

NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

Medallion No 1

1949

100th Anniversary of First Australian Copper Token



Event Commemorated

This medallion was issued to commemorate the Centenary of the issue of the first copper token in Australia.

Throughout the 19th century, Australia consisted of a number of colonies of Great Britain. These colonies relied on the mother country to supply them with coinage to enable normal commerce to be carried out. However the output of the Royal Mint (in London) was insufficient and traders often suffered from serious shortages of small change. In earlier times in Great Britain, various municipalities had issued tokens which circulated to provide the necessary change.

In 1849, Annand, Smith & Co, a grocer in Melbourne (Victoria), had a supply of one penny tokens struck from copper and these were first issued in October 1849. Over the next 25 years, approximately 120 firms (tradesmen) issued tokens in the Australian colonies; most of these were pennies with a significant number of half pennies (½ penny) and a few silver threepences (3 pence). Until 1860, regal pennies and half pennies were copper; after that year they mostly struck from bronze in a smaller size; similarly, the penny and half penny tokens were struck from copper until the early 1860s and after that, they were struck from bronze.

While these (and the many other) tokens were always illegal, they were tolerated by the Colonial Governments until the Home Government (in Great Britain) was able to supply sufficient regal coin. The issue of the tokens meant a profit for the issuer, free advertising for the issuer, and circulating small change.

George Annand was a Melbourne City Councillor (1847-52) and then a member of the Legislative Council (1853). Robert Smith had brief partnerships with various people; his partnership with George Annand was over by 1851.

NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

Medallion No 1

Medallion

This 41 mm diameter medallion was designed by Roy Farman (of the NAV) and struck by Stokes & Sons, Melbourne; it was struck in one metal and was issued unnumbered:

- ◆ Oxidised silver on copper (100 pieces)

There are seven known trial strikes which represent the various stages of manufacture (1) the blank, (2) the blank with rims, (3) 1st striking, (4) 2nd striking, (5) 3rd striking, (6) plated silver finish, (7) final oxidation.

The obverse design of the medallion features the obverse design (an inscription) of the token issued by Annand, Smith & Co surrounded by the commemorative inscription "AUSTRALIA'S FIRST COPPER TOKEN ISSUED 20TH OCTOBER 1849".

The reverse design of the medallion features the reverse design of the same token which is based on a pattern for a British copper penny; this is also surrounded by an inscription which reads "THE NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA 1949".

The Annand, Smith & Co token has the name and address of the issuer on the obverse and Britannia on the reverse. This representation of Britannia had been prepared by Küchler (of the Soho Mint) for a proof pattern penny of 1806. The design is very similar to that on the then current British penny.