

Mob Rule

The quest for complexity in collecting has no limits. There is so much more that could be untangled with Guatemalan Quetzals - layer by layer by layer - that, despite two articles, I feel I have barely scratched the surface. But on this occasion it is time to set them to one side, hopefully temporarily, and focus attention on a very different bird, in a very different part of the world and, crucially, with an even more challenging series of stamps.

The Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*) is a flightless bird and after the Ostrich, is the second largest of this type in height. It is endemic to Australia, and, according to my ancient but dependable Slater/Rigby field guide (Volume One), widespread on the mainland in non-urban areas such as open grassland and shrub land, but no longer found in Tasmania. They have a large range, can sprint at quite a rate with their three-toed feet and, rather like camels, drink infrequently but take in large quantities when they do. The current population is thought to exceed 700,000. Perhaps no surprises then, that, despite being “exterminated” in cities and towns, it is the national bird and forms an integral part of the country’s coat-of-arms.

I confess that I had to look it up, but did you know that the collective noun for these birds is a mob? Given the recent challenges, sleepless nights and general mental battering they have engendered when trying to make sense of them on a particular issue, the term feels completely appropriate. They gave me quite a battering



Fig. 1 - The Mobsters

So, a health warning. This is a long article, and I make no apology as there is an awful lot to cover. Oh, and by the way, despite their seemingly unchanging appearance they are immensely complicated stamps.

We are in the new Commonwealth of Australia. Their first issue was Kangaroos with a map of the country. You must have seen them around and they are highly sought after. Some can command very high prices too! They are usually referred to as “Roos.” But just prior to WW1, Australia as a “Dominion,” then went for something rather more traditional with the head of George V.

At first glance, they don’t look particularly complicated. A pretty standard and perhaps not very exciting design, with the King as the central feature but with the word “Australia” used for the first time. In fact, they don’t automatically strike you as a bird stamp at all. The design incorporates elements of the arms of the new country. There is some botanical ornamentation with Wattles in the corners at the top and then, perhaps inevitably, a Kangaroo at the bottom on the left, but paired with the Emu on the right. All in single colours. If you check out the arms of Australia you find them in the same supporting roles.

So it's all quite neat and certainly not unattractive, but perhaps unoriginal and arguably kind of average for stamps issued during the KGV period? I'll leave you to decide.



Fig. 2 – The 1d Red

Australians sometimes call these stamps “George’s” or “sidefaces.” Indeed, all the issues between 1914 and 1937 are normally referred to as the Sideface Series. The very first one was issued in late 1913, but then again in early 1914. In fact, at virtually the same time as the first reddish maroon 6d Kookaburra stamp. The original issue was a 1d red, recess engraved by Harrisons, but the follow-up was another 1d, this time with a pale rose-red.

If you look at any simplified catalogues - Stanley Gibbons, Australia’s Seven Seas or even Scharning’s normally excellent listing - they will give you a basic set of about 22 stamps. That is, 19 different issues, plus two overprinted surcharges. And in a sense this is not incorrect as they take into account the number of values and the range of colours in which they can be found. Table 1 below is an attempt to crudely summarise this elementary distribution, although I caution, the colours are far more complicated than this as I will explain later.

Table: 1 – Simplified Distribution of Basic Values and Colours

Values	Green	Orange	Red	Brown	Violet	Blue	Black#	Olive	Tot.
0,5d									2
1d									3
1,5d									4
2d									3
2/1,5d									1
3d									1
4d									4
4,5d									1
5d									1
5/4,5d									1
1s 4d									1
Total	3	3	4	3	5	2	1	1	22

classified as a brown by SG, but in reality predominantly black

Just nine values, plus two surcharges, nearly all at the lower end, spread across eight basic colours, but with duplication across those attributes. Add them all up and yes, you seemingly have just twenty two to collect. Simple. Nice and easy. No fuss. Job done. Let’s move on to Kookaburra’s?

