

Market Matters

Buy Catalogues!

Over my 25 years in selling stamps full time I have made an absolute fortune by "arbitraging" catalogue listings.

It may surprise many readers, but not all catalogues are created equal.

And the best part is, collectors and dealers in many regions stick strictly to their local catalogue.

In Continental Europe Michel catalogue listings rule the roost overall. However in Switzerland Zumstein is used, and Italy, Spain and Holland have very strong local catalogues used far more widely than Michel.

In the USA Scott catalogue are used almost exclusively by collectors and dealers and auctions alike.

If you collect Israel you use Bale almost exclusively - no matter where you live.

In the UK and in many Commonwealth countries Stanley Gibbons (SG) is king.

If you buy in one market and sell in another you can make excellent profits if local catalogues have under-rated or totally omitted many stamps or errors. Which often occurs.

Curious mix locally

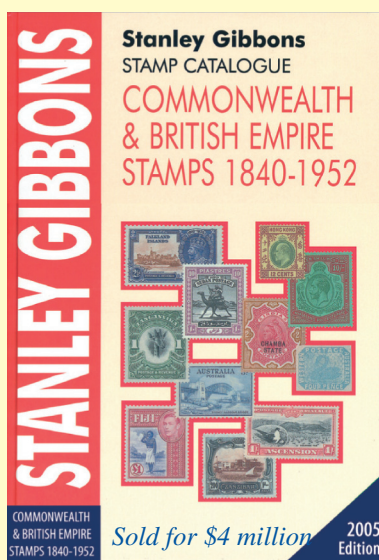
In Australia we have a rather curious hybrid catalogue mix. SG is the most widely used for general use. For collectors of Australia Seven Seas 'ASC' (reviewed below), and the 'Comprehensive' are both big sellers.

Renniks "Stamps Of Australia" does good business via newsagents, and the new edition is out around Easter. And finally, no specialist can live without a ACSC set.

Totally updated KGVI and QEII 1952-66 ACSC volumes are just being printed and I hope to review them next column.

Catalogues are often expensive. We all know that. The current SG "1840-1952" alone retails for about \$A180 for a book only an inch thick. I sell lots as it is now (thankfully) in colour, and lists all the material in specialised form.

Material in this volume has experienced large price jumps. I noticed some Cape Of



Retail \$180 for 2006

Good Hope triangle stamps a friend has, had doubled from £20,000 each to £40,000 each in the one edition. He did not mind paying \$180 to discover that!

Each volume of Scott are now about \$A125 retail and there are 7 different volumes a year. They are big and heavy and shipping costs a ton. A full set fills a dozen wine size carton.

I fly to the USA several times a year and regularly bring back a few cartons of the current Scott set, and let the airline pay the shipping! I am a Platinum flyer member and am allowed 3 or 4 pieces or cartons of checked baggage at no cost. This can regularly save me \$600-\$1000 in air shipping.

I often check through several 20 Kg cartons of Australian "Commems Only" kiloware for clients in the USA. It costs them under half from me than it does in the USA. One large Auction often orders 80 Kgs.

I just hand them to the concierge at the first Hotel with a \$10 bill, and they ship cheap Fedex ground "collect" to the US client, saving them very many \$100s on air

shipping. So my airline ticket cost is often effectively "paid" by the shipping I save.

Sadly as a dealer I need ALL catalogues pretty much. And recent ones. My annual spend on catalogues and reference works is often about \$2,000. I generally offer last edition sets in my monthly internet lists for about half retail which for most collectors is a great trade-off!

Think laterally

So to the point of this article - you can often buy VERY cheaply if buying in a country where stamps are not correctly - or not accurately listed and priced.

Scott for instance does not list any Australian inverted watermarks - and Gibbons does. I often see Australia inverted watermarks in American auctions with the NORMAL Scott value next to it - as if the invert is of no account.

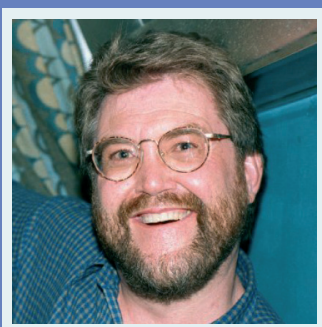
See my columns from the last 2 months about otherwise common Australia KGV heads selling for huge 5 figure sums with inverted watermarks and you will see the wisdom of buying in the USA!

