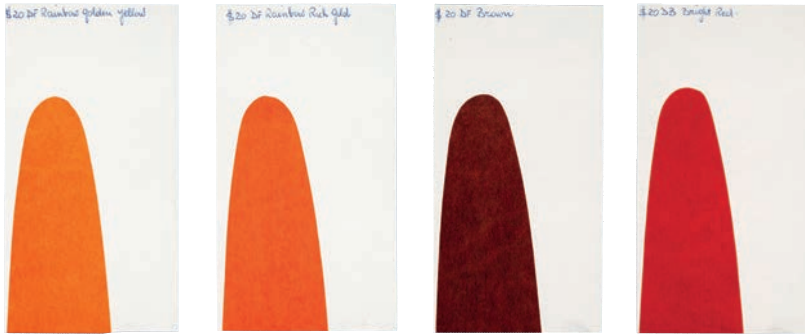


NP-002040

Scenes of Henry Lawson's childhood years in gold towns like Gulgong were selected for the banknote's background. The images were adapted from the Holtermann Collection, an extensive photographic archive held by the State Library of New South Wales. Lawson's writing often reflected his childhood experiences of the Australian outback, capturing a sense of the national character in its laconic dialogue.



Alfred Cook (New Zealand, Australia, 1907–70) study of Henry Lawson for the \$10 banknote, ink and wash, 1965.



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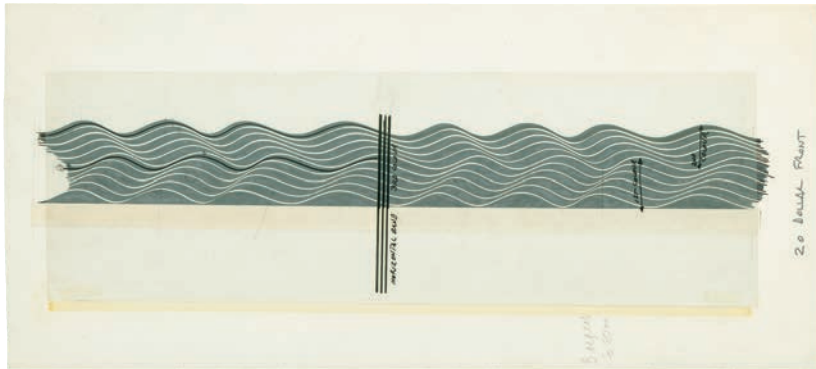
**Gordon Andrews, colour samples
for the \$20 banknote: rainbow
golden yellow, rainbow rich gold,
brown, bright red, ink on card.**

Australia's contribution to aviation was depicted on the \$20 banknote with the pioneering work of Lawrence Hargrave, together with Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, who demonstrated the potential of aviation through a number of epic flights. Like decimal currency itself, aviation reflected the spirit of Australian innovation.

**Front of the \$20 banknote
showing Sir Charles
Kingsford Smith, with
watermark of Captain
James Cook; concept
design by Gordon Andrews.
First issued in 1966.**



NP-003931



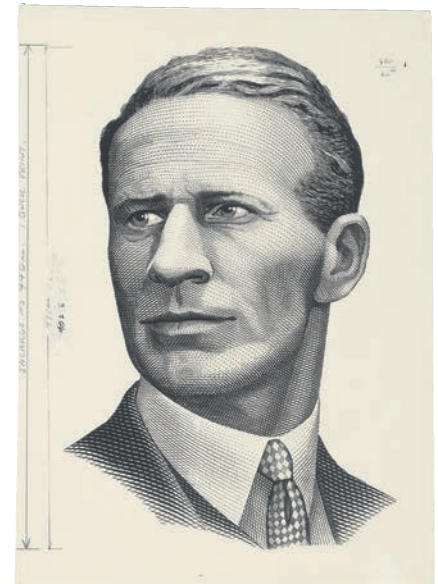
NP-002048

Preliminary design of background lines for \$20 banknote.

