

## Synopsis: The Kookaburra Stamps of Australia 1914-1960

### Summary

This traditional exhibit features the different stamp issues of the Australian Kookaburra, and their uses. The first 6d Kookaburra was intaglio printed, issued in 1914. One 6d Kookaburra issue replaced the previous issue. The last 6d Kookaburra printing was in June 1960. The 6d Kookaburra was finally replaced by the 6d Numbat (or Banded Anteater) on 30-Sep-1960. As a result, this exhibit encompasses a long period of time; much happened during this timeframe, including two world wars and the advent of airmail.

The only exception was the issuance of a 3d Kookaburra in Oct-1928 to Commemorate the 1<sup>st</sup> International Philatelic Exhibition in Melbourne, which was a re-engraving of the 1914 6d Kookaburra to a value of 3d, which paid 3d registration or the 3d Australian airmail fee before airmail stamps were first issued.

### Discussion

By default, the usage in this exhibit gives a broad overview/summary of airmail development within Australia and to the rest of the world. Airmail was critical to mail delivery in Australia, and Australia was an early adapter. Australia is about the size of the USA and in 1930 Australia had a population of only 6.45 million people, with well over 90% living in the eight capital cities. Thus, expediting mail delivery between these cities was a priority because railroads did not connect all capitals together; some capital cities used ship mail. The "puddle jumping" of early airmail flights also connected country towns. The 3d Kookaburra issued in 1928 was the official airmail stamp for seven months until the first airmail stamp was issued in 1929.

Mail to and from the United Kingdom took generally at least six weeks by ship, and it was a joint priority between the two countries to develop continuous airmail service, which was finally implemented in 1934. The first official non-parcel use of the 6d Kookaburra was to pay the airmail rate from Karachi, India (now Pakistan) to London in 1932.

Kookaburra usage also documents changing ordinary postal rates. For instance, registration changed from 3d to 6d in 1949, and double letter rates changed from 2d per 1oz in 1914 to 6d per 2oz in 1950.

Australia, especially in the late 1920s and early 1930s, seemed to make a point of using specific stamps for the specific uses they were issued (a very Australian thing to do). For instance, a 1930 registered airmail letter sent within Australia would commonly have three stamps: a 3d Airmail stamp, a 3d Kookaburra for registration, and a 1½d stamp for the surface rate. Each stamp is a different color, which makes for attractive covers. These triple color covers are not purposely "philatelic" but were standard practice in this timeframe (Author's opinion/research).

The timeframe from 1927 into the 1930s were the heyday of Australian Commemorative stamps. One design was issued every year, except 1933. Except for the 1928 Kookaburra, the themes were of the States/Territories, Explorers/Notable names, Military, and Royalty. An effort was made to use Commemorative stamps in this exhibit whenever possible to give more variety to the exhibit. Use of most one shilling Commemorative stamps are quite scarce; the one shilling Lyrebird was the common use stamp.

There are many shades of 1942-1952 Kookaburras, and it is impossible to determine the printing without having imprint blocks because they all have the same watermark paper and perforations. The 1949 issue illustrates six shades of brown (Author's research). More shades exist, but I cannot yet tie to specific a printing via an imprint block. Stanley Gibbons lists two shades. Brusden-White lists five.

### Items of note within the exhibit

- Plate numbers of all four 1914 plates, the 1937 plate number 2, and 1949 plate number 7. Only a couple known of the later two as they were normally guillotined.
- Usage of the 1914 6d Kookaburra on cover 2 months after issuance.
- A clean, full sheet of the 1928 3d Commemorative stamp from the Melbourne International Exposition of 1928.
- 1949 guillotine and printing errors, including a corner block of four with the "top hat" flaw.

- WW2 wartime mail to Europe, especially 1944-45; Overseas Forces mail; POW airmail.
- Some attractive parcel label usages.
- Kookaburra used as a postage due fee.
- Usage of the 1947 B.C.O.F 6d Kookaburra on cover.

### Rarity

I consider rare as 5 or less known. If an item is rare, I list the number of items known. There are some items highlighted in red (generally scarce) just to help illustrate the more interesting exhibit items in my opinion.

Parcel Post labels/tags are difficult to find, and collecting all parcel rates on label is likely impossible, let alone with Kookaburra usage. Even though the 1914 Kookaburra was issued for Stage 1 parcel post, I have not seen one. I am told they exist, but I have not talked to one British Commonwealth/Australian auction house or dealer that has *actually seen* one used on parcel! Besides, *any* usage of the 1914 6d Kookaburra on cover is very scarce and maybe 10-20 exist.

### Key References:

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(Book 4 of 5 is being printed June 2024)

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