The highest price at auction for an inverted watermark Australian stamp is the \$A39,100 that Status got for the KGV 1d Red single line perforation at auction on July 21, 2004.

The next highest price was the 3d blue Die 2 Small Multiple watermark mint illustrated nearby that was invoiced at just over \$A32,000 in the Prestige Philately Rarity Auction in April 2005.



Sold for over \$32,000



Glen Stephens

The illustrated \$32,000 error stamp is not unique, is perf "OS", has brown gun toning, is way off centre, and the margin is totally re-joined. No matter. These are the dizzy prices Australian watermark errors now bring.

Now both these stamps are quite common with normal watermarks. The INVERT is where these huge figures are coming from.

New 2d KGV orange

I had a reader mail me this week a 2d Orange KGV head used with inverted watermark and lovely upright dated WA small town cancel. I am hoping to get him 5 figures for that stamp - that he found among his duplicates, after reading my column last month.

Until he read my article he had no idea he owned this error, and 5 figures is not a cheque any collector would sneeze at!

Seeing many KGV heads run into 5 figures for inverted watermarks, and only a few dollars for normal watermark one can and does make superb buys if sourcing material from the USA or countries that do not use Gibbons!

BUY Catalogues - and as often as you can afford.

Whether you are a dealer or collector, they re-pay you MANY times their cost if you get an advantage by having them over other purchasers looking at the same material who do NOT.

Howzat?

You have to feel a touch sorry for British sporting fans. There is precious little to celebrate there most years.

For a large country of over 60 million they have a rather appalling sporting record.

As an Olympic nation their medal winning tally is often eclipsed and



overshaded by countries like Zambia, Laos, Bolivia and Mongolia. Well maybe I am exaggerating slightly - about Laos.

Take out the Caribbean born "British" athletes and they have not won an Olympic Gold medal since 1896 I believe. But I may be slightly wrong there too.

(I can hear the indignant emails being typed now! Heck the editor is British, so all this may be edited out anyway.)

So when England do occasionally win anything of note in the sporting arena the entire country goes berserk and stays that way for a long time. Takes their mind of the weather and the weak warm beer I imagine.



Britain needs to savour each win, as they know from experience that it will be a long time until the next one!

To demonstrate this truism, the same cricket 'conquering heroes' got compressively whopped by lowly Pakistan a couple of months later in the one day and test series in late 2005.

One such jubilant over-reaction was on October 6 2005 when Royal Mail issued a miniature sheet depicting a very rare post-war occurrence - a British cricket team winning anything other than a wooden spoon.

A miniature sheet of 4 stamps was rush-released on October 6 showing the members of the winning team - the alleged 'star' of which bombed quite miserably in the "Super Series" held soon after that played Australia.

The miniature sheet is illustrated nearby.

One stamp has the full faces of Kevin Pietersen, Michael Vaughan and Andrew "Freddie" Flintoff clearly visible on the entire design.

A Royal Mail spokesperson was quoted as saying: "this is the first time that famous living people other than the Royal Family have been clearly identifiable on a set of special stamps".

Strictly speaking, not so. Sir Edmund Hillary appeared on a stamp commemorating Everest in 2002 not long after the convention was superseded by a rule that living people can be on stamp provided they are not the 'hero image' and that an achievement, rather than a person, is being celebrated.

Max Stern is the Australian agent for Royal Mail and kindly sent me the sheet to illustrate. The issue was keenly sought

Sporting heroes: the new Royal Family

by both collectors of Australian and British stamps. "We have sold large numbers of these sheets" Max told me today.

The "Ashes" series against Britain in Australia this coming summer will be keenly fought. I understand Australia Post has almost completed the artwork for our own miniature sheet to commemorate the inevitable winning of them back.

I imagine they are nearly printed and stockpiled already. Perhaps Max Stern will produce a special folder containing both country Miniature Sheets?!

