

W.J.Farrer - The Wheat King



William James Farrer, born in 1845 in England as the son of a farmer, came to New South Wales in 1870 and immediately turned to agricultural and other rural problems of that time. Farrer's attention was primarily focused on the benefits of scientific studies of grazing land, especially the link between native grazing plants and the study of sheep diseases. He was also very interested in wheat cultivation.

It is difficult to imagine Australia as a country that had to import the most important food, wheat. But at the time when W.J.Farrer (Fig. 1; Mi.-No.191) began his wheat breeding research in 1885, the harvests of this grain in Australia were so low due to drought and plant diseases that wheat imports were necessary for the general demand. Farrer pursued the idea of transferring desirable characteristics from old to new wheat varieties. He did this research from 1885 until his death in 1906, first privately, later as an employee of the Ministry of Agriculture of New South Wales. As a direct result of its drought- and disease-resistant wheat breeding, yields rose sharply, resulting in an increase in cultivation and even exports. Over time, the new wheat has reached up to 40 quintals/ha, much more than the old varieties ever achieved.

And for 25 years after Farrer's death, only his "Federation" wheat variety, which he first developed in 1905, has been cultivated throughout Australia.

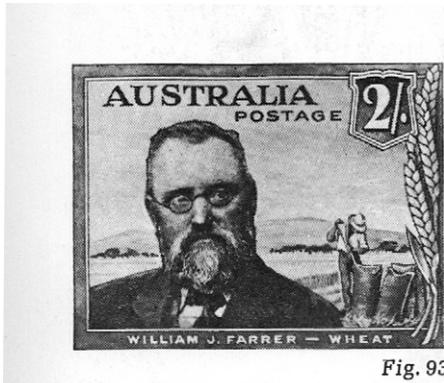


Fig. 93

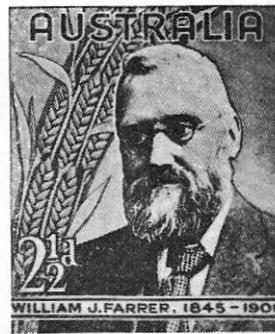


Fig. 94

show in Figure 2 and 5. the portrait on the issued stamp comes from the collection of Farrer's documents, which is now in the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

The stamp was printed in sheets of 160; total circulation 74,168,000.

Dr.K.Knopke

Source: Australiens Commemoratives and Air Mail Stamps 1927-1951,

Publisher. Australian Post Office, no date, p.29/50

On his 100th birthday in 1945, the Australian Post had already suggested a commemorative stamp in his honour but was not able to do so at that time. A suitable opportunity for such an honour arose in 1948, when a film company produced the film "Strong is the Seed", which was based on Farrer's life. It was agreed that a trademark should appear on the same date as the film was premiered. There were a number of designs for this stamp, two not shortlisted we

Special cover no.079 of 13.02.1984 for the introduction of the McKay combine harvester 100 years ago.

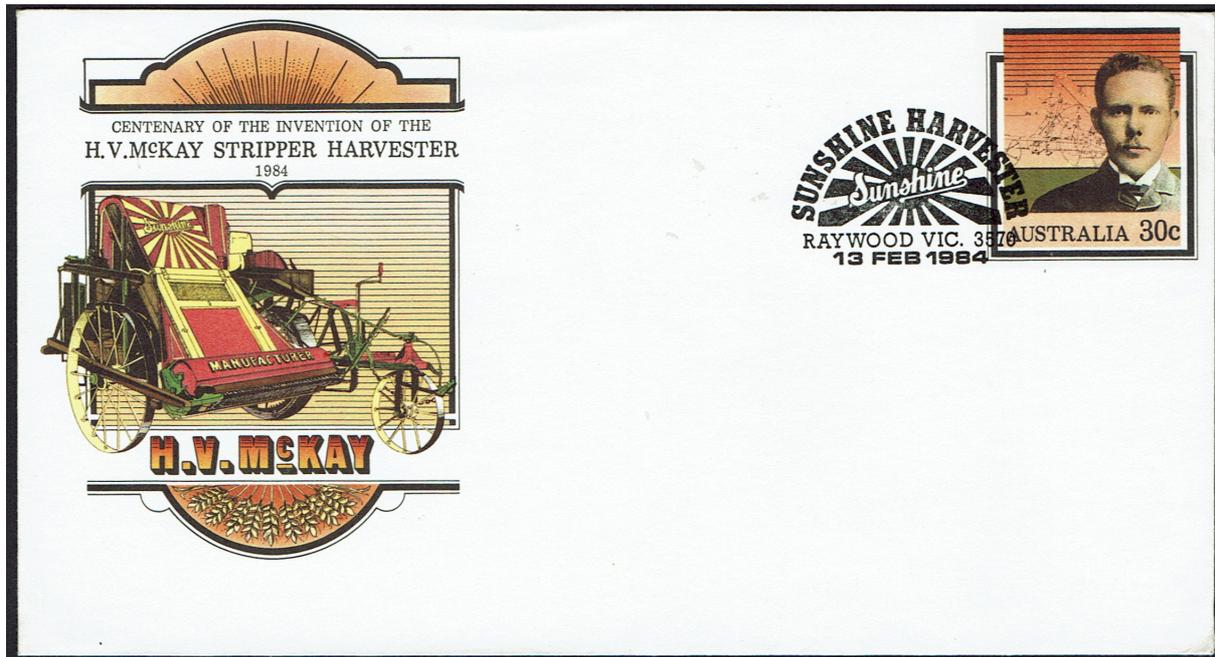


Illustration of the first type of combine harvester. The imprinted stamp shows a portrait of the young McKay and the patent drawing of the combine harvester.

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