



Glen Stephens'

Market Matters:

Fill any 1990's gaps NOW...

The longer I am connected with stamps the more surprised I am at the niche products that exist out there!

Reader Geoff Sherrington sent me a CD Rom recently that has images on it of most Australian stamps issued since 1913 - right up to 2004. It also includes Australian Antarctic Territory and 1946 BCOF Japan issues etc.

There are about 2,200 different images in the standard JPG format. They are all indexed chronologically in a neat Excel spread sheet that has about 3500 rows of 17 columns wide!

The amount of scanning work and data entry work involved in this new production must have been phenomenal. It illustrates 'Specimen' issues from 1913, and perf 'OS' Commems, and mini sheets and sheetlets of the modern issues.

I selected one stamp at random - the 1981 20¢ Butterfly. The listing for that reads as follows in one neat line: 2300 - 1981 - 20 cent Multi - No Wmk - Perf -13.5 - SG 787, Scott 874, Michel 841, Com-prehensive - 859, ACSC - 1000, Seven Seas ASC - 890 - Butterfly, *Graphium macleayanus*

The images I looked at were all very clear, and indeed the one shown above is taken direct off the spreadsheet. To use them in this way, you simply right click on the image, and left click 'Save Picture As' option, and type in the short name you want to save it as.

You can then email it and use it in any way you wish. The result is a good clear scan of this 20¢ butterfly that is about 150 Kb in size - perfect for normal use and emailing. This illustration here was emailed to the Editor after saving via this method, off the CD Rom.

And I must stress right up front I am almost techno illiterate. I do not know how these things work, or why it works, and unless DEAD simple, simply can't GET it to work! If I can use this, ANYONE can use it.

For anyone listing stamps on eBay etc this CD Rom could save a LOT of time with scans and listing data like catalogue numbers and description.

For general dealer use the same applies. If you have a client after Orchids topicals you key in CTRL+F and a search box pops up. You can then type 'Orchid' or 'Butterfly' or 'Dogs' in there, and a LOT of matches come up with applicable photos for each.

You can then email these images direct to your client to see if these stamps suit etc. AND all the catalogue numbers for these sets in SG, Scott, Michel, ASC, ACSC or Comprehensive catalogues are readily displayed you can add to the email.

Great for 'want' lists

This part is to me a VERY valuable asset. I often get long 'want' lists from Americans in particular, listing only Scott numbers. Or from Europeans listing only Michel numbers etc. This CD Rom is worth many dealers buying JUST to use as a cross-reference for catalogue numbers, as it can save you hours.

Likewise it is easy for a collector to arrange his 'want list' as a print out or email using this CD as the basic data base.

Catalogues have got horrendously expensive in recent years. Even the once cheap Scott catalogues are now \$A120 a volume from the Australian agent Max

Stern - and there are about 7 to the full set. And he sells out FAST - even of the biggest selling Volume #1 - as I discovered this week.

The many thick German Michel volumes also now all run to \$A120 each. And local postage on each of the Scott or Michel or SG works can be another \$20 on top of the \$120.

So all this number and photo data on a compact CD Rom for 15% the cost of a single catalogue saves keeping up to date with buying a bunch of foreign catalogues.

Updates occur every 2 years for this CD I am advised.



Only \$A20 post free

Cost of the CD Rom is \$A20 including postage and packing within Australia, (anywhere overseas \$US15 - PayPal accepted) and in my opinion is excellent value if you do not enjoy scanning. It is a fast and compact way to access illustrations and catalogue numbers.

As you can see from the illustration above it is packaged professionally with a custom colour outer label inside the hard jewel storage case.

The uses are many. It is a very clever and long overdue idea, and a product of five years work Geoff tells me. I do like to see folks rewarded for hard and innovative work, and hope this product has good commercial success.

Contact the producer sherro@bigpond.net.au re ordering details or payment or queries about this production.