And that is what I naively thought as I started to collect them. Tick, tick, tick. Got this one. Need that one. Tick. Most used, some mint, some not in the best condition. Tick. But I was completely, absolutely, totally, 100% wrong. These early issues with their flightless bird and old king profile are much more complicated and challenging than they seem at first sight. In fact, to be honest, they are an absolute nightmare.

Dare I say it, but we are probably approaching an avian Machin territory here. Indeed, there are some philatelists who collect only these stamps, obsessed by their seemingly endless

variations and complexities. The following is a frankly lamentable attempt to try and describe them and hopefully give a framework for collecting.

For a start, as I began to research their background I soon become confused. A better word might be perplexed. I like to start by having a handle on the number to collect - who doesn't - but trying to arrive at that number with these issues started to prove challenging. I quickly began to realise that twenty two in a grossly inadequate number and that there were far more Emu's than I had thought. Going to other sources, the Free Catalogue using Scott lists 53 issues, but one Australian dealer citing the Seven Seas Catalogue says there are 72, while Michael Dodd's Australian Online Stamp Catalogue details 79. Stanley Gibbons specialised Commonwealth & British Empire hedges its bets but arrives at a basic set of at least 61 but probably a little more. Probably. Oh, dear!

At this point I desperately needed help and our encyclopaedic Membership Secretary suggested that I contact another member of the Society who collected these issues, was very familiar with them and ought to be able to advise. And it was excellent advice. I went to Graham U'ren who, I discovered, had an interest in flightless birds and had been collecting sidefaces for some time. He even lives in Scotland as well.

Graham doesn't like the description "master," and would argue that he is on a continuous learning experience with these issues as well, but without his large knowledge of these stamps I don't believe I would have got very far. Graham knows his stuff, I am just a bumbling apprentice. I follow in his footsteps.

Graham gave me a huge amount of useful general advice that confirmed their complexity but stimulated further interest. But crucially, he also directed me to what is almost certainly the most authoritative publication on these issues - the Australian publisher Brusden-White, usually abbreviated to just "BW." They publish the Australian Commonwealth Specialist Catalogue, arguably the definitive catalogue for all Australian issues. Several chunky volumes and extremely expensive. But for Australia, they are the bizz. The definitive volume for these issues is the King George V specialist Catalogue. They revise/update every ten years or so and the latest (5th) edition is 2018. Over 500 pages and 250mm thick and packed, literally crammed, with everything you need to know about sidefaces. I had to mortgage the house to buy it.

When you start to examine these issues using Brusden-White, you quickly appreciate that it takes a completely different approach to Stanley Gibbons. The SG specialised (C&BE) catalogue starts with the 1d red issued on 9th December 1913 (SG17) and then progresses in a series of date blocks - each in value order - through the King's reign up to the 1.5d red-brown (SG126) in October 1936. If you count these issues and ignore colour, watermark and all sorts of other variations - there are lots - you'll arrive at a basic set of 61 - or could it be 64 - but still with quite a good deal of complex but useful detail along the way. Dealers love it.

Brusden-White doesn't work like this at all. It begins in the same place with the 1d reds of 1913-14, all printed by Harrisons (the BW59's, and note the plural) but then departs from dates and proceeds to describe in considerable detail issues by value. It's a long journey and it will give you a basic set of 70 issues, but by the time you have trawled through the pages you'll realise that that is a very understated figure. You will also be mind-boggled by the detail as well.

Let's attempt what seems a contradiction and try to keep things relatively straightforward whilst giving you a dose of just how immensely complicated these stamps are. Indeed, I

believe that despite their simple design, they are so complex that only an overview is realistic here.

Take the first issues of 1913/14, BW59. It comes in Pale red (59A), Rose-red (59B), Carmine-red (59C) and Bright Scarlet (59D). Now you know why I emphasised the plural. Colour variations always receive a capital letter suffix in Brusden-White. The issue also appears in at least 8 imperforate versions from a number of different plates; two double perforations from four different plates; six cancelled-to-order versions and then a couple of inking varieties. There are four different plates and each has its flaws and idiosyncrasies. They are all covered in eight pages of detail.