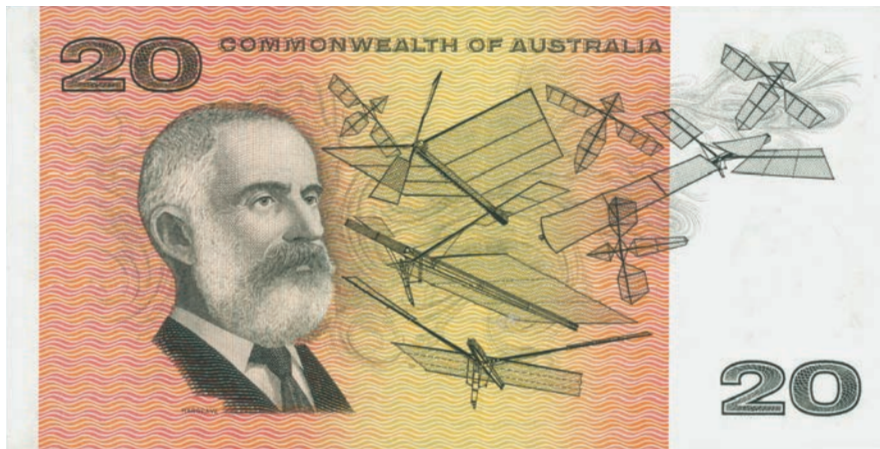
In 1927 Charles Kingsford Smith partnered with co-pilot Charles Ulm to complete a flight of 12 000 kilometres around Australia in little more than 10 days, breaking the previous record of 20 days. The next year he achieved the first flight across the Pacific Ocean from California to Australia in a three-engine Fokker, the *Southern Cross*.

Keyline drawing of the portrait of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith. The portraits for the banknotes were prepared originally by the artist Guy Warren, with the exception of Henry Lawson. This was rendered by Alfred Cook, who also assisted in the portrait of John Macarthur.

The security features of the first decimal currency banknotes included a watermark of Captain James Cook's profile, an internal metallic thread through the centre of the banknotes, and complex lines that were difficult for counterfeiters to replicate. If the counterfeiter's camera was exposed for the thick lines, the fine lines disappeared; if exposed for the thin ones, the thick lines flared and closed over the thin.



NP-002052

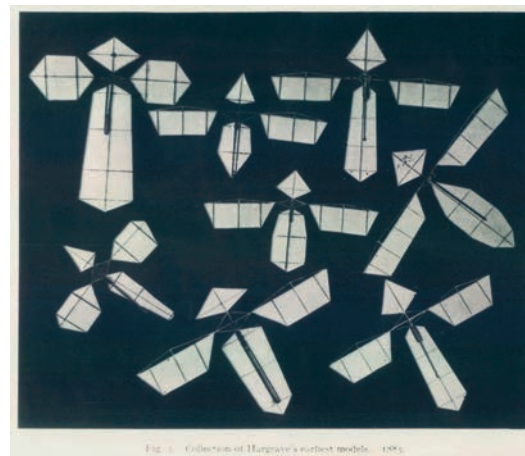


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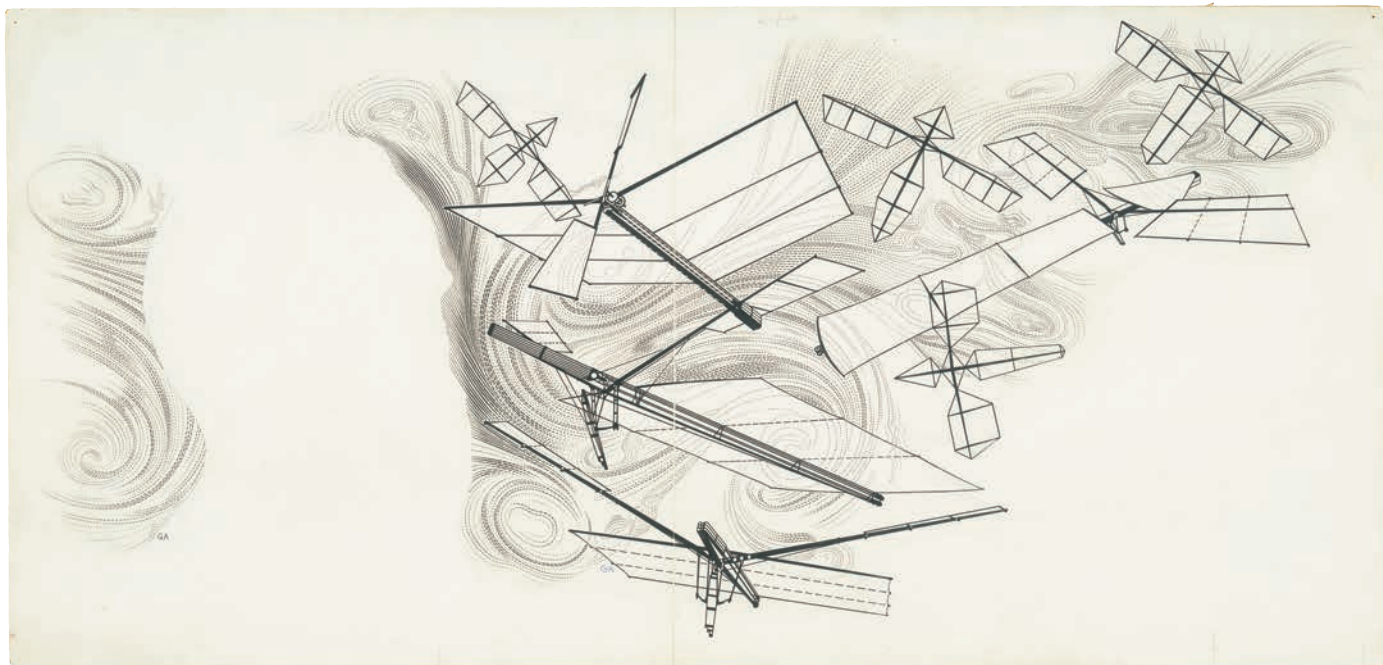
Back of the \$20 banknote showing Lawrence Hargrave, with watermark of Captain James Cook; concept design by Gordon Andrews. First issued in 1966.

