

THE GREAT SEAL Of the Commonwealth.

(BY FLINDERS BARR.)

On October 29, 1900, the office of Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia was constituted by letters patent, which included provision for a great seal for the Commonwealth. But, as some considerable time would elapse before the new seal could be designed and made, it was arranged that the private or personal seal of the Governor-General should be used as a great seal, till the latter was ready. Since the most remote periods princes, nobles, important personages, and traders had been in the habit of using their own personal seals in place of a signature, and when, in the course of time, the art of heraldry flourished, the seal bore the arms of the owner upon it, in as full detail as was possible. When knighthood was in flower, the idea of a knight without a coat of arms would have seemed as absurd as a handle without a pump. The title "Sir" was the handle, but the actual and visible record of his deeds, and of his family, was his coat-of-arms.

The Earl of Hopetoun, the first Governor-General of the Commonwealth, was naturally in possession of a personal seal bearing his arms fully displayed. This seal was used for all official purposes from October 29, 1900, till July 18, 1902, from which latter date till January 21, 1904, Lord Tennyson's personal seal was in use, he having succeeded Lord Hopetoun as Governor-General. I have not seen an impression of Lord Hopetoun's seal, but I have one in red wax of Lord Tennyson's, which is quite large and of an oval shape; it bears his arms as they are shown in Burke's Peerage.

An January 21, 1904, the first actual great seal of the Commonwealth came into use; this had been prepared in 1903, and had been granted by King Edward VII. King Edward died on May 6, 1910, but by a warrant of King George V., dated 20 days later, the use of King Edward's seal was authorised till a new one should be provided. This, the second great seal of the Commonwealth, arrived here in 1912, and bears upon it a design similar to that of its predecessor, with a few exceptions.

CURIOUS ERRORS.

The Royal Arms and Imperial Crown in the centre are surrounded by six shields, having their base points inwards. On these shields, treated as coats of arms, are the official badges of the six federated States. This incorrect manner of using badges was adopted because South Australia and Western Australia had no coats of arms, nor have these two States yet placed themselves in a correct heraldic position. Round the edge of the seal runs an inscription in Latin and English. The shield of Queensland on the great seal, should be charged with a Maltese cross surmounted by an Imperial crown, but by some error, what is called a cross moline has been used instead. Neither the authorities at the Heralds' College, nor those of the Queensland Government, could tell me how the mistake arose. Also on the seal, the black

Queensland Government, could tell me how the mistake arose. Also on the seal, the black swan of Western Australia is swimming in the wrong direction. When a new great seal shall be required for the Commonwealth, in addition to correcting the abovementioned errors, the arms of Canberra will have to be included, and possibly those of any new States



The Second Commonwealth Seal.

which may by that time have come into being, though with the multiplicity of States a complexity of heraldic design is bound to follow, and some simple device for the whole Empire, with a "difference" for each particular unit, will become a necessity.

In connection with the use of the personal seals of Governors used as official seals, it is interesting to remember that Governor Phillip had no official seal when he first assumed office in New South Wales, on February 7, 1788. Between that date and September 22, 1791, when the colony's first seal arrived from England, he used his own private one, or, as he puts it, "a seal of my arms." Now, this opens an interesting question as to what those arms were, as Governor Phillip's father, Jacob Phillip, was a German, belonging to Frankfurt, a land steward or agent, who came to England, took up the profession of a teacher of languages, and married a widow, then Mrs. Herbert, afterwards Arthur Phillip's mother. The right to bear arms was very sharply regulated in Germany at that period, and it is very doubtful whether Jacob Phillip's social position would entitle him to the honour.

Round the hall at Government House, Sydney, are depicted in correct colouring the arms of all the State Governors, from Arthur Phillip to Sir Dudley de Chair, and being anxious to know something about the imposing armorial ensigns there assigned to Governor Phillip, I wrote to the Heralds' College on the subject. In reply, they told me that the arms displayed as his at Government House were those of a very ancient and long extinct English family, and had been taken from the tomb of Sir John Phillips of Devington, in Kidderminster Church, erected about 1500. They further informed me that according to their records Governor Arthur Phillip had never established any right to bear arms in England. It would be very interesting to know who provided our first Governor with the very ancient achievement now posing as his at Government House, and also what the actual arms were upon the seal which he first used in New South Wales. Finally, it would be of interest to know what seal a Governor-General or a Governor would use in the event of the Commonwealth or a State great seal being put out of action, if he should not happen

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being put out of action, if he should not happen
to possess a private seal of his own.