After this foray, the catalogue then settles into a pattern of describing each value and their different incarnations. Onto the various halfpenny's issued from February 1915. It starts with the first of the various halfpenny greens (BW63) - no less than eight different colour variations and three of those with different shades; four cancelled-to-order varieties and several printing, paper or watermark variations. And then across a further six pages detailed descriptions of all the flaws and variations in the electros/plates. More on that later.

And so it goes on, through to the last halfpenny orange (BW69) printed in late 1931 and again in May 1937; three colour variations, a couple of other varieties, and then for good measure, an overprinted official service (BW69(OS)) with two colour variations of its own and not to mention a host of plate flaws. The halfpenny appears in just two standard colours, covers the full reign (and a little beyond) but there are seven basic versions to collect plus the "OS" overprint.

All this is detailed value by value, issue by issue from the halfpennies through the other values to the one shilling and four pence. Table. 2 below is intended to give a sense of the scale of the detail:-

Table. 2 - Range of KGV Issues

Values	No. Issues	Colours (Generalised)	BW Nos.
0.5d	7	Green, Orange	63-69
1d	14	Red, violet, green	59, 70-82
1.5d	12	Black-brown, brown, green, red, red-brown	83-94
2d	8	Orange, red, red-brown	95-100, 102-3
2/1.5d	1	Red	101
3d	6	Violet-blue, blue	104-109
4d	8	Orange, violet, blue, olive, green-olive	110-117
4.5d	4	Violet	118-121
5d	5	Brown, orange-brown	122-124, 126-7
5/4.5d	1	Violet	125
1s4d	4	Turquoise	128-131
TOTAL:	70		

It is possible to compare the Brusden-White issues and match them, up to a point, with those identified and listed by Stanley Gibbons. Up to a point. I hedged my bets on the exact SG numbers because analysis will show that some firm BW issues are subsidiary numbers for the Gibbons catalogue. There are three of these, perhaps four, but at least five BW issues have no SG match at all. I feel sure dealers will hate that.

All this is just a teeny-weeny flavour. Believe me - and I feel certain Graham U'ren will agree with me - you can become quite obsessed with these issues. And I haven't even mentioned the Perfins and others yet! More on those later.

Printings, Perforations, Watermarks and Colours

Let's step back and try to put some framework to collecting these stamps. We have mentioned the values and colours, but you can already see from the dip into Brusden-White that the variations can extend that number considerably.



Fig. 3 - Recess (left) and Litho (right) printings

Between 1913 and 1937 there are thirteen recognised general issuing periods but with four different printers employed. They began with T.S. Harrison for the recess-engraved outing, but the main letterpress issues began with J.B. Cooke in July 1914 and then passed back to Harrison's in 1918, went through a very brief period with A.J. Mullett, and then finally ended with J. Ash. John Ash by the way, was born in Scotland. I thought I would mention it. Table. 3 below gives an outline chronology.

Table: 3 - Chronology of Printings & Printers 1913-36

Issue	Dates	Printers
Recess	Late 1913	T.S. Harrison
1 st	1914-15	J.B. Cooke
2 nd	1918	J.B. Cooke
3 rd	1918-19	T.S. Harrison
4 th	1918-19	Cooke/Harrison
5 th	1920-21	T.S. Harrison
6 th	1922-23	T.S. Harrison
7 th	1924/May	T.S. Harrison
8 th	1924/May	T.S. Harrison
9 th	1924/August	T.S. Harrison
10 th	1926-28	A.J. Mullett/J. Ash
11 th	1930	J. Ash
12 th	1930	J. Ash
13 th	1931-36	J. Ash

If you are lucky enough to find marginal issues or blocks watch out for the printer markings or monograms. What looks like an encircled "A" or "B" for Cooke; the names T.S. HARRISON. "COMMONWEALTH STAMP PRINTERS," or for the others, A.J. MULLETT or JOHN ASH with "AUSTRALIAN NOTE AND STAMP PRINTER," in the corners. They are collectable.