New ASC Catalogue

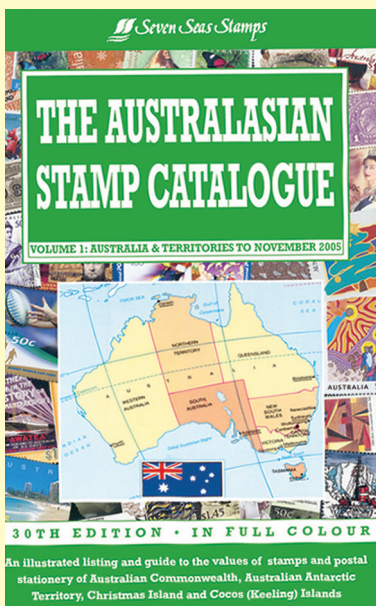
I received a copy recently of the new 30th Edition of the *Australian Stamp Catalogue* - commonly referred to as the "ASC".

The new edition covers Australian stamps from 1913 right to the end of 2005. At 312 pages in colour, for \$A36.50 RRP it is a very useful addition to the library of all dealers and collectors.

Stamps for the AAT, Cocos and Christmas Islands are also included in separate sections. And postal stationery and PO packs of all three are also listed and priced - a very valuable resource.

This new edition has a listing of all the counter printed stamps (CPS) and all the Special Event Sheetlets of 10 - called SES. I counted near 200 different sheets issued since 1999! I understand these items are listed nowhere else.

It is the ONLY catalogue available that lists and prices postal



Essential buying

stationery, and many price increases are evident. Some of the Registered Envelopes run to \$1000s each, so all dealers should own this catalogue.

Many of these items look VERY similar, and this catalogue is the only way to be sure of what you have. A used R7 is \$50 and a used R8 is \$1,000 and are very similar animals.

Even several normal issue postcards and letter cards are in the 4 figure price band, and scores are in the \$100s league. Did you realise that?

One useful page are the "wartime issues." I find lots of these envelopes, lettercards, aerograms and cancels in collections and estates and the owners usually have no idea of the value of most of these things. Many are in the \$100s region - even from the WW2 era.

The listing of Maximum Cards is pages long and is also a very valuable resource. And the long listings of FDC and PO packs for Australia all in the one place is the best in the business.

The only thing I really dislike about this catalogue is that the photos do not always face the applicable text. I get the feeling this year is an improvement over previous years, so maybe steps are being taken on that front?

The ASC is a very useful and very comprehensive catalogue for its size and price. No dealer or collector should be without one.

The price guides given seem quite accurate from my study of them. For readers overseas that is important as SG and Scott are often well out of touch.

Glen Stephens has written monthly 'Stamp Tipster' columns for 25 years. A vast library of past articles is at:
www.glenstephens.com/column.html

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Braille on 45-cent stamp a New Zealand first

According to the Chinese Zodiac, 2006 is the Year of the Dog, and to celebrate this New Zealand Post has issued a special series of stamps recognising the significant contribution that dogs of all shapes and sizes make to our daily lives.

This special series also marks the first time that Braille has appeared on a New Zealand stamp. The 45-cent stamp, which spells out the number '45' in Braille, depicts the image of the Labrador Retriever, a dog that with its intelligence and good nature is an ideal guide for the blind.

Stamps General Manager Ivor Masters said "from supporting the vision-impaired, to herding sheep, to providing friendship and

fun, dogs play an essential role in helping New Zealand communities function effectively.

"New Zealand Post is delighted to celebrate the loyalty, skill and stamina of our canine companions. Our Stamps Business is well-known for its innovations on the ordinary postage stamp, and with this series we have once again included a stamp that is inventive and different in order to acknowledge the crucial work of New Zealand's guide dogs," Mr Masters said.

The 90-cent stamp features the German Shepherd dog, whose versatility and intelligence have made it the dog of choice for the New Zealand Police. The energetic and feisty Jack Russell Terrier appears on the \$1.35,

followed by the gentle Golden Retriever, a favourite family pet, on the \$1.50.

Finally, the Huntaway graces the \$2.00 stamp. Although it does not have official 'breed' status in many kennel clubs, the Huntaway is an undisputed necessity for sheep farmers throughout the country.

The stamps and first day cover were designed by Stephen Fuller of Wellington and printed by Southern Colour Print. Products are available at all New Zealand Post retail outlets, or from the New Zealand Post stamps web site www.nzpost.co.nz/stamps, from 4 January 2006.

www.nzpost.co.nz

NUMBER ONE WEB PAGE IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE: 1000's OF STAMP BARGAINS

www.GlenStephens.com

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