

NOTES ON THE COINAGES OF THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

A. The original designs for the silver and bronze coins of the Union were approved by the Union Government after consultation with the then Deputy Master and Comptroller of the Royal Mint, London, Sir Robert A. Johnston. The artist responsible for the head of the King (George V) was the late Mr. Bertram McKennal, whose initials "B.M." appear below the shoulder. The King's head was the standard model for use in all the self-governing Dominions. The George VI head (uncrowned) introduced in 1937, was the work of Mr. Henry Paget. The reverse designs in all the silver and bronze series, were the work of Mr. G. Kruger Gray. The initials of the above artists appear on the designs referred to. Mr. J. J. I. Middleton, who was Under Secretary for Finance at the time the designs were settled upon, is credited with first suggesting the incorporation of two sparrows on the reverse of the farthing.

Assistance was given in the early discussions on the new designs by the late Dr. F. V. Engelenburg, the late Mr. J. de Villiers Roos, Mr. J. S. Cleland (then Chief Architect of the Public Works Department), Dr. E. P. Phillips, my predecessor Mr. Ralph Pearson, and others.

The halfpenny reverse design, it may be noted, is a reduced replica of the penny design, and at various times it has been suggested that a new design for the halfpenny would round off the

series more satisfactorily. Proposals for features in this connection have included Table Mountain, the Van Riebeeck Monument and the wild olive tree of the Free State.

B. The coinage of gold took place in the case of sovereigns in each year from 1923 to 1932; half-sovereigns were produced in the years 1923 to 1926 only. The sovereign and half-sovereign obverses were identical in design and have as an indication of their origin the small letters "S.A." beneath the Dragon on the reverse side. It is of special interest to note that the issues of sovereigns from 1929 to 1932 were struck from new master dies in which the head of the King was slightly reduced in size on the obverse and the figure of St. George and the Dragon on the reverse was also slightly reduced in size as compared with the earlier issues.

Another point of interest is that in the 1923 to 1928 issues, the beading on the obverse of the sovereign was "sphericled" and that on the reverse "fluted." On the later issues, the same form of beading was adopted for both sides, namely "fluted."

C. UNION SILVER AND BRONZE SERIES

Since the original designs were approved, certain alterations have been made which are summarised as follows:—

1. *Halfcrown*

In 1926 the mark of value on the reverse was changed from "2½ Shillings 2½" to "2½ Shillings".

2. *Florin*

In 1931 the mark of value was changed from "Florin" to "2 Shillings".

3. *Shilling*

In 1926 the mark of value on the reverse was changed from "1 Shilling 1", to "1 Shilling" and the beaded circle round the figure of Hope was omitted.

4. *Sixpence*

In 1925 the original reverse design was superseded by the mark of value being changed from "6" to "6 Pence" and the Mimosa leaves with berries by an open Protea blossom with leaves, surrounded by a broken circle composed of six bundles of faggots, each bundle being composed of four individual faggots. In 1931 the mark of value was changed on the reverse to "6D".

5. *Threepence*

A similar alteration was made in regard to the design of the threepence and in regard to the marks of value, as for the sixpence.

6. *Penny*

In 1926 the mark of value on the reverse was changed from "1 Penny 1" to "Penny". In 1931 the mark of value was again changed to "1D".

7. *Halfpenny*

In 1926 the mark of value was changed from "½ Penny ½" to "½ Penny", and in 1931 to "½D".

8. *Farthing*

Similar changes were made as for the halfpenny.

D. In the silver and bronze series, the legend on the reverse side was changed in all cases in 1931 from "Zuid-Afrika" to "Suid-Africa".

E. No coins were struck bearing the effigy of King Edward VIII, although master punches were received and are now held in the Mint Museum of coins, medals and dies.

The reasons for the various changes are too detailed and numerous to allow of any short summary being made, but many of them will no doubt be appreciated without difficulty by numismatists.

J. T. BECKLAKE.

South African Mint,
Pretoria,

18th September, 1943.