This swapping and changing of printers with its inevitable impact on plate production, plus changes in postal rates and colours for all sorts of reasons has led to the huge range of variations that can be found. For example, take those halfpenny issues again. It is found in two colours. The first green issue (BW63) was printed by Cook's until May 1918, and thereafter by Harrison's. Cooke's used electros (see note box) 1 to 5 with a monogram in the margins. Harrison's used electros 4 and 5 as well, but with a CA monogram and then from 1918 used electros 6 and 7 using their own imprint under each gutter. I have already mentioned there are eight variations of colour. They are found from Emerald to, wait for it, Very Yellow Green. Still with me?

Electros: All the plates manufactured in Australia up to 1926 were copper electrotypes, normally with a protective nickel coating. These were called “electros.” BW notes that for the succession of different postage rate stamps many were required and therefore the definite number employed is still uncertain.

Up to 1918 only one type of watermark was used but then changed to something more complex. I’ll say more about Australian watermarks later. They are important. And so are perforations. The first green outing is perforated 14 comb. The second outing, BW64 issued in late 1915 is perforated 14.2 single line. It is found in two colour variations. Oh, and it’s rare and has a very high catalogue value.

The halfpenny orange appeared in November 1923 (BW66). It was then still printed by Harrison’s but the colour needed to be changed as the 1.5d stamp had gone from brown to green to conform to UPU requirements. It can be found with three colour varieties, but they are still basically orangey. Mullett’s took over printing in late 1926 with BW67. There is the same perforations, but a change in watermark. The colours vary from orange to yellow orange!

When Ash became the printer in November 1927, they kept the same watermark but changed the perforation to 13.5x12.5. The halfpenny orange saw its final issuing in December 1931 as BW69. It kept the new perforation but now went to an even more complex watermark.

Scattered through all these changes there are of course lots of flaws to be discovered, some of them part of or are close to the Emu. I have a full list if anyone is interested.

I ran through this one value deliberately to provide a small flavour of all the different variables you will discover with these issues. So let’s at a few of them more carefully. They run through the whole series and make the issues as complex as they are. So here goes.

a) Perforations

There has been debate on the number of perforations. The SG catalogue cites just four, but Brusden-White has fine-tuned it to five with the addition of a 14.2 perf which was briefly used and I’ll go with that. The early recess engraved 1d red has perforation 11, but this is the only occasion that perforation was used.

Broadly, the various perforations do seem to fall within certain periods, albeit with considerable overlap, and can be roughly summarised as per Table 4 below.

Table.4 - Perforation Periods

Perforations	Periods found
11	1913 - 1914
14.2	1914 - 1915
14.25x14	1914 - 1919
14	1915 - 1928
13.5x12.5	1926 - 1936

Whilst this is perhaps still broad brush, perforations can help with identification so the perforation gauge is an essential tool with these issues. It certainly contributes to the challenges!

Both Stanley Gibbons and Brusden-White refer to single-line and comb perforations. And these types are scattered throughout the issues. There is not space to dwell on them here, but a brief explanation of the two is provided in the note box below:

Line perforations: This requires two separate applications of the perforating machine - one for the vertical perforations and another for the horizontal. They are normally made by a series of parallel perforating wheels rolled across a sheet of stamps. The sheet is turned 90 degrees, and the same or a set with a different perforation is then applied.

Comb perforations: The name is derived from a single strike of the perforating head in a piece of paper and which looks like a pocket comb. It can be applied either horizontally or vertically. The top of the comb perforates one full side when applied. The “teeth” of the comb appear widely spaced and perforate the sides or the top and bottom when applied vertically. All the perforated holes are uniformly spaced around three sides of a stamp and every stamp in a sheet should have the perforation holes in almost the same location on each side. Comb perforations are characterized with all corner perforations meeting in a single hole.

b) Watermarks

Australian watermarks can be fun. Well, sort of, as they are another maze to negotiate. Australia used watermarks up to the 1960's and decimalisation albeit sporadically, but they are nevertheless an important feature with many of the earlier issues of the Commonwealth. The Emu sidefaces are no exception and will assist with dating and identification.