1990s Pacific Issues

The stamp market is indeed cyclical. Things always move in waves.

In the early 1970's, no-one was buying stamps other than for their immediate and personal collecting needs. No-one bought extras - most dealers included.

As a result of this many Australia 1971/2 era issues went up a lot in price a decade later, when a lot of new collectors joined the ranks.

To this day the 1971 and 1972 Xmas issues, and 1972 Beef sets etc are all very



Taken off the CD ROM

Glen Stephens - Market Matters

good sets, and get good prices. Why? Because demand has always exceeded supply.

Human beings catch on slowly – but then act in herds. When folks saw these items rise to \$100s a block of 7c stamps like the 1971 Xmas, lots of them all started buying ‘extras’ of NEW issues. Dealers and collectors alike – assuming the same huge rises would occur with their 5 x ‘spare’ 22¢ Waltzing Matilda sheets.

This speculative buying frenzy started around 1980 in Australia. And it continued for most of the 1980’s.

Supply and demand of course soon reared its ugly head. This stuff was NEVER scarce. It was purchased in quantities 10 times greater than any actual collecting needs, so it has always been a glut on the market.

Dealers still buy and sell it well UNDER face value. This will be so in 20 years time. ‘Sydpex 80’ issues and the like WILL still be selling under face in 30 times time, take my word on it.

Look at the USA 3¢ commemoratives from the 1930’s and 1940’s if you do not believe me. Sixty five years on and they still sell under face value in full mint sheets. A \$US3 sheet 100 was a day or two gross wages back then.

Around 1990 everyone in Australia seemed to wake up this was a dumb way to lose money and they stopped. Nearly all at once.

My personal belief is the one single factor behind this was the 1990 \$20 Painting issue. A collector who had a standing order for a single, a block 4, FDC and PO pack of each issue got a bill for over \$140 with that one issue.

Fourteen years back \$140 was serious bucks, and for a pensioner (as about 50% of AP new issue buyers were) this blew their entire pension way out of the water in one go.

As for the poor sods that were signed up with AP for a mint SHEET of each new issue, (and there were thousands) that one \$20 issue wiped \$1,000 off their credit card balance. Lucky for them it was a large stamp and issued only in sheets 50, and not 100!

Masses of collectors cancelled their standing order accounts in annoyance around 1990, and have not bought new issues since.

Of course the wheel turneth and many of those same folks

A pretty N.Z. 1999 M/S

are now drifting back to stamps, and deciding to chase up the issues they are missing.

All dealers will tell you it is not uncommon for someone to say they want to order all stamps issued since the early 1990s for Australia, AAT, Cocos, Christmas Is - and often several other Pacifics as well.

In my September ‘Specials’ email to client I had cartons of 10 ‘Lighthouse’ black page stockbooks on offer, and cartons of 220 German ‘Hagner’ type sheets for half retail.

Response was large, and nearly all who ordered by phone told me they were buying up at the sale prices so as to update or re-house their collections, as they had neglected them for some time.

I have in recent months sold about 100 cartons of 10 stockbooks via these offers, and that clearly means folks are BACK into their stamp collections with a vengeance. A good sign for the stamp business.

Sourcing early 1990s issues is not so hard, but get to about 1995 and it gets tough, especially for Pacifics. Get to the late 1990s and this material is downright scarce.

2000 onwards ‘impossible’

Start looking for the few years after 2000 and you have no hope basically. A lot of those still collecting moderns drew a line in the sand and decided nothing after end 2000 was going to be purchased as new issues. A nice Millennium ‘round figure’ date to choose.

Anyone who has bought or sold anything counter-cyclically whether shares, bullion, real estate etc, can see where this advice is heading!

My advice is that many issues from Australia and Pacifics from the mid 1990’s onward are now HALF or one third the price

they will be in the not too distant future. Simple supply and demand rules at play.

