

Australia in Depth Article #117

Forgeries on eBay

By Simon Dunkerley © 3rd December 2006

As published in *Stamp News* January 2007

You may recall the 'Australia in Depth' series titled '**eBay – a useful resource and a place to beware**'; these articles appeared in the *March*, *April* and *May* 2006 editions of *Stamp News*. If you missed any of those issues, the series can be accessed in the 'Articles by Simon' section of my website or by clicking [here](#).

Whilst there are many good items available to prospective buyers on *eBay*, unfortunately there is also a steady stream of 'duds' or perhaps 'lemons' on offer.

This month I will pick out three recent examples to bring to your attention.

Firstly, one of the bigger overseas stamp sellers on *eBay* offered a New South Wales 3d Sydney View as SG 40, the rare myrtle-green shade on the soft yellowish paper, with a current catalogue value of £1,000 in Stanley Gibbons. The item number was 320020604625, closing on 30th August 2006. There were five bids made, with the unsuspecting winner paying \$US437.10 or approximately \$AU583. As you can see in the image provided, the stamp has good margins and all looks well to the uninitiated. Unfortunately, however, the stamp is a forgery, with a current market value of around \$AU30. Buyer beware!

Although each position in the plate of the genuine 3d Sydney View stamps has its own characteristics and can be individually plated, the designs are all very similar. In the illustrations below, it is not too hard to see that the forgery does not show the fine engraving detail visible in the genuine original stamps. Also note that the colour of the forgery does not match *any* of the printings of the issued stamps.



Forgery of the 3d Sydney View
sold for \$583 – real value \$30



Genuine 3d Sydney View

more recently offered as a used example of the *rare postal forgery* of the 2d Sydney Harbour Bridge. Item number 20023969359 closed on 8th October 2006, with the winning bidder paying \$AU172.50 This stamp was described by the seller as '1932 IRISH SWEEPSTAKE FORGERY ...RARE ...INCREDIBLE ... RARITY ... ONLY A HANDFUL EXIST ... INVESTMENT ...'

Unfortunately in this instance, the stamp on offer was a *genuine* used example of the *issued* no watermark *recess* printed stamp (sometimes referred to as the *engraved* issue). It is nothing like the forgery, which is much closer in design characteristics to the 2d *letterpress* stamp (sometimes referred to as the *typographed* issue). Buyer beware again! Had it been a genuine correctly used example of the forgery, and by that I mean postally used *before* those involved in the production and use of the forgeries were arrested, I certainly would have been happy to pay many times the winning bid, despite the fact that it has been partially trimmed at top-right. I do not recall having *never* seen a used example of this forgery with any cancellation, let alone in the correct period offered during my time in stamps. It is doubtful that any correctly used examples actually exist.

This forgery is recorded in five formats: (1) *mint* as shown in two examples illustrated; (2) *mint* examples *defaced by pen* (usually by a vertical and a horizontal line); (3) *unused on cover*; (4) the so-called imperforate plate proof pairs, which may actually be normal examples that simply had not yet been perforated, and (5) philatelic covers made after the arrests (see below).

The unused examples on cover were apparently about to be posted when the alleged culprits were arrested. Such covers are extremely rare, and how they found their way into private hands is an interesting matter to consider as they would have been important evidence in the prosecution case. In addition, although I do not recall seeing any on the market, some examples were reportedly used *after* the arrests were made, and as noted in the *Australian Commonwealth Specialists' catalogue (ACSC)* these would 'seem to have been created by collectors'. On the other hand, there are about six examples of the KGV 2d postal forgery known on correct covers, having either one or two stamps each, and these are worth in the region of \$5,000 on today's market. With the ever increasing popularity of the bridge issue, if a correctly used forgery on cover were to be found, it would surely sell for more than double that amount.

The forgery was reproduced photographically from an original of the *letterpress* stamp and was printed on no watermark paper single-line perf 11. The genuine *recess* printed stamp was *also* on no watermark paper single-line perf 11; however an examination of the differences between the printing, paper and gum of these two items shows that they are quite different. Overall, the genuine *recess* printed stamp has a much 'softer' appearance to that of both the forgery and the genuine *letterpress* stamp. This compares to the watermarked paper and comb perf 10 of the *letterpress* stamp. However, as you can see in the illustrations below, the fine details *throughout* the designs are very different between the *recess* and *letterpress* printed stamps. Although the differences throughout the design are many, perhaps the most readily visible is in the amount of and formation of the smoke coming from the ship about to go under the bridge. The design of the forgery closely matches that of the *letterpress* stamps, and accordingly is very different to that of the *recess* printed stamps.

The forgery in fine mint condition has been selling for approximately \$1,500 to \$1,750 in recent times, and if a correctly used example were to be found, I would expect it to sell for somewhat more than that amount, even if it were in less than perfect condition.



Normal recess printed stamp sold as a forgery on eBay for \$172.50; with faults - value zero!



The normal recess printed stamp in fine mint condition; value \$2



The normal 2d letterpress stamp as issued; value \$2



The forgery; value \$1,500 to \$1,750



A second example of the forgery sold in recent times

The scans of the 2d Bridge forgeries are reproduced here courtesy of **Prestige Philately**, with the most recent examples having sold at their auctions in January and August 2005 respectively.

Thirdly, and on a more positive note, the Western Australian forgery illustrated below was put up by the seller as a normal 6d green imperforate stamp, however, the listing was changed as soon as the seller was informed that his stamp was a forgery, and a

rather crude one at that! It sold for £1.50 and was good buying at that price.



Crude 6d forgery sold on eBay for £1.50 – real value approximately \$30.