Those first 1913/14 issues were without watermarks, so you have both a unique perforation and the absence of a watermark to guide you. Watermarks are also absent from the 1d green and one and half penny scarlet issued in 1924 with perforation 14, so that's another couple easily dealt with. But with others it is less straightforward. Holding stamps to a light source can help but I have found that with variations in paper and gum and what have you it is not always certain that you will determine the watermark. I have now invested in a watermark detector. I am still learning how to use it. There is a degree of trial and error here.

Part of the challenge is the similarity of designs. With the KGV's there are four to be aware of and these are reproduced in figure 4 below.

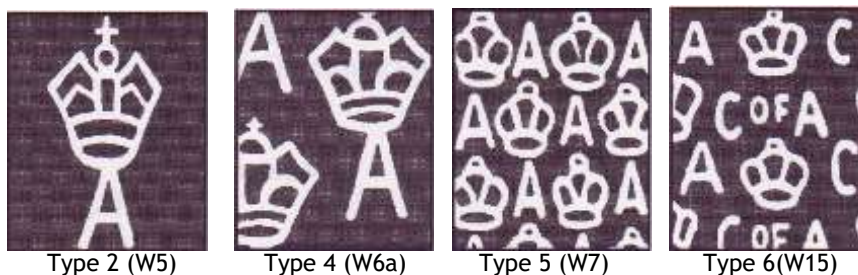


Fig. 4 - Watermark Types used with Australian KGV's

The figure shows Brusden-White referencing but with Stanley Gibbons numbering in brackets. One of the problems with the watermarks is that, depending on which catalogue

source you use, they are then distinguished with different references. The best and possibly correct way around this is to describe them in full, but I have also provided a cross-reference with table 5 below.

Single Watermark - Large Crown over A. This is BW's type 2 and can be found on paper with a vertical mesh. It was used for most of the issues between 1914 and 1924, in other words, quite a wide range.

Large Multiple Watermark - Multiple Large Crowns over A. BW type 4. It is effectively a series of compacted single watermarks, and the least common one found. It appears on only the three lowest values. It differs from type 2 in that parts of other crowns appear. It can be found on 1918-1920 values and a single 1924 issue, so a potentially useful guide. If you discover it.

Small Multiple Watermark - This is a series of small crowns interspersed with similar size. This is BW type 5. It is only found on issues between 1926 and 1930, so again it's a useful indicator.

C of A Watermark - Another series of small crowns but this time interspersed with the letters "CofA" - Commonwealth of Australia. This is BW type 6 and at first glance can be mistaken with type 5. It is found only on the later issues 1931 to 1936 which makes it another handy source for identification.

Table.5 - Watermark Reference Conversions

BW	SG	ACSC*	Scott	Description
2	W5	43	9	Large crown over large letter "A"
4	W6a	45	11	Multiple large crowns with "A" below
5	W7	46	203	Multiple small crowns over small "A"
6	W15	47	228	Multiple small crowns over "CofA"

*ACSC: "Australian Commonwealth Stamp Collection"

You can see from the dates that there is a sort of historical development running from type 2 to 6, with the design becoming more intricate. Less helpfully, the "Single watermark" (type 2) was utilised for the first ten years. A rather wide time frame. Additionally, the type 5 watermark whilst covering only a four year period also saw a relatively large number of issues. Table 6 below summarises the watermark periods.

