

Market Matters

Killer Cancels

Most regular readers must know by now of my 25 year crusade to have us all where possible use nice frankings and secure neat cancels.

We owe it to the next generations of collectors to do our best in this regard.

I went to pick up a packet last week the Editor of *Stamp News* had mailed me. My postmaster handed it over and said: "just look at what some idiot has done here".

Now my PM is a great bloke, and knows my passion for neat cancels, and applies superb ones himself. He even allows me to do them personally when the PO is not busy with other customers, or parcel has a lot of franking.

He had seen this one arrive and knew what my reaction would be.

The *Stamp News* packet had used a se-tenant strip of 5 of the 36¢ Bicentennial issue, (face \$1.80) and couple of other attractive 37¢ commems to slightly overpay the \$2.45 rate up to 500 grams.

17 strikes

Go to any dealer price list or catalogue - that \$1.80 strip sells retail for MORE than \$1.80 when lightly cancelled. Some maniac at Dandenong Letter Centre on September 20 had gone troppo, and belted this franking with SEVENTEEN ugly cancels, when just three would have sufficed rather nicely.

As you can see the canceller was reinked 2 or 3 times in this act of deliberate vandalism. Why this person went so nuts I will never know. I contacted the Editor and sent him a scan of this, and he advises that his mail is cancelled locally.

This packet must have missed local cancelling and the regional Mail Centre then went crazy when it arrived there with no cancels.

I will forward this column to the Manager of the Mail Centre and hopefully he can kick someone's backside for acting the fool and deliberately ruining perfectly good Philatelic franking.



Deliberate Vandalism.

Cancelling things 17 times when 3 strikes would suffice is obviously taking that staffer 5 times as long to do their job, and that becomes a real needless cost to Australia Post. In addition to annoying their customers at the same time.

Just take your fist and bring it down 17 times on the desk. That takes a LOT of effort and time

An Adelaide client bought a few collections off me the same week and I mailed them using 3 x central CTO copies of the massive \$5 "Kangaroo and Map" series that I wrote about in my January 2005 column.

Again these are worth MUCH more than \$5 when nicely cancelled like this. So his \$15 shipping cost should have been a profit to him, not a cost. He could have sold them for \$8-\$10 each if in the condition they left me.

This is the first stamp in the new \$5 series 'Treasures from the Archives', which highlights items from the National Philatelic Collection. The stamp is MASSIVE - 105 x 70 mm. Literally the size of many modern Mini sheets. You can see from the size of the postmark on the copy illustrated nearby how large it is.

The sheet of 10 is about the same size as a regular sheet of 100, so they are clearly about 10 times the exterior size of a normal commemorative.

These stamps are PERFECT for us all to use on philatelic mail. The self-stick versions adhere well to most parcel surfaces - far better than the gummed version.

I purchased dozens and dozens of sheets, and 50 x \$100 "cheque books" of the 'peel and stick' versions. Clients just love getting these on mail. Must be 20 years since I bought so many stamps for postage from Australia Post.

I imagine 90% of the world supply of used copies are central cancelled "Castlecrag NSW." Regular clients now ASK for this to be used as franking!

My Adelaide client had his 3 copies largely mangled by Australia Post in transit. As I suggest to all customers that experience this vandalism - mail the ruined mess to the Philatelic Division of Australia Post. They generally mail you the same value stamps nicely cancelled free of charge - as a goodwill gesture.

That occurred in this instance, and my client was pleased to report this week he was mailed 3 x CTO copies of the next

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Worth more than face value

stamp (issue #2) in this giant sized series. The NSW £1 Carrington stamp - which I personally dislike. However they too will retail well over face value. Of course this offer applies ONLY to ruined recent issues I would imagine.

Watermark Error

As I often type here in these columns - the last word is NEVER written in Philately. A new error has turned up 70 years after being mailed.

For decades I have been a member of the Australian Commonwealth Collector's Club. I almost never attend meetings, (laziness!) but do find much of interest in the bi-monthly "Bulletin" Journals.

Annual membership dues to ACCC for Australians are \$A30, and \$A50 for overseas members. Remittances to GPO Box 1971, Sydney. NSW. 2001.

Current Editor of the "Bulletin" is Dr. Geoff Kellow, also Editor of the superlative range of Australian Specialist Catalogues. (ACSC)

Dr Kellow ran an article that fascinated me in the August "Bulletin" reporting a new watermark error discovery.

A John Greenaway from Canberra had discovered a new error on a 1931 2d Red

KGV CofA watermark stamp - SG 127. The "C" of the C of A watermark had been soldered on backwards in one position. i.e. the C was reversed (or mirror imaged) from where it would normally be.

The C in the upper middle of the error stamp reads in positive - looking at it from the back of the stamp, where watermarks show clearest on this (indeed most) issues. Worldwide convention is that watermarks are catalogue listed and illustrated as they show from the FRONT of the stamp.

Hopefully the illustrations nearby will give you a clearer idea. Remember these



Normal

Error

illustrations are what you see from the FRONT of the stamp.

Kellow says: "there is no question as to the genuineness of the variety". The 2d KGV is postmarked at "Koo-Wee-Rup" Victoria in September 1935.