I bought an Estate lot this week of N.Z. FDC and MUH stamps from early 1990’s to Xmas 2003. Direct from the Bureau. I had never set eyes on most of these before! Some of them are very attractive such as the inexpensive 1999 \$1.20 flower miniature sheet I illustrate above.

Now N.Z. 1980’s issues I have bought and sold hundreds of times. And early 1990’s to a lesser extent. But certainly NOT the past decade material - it is surprisingly thin on the ground locally.

I’ve just typed both runs of N.Z. stuff into my next internet list as job lots priced below face, to move it along fast as one lot, which is my usual selling style. However if you want to buy this material by the set you may collapse at what any dealer who DOES have regular stock will charge you for it.

20% off for readers!

I looked today at the quite excellent website of Auckland City Stamps (www.nzstamps.com) who has the \$1.20 Mini sheet shown above for \$NZ15 retail, in pair with its \$1.40 brother.

A lot of N.Z. material in this 1994-2003 period is already priced at 3, 4 or even 5 times face, such as the 2001 Lord Of The Rings sets. The message is clear – this material is already on the move, and will never be cheaper.

I have known ACS Manager Warwick Delamore for about 20 years, and he has offered a special discount of 20% to all readers who order over \$NZ150 of N.Z. 1994-2003 material off his website during the month of October. You MUST mention this column to receive the discount however.

Try phoning a few LARGE dealers advertising in “Stamp News” and ask how much the year 2002 issues from Nauru, Pitcairn, or Samoa will cost you. Most will just laugh and say they have NEVER once set eyes on these stamps, much less have them in stock.

This is only a guess, but I’d take a stab that the number of Nauru or Samoa sets of any new issue sold in 2001 is about 10% of that sold in 1991. Ditto for many other Pacifics that are popular locally.

However right now prices of most of these areas are not 10 times higher than face - they are often just one or two times face value. That WILL change, trust me.



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Dealers have no way to re-stock this material other than to pay good money to buy it. And whether they source it via Auction or buying off collectors they WILL pay a premium for the more difficult years. As I said in the first sentence – *'The stamp market is indeed cyclical'*.

Moral of the story - if you have been disillusioned, lazy, or just busy, and need anything Pacific from the past 5 or 10 years DO go order it now at the prevailing prices, which will look VERY cheap in a few years time.



Want a new collecting challenge?

Many collectors say to me they are 'bored' with their mainstream collections. There comes a time when most folks reach the point where the 10 stamps they still need all cost \$1,000+ each, and the 'divorce

court potential' is not worth pursuing them!

Or, as outlined above, a lot of folks are sick of buying the needless new issues and want another philatelic challenge to keep them interested.

I had a client call me today about something he ordered, and we got talking about an interesting sideline collection he has recently embarked upon.

Peter Dolan from Adelaide collects stamps from 1962 - the year he was born.

I am sure others have this as a collecting sideline it is just one I have never heard of! Peter tells me that his research shows that there were 3,647 stamps issued worldwide in that year, from 172 different issuing entities.

This data is taken from the SG Simplified catalogue, so includes no mini sheets and no perforation or watermark paper varieties etc.

He says that about 5% of all stamps issued that year - about 140 of them, came from Russia. An amazing statistic. By contrast Great Britain issued only one small set - the NPY trio ... which of course comes in both phosphor banded and non phosphor if you really want to get technical!

1962 was a year when about 10% of the world's stamps depicted a combating Malaria theme. Peter's favourite item shown nearby from Cambodia is a FDC of that topical.

Peter has only accumulated about 15% of his Holy Grail, so if any readers or dealers can help him add to the tally please email him on pollution_avoidance@yahoo.com.au or write to Peter Dolan, PO Box 280, Enfield Plaza SA 5085. Mint or used or on cover - the more obscure the country, the better! Please note that Peter has given me written approval to publish his contact details here.

A great sideline collection, that in the most cases will not cost you much money, but a GREAT deal of time! I am glad he shared it with me, and it is a field many readers would have fun with I suspect.

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