Table. 6 - Watermark Periods

Wmk	Periods Issued
Type 2	1914-1924
Type 4	1918-1920 & 1924
Type 5	1926-1930
Type 6	1931-1936
None	1913/14 & 1924

Oh, and just to spice things up further, something else to be aware of are the watermark errors, either inverted or sometimes situated sideways or reversed, or even absent when there should be one. Brusden-White lists and catalogues all of them. In detail. There are - wait for it - at least 64 errors across all issues, with two thirds of these (42) as watermarks inverted. So, the chances of finding them are relatively high and, if you are lucky, you might even discover new ones. I have a spreadsheet for other anoraks like me who are interested.

c) Colours

This is another fun area that can make collecting these issues exciting. And perplexing. We saw in Table.1 what was thought to be eight basics colours and how they are supposed to be distributed across the different values. But we also saw from our toe in the water that

each issue can have a number of catalogued colour variations that go well beyond just simpler matters of shading.

The first halfpenny green has eight colour variations, three of which have shadings from pale to deep. But this is nothing. With some of the other issues the variations are far larger. Take the 1d red issued in August 2014 (BW71) printed by Cooke and then Harrison's. It has no less than 26 colour variations from carmine-red, through to salmon red, scarlet, rose-carmine, crimson, brownish-rose, orange-red, brick and pink. Oh, and at least eight of these variations have genuine shadings as well, usually from pale to a deeper colour. See Figure 5 below for a sample of the varieties.



Fig. 5 - Red Colour Variations

Other 1d red issues can be found in almost as many variations from deep scarlet to plum and maroon or even orange-brown. Indeed, red issues generally, regardless of which value, make up the largest range of colour variations at just over a third. Blue (see Fig. 6) and then violet issues show the next widest range of variations.



Fig. 6 - A tales of two blues; left Sept 1926, right December 1926

In Table.1 I gave orange for one of the 4d issues. This is BW110 or SG22, and both Brusden-White and Stanley Gibbons agree that it is found in a number of forms: as lemon-orange, lemon-yellow, pale orange-yellow, buff-orange and even yellow-orange. So it's yellow or orange or perhaps both? And the 4d Olive can also be a very yellowish affair with one variant even described as olive-yellow, although SG reverses it and calls it yellow-olive. To me it appears to be a greenish yellow, not olive at all! It's all fruit and no vegetables here!

And then the so-called black-browns. These are found in the 1.5d issues (BW83 and 84, with the nearest Gibbons equivalent being SG51). Yes, there are black-browns versions, but also you can find them as purple-black or in a grey-black version. You can barely make out the inky Emu! (See figure 7).



Fig. 7 - Same values - Brown, Chocolate or Black?

This is just a tiny sampling of the variations to be found. It is a very complex area. When you add all of them up across the basic colour types you will find Brusden-White lists 169 different colours. And that is not including the various shades. If you then identify their occurrence across all of the BW issues - think of it as a matrix - the number of occurrences increases further. I calculate 310 for the basics and 21 for the OS overprints. That's 331 in total. And yes, even the overprints have their colour challenges.

There is no space here to go through every value and colour - although I have, and it's fun and there's a spreadsheet to prove it - but Table. 7 below will give you an outline indication of the range of different colours across all the values and issues. Table. 8 gives the occurrences across the same colour spread. Frankly, they are mind-boggling.

Table. 7 - Colour Variation Spread

Green	Olive/ Yellow	Orange	Red	Brown	Violet	Black/ Brown	Blue	TOTAL
13	10	14	57	20	23	2	30	169
7.7	5.9	8.3	33.7	11.8	13.6	1.2	17.8	100%

Table. 8 - Colour Variation Occurrences

Green	Olive/ Yellow	Orange	Red	Brown	Violet	Black/ Brown	Blue	TOTAL
37	17	26	106	40	38	4	42	310
11.9	5.5	8.4	34.2	12.9	12.3	1.3	13.5	100%

d) Flaws

I could just say that there are lots of them and leave it at that. With a series of different printers, plate changes, colour changes, high production output and what have you spread over a relatively long period it is inevitable that a large numbers of flaws would occur. Brusden-White - of course - details all the known ones value by value, colour by colour and plate by plate. So many, that it would try your patience to detail them here.

