

# NEW SOUTH WALES (AUSTRALIA) – INSPECTOR’S MARKINGS ON WEIGHTS

By Mal Campbell

Colonised Australia consisted of a group of self managed British colonies prior to 1901, after which time the Commonwealth of Australia was formed. Colonies and subsequently States adopted and developed systems of administration of weights and measures, based on the British system. Standards and secondary standards, with few exceptions, were brought from Britain to Australia for their use in the administration of weights and measures legislation. Subsequent requirements, predominantly came from Britain, until post WWII when they were manufactured within Australia.

Standards and secondary standards were required for the implementation of weights and measures legislation and included administration by central and local authorities to check and verify the legitimacy of weights and measures being used in trade and for precious metals. Initially, and until 1948, each State controlled their systems of administration, after which time Commonwealth legislation was introduced. This legislation centralised overall control and systems while still allowing individual administration of systems to be maintained by each State.

The topic of this article is the markings on weights and measures by applied by local inspectors of New South Wales. Information about the recording and markings of verification and reverification is sparse, with the available writings found on the subject matter being focussed generally upon Australia’s weights and measures system; the standards; their technical accuracy; the validity of standards and secondary standards; legislative process; national uniformity; and metrification; but not the individual systems that the states and territories have used to indicate verification and re-verification of trade weights and measures. Weights and Measures legislation within Australia, set out high level behaviours in respect of the implementation and administration of our weights and measures system, but as with most legislation the level of detail of actual implementation was sparse and it was left to the subsequent Regulations to provide details of the day to day implementation of legislative requirements.

Although New South Wales had weights and measures legislation passed in 1832 and amended 1849, the first reference I have found to a requirement for inspectors to be issued with stamps for stamping or sealing weights and measures used within their areas of jurisdiction is section 7 of the 1852 Weights and Measures Act. The implementation of this requirement was to take effect after 1 January 1854, but whether it did or not and the manner in which it did or not are unknown.

A subsequent reference to stamping weights and measures after inspection and verification is found in September 1861 in a newspaper calling of a tender for Weights, Measures, and Testing and Stamping Instruments. No eligible tenders were received in response to a tender of 19 September 1861 and hence it was extended until 1 October 1861<sup>i</sup>. The tender was further extended to 15 November 1861<sup>ii</sup> No further mention is found in NSW Gazette archived until 4 January 1865<sup>iii</sup> when it was announced that, December 1864, a tender was accepted from Mr John Keep for the supply of a significant amount of tools and equipment for government use including weights, measures of capacity and length as well as scales and stamps and brands with shield, lion and N.S.W. engraved on them (two sizes in a set). John Keep was an Ironmonger in Sydney and he would have obtained quotations from England for the supply of all or most of the items being supplied. Again in 1880 John Keep was still the successful tenderer for these items<sup>iv</sup>. Note that in 1880 the description of the stamps and brands was still the same, shield, lion and N.S.W. engraved on them (three sizes in a set).



From the book *Marking of Weights and Measures of the British Isles* by Carl Ricketts and John Douglas, on page 245 Appendix VI – Unidentified Verification Marks<sup>v</sup> contains this image which is a NSW verification stamp, probably the first iteration of it. Refer to Figure 1. This image in the book, was the start of my search for examples of New South Wales weights and measures inspectors stamping of weights and measures. Below is a compilation of stamps found so far that reflect, in my view, the chronology of stamping of weights and measures in New South Wales.

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

Figures 2 to 5 show different versions seen of shield, lion, N.S.W., 1. Based on what appears, to me, to be the complexity of detail on the stamps, I have placed them in order of age, oldest to newest. The lion does not always face the same direction, perhaps not prescribed but determined by the stamp maker at the time of manufacture. The need, intent or significance of the number 1 underneath N.S.W. is unknown. I have not seen another number on stamps although the font of the 1 used in some instances may appear at first glance to be a 2, I don't think it is. Curiously two of the above were found on weights purchased from the England. They would have been brought in the 19<sup>th</sup> century from England to Australia for use, stamped in New South Wales (NSW), taken at some point collectors back to England only to be purchased by a collector here in Australia and found their way back. The weight on which the stamp of Figure 4 was found also has SW and Crown VR stamps. The SW and Crown VR stamps indicate that the weight was at some point in time used as an inspector's weight as these markings are, required by Legislation in NSW and other states except Victoria, to identify weights as local authority Standard Weights.



