



Market Matters:

From PO Discounting to Royal Weddings...

By Glen
Stephens

Australia Post discounts old stock 30%

Well I never thought I'd see the day Australia Post Philatelic went in to the heavy discounting business, but that day came today.

I received a phone call from A-One Stamps mid May advising me the current 'Stamp Bulletin' just arrived in the mail had a range of 'Souvenir Stamp Sheets' discounted up to 30% from issue price.

This astounded me. I went and looked - a full page offering them. I went to the Australia Post website, and the same items were featured there in glorious colour as a "special offer".

The one that most caught my eye was the November 19, 2002 Star Wars issue: 'Classic Vehicles of the Saga.' This sheetlet of 10 was issued 18 months ago, on November 19, 2002, and sold for \$39.95. Australia Post now offers this same item for \$27.95 - which is a 30% discount off the original price.

May the discount be with you!



This new policy I have never seen used by Australia Post. Ever.

Indeed no responsible 'First World' postal administration to my knowledge does anything like this.

The long term effect of this will be far greater than to make a few quick bucks flogging mouldy old product littering the back rooms. It will stop BOTH collectors and dealers in some cases from buying further new issues of these Stamp Sheets - as they will expect they may again be discounted 30% in the future.

I phoned Craig Chappell - the leading leader in these Stamp Sheets (and *Stamp News* advertiser) based in Clayfield Queensland.

"I am disappointed to see this happen, and hope it does not ever happen again" Chappell told me today.

"I have this same 'Star Wars' stamp sheet on my pricelist for \$80, which after holding the stock since 2002, and applying the usual dealer mark-up is a fair and reasonable retail price. To see the Post Office offer it direct to collectors at 30% less than I paid is not great news" he continued.

"I do hope that those making this decision are fully mindful of the possible effect this action will have on future sales of this product if future discount sales eventuate" he concluded.

Craig is far more diplomatic than I would have been in his position, as clearly the major Australian stockist of this product range.

I wonder where the next "sale" might occur? Unsold 2001 First Day Covers? 2002 PSE's? 2003 year albums? The mind boggles.

Dredging up 18 month items to discount is a terrible and dangerous precedent. And not all offers were 'golden oldies'. The January 19th 2004 Tennis Open stamp sheet is also discounted 21.5% from issue price before its usual 6 month new issue sales period is over.

As the *Stamp Bulletin* copy is prepared several months in advance of being mailed this 21.5% discount offer must have been typed around the same the sheet was issued!

One way Australia Post will get the message on this loud and clear is if collectors who purchased these items at full price now contact them and request they received a refund based on being foolish enough to pay the "original" price.

You may never get an refund - that is pretty likely, but it will possibly make a few boffins in there think twice before they do it again.

This column is being written right on absolute magazine deadline, but in fairness I did seek clarification from Australia Post on what others product areas (if any) this discounting policy may be extended to in future.

I phoned Amber McDougall, the Manager of the Philatelic Group who was not in. After explaining fully the reason for my call to her PA my details were taken and I was then transferred by her office to Kylie Smith, Product Manager of Stamp Sheets. Ms Smith advised all her managers were in a meeting for the day so she was unable to answer my question, and promised someone would get back to me next day.

No-one did, and make of that what you wish.

New Gibbons "Australia" catalogue

Well for once Stanley Gibbons seem to have chanced on doing SOMETHING right with catalogues!

Their recent history of issuing the Part One Commonwealth "only" in simplified format went over like a lead balloon with both dealers and collectors. No watermarks, no varieties, no booklets, no perforation variances etc made it a joke to use for anyone collecting seriously.

Just air freighted out are copies of the new SG "Australia" catalogue.

Simon Dunkerley will I am sure have a more detailed review of price changes elsewhere in this magazine.

Someone may remember when the last attempt at this was made. As far as my library shows it was in 1991 when the small format SG "Concise" Australia was issued. That was a silly little size and I personally disliked using it. That little book was black and white of course and this new one is (largely) in colour.

Both editions contain Australian States, Australia, BCOF, Cocos, AAT, Christmas and Norfolk Island issues. 1991 contained PNG and Nauru issues and 2004 does not. Pretty silly omissions really, as neither take a lot of space.