Watermarks are made by pressing a mesh of steel wire (the "dandy roll") into the damp mushy paper pulp, compressing or thinning it in the area the wire touches. The watermark can be a simple image as we see on the single Crown over A stamps on early Roo and KGV issues. Or they can be a far more "busy" design as we encounter on the Small Multiple and "C of A" designs.

Paper was supplied to the Australian Note Printer in large sheet form from the UK. KGV head stamps were printed 8 panes of 60 each pass - i.e. '480 on' and then guillotined down to the normal PO sheets of 120.

Wiggins Teape paper

The papermaker for this issue was Wiggins Teape in the UK, although issues like the 1934 Victoria Centenary also had Cowan supplied paper on the 2d value. The recent ACSC listings have separated these issues and some are quite valuable. Many dealers are NOT aware of this, and bargains abound!

Kellow tells me that the papermakers did not make the dandy roll for watermarks - that is a separate specialty manufacturing operation. The dandy roll would have been supplied under authority to whichever papermaker was authorised to use them.

At some point a "C" broke or fell off the master grid, and was soldered on backwards in error. Seventy years have gone by and not one collector has ever noticed this - until now.

This discovery stamp is dated September 1935 as mentioned and was posted from "Koo-Wee-Rup" Victoria. I can't decipher either the name or date from photo, but Geoff Kellow assures me both are correct. I have seen a scan of the reverse, and the error looks indeed beyond question.

"C of A" watermarked stamps were first issued in 1931, and for the next 20 years every stamp printed were water-



The new discovery

marked with this design. From the early 1950s onwards commemorative issues were unwatermarked, but all definitives were - even the humble ½d orange value, until 1959

Indeed all the pre-Decimal Navigator stamps on sale until the 1966 Decimal issues were on the same "C of A" watermarked paper, as were all printings of the 5/- 1961/64 Cattleman.

So we are talking literally BILLIONS of stamps sold on "C of A" watermarked paper.

The "C of A" stood for "Commonwealth Of Australia". Most British Empire stamps in this era had a fairly similar Multiple "CA" watermark, which of course stood for Crown Agents.

\$64,000 Question

How many were produced with this "back-to-front C" watermark? That of course is the \$64,000 question!

The error may have been quickly detected at the watermark dandy roll supplier and/or printer and easily corrected with a soldering iron. In which case only stamps printed around the same 1935 date of this example will be possible to show the error.

OR, if it was not detected, every sheet made for the next 34 years may contain the variety. No-one knows until readers start searching their collections. Let me know if you are successful and I'll pass on the reports.

Is it valuable? Well my guess is that if the copy illustrated nearby was auctioned today it would sell for at least \$1,000 and possibly for a few \$1,000. The buyer would take a chance. If hundreds more

turn up - he'd have overpaid. If no others surface the stamp is worth possibly five or ten times that.

Australia is one country where prices for watermark errors have risen phenomenally in recent years. Most other countries do not share this passion - or high prices.

My colleague Simon Dunkerley tells me the highest price at auction for an inverted watermark Australian stamp is the \$39,100 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 that was invoiced at just over \$32,000 in the Prestige Philately Rarity auction in April this year.

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 watermark errors now bring.

Now both these stamps are quite common with normal watermarks. The INVERT is where these huge figures are coming from. This is what I base my figure of a few \$1,000 upon. Such a stamp might be in any reader's duplicates.

Check dealer stocks

A dealer friend in Sydney, NRG Philatelics laughed when I told him of this new discovery. He has just sent in his *Stamp News* ad for next month and had an estate hoard of 1,000s of this "C of A" 2d KGV head for sale, and his asking price was well under \$100. I bet he gets a fast buyer for THAT!

Of course as pointed out it is possible you may find this error on a 1964 5/- Navigator. Or on a £2 Roo, or a £2 Arms. Or a very common 1d or 2d KGV definitive.

There is no way of knowing when - if ever, the error was corrected. However the 2d Red KGV is an issue that DEFINITELY has the error - we do know that.

Kellow surmises it would likely have been corrected, and points to the dandy bit errors in British Commonwealth issues in a similar time era. Certainly otherwise common stamps from the Bahamas and Seychelles are in Gibbons for figures around £1,000 with similar errors. These errors were quickly corrected.



Sold for over \$32,000

So the hunt is on a perfect way to spend a few days over Christmas perhaps? Please remember my bottle of bubbly when you find one!

The challenge will be to find it where the error falls nearly in the centre of the stamp as it did in the one example seen so far. Partial "C" on outer edges will be far harder to verify with any confidence.

And of course care must be taken to ensure you have for CERTAIN identified this error, as poorly impressed watermarks will not be always be easy to read.

One of those cheap \$2 black watermark trays, (or indeed any small black tray) and a can of lighter fluid or watermark fluid is all anyone needs to start looking. And LOTS of patience!

There is no doubt this variety will be listed and priced in the next ACSC "KGV" volume - along with any others that may turn up and be verified. And I have no doubt it will also be listed and priced in Stanley Gibbons and other main catalogues.

The "C of A" paper was not only used for Australian stamps. It was used for the Papua Lakatois of 1932. The same watermarked paper was also used for stamps of the Dutch East Indies - a little known fact.

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