Lawrence Hargrave's experiments with the rotary engine and the box kite took place mainly at Stanwell Park, south of Sydney, known for its favourable wind conditions. In November 1894, he succeeded in lifting himself 16 feet above the ground with his four-kite construction.

'Collection of Hargrave's earliest models, 1885', a reference image used by Gordon Andrews for the background of the Lawrence Hargrave side of the \$20 banknote.



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**Gordon Andrews, study for the background of
the Lawrence Hargrave side of the \$20 banknote.**

DOLLAR BILL

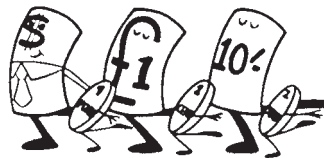


In come the dollars and in come the cents
To replace the pounds and the shillings and the pence
Be prepared folks when the coins begin to mix
On the 14th of February 1966

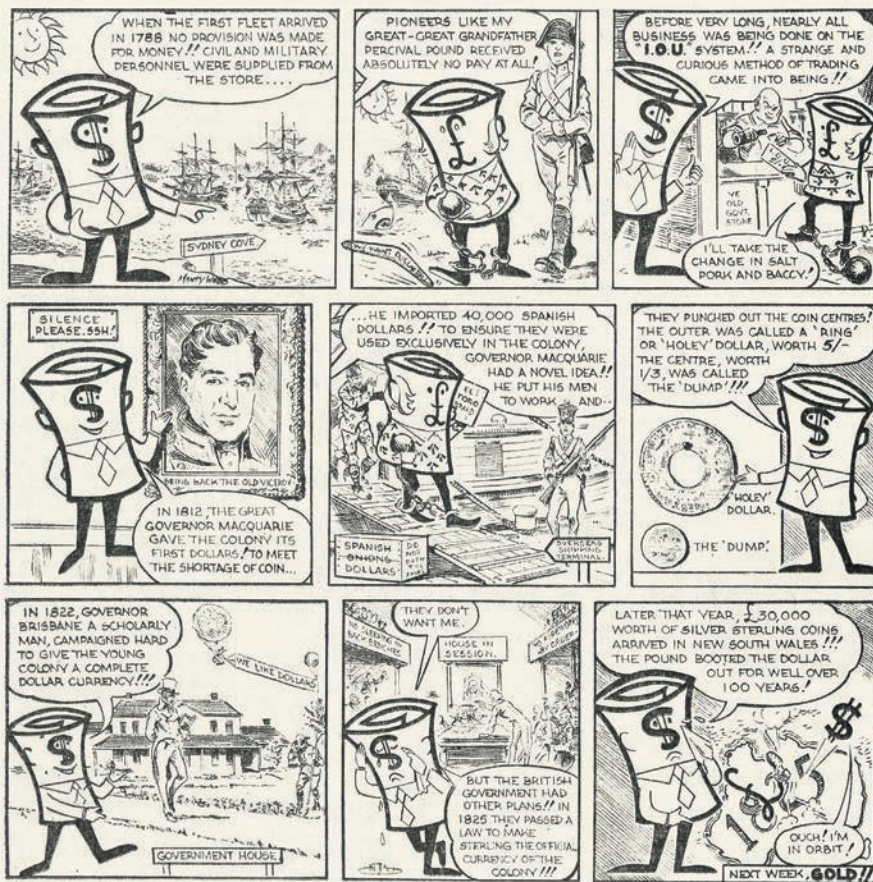
Clink go the cents folks, clink, clink, clink
Changeover day is closer than you think
Learn the value of the coins and the way that they appear
And things will be much smoother when the decimal point is here

In come the dollars and in come the cents
To replace the pounds and the shillings and the pence
Be prepared folks when the coins begin to mix
On the 14th of February 1966.