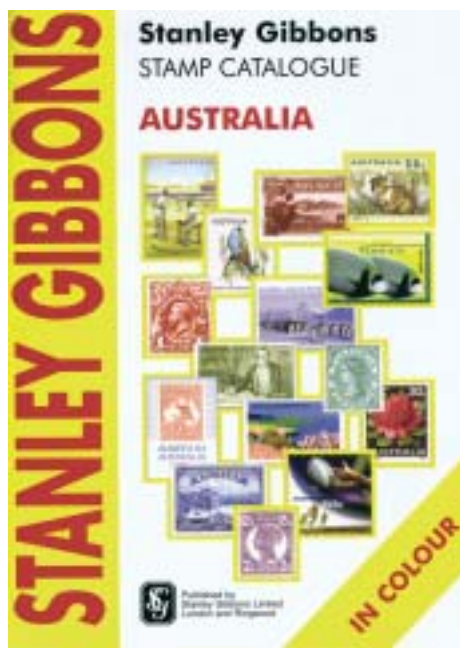
The "States" issues are seldom illustrated in colour, and someone at SG really must address this ASAP. Several dealers could surely assist with loaning of stamps for scanning if they are serious about this.

Price is about \$A60 - which compares VERY favourably with the UK retail of £19.95 if you check current low exchange rates and add freight costs.

I know *Stamp News* retail department is offering them elsewhere for \$A67.50 post free anywhere in Australia and that is a very good offer in my opinion. All main dealers will of course keep stock in you are in a stamp store, and wish to save on mailing cost.

I like the large A4 size - so easy to use - and the fact that unlike the disappointing "Part One" this volume has all the info in here you'll ever likely need. Many major plate varieties, superb coverage of stamp booklets, and inverted and sideways watermarks etc. I have no idea who decided upon WHICH decimals plate errors to list, but I hope they are sacked and replaced for next edition!

The perennial 1966 \$1 Flinders "eye" flaw and plate crack have gone up in value for some reason to £75 and £100 respectively.



Whoever in the catalogue department selected the 1967 4c Bible Society and included the "white colour dot between R and S" to list and then called it a "broken frame" needs to go looking for another job!

There are many worthwhile and major constant plate flaws in the 1960s and 1970s in particular, and for SG to include this strange one (and mis-named it at that!) and no others is rather weird I thought.

Many of these only cost a few dollars and listing them in SG would create a worldwide market. As a young teenager I remember buying up blocks of the 1966 4c Hartog with the "Cannon ball through hull of Ship" error.

And later on the 1970 Captain Cook M/S "Double spear" error. And being

fascinated by all the constant varieties on the 1969 5c Flight trio. And who could forget the row of 10 "Misplaced Tiara" on the 1970 5c Royal Visit?

None of these are expensive, all are constant, none are hard to spot, and all of them are worthy for inclusion on such a catalogue. Overall however, a very useful buy at around \$A60.

S.A. "Departmentals"

Speaking of this new Gibbons catalogue, it does of course list all the South Australia "Departmentals". But as always does not PRICE any of them. This is simply inexcusable for someone like Stanley Gibbons who allegedly know the stamp market.

These stamps have been around for 136 years and by now the keen followers have a very good idea of prices. And someone like Tony Presgrave can I am sure do the job expertly if SG are incapable or unwilling of doing it themselves.

For those who are unfamiliar with these issues they comprise South Australian Government overprints on normal SA stamps. There are many wonderfully politically incorrect today abbreviations like "P.A." (Protector Of Aborigines") and "L.A." ("Lunatic Asylum" and "C.D." ("Convict Department") etc.,



Est \$300 sold for \$2,150

A major collection formed by Les Munn of these issues was auctioned May 15 this year by Prestige Philately in Melbourne. Some spectacular prices were obtained.

One strong result I noted was "GF" for "Gold Fields" - estimate \$300 which sold for \$1,900 plus 13.2% "Buyer Fee" totalling \$2,150.80. Even more interesting is that this stamp is only rarity rated "RR" from a possible "RRRRR" maximum. The "RRRRR" rated stamps in the sale obtained lesser prices rather interestingly.