Figure 6

Figure 6, shield with well detailed lion facing left with NSW beneath, and no longer with number 1. No longer or never required? This stamp is on a number of sovereign weights held by Reserve Bank of Australia Museum.



Figure 7



Figure 8

Figures 6 & 7 show a change in the shape of the shield and N.S.W. now outside the shield. I have not been able to identify the shape or symbol within the boundary of the shield of Figure 8, but with N.S.W. outside the shield, I believe this is an inspectors stamp from New South Wales, but am open to other explanations. My assumption of this stamp's chronology is based on it being after the use of a lion within the shield and before the use of a crown within the shield. I am still looking for a better example which may provide a definitive answer.

New weights and measures legislation of 1915 and amendment of 1916 and the subsequent issuing of Weights and Measures Regulations, 1917 required that on verification a verification stamp and a date stamp should be applied. If the size of the article made it impractical to apply both stamps the date stamp would take precedence. It was not stated in what format the date stamp should be. On subsequent reverification of an article that had a legible verification stamp on it, only the new date stamp was required.

An amendment to these regulations in 1925 clarified that the date mark was required to indicate the month and year of the stamping. It further detailed the form of date marking by providing examples of "A 3" representing January 1923 and "L 3" representing December 1923



Figure 9

Figure 9, Circled Crown with NSW beneath. Also B 3 which indicates the date of verification. B is the month, February and 3 the year but could be 1933,1943, etc. Picture from lead insert underside of a cast iron weight BOWREY 8 OZ.

From hand written notes of a Victorian Inspector visiting NSW Weights and Measures in February 1940 (Victorian Public Record VPRS 9526 P0001 02<sup>vi</sup>) it is noted that verification is via stamping of a Crown and NSW together with a letter for the month and figure for the year (eg. D 6 = April 1936)



Figure 10

Figure 10, This is after 1950. In a booklet produced by NSW Weights and Measures “Instructions for The Guidance of Inspectors of Weights and Measures”, produced circa 1950 , (found in Victoria Public Records) there is a section of the book which deals with verification stamping. On verification the weight is to be stamped with a crown and a letter and figure indicating month and year. B 0 indicates February 1950, C 1 indicates March 1951. This was for districts where they had inspectors employed by Weights and Measures Departments. At this time offices were maintained at Sydney, Newcastle, Orange, Goulburn, Wagga Wagga, Grafton and Tamworth. In areas not included within these districts, police officers acted as inspectors and only had numeral available so the date stamps would be 2.0 indicates February 1950 and 3.1 indicates March 1951.

No consideration is given to the year number repeating every 10 years or any confusion that might create.



Figure 11

Figure 11, Insert underside of a 14 lb bell weight (NSW collector) with stamps of a Circled Crown and H 60 or 69 (August 1960 or 1969)

Authors Note: As a resident of Victoria, the state south of New South Wales (NSW), I am aware that I have had no access to public records which may or may not provide further detailed information. In the absence of any other information being publicly available as to documenting the markings applied by weights and measures inspectors when verifying and reverifying weights and measures, I have nonetheless prepared the above as my view on the markings applied by accessing online data, pictures and weight stamps I have collected or have obtained images of. Any additional information or corrections to the above will be gratefully received.

End Notes:

<sup>i</sup> <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/225138028?searchTerm=weights%20measures>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/225138362?searchTerm=weights%20measures>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/225847378/14457118>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/223695605?searchTerm=weights%20measures%20tenders%20and%20contracts>

<sup>v</sup> [https://www.pewtersociety.org/sites/default/files/2021-](https://www.pewtersociety.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/MARKS%20AND%20MARKINGS%20OF%20WEIGHTS%20AND%20MEASURES%20OF%20THE%20BRITISH%20ISLES..CARL%20RICKETTS%20with%20John%20Douglas...281.pdf)

[12/MARKS%20AND%20MARKINGS%20OF%20WEIGHTS%20AND%20MEASURES%20OF%20THE%20BRITISH%20ISLES..CARL%20RICKETTS%20with%20John%20Douglas...281.pdf](https://www.pewtersociety.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/MARKS%20AND%20MARKINGS%20OF%20WEIGHTS%20AND%20MEASURES%20OF%20THE%20BRITISH%20ISLES..CARL%20RICKETTS%20with%20John%20Douglas...281.pdf)

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<sup>vi</sup> <https://prov.vic.gov.au/archive/RG9526-P0001/boxes/2> This link does not take the reader to the item referred to. It is accessible via Public Records Reading Room, preorder only.