Central to the publicity campaign was a television commercial featuring the animated character 'Dollar Bill', created by Monty Wedd and drawn by animator Laurie Sharpe. Dollar Bill became known for his infectious jingle, sung to the tune of the Australian folksong 'Click Go the Shears' with new lyrics by Ted Roberts. The commercial featured the voices of actors Kevin Golsby as Dollar Bill and Ross Higgins as Pound Note.



DOLLAR BILL —



Monty Wedd (Australia, 1921–2012), comic featuring the character of Dollar Bill, *The Canberra Times*, 15 February 1965. In this first instalment of the comic strip, Dollar Bill explained that he was descended from a convict, his great-great grandfather Percival Pound.

Curator: John Murphy
Booklet designer: John Fear
Exhibition designers: Freeman Ryan Design

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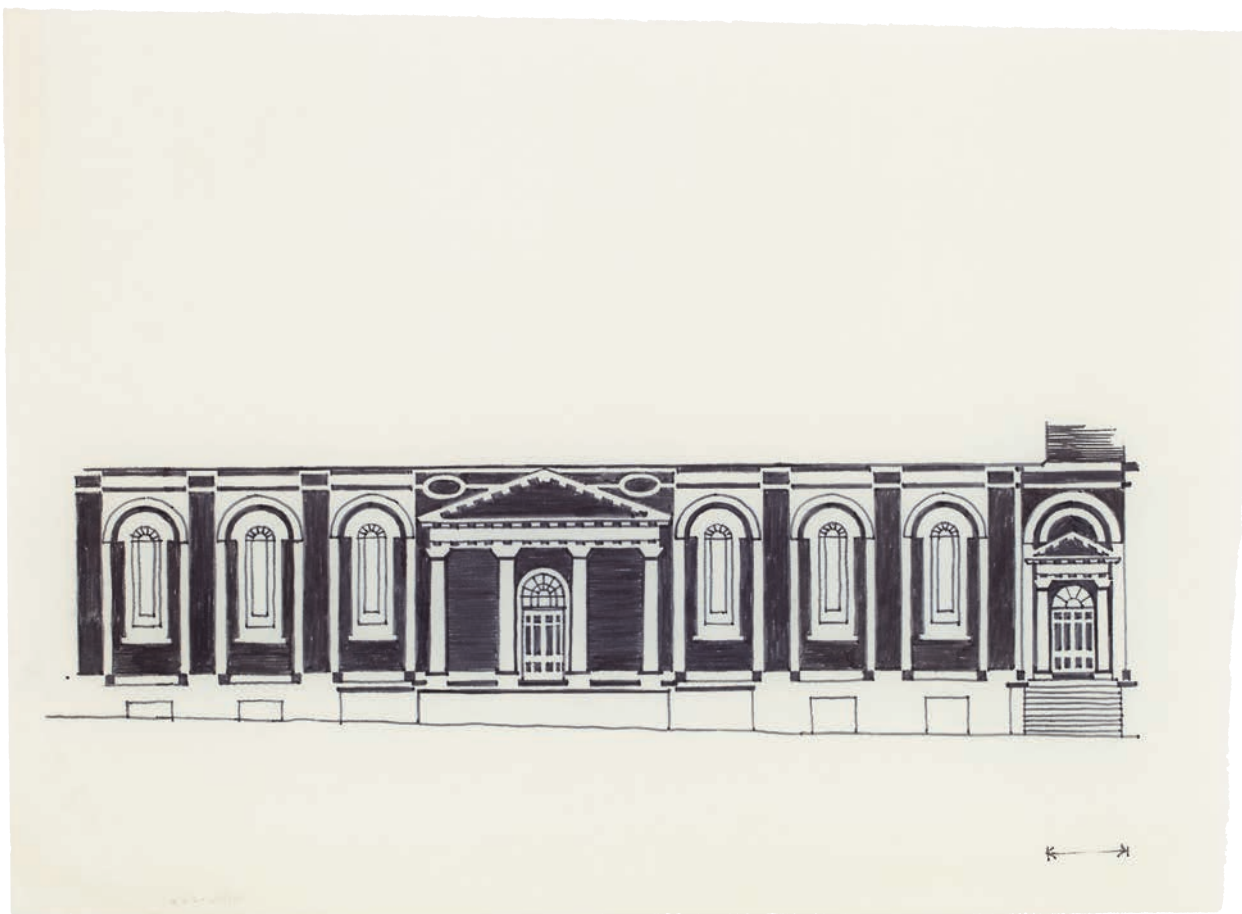
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For further information on the anniversary of decimal currency, visit the Reserve Bank's website at www.museum.rba.gov.au/exhibitions/decimal-currency.

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**Gordon Andrews, sketch of Francis Greenway's St James' Church, Sydney,
black felt-tipped pen on tracing paper.**