However, the Emu itself can be found with a number of flaws actually on the bird or close to it. I estimate 15 in total and they seem to be found principally on the values between 2d and 1 shilling & 4d. Table. 9 below lists the Emu only ones. Happy hunting to find them!

Table. 9 - Identified Emu Flaws

Thick rear leg of Emu and thin right frame
Cut SW corner, double tail to Emu, top right frame uneven
Flaw in Emu's tail
Flawed shading behind Emu's head
White flaws in left wattle, under "P" of "PENANCE" and on Emu's head
Broken leg of Emu
White flaw on Emu's back
White spot on Emu's tail
White flaw on Emu's breast and breaks in shading lines in lower part of oval
Crack through Emu's neck and shading

The Other Stuff

I have talked at some length about the complexities of the “basics” and only briefly mentioned the surcharges and “officials.” So perhaps a little further detail is needed as well as briefly introducing the other KGV Emu’s that are out there to collect.

The Surcharges - There are just two. There is the 2d on the one and a halfpenny red (BW101/SG119) and the 5d on four and a halfpenny violet (BW125/SG120), which were both issued at roughly the same time in mid-1930. Both were printed by J. Ash. The surcharges arose through a changed letter rate and changes in postcard and airmail rates. They are both relatively easy to find.

The Officials - These are the official service overprints and are distinguished with the lettering “OS” in black and superseded the perfins. There are seven of them. They were all printed by J. Ash and came out quite late in the series mainly during 1932 but also into 1933. For the eagle-eyed, there is some fun to be derived from finding errors in the lettering of the overprint. Table. 10 below provides some further detail, listed in date order.

Table.10 - Listing of “OS” Overprints

Date	Value	Colour	BW	SG
1932/January	5d	Orange-brown	127OS	O132
1932/February	2d	Red	102OS	O125
1932/February	2d	Red	103OS	O130
1932/March	1d	Green	82OS	O129
1932/March	4d	Olive	116OS	O126
1932/June	½ d	Orange	69OS	O128
1933/March	3d	Blue	109OS	O131

The 4d Olive is actually more yellow than olive, but note the two 2d reds. They both come in variations of scarlet and with two types of watermark (5 and 6). They also have the same perforation and can display the same flaws, so good luck distinguishing between them!

Perfins - In my view, perfins are a collecting area in their own right. They are officials as well but with the lettering punched instead of printed. Brusden-White uses the term “punctured OS,” and Stanley Gibbons “perforated OS.” They were the form of official stamp originally used, but then phased out by the early 1930’s and replaced by the “OS” overprints.

I have a list available for those who might be interested but it’s a long one. Brusden-White identifies 56 punctured issues, while Stanley Gibbons comes up with only 53! The discrepancies are found with a 3d blue (BW105), 4d blue (BW113) and a 5d brown (BW123). Brusden-White indicate perfins with a small letter suffix to the main catalogue number (often “ba”); Gibbons use the normal “O” prefix with a separate numbering. I have only been lucky enough to find 15 perfins to date, so there is still some way to go!

NW Pacific Islands - I wasn’t aware of these until Graham U’ren alerted me to them. Perhaps not exactly Australia, but they are essentially the KGV Emu’s overprinted for Papua, Nauru, etc. They were issued during three periods: 1915-16, 1918 and 1918-22.

Brusden-White doesn’t list these in the KGV catalogue, so I had recourse to the SG specialist catalogue to locate them. They are tricky in their own right as there are no less than four types of overprint - Stanley Gibbons indicates them as 6(a), 6(b), 6(c) and 11. At first glance the differences are, shall we say subtle. My trawl through the catalogue identified 15 basics, but I think this could be expanded to 22 issues if you consider some colour variations and die changes. Oh, and they can be pricey. I have not gone out of my way to seek these issues, but since becoming aware of them I have found just one and it was affordable.

So that's it. I know there is a lot here to take in and yes, their complexity makes them a minefield to wade through. But if you like these birds and seek collecting challenges as I do, they will richly reward your interest. This might be the mob for you.