Gary Watson said in the catalogue preface: "The lack of proper catalogue listings with valuations has resulted in this fascinating field being perhaps the most under-valued in Australian philately". I agree with him 100%.

WHATEVER you pay for these "Departmental" stamps now will seem a bargain in a few years' time is my predication. In 25 years of stamp dealing I have handled only a few dozen, and if demand takes off these will quickly be worth 5 times present levels.



*Top Left: Lunatic Asylum
Top Right: Legislative Council
Bottom: Protector of Aborigines*



"Leather" Year Books

I mentioned last month that year books seem to have gone mad in the market. And it gets even stronger.

I put up a separate web page on these in April and was swamped - it amazed me.

This week I was looking week for 1996 and 1997 "Leather" Australia Post Books to complete a set this week, and wasted 2 hours on the case. Not one dealer in this country appears to have them in stock. At ANY price!

If you have ANY gaps in this area fill them NOW. Present "retail" prices are half what they should be for the mid 1990s on - simply as no-one really does have stock it seems! Even Richard Juzwin does not stock or carry these items.

Danish Royal Wedding

I did not really imagine that the May 14 wedding of His Royal Highness Frederik the Crown Prince of Denmark, and Miss Mary Donaldson of Tasmania Australia would create much stamp collector interest.

How wrong I was! I emailed clients on the eve of the Wedding on May 14, and received an avalanche of orders for the set of 7 different special colour "Wesley" covers cancelled in Hobart on the wedding day.

I guess the enormous mass media coverage of this in Australia was a factor. All national TV Bulletins for 2 days led with the story. And the fact only 150 numbered sets of covers existed worldwide was another obvious factor. I could have sold my 50 sets to the Danish trade alone had I wished.

I understand *Stamp News* Mail Order is running an ad for their small stock of these in this magazine, and as they only have about 50 sets of 7, if you need this set do NOT hesitate to secure it soon. There was NO other issue from Australia to mark this historic wedding.

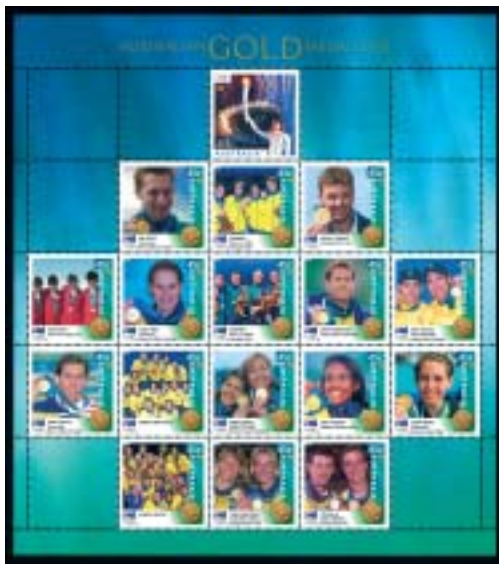


One of the set of 7 covers

Crown Prince Frederik and Mary first met at a Sydney Hotel - the "Slip Inn" ... during the Sydney Olympics 2000. That hotel was offering free beer on the Wedding weekend to all patrons who produced a Danish passport!

The Danish Post Office of course issued a swag of material for this event. Stamps, PNC, Maxi Cards, and a common design Souvenir Sheet from Denmark, Faroes and Greenland - the latter 2 countries of course both use Danish currency and are under Danish administration. Max Stern had a page advert in the May edition of this magazine listing out all this material.

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As at May 2004 our prices were as follows:

Per sheetlet \$74.95

Per 5 sheetlets \$355.00

Per 10 sheetlets \$675.00

PLEASE ADD \$2 PER SHEETLET TO COVER POSTAGE & PACKAGING COST.

Currently wanting to buy quantities of 10 subject to stock requirements, please quote your best price!

Price is for Mint Unhinged, CTO used or used on registered cover also available at same prices.

AUSTRALIA 2000 OLYMPICS COMPOSITE SHEETLET

We have managed to secure a small stock of this sheetlet pictured below, and issued only in the 2000 Year Book. We are also urgently seeking further supplies from potential sellers who have 10 or more copies. Whether buying or selling please contact us for the latest prices!

**Secure your copy today, only a few left